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SURVEY ARTICLE

Cognitivism in the Theory of Emotions*

John Deigh

Cognitivism now dominates the philosophical study of emotions. Its ascendancy in this area parallels the ascendancy of cognitivism in the philosophy of mind generally. Yet the two trends have independent sources. In the philosophy of mind, cognitivism arose from unhappiness with the various behaviorist programs that prevailed at midcentury in psychology and philosophy. In the philosophical study of emotions, it arose from unhappiness with affective conceptions of the phenomenon that had been a staple of British empiricism for more than two centuries. The change of orthodoxy in the first case meant replacing conditioning, as the model of explanation, with computation. It also meant abandoning operationalist translation schemes and embracing functionalist ones instead. The change of orthodoxy in the second case meant reconceptualization. Thought replaced feeling as the principal element in the general conception of emotion. This second change is the subject of this essay.

What interests me is the question of progress. Specifically, has this change brought about a significant improvement in our understanding of emotions? The question, however, is not intended to invite a return to earlier, feeling-centered conceptions of the phenomena. The criticisms of them that propagated the current wave of cognitivist theory were well aimed and wholly successful. The question, rather, is intended to initiate examination of the conversion from these old, now discredited conceptions to the new, now widely favored ones. I want to see whether the accounts of emotion that incorporate the latter and that developed from criticisms of the former represent advances

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in the theory of emotions. Cognitivism, one could say, is the lesson philosophers working in this theory have drawn from the criticisms to which the feeling-centered conceptions succumbed, and the question I want to examine is whether their work shows that they have drawn the right lesson.

Two criticisms are chiefly responsible for the demise of feeling-centered conceptions. These criticisms are well known, and I will present them with a minimum of fuss. One is that feeling-centered conceptions cannot satisfactorily account for the intentionality of emotions. The other is that they cannot satisfactorily represent emotions as proper objects of rational assessment. I will begin with the first. Consideration of various ways in which cognitivists have tried to work and rework the idea of intentionality into an argument for their conception will then lead to the second.

I. INTENTIONALITY

Any feeling-centered conception of emotion assimilates the phenomena to bodily sensations, particularly the sensations of pleasure and pain. That is, emotions are conceived of as having similar intrinsic properties to such sensations. At the same time, the conception distinguishes emotions from bodily sensations by locating them in a different place in the mind's machinery. Emotions, on this conception, thus differ from bodily sensations in the relations they bear to other states of mind and to states of the body. Locke's conception is typical. Emotions, in Locke's view, are "internal sensations" of pleasure and pain, which differ from bodily sensations in being produced by thoughts of something good or evil rather than by alterations of the body (Locke [1695] 1975, bk. 2, chap. 20, sec. 3, pp. 229–30). Being simple ideas, however, they no more contain any thought than do the bodily sensations that are their simple counterparts. Moreover, Locke was largely following Descartes, who had defined emotions as excitations that seem to come from within the soul itself rather than from any part of the body or from some object external to the body (Descartes [1649] 1989, pt. 1, art. 25, p. 32). And Locke's view was in turn taken over by Hume, whose conception of emotions as impressions of reflection matches Locke's notion of them as internal sensations (Hume [1739] 1978, bk. 2, pt. 1, sec. 1, p. 275). The feeling-centered conception was thus a fixture of early modern philosophy.

Indeed, it represents one of the many ways in which the moderns tried to distance their philosophical programs from their medieval predecessors. The older schools, particularly the Scholastics, used the notion of intentional being to understand various states of mind including especially emotions, and this notion is just the sort of Scholastic innovation that Descartes and his successors had the signal aim of eliminating from natural and moral philosophy. They conspicuously

omitted it from their general definition of emotion and introduced mechanistic relations among distinct thoughts and feelings to describe what the notion was meant to capture. Their strategy falls short of its aim, however. Intentionality, as we now call it, cannot be so readily replaced. This point lies behind the first criticism of feeling-centered conceptions.

The criticism itself is easy to outline. Intentionality is a property of actions and mental states. It is the property of being directed at or toward something. Emotions typically have this property. When one is angry or afraid, for example, one is angry at someone or something, afraid of someone or something. This someone, this something is the emotion's intentional object, that at or toward which it is directed. By contrast, bodily sensations of pleasure and pain, the comforting feeling of a warm bath, say, or the aching feeling of sore muscles, are not directed at or toward anyone or anything. They are not intentional states. Hence, a conception of emotion that identifies the phenomenon with feelings like these misrepresents it. Here then is the first criticism of feeling-centered conceptions.

One obstacle to converting this criticism into an argument for cognitivism is that not all emotions have intentional objects or at least it is hardly uncontroversial to claim otherwise (see, e.g., Alston 1967, p. 486). Common opinion holds that one can experience anxiety or depression, say, without being anxious or depressed about anything, and the existence of such "objectless" emotions makes a cognitivist conception of emotion an unpromising corrective for the misrepresentation the first criticism brings out in the feeling-centered conceptions. One can grant, in other words, that intentionality is typical of emotions without believing that it is essential to them. Consequently, cognitivists appear to be overcompensating when they take thought to be the phenomenon's principal element.

The usual replies from cognitivists to this objection consist in either excluding experiences of objectless emotions from the class of emotions proper and placing them in some distinct class of mental states, such as moods, or attributing to them a subtle or suppressed intentionality, which then explains away their apparent objectlessness.[1] The persuasiveness of these replies depends, of course, on one's willingness either to allow some adjusting of conceptual boundaries for theoretical purposes or to allow sufficient opacity of conscious states to make the distinction between apparent and real objectlessness possible. But neither allowance seems extravagant, and an unwillingness to make either would be hard to defend. Charity and just good

1. Green 1992, pp. 33–34. See also Broad 1971, pp. 286–87; and Kenny 1963, pp. 60–62.

sense advise us to let the problem of objectless emotions pass. We may assume that the more successful the cognitivist theory is generally, the more compelling will be its way of conceptualizing emotions and so the more acceptable its ways of handling this problem. And starting with this assumption, our task then lies in seeing how far the theory can go when funded by the thesis that intentionality is essential to emotions. Although the thesis overstates the results of the first criticism, it should be treated less as an overdraft than as a loan, a loan that the theory needs to get started and is certain to repay if it prospers.

The first thing to look at, then, is the transition from intentionality to thought. This transition would be immediate if 'intentionality' were coextensive with 'cognitive content' (or 'the content of thought') and, of course, trivial if the two terms were synonymous. But whether the two are even coextensional, let alone synonymous, depends on the concept of thought the cognitivist theory assumes. On the one hand, if the concept it assumes applies to every state of mind with objective content, which is to say, every state the realization of whose content implies the existence of some object, and to no other, then the two would be coextensional. On the other hand, if the concept the theory assumes has a narrower range of application, then the terms would not be coextensional, and consequently the transition would not be immediate. If, for instance, the concept it assumes applies only to what grammarians call complete thoughts and logicians, conceiving of thoughts in abstraction from any thinker, call propositions, that is, thoughts of the kind expressed by complete, declarative sentences, then the concept's range would be narrower than that of intentionality, and the transition from the latter to the former would therefore require additional premisses to establish that such thoughts were essential to emotions. Accordingly, let us distinguish two cognitivist or thought-centered conceptions of emotion, one that entails a concept of thought broad enough to apply to all states of mind with objective content and another that entails the narrower concept whose application corresponds to that of the grammarians' 'complete thought' and the logicians' 'proposition'.

The latter is the conception of contemporary cognitivism. One can trace the current ascendancy of cognitivism in the theory of emotions to its appearance and increasing acceptance. The former is the conception of an earlier period. While we shall largely be concerned with the latter, it will nonetheless be instructive to consider the former. Would it represent an advance over feeling-centered conceptions?

II. COGNITION

The cognitivist theory of emotion that assumes the broader concept of thought was prominent in works produced during the first half of

this century by English psychologists and analytic philosophers.[2] In these works, to sense, to imagine, or to remember something is to be cognizant of it, and cognitions, which is to say, thoughts in the most general sense of that term, are the states of mind that result from these operations as well as from the intellectual operations of understanding and judgment. Emotions, then, are classified within this theory as cognitions, since the theory conceives of them as mental states in which the subject is cognizant of some object. At the same time, since the theory allows that in some emotions the constitutive cognition results from the operations of an external sense or those of imagination, it follows that the theory does not conceive of emotions as necessarily connected to the intellect. In this respect its account of the emotions differs significantly from that of contemporary cognitivism. The latter is intellectualist, in the philosophical sense, while the former, which I'll call traditional cognitivism, is not.

