

## Emotion and Cognition: Recent Developments and Therapeutic Practice

Michael Lacewing

Heythrop College

Kensington Square

London W8 5HQ

020 7795 4223

[m.lacewing@heythrop.ac.uk](mailto:m.lacewing@heythrop.ac.uk)

Word 2000    WC: 7,707    CC: 41,756

Michael Lacewing is lecturer in philosophy at Heythrop College, University of London. His research interests lie in the area of overlap between philosophy of mind, especially psychoanalysis, and ethics. He is author of “Emotional Self-Awareness and Ethical Deliberation”, *Ratio* XVIII, forthcoming in March 2005, and is currently working on the relation between the intentional content and feeling of an emotion and on the nature of unconscious emotion.

# Emotion and Cognition: Recent Developments and Therapeutic Practice

Michael Lacewing

Heythrop College, University of London

A review of:

Ben-Ze'ev, A. 2000. The Subtlety of Emotions. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press. 611 pp.

ISBN 0-262-02463-2 (hbk).

Goldie, P. 2000. The Emotions. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 265 pp. ISBN 0-19-925304-8

(pbk).

Helm, B. 2001. Emotional Reason: Deliberation, Motivation, and the Nature of Value,

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 261 pp. ISBN 0-521-80110-9 (hbk).

Nussbaum, M. 2001. Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions, Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press. 751 pp. ISBN 0-521-46202-9 (hbk).

Roberts, R. 2003. Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology, Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press. 357 pp. ISBN 0-521-52584-5 (pbk).

## Abstract

As is widely known, the last 25 years have seen an acceleration in the development of theories of emotion. Perhaps less well-known is that the last three years have seen an extended defense of a predominant, though not universally accepted, framework for the

understanding of emotion in philosophy and psychology. The central claim of this framework is that emotions are a form of evaluative response to their intentional objects, centrally involving cognition or something akin to cognition, in which the evaluation of the object relates to the concerns, interests, or well-being of the subject. I aim to summarize and review the work of five authors on three of the central themes of this framework, and to note some implications for the understanding of emotion in different psychotherapeutic approaches.

### Keywords

emotion, evaluation, cognition, feeling, unconscious emotion, cognitive therapy, psychodynamic psychotherapy, psychoanalysis

Since 2000, a number of book-length treatments of the theory of emotions have emerged, each defending a similar framework within which they develop their accounts. The five books reviewed include three by authors of articles that influenced the development of emotion theory in the 1990s – Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, Martha Nussbaum, and Robert Roberts – and two more recent voices, Peter Goldie and Bennett Helm. Each understands an emotion to be an evaluation of its intentional object – the person, event, or state of affairs that the emotion is about – in relation to the concerns, interests, or well-being of the subject, that centrally involves cognition, or something akin to it. There is much of merit in each of these books – including the detailed and insightful analyses of types of emotion found in Nussbaum, Ben-Ze’ev, and Roberts – that is not touched on here. These are all powerful books that will set the terms of debate for some years to come.

My purpose is to bring out three themes within the framework and briefly note some implications for cognitive and psychoanalytic therapy. But it is perhaps appropriate, in these scientific times, to note that the methodology that this framework assumes – viz. conceptual analysis drawing on psychological data – is in need of defense against the view that only evolutionary biology and neuroscience can tell us what emotions “really are” (the phrase is from Paul Griffiths (1997), who holds such a view). The most notable defense is from Roberts (2003: 14-59),<sup>1</sup> who argues that, while emotions are multifaceted phenomena, only conceptual analysis provides an understanding of emotion at the level of the person, and at this level is irreplaceable. Griffiths’ basic thesis is that scientific investigation of the emotions divides them into either ‘affect programs’ (universal physiological responses not involving higher cognitive functions) or ‘irruptive motivations’ (motivating states that depend on higher cognitive functions, but do not generally have a physiological basis, and disrupt long-term goal-seeking). In response, Roberts argues that, first, the idea that an account based on brain processes or the evolutionary history of an emotion is somehow a ‘better’ or ‘truer’ account of its nature gives an unwarranted preference to scientific explanations. If anything, if we are interested in the emotions of human beings rather than animals, preference should be given to conceptual analysis, with material from evolutionary biology and neuroscience playing an important supplementary role, for, as the work of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1994) shows, it is impossible to understand the operation of human emotions independent of the meanings with which they work. An account that takes in meaning is one that works at the level of the person, and conceptual analysis must therefore form the core of an account of (human) emotion. A further defense of conceptual analysis as a methodology is provided indirectly by the overall success of such accounts in accounting for a variety of emotional and

related phenomena. Second, Roberts argues that Damasio's demonstration that the higher cognitive brain systems, which interpret and evaluate, can activate the amygdala and other systems related to the physiology of emotion, is 'devastating' to Griffiths' basic analysis of emotions into cognitive *or* physiological (Damasio 1994: 131-9).

