Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

# An encompassing account of regret

**Abstract:** Philosophical attention to regret is typically focussed on the ethical issues it raises, leaving foundational questions about its objects and structure undecided. Here, these questions are at the forefront. I defend an encompassing account of regret, according to which this emotion is not only fittingly felt for the past, or our mistakes, or for things we have done or caused to happen. Instead, I argue, regret is a feeling of discomfort experienced when how things are or will be seems worse, given something we value, than some nonactual but possible state of affairs. This view accommodates the variability of regret, allows for a nuanced account of its value and can help us to recognise and manage our regrets.

## Introduction

There are many ways to feel bad about things. This paper is about which of those ways of feeling bad we should count as regret, and why. Various restrictions on regret have been proposed. For instance, it is sometimes suggested that regret is only felt for past states of affairs, or our mistakes, or our actions, or that regret involves a sense of loss for what we have narrowly missed out on, or a characteristic thought. In opposition to these restrictions, I will argue that regret is much more encompassing. Whenever we feel discomfort over how things might have been better than how they are (or will be), we feel regret.

Whilst regret has not been ignored by philosophers, the focus has primarily been on ethical issues it raises, and on the moral psychology of regret, often prompted by Bernard Williams (1973, 1976) discussions of regret. As such, questions about the objects and structure of regret that are more at home in the philosophy of mind have been left undecided (Mac Cumhaill 2018, p.187). They are not undecided just in the sense that—as is typical in philosophy—there has been extensive argument that has not led to a consensus. Rather, various inconsistent assertions are made that pertain to these questions, sometimes with little attempt to adjudicate. These undecided questions about regret will be at the forefront in this paper. A proper characterisation of regret that addresses these questions is necessary in order to identify the target of ethical discussions of regret. It is also required to adequately grasp the value, if any, that this emotion has. Finally, in that regret turns out on the account offered to be an extremely common emotion, an account of it will have considerable value as an aspect of understanding and managing our emotional lives.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

In section 1 I will argue for an expansive conception of regret's objects. In section 2 I turn to the structure of regret, presenting a hypothesis that reflects the conclusions of section 1 and highlights the distinction between the emotion regret, and the thought or judgement that some state of affairs is regrettable. The hypothesis also allows for several other ways in which regret is variable, beyond the diversity of its objects. In section 3, I respond to the objection that the encompassing view counts too much as regret, suggesting that there are good reasons to embrace the idea that regret is an extremely common feature of human emotional experience.

## 1. The objects of regret

The objects of regret include its *formal object* (the evaluation that is characteristic of regret) and its *concrete objects* (the things that regret evaluates). Both formal and concrete objects are what a regret is about if it is *fitting*, which I will take to be a kind of 'emotional accuracy' distinct from moral or pragmatic appropriateness.[1] To defend an expansive account of regret's objects, I will reflect on some narrower conceptions. Whilst these reflections will ultimately be unfavourable, the hypothesis about the structure of regret that I will go on to defend is consistent with there being subtypes of regret, which can be understood as the targets of these narrower conceptions. Furthermore, the hypothesis defended will also help us to see why certain forms of regret—those that are the target of these narrower conceptions—occur more frequently or at least more predictably than others. Perhaps the narrowest of these conceptions of regret is that on which it involves evaluating one's past action as a mistake or error.

The first question this raises is whether regret always pertains to the past. Some have taken this to be quite obviously so. For instance, Ben-Ze'ev writes that 'regret is clearly directed at past activities' (2001 p.491) and Jay Wallace's description of regret is 'looking backward with feeling' (2013, p.15). According to Hoerl & McCormack, regret is '*by definition* an emotion directed toward the past' (2016, p.241, my italics). In contrast, psychologist Janet Landman suggests that 'regretted matters may have occurred in the past, present, or future'

[1] See for example D'Arms and Jacobson 2000 for this distinction between kinds of emotional appropriateness.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

(1993, p.36). Similarly, according to Amelie Rorty, 'one can regret something that one intends to do, or something one is convinced one is likely to do' (1980 p.490).

To defend the claim that regret's concrete objects must be in the past, it might be argued that what is called regret for the future isn't felt regret, but instead the anticipation that one will feel regret for future x, once x is in the past. It is certainly true that some 'anticipatory regret' takes this form. For example, this is what Michael Bratman (e.g., 2014, see discussion in White 2017) has in mind when he gives anticipatory regret a role in maintaining our intentions: having formed the intention to give up smoking, anticipating that one *will* regret it if one smokes gives one a reason not to smoke. However, whilst some anticipatory regret may be anticipating that one will feel regret, there are other examples that are not naturally understood in this way. Consider 'I regret that I will never see him face justice' or 'I regret that I will never be able to describe what I experienced' or (in the context of a bereavement) 'I regret that I won't get another birthday call from him'. It is not at all natural to think of these descriptions as picking out anticipating how someone will feel about something in the future, or only that.

In addition, we can explain why it might seem right to say that regret is always past directed, despite this not being the case. For what regret does concern itself with are 'settled facts' (Na'aman 2017).[2] Hence when we regret something—even something in the future or still unfolding now—it is 'as if it is a foregone conclusion and already in the past' (Solomon 1993, p.288). This is not inconsistent with regret sometimes motivating one to 'undo' something regrettable as when regretting having bought some expensive item, one takes it back to the shop.[3] In such a case what is regretted—the initial purchase—is still in the relevant sense settled: one cannot make it the case that one didn't purchase the item. It's in this same sense that one feels regretted things in the present or future to be settled and unchangeable. We said that on the narrowest conception of regret, it concerns only our past

[2] One way for a regret to be unfitting would be for it to represent as settled something that is not. Hence, someone who thought that there are no settled facts about the future would take all future-directed regret to be unfitting. Whether there are settled facts about the future is an issue beyond the scope of this paper: I assume for the sake of argument that there are.
[3] Sometimes regret involves feeling urgently motivated to undo something in this sense. See for example the 'hot' regret felt in Price's example of Holly, who regrets misreading an email after realising this has led her to turn down a valuable opportunity (Price 2020).

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

mistakes or errors. We can now conclude that this narrowest conception is incorrect insofar as the concrete objects of regret need not be in the past.

Need, however, regret always pertain to our mistakes and errors, whether past, present or anticipated? Two kinds of case have been thought to suggest not. The first kind of case is exemplified by Bernard Williams' unlucky lorry driver who despite driving perfectly safely, hits and injures a child. This example is intended by Williams to illustrate his—quite idiosyncratic—notion of 'agent-regret' rather than to probe regret's formal object.[4] However, it is relevant to the current point since the driver is supposed to have neither made an error or mistake, nor to feel that he has made one. According to Williams we would nevertheless expect the lorry driver to feel regret, and we would deem that regret to be fitting (Williams 1976, p.124).

