



Explaining Emotions

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EXPLAINING EMOTIONS *

SOMETIMES our emotions change straightaway when we learn that what we believed is not true. The grieving husband recovers when he learns that, because she missed her plane, his wife did not die in the fatal plane crash. But often changes in emotions do not appropriately follow changes in belief. Their tenacity, their inertia, suggests that there is *akrasia* of the emotions; it reveals the complex structure of their intentionality.¹

I want to examine the strategies we use to explain cases of unexpected conservation of emotions: those which seem to conflict with a person's judgments and those which appear to have distorted our perceptions and beliefs, making them uncharacteristically resistant to change or correction.² I shall begin with complex cases, so that we will be forced to uncover layers of explanation that need not normally be brought into play in what are taken to be the standard cases. When people act or react in ways that can be explained by reasonable beliefs and desires, we tend to suppose that these beliefs and desires are the causes of their behavior. We then try to construct our explanations of the more complex cases, using only what was necessary to explain the simple ones. Not surprisingly, we often then find that we are left with bizarre cases at the margins of our theory: self-deception, *akrasia*, and the irrational conservation of emotions. By beginning with fringe cases, we may find the more complex structures which underlie the apparently straightforward cases but which are difficult to discern when everything is going as we expect. One of the difficulties of our enterprise is that of specifying the psychological principles that rationalize a person's beliefs and desires, his interpretations and responses. When an

* Many people contributed to the writing of this essay. It grew out of conversations with Kathryn Morgan and Ronald de Sousa; Ernest Loevinsohn and Adam Morton helped shape an early draft. Jonathan Bennett and Georges Rey showed me how to eliminate some unnecessarily Baroque elaborations; Mark Johnson and Graeme Marshall gave me some distinctions when I needed them most. I am also grateful to the participants of a number of seminars where I have read this paper.

¹ The contrast between voluntary actions and involuntary passions is generally too sharply drawn. For an account of the degrees in the voluntary control and redirection of the emotions, see Iris Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," in *The Sovereignty of the Good* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: Schocken Books, 1970).

² As Russell Dancy and Nancy Cartwright have pointed out to me, an emotion need not be irrational or inappropriate to be anomalous: it may simply be out of character. Identifying an emotion as anomalous can, but need not, presuppose a normative judgment. Michael Stocker convinced me that even apparently appropriate and rational responses can be baffling: the question "Why did he do *that*?" always has a purchase.

emotion appears to be anomalous, and its explanation requires tracing its etiology, it is difficult to identify the intentional object of the emotion without constructing its rationale, if not actually its justification. But accurately describing a person's beliefs and attitudes, especially when they involve *akrasia* or the apparently inappropriate conservation of the emotions, often involves attributing false beliefs, apparently irrational intentional sets.³ Sometimes it is implausible and inaccurate to explain an inappropriate attitude by attributing a belief or desire that would rationalize it, because the apparently anomalous emotion is embedded in a system of other inappropriate attitudes or false beliefs. Yet explaining a person's condition requires tracing its causal history, reconstructing the details of a ramified, gradually changing intentional system of attitudes, beliefs, habits of attention and focusing. Constructing the causal history often involves reconstructing a rationale: the problem is to determine at what point in that history to apply some modified version of the principle of charity.⁴ Often it is accurately applied only quite far back in the person's psychological history, to explain the formation of pre-propositional but intentional habits of salience, organization, and interpretation. It is these which, through later intervening beliefs and attitudes—many of them false and inappropriate—explain the conservation of emotions. When so applied, the principle of charity is modified: it accounts for the coherent appropriateness of the *formation* of a person's intentional system without maximizing agreement on the number of true be-

³ A person's emotion is irrational if correcting the false belief presupposed by the emotion fails to change it appropriately or if the person uncharacteristically resists considerations that would standardly move him/her to correct the belief. But an emotion can be irrational even if the presupposed belief is true; for the true belief presupposed by an emotion need not be its cause, even when the person does genuinely hold it. The emotion may be caused by beliefs or attitudes that bear no relation to the true belief that would rationalize it. An emotion can be inappropriate when there is no irrationality: the emotion may be too strong or too weak, out of balance with other emotions that are appropriate. Irrational emotions can sometimes be perfectly appropriate to the situations in which they occur. The rationality or irrationality of an emotion is a reflection of the relation between its causes and the beliefs that are taken to justify them: judging the rationality of an emotion requires knowing its etiology. Both judgments of rationality and of appropriateness involve conceptions of normality that have normative force. Disagreements about the classification of an emotion often disguise disagreements about what is wholesome or right.

⁴ Cf. W. V. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 57–61; Donald Davidson, "Belief and the Basis of Meaning," *Synthese*, xxvii, 3/4 (1974): 309–323. For some modifications of the principle, see Richard E. Grandy, "Reference, Meaning and Belief," this JOURNAL, lxx, 14 (Aug. 16, 1973): 439–452; and Colin McGinn, "Charity, Interpretation, and Belief," *ibid.*, lxxiv, 9 (September 1977): 521–535.

liefs. It is not the belief or emotion that is rationalized, but a person's coming to have it.

Emotions do not form a natural class. A set of distinctions that has generally haunted the philosophy of mind stands in the way of giving good descriptions of the phenomena. We have inherited distinctions between being active and being passive; between psychological states primarily explained by physical processes and psychological states not reducible to nor adequately explained by physical processes; distinctions between states that are primarily nonrational and those which are either rational or irrational; between voluntary and nonvoluntary states. Once these distinctions were drawn, types of psychological activities were then parceled out *en bloc* to one or another side of the dichotomies. That having been done, the next step was to argue reclassification: to claim that perception is not passive but active, or that the imagination has objective as well as subjective rules of association. Historically, the list of emotions has expanded as a result of these controversies. For instance, the opponents of Hobbes, wanting to secure benevolence, sympathy, and other disinterested attitudes as counterbalances to self-interest, introduced them as sentiments with motivational power. Passions became emotions and were classified as activities. When the intentionality of emotions was discussed, the list expanded still further: *ressentiment*, aesthetic and religious awe, anxiety and dread were included. Emotions became affects or attitudes. As the class grew, its members became more heterogeneous; the analysis became more ambiguous; and counterexamples were explained away by charges of self-deception.