### Construal, Cognition, Value

So, if emotions are a form of evaluative response, what is the nature of this response? The theories under discussion all wish to describe the response in terms appropriate to cognition, while also claiming that the type of thought involved is not straightforwardly cognitive. (Cognition here should be taken in a broad sense, viz. a psychological state is cognitive if it represents the way the world is. The contrasting term is 'conative', to indicate that the intentional content of the psychological state derives from a desire about the way the subject would like the world to be.) Many of the theories argue for a strong analogy between emotion and 'quasi-perceptual' states, an analogy that Roberts (1988) originally developed through the idea of a 'construal', and whose recent treatment is the most detailed available. Nussbaum likewise argues that emotions use "the general ability to see X as Y" (2001: 5) – seeing the object as having certain evaluative properties or features (e.g. fear: seeing the object as dangerous); and that the experience of emotion "contains rich and dense perceptions of the object, which are highly concrete and replete with detail" (65). This is a shift from her earlier (1994) position, which assimilated emotions more to propositional judgments. However, while accepting that a propositional attitude analysis is fundamentally flawed, she is unwilling to give up talk of belief: it is not always easy or desirable to distinguish between seeing X as Y and believing that X is Y (2001: 28). Held adopts Roberts' talk of construals

(2001: 34), and emphasizes the ‘receptive’ nature of emotional response, but he is not explicit about the degree to which emotional construals resemble perceptual states. Goldie is perhaps closest to Roberts in emphasizing the perceptual nature of emotional thought, and is the most forceful critic of analyzing emotional ‘cognition’ in terms of beliefs (2000: 72-7). Given the centrality of construal or ‘seeing-as’ to the analyses, it is worth giving some space to an explication of the idea.

Roberts defines emotions as “concern-based construals”. In the sense he intends it, ‘construal’ means more than ‘interpretation’: “Construals have an immediacy reminiscent of sense perception. They are impressions, ways things appear to the subject; they are experiences and not just judgments or thoughts or beliefs” (2003: 75). “Experientially...a construal is not an interpretation laid over a neutrally perceived object, but a characterization of the object, a way the object presents itself” (80). Gestalt figures – such as the duck/rabbit – present simple examples of construals; one sees the figure as duck or rabbit, in neither case (unless one bends one’s will to it with some effort) as a neutral arrangement of lines. Likewise, we typically experience an instance of a person’s behavior as an action of a particular type; for example when someone raises their hand at an auction, we see them bid, which is “a perceptual experience of the raised hand in these terms” (72). For example, we would say “I saw him bid” rather than “I saw his raised hand as a bid”. The former is the more natural, and more accurate, intensional characterization of the content of the experience. So construals “involve an ‘in terms of’ relationship: one thing is perceived in terms of something else. Construals are ‘constructive’, ‘synthetic’, and ‘organic’, bringing together a variety of elements in some kind of integration” (76). However, precisely because construals integrate elements into an organic whole, these elements typically only emerge in analysis.

We do not typically characterize our experience using the language of construal or seeing one thing as another, but in language that ascribes to the object the characterization in terms of which we experience it. If I am touched by your deed, I naturally say that it was a kind deed or that you are a kind person, not that I saw the deed or you as kind.

If such is the nature of construals in general, what distinguishes emotions, and why are emotional construals not straightforwardly cognitive? For Roberts, emotions are distinguished from other types of construal by being based on the subject's concerns (desires, aversions, attachments, interests). It is this foundation in concern which makes emotions more than cognitions. However, the element of concern enters into the construal in a quasi-perceptual form. The way in which an object of emotion is 'perceived' is in terms of "some kind of importance or worthiness that is lent the object by the concern on which the emotion is based. In emotions, as in sense perception, qualities are attributed to 'the world', qualities that the world may or may not have." (147) And so "[a]s a concern-based construal the emotion makes two kinds of claims, first about what we might call the structure of the situation that the emotion is about, and second about its importance or bearing" (317).

Whereas Roberts is happy to allow any concern of the agent to generate emotion, and Goldie speaks broadly of "human...or cultural interests" (2000: 30), Ben-Ze'ev and Nussbaum attempt to provide a more precise account of the concern involved. Ben-Ze'ev, who takes a more empirical, psychological approach than the other authors, argues that "[e]motions typically occur when we perceive positive or negative significant changes in our personal situation" (2000: 13). A significant change in our personal situation is a change that "significantly interrupts or improves a smoothly flowing situation relevant to our concerns" (13). The particular form of concern involved in emotions is typically "comparative personal

concern”. The meaning and significance of a particular change is essentially relational, i.e. we understand changes in our personal situation by comparison with other actual, possible, desired, and idealized states – typically along the lines of the fortunes, actions, and qualities of others and the self (94). So I feel gratitude when you actually improve my fortune, fear when it is under possible threat, shame when my personal qualities appear undesirable. It is the concerns expressed in and generated by these comparisons that underpin our assessments of the significance of changes in the world or self.