Traditional cognitivism, without question, represents a significant advance over such theories of emotion as Hume's. On a theory like Hume's, emotions have no intrinsic relation to cognition and thus, in principle, can arise independently of all thought. To be sure, Hume made much of the way certain emotions, what he called the indirect passions, were conditioned on certain antecedent thoughts as well as on sensations of pleasure and pain. But with regard to other emotions, he held that sensations of pleasure and pain alone were sufficient for their occurrence, and even with regard to the indirect passions, he held that their relation to the antecedent thoughts on which they were conditioned was extrinsic (Hume [1739] 1978, bk. 2, passim). That is, nothing in these passions necessitated the prior occurrence of their antecedent thoughts. Hence, his general account of the emotions, his conception of them as impressions of reflection, was ill equipped to explain their intentionality. The variations on his theory that continued into the nineteenth century among the English exponents of associationism in psychology were therefore, in this respect, decidedly inferior to the theories of traditional cognitivism that succeeded them.

By the beginning of this century, however, subtler accounts of emotion incorporating a feeling-centered conception of the phenomenon, the James-Lange theory, in particular, were being advanced, and they did not run as counter to traditional cognitivism as Hume's theory did (Lange and James 1922; James 1950, vol. 2, pp. 442–85). James, for instance, takes emotion to be constituted by certain feelings that are aroused by the thought or, as he says, perception of an exciting object. The object excites in that perceiving it precipitates changes in

2. See, e.g., Broad 1925, pp. 574–75, and 1971, p. 286; Stout 1929, pp. 363–64; and Price 1953, p. 152.

the body, and "our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion" (James 1950, vol. 2, p. 449). Thus, feeling hot and agitated, when identified with anger, are feelings of certain physiological disturbances—"boiling blood," a churning stomach—that the perception of someone insulting one or the mere thought of one's least favorite politician excites. The difference then between James's conception and that of traditional cognitivism lies in the relation to thought that emotion is understood to have. It is a causal relation on one theory, constitutive on the other. Since neither theory supposes that one can understand an emotion independently of thought, it is unclear whether either represents a significant advance over the other.

Consider C. D. Broad's account of the emotions, which falls within traditional cognitivism (1971, pp. 283–301). Broad defines a cognition as any experience that has "an epistemological object" and accordingly distinguishes it from a pure feeling, which lacks such an object. Emotions, on his view, are cognitions that have a felt quality or tone. Crudely put, he conceives of anger, when one is angry at P, as thinking angrily about P rather than, as James would put it, feeling hot and agitated in response to some thought about P. James, nevertheless, could agree with Broad that some thought must be present, for otherwise these feelings, on his account, would not amount to anger.[3] Similarly, Broad could agree with James that some feelings must be present, for otherwise the thought, on his account, would not have the requisite tone to constitute anger. The two ultimately disagree, then, only in what part of the overall experience they would label the emotion. The difference between their accounts thus appears to be largely verbal. There appears, in other words, to be little if anything of material importance in either to make one significantly better than the other.

The difference between the accounts results from each thinker's having fixed on a different property of emotions and constructed his account accordingly. On the one hand, emotions are turbulent states. To become emotional, to be filled with emotion, to experience a flutter or rush of emotion, is to be in some state of agitation, commotion, excitation, etc. Thus, it is easy to assume that turbulence of the mind is what we mean above all by emotion, and this assumption no doubt lay behind James's identifying emotions with certain feelings of bodily changes. On the other hand, emotions are intentional phenomena. In experiencing an emotion, something about our circumstances, our lives, or ourselves captures our attention, orients our thoughts, and touches our sensibilities. Thus, it is easy to assume that the central truth about emotion is that it is a state through which the world en-

3. James sometimes strays from his account, however. See 1950, pp. 458–59.

gages our thinking and elicits our pleasure or displeasure, and something like this assumption no doubt lay behind Broad's classifying emotions as cognitions in the general sense he meant. Neither assumption, however, excludes the other, and each account readily accommodates, although as a secondary thesis, the assumption that lies behind the other. The difference, then, between the two accounts is a difference of emphasis rather than substance.[4]

III. INTROSPECTIONISM

Broad and James accepted introspection as the main way to gather facts about the mind. Accordingly, both men, in giving their accounts of emotion, took themselves to be looking at consciousness and describing what they saw. To say then that the difference between their accounts is a difference in emphasis is to say that, while they both saw the same phenomenal facts, each highlighted different ones in his description. And it is reasonable to suppose that James highlighted turbulence, Broad intentionality, because of preconceptions about emotions that each man brought to his study. Be this as it may, introspection is now a defunct method in Anglo-American philosophy. It was replaced in the philosophy of mind by conceptual and linguistic analysis, and within the philosophical study of emotions this change from empirical investigations of the phenomena to investigations of the concepts and words we use in understanding and describing the phenomena brought about the shift in the study from traditional to contemporary cognitivism. With this shift, all support for feeling-centered conceptions of emotion collapsed.

4. There is some experimental research aimed at deciding between James's theory and cognitivism. Schacter and Singer's well-known experiments, in particular, are taken (by, e.g., the experimenters) to yield results that support cognitivism as against James's theory. As several critics have pointed out, though, they do not in fact yield evidence one way or the other. Either theory accounts with equal plausibility for the emotions, anger and euphoria, that the subjects in the experimental groups experience and for the absence of these emotions among the subjects of the corresponding control groups. In other words, nothing in the difference between the experimental groups and the control groups rules out or makes less plausible using James's theory to explain the anger and euphoria that occurred more frequently in the former. Schacter and Singer infer otherwise chiefly because they attribute all of the bodily changes that the subjects in the experimental groups and the relevant control group feel to the drug that was administered to these subjects. This attribution then leads them to assume that they have controlled for bodily changes (i.e., that no difference in the bodily changes felt by the subjects in these groups exists). They then infer that the differences in emotional experience found among these groups consists entirely of cognitive states. Nothing in their procedure, however, warrants either this assumption or the attribution of all bodily changes to the drug they administered. Nothing, that is, rules out the possibility that among the cognitions the experimenters induce in their subjects are Jamesian perceptions of exciting facts. See Schacter and Singer 1962; de Sousa 1987, pp. 53–55; and Gordon 1986, pp. 94–109.

It would be hard to see how the change from empirical investigations to conceptual and linguistic ones could bring about such a shift—let alone the collapse of support for feeling-centered conceptions—if the new subject of the study were merely the general concept of emotion or the most general words we use to describe emotional phenomena. Nothing in the general concept, as we ordinarily understand it, entails thought in the narrower or intellectualist sense; nothing in our ordinary use of the words 'emotion', 'emotional', 'emote', or 'emotive' to describe a person's state of mind or behavior implies that the person affirms or even just considers some proposition. This general concept, however, and these general words were not the subject of the study once it became dominated by conceptual and linguistic investigations. Rather these investigations focused on more specific concepts and words, and this move to a level of greater specificity is what brought about the shift.

Thus, the concepts of anger, fear, envy, shame, pity, and so forth became the real subject of the study, and in analyzing these concepts philosophers converged on the conclusion that each entailed thought in the intellectualist sense. The refrain typical of philosophers engaged in these investigations went (and still goes) something like this: "There is a logic to the concept of x such that to say that a person feels x toward z implies that the person believes such and such about z." There is a logic, for example, to the concept of pity such that to say that a person feels pity for z implies that the person believes z to be in some distress. Thus, by a kind of Socratic induction over the range of specific concepts investigated, the thesis that emotion entailed propositional thought became orthodoxy in the philosophical study of emotions.