When we focus on their consequences on behavior, most emotions can also be described as motives;⁵ some—but not all—emotions can also be described as feelings, associated with proprioceptive states. The objects of some emotions—exuberance, melancholy—are difficult to specify; such global states verge toward being

⁵ Cf. William P. Alston, "Feelings," *Philosophical Review*, LXXVIII, 1 (January 1969): 3-34; and "Emotion and Feeling," in Paul Edwards, ed., *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967). See also R. E. Lazarus, "Emotions and Adaptation: Conceptual and Empirical Relations," *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, 1968; P. T. Young, *Motivation and Emotions* (New York: Wiley, 1961); and Magda Arnold and J. A. Gasson, "Feelings and Emotions as Dynamic Factors in Personality Integration," in Arnold, ed., *The Nature of Emotion* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968). This anthology—and Arnold's *Emotion and Personality* (New York: Columbia, 1960)—contain an excellent selection of papers, surveying current psychological theories of the emotions.

moods.⁶ Still other emotions come close to being dispositional character traits: we speak of vengeful or affectionate persons. But when we speak of a psychological state as an emotion, contrasting it to feelings, motives, moods, or character traits, we focus on the effects of our intentional states—perceptions and descriptions—on us.⁷

The causal history of our emotions, the significant events that form our habits of response, affects our conceptions of their objects. There are three closely interwoven strands in that causal history: (1) the formative events in a person's psychological past, the development of patterns of intentional focusing and salience, habits of thought and response; (2) the socially and culturally determined range of emotions and their characteristic behavioral and linguistic expressions; and (3) a person's constitutional inheritance, the set of genetically fixed threshold sensitivities and patterns of response. Because the social and genetic factors were assumed to be shared or invariable, their effects always appearing within a person's psychological history, we have treated them, when we focused on them at all, as fixed background conditions. But they are essential to the full account, and often critical in explaining apparent anomalies: their contribution to that explanation does not simply reduce to a variant of individual psychological explanation.⁸ I shall, however,

⁶ But cf. Michael Tanner, "Sentimentality," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, LXXVII (1977): 127-147, who describes a range of objectless (and sometimes pointless) emotions.

⁷ J. de Rivera, "A Structural Theory of the Emotions," (New York: International Universities Press, 1977).

⁸ For discussions of genetic and physiological determinants of emotions, see Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: Appleton, 1896); and D. Hamburg, "Emotions in the Perspective of Human Evolution," in Peter Knapp, ed., *Expression of the Emotions in Man* (New York: International Press, 1963). See also: Paul Ekman, "Darwin and Cross-cultural Studies of Facial Expression," in his *Darwin and Facial Expression: A Century of Research in Review* (New York: Academic Press, 1973); Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth, *Emotion in the Human Face* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1972); and Ekman, *Unmasking the Face* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975); Silvan A. Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Springer, 1962/3); and C. E. Izard, *The Face of Emotion* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971). For discussions of cultural and social factors, see John Middleton, ed., *From Child to Adult: Studies in the Anthropology of Education* (New York: Natural History Press, 1970). The essays by Margaret Mead, Meyer Fortes, and Dorothy Eggan are especially useful for an account of the socialization of the emotions. See also Hildred Geertz, "The Vocabulary of the Emotions," *Psychiatry*, xxii (1959); and Jean Briggs, *Never in Anger* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1970). For a controversy about the priority of social structure and "basic" human sentiments, see Rodney Needham, *Structure and Sentiment* (Chicago: University Press, 1962); and George Homans, *Sentiments and Activities* (New York: Free Press, 1962). For a general discussion of the genetic and the social determinants of emotions, see my forthcoming

abstract from the social and genetic factors, and concentrate on the intentional components in the formation of a person's individual emotional dispositions.

I. CAUSES, OBJECTS, TARGETS

Jonah, a newswriter, resents Esther, his editor, whom he thinks domineering, even tyrannical. But as bosses go, Esther is exceptionally careful to consult with the staff, often following consensus even when it conflicts with her judgment. His colleagues try to convince Jonah that Esther's assignments are not demeaning, her requests not arbitrary. Jonah comes to believe he was mistaken in thinking her actions dictatorial; he retreats to remarking that she derives secret pleasure from the demands that circumstances require. Where his colleagues see a smile, he sees a smirk. After a time of working with Esther, Jonah realizes that she is not a petty tyrant, but he still receives her assignments with a dull resentful ache; and when Anita, the new editor, arrives, he is seething with hostility even before she has had time to settle in and put her family photographs on her desk. Although many of the women on the secretarial staff are more hard-edged in mind and personality than either Esther or Jonah, he regards them all as charmingly endowed with intuitive insight. He patronizes rather than resents them.

To understand Jonah's plight, we need distinctions. We are indebted to Hume for the distinction between the object and the cause of emotions. But that distinction needs to be refined before we can use it to understand Jonah's emotional condition. In the case of the husband who believed his wife had been killed in a plane crash, the precipitating or immediate cause of the man's grief is hearing a newscast announcing the fatal crash of the plane his wife intended to take. But of course the newscast has such a powerful effect on him because normally such news stories are themselves effects of the significant cause of his grief: her death in the fatal plane crash. Often when we find emotions puzzling, it is because we do not see why the immediate cause should have such an effect.

The significant cause of an emotion is the set of events—the entire causal history—that explains the efficacy of the immediate or precipitating cause. Often the significant cause is not in the immediate past; it may be an event, or a series of events, long forgotten, that formed a set of dispositions which are triggered by the immediate cause. Tracing the full causal story often involves more than locating initial conditions or identifying immediate causes:

article, "Genetic and Social Explanations of Emotional Dispositions," and that of James Averill, "Emotions and Anxiety," in M. Zuckerman and C. D. Spielberger, eds., *Emotions and Anxiety* (New York: Wiley, 1976).

it requires analyzing the magnetizing effects of the formation of our emotional dispositions, habits of thought as well as habits of action and response.⁹ Magnetizing dispositions are dispositions to gravitate toward and to create conditions that spring other dispositions. A magnetized disposition to irascibility not only involves a set of specific low thresholds (e.g., to frustration or betrayal); it also involves looking for frustrating conditions, perceiving situations as frustrating. It not only involves wearing a chip on one's shoulder; it involves looking for someone to knock that chip off. Magnetizing dispositions need not by themselves explain actions or attitudinal reactions: they can do so indirectly, by characterizing the *type* of beliefs, perceptions, and desires a person is likely to have. Such traits determine actions and reactions by determining the *selective* range of a person's beliefs and desires.¹⁰ The genesis of a magnetizing disposition need not always lie in an individual's particular psychological history; such dispositions are often acquired, along with other characteristically culture-specific intentional sets and motives, as part of a person's socialization. It is because significant causes often produce magnetizing dispositions that they are successful in explaining the efficacy of the immediate causes of an emotion: they explain not only the response, but the tendencies to structure experience in ways that will elicit that characteristic response.