Nussbaum argues that the object of the emotion is seen by the subject as salient or important for their well-being (2001: 5). This evaluation is a cognitive appraisal of the relation of the object to well-being, rather than being based on a conative state, and so Nussbaum defends a purely cognitive theory of emotion. However, she accepts that the evaluation is not “fully and reliably determined by present input about one’s current situation” (177). Our conception of our well-being has roots in early infantile experience, so that “new objects of [emotion] bear the traces of earlier objects” (175). Nevertheless, the influence of our early experience is transmitted through cognitive content.

Two powerful objections can be raised against Nussbaum’s cognitive account. First, we may question whether the early shaping of our emotional responses, and its later influence, is fundamentally cognitive – an issue to which I shall return in the final section. Second, we may note the prima facie implausibility of claiming that all emotions relate the object to the subject’s well-being (what of compassion, wonder, aesthetic emotions?), and then question Nussbaum’s extension the idea of well-being which she acknowledges is necessary to make her claim plausible.<sup>2</sup> Thus, she says, my conception of my well-being includes everything to which I ascribe intrinsic value (such as the well-being of others, or

certain states of the world, e.g. the continued existence of areas of natural beauty) when these are valued as part of my own life. It is only when I see the objects of value as important to me that an emotion is generated (32). But this is confused, because one cannot deduce from something being of value to me that it is of value for me (and my well-being). There is no good reason to think that we cannot hold personal values whose content is defined independent of how well our lives go. Thus Nussbaum struggles with the emotion of wonder, which takes us ‘out of ourselves’ and seems to precisely value an object in terms of its otherness and independent of our concerns for ourselves. What is true, and I believe what has misled Nussbaum, is that many of us feel that our lives would go less well unless we experienced such emotions. This indicates that we take such responses to value as part of our well-being – it is better to be the sort of person who responds to certain types of value; but this does not mean that the value is itself defined in these terms. This objection also tells, I believe, against one (natural) understanding of Ben-Ze’ev’s claim that emotions relate to our concerns regarding our personal situation. However, he is more cautious, and claims only that this is ‘typical’, and that some emotions, particularly the aesthetic emotions, are exceptions in this way (74).

Helm, whose primary concern is to dismantle the cognitive-conative divide in metaethics, goes into most detail. He defines emotions as evaluative feelings, construals of their objects as having a certain type of import (2001: 34). The import of an object is its “worthiness [of attention and action] imparted by a subject’s concern for something” (32), but it is not imparted to objects by single emotions. Rather, “something’s having import is intelligible only in light of a subject’s evaluative perspective” (57) which is constituted by the broad patterns in our evaluative feelings (emotions) and evaluative judgments. We are

rationally committed to such patterns by the import we experience the objects of our concerns to have, e.g. a parent's concern for the well-being of their child commits them to feel fear when that well-being is threatened, anger at the threat (if a person), joy when the child's well-being is furthered, and so on. Individual emotions, therefore, are receptive to (rather than projective of) import, and are experiences of the import objects have. And so, a particular emotion can be mistaken as to the import of an object, e.g. if the emotion is in some tension with the general evaluative perspective of the subject. Phobias are an obvious example; standardly, the subject does not, on consideration, evaluate the object of the phobia as being as dangerous as the phobic fear would indicate. The phobic fear is mistaken as to the import of its object.

Helm approvingly cites McDowell's (1985) understanding of values as subjective in the sense that they can't be conceived except in relation to certain types of states of subjects, but objective in being independent of any particular state. But that does not yet make import independent of any particular subject, which is surely necessary for any robust conception of objectivity. For example, Helm remarks that "in contrast to secondary qualities, import can be relative to the individual" (2001: 57). This does not mean that it always is: Helm wishes to leave room for the possibility of moral values that are universal in scope, but he is unclear about the implications of such a claim for his theory of import, and his discussion, though detailed and insightful, is vulnerable to the type of objections made by Blackburn (1998: 4-8) and Williams (1985: 150ff.).

In failing to make import independent of a particular subject, Helm misses its intersubjective dimension. If Ben-Ze'ev is correct, for instance, a subject's emotional response is often guided by their evaluation of their social situation, which will be constituted

by social meanings which are independent of any particular subject. Furthermore, within any society or culture, there will be a range of social possibilities and ideals that will shape the comparative evaluations that ground emotions. Our emotional capacities and evaluative perspective are formed within and by a particular culture. Goldie argues that we are taught to recognize and respond emotionally to the evaluative properties of objects as part of one and the same education. We come to understand that a certain evaluative property merits a certain emotional response (he terms this the ‘recognition-response tie’). Our emotions, then, are educated towards being appropriate and proportionate, where these ideas are understood in terms of the response that the evaluative property merits. However, the evaluative properties to which emotions respond are relative to human interests, and these in turn can be relative to culture; our emotions, therefore, are educated into a cultural understanding. Similar considerations supplement the views of Roberts (2003: 184) and Nussbaum (2001: Ch. 3, § 2, 6).