Of course, this thesis could not have attained orthodoxy as easily as it did if the empirical investigations of the introspectionists had yielded accounts of specific emotions that could rival the accounts that the conceptual and linguistic investigations produced. But the introspectionists, because they took emotions to be states of consciousness, in fact had little of substance to say about specific emotions. And this is true of both introspectionists, like Broad, who assumed the traditional cognitivist conception and those, like James, who assumed a feeling-centered one. They had little of substance to say because once anger or pity is reduced to a kind of introspectible state, a state of consciousness, its distinctive properties must be phenomenal, and not much can be said about an emotion's distinctive phenomenal properties beyond what experiencing the emotion feels like. Indeed, often the introspectionist account came to no more than that every specific emotion had a distinctive quale. Thus, Broad distinguished specific kinds of emotions by their characteristic emotional tone ("To be fearing a snake, e.g., is to be cognizing something . . . as a snake, and for that

cognition to be toned with fearfulness" [1971, p. 286]). And G. F. Stout, another traditional cognitivist, held that what ultimately differentiated each specific emotion from the others was "a unique kind of feeling-attitude toward an object . . . [a] peculiar colouring [that] cannot be resolved into mere pleasantness or unpleasantness" (1929, p. 371).

James, on the other hand, was actually hostile to the whole enterprise of describing the distinctive properties of specific emotions. "The merely descriptive literature of the emotions is one of the most tedious parts of psychology. And not only is it tedious, but you feel that its subdivisions are to a great extent either fictitious or unimportant, and that its pretences to accuracy are a sham. But unfortunately there is little psychological writing about the emotions that is not merely descriptive" (James 1950, vol. 2, p. 448). In addition, he saw in this enterprise the misguiding influence of Lockean simple ideas. To take the names for specific emotions such as pity and fear as Broad and Stout do, that is, as names for unanalyzable qualities of consciousness that recur in mental life and are the building blocks of more complex qualities, is to misconceive of our mental life as a series of discrete, repeatable states whose elements are unalloyed and can therefore be individuated absolutely. "The trouble with the emotions in psychology is that they are regarded too much as absolutely individual things. So long as they are set down as so many eternal and sacred psychic entities, like the old immutable species in natural history, so long all that *can* be done with them is reverently to catalogue their separate characters, points, and effects" (James 1950, vol. 2, p. 449). A truly scientific psychology, James believed, aims at determining the general causes of the phenomena and leaves taxonomic exercises to the amateurs. "But if we regard [the emotions] as products of more general causes (as 'species' are now regarded as products of heredity and variation), the mere distinguishing and cataloguing becomes of subsidiary importance" (James 1950, vol. 2, p. 449). Suffice it to say that James had even less to offer than traditional cognitivists on the subject of the nature and differentiae of specific emotions.

The upshot of this void in the introspectionists' studies was that the accounts of specific emotions that the conceptual and linguistic analysts advanced took over the field by default. Of course, those accounts had to be plausible; their way of distinguishing among specific emotions had to make sense. Passing this test was not a real problem, however. And in the absence of any other way of drawing these distinctions, their way, which turned on each emotion's thought content and assumed an intellectualist conception of thought, became dominant as quickly as introspectionism became defunct. The shift from traditional to contemporary cognitivism appears, then, to have come about as an incidental consequence of the change in the methods by which philosophers studied emotions.

Nevertheless, the shift can be justified in its own right. Introspectionism treated emotions as states whose intrinsic properties were all inwardly observable. It treated them, that is, as purely empirical states. To be sure, introspectionists also regarded emotions as signs of other mental states that were their typical causes or effects, and as correlates of neurophysiological states that were their physical underside, basis, or constant companions. But in themselves, as mental phenomena, emotions were not seen by the introspectionists as having any theoretical depth. By contrast, the conceptual and linguistic investigations that replaced introspectionism allowed for an understanding of emotions as having such depth. These investigations concentrated on clarifying the criteria by which we apply the concepts of specific emotions, and one can construe these criteria theoretically. That is, one can take our everyday thought and talk about psychology to contain a theory of the mind whose principles determine these criteria. Indeed, this idea has now become a standard view in philosophical psychology. The theory that, on this view, our everyday thought and talk contains typically goes by the name of commonsense or folk psychology, and its principles are understood as governing relations of interdependence among various mental states, including emotions. The shift from traditional to contemporary cognitivism can be justified then, given that there is such a theory and given that its principles are such as to define a conception of emotions according to which their intentionality implies thought in the intellectualist sense.[5]

5. This is not to say that the change to a new understanding of the kind of state an emotion is came about smoothly. To the contrary, it did produce some wrinkles, and attempts by conceptual and linguistic analysts to iron these out have been a regular feature in the subsequent philosophical literature. In particular, a fair amount of attention has been paid to the problem of fitting into this new understanding the idea that emotions are characteristically turbulent states of mind. No similar problem arose for introspectionists since for them turbulence and intentionality were both coincident, observable properties of emotional consciousness. On the new understanding, however, because intentionality is explained by reference to a thought found in the subject's mind, which is attributed to the subject in virtue of the kind of emotion he is experiencing (i.e., as a piece of theory) and regardless of whether he is conscious of the thought, intentionality and turbulence are not comparable properties. Consequently, what the relation is between the thought and the turbulence characteristic of emotional experiences and whether an emotion contains both thought and turbulent feeling as essential components or is to be identified with one of the two while the other is treated as an essential cause or a typical effect have become arguable questions, questions on which no consensus position has developed. See, e.g., Thalberg 1964, 1980; Neu 1977, pp. 88–89, 161; Rey 1980, pp. 188–90; Greenspan 1988, chap. 2, passim; Green 1992, pp. 96–100; and Stocker 1993, pp. 20–24. The problem, it is worth noting, is not original to this literature. Freud recognized it as a problem that resulted from attributing emotions to the unconscious, since attributing a mental state to the unconscious meant treating it as having theoretical depth. See Freud 1969, pp. 177–79.

In short, change in the methods of philosophical psychology brought about change in the understanding of the kind of state emotions are, and as a result one can look to this new understanding for a way to justify the replacement, in the cognitivist conception of emotion, of its traditionally broad concept of thought by a narrower, intellectualist one. Justification, however, is not immediate. One may accept the new understanding of emotions as having theoretical depth and so the idea of folk psychology and still query the contemporary cognitivists' conception of emotions. In particular, one can still ask, "How is it that propositional thought is essential to emotions, given their intentionality?" Hence, insofar as contemporary cognitivists take the first criticism of feeling-centered conceptions of emotion as bolstering their conception, an argument that justifies the transition they make from intentionality to propositional thought is still needed.

IV. BELIEF

The most influential argument is due to Kenny.[6] Its main thesis is that the concept of each emotion, be it that of fear, pity, envy, or what have you, restricts what can be its object. That is, the object must have a certain character, or at least the subject must see it as having that character. Thus, the object of fear must be seen as something or someone who threatens harm; the object of pity must be seen as someone who has suffered misfortune; and the object of envy must be seen as someone who has an advantage one lacks. Indeed, a dangerous man would not be feared if he were not known or believed to be dangerous, and someone with a terminal disease would not be pitied if no one even suspected he was ill. Conversely, one need only believe that something is a threat to fear it or that someone is in misery to pity him. Thus, the belief that the snake one suddenly finds slithering across one's path is dangerous suffices to make it an object of fear even though the snake is actually harmless, and the belief in the miserable existence of the crippled beggar with the twisted lip suffices to make him an object of pity even though his hideous appearance is a disguise and he is in fact a well-to-do gent working a remunerative con.[7] From these considerations it should be clear that what qualifies something

6. Kenny 1963, pp. 187–94. See also Neu 1977, pp. 36–43; and de Sousa 1987, pp. 114–23. Kenny, at an earlier place in his book (1963, p. 75), also argues for attributing to the subject of an emotion a belief about its object on the grounds that the object is intentional. This earlier argument, though it may actually be less central to Kenny's account, has attracted much more criticism, which effectively showed it to be ill conceived. See, e.g., Gosling 1965, pp. 486–503; Wilson 1972, pp. 67–69; and Green 1972, pp. 28–30.

7. The example is from Arthur Conan Doyle's story "The Man with the Twisted Lip," in Doyle (1930, pp. 229–44).

as the appropriate object of an emotion is the subject's belief that it has a certain character. Hence, belief and so propositional thought is essential to emotion. Hence, the familiar refrain, "There is a logic to the concept of x such that to say that a person feels x toward z implies that he believes such and such about z."