In order to understand the relation between the immediate and the significant cause, we need refinements in the account of the objects of the emotions. The immediate object of an emotion is characteristically intentional, directed and referring to objects under descriptions that cannot be substituted *salva affectione*.¹¹ Standardly,

⁹ This terminology is meant to be neutral between competing analyses of causality and of the logic of dispositional terms. I shall speak of dispositions and habits interchangeably; but I want to examine the relation between the cause of a disposition and its triggering conditions, and to alert us to the possibility that the component "elements" of a disposition may be quite heterogeneous. I would hope that the account of dispositions—as it finally emerges from the specialists concentrating on that issue—will show us why and how some dispositions have a magnetizing momentum of their own: the more they are acted upon, the more likely it is, the easier it becomes, to fall into that way of responding.

¹⁰ For an excellent account of how traits dispose a person to have characteristic *sorts* of beliefs and desires, see N. Hirschberg, "A Correct Treatment of Traits," unpublished manuscript.

¹¹ Cf. G. E. M. Anscombe, "On the Grammar of 'Enjoy'," this JOURNAL, LXIV, 19 (Oct. 5, 1967): 607-614; Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will* (New York: Humanities, 1963), chs. 1-3; D. F. Pears, "The Causes and Objects of Some Feelings and Psychological Reactions," *Ratio*, IV, 2 (December 1962): 91-111; George Pitcher, "Emotion," *Mind*, LXXIV, 295 (July 1965): 326-346; Irving Thalberg, "Constituents and Causes of Emotion and Action," *Philosophical Quarterly*, XXIII, 90 (January 1973): 1-14.

the immediate object not only is the focus of the emotion, but is also taken by the person as providing its ground or rationale. The immediate target of the emotion is the object extensionally described and identified. I shall refer to a person's emotion-grounding description of the target as *the intentional component of the emotion*, to his having that description as his *intentional state*, and to the associated magnetized disposition as his *intentional set*. Of course a person need not be able to articulate the intentional component of his emotions. Ascriptions of emotion, like ascriptions of belief, are inferences to the best explanation.¹²

A person's intentional set may fail to ground the emotion because the target does not in fact have the relevant properties, or because it does not have them in the configuration with the centrality that would ground the emotion, or because it does not in fact exist: the description does not succeed in referring. The difficulties of ascribing intentional states and those of referring in opaque contexts are no more (and no less) devastating in ascribing emotions than they are elsewhere.¹³ When an otherwise perceptive and reasonable person widely and persistently misdescribes matters or persistently responds in a way that apparently conflicts with his beliefs, we first try standard strategies for explaining misperceptions and errors. Sometimes, indeed, we persuade a person that his emotion is unfounded; and sometimes this is sufficient for the emotion to change.

When an emotion remains intractable or an anomalous intentional set persists, we suspect that the emotion is rooted in habits of selective attention and interpretation whose activation is best explained by tracing them back to the significant causes of a magnetized disposition.¹⁴ The causal story of that formation can take

¹² Cf. Gilbert H. Harman, "Knowledge, Reasons, and Causes," this JOURNAL, LXVII, 21 (Nov. 5, 1970): 841-855. Harman's solution to the Gettier problem provides an analogue to my account of the conservation of the emotions. But, as Brian Skyrms pointed out to me, and as Bas C. van Fraassen has shown in "The Pragmatics of Explanation," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, xiv, 2 (April 1977): 143-150, the phrase 'inference to the best explanation' is incomplete: apparently competing claims are sometimes compatible because there are different questions at issue. For instance, sometimes we want to know why a person has that emotion (is resentful rather than hurt) and sometimes we want to know why his emotion is directed to that object (why he is angry with his son rather than his boss).

¹³ Cf. Keith S. Donellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions," *Philosophical Review*, LXXV, 3 (July 1966): 281-304; and Saul Kripke, "Naming and Necessity," in Davidson and Harman, eds., *Semantics of Natural Language* (Boston: Reidel, 1972), esp. pp. 269-272, 301-303.

¹⁴ Cf. H. Hartmann, "Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation," in *Essays on Ego Psychology* (London: Hogarth, 1964); and Hartmann, E. Kris, and

several forms. For instance, we might suspect that Jonah resents Esther because he now is, or once was, resentful of his mother. In such cases his mother may be the (acknowledged or unacknowledged) target of his emotions, and Esther only the front for that target. But Jonah's mother need not be the explanatory target—acknowledged or not—of Jonah's emotion; she may simply have been a crucial part of the significant cause of Jonah's magnetized disposition to structure and interpret situations by locating some female figure whom he sees as hostile and domineering, a figure who, so seen, grounds his resentment. Which of the various alternatives best explains Jonah's condition is a matter for extended investigation; we would have to examine a wide range of Jonah's responses, interpretations, and emotions under different conditions. In any case, our best explanatory strategy is: When in doubt about how the immediate target and precipitating cause explain the emotion, look for the significant cause of the dispositional set that forms the intentional component of the emotion.¹⁵

II. HABITS AND INTENTIONAL SETS

To see how finding the significant cause can help us reconstruct the rationale of the intentional component of the emotion, we need to examine the composition of the significant cause. An important part of the history of Jonah's condition will show us what we need.