#### Evaluation, feeling, and the unitary nature of emotional experience

It would be a mistake to think that because an emotion involves both cognition and evaluation of its object, there are two distinct components to its intentional content. All the authors under discussion insist on the unitary nature of emotional experience, though to differing degrees.

Ben-Ze’ev identifies four basic components of emotion: cognition, evaluation, motivation, and feeling. He claims that these components emerge in analysis, rather than being genuinely separate elements of an emotion (2000: 50). In particular, the distinction between cognition (information about the circumstances) and evaluation (relevance to

personal concerns) is difficult to draw in practice, but is useful for explanatory purposes. Roberts presents an account of why this should be so: as we saw above, construals create organic unities out of diverse elements, construing the object ‘in-terms-of’ certain properties or features. So, in emotional construals, the elements of perception and concern are united: “experientially [in an] emotion...the concern enters into the perception so as to characterize the appearance of the object... It is taken up, or synthesized into, the appearance of the...object” (2003: 80), so that the object appears to have the property the concern ascribes to it. Hence the “two claims” of emotional construal, about the structure of the situation and about its importance, are “inextricably intertwined” (111).

Both Roberts and Ben-Ze’ev, however, keep feeling distinct from evaluative cognition. Goldie, by contrast, unites cognition, evaluation, and feeling in a single sui generis mode of intentionality which he terms “feeling towards”. His phrases are similar to Roberts’ descriptions of construal, but with feeling, rather than concern, built in: Feeling towards is “thinking of with feeling” (2000: 58), in which the feeling is not ‘added-on’ to the thought, but in which it is “an ineliminable part of the intentionality of emotional experience” (4). It is “feeling towards an object...as being a particular way or as having certain [evaluative] properties or features” (58). Helm would agree with this unification of evaluation and feeling, as he defines emotions as evaluative feelings. Ben-Ze’ev, however, is critical: he understands feelings to be a dimension of mental states separate from intentionality, containing no meaningful intentional content (2000: 49). They are variations in hedonic tone expressing the subjective state of the person (64).

Such a contrast between states with intentional content and feelings is perhaps still the norm in philosophy of mind and psychology, though the distinction between content and

phenomenology has increasingly come under attack (for example, in discussions of Frank Jackson's (1982) case of Mary). Goldie, quite rightly, attacks it by arguing that if it was an accurate reflection of the nature of mind, the feeling of an emotion could be logically subtracted from the experience without affecting the intentional content. But, he argues, this is unconvincing. When one grasps the evaluative properties of an object in emotion, as opposed to evaluating the object non-emotionally, "[c]oming to think of it in this new [emotional] way is not to be understood as consisting of thinking of it in the old way, plus some added-on phenomenal ingredient – feeling, perhaps; rather, the whole way of experiencing, or being conscious of, the world is new... The difference... will not just comprise a different attitude towards the same content... The difference also lies in the content" (2000: 59-60). Goldie cites Stocker's (1983) example of someone believing that the ice is dangerous, and then, after slipping, fearing the ice. The transformation is not simply the addition of a feeling of fear, but an alteration in the way in which the ice is thought of.

The explanation of the difference in content, Goldie believes, lies in the recognition-response tie. We may be able to have some grasp of the concept of the evaluative property without emotional response, but concept possession comes in degrees, and a full grasp of it requires the emotional response (for the property is, by definition, such as to merit this response). A comparison can be drawn with color concepts: a blind-blind person may have some grasp of the concept of 'red' – such as what is paradigmatically red, the place of red in the spectrum, the associations with warmth and with danger – but without appropriate visual experience of redness, cannot be said to have a full grasp of the concept (2000: 29; see also 2002). Feeling towards, like vision, is a sui generis mode of intentionality, that of our capacity to be sensitive to evaluative properties related to human interests. Only emotional

response to such properties exhibits a full conceptual grasp of the property. Helm defends a similar conclusion: as import is only intelligible in relation to the evaluative perspective of a subject, to be a subject of import requires that one has the capacity for felt evaluations. It is the patterns of our felt evaluations that define the import objects have for us (2001: Ch. 3.3).

Nussbaum approaches the question of evaluation and feeling from the other side. She too wishes to claim that it is not possible to have a mental state with evaluative content identical to that of an emotion without that state being an emotion. But this is because, she argues, the evaluative judgment relating the object to the subject's well-being is identical to the emotion. In such judgments, thought does not retain equanimity: "[t]he upheaval is a part of the experience of what it is like to have those thoughts" (2001: 45). If a subject has a similar evaluative thought, but without feeling, then its evaluative content is not identical – in particular, the subject has not related it to their well-being. Hence the evaluative thoughts of emotions are not feeling-less, but emotional feelings are nothing other than these thoughts.