I have deliberately omitted from this statement of the argument the medieval mumbo jumbo about formal objects in which the argument is sometimes couched, as well as the unnecessary bits about the grammar of direct objects and transitive verbs that Kenny thought advanced it (see Kenny 1963, pp. 187–94). These decorations have helped the argument win more converts than it should by obscuring the large jump it makes when it concludes that something qualifies as the object of a specific emotion in virtue of the subject's beliefs about it. For something can be an intentional object even if the subject has no beliefs about it and even if the subject's state of mind is such that only certain things can be its object. When a baby or a cat stares at you, you are the object of its stare. Yet it does not follow that the baby or the cat has any beliefs about you. When a dog relishes a bone, the bone is the object of its delight. Yet it does not follow that the dog has any beliefs about the bone. So too, by the very concepts of staring and relishing, you must be visible to be the object of a state, and a bone must be pleasing to be relished. Yet a cat or a baby can stare at you without believing you are visible, and a dog can relish a bone without believing that the bone is pleasing.

Kenny's argument seems valid because the examples it adduces do support its conclusion. These examples, however, are skewed. In each one there is a dissonance between the actual character of an object or potential object of emotion and the character the object has in the subject's mind, a dissonance for which belief is typically the best explanation. But as the examples of staring and relishing show, not every intentional state, or even every intentional state the character of whose object is restricted by its concept, creates the possibility of such dissonance. Not every object of an intentional state is such that the best explanation for the character it has in the subject's mind are beliefs that the subject holds about it.

V. EVALUATION

Perhaps, though, there is something about the character of an emotion's object that is best explained by belief. Perhaps the objects of emotion have a special character that justifies the inference from their intentionality to propositional thought. While contemporary cognitivists who move effortlessly from one to the other have not explicitly advanced this idea as a way to ground the transition, many have held that evaluation is essential to emotion, and perhaps the character of an emotion's object implicit in this view supplies the grounds they

need to justify the move.[8] This possibility, it would seem, is the best hope for justifying the transition. The question then is what addition to Kenny's argument cognitivists could make to realize it.

That evaluation is essential to emotion is reflected in the restrictions that, on the main thesis of Kenny's argument, the concepts of specific emotions place on what can be their objects. If the object of fear must be something that is seen to threaten harm, then fear entails an evaluation of its object as the potential source or agent of some bad effect. If the object of pity must be someone who is seen to have suffered misfortune, then pity entails an evaluation of its object's condition as bad and undeservedly so. And similarly for the restrictions that the concepts of other emotions place. Cognitivists might then argue as follows. The object of an emotion can have, in the subject's mind, its evaluative character only if the subject believes or judges it to have this character. For each evaluation implies that the object is in some way good or in some way bad, and being in some way good or in some way bad can be seen as a property of an object only if one attributes it to that object. The conclusion then follows, given the assumption that such attributions only come from belief or through judgment. This argument is not obviously unsound, and if sound, it shows that contemporary cognitivists can use a doctrine common to many of their theories to fill a hole in the foundation of their program.

Some cognitivists who advance such theories have gone so far as to identify emotions with evaluative judgments (see, e.g., Solomon 1976, pp. 185–87; Nussbaum 1990, p. 292). Others have been less bold. While they take such judgments to be among an emotion's essential components, they take other states and phenomena to be among them as well.[9] On their view, emotions essentially combine evaluative judgments with some or all of the following: agitated states of mind, autonomic behavior such as perspiration and goose flesh, and impulses to action. Still other cognitivists who accept the doctrine that emotions entail evaluations have denied that the evaluation an emotion entails is always a judgment or belief (see, e.g., Greenspan 1988, pp. 3–9; Roberts 1988, pp. 195–201). In other words, they deny the final assumption on which the argument sketched in the last paragraph

8. Pitcher 1965, pp. 326–46; Alston 1967, p. 485; Solomon 1976, pp. 185–91; Lyons 1980, pp. 53–63; Taylor 1985, pp. 1–16; de Sousa 1987, pp. 184–86; Greenspan 1988, pp. 3–9; and Roberts 1988, pp. 183–209.

9. See, e.g., Alston 1967, pp. 485–86; Lyons 1980, pp. 57–62; Taylor 1985, pp. 1–2; and Greenspan 1988, pp. 15–17. Both Alston and Taylor, it should be noted, allow for experiences of emotion that do not contain evaluative judgments, but they argue that these experiences are parasitic on those that do. See Alston 1967, p. 486, and Taylor 1985, p. 3, n. 3. Lyons's objection (1980, pp. 87–88) that this maneuver is nothing more than a methodological dodge of embarrassing counterinstances to the dodger's account seems to me well taken.

reached its conclusion. They accept instead an assumption on which a weaker conclusion follows, one that makes propositional thought, whether or not it is given any credence, essential to emotion, and they mark their dissent from views that take belief or judgment to be essential by calling emotions by such names as "propositional feelings" (Greenspan 1988, p. 4) and "concern based construals" (Roberts 1988, p. 184).

Consideration of certain groundless emotions recommends this last view over the other two. A garter snake may fill one with fear, even when one knows that it is perfectly harmless. According to either of the first two views, one must in this case be making conflicting judgments or holding conflicting beliefs about the snake. Yet attributing such a conflict does not seem necessary to understanding the case. After all, it is one thing to have a thought and another to affirm or accept it. Thus one might have the thought that the snake threatens harm—this thought might even be intractable—and yet one need not have affirmed or accepted it. Indeed, as long as one knows that the thought does not correspond to the way things really are, one may have no tendency toward affirmation or acceptance. The last view, then, makes room for what seem to be real possibilities that the first two views exclude.

At the same time, one might wonder whether there are cases of groundless emotion in which the subject reacts to an object without evaluating it.[10] Couldn't a garter snake, for instance, fill one with fear without one even thinking that it threatens harm? Couldn't snakes be a kind of creature whose serpentine shape and movements innately excite fear, just as, so one might suppose, thunderclaps and other sudden loud noises innately excite fear? Perhaps, as children, we learn the connection between fear and danger when we are taught not to be afraid of certain things that instinctively frighten us: large or barking dogs, strangers (who are older and bigger), thunder and lightning, darkness. We see a large dog and are afraid, and then our parents try to calm us and show us that the dog is really friendly and not at all a threat. "Don't be afraid; the dog won't hurt you," they say, and so we learn that the appropriate objects of fear are things that can hurt us. If this account were accurate, then our earliest fears would not entail an evaluation of their objects, for we would not yet have learned the criteria by which to evaluate them. Later experiences of groundless fear might then be best understood, in some cases, as repetitions of these earliest experiences.

Cognitivists who hold that emotions entail evaluations—Socratic theorists, I'll call them, since the view originates with Socrates (see

10. See Morreal (1993) for additional examples.

Plato 1976, 358d–e, pp. 52–53)—would of course reject this possibility. What makes the reaction to the snake one of fear, they would ask, if not the character of the subject's thought? What else could be the basis for ascribing fear and not some other emotion like horror or disgust? To suppose that the subject is experiencing a special feeling, a turbulence of mind with a distinctive tone, would be to fall back on the discredited views of introspectionism. And to suppose that the fear is a matter of sweating palms and a palpitating heart, or rapid movement away from its object, is no solution either. While these are among fear's natural expressions, one could hardly maintain that the subject's reaction required such behavior. Here behaviorist accounts of emotion are as unhelpful as Cartesian ones. Contemporary cognitivism, as we noted earlier, gained advantage over its predecessors by focusing on specific emotions and offering a plausible way of differentiating them. That noncognitivist ways of differentiating them presuppose a discredited metaphysics or rely on a crude symptomatology highlights this advantage. It makes clear the difficulty of assuming that the concept of an emotion like fear applies to an emotional state when no propositional thought is attributed to its subject. By taking evaluative thought to be the principal differentia of emotions, Socratic theorists avoid this difficulty. The accounts of specific emotions that these theorists have produced are decidedly more persuasive than the introspectionist and behaviorist accounts that preceded them.