Not only does Jonah regard women in high places with resentment and hostility; he also suffers from nightmares and, sometimes, from obsessive terrors. Both have a recurring theme: his mother is trying to kill him. Moreover, he loathes scarves, refusing to wear them even in the coldest, dampest weather. No matter what wonderful things have just happened to him, he breaks into an anxious sweat when he walks through the scarf section at Woolworth's. His mother, a gruff, brusque woman, used to swathe him in scarves that she knitted herself. But she always bought the itchiest wool imaginable; and when she bundled him up in winter, she used to tie the scarf with a swift harsh motion, pulling it tightly around his throat. She had never come

R. Lowenstein, *Papers on Psychoanalytic Psychology* (New York: International Universities Press, 1964).

¹⁵ One might worry that this involves the sort of circularity that is supposed to trouble claims that the reasons that sometimes cause actions also identify them. But Davidson, among others, has made headway in answering these objections by distinguishing action-types and action-events. These solutions can be transposed to emotion contexts. Cf. Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," this JOURNAL, LX, 23 (Nov. 7, 1963): 685-700; and Anscombe, *Intention* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1958, pp. 11, 45/6). A different solution is proposed by Alvin Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

close to trying to kill him. She was in fact an affectionate woman, but an awkward one. Certainly she was occasionally ambivalent, and sometimes exasperated and angry. It was because Jonah was sensitive to the negative undertones of her attitudes (a sensitivity that had an explanation of its own) that he felt the pressure of the scarf as painful rather than as reassuring or comforting.

To understand what has happened to Jonah, we must examine several components of the significant causes of his nightmares, phobias, terrors. When children remember events as attacks, they may be picking up genuine undercurrents in the behavior of those around them. Adults often behave with hostility without attacking, seductively without trying to seduce. Because children are unable to place the undercurrents they discern in the context of a person's whole psychological character, they magnify what frightens them. But the "fantasy" often rests on something perceived. Perception, magnified or distorted interpretation, and fantasy shade off into one another, often in ways that can only be distinguished with the benefit of theory-laden hindsight.

But let us suppose that what Jonah's mother did would not in itself have been sufficient to form his emotional dispositions. His perceptions of the attitudes that determined her manner toward him are essential ingredients in the causal story of his condition. There were not two events, two significant causes: the tying of the scarf and the tying of it in a way that pained Jonah. In such situations it is often necessary not only to identify the significant cause by an extensional description (scarf tied at speed so-and-so, pressure so-and-so), but also to see it through the eyes of the beholder. When we understand that both components of the significant cause—the scarf tightly tied and Jonah's feeling that tying as painful—are fused in the forming of Jonah's emotional dispositions, we can see how locating the significant cause can help us reconstruct the emotion-grounding description that links the intentional component of Jonah's emotion to its immediate cause and target.

Because the intentional component of the significant cause and the intentional component of the apparently anomalous emotion do not always fall under the same description, it is not always as easy to spot the significant cause as, in this post-Freudian age, it has been easy to locate, almost without stopping to think, the significant cause—and even in this case, the explanatory target—of Jonah's emotion. Nor need the significant cause involve a particular set of events that fused and formed the person's magnetized dispositions, the patterns of salience and attention. The causal story is likely to

involve idiosyncratic beliefs and associations, many difficult to recover or articulate. In any case, our motto can now be made more precise: When in doubt about the rationale of an emotion, look for the intentional component of the significant cause of the dispositional set that forms the intentional component of the emotion.

But we are not yet through explaining Jonah's condition, for we do not yet have an account of his tendency to focus on the minimally harsh manner of his mother's scarf-tying ways, his interpreting her actions as hostile. It might seem as if we have re-introduced our original problem—the problem of explaining an anomalous emotional reaction—at an earlier stage. Jonah's perceiving his mother as hostile is an essential part of the significant cause of his phobias and his troubles with lady bosses. Nevertheless, if only Jonah and not his brother Abednego has this intentional set, although Abednego was also tightly swathed in itchy scarves, we have not got the significant cause in all its glory: though our explanation is fuller, it is not yet complete.

To understand why the usually perceptive Jonah so misperceived his mother's attitudes, I must tell you more of his story.

Jonah was the eldest of the children. During his childhood, his father the Major was given army leave only to return home for short visits. At an appropriate time after one of these visits, Abednego was born. Since his mother was on her own at the time, Jonah was sent off to stay with his adored grandfather while his mother was in the hospital. Now the truth of the matter is that the adored grandfather loathed his daughter-in-law, whom he saw as a domineering angry woman, the ruination of his son. Without intending to do so, Jonah's grandfather conveyed these attitudes to Jonah, who at that time was apprehensive of losing his mother's affections. Susceptible to the influence of a figure who represented his absent father, he found in his grandfather's attitudes the confirmation and seal of what might have been a passing mood. His grandfather's perspective became strongly entrenched as his own.

We now have an account of why a reasonable person might, in a perfectly reasonable way, have developed an intentional set which, as it happens, generates wildly askew interpretations and reactions.¹⁶ But have we found a stopping place, thinking we've ex-

¹⁶ Cf. Rousseau, *Fragments pour 'Emile'*: "Nos passions sont des instruments spirituels dont la nature arme notre coeur pour la defense de notre personne et de tout ce qui est necessaire à notre bien être. Plus donc nous avons besoin de choses étrangères, plus d'obstacles peuvent nous nuire, plus aussi nos passions sont nombreuses et exaltées; elles se mesurent naturellement sur les besoins de notre coeur."

plained an anomalous attitude simply because we have come to a familiar platitude? Perhaps: that is a risk explanations run; but if we have stopped too soon, at a place that requires further explanation, we can move, whenever the need arises, further back in the causal story. And indeed, we may want explanations of reactions that are not at all anomalous: we can ask why an accurate perception or a true belief has the form it does, why a person focused on matters *this* way rather than that.

The principle of charity is now seen to be very general in scope. Characteristically, it is best applied to the intentional components of the significant causes of magnetizing dispositions, where it accounts for a range of attitudes and beliefs (without necessarily maximizing agreement on truth), rather than to individual episodic beliefs. Moreover, its use presupposes not only that we have a certain gravitational attraction toward truth, but that we are also endowed with a wide range of psychological dispositions that determine the ways in which we acquire beliefs and attitudes. These dispositions are quite varied: some are neurophysiological determinants of perceptual salience (e.g., red being more salient than grey under standard background and contrast conditions); others are psychological in character (e.g., the dominance order of emotions under standard conditions: fear displacing and re-organizing the emotional field in characteristic patterns); still others are psychosocial (e.g., the effects of mass hysteria on individual preference rankings). In short, when we try to apply the principle of charity to those places where it best explains and identifies the range of our attitudes, its canonic formulation is so modified as to disappear as a special principle.