Jacobson's argument that Williams reaches the wrong verdict about the lorry driver rests on the claim, which we will discuss again in section 3, that regret is defined by its characteristic function: to motivate policy change.[5] This function cannot be realised by feeling bad about an action that unforeseeably and unintentionally issues in bad outcomes, and therefore, according to Jacobsen, we should not define regret in a way that includes such feelings. However, a problem with this argument is that the claim about function is contestable. First, it might be argued that regret plays this role less well than one might expect if it were its defining function. We are probably all familiar with, as Rudiger Bittner puts it, 'the self-complacency of feeling terrible and leaving it at that' (1992, p.267). There is also sometimes, perhaps often, no policy that one could change in light of one's regret, even when it does pertain to an error or mistake. Second, in the absence of additional theoretical commitments, we might question the idea that regret has a defining function at all.[6] It might have no such

[4] Williams' notion of 'agent regret' is supposed to be distinct from remorse in not involving self-blame, but also to go beyond regret simpliciter, not merely in pertaining to the results of one's agency, but also in requiring a particular kind of expression from the agent, namely an attempt at restitution. Wallace, I think rightly, doubts that such expressions would be involved in the case of the unlucky lorry driver, and also that they would be considered reasonable if they were thus involved (2013, p.43).
[5] Similarly, McQueen takes regret to have a specific 'action tendency' (motivating us to improve our decision making) which constitutes regret's primary function (McQueen 2024, p.12).
[6] On Jacobsen's view, regret is one of a subset of emotions (sentiments) that are natural kinds with characteristic motivational tendencies. We will return to the question of what function, if any, regret has in section 3.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

function or, as Price (2020) suggests, several. So, Jacobsen has not provided a convincing argument for thinking that the unlucky lorry driver would not feel fitting regret.

The second kind of case pertinent to whether regret only concerns our mistakes and errors are ones that involve what Price calls 'uncomfortable choices'. One example is regret over having knowingly chosen the lesser of two evils. In such a case, you don't evaluate your choice as mistaken, since you have chosen what is by your lights the better option. However, it seems you may still regret it: it is an evil, after all.[7] Another different example of regret over an 'uncomfortable choice' is regret over a decision that you are, all things considered, content with. Kieran Setiya in his philosophical guide to midlife gives the example of how he feels about his decision to become a philosopher and not, as he briefly considered, a doctor or a poet. He doesn't believe that he would have had a better life as a poet or a doctor, (he says) but

> …when I run the experiment, draw 'doctor' or 'poet' from the hat of personal history, trace a branch in the tree of possibilities now cut off, I feel a sense of loss that is not unlike regret. (2017, p.56)

According to Setiya, what he feels is only *not unlike* regret and he labels the feeling as self-envy and nostalgia for his past self. However, his reason for thinking that this is not regret seems to be that it is not felt over something he considers a mistake or error. But, if we allow our other cases of regret without mistake or error, this obstacle to counting Setiya's feeling as (at least in part) one of regret has been removed. In summary, there are compelling counterexamples to the idea that regret's evaluation—its formal object—is that one has made a mistake or error.

Allowing that feeling regret need not require evaluating what one has done (or is doing or will do) as a mistake or error, it might nevertheless be argued that regret is always about our actions, a restriction on its concrete objects. Here 'action' might be understood to include what we don't do, such as Setiya's not having chosen to become a doctor, as well as what we unwittingly cause to happen, such as the lorry driver's injuring the child. Must regret always

[7] Williams (1973) discusses an example of this kind—Agamemnon's regret over sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia, despite believing this to be required of him as a commander. As Baron points out, this is an unhelpful example since 'most of us are inclined to think that Agamemnon made the wrong choice' (1988, p.263).

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

be in this sense agential? This is not, it should be noted, a question that can be answered just by looking at psychological studies of regret. As Landman observes, because psychologists often assume regret to be agential, studies probing the circumstances that engender regret sometimes ask questions that subjects could not answer by citing regrets—if any there are—of a broader kind (Landman 1993, pp.101-2). Indeed, according to Hoerl and McCormack, 'In psychology the term *regret* is typically reserved for cases in which one had responsibility for the choice, and hence the outcome' (2016, p.246).

As with our previous two questions, the answer to this third is undecided in the philosophical literature.[8] As we will see below, Williams take 'states of affairs' to be the objects of regret in the 'general sense', of which his agent regret is a subtype. Similarly, in his discussion of remorse, Thalberg states that regret 'is by far the broader notion. I can regret events which are unrelated to my own actions' (1963, p.547). And, other philosophers provide examples of what they take to be regret over non-agential states of affairs, which we might call 'situation regret'. Most common are examples of (purported) regret over situations pertaining to one's being some way one would prefer not to be: call this 'personal situation regret'. For example, Ben-Ze'ev reports Eleanor Roosevelt, having been asked what she regrets most, replying that she hadn't been prettier.[9] As a particularly striking example of what Rorty calls 'character regret' (1980, p.490), a subtype of personal situation regret, she highlights the main character of Dostoyevsky's *Notes From The Underground*: a man who regrets 'being himself'—all of his characteristics, including 'the capacity for, and tendency to regret' (p.491). A different kind of example is Cholbi's (2023) case of regret that humans are mortal—regret over one's being some way that one shares with the species. Less common are putative examples of what we regret over *mere* situations that don't involve some way one would prefer not to be. One such case of 'mere situation regret' is mentioned in passing by Christine Tappolet: regret that dinosaurs died out (2023, p.107). Another example is Thalberg's: 'I might regret (the

[8] Price takes regret over 'facts or states of affairs' to be the 'most controversial' cases of putative regret, and so sets them aside in her discussion (2020, p.148). Others imply acceptance of situation regret by labelling 'agent regret' the narrower phenomenon concerned with what one has done or caused to happen—for example, Bagnoli 2000, Barnum-Roberts 2011. Similarly, Warren (2022) begins his discussion of regret in ancient philosophy by noting that he is primarily interested in 'metameleia', which is similar although not identical to agent regret as just described. As noted above, Williams' agent regret is not just regret over what one has done or caused to happen, but also involves a certain kind of expression.