Still, their assumption of strict criteria for distinguishing among the different emotions invites James's complaint against philosophers and psychologists who treat the emotions as if they were "absolutely individual things . . . eternal and sacred psychic entities, like the old immutable species in natural history" (1950, vol. 2, p. 449). It should remind us as well of Wittgenstein's objections to taking words like 'fear', 'anger', 'joy', 'pity', and the like to be names of inner states, for taking them, as the cognitivists do, to be names of theoretical states instead of introspectible, private ones circumvents only some of those objections (1953, secs. 308, 571). The common target of James's and Wittgenstein's criticisms were theories of the mind, like Locke's, that represent thinking and feeling as a series of discrete, recurrable states, either elementary or compound, a kind of theory whose dominant theme is so well captured in Hume's famous description of the mind as "a kind of theatre where several perceptions successively make their appearance, pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations" (1978, bk. 1, pt. 4, sec. 6, p. 253). To be sure, the cognitivists' assumption of strict criteria for distinguishing among different emotions does not commit them to a full-blown Lockean theory of the mind. Nonetheless, it may wed them to enough Lockeanism to put them within the range of James's and Wittgenstein's criticisms. If we granted the assumption the cognitivists make, their

accounts of specific emotions would be significantly more illuminating than the ones introspectionists and behaviorists offered. But the question is whether we should grant it.

VI. PRIMITIVE EMOTIONS

Let us examine this question by considering a thesis that the assumption implies, the thesis that all experiences of a given emotion have a property in common that identifies those experiences as experiences of that emotion and not some other. On the Socratic theory, this common property is the specific form of evaluative thought the emotion is said to entail. Plainly, there are emotions all of whose experiences have some such thought in common. Any experience of resentment, for instance, includes the thought that one has been treated unjustly. Furthermore, this thought identifies the experience as one of resentment rather than, say embarrassment. There is no mystery, however, as to why all experiences of resentment share a specific form of evaluative thought. Resentment is a moral emotion. To be capable of it one must have acquired certain moral concepts and principles, and an experience of resentment then signifies that one has applied these concepts and principles to one's situation. Indeed, with regard to any emotion that marks an individual as socialized and the beneficiary of a moral education, it is safe to assume that all of its experiences share a specific form of evaluative thought that identifies them as experiences of that emotion and not some other. For an experience of such an emotion signifies the application of concepts and principles one acquires through socialization and moral education, and to apply these concepts and principles is just to have certain evaluative thoughts about one's situation.

Needless to say, not every emotion marks one as socialized or the beneficiary of a moral education. Some emotions are more natural or primitive. Many experiences of fear, anger, love, joy, and sorrow, for example, do not presuppose the cultural transmission of concepts and principles. These are emotions to which other animals, and not just human beings, are liable (Darwin 1965, pp. 83–145). Hence, one cannot appeal to the application of concepts and principles acquired through cultural transmission to establish, with respect to any of these emotions, that a specific form of evaluative thought is common to all of its experiences. To be sure, no one innocent of the relevant culture could experience fear over the downward plunge of a stock market or anger at an obscene gesture. But to experience fear of falling as one looks down from a precipice or anger at an intruder when one is enjoying a quiet moment does not require knowledge of one's culture or training in its practices. The question then, if these latter experiences share the same forms of evaluative thought as the former, is how their subjects acquired the corresponding evaluative concepts and came to understand the criteria governing their application.

One answer Socratic theorists might give is that, just as the reactions in the latter cases are instinctive, so the concepts they imply are innate. If we are born with a capacity for fear, then we are born with the power of sensing danger. The other answer, of course, is that these reactions are learned rather than instinctive, and the concepts therefore are acquired through experience. Thus, we learn to fear those things that cause us pain, and the unpleasant memories of the experience give us a sense of danger when those things are in our vicinity. Prey that have a keen sense of when a predator is approaching, antelope that can sense the stalking lion, smell the danger, as we sometimes say, and flee. Thus, whether the requisite concept for experiencing fear is inborn or acquired through experience, these beasts clearly possess it, and it is equally clear that they possess it independently of any culture. The same thing then holds of the seemingly instinctive fears to which human beings are liable. Or so these contemporary cognitivists might argue.

The problem with this argument, however, is that it confuses being sensible of something with having a concept of it. Many people are sensible of sharps and flats, for instance, though they have no concept of half steps in a diatonic scale. Wild geese are no doubt sensible of changes in the weather, though they have no concept of seasons. To be sensible of a property is to be able to detect its presence and to discriminate between those things that have it and those that do not. To have a concept of a property, by contrast, is to be able to predicate it of some object and, hence, to locate it in a system of propositional thought. Predication, after all, as we learned from Neurath, presupposes some system of propositions. This system is realized in an organization of thought that having a concept of some property implies, and such organization of thought is unnecessary for detecting the property or discriminating between those things that do and those things that do not have it. Such organization constitutes a conceptual understanding of things, and the powers of detection and discrimination that a creature's sensory faculties include do not require conceptual understanding. Thus that a creature can sense danger in certain circumstances does not imply that it has the concept of danger. One cannot, in other words, infer the kind of evaluative thought Socratic theorists require for an experience of fear from the supposition that its subject senses danger.

Of course, dangerousness is an abstract property and not a sensory one. Anything that threatens harm is dangerous, and there are indefinitely many ways of being harmed. One might then conclude that a creature who had an ability to sense danger must understand the many ways in which it could be harmed and so must have the concept of danger. But the more telling conclusion is that a liability to primitive experiences of fear, like the fear of falling or the fear that strikes prey

when being stalked by a predator, does not entail this ability.[11] We say an antelope has a keen sense of danger because it reacts so quickly when a lion comes on the scene, but we do not mean to imply by this that the antelope would react as quickly or at all if it stumbled on a live grenade. The sensibilia to which it reacts when it becomes aware of a predator are fixed, it is reasonable to suppose, by natural selection and the narrow range of experience characteristic of life in the wild and do not generalize to other dangers.[12] Dangerousness, in other words, is not the property of which the antelope is sensible when it flees a predator in fear.

The same conclusion follows from reflection on primitive experiences of fear where the subject knows that he is perfectly safe. Fear upon looking down from a precipice, for example, is a common experience even when one knows that one is in no danger of falling.[13] One can feel fear in such circumstances without having a sense of danger. Thus the experience is not comparable to seeing water on a distant surface that one knows is perfectly dry. Dangerousness, since it is not a sensory property, is not a property of which one can have an illusion. And it would also be a mistake to insist that one must at least be imagining that one is in danger. One may of course be imagining oneself falling and the unpleasant outcome at the end of the fall, but that is to imagine certain harm, not danger or the threat of harm. To imagine that one is in danger, one must imagine some such circumstance as that one's enemy is lurking in the bushes, waiting for the chance to push one over the cliff, or that a sudden gust of wind catches one off guard, making it very difficult to maintain one's balance. And one does not need to imagine such a threat to feel fear upon looking down from a precipice. It is not the dangerousness of one's circumstances, therefore, that one is sensible of when one feels such fear. The thought of danger, propositional or otherwise, is not a thread that runs through all experiences of fear.

11. Morreal (1993, pp. 359–66) argues for a similar point.

12. Indeed, even wide and repeated experience of things that harm would only enhance the antelope's sensitivity to such things, and having an enhanced sensitivity is not the same as having a concept. Without the rudiments of language, it is hard to see how experience alone could be transformed into a conceptual understanding.

13. The example is Hume's, though his own attempt to make the experience intelligible is notable only for its uncharacteristic incoherence. "But they are not only possible evils, that cause fear, but even some allow'd to be *impossible;* as when we tremble on the brink of a precipice, tho' we know ourselves to be in perfect security, and have it in our choice whether we will advance a step farther. This proceeds from the immediate presence of the evil, which influences the imagination in the same manner as the certainty of it wou'd do; but being encounter'd by the reflection on our security, is immediately retracted, and causes the same kind of passion, as when from a contrariety of chances contrary passions are produced" (1978, bk. 2, pt. 3, sec. 9, p. 445).

What is one sensible of in these primitive experiences? What makes them experiences of fear rather than horror or disgust? A plausible answer to this second question draws on the aesthetics of these different emotions. Roughly speaking, one feels fear at what is scary, horror at what is gruesome, and disgust at what is foul. These properties characterize the way things look, sound, taste, and smell. A scary mask, for instance, will have certain exaggerated features that are designed to alarm or frighten the innocent or unsuspecting viewer, and a scary voice will have a certain unusual cadence and pitch that unsettles the listener. What is scary may also be a property of something independently of the way it looks and sounds. A bat may be scary only because it can menace: alone in a dark, cavernous place, one would naturally be frightened by swooping bats. Alternatively, though, bats may be scary because they are large, nocturnal, dark, swiftly flying, shrieking creatures. Be this as it may, the important point is that the scary differs from the dangerous in being at least sometimes a true or direct property of the way something looks and sounds. Something that looks dangerous is something one can infer is dangerous from the way it looks, whereas one need make no inference to see that something looks scary. Hence, the answer is congenial to rejecting the view of emotions as immutable species.