But having come to the end of Jonah's story, have we come to the end of an account of how we explain emotions? Our questions seem now to multiply: Will we, in tracing the significant cause to an appropriate stopping point, always still introduce an intentional component of the significant cause? Are we to interpret young Jonah's tendency to take on the intentional set of a figure who stands in a certain relation to him as itself an intentional set? Or do significant causes of magnetizing dispositions sometimes have no intentional component of their own? We do not know enough about the neurophysiology and psychology of early learning to know what constraints should be set on our philosophical theory. In any case, an account of the etiology of the intentional components of emotional dispositions is nestled within a general psycho-

logical theory: it is inseparable from theories of perception and theories of motivation. The holistic character of mental life makes piecemeal philosophical psychology suspect.

Since air-tight arguments have vacuous conclusions, it would be folly to stop speaking at the point where we must start speculating.

There are good, but by no means conclusive, reasons for recognizing a gradation between beliefs in propositional form and quasi-intentions which can also be physically or extensionally identified. Let us distinguish:

(1) beliefs that can be articulated in propositional form, with well-defined truth conditions;

(2) vague beliefs in sentential form whose truth conditions can be roughly but not fully specified ("It is better to have good friends than to be rich." "Men in Islamic countries tend to have sexist attitudes.");

(3) specific patterns of intentional salience that can be formulated as general beliefs (A pattern of focusing on aspects of women's behavior construed as domineering or hostile rather than as competent or insecure might in principle be treated as a set of predictions about the behavior of women under specific conditions.);

(4) intentional sets that cannot be easily formulated as beliefs (A pattern of focusing on the military defensibility of a landscape, rather than on its fertility or aesthetic composition, cannot be so easily formulated as a set of predictions about the benefits of giving priority to military defense over fertility or aesthetic charm. Nor can such patterns of salience be translated straightforwardly as preference rankings. For instance, a painter can focus on patterns of color in a landscape rather than on its compositional lines, but the patterns and habits of his attending are quite distinct from his painterly preferences.);

(5) quasi-intentional sets that can, in principle, be fully specified in physical or extensional descriptions (e.g., other things being equal, painful sensations are standardly more salient than pleasurable ones).

For such intentional sets—patterns of discrimination and attention—the question of whether the significant cause of a magnetized intentional set has an irreducibly intentional component is an open one. Such quasi-intentional components form patterns of focusing and salience without determining the description of that pattern. A quasi-intentional set (patterns of perceptual salience under standard conditions of contrast and imprinting) can be given both

physical and intentional descriptions; in some contexts, the physicalistic descriptions can function in an explanation, without any reference to the intentional description. But in other contexts, particularly those which move from functional explanations toward interpretive or rational accounts, the intentional description is essential. Often the intentional and the quasi-intentional component of the significant cause of magnetized interpretive dispositions is ambiguous in this way: we tend to read the intentional component back into the significant cause when doing so helps rationalize the person's responses. But the intentional set that is introduced at that stage often bears a causal rather than a directly logical relation to the magnetized set produced. (The quasi-intentional set that made Jonah prone to adopt his grandfather's interpretations at just that time bears a causal but not a logical relation to the intentional set he acquired as a result of this sensitivity. But the connections between the intentional set he acquired from his grandfather and the intentional set that leads him to see Esther as domineering are logical as well as causal.)

In such cases there are physiological generalizations about the quasi-intentional states under their extensional descriptions. Although the opacity criteria for intentionality do not yet apply, it is useful to recognize that such selective sensitivities are oriented to a stimulus under a description that later does function in its fully intentional form. Holistic considerations influence us: the wider the range and the greater the complexity of behavior that is best explained by the intentional set in its fully intentional form, the more likely we are to treat the significant cause as having that intentional component, even though it need not, in its original appearance, have then functioned in its fully intentional form. (For instance, a child can be frightened *by* a clap of thunder without initially having an intentional set to interpret such sounds as danger signals. If he is ill and feverish, hearing loud sounds is painful, and, if he is generally in a weak and fearful condition, he can develop a fully intentional sensitivity, becoming frightened *of* thunder because he had been frightened *by* it.)

III. OBJECTIONS

One might wonder: Why do we need these distinctions descending like a plague to devour every living thing, transforming a once fertile plain into a desert? Why can't we explain intractable, inappropriate emotions more simply and elegantly by specifying the relevant belief that fixes the description of the target? Perhaps what

explains Jonah's resentment is that he thinks figures in authority are likely to be, or to become authoritarian. Although such beliefs are occasionally interesting and true, it is sometimes difficult to ascribe the appropriate plausible belief. Jonah does not resent Abe Zloty, the editor-in-chief, though Zloty is far more peremptory than Esther. It seems more plausible to ascribe to him the belief that when women are in a position of authority, they become insufferably authoritarian. But Jonah is a skeptical sort of fellow, who rarely leaps to generalizations, let alone wild ones. Often when we don't understand an emotion, or its intractability, we also don't understand why the person should have and hold the belief that is its intentional component. The belief "explains" the emotion only by subsuming its intentionality in a more general frame.

But our objector persists, claiming that in tracing the etiology of an emotion, intentional sets and quasi-intentions are unnecessarily complex ways of talking about beliefs or evaluative judgments. If we judge emotions for their rationality, they argue, then some belief must either be presupposed by, or embedded in, the emotion. The correction of emotions generally involves the correction of the mistaken belief.

Certainly many cases do follow such a pattern; and certainly some emotions can be identified by the full-blown beliefs that are also a part of their causal explanation. But the issue is whether the intentional component of an emotion always is a belief, and whether there are emotions that are more properly evaluated as inappropriate or harmful than as irrational.

If the intentional component of an emotion is always a belief, then the conservation of an emotion after a change of belief would always involve a conflict of beliefs. Now this may indeed sometimes occur; but often the only evidence that the person retains the abandoned belief is his emotional state. One of the reasons for resisting assimilating all intentional components of emotions to beliefs is the difficulty of stating *what* the belief is. There is sometimes no non-question-begging way of formulating a proposition *p*, where "inserting *p* in the sentence 'S believes that ____' would express the fact that the subject was in that state."¹⁷

A person may not only deny having the abandoned belief, but (with the exception of the episode in question) consistently act in

¹⁷ Cf. Stephen Stich, "Beliefs and Subdoxastic States," unpublished manuscript, p. 16. Stich gives excellent arguments for the necessity of postulating intentional states that are not beliefs. Though he is primarily concerned with perception, the argument can be generalized.