[9] Since Ben Ze'ev takes all regret to concern missed opportunities, he interprets Roosevelt's regret as 'concerned with long-term missed opportunities, which she considered to be consequent upon her lack of beauty' (p.497).

fact) that the U. S. Supreme Court is restricting First Amendment guarantees free speech and assembly' (1963, p.547).[10]

But in the face of what seem to be examples of situation regret, stands another argument of Jacobsen's. Consider, he asks us, Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler in Munich in 1938. You might think that Chamberlain was 'peculiarly well situated to regret that policy in light of the German blitzkrieg of Poland in 1939'. However, if we accept the possibility of situation regret, then not only Chamberlain, but also Churchill, and even a present-day historian reflecting on the consequences of Chamberlain's actions might also have cause to regret the Munich agreement. In fact, says Jacobsen, unless we make agency a condition on regret then anyone has 'equal standing to regret that state of affairs', given its unfortunate consequences. And this, he says 'seems odd' (2013, p.97).

To respond to this argument, it is helpful to bring an additional feature of emotional intentionality into play, namely what Helm (2002) calls the *focus* of an emotion. For something to be the focus of an emotion one has to value that thing, and in a certain way. To value something in the relevant way it is neither necessary nor sufficient that one judge that it is valuable. It is not sufficient, since one can judge something to be of value without the requisite emotional vulnerability to how it fares (Wallace 2013). It is not necessary since what we feel can take us by surprise, revealing to us values that have not shown up in our evaluative judging. This happens in what White (2017) calls revelatory regret.

The focus of a token emotion—and a focus is always to be attributed to a *token* emotion—contributes to the emotion's fittingness, alongside its formal and concrete objects.[11] More specifically, an emotion's focus is something the subject values and which, if the emotion is fitting, is impacted by the way the emotion's concrete object is evaluated as being, in or by that emotion. The focus makes the evaluation (formal object) of the emotion's concrete object intelligible. For example, suppose my cat is the focus of my annoyance at my neighbour's

[10] See also Sussman 2018, p.793-4 for further examples of mere situation regret, which he calls 'spectator regret'.
[11] Plausibly, the focus of an emotion shouldn't be thought of as an aspect of the content of that emotion but instead a necessary background condition for having an emotion, and for its fittingness. See for example Marusic 2022, p.57.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

barking dog. I value my cat, and if my annoyance is fitting, then she is in fact impacted by the barking dog, which makes it intelligible that I have an emotion (annoyance) that evaluates the dog's barking (concrete object) as annoying (formal object). To generalise, whether or not a subject's emotion is fitting in some circumstance always depends in part on what they value: on whether they have a focus for that emotion.

To explain how the notion of the focus of an emotion allows us to respond to Jacobsen's argument we also need to observe that individuals vary in what they value. Indeed, one's evaluative perspective—the full range of things that one values (and disvalues) in the relevant sense—can be thought of as an aspect of being the distinct individual one is. Since individuals vary in what they value in this way, they will also vary in whether they have a focus for an emotion of some kind, in any given circumstances.

We can now see why it would be wrong to say as Jacobsen does that if we allow for situation regret then the *unfortunateness* of a state of affairs s will be enough for anyone to regret s fittingly. Instead, whether a subject can fittingly regret s will depend in part on what she values: on whether she has a suitable focus for regret over s. In other words, a subject's regret over s will be fitting only if it impacts upon something that subject values in the relevant way, which, as we have said, varies from subject to subject. Regret over Chamberlain's actions in 1938 will only be fitting for a subject who values something impacted by these actions: a subject with a focus for regret in this case. These same actions would not be fittingly regretted by a subject who lacked a relevant focus for regret: a subject for whom there is nothing that they value that was or is impacted by Chamberlain's actions. Hence, I suggest, Jacobson's argument against situation regret is not convincing: allowing for situation regret does not mean granting that everyone has 'equal standing' to regret any unfortunate state of affairs.

Having said that, it is also worth noting that Jacobsen's example is one in which we probably do want to allow that very many people might fittingly feel (situation) regret. Given the various devastating and far-reaching consequences of the second world war, many of us will have something that we value that has been impacted upon by these actions, and so many of

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

us could fittingly regret them.[12] In other words, many of us probably do have a focus for regret over Chamberlain's actions, albeit not the same focus that Chamberlain had. For we can, consistently with our verdict on Jacobsen's argument, allow that Chamberlain's regret might be of a different quality to anyone else's, in having a focus and a concrete object that no one else's regret in these circumstances could have. After all, only *his* regret would take the concrete object *he himself* having played the role he did in bringing about the relevant events. And so, it is only *his* regret that could take as its focus, for instance, *not acting so as to cause great harm* or *being remembered as a great statesman*.

Another way that someone might argue against situation regret starts from the observation that—as is undeniably the case—some of our talk about regret is not about the emotion, regret, at all. In fact, there is more than one way in which this is so. Firstly, 'I regret that…' sometimes expresses an evaluative judgement falling short of the emotion, regret. In fact, while many emotion terms have an evaluative-judgement use of this kind, this is especially salient in the case of regret. The question 'do you regret x?' is quite frequently one that can be answered 'yes', truthfully, on the grounds that one judges x to be regrettable, whilst feeling nothing at all.[13] Secondly, we have (in English, in the UK) some conventions around expressing regret when we neither feel regret nor make the corresponding evaluative judgement. We might not think that the HR professional tasked with letting us know that we have not got the job either feels regret or thinks it regrettable that they have to inform us of our lack of success. Given these features of our talk about regret, it could be argued that apparent expressions of situation regret specifically, are never expressions of emotion, or at least not of the emotion regret (McQueen 2024, p.17). On similar lines, Price presents the issue around situation regret to be whether expressions of situation regret should be 'taken at face value' (2020, p.147).

In response to this argument, observe that it does not speak directly to all or even most of the examples of situation regret that I have mentioned or others like them. In particular the narrator of *Notes From the Underground* does not *say* 'I regret who I am' or 'I regret even my capacity for regret'. So, there is nothing to pass off here as conventional speech or the

[12] A different question is whether one *ought* to have some such focus for regret over this state of affairs—but that is to ask about the appropriateness of regret in the sense that outstrips it fittingness, and which we noted in section 1.
[13] See Landman 1993, p.36.

expression of an evaluative judgement. Rather, Rorty's idea is that when we read this story, it seems to us that this character experiences many regrets, some of which are situation regrets. Similarly, Landman's suggestion that Pip in *Great Expectations* feels regret on 'discovering the lowly status of his benefactor' (1993, p.102) does not seem to be based on Pip's *saying* that he regrets it. Hence, one cannot dismiss the idea of situation regret just by appeal to features of our talk about regret. In any case, the conventional and evaluative-judgement uses of 'regret' are not restricted to expressions of apparent situation regret, and neither can we conclude—without further evidence—that they are more common in the context of such expressions. I suggest then that we should only conclude that all talk of situation regret is of this kind if we have other, compelling reasons to think that regret must be agential. More generally, we have not found good reason to deny that regret's concrete objects are states of affairs rather than the things we do or cause to happen.