It gives us as well an answer to the first question, the question of what one is sensible of in these primitive experiences. That answer is whatever properties make a thing scary. These properties are distinct from those that make something gruesome and those that make something foul. The latter, as we have already noted, are the properties one is sensible of in primitive experiences of horror and disgust. Consequently, one can cite the difference between the characters of these emotions' intentional objects to distinguish among primitive experiences of fear, horror, and disgust. One is not, in other words, forced by an understanding of emotions as intentional phenomena always to take forms of evaluative thought as their differentiae. The answers thus form a basis not only for rejecting the view of emotions as immutable species but also for denying the thesis that evaluative thought is essential to the phenomena.

VII. DAVIDSONIAN THEORY

Not every cognitivist theory of emotions currently in play has this thesis as a central tenet, however. A different type of cognitivist theory takes its lead from Donald Davidson's work in philosophical psychology.[14] The main idea of this work is that one can use interlocking

14. See essays 1–5, 14, and 15 in Davidson 1980. The last of these, "Hume's Cognitive Theory of Pride," is Davidson's most extended effort at applying his general program to a certain class of emotions, which he calls propositional emotions.

combinations of beliefs and desires to explain a range of psychological phenomena, including, in particular, intentional actions and emotions. The beliefs in these combinations are typically perceptual beliefs or other factual beliefs one could arrive at by perception and inference. The desires are conative or affective states with thought content that meshes with the thought content of their complementary beliefs in a way exemplified by an Aristotelian practical syllogism, and to account for a broad range of emotions, they are explicitly assumed to include pro and con attitudes with no conative force or whose conative force is too weak to be that of desire according to its ordinary conception. The class of Davidsonian desires is thus larger than the class of desires on their ordinary conception. And to simplify the discussion I shall follow Davidson in using 'desire' to denote any member of this larger class and 'belief' to denote any propositional thought of the kind that combines with desires to explain intentional actions and emotions (see 1980, pp. 3–4).

Common to theories of the type that applies Davidson's main idea is a cognitivist analysis of emotion in which desire rather than evaluative thought is an essential component.[15] That is, instead of representing the cognitive core of an emotion as some combination of evaluative thought and factual belief, these theories restrict that core to factual belief and add as an essential component a complementary desire. Instead of taking pride, for example, to entail the thought that one is in some way commendable, these theories analyze it as essentially a combination of a belief that one has a certain feature and a pro attitude toward a person's having that feature. Davidson himself vacillates between taking declarative sentences of the form '*x* is commendable (good, bad, praiseworthy, blameworthy, etc.)' to be expressions of belief and taking them to be expressions of pro and con attitudes, which is to say, he vacillates between classifying evaluative thought as a genuine kind of belief and classifying it as a kind of desire (1980, pp. 27, 86). The latter classification obviously blurs the line that I mean here to draw between two types of cognitivist theory. Still, since one can in principle distinguish between evaluative thought and desire, a line can be drawn. And while one may be unable to say definitively which side of that line Davidson falls on, others who have taken up

15. See Rey 1980; Marks 1982; Searle 1983, pp. 29–36; Gordon 1987; Davis 1987; and Green 1992. There are, of course, significant differences among the views that share the Davidsonian approach. Like the divisions within Socratic theory, some Davidsonians (e.g., Marks and Green) identify emotions with belief-desire combinations, and others (e.g., Rey and Searle) hold that emotions are not reducible to the belief-desire combinations that explain them. Green thinks the model applies either straightforwardly or with some modification to all emotions; Gordon follows Davidson in taking it to apply to a restricted class of emotions. These differences, though, do not affect our discussion.

his idea have removed this ambiguity from their views. In their work a distinction between evaluative thought and desire is expressly noted or made so that no confusion arises over which is to be understood as an essential component of emotion (Green 1992, p. 78).

These views then define a type of cognitivist theory that represents an alternative to Socratic theory. They do not, however, contain or even suggest an alternative way to make the transition from intentionality to propositional thought. Rather the idea of an intentional object is demoted, if not excluded altogether, from their accounts of emotion on the grounds that talk of an emotion's object is loose, confused, vague, suspiciously metaphysical, or merely shorthand for the proposition that is the thought content of the emotion (see, e.g., Searle 1983, pp. 16–18; Gordon 1987, pp. 45–46, 65–66). Exponents of these theories nonetheless continue to speak of the intentionality of emotion, by which they understand its thought content. This understanding is importantly different from the traditional understanding of intentionality as the property of being directed at or toward some object, for it omits the notion of a relation between the mental state and an object.[16] And by adopting it, Davidsonians effectively obliterate the question of the transition from intentionality to propositional thought, since that question just is the question of what grounds the inference of such thought from the relation captured in the traditional understanding. Davidsonian theories, in other words, do not fashion their accounts of emotion to fit the intentionality of the phenomena, as traditionally understood. Rather, they change the understanding of intentionality to fit their accounts.

One consequence of this change is that these theories offer a conception of emotion that is no less vulnerable than feeling-centered conceptions to the charge of misrepresenting the relation between an emotion and its object. For if the charge is correct as applied to feeling-centered conceptions, then it applies with equal force to Davidsonian conceptions. And if it has no force against the latter because of the criticisms Davidsonians make of the idea of an intentional object, then those same criticisms either negate its force against feeling-centered conceptions or beg the question of which conception is correct. Specifically, criticizing talk of intentional objects as loose, confused, vague, or suspiciously metaphysical negates its force, and holding that such talk is shorthand for the proposition that is the emotion's thought content begs the question.

This last point is worth elaborating since the change Davidsonian theories make in the traditional understanding of intentionality generates a different charge against feeling-centered conceptions, a charge that may appear to be every bit as forceful a criticism of them as the

16. I owe this point to Meredith Williams. See Searle 1983, pp. 18–19.

original. The new charge is that feeling-centered conceptions misrepresent the intentionality of an emotion in the sense of its thought content, and it goes without saying that these conceptions are no better able to account for an emotion's thought content than they are its relation to an intentional object. This new charge, however, unlike the original, implies something about emotions that those who put forth feeling-centered conceptions simply deny, namely, that an emotion contains thought. For this reason the charge begs the question. It merely repeats the opposition between thought-centered and feeling-centered conceptions and does not base its criticism of the latter on anything outside of the dispute.

By contrast, the original charge bases its criticism on the intentionality of emotions as it is traditionally understood, which is not something about emotions that those who put forth feeling-centered conceptions deny. To the contrary, they accept it as a datum of psychology that any theory of emotions must explain and that their theories explain by describing certain mechanistic relations between thoughts and feelings. The dispute then centers not on whether intentionality is a property of emotions but on how to explain it. Thus consider how the dispute plays out in the controversy over the existence of genuinely objectless emotions. The exponents of feeling-centered conceptions, far from holding that all emotions are objectless, regard such emotions as atypical. At the same time, they maintain that the existence of such emotions argues for the mechanistic model they use to explain the relation between emotions and their objects because it shows that the relation is an external one. This argument then puts the exponents of cognitivist conceptions under pressure to explain away the existence of genuinely objectless emotions, which eliminative explanations I canvassed in Section I. Clearly, the controversy proceeds from agreement by both parties that emotions in general have objects. In other words both parties accept the intentionality of emotions, traditionally understood, as a datum. This agreement then gives the original charge against feeling-centered conceptions the probative force that is lacking in the charge that Davidsonian theories generate.