a way that supports the denial. On the view that emotions always involve beliefs, it becomes necessary to suppose that the person is massively successful in deceiving himself about the conflict between the belief embedded in the emotion and the belief implicit in the rest of his conduct. This is certainly a recognizable and even common phenomenon. It seems implausible, however, to assimilate all cases of the conservation of emotions to cases that involve a self-deceptive denial of such conflicts. No doubt much conservation is to be explained by ambivalence, and at least some ambivalence is to be understood as involving conflicting judgments, with the person deceiving himself about at least one side of a divided mind.¹⁸ But unless the claim is to be question-begging, the conservation of emotions cannot *automatically* count as grounds for attributing self-deception. Characteristically, self-deception involves quite distinctive behavior: signs of facial malaise, frozen features, certain sorts of systematic failures in action.¹⁹

Even if it were the case that—in a much revised and extended sense of belief—the intentional components of emotions were beliefs, the distinctions we have drawn would have to be re-introduced to differentiate the ways in which a person accepts or uncharacteristically ignores or refuses counterevidence. The phenomena of the conservation of emotion would then reappear as the anomalous conservation of belief. To explain such conservation, we would once again have to return to the ravenous hordes of distinctions between the immediate and the significant causes of magnetized intentional states; we would have to introduce beliefs that could not be attributed in propositional form. Explaining the anomalous conservation of belief, or its resistance to considerations or observations that would characteristically change it, would lead us to exactly the same sort of schema of causal explanation that we use in understanding the conservation of emotions.

There are objections from other quarters. Nowhere does the mind-body problem raise its ugly head with a stiffer neck than in the analysis of the thought component of the emotions. In some cases, it might be said, the significant cause isn't significant at all.

¹⁸ Cf. Robert C. Solomon, "The Logic of Emotion," *Noûs*, xi, 1 (March 1977): 41-49. For an excellent discussion of ambivalence, cf. P. S. Greenspan, "A Case of Mixed Feelings: Ambivalence and the Logic of Emotion," forthcoming in my *Explaining Emotions*, University of California Press.

¹⁹ As part of his general program of mapping the facial configurations characteristic of particular emotions, Paul Ekman has begun to specify the configuration of facial muscles associated with various forms of deception. Cf. Ekman, Friesen, Schever, "Body Movement and Voice Pitch in Deceptive Interaction," *Semiotica*, xvi (1976).

It casts no light on the rationale of the intentional component of an emotion because there is no rationale. [In the narrative epilogue at the end of *War and Peace*, Tolstoi describes the emotional condition of the aged Countess Rostoff. She needs, he says—and he suggests that this is also a physiological need—to become angry, melancholy, merry, peevish, to express the cycle of her emotional repertoire every few days. Usually the family manages to arrange matters in such a way so as to give her emotional life an air of appropriateness. But sometimes this cannot be done, and she becomes peevish in a situation in which she is normally merry. Tolstoi remarks that in infancy and old age (and we might add: in adolescence) the apparent reasonableness that we believe really conditions our adult emotional life wears thin, and emotions reveal a rhythm and pattern of their own. Tolstoi does not, unfortunately, go on to speculate whether the independent rhythm of the emotions is merely disguised in our prime, indiscernible beneath our bustling intention-directed activity, or whether it is precisely this difference that makes the emotional life of infants and the senile different from our own, that their emotions are merely coincidentally associated with the appropriate intentions.] When a person suffers from a hormonal imbalance, his emotions have one target after another, none intentionally linked to the intentional component of a significant cause. When we look for the explanation of a recalcitrant inappropriate emotion, there is sometimes no need to look deeply into the etiology of the intention: the state of the person's endocrine system is explanation enough.²⁰ The best thing to do with this objection is to accept it gracefully. It is after all true.

But we must be careful not to conclude too much. From the fact that the best explanation of a person's emotional state may sometimes be that he suffers glandular malfunction, it does not follow that, under standard conditions, explanations of emotions can be given without any appeal to beliefs or intentional states.²¹ Most

²⁰ It is common in such circumstances to deny the attribution, saying of an adrenally charged person, "Oh, he isn't angry; it's just glands." Sometimes, at any rate, we shy away from attributing an emotion because the person's condition hasn't got the right sort of causal history.

²¹ Cf. Jerome Singer and Stanley Schacter, "Cognitive, Social and Physiological Determinants of Emotional States," *Psychological Review*, LIX, 5 (September 1962): 379-399. Following Cannon, they argue that, as the same visceral changes occur both in a variety of emotional states and in non-emotional states, our perception of these changes cannot identify distinctive emotions. They also hold that "cognitions arising from the immediate situation as interpreted by past experience provide the framework within which one understands and labels feelings" (380). It is, they argue, the cognition that determines whether the state of psychological arousal will be labeled "anger," "exuberance," "fear." Their experiments led them to conclude that "emotional states may be con-

physicalistically oriented theories fill in their accounts by tracing the causal interaction between the *sorts* of physical states that are associated with being in an emotionally charged condition (generally metabolic states) with the sorts of physical states that are associated with a person's having propositional attitudes (generally brain states).²² Such physicalists do not, however, claim to be able to identify the propositional content of a person's attitudes solely by reference to physically described brain states. On this view, we would not expect to find strict physicalistic laws distinguishing Jonah's perceiving-Esther-as-Slavic and his perceiving-Esther-as-Semitic.

The zealot hard-core physicalist goes further: he proposes to identify "psychological" states as states whose descriptions eliminate all reference to intentional states and their propositional content, distinguishing Jonah's believing Esther to be bossy from his believing her to be vain, by specifying the differences in the brain states that constitute the two beliefs. It seems at the very least premature to present the results of what is an extended and only projected program of research as having provided the explanations we need, especially as hard-core zealot physicalists have yet to give us an account of how to proceed with the reductive analysis. So far, all we have are science-fiction stories about possible worlds in which the reductive analysis has taken place, "what Scientists somehow discovered" already become part of the popular culture. Until the theory is established, all the physicalist account of the emotions adds to the intentional account is the important observation that, when the best explanation of a person's emotional state is primarily physiological, then raising questions about the causal force of the

sidered a function of a state of physiological arousal and a cognition appropriate to that arousal" (398). But, "given a state of physiological arousal, for which an individual has no immediate explanation, he will label that state and describe his feelings in terms of the cognitions available to him" (398). The subject's reports of his emotions, and sometimes his behavior, can be manipulated by exposing him to modeling behavior or by misinforming him about the drugs administered to him. These classical experiments have been subjected to a variety of criticism, ranging from criticisms of experimental design to criticisms that the data do not warrant the conclusions. In any case, Singer and Schacter do not discuss whether the psychological factors they introduce can be redescribed in physical terms.