Nussbaum and Ben-Ze'ev understand the feeling of an emotional experience to be a consequence of its evaluative nature, rather than indicative of a distinct intentional mode.<sup>3</sup> Goldie and Helm, I believe, have the edge here in defending a conceptual – and indeed, an ontological – connection between evaluative properties/import and emotional response. For Nussbaum, that human beings respond emotionally to such evaluative properties is simply a fact of human nature.

### Unfelt feelings?

It would be a mistake to think that Goldie's analysis, because of its emphasis on feeling, is committed to the idea that all emotions are consciously experienced. First, 'feeling towards'

is only the central element in an episode of emotional experience, not an analysis of emotion, and Goldie takes pains to emphasize the distinction between the two. An emotion is somewhat more complex: it involves many different elements, including ‘feelings towards’, but also bodily changes and dispositions to further feelings, thoughts, and construals. And it is dynamic – the different elements of an emotion can come and go over time. What unifies an emotion is its narrative structure – we understand a person’s emotion, its nature and type, through the narrative within which it is embedded as a constituent part (2000: 11-16). For example, if a man is jealous of a rival – an emotion that may last for years – this does not consist simply in an episode, or even several episodes, of his consciously feeling jealousy, but in his thoughts, feelings, bodily states, and dispositions to all these, between such episodes of jealous feeling. What makes the emotion jealousy is given by the terms in which we understand him, his life, and his relations to the object of his desire and his rivals. Emotions, and the ascription of emotions, find their home in the narrative structure of people’s lives. I find this distinction both cogent and necessary; to the extent that Nussbaum and Roberts, by analyzing emotion in purely episodic terms, do not explicitly make a place for it, their accounts are lacking. It is possible to talk of ‘standing’ construals or judgments, but such an account of the (often dynamic) existence of an emotion over time is somewhat thin.

However, Goldie’s emphasis on feeling does raise the question of how the different theories cope with or allow for ‘unconscious emotions’ in the different possible senses of that phrase. A common analysis of ‘unconscious emotion’ is that the subject misidentifies the emotion in some way, and this is the analysis Ben-Ze’ev adopts: “What is unconscious, or rather unknown, not realized, or mistakenly identified, is the nature of the emotional state”

(2000: 55). Although this is undoubtedly true in some cases of ‘unconscious emotion’, it has always been unclear to me whether this analysis can allow, what is surely necessary, that one type of mistake the subject may make is to think they feel no emotion when they feel some emotion. In this case, it is the existence, rather than the nature, of the emotion that is at issue.

Goldie creates a space for feelings that we are unaware of by distinguishing between reflective and unreflective consciousness, the former being consciousness of our thoughts and feelings about the world, the latter being consciousness of the world (see also Schooler (2002)). Feeling towards is fundamentally a matter of being engaged with the world, towards which we have certain feelings. However, we may not identify ourselves as having those feelings towards the world until or unless we become reflectively aware of them, which is in part a matter of self-interpretation (2000: 45). Do we still have feelings when we are unreflectively emotionally engaged with the world? Yes, for when we reflectively remember the episode, we are able to say how we felt; “in particular, you will be able to talk about your feelings towards the world in terms of your special way of thinking of the world” (66). There is no sharp boundary to be drawn between reflective and unreflective feeling, as there are different degrees to which we recognize our feelings – as the feelings they are, or more fundamentally, that they exist at all. And the subject may be motivated in various ways not to recognize the emotions they actually have, and this may prevent the contents of unreflective consciousness from entering reflective consciousness.

Roberts makes a stronger distinction between an emotion and feeling of an emotion. As concern-based construal, emotion is not logically connected to consciousness, and so there can be, and are, unconscious emotions – ways we construe the world in relation to our concerns, but of which we are unaware. To feel an emotion is an “immediate and quasi-

perceptual grasp of oneself as in a certain emotional state” (2003: 318); i.e. it is to construe oneself as performing or undergoing a particular concern-based construal (319-20). Emotions are states of the self and feelings are construals of the state of the self. In making feelings a meta-level construal, Roberts uses concepts of reflective consciousness (as a type of self-interpretation) and unreflective consciousness, calling the latter ‘subception’: “a state of mind in which one is aware of something without noticing being aware of it – so that when one’s attention is called to it, one remembers a kind of peripheral awareness of it” (320). Like Goldie, Roberts notes that subception comes in degrees and recognition is influenced by other motivations.

By separating the definition of emotion from feeling altogether, Roberts leaves open the possibility of undergoing an emotional episode with absolutely no awareness or feeling of it at all, not even unreflective awareness. My suspicion is that many philosophers and psychologists would wish to rule out the possibility of undergoing an emotional episode with no feeling (as Nussbaum and Ben-Ze’ev are so inclined), and account for cases in which the subject is unaware of their emotional state using concepts similar to unreflective awareness and subception, but that many psychoanalysts will be attracted by the additional possibility that subjects may undergo emotional episodes of which they have no awareness. After all, if we may be motivated to prevent the contents of unreflective awareness reaching reflective awareness, we may be motivated such as to prevent all awareness of a particular emotion.