What though of regret's formal object, or characteristic evaluation? Having rejected the idea that regret's formal object is that something is an error or mistake, what should we accept instead? Williams makes the following assertion:

> The constitutive thought of regret in general is something like 'how much better if it had been otherwise', and the feeling can in principle apply to anything of which one can form some conception of how it might have been otherwise, together with consciousness of how things would then have been better. In this general sense of regret, what are regretted are states of affairs, and they can be regretted, in principle, by anyone who knows of them. (Williams 1976, p.123)

The implication, in this passage, is that

**Williams' proposal:** the evaluation necessary to regret is the thought that some way things could have been but aren't, P, is better in some respect than some way things are, A.

Now, one thing that should immediately be noted about William's proposal is that, in construing regret's evaluation as a characteristic *thought,* it does not allow us to distinguish, as we have seen above that we must, between feeling the emotion, regret, and merely

thinking (or indeed believing or judging) that something is regrettable. I will return to this in the next section. However, and more positively, in presenting regret as involving the comparative evaluation of A and some nonactual state of affairs P, Williams' proposal is pleasingly consistent with the frequently mentioned idea that regret is a distinctively 'counterfactual emotion.'[14] This is something that an account of the objects of regret should accommodate, whilst allowing that P might on some occasions simply be not-A (such as not having injured the child), and might on some other occasions need further specification, as in Setiya's regret concerning actually being a philosopher, in comparison to the nonactual state of affairs, being a doctor or a poet.

However, there are two different ways in which regret could be a counterfactual emotion, one stronger than the other, which raises a final issue about how expansive our conception of regret's objects should be. On the weaker construal, P is just some state of affairs that is possible but nonactual, and so in that broad sense, some way things could have been but aren't. The stronger construal restricts 'counterfactual scenarios' to ways *this* world could have been or could easily have been (perhaps ways things are in close possible worlds). Some nonactual states of affairs that count as counterfactual scenarios on the weaker construal will not count as counterfactual scenarios on the stronger construal. On the stronger construal, we might say that we feel regret only over alternatives that we have narrowly missed out on. The stronger construal of regret's counterfactual nature is evident in work on regret in psychology and in work on economic decision making, when it is taken for granted that one only regrets *foregone* alternatives.[15] On the stronger construal regret can be understood as an emotion that pertains to loss: the loss of the greater value one would have had from P (which one has forgone or narrowly missed out on), and which one has therefore lost, given the obtaining of A.[16]

[14] For example, Landman 1993, Eldridge 2017, Hoerl and McCormack 2016, Ben Ze-ev 2001, Mac Cumhaill 2018.
[15] See for example Zeelenberg & Pieters 2007 for a review of economic and psychological regret research in which *foregone* alternatives are assumed to be those implicated in regret. Such work also focusses on agent regret, and more specifically regret over decisions or choices between known alternatives.
[16] Relatedly, Jacobsen suggests that part of what concerns him is whether regret is fundamentally about 'loss or error' (p.98). Mac Cumhaill sees the question of regret's object as one of determining 'what the peculiar loss of regret is' and Ben Ze'ev thinks that regret pertains to 'lost opportunities'.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

I see no reason to favour the stronger construal of regret's counterfactual nature nor therefore to understand regret as an emotion that pertains to loss in this sense. I *may* regret that a box I opened contained £1 and not £100: a way this world could have been, or could easily have been, given the presence in the actual world scenario of another box containing £100 that I could easily have opened instead. In such a case I might feel a sense of loss for what I have forgone or narrowly missed out on. However, my regret on opening the box might also involve possible but nonactual states of affairs that are not naturally thought of as forgone or missed out on—possible states of affairs that are not ways the actual world could (easily) have been. For example, I might regret that the box didn't contain food (if I am hungry) or that a long-deceased friend wasn't there to see me open the box (if I know they would have found it funny) or even that I am not opening the box on the moon if I have an appropriate (no doubt idiosyncratic) focus for that specific regret. I may even regret—say, if I have worked very hard on defending it—the falsity of some philosophical theory that I come to see could only be true in *very* distant possible worlds.[17] In a case like this, one may experience A as *lacking* in comparison to P. But the value associated with P will plausibly not be felt as *lost*—as something that one was close to possessing or that was so to speak within reach. Hence, I suggest that we adopt the weaker construal of regret's counterfactual nature and have defended expansiveness about regret's objects in this additional way.

To sum up this section, I have argued that (fitting) regret is not restricted to past states of affairs, nor to our mistakes or errors. Neither need regret be restricted to agential phenomena—what we do, don't do and cause to happen—more generally. Furthermore, I have suggested that the 'counterfactuals' involved in regret are ways things could have been but aren't construed broadly. The upshot so far is a maximally expansive conception of regret's concrete and formal objects which can be partly captured by Williams' proposal.

## 2. The structure of regret

[17] According to Sussman one can even regret metaphysical or logical impossibilities, such as the impossibility of all one's students being above the class average (2018, p.794). I suggest that while one could feel such regret, it would not be fitting if it involved a representation of an impossibility as possible. That is not to say, as McQueen does, that such regrets are irrational (2024, p.16), since an unfitting emotion, like a false belief, need not be an irrational emotion.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

To understand regret's nature, we need to ask not only about its objects, but also about its structure: the mental states or events that it involves and how they relate to one another. Here is the two-part hypothesis about the structure of regret that I want to defend:

*I.* A situation for regret arises when I represent as actual a state of affairs A, and as possible but nonactual a state of affairs P, and there is something I value V, such that A is worse than P with respect to V.

*II.* Regret occurs when I feel the discomfort to which this situation gives rise: this feeling of discomfort is the evaluation that constitutes the emotion, regret.

As will become clear, this hypothesis about the structure or regret will make our conception more encompassing than it might otherwise be, even given the expansive conception of regret's objects just defended. But before that, we need to make some remarks about how to understand some of the terms in the hypothesis. Given the conclusions of section 1, 'actual' must be understood to mean 'settled', to allow, as just argued, that we can regret what is in the past, present or future. A subject represents a state of affairs as actual in the sense required by the hypothesis when they represent it as settled: something that cannot be changed. In addition, 'possible but nonactual state of affairs' is to be understood in line with the weaker construal discussed at the end of the last section, rather than the stronger. It is not a condition on accurately representing a state of affairs as possible but nonactual that it is a way things are in close possible worlds, or a way things easily could have been, e.g., at the time when a decision was made.

