

On salience, confabulation, and emotion's reliability

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Abstract De Sousa notoriously insisted on the fact that emotions focus our attention on some information that they make salient. Thanks to this property, they foster the search of reasons, and notably of justifications for our evaluative judgments. But this property has also side-effects since it gives way to various rationalizations and confabulations. When one confabulates, one produces a justification of one's emotion that one genuinely assesses as a good justification, although it is generally not. This raises the problem of emotions' unreliability: how can we trust our emotions if they can lead us in errors of which we can hardly be aware? In this paper, I review various solutions that have been proposed to address this problem. I first examine what I understand to be De Sousa's own solution. I then consider a solution that calls for a form of evaluative understanding, notably proposed by Elgin and Brady. Finally, I suggest another kind of solution, which consists less in distrusting our own emotions, than in a critical assessment of the motivational states from which our emotions derive.