²² William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. II (New York: Holt, 1893), p. 499: "The bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact . . . and our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion." It is very difficult to establish whether or to what extent James can be called a physicalist. On the one hand, he seems to hold that particular perceptions can be distinguished from one another by their felt qualities. On the other, he does not reduce the content of propositional attitudes to extensionally described brain states.

intentional object may produce arbitrary ad hoc answers. There may be a revealing pattern in the immediate causes or objects of an adrenally charged person's various aggressive angers, but sometimes that pattern is best explained by tracing the effects of chemical changes on perception and attention.

This suggests that, for at least these sorts of cases, the physicalist and the intentionalist accounts of anomalous emotions are perfectly compatible and perhaps even complementary, physicalistically oriented theories explaining why a person is in *that* state, intentionally oriented theories explaining why the emotion has *that* intentional object. They appear to be at odds only when both theories get reductionally ambitious: when, denying overdetermination, each tries to explain all phenomena at all levels. Certainly if the intentional accounts deny that a person's hormonal state ever enters into the explanation, and if the physicalistic account denies that intentionality is ever required to explain or identify the emotional states, the two approaches will clash in an unilluminating struggle whose sterility will be masked by the parties goading each other to dazzling displays of ingenuity.²³

Does it follow that both levels of explanation, the physiological and the intentional, are necessary but neither sufficient? The situation is fortunately more complex. The physiological and the intentional aspects of our emotions do not enter into all emotions in the same way. The difference between a delicate distaste for malicious gossip in departmental politics and the terror of waking after a nightmare whose drama one has already forgotten, the difference between nostalgia-for-the-lilacs-of-yesteryear and fear in the face of a powerful danger, are differences in kind.

Some emotions are primarily associated with physical states largely affected by metabolic imbalance: malfunctions of the pituitary or adrenal glands are associated with highly specific emotional disorders, leaving the rest of a person's emotional dispositions relatively intact. Other, quite different sorts of emotional disorders are associated with some sorts of brain damage rather than with endocrinological malfunction.²⁴ Still other sorts of emotions—such cul-

²³ Cf. the controversy in John O'Connor, ed., *Modern Materialism: Readings on Mind-Body Identity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969).

²⁴ Cf. Paul MacLean, "Sensory and Perceptive Factors in the Emotional Functions of the Triune Brain," in L. Levi, ed., *Emotions, their Parameters and Measurement* (New York: Raven Press, 1975), and "The Triune Brain, Emotion and Scientific Bias," in F. O. Schmitt, ed., *The Neurosciences: Second Study Program* (New York: Rockefeller University Press, 1970). Cf. also P. Black, ed., *Physiological Correlates of Emotion* (New York: Academic Press, 1970).

turally variable ones as nostalgia or Sunday melancholy—seem difficult to associate with any particular physical condition. While the introduction of intentional apparatus seems forced in some cases, the introduction of physiological determinants is forced in others.

IV. EXPLANATION, CHANGE AND RATIONALITY

We can expect three things from the study of history: the sheer pleasure of knowing particulars; useful precepts for the important matters of life; and furthermore, because the origins of things recur in the present from the past, we acquire the best understanding of all things from a knowledge of their causes.

Leibniz, Preface to *Accessiones Historicae*

The conservation of emotions has its explanation in the conservation of habit, especially of those magnetized dispositions involved in selective attention and focused interpretation. We have concentrated primarily on that aspect of a person's psychological history which explains the formation of his characteristic intentional habits. But social and genetic factors also contribute to the causal story; the full account of the conservation of emotional habits would have to introduce these determinants as well. The three layers of explanation—the individual, the social, and the genetic—are closely interwoven. A person's constitution—his threshold to pain and to various sorts of stimuli, the structure of his glandular and nervous systems—affects the development of his intentional sets, his habits of interpretation and response. Constitutional factors (for instance, metabolic rate) influence the social roles and settings in which a person is cast; this in turn also affects the formation of his intentional sets. Sociocultural factors structure the interpretations of a person's experiences: a range of emotional responses is formed by such interpretations.²⁵ The full explanation of a person's emotions requires not only an analysis of the causal contribution of each of the three strands, but also an account of their interactions.

(But what goes without saying may need to be said: we should not be misled by talk of interaction, layers, or strands, to suppose that we are dealing with distinct variables whose causal interaction can be traced. What is variable in a theory need not be independently variable in fact. At this stage, we are still using metaphors; we are not yet entitled to suppose we have detached them as a technical vocabulary. "Biological limits" or "constraints" to sociocultural variation, physiological "determinants" of psychological or intentional processes, cultural "forms" of biological "givens": all

²⁵ Cf. Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), esp. pp. 448-453.

these expressions are borrowed from other contexts. Our vocabulary of the "interrelation" of these "domains" is crucially in the formative stage; talk of separate but interwoven explanatory strands must be treated as provisional to a developing explanatory scheme—heuristics without ontology. We have here a clear example of the encroaching constitutive character of early terminological raiding. Perhaps eventually, by tracing these cases, we shall be able to see the rewards—and the costs—of theft that cannot be distinguished from honest toil without the benefit of a program.)

It might be thought that my suggestion that emotions are not only explained but often also identified by their causal histories must be either trivial or exaggerated. No one would deny that we require more than the immediate occasion to understand the exact shades of Jonah's resentment: the images and thoughts, sensations and anticipations, the evocation of associated emotions that constitute just *that* condition. But it doesn't follow that we need a causal account to identify his condition as a case of resentment, and to explain it by his perception of Esther.

Certainly emotions are often identified in a rough way without tracing their causal histories; one need not always know why a person is angry to recognize his condition. The contexts in which they occur, their expression in speech and behavior are sufficient to identify them; their immediate contextual causes are often quite sufficient to explain them. There is, however, a rough and unexamined, but nevertheless quite specific folk psychology that stands behind, and informs such standard explanations.²⁶ The explanatory strategies that I have sketched make explicit the stages and assumptions embedded in our ready and quick contextual identifications of emotions and their intentional objects. It is because we supply the standard causal history of emotion-types that we readily identify tokens of that type.