Some further remarks relate to how we should understand the 'feeling of discomfort' that regret on this hypothesis involves. Thinking of the evaluation necessary to regret as a feeling means that the hypothesis, unlike Williams' proposal, allows us to distinguish clearly between the emotion regret, and the related evaluative judgement, belief or thought. There is a difference between judging, believing, or thinking that it would have been better had things been otherwise, and feeling the discomfort in *II.*[18] It is not my purpose here to defend any

[18] Scarre takes Williams' proposal to be problematic only to the extent that it presupposes a 'strong' cognitivist theory of emotion, on which 'a certain constitutive thought' is sufficient for an emotion (2017, p.573). Hence, he suggests we adopt a weaker cognitivist view, on which the thought is necessary but not sufficient for the emotion, which involves an additional 'feeling element' (ibid). In contrast to Scarre's, on the view I defend here,

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

view of the feelings that are involved in emotions generally. However, whilst the hypothesis is consistent with a range of views of emotional feelings according to which such feelings have extra-bodily intentionality (e.g., Ratcliffe 2005; Goldie 2002), it is a particularly good fit for Helm's view, on which emotional feelings are, precisely, evaluative feelings: more specifically, pleasurable or painful 'feelings of import impressing itself on one' (2002, p.253). I have chosen to describe the negatively valenced feeling of regret as 'discomfort' rather than pain only to avoid the question of the relationship between emotional and somatic pain. I propose then to explain the feeling of regret in Helm's terms.

Evaluative feelings can be further elucidated in relation to another idea of Helm's, introduced in section 1, of an emotion's focus. If I value the tomatoes I am growing in the relevant way, then they can be the focus of various emotions: my painful or uncomfortable feeling of fear at a predicted frost is, on Helm's view, 'the danger the frost presents to my tomatoes' impressing itself on me. (ibid). Analogously, a feeling of regret is on this view the comparative badness of A over P given V, impressing itself on one. For instance, my regret over waiting until today to pick the tomatoes (instead of doing so yesterday before the frost came) is the comparative badness for the tomatoes of my waiting over my not having waited impressing itself upon me.

With these remarks in place, we can see that the hypothesis is consistent with the conclusions drawn in the previous section about regret's objects. On the hypothesis, regrets over a mistake, the unforeseen consequences of an action, some way one is, or some 'mere' state of affairs, share the same structure and are thus tokens of the same emotional type. Any such regret could be fitting, if the representations of A and P are accurate and the subject has a suitable focus, V. As indicated at the beginning of section 1, the hypothesis does allow us to distinguish different subtypes of regret that take different kinds of concrete object, such as agent regret, understood as regret over an action; or personal situation regret; or 'mere' situation regret (discussed in the previous section). However, no such subtype will on the hypothesis be more paradigmatic or fundamental than any other. Whilst no more fundamental or paradigmatic, we can also see, given the hypothesis, why regret over some kinds of objects

no cognitive attitude (such as a thought with the content 'it would have been better had things been otherwise') is necessary for regret.

might occur more predictably, and perhaps more commonly, than regret over other kinds of objects. For instance, since it seems likely that most of us place some value on not making mistakes, we can reasonably predict that someone will feel regret when A is a mistake of theirs or the consequence of one, without knowing much more about that person or their situation. In contrast, 'mere' situation regret is frequently less predictable, depending as it does on a potentially idiosyncratic interplay of values and represented states of affairs. For instance, a particular subject might regret the dinosaurs dying out because she values her career, and the success of her career—the focus of her emotion—depends on her having proof that dinosaurs were feathered: proof that she would have if they had not died out. Her regret, whilst identical in structure to regret over mistakes, cannot be predicted without knowing things that are quite specific to her.

Furthermore, the hypothesis allows us to acknowledge further diversity in regret, beyond that associated with the varied kinds of states of affairs that can be its objects. First, the hypothesis accommodates regret's varying determinacy. That's in part because, in not specifying a form that the representations of A or P should take, it allows for varying degrees of determinacy in those representations. This is how things should be. As Amelie Rorty observes, regret can require very fine-grained description—I might regret not that I did x, but that I did it *in that way at that time*. But she also notes in passing that it can work the other way (if I've interpreted her correctly): 'sometimes a regret that appears in the schematic outline, the thin description of the event, disappears in the finer-grained description' (1980, p.495). It might be this kind of indeterminacy that is manifest when, instead of describing ourselves as regretting that p, we use expressions like 'I have a lot of regrets around x'.

Furthermore, the hypothesis allows for indeterminacy in that it allows that there can be regret where it is not clear to the subject what is regretted—Rorty observes that it is a skill of Thomas Hardy's to write characters (she provides the example of Tess) of whom

> it is unclear to them—and to us—whether they regret what they do, or their natures, their characters, or…the impersonal wind-shift forces of time and chance which again and again bring the course of their lives to tragedy (1980, p.490).

The hypothesis allows for this further kind of indeterminacy because one can feel the discomfort in *II* without it being fully apparent what is giving rise to it, either because A and/or P are represented indeterminately or (or also) because one's feeling of regret (of the comparative badness of A over P) is less than fully determinate about what is being evaluated. We can have vague (but nevertheless intense) feelings that *something* is worse than it might have been, which may or may not coalesce into more specifically directed feelings given reflection or time.

A second way in which the hypothesis allows for regret's variability is in its being consistent with different time courses for regret. You may feel the discomfort in *II* only briefly, as in the pang you feel when you realise you purchased train tickets for yesterday, rather than for today when you want to travel, and so have wasted some money. Philosophy of emotion is typically concerned with the affective bursts and flashes of short-lived emotional episodes like these. However, tokens of some emotion types, such as grief, always take a somewhat lengthy form. Others, such as regret, can be either shorter- or longer-lived and the hypothesis makes room for this. One may continue to feel the discomfort in the hypothesis for a long time, for instance, because it involves a focus (V) of extreme and unshifting import to you, and/or because A, P or both are for some reason extremely salient to you and continue to be so. And, your regret may (also like grief) change over time due to changes in your representation of A or of P, in V, or the broader evaluative perspective of which V is part.

Third, the hypothesis allows for variability in what we might call the *cognitive richness* of regret. The hypothesis is consistent with a cognitively 'thin' form of regret which is considerably less cognitively demanding than regret looks to be on many other accounts according to which regret involves mental states or events such as blaming oneself, wishing, desiring or ruminating. However, the hypothesis also does not rule out that regret can and does take cognitively richer forms. For example, it is consistent with the hypothesis that there are tokens of regret in which the representation of A and/or P implicates the subject's conceptual capacities. And, it is consistent with the hypothesis that other elements (such as blaming oneself, wishing, desiring, ruminating) might play various roles in a particular episode of regretting. For example, there is nothing in the hypothesis to say that the evaluative feeling that constitutes regret couldn't generate—or even turn into—blaming

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

oneself, wishing or desiring. Furthermore, ruminating, or some other cognitively demanding activity such as deliberately trying to imagine nonactual possibilities, might sometimes be involved in generating the representations of A and/P, or in making them salient enough to generate, sustain or exacerbate discomfort.