Many contemporary cognitivists, I imagine, would balk at this result. "Emotions are propositional attitudes," they would argue, "and as such they are intentional states in the traditional sense. Consequently, one need not suppose that Davidsonian theories introduce a change in the understanding of intentionality. Rather the change they introduce is in the kind of object emotions have." This argument, popular though it may be, should be resisted.[17] Its major premiss is

17. The description of emotions as having propositions as their objects is now common, and sometimes it results from the characterization of emotions as propositional attitudes in the way the argument suggests. See, e.g., Nissenbaum 1985, pp. 10–11; de Sousa 1987, pp. 137–39; Davis 1987, pp. 287–89; and Greenspan 1988, pp. 15–16.

faulty. Admittedly, the premiss seems unexceptional, for we frequently describe emotional states by using sentences with noun clauses as direct objects, and after all, if 'Henny Penny believes that the sky is falling' describes a propositional attitude, why not assume the same thing about 'Henny Penny is afraid that the end is near'? Russell's observations about sentences with nondenoting definite descriptions supply the answer: the grammar of a sentence is not a foolproof guide to the structure of the fact it describes (1971, pp. 167–80). Thus, although the grammar in the first sentence about Henny Penny does accurately reflect a relation between her and a proposition, it does not in the second. The reflection is accurate in the first sentence because belief is a propositional attitude in the requisite sense, as are certainty, doubt, and assumption. That is, we believe propositions, are certain of them, doubt them, and so forth. It is misleading in the second because fear is not a propositional attitude in this sense. Anyone who is afraid of propositions needs to have his head examined.[18]

VIII. RATIONALITY

At the outset of this essay I mentioned two criticisms of feeling-centered conceptions that were largely responsible for the current ascendancy of cognitivism in the philosophical study of the emotions. The first of these criticisms, as we have just seen, provides no encouragement for Davidsonian theories. The second, however, does. Briefly, this criticism is that feeling-centered conceptions, because they assimilate emotions to bodily sensations, cannot explain how an emotion can sometimes be unreasonable or irrational and so (by implication) at other times be reasonable or rational. For instance, anger can be unreasonable when it is misdirected; fear can be irrational when its object is innocuous. By contrast, it would be gibberish to describe a bodily sensation, a toothache, say, as unreasonable. The criticism thus highlights something about emotions that eludes feeling-centered conceptions of them. Call it their rationality. This is a feature any Davidsonian theory is well suited to explain, for the explanations it offers represent emotions as the logical outcomes of the desires and beliefs that combine to produce them, which means that they can be described as reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational, according as the beliefs and, more controversially, the desires that combine to produce them are reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational.[19] The second criti-

18. His fear perhaps is like that of the protagonist at the end of Woody Allen's short story "The Kugelmass Episode" who, fresh from having projected himself into *Emma Bovary,* tries to inhabit *Portnoy's Complaint* but winds up in a different sort of book. "Kugelmass . . . had been projected into an old textbook 'Remedial Spanish' and was running for his life over a barren rocky terrain as 'tener' ('to have')—a large and hairy irregular verb—raced after him on its spindly legs."

19. Green (1992, pp. 93–94), e.g., holds the more controversial thesis.

cism, one could say, issues an invitation to account for the rationality of emotions, an invitation that Davidsonian theories are primed to answer.

Of course, Davidsonian theories are not the only type of cognitivist theory with a ready response to this invitation. To the contrary, any contemporary cognitivist theory should be well equipped to respond. For to conceive of emotions as containing propositional thought is to take them to have an essential element that is subject to assessments of rationality, and an emotion can then be understood to be reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational, according as the propositional thought it essentially contains is reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational. Hence, the second criticism, like the first, highlights a feature of emotions that promises to decide the dispute between feeling-centered and thought-centered conceptions of emotion in favor of the latter. The question, then, is whether the promise in this case can be fulfilled. Can contemporary cognitivists draw from this second criticism a sounder argument for their conception of emotions than can be drawn from the first?

The immediate difficulty in converting the second criticism into an argument for contemporary cognitivism is that not all experiences of emotion have the feature this criticism highlights. The emotions of animals that lack reason are obvious examples, for a state of mind is rational or reasonable either directly, that is, in virtue of the operations of reason that alone or in conjunction with the operations of other faculties produce it, or indirectly, that is, in virtue of all of its essential elements (or rather all that have rationality) being rational or reasonable. In any case, what makes the state rational or reasonable is the soundness of the relevant operation of reason, and what would then make it irrational or unreasonable is the failure of reason to operate as it should. Hence, if a creature lacks reason, it lacks the faculty whose operations are presupposed in descriptions of states of mind as rational or irrational, reasonable or unreasonable. Such descriptions do not hold of any of its states. Thus the emotions of wild animals and of small children, whose rational capacities have yet to develop, do not have the feature the second criticism highlights, from which it follows that the criticism cannot yield grounds sufficient for a general conception of emotion.

This limitation does not seem to have bothered contemporary cognitivists, however. Few even stop to comment on the emotions of creatures who lack reason, and the tendency among those who do is to wall them off from the phenomena their theories are meant to explain.[20] De Sousa, for instance, characterizes such emotions as "mere

20. Greenspan (1988, pp. 48–49) and Davis (1987, p. 304) are exceptions. They hold that the emotions of beasts, like those of humans, entail evaluations. Greenspan

responses" that fall short of being "full-fledged" intentional states and for this reason denies that they are emotions.[21] Likewise, Gordon removes them from the objects of his study, which are emotions explicable by reference to propositional thought. He classifies them instead as syndromes consisting of transfixed attention, overt behavior, and autonomic changes in the subject's physiological condition. Thus he distinguishes between "propositional fear" and "the state of fear," where the former is a type of emotion to which his analysis applies and the latter is "the flight-arousal syndrome" common to many species of mammal and "too special a phenomenon" to be caught in the net of his analysis (Gordon 1987, pp. 71–72). Both thinkers, then, argue in effect for excluding the experiences of beasts and babies from the study of emotions on the grounds that these experiences lack the requisite intentionality. This argument may well capture a view that contemporary cognitivists in general hold. And if it does, we need look no further for an explanation of their inattention to the emotions of creatures who lack reason and can quickly bring our inquiry to a close.

For the argument is merely a variation on the by now familiar fallacy of inferring propositional thought from intentionality. In this variation, it is a fallacy of equivocation. Intentionality, in the sense of being directed at an object, is a property of emotions whether or not their subjects possess reason. The emotions of antelope, for instance, though neither rational nor irrational, are not objectless states: bucks, when rutting, display anger toward their rivals; does, having given birth, show affection for their young; and the herd when under attack by some predator collectively bolts in fear of its attacker. Similarly for babies delighted with new toys, afraid of large dogs, distressed at spilt milk. Hence, cognitivists must be using the word 'intentionality' in some altered sense when they exclude emotions like these from their studies on the grounds that they lack the necessary intentionality. In this altered sense, the word describes a property of mental states that only rational creatures can experience. It thus furnishes nominal grounds for omitting phenomena that do not fit the preferred analysis, but in the absence of a sound argument for taking intentionality in this sense to be a defining property of emotions, these grounds are only nominal. Intentionality, when reintroduced into the philosophy of mind in the late nineteenth century, was proposed as the mark of the mental (Brentano 1973, p. 88). To redeploy it, as these cognitivists now do, as the mark of the rational is either to change it into a different

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offers her cat's anger at another cat as an example; Davis cites fear induced in a mouse by, e.g., a loud noise. Neither, however, explains how the animal in question came to have the operative concept. So the objections to such a view given in Sec. VI apply.

21. De Sousa 1987, p. 101 (see pp. 181–82 for characterization of primitive emotions as mere responses).

notion while illicitly retaining its application to a wider range of mental phenomena or to risk commitment to Descartes's preposterous thesis that only rational creatures have minds.

It would be ungenerous, though, to insist that cognitivist inattention to the emotions of beasts and babies is due to cognitivist confusion of a mark of the mental for a mark of the rational. An alternative explanation is that contemporary cognitivists see their study as falling within the field of human psychology, a field that, unlike the fields of animal and infant psychology, concerns the thoughts and feelings, powers and susceptibilities, of rational creatures. Consequently, one should not expect their accounts of various emotions to extend to the emotions of creatures who lack reason, and the failure of those accounts to be so extendable is therefore no threat to the soundness of their theories. According to this explanation, contemporary cognitivists understand the relevant dispute to be a dispute over different conceptions of human emotion, which is emotion of the sort to which normal, adult human beings are liable, and given this understanding, no fact about the emotions of beasts and babies can defeat the conversion of the second criticism into an argument for the contemporary cognitivists' conception.