But Roberts faces the commonsense intuition that we cannot undergo an emotional episode with no feeling of it at all. The centrality of feeling towards in Goldie’s analysis of emotional episodes likewise suggests that this is impossible – how could one feel towards without feeling? But there is a solution here that allows us to preserve intuitions. Goldie’s

defense that I do always feel an episode of emotional experience, albeit unreflectively, is based on retrospective confirmation: we are able to look back and recognize the feeling as feeling afterwards (as Roberts says, we can remember a peripheral awareness of it). And this confirmation could be lacking, while narrative – so central to understanding and ascribing emotions – supports the ascription of not just an emotion, but an episode of emotional experience. Here is the strongest such case for such an ascription: 1) the narrative of that time ascribes the emotion to me, 2) the narrative explains my actions and behavior (e.g. facial expressions and bodily postures) at the time as expressive of emotion, 3) I can understand the ways I had of thinking of the world in terms typical of episodes of that emotion, and 4) I can, in recollection of the episode, now feel towards the object of the emotion, but 5) I cannot recall any peripheral awareness of feeling at the time in question. In cases in which we recall emotional episodes of our life from some time past, I do not think this unlikely. We are faced with two choices: we must either claim that despite the absence of recall, at the time there was some unreflective awareness of feeling; or, there was no awareness of feeling, and paradoxical though it is, we are able to feel towards without any awareness of feeling.

Some may feel that this tells against Goldie's conception of feeling towards as a sui generis form of intentionality in favor of something like Roberts' approach. Given the strengths of Goldie's analysis of feeling towards, including the recognition-response tie, this would be unfortunate. As cases of 'unfelt feeling towards' require explanation – usually in terms of the subject being motivated to suppress their feeling at the time – I would suggest thinking of them as limiting cases – if there are degrees of unreflective awareness, the lowest limit of such awareness is its absence. What makes such cases still instances of feeling

towards is that the way the subject conceptualizes the object fits both the narrative of the emotion and our understanding of the type of cognition involved in feeling towards.

### Implications for theories of therapy

I wish to finish with a few tentative remarks on the implications of these theories for different theoretical approaches to psychotherapy. These books collectively contain a wealth of material with far-reaching implications for our understanding of therapeutic approaches towards conditions that involve disturbances of the emotions (and there are few conditions that don't). There is a great deal, therefore, that I am unable to comment on. I shall also limit myself to contrasting the theoretical models of cognitive and psychodynamic, especially psychoanalytic, therapies.

The three-point analysis of affective disorders by Ellis (1962) is well-known: an unpleasant event leads the subject to a negative cognitive response or evaluation of the event and of themselves, which in turn generates negative emotions. These emotions can in turn increase the unpleasantness experienced in relation to the event, thus generating a negative feedback loop. A standard example is panic attacks, in which an unpleasant bodily feeling is interpreted as dangerous, which causes fear, which can exacerbate the bodily symptoms, the thoughts, and the fear (see Salkovskis and Clark (1991)). Cognitive therapy consists in eliminating the cognitive-evaluative thoughts of the second stage and replacing them with an alternative understanding of the event and the self. The theory is that this in turn will resolve the negative emotions. The cognitive therapies of Beck (1976) and Meichenbaum (1977) similarly focus on counteracting the negative thoughts, first by making the subject aware of them, and then through encouraging them to willfully think more positively, presenting them

with information that challenges the thoughts, and providing alternative ways of handling their problems.

Eliding the differences between these theories, what we might call the ‘standard model’ of cognitive therapy receives confirmation from the theories under review in that emotions can be understood in terms of the evaluative thoughts they involve. However, the model understand the emotion as resulting from the thoughts, rather than being constituted by the thoughts. This has the unfortunate result that, whatever happens in actual cognitive therapy, the models tend to understand the thoughts as akin to other, non-emotional thoughts in being open to influence by rational means. It appears as though the patient has simply made a mistake. Hence it would be natural for the therapist to seek to extinguish the emotion by refuting the thoughts involved. A more nuanced understanding of the nature of emotional thought shows the limits of this approach, and how a transformation in emotion involves more than the correction of an evaluative mistake.

First, the nature of the thought that constitutes the emotion is more akin to seeing-as than to beliefs. As with many forms of construal, a subject can experience the world as being a certain way without believing it is that way, which in turn makes argument redundant. For example, we cannot be argued out of optical illusions such as the Müller-Lyer lines. It is certainly true that emotions are typically grounded by a set of beliefs, but especially in affective disorders, this need not be true. Emotional disorders are disorders at least in part because the emotion is particularly resistant to cognitive evidence. Goldie calls this the ‘cognitive impenetrability’ of emotions (2000: 76). In such cases, the beliefs that accompany an emotion are as much its product as its cause, and hence undermining the beliefs may leave the core of the emotional experience – the construal – untouched. Indeed, this is what some

subjects report after cognitive therapy: the beliefs that supported the emotion are sufficiently weakened that they are now able to prevent the emotion from disrupting their behavior, but they still feel the emotion and must actively talk themselves through it.