Finally, observe that the hypothesis doesn't say much about the phenomenology of regret, which is also pertinent to its capacity to encompass diverse forms of regret for there is reason to think that regret's phenomenology can be quite varied too.[19] As Landman (1993, chapter 3) points out, various metaphors—old ghosts, haunting, an arrow in the heart, a thunderclap, something gnawing or eating at one—to name a few—are used in connection with regret, and it seems plausible that the metaphors are various because regret's phenomenology is, to some degree. However, the hypothesis does allow us to see why some of these metaphors can be appropriate, for example, metaphors involving ghosts and haunting. Ghosts, like the possible but nonactual states of affairs involved in regret, are 'unreal' and typically unwelcome. When one experiences regret, some such possible but nonactual state of affairs is present in our experience of how things are (i.e., in the overall experience of which some representation of actuality A and the feeling of discomfort are also parts). Hence, the nonactual possibility P involved in regret is akin to a ghost in being an unreal, unwelcome presence in our experience of how things are, and hence the experience of regret can with good cause be described using the terminology of ghosts and haunting.[20] But, especially in light of the points made above about other ways in which regret is variable, we can also see why other metaphors might sometimes be apt in capturing regret's phenomenology. Regret might be 'an arrow lodged in the heart' when it is unchanging, and the focus V relative to which A is worse than P is of deep and abiding significance so that one's regret is persistent and prolonged. One kind of circumstance in which regret might be a 'thunderclap' is in 'revelatory regret', in which the felt evaluation of A as better than P reveals to one something which one values V. However, the hypothesis can also accommodate regrets for which none of these metaphors seem apt because one's regret is mild and fleeting.

[19] The varied phenomenology of regret is also highlighted by Price (2020), in her identification of several 'flavours' of regret.
[20] On Eldridge's account, the phenomenology of 'regretful memory' involves an episodic recollection that is 'affectively saturated *and haunted* by an alternative version of events' (2017, p.647, my italics). Eldridge restricts regret to past events.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

In summary, I have in this section put forward a hypothesis about the structure of regret which allows for much variation in the phenomenology, cognitive richness, temporal profile, and determinacy of regret.

## 3. Why the encompassing account of regret does not encompass too much

In the previous sections, I have been exploring a conception of regret that is very encompassing both in terms of its objects and its structure. However, this inclusiveness has the potential to cause some difficulties that I will respond to in this section.

A first objection to consider is simply that the inclusive conception finds regret where there is none. This might be motivated by the thought that the situation described in the first part of the hypothesis, *I*, is likely to be extremely common. That is, so the objection goes, it is likely to be very frequently the case, if S is an adult, that S represent as actual a state of affairs A, and as possible but nonactual a state of affairs P, and also that there is something she values V, such that A is worse than P with respect to V. After all, most adult humans will have a complex evaluative perspective, incorporating many interrelated objects of value to them, and it also seems plausible that most adult humans will, at any one time, have many representations of ways things are, and also of way things could be but are not.[21]

In partial response to this first objection, recall that the second part of the hypothesis requires that you feel the discomfort to which the situation described in the first part of the hypothesis gives rise. So, while situations for regret (as described in the first part of the hypothesis) may well be very common indeed, regret itself will likely be considerably less common than that. One may feel no regret despite the obtaining of a situation for it due—for example—to inattention to A or P, or the occurrence of other, stronger feelings. Nevertheless, it does not seem to me implausible that regret is a very common element in the emotional lives of typical adults, and in particular that we do very frequently feel brief regrets, that get quickly submerged in the stream of other kinds of conscious experience. In fact, even on more

[21] It is an empirical question just how frequently adult humans represent nonactual possibilities. Some literature on the development of counterfactual reasoning suggests that adults automatically generate representations of alternatives to actual states of affairs (e.g., Goldinger et al 2003). However, as touched upon in section 1, 'counterfactual scenarios' is subject to a weaker and a stronger reading and it is not clear to me which of these the relevant empirical work concerns itself with.

restrictive accounts it has been found to be amongst the most frequently occurring 'negative' emotions (Zeelenberg & Pieters 2007, p.5).

A second and related objection is that the inclusive conception of regret will subsume emotional episodes that more plausibly belong to some other category. For example, it might be argued that the conditions described in the hypothesis are met in some experiences of (for instance) disappointment, shame, guilt, and envy and remorse (McQueen 2024, pp.14-15). My response to this, in short, is that I agree: the conditions can indeed be met when undergoing an emotion other than regret. However, those particular experiences of disappointment, shame, guilt, envy, remorse (and others) that meet the conditions for regret will also satisfy the conditions that are characteristic of those emotion types. For instance, a specific episode of disappointment that meets the conditions for regret—say, disappointment that one received a B for an assignment *rather than an A*—will also involve having an expectation or hope (that would one get an A) that is not met. Similarly, if you are ashamed of arguing with your friend *rather than being more understanding of their point of view* and so meet the conditions for regret that constitute the hypothesis, you will also undergo the negative self-evaluation necessary for shame.

It can be added that when one satisfies the conditions described in the hypothesis and is undergoing some other emotion, one is experiencing regret, too. That is, in such a case, one will be feeling for instance shame over some state of affairs *and also regret it*. That regret does not preclude feeling other emotions should not be surprising since, quite generally (as Rorty puts it), 'rarely, if ever, do we feel only one psychological attitude at a time' (Rorty 1980, p.502). In thinking about the co-occurrence of regret and other emotions we should not be misled by the fact that it sometimes sounds odd to *say* that we feel regret over some situation when some other emotion is also felt. More specifically, to say that one regrets x when some other emotion would be fitting sometimes conversationally implies that one does not feel that other emotion, or even that one does not take that other emotion to be fitting. Due to this conversational implicature, if I were to say that I regret having burgled your house, you might reasonably assume that I feel no shame at having done so. But it does not follow that one cannot or does not feel both emotions simultaneously. Furthermore, the relationship between regret and other emotions need not be one of mere co-occurrence. For

example, one's shame and regret over some state of affairs might be *inseparable*, such that one's experience might be best described as one of regretful shame, or shameful regret.[22]