But instances of emotion-types differ markedly from one another in their origins, their expressions in speech and action, and in their psychodynamic functions. To bring order into these heterogeneous classes, we need a much finer taxonomy of the varieties of (e.g.) anger, melancholy, envy. Such a taxonomy can be constructed by distinguishing varieties of causal histories of the intentional component of these emotions. Differences in the characteristic causal histories of their intentional components helps to explain why dif-

²⁶ Cf. Adam Morton, "The Psychological Imagination," unpublished manuscript, with an illuminating account of how in ordinary contexts we attribute and explain psychological states.

ferent instances of the same emotion-type often have different tonal and behavioral expressions. But we have been too impressed by the multiplicity of instances of emotion-types, and so have tended to distinguish different instances of the same type by the differences in their *particular* intentional objects. Certainly if we want an account of their individuation, especially in cases of overdetermination, this is necessary.²⁷ When we identify and explain a particular emotion without tracing its etiology, however, we are implicitly classifying it as a standard instance of a *variety* of the emotion-type; in doing so, we are relying upon the characteristic causal story that distinguishes that variety from others. If we thought that the causes of a person's condition conformed to none of the standard histories, we would doubt the attribution.

If this analysis is correct, then an account of how people succeed in changing emotions that they judge inappropriate or irrational closely follows the more general explanation of how people change their habits. The difficulties involved in bringing about such changes—the deep conservation of emotional habits—make the claims that emotions are choices or voluntary judgments seem implausible.²⁸ Sometimes—rarely—it is possible for some people—a happy few—to take steps to restructure their intentional sets, to revise their emotional repertoire. Sometimes secondary emotions—emotions about emotions—play a crucial role in such transformations. For instance, someone who thinks that the objects he fears are indeed dangerous, may nevertheless reasonably judge that he is too afraid of being afraid. He may think that he should not go as far as he does in order to avoid situations where there is only a remote possibility of danger. It is this secondary fear (“We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”) that impels responses the person might judge inappropriate; and it is this, rather than the first-level fear, that he might wish to change. Or it might go the other way:

²⁷ Cf. Graeme Marshall, “Overdetermination and the Emotions,” forthcoming in *Explaining Emotions*, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Cf. Solomon, “Emotions and Choices,” *Review of Metaphysics*, xxvii.1, 105 (September 1973): 20–41; and Jean-Paul Sartre, “Bad Faith,” in *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956). Of course it might also be useful to think of choices and voluntary judgments as the expressions of certain sorts of habits, and so as also evincing the problems of conservation. Sartre constructs an ontological explanation for the conservation of habits of choice: consciousness' evasion of its own non-being. More naturalistic explanations are given by Melanie Klein, “On the Development of Mental Functioning,” *Envy and Gratitude* (New York: Delta, 1975), pp. 236–246; and by John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Modern Library, 1930), part III, pp. 172–210.

a person might underwrite a second-level emotion, and wish to change its first level.²⁹

Shifts in emotional repertoires can often take quite subtle forms: someone might wish to check the standard expression or behavioral consequences of either a first- or a second-level emotion without wishing to change the habits or intentional set of having it. Although some tendency to action, often taking the form of posture or expression, is "part" of many first-level emotions, it is often possible to restrain or mask the behavior without changing the emotional set.³⁰ One of the ways of doing this is to distinguish more sharply between the varieties of instances of an emotion-type. A person might learn to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate responses by coming to see that different instances of the same type cluster together because they have the same causal history. They form a variety defined by its etiology. If he tackles his problem of identifying and overcoming inappropriate resentments separately each time, Jonah is unlikely to make much headway by learning not to resent Esther, and then learning not to resent Anita, and then Sarah, . . . and each and every woman in authority. Because he thinks some cases of resentment are perfectly justified by their causes and objects, he is unlikely to solve his problem by setting himself the task of avoiding resentment altogether. By understanding the special etiology of the variety of resentments of which his resentment of Esther is a particular instance, he can at least begin to be alert to the situations that trigger magnetized dispositions he regards as inappropriate.

The analysis of the causal history of our emotions suggests that judgments of the appropriateness of the emotions must be made on a number of different levels. It may be not only irrational but inappropriate for someone to be frightened of lions in a zoo, but it is not inappropriate to be frightened before one has had time to be reasonable, so constructed that one's fear is not immediately eradicated by one's more considered reactions. It may be irrational for Jonah to take on his grandfather's attitudes without testing

²⁹ The distinction that Harry Frankfurt has made between first-order desires and their second-order evaluations can be applied to the emotions. Cf. "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," this JOURNAL, LXVIII, v (Jan. 14, 1971): 5-20. There is, however, much more latitude in second-order emotions than there is in second-order attitudes toward desires. A person can enjoy being afraid, be angry at being afraid, regret being afraid, fear being afraid, etc.

³⁰ I am grateful to Sara Ruddick for this point, and to Jerome Neu for his discussion of it in "Jealous Thoughts," forthcoming in *Explaining Emotions*, *op. cit.*

them, irrational for him to reinterpret all the evidence that might correct his attitudes. But it is also beneficial for children to tend to absorb the intentional dispositions of the crucial figures around them, even at the cost of generating confusion and conflict. What is maladaptive in a particular case, need not be so typically; it may be highly beneficial for habitual responses to dominate rational considerations, and for them to be changed by rational considerations only with considerable difficulty. It is part of the discomforting character of our emotional life that the genetic programming and the social formation of emotional dispositions are not respecters of the rationality or the comfort of individual persons.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Language of Thought. JERRY A. FODOR. New York: Crowell, 1975. 214 p. \$10.

When Denise Levertov writes

In the Japanese
tongue of the
mind's eye, one
two syllable word
tells of . . .

she expresses a widespread intuition: that the process of making what one sees—hears, gathers—one's own is in part a matter of reconciling it with an inner code, an ideography that is somehow like a language and yet somehow exotic. It is an expressive idea, a subtle and flexible metaphor. When we take such metaphors seriously they sometimes turn out to express important truths. Fodor argues, powerfully, that this one does. He argues that there is, there has to be, a system of concepts, "discursive" like language, that is the medium of thought, and not only is independent of spoken language but underlies our ability to use it. In this review I will describe the development of his argument in terms of one recurring theme, that of the representative power of cognition. This will mean that I must ignore some interesting things in the book, but, reviewer's license aside, the argument I am tracing really is the central one.