Second, in seeking to challenge the evaluative beliefs that underpin an emotion, cognitive therapy assumes that such evaluative content can be articulated. Goldie and Helm, following the lead of Charles Taylor (1985), both emphasize that the articulation of our emotions is an exercise in self-understanding. However, as in complex perceptual experiences (such as wine-tasting), such content can defy articulation, since the conceptual clarity of articulation is not the natural state of such emotional evaluations. Taylor argues that “all our articulations are open to challenge from our inarticulate sense of what is important, that is we recognize that they ought to be faithful articulations of something which we have as yet only fragmentary intimations” (1985: 75), suggesting that there is more meaning available in the emotional sense than in the product of articulation. If we cannot get further than ‘fragmentary intimations’ of this meaning, then cognitive therapy may not have enough to work on to fundamentally alter the emotional state of the subject. A style of therapy which does not require complete articulation in terms of beliefs or judgments is called for.

Psychodynamic psychotherapy, and perhaps particularly psychoanalytic psychotherapy, calls for articulation, but it takes a very different approach to the products of articulation, one which is far less ‘literal’ than that of cognitive therapy. Famously (or notoriously, depending on one’s view), psychoanalysis works as much with what is not said, the interstices of meaning, as with what is explicitly declared (e.g. Casement (1994) 72; Corradi Fiumara (2001) 94ff.; and Hobson (1985) 183-4, 189). This is not to say that the standard model of cognitive therapy does not take account of what the subject does not or

cannot say, but the understanding of the relationship between what is said and what is not is entirely different. For on the standard model, the focus of therapy is on the evaluative thoughts, and by their very nature, these are capable of articulation and open to cognitive confirmation or refutation (e.g. Wells (2002) Ch. 1). Psychodynamic psychotherapy makes no such claim. It aims, instead, to transform the shape of the subject's "inarticulate sense of what is important" and their self-interpretation, i.e. the construals they make, not only through articulation, but also through some processes that do not work on the reflective or evidential level, especially the experiential level of transference and countertransference (see Bateman and Holmes (1995) 22-3 and Ch. 5; Corradi Fiumara (2001) Ch. 7; Segal (1988) Ch. 10; and Hobson (1985) Chh. 6 and 12). If emotion is a sui generis quasi-perceptual mode of intentionality, this may in the end be a preferable approach, for what is necessary to the reshaping of a subject's emotional capacities is a change in how the subject experiences reality, not how they believe it to be.

I should stress again that my argument here is with the standard model of cognitive therapy. The addition of behavioral therapy in the actual practice of cognitive-behavioral therapy may well provide a means by which a subject's experience of reality is altered more directly than the standard model would imply. (For a discussion of the possible relations between treatment effects and the standard cognitive model, including the significance of the behavioral aspects of the therapy, see Parker, Roy, and Eyers (2003).) The same may be said of the quality of the affective relation between the subject and the therapist. And so the theorization of emotion and its therapeutic treatment by the standard model remains inadequate.

Third, and finally, there is the question of the effect of early experience of later emotional responses. I noted earlier that Nussbaum accepts that our judgments of the importance of objects to our well-being is influenced by earlier experiences, but that she believes this influence is transmitted cognitively. She argues persuasively that although it may feel as though the emotion wells up “out of nowhere” and seems inexplicable, this is not because it does not have cognitive content, but because its content is either not available to the subject or it takes an archaic and infantile form (2001: 230). “But once we see that it is the past that so wells up, and not some shot of adrenalin, we also see that we cannot understand it without getting at the intentional content that is proper to it.” (232). We should note that the influence of the past is not restricted to ‘inexplicable’ emotions. As Roberts comments, feelings “are surrounded by unconscious or only semiconscious meaning. The difference between false feelings and veridical ones is not that the veridical ones lack this unconscious meaning, but that the unconscious meaning is not such as to distort the feeling.” (2003: 326)

This understanding of past and present is more suited to psychodynamic psychotherapy, particularly psychoanalysis, than the standard model of cognitive therapy for reasons relating to the way in which we might understand the past, and past meanings, to influence the present. For psychoanalysis, these meanings are embodied in a quasi-perceptual and cognitively impenetrable form, expressed in the subject’s general experience of reality rather than any formulable evaluative beliefs. The transformation of meaning is a transformation of affective experience, not a transformation of belief. This is not to argue that such a transformation always requires an examination of the past. It may be possible via an examination of the transference occurring in the present.