A final point to make in response to the first two objections is that it need not be fatal to the hypothesis if it entails finding regret where we do not typically think that it is. For I am not here committed to offering an analysis of our concept of regret, nor even of one of our concepts of regret (if there are more than one). Instead, I am trying to pick out an emotional phenomenon, an aspect of human emotional life. Whilst I do think that this phenomenon is close enough to many of our ways of speaking and thinking about regret to deserve the name, it may not perfectly track the ways, or some particular way, in which 'regret' is used. And the way in which 'regret' is used, in English, has been and continues to be subject to change.[23] Earlier now obsolete meanings include 'the expression of grief, distress or sorrow' ('He made the moost pitous regrettes that any man might make'). Arguably, on its way to becoming obsolete is 'regret' as 'sadness or longing for a person or thing lost or absent' (OED 2023). This latter is the sense of regret that Scarre labels 'Cartesian regret', since Descartes offered a definition of it in his *Passions of the Soul* (Scarre 2017, p.581). On Scarre's view, Cartesian regret—which is not regret even on the encompassing account defended here—would now be described as nostalgia. The phenomenon I am exploring is as I understand it part of the emotional reality that underlies this linguistic variability. To uncover this phenomenon, whether or not it is what we currently, usually pick out by 'regret' is, as Gordon puts it, to 'discover something about the susceptibilities of human beings' and thus to 'discover something about ourselves' (1987, p.11).

A third objection arising from the inclusiveness of the conception of regret defended here is that it precludes saying anything interesting about its value, and in particular in response to the maligning of regret that is common in some cultures. For instance, in response to the rallying cry to have no regrets, it has been argued that regret is valuable because it plays some specific and important function. One common idea that we have already encountered is that the function and value of regret is to motivate policy change. As we have also already said,

[22] In Chinese, it is more common than in English to combine emotion terms in this way and hence, arguably, the possibility of inseparable or intertwined emotions is more salient to Chinese speakers than English speakers. Thanks to Carl Hilton for this point.
[23] McQueen (2024 p.17) also makes this observation.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

this conception of the value of regret is closed to us here. Must we then say that regret is without value?

In response to this third objection, we might begin by observing that there is no reason why we must say that regret has some *distinctive* value, even if we find the maligning of regret suspicious. We can, for example, allow that tokens of regret have value of various kinds, including, but not restricted to the value, sometimes, of motivating policy change. Another valuable function that regret can on occasion play is that of keeping a goal in view, so that if an opportunity arises to achieve it, one is more likely to take it (Price 2020, p.157). And, some tokens of regret can also play a role in self-knowledge or self-understanding, for instance, Landman suggests that 'regret confronted can lead to the healthy recognition that we are who we are partly by virtue of who we are not' (1993, p.28). If the need to find value in regret emerges from a different direction, that of its having survived natural selection, we also do not need to find a single valuable role that regret invariably or even frequently plays. For instance, though I do not want to commit to this here, the role of regret in motivating policy change might be drawn on in explaining its having survived natural selection even if this is a role it plays only occasionally. In summary, the choice is not between a narrow conception of regret on which it is valuable because it motivates policy change, and a more inclusive conception on which regret is never valuable. Hence, the inclusive conception of regret defended here does not preclude saying anything interesting about the value of regret.

In addition, if we want to defend regret from its maligners there are strategies open to us other than identifying its positive value or the positive values of its tokens. For some regret-maligning may be due to a focus on the disvalue that some tokens of regret conspicuously have, but which should not be associated with regret in general. Landman observes that whilst regret can be, as it has been accused of being, self-indulgent, used to elicit sympathy or as self-punishment, or be based on a 'bad, immoral or self-alien value' (Landman 1993, p.14), it need not be any of these things.

We can also respond critically to encouragements to have 'no regrets' by pointing out the inevitability of this emotion in most humans, or most humans beyond a certain age. For, on the hypothesis defended here, regret is the inevitable concomitant of two capacities that humans typically develop before reaching adulthood. The first is a certain counterfactual

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

capacity—the capacity to generate counterfactuals, and, to a suitable degree the more general cognitive capacities—working memory, attentional flexibility—required for the comparison of a counterfactual with something taken to be actual (Beck at al 2014). The second capacity which, alongside the first, makes regret inevitable is having an evaluative perspective, which is to say, there being a wide range of things that one values in the sense of being emotionally vulnerable to how they fare. This is also something that is shared by typically developing humans. As Wallace puts it, 'we are, for better or worse valuing creatures' (2013, p.26). Put these two capacities together and we can see that we are inescapably regretting creatures too. That is not to say with Kierkegaard (2004) that anyone will inevitably regret any decision or state of affairs, but that the enjoinment to have no regrets cannot be satisfied. And, if we see regret as in this way inevitable, then another way of understanding its surviving natural selection is available. It is consistent with what I have said here that while the capacities that give rise to regret have adaptive value, there is nothing distinctively adaptive about regret.

A fourth objection to consider relates not to the value of regret but the value of the account I have given of it. According to McQueen, since it is in general 'better to distinguish between subtly different emotions' (2024, p.19), we should favour a narrower view of regret than the one defended here.

One response to this objection is that it is not obviously the case that capturing subtle difference is best achieved via distinguishing between types of emotion. It is generally recognised that tokens of grief, for example, admit of a great deal of variability along multiple dimensions, but this does not generally lead anyone to conclude that we are dealing with more than one emotion type. Instead, philosophical and other accounts of grief attempt to be consistent with or even explain this enormous variability.[24] Similarly, it is as we have seen a feature of the encompassing account that it allows for significant variability amongst tokens of regret.

Furthermore, a narrower conception of regret could itself prevent us from 'distinguishing between subtly different emotions', because there are some instances of what the hypothesis

[24] See for example Ratcliffe 2022 and Cholbi 2021 for recent book-length discussions of grief that aim at consistency with grief's diverse manifestations.

Forthcoming in *Inquiry*
Accepted 13/08/2025
Final version: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2025.2548516

allows us to call regret which would otherwise be difficult to categorise or receive only a vague categorisation as 'sadness' or 'feeling bad about x'. Consider, for instance, a particular example that the hypothesis would allow us to categorise as a case of regret over having been an only child. In this case, the subject of this regret didn't expect or hope for a sibling so feels no disappointment, and they feel no resentment or anger towards their parents or envy of others who have brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, when they imagine the possibility of having had siblings, they are discomfited by the contrast between how things are in comparison. The hypothesis allows us to give this a less vague, and thus more informative description—regret—than sadness or 'feeling bad'.