Clearly, this alternative explanation justifies cognitivist inattention to the emotions of beasts and babies only if it does not derive from a distinction between human beings and other animals that is as implausible as Descartes's. It could not, for instance, rest on the supposition that the human soul was ontologically distinct from the souls of animals who lacked reason. The Aristotelianism implicit in this supposition would be no advance over the Cartesianism suggested by de Sousa's and Gordon's remarks. In general, the distinction from which the explanation derives must, to be plausible, be compatible with our understanding of human, animal, and infant psychology as branches of natural science. Whatever differences in psychological capacities exist between humans and beasts, or grown-ups and babies, they cannot, consistent with evolutionary biology and developmental psychology, imply that mature human thought and feeling are phenomena utterly incomparable to their bestial and infantile counterparts.

Of course, what marks human beings as rational creatures and sets them apart from other species and the very immature of their own species is the special importance of language in human life. Its pervasive impact on human thought and feeling is obvious to anyone upon self-reflection. Human beings, as they mature, learn to speak and to encode their thoughts in language.[22] As their facility for language improves and the store of their encoded thoughts enlarges, they de-

22. I mean 'thoughts' in the broad sense here.

velop an increasingly powerful system of beliefs on which they rely in negotiating their way through life. At some point, perhaps fairly early in this process, the system of beliefs a person develops becomes sufficiently influential in his or her life that it shapes and orients every experience beyond those of simple reflex. It makes sense, then, in studying the thoughts and feelings, powers and susceptibilities, of mature human beings to regard belief as a ubiquitous factor and to assume that transitions of thought in the human mind often track logical relations among beliefs. Thus, to the student of psychology, the contents and workings of the human mind are so infused with belief and rational process as to distinguish their study from that of the minds of beasts and babies. Here is a plausible distinction between human psychology, on the one hand, and animal and infant psychology, on the other, that warrants treating the former as a separate field from the latter. Here is a distinction that contemporary cognitivists could invoke to justify restricting the scope of their theory to human emotions.

Yet contemporary cognitivists would be no closer to converting the second criticism into an argument for their conception of emotion if they invoked this distinction to avoid the difficulty that the emotions of beasts and babies create for them. The difficulty would remain because the distinction, being based on the observation that belief is ubiquitous in human experience, implies only that belief is always present in experiences of human emotion and not that it is, in every case, an essential element of such experiences. Consequently, the distinction, when applied to emotions, does not yield an account of the rationality of human emotions that supports the contemporary cognitivists' conception of them. It yields, rather, an account that renders the rationality of human emotions insufficient as grounds for conceiving of them as containing propositional thought as an essential element.

What creates the insufficiency is the fact that an emotion can be infused with belief and nonetheless be intelligible without regard to any of the beliefs that permeate it. Thus, while fear of a plummeting stock market, to recur to an earlier pair of examples, would be unintelligible without regard to the subject's beliefs about stock markets and finance, fear of falling as one looks down from a precipice is intelligible regardless of the beliefs the subject has as he contemplates the fall. And while the former fear would be reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational, according as the subject's beliefs about stock markets and finance were sound or faulty, which is to say, according as one attributes those beliefs to sound or faulty reasoning, the latter fear could not be reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational, in the same way. This point is best seen in cases of unreasonable fear of falling, where the subject feels the emotion upon looking down from a precipice despite knowing that he is perfectly safe. In such cases, what

makes the fear unreasonable is not that it contains a faulty belief but rather that it is felt despite a sound belief that should have immunized its subject from feeling this fear. What makes it unreasonable, that is, is not faulty reasoning resulting in false thoughts but rather the persistence of a tropism that should have yielded to sound reasoning and firm belief. A person can be unreasonable when he fails to listen to reason as well as when he speaks nonsense. Likewise, an emotion can be unreasonable when it fails to respond to reason as well as when it contains false thoughts that are due to faulty reasoning. And when an emotion is unreasonable because it fails to respond to reason, one cannot infer from its being unreasonable that it contains propositional thought as an essential element.

Human emotions, on this account of their rationality, include some that are not originally responsive to reason. These, we may assume, are the primitive emotions discussed in Section VI. A child's primitive emotions become responsive to reason, then, as the child learns to speak and begins to develop a system of beliefs that expands and alters its understanding of the world. Part of what the child learns is to recognize certain objective conditions, and to respond to them, as distinct from the merely sensory phenomena to which it responds instinctively. It learns, for instance, to distinguish what is harmful from what is merely scary, what is rotten from what is merely foul. Acquiring the concepts of these objective conditions and the understanding of the world that having these concepts entails weakens the impact of the sensory phenomena, the scary and the foul. Accordingly, the child's susceptibilities to fear and disgust change. While it may continue to feel uneasy in the presence of large dogs, say, it is no longer afraid of them and may at some point cease even to regard them as scary; while it may continue to dislike liver, it is no longer disgusted by it, and the dish may at some point cease even to taste foul. These emotions, in being educated, as it were, for governance by the conceptual understanding of the world one acquires, thus become responsive to reason.

To be sure, once this happens, their rationality will fit the contemporary cognitivists' account. But with some emotions it may not happen. Some emotions may never become completely responsive to reason, for one's susceptibilities to them in certain circumstances may be so fixed that they do not change as one learns to speak and develops a system of beliefs. These emotions are to that extent ineducable. Accordingly, experiences of them in the relevant circumstances will be irrational or unreasonable in a way that eludes the contemporary cognitivists' account, though a better description of some would be that they lacked rationality altogether since their unresponsiveness to reason is normal whatever the subject's stage of development and socialization. In this case, they tell directly against the contemporary

cognitivists' conception, for that conception implies that rationality is a universal feature of human emotion. In either case, then, the account of the rationality of emotions that a plausible distinction between human and animal psychology yields does not support the contemporary cognitivists' conception. Short of assuming an obsolete metaphysics of the soul like Descartes's or Aristotle's, contemporary cognitivists cannot find in the second criticism of feeling-centered conceptions a basis for the one they favor.

IX. CONCLUSION

Current philosophical writing on emotions regularly contains discussions of fear and anger. Discussions of hope, pride, compassion, envy, and grief are also common. Love too is frequently discussed. It is not always treated as an emotion, though, and when it is, it is usually conceived of an an emotion of friendship independent of romance or amorous feeling. Indeed, in the current literature, the latter forms of love, particularly sexual passion and erotic desire, are virtually ignored. This fact should not come as a surprise, however. Contemporary cognitivism dominates this literature, and it would be rather hard to keep these emotions before one's mind and at the same time expound this school's characteristic view of the rationality of emotions. It thus becomes necessary to forget the truism that sexual passion and erotic desire are unresponsive to reason.

The argument of the last section, by contrast, affords an explanation of this truism. Amorous feeling is normally excited by sensory experience or fantasy. The impact on our psyche of the sensory phenomena of male or female beauty, depending, as we now say, on our sexual preference, which is to say, depending on which sex attracts us, does not obviously weaken with the development of a conceptual understanding of the world. In some people, of course, the susceptibility to such emotion becomes severely repressed because the conceptual understanding they acquire includes beliefs intolerant of deviant sexual desire. And presumably the demands of monogamy and the beliefs that support them make some repression of sexual desire unavoidable in most people. Nonetheless, for many the development of a system of beliefs, rather than bring repression of or immunization from amorous feeling induced by the sight of human beauty, enriches and makes more articulate those experiences. No one has captured this phenomena better than Proust. In a wonderfully observed passage, he first writes of the early stirrings in a teenage boy's soul brought by the sight of a girl, glimpsed momentarily from a carriage that is rapidly returning home at the end of the day. Then he generalizes.

> If our imagination is set going by the desire for what we may not possess, its flight is not limited by a reality completely perceived, in these casual encounters in which the charms of the

> passing stranger are generally in direct ratio to the swiftness of our passage. If only night is falling and the carriage is moving fast, whether in town or country, there is not a female torso, mutilated like an antique marble by the speed that tears us away and the dusk that drowns it, but aims at our heart, from every turning in the road, from the lighted interior of every shop, the arrows of Beauty, that Beauty of which we are sometimes tempted to ask ourselves whether it is, in this world, anything more than the complementary part that is added to a fragmentary and fugitive stranger by our imagination over stimulated by regret. [Proust 1934, vol. 1, p. 540]

What Proust describes is a paradigm of an experience of primitive emotion infused with and altered by belief but nonetheless intelligible without it. What he describes defies the various attempts surveyed in this article to represent all our emotions as civilized experiences, to render them all answerable to reason.

There has been plenty of movement in the philosophical study of emotions over the past thirty years. How much of it counts as progress, however, is hard to say.

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