Developing the point somewhat, it is implausible that past meanings are transmitted only through content that can, with any justice, be called ‘cognitive’. Not all conceptions of an object’s meaning or significance derives from thoughts of what it is. Nussbaum mistakenly equates intentional content with cognitive content. In accepting that infantile experience influences the content of emotions later in life, Nussbaum commits herself to attributing to the infant thoughts or judgments about its well-being. She admits that they are “inchoate” (2001: 190), but despite her compelling account of child-development in terms of object-relations theory, I question whether we are right to call them judgments at all rather than conations. A concern or desire for certain goods, such as food and affection, seems a simpler mental state, and *a fortiori* more plausible to attribute to an infant than a recognition that these goods constitute its well-being. There is no thought of well-being prior to this concept being shaped by the experiences one has; and that is perhaps one reason why emotions may always remain cognitively impenetrable to some degree, for the shape of our emotional capacities is originally forged by forces more primitive and powerful than those of thought. For this reason as well, then, whatever is the case on the success or otherwise of cognitive, or cognitive-behavioral, therapy in practice, the conception of emotions present in the standard model of cognitive therapy appears inadequate.

### Conclusion

Recent developments in the theory of emotion have included a number of highly significant book-length treatments of the subject that adopt a similar framework for the understanding of emotion. There are unresolved issues within the framework regarding the exact nature of emotional evaluation, including its relation to the subject’s well-being or concerns, its

similarity to perception or belief, and the relationship between evaluation and feeling. There are also disagreements regarding the nature of emotional feelings and the possibility of their being unconscious. These issues form an important focus for future research. The analyses have a number of important implications for the cognitive and psychoanalytic theories of emotional disorders, deriving from the nature of emotional evaluation. In particular, the theories of Nussbaum, Goldie, and Roberts challenge the understanding of emotion in the standard model of cognitive therapy and lend some qualified support to a more psychodynamic theory.

## References

- Bateman, A. and Holmes, J. 1995. Introduction to Psychoanalysis. London: Routledge.
- Beck, A. T. 1976. Cognitive Therapy of the Emotional Disorders. New York: American Library.
- Ben-Ze'ev, A. 2000. The Subtlety of Emotions. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press.
- Ben-Ze'ev, A. 2004. Emotion as a Subtle Mental Mode. In Solomon, R. Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotion. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blackburn, S. 1998. Ruling Passions. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Casement, P. 1994. On Learning from the Patient. London: Routledge.
- Corradi Fiumara, G. 2001. The Mind's Affective Life. Hove: Brunner- Routledge.
- Damasio, A. 1994. Descartes' Error. New York: Avon Books.
- Ellis, A. 1962. Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy. Secaucus, NJ: The Citadel Press.
- Goldie, P. 2000. The Emotions. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Goldie, P. 2002. Emotions, Feelings, and Intentionality. Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences 1: 235-254.
- Griffiths, P. 1997. What Emotions Really Are. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Helm, B. 2001. Emotional Reason: Deliberation, Motivation, and the Nature of Value, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobson, R. 1985. Forms of Feeling. London: Tavistock.
- Jackson, F. 1982. Epiphenomenal Qualia. The Philosophical Quarterly 32: 127-36.
- McDowell, J. 1985. Values and Secondary Properties. In Honderich, T. (ed.) Morality and Objectivity. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul: 215-25.

- Meichenbaum, D. 1977. Cognitive-Behavior Modification. New York: Plenum.
- Nussbaum, M. 1994. "The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions". In Nussbaum, M. The Therapy of Desire. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. 2001. Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parker, G., Roy, K. and Eyers, K. 2003. Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Depression? Choose Horses for Courses. American Journal of Psychiatry 160: 825-834.
- Roberts, R. 1988. What An Emotion Is: A Sketch. The Philosophical Review 97: 183-209.
- Roberts, R. 2003. Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salkovskis, P. M. and Clark, D. M. 1991. Cognitive Therapy for Panic Attacks. Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy 5: 215-226.
- Schooler, J. 2002. Re-representing Consciousness: Dissociations Between Experience and Meta-Consciousness. Trends in Cognitive Sciences 6: 339-344.
- Segal, H. 1988. Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein. London: Karnac Books.
- Stocker, M. 1983. Psychic Feelings: Their Importance and Irreducibility. Australian Journal of Philosophy 61: 5-26.
- Swanton, C. 2003. Virtue Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, C. 1985. Self-Interpreting Animals. In Taylor, C. Human Agency and Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, A. 2002. Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Williams, B. 1985. Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy. London: Fontana.

---

<sup>1</sup> See also Goldie (2000): 101-6, Ben-Ze'ev (2000): 5-10, and Nussbaum (2001): 8-11.

<sup>2</sup> We may shore up this objection by questioning whether any overarching conception of 'well-being' plays a foundational role in our valuing, or whether this idea is an Aristotelian vestige, as Christine Swanton (2003) has recently argued.

<sup>3</sup> In his (2004), Ben-Ze'ev does describe emotion as a particular mental 'mode'. However, its distinctiveness arises from its combination of 'ordinary' intentional states and feeling, not from emotional feeling itself being a distinct intentional mode.