Still, the objector might say, even if we allow that there can be situation regret, we should also recognise agent regret (or perhaps even agent regret over our mistakes) as a distinctive type of emotion, and the target of much non-philosophical study of regret. However, we already have the resources to respond to the objector's comeback. If the occurrence of situation regret is allowed due to acceptance of the hypothesis, then it should also be allowed that situation regret and agent regret (or more specific subtypes thereof) share a common structure. So, while there may be explanatory contexts—such as in studies of economic decision making—in which agent regret is naturally of most interest, it should not be thought of as a sui generis emotion type. Rather, it is simply regret simpliciter, in which A and/or P are agential phenomena. To further support this claim, observe that the kinds of diversity in regret discussed in section 2 cut across any proposed distinction between agent regret and situation regret. Both can be more or less determinate, more or less long-lived, and similarly varied in phenomenology and cognitive richness. In sum, the encompassing account of regret that I have defended is not too encompassing.

**Conclusion**

I have argued that we can regret a wide range of objects, and that regret can vary in a number of other ways, too. Thus, I have defended a specific way of addressing various questions about regret that are frequently left undecided, and the addressing of which should be prior to any consideration of regret's ethical dimensions. While my focus has been on regret and not on emotion more generally, the account, if accepted, has some consequences for broader theorising about emotion. For example, if the account is accepted then it cannot be the case

that emotions must be associated with specific action tendencies, or that emotional feelings must be associated with such tendencies or directed only at one's body. Furthermore, since the view does not require a belief, thought or judgement with a certain content for a subject to experience regret, it can contribute towards the defence of a non-cognitivist view of emotion in general.

These philosophical upshots aside, the encompassing account of regret has consequences for understanding and managing our emotional lives. For if the account is correct, then there are regrets that might have been overlooked as such, and ways of managing regrets that may be of limited use: for example, convincing oneself or others that no mistake was made or that an occurrence was not caused by some action. More positively, since it makes clear that regret—whatever its objects—involves a small number of interacting components (A, P, V, a feeling of discomfort generated by these others), the hypothesis allows us to see what might be done (or not done) about any token regret. Whether one regrets—for example—an action, a way one is, or a situation that impacts something one cares about, one can only eliminate that regret, if at all, by changing either what one values, or the relevant representations of what is settled or of what could be.

**References**

Bagnoli, C. (2000). Value in the guise of regret. *Philosophical Explorations,* 3(2), 169-187.

Barnum-Roberts, B. N. (2011). Apologizing without regret. *Ratio,* 24(1), 17-27.

Baron, M. (1988). Remorse and agent-regret. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy,* 13(1), 259-281.

Beck, S. R., Weisberg, D. P., Burns, P., & Riggs, K. J. (2014). Conditional reasoning and emotional experience: A review of the development of counterfactual thinking. *Studia Logica*, 102, 673-689.

Ben-Ze'ev, A. (2001). *The Subtlety of Emotions*. MIT press.

Bittner, R, (1992). Is it reasonable to regret things one did? *Journal of Philosophy,* 89(5), 262-273.

Bratman. M. (2014). Temptation and the agent's standpoint. *Inquiry* 57(3), 293–310.

Cholbi, M. (2023). Rationally facing death: fear and other alternatives. *Philosophy Compass,* 18(6), e12931.

Cholbi, M. (2021). *Grief: A Philosophical Guide*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

D'Arms, J., & Jacobson, D. (2000). The moralistic fallacy: on the 'appropriateness' of emotions. *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research* 61(1), 65-90.

Eldridge, P (2017). Regret and the consciousness of the past. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies,* 25(5), 646-663.

Goldie, P. (2002). Emotions, feelings and intentionality. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 1(3), 235-254.

Goldinger, S.D., Kleider, H. M., Azuma, T., and Beike, D. (2003) "Blaming the victim" under memory load. *Psychological Science*, 14, 81–85.

Gordon, R. M. (1987). *The Structure of Emotions: Investigations in Cognitive Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Helm, B. W. (2002). Felt evaluations: A theory of pleasure and pain. *American Philosophical Quarterly,* 39(1), 13-30.

Hoerl, C., & McCormack, T. (2016). Making decisions about the future. In Michaelian, K., Klein, S, B., & Szpuna, K. K. (eds), *Seeing the Future: Theoretical Perspectives on Future-oriented Mental Time Travel*. Oxford University Press. 241-266.

Jacobsen, D. (2013). Regret, agency, and error. *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility, Volume 1*. 95-125.

Kierkegaard, S. (2004). *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*. Penguin UK.

Landman, J. (1993). *Regret: The Persistence of the Possible*. Oxford University Press.

Mac Cumhaill, C. (2018). Night fight. In Naar, H & Teroni, F. (eds.), *The Ontology of Emotions*. Cambridge University Press. 187-208.

Marušić, B. (2022). *On the Temporality of Emotions: An Essay on Grief, Anger, and Love*. Oxford University Press.

McQueen, P. (2024). *Regret*. Oxford University Press.

Na'aman, O. (2017). Can we intend the past. *J. Ethics & Soc. Phil.*, 12(3), 304-311.

Price, C. (2020). The many flavours of regret. *The Monist,* 103(2), 147-162.

Ratcliffe, M. (2022). *Grief Worlds*. MIT Press.

Ratcliffe, M. (2005). The feeling of being. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12(8-9), 43-60.

Rorty, A. (1980). Agent regret. In Rorty, A. (ed.), *Explaining Emotions*. Univ of California Pr. 489-506.

Scarre, G. (2017). The 'constitutive thought' of regret. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies,* 25(5), 569-585.

Setiya, K. (2017). *Midlife: A Philosophical Guide*. Princeton University Press.

Solomon, R. C. (1993). *The Passions*. Hackett Publishing Company.

Sussman, D. (2018). Is agent-regret rational? *Ethics*, 128(4), 788-808.

Tappolet, C. (2022). *Philosophy of Emotion: A Contemporary Introduction*. Routledge.

Thalberg, I. (1963). Remorse. *Mind*, 72(288), 545-555.

Wallace, R. J. (2013). *The View from Here: On Affirmation, Attachment, and the Limits of Regret*. Oxford University Press.

Warren, J. (2021). *Regret. A Study in Ancient Moral Psychology*. Oxford University Press.

White, J. F. (2017). Revelatory regret and the standpoint of the agent. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy,* 41(1), 225-240.

Williams, B. (1976). Moral luck. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes,* 50, 115-135.

Williams, B. (1973). Ethical consistency. In *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956–1972* (pp.166–186). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zeelenberg, M., & Pieters, R. (2007). A theory of regret regulation 1.0. *Journal of Consumer psychology*, 17(1), 3-18.