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## **Emotion, Cognition and Feeling**

### **Abstract**

*This article examines recent developments in cognitivist theories of the emotions, and seeks to develop an original theory within that approach. The article specifically considers the criticism that such theories over-intellectualise emotions by reducing them to attitudes towards propositions and by excluding feelings. I argue that few cognitivists have ever held the former position, and that it is possible to claim that emotions are partly-constituted by feelings and remain within the parameters of a cognitivist theory. This is possible in virtue of the fact that cognitivists take emotions to be composed of intentional states. If we define a feeling as a perception of the state of one's body, then a feeling can be counted as one of the intentional states, alongside, say, a belief of a judgement, which partly-constitute any emotion. I call this position 'complex cognitivism'.*

### **Key Words**

Emotion, cognitivism, feeling, judgement, perception

## **1. Introduction**

The explosion of interest in the emotions within analytical philosophy over the last thirty years has seen a number of distinct positions occupying the theoretical landscape. The dominant one has come to be known as 'cognitivism', and is generally taken to be the view that an emotion is identical with some sort of cognitive state. Precisely which sort of cognition varies according to which theorist we are looking at, with the list of candidates including beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and judgements.<sup>1</sup> Yet each position has also provoked a series of trenchant criticisms, many from rival cognitivists.

The aim of this article is to consider the accusation of over-intellectualisation, and the ways in which cognitivism has been adapted to deal with it. More specifically, I consider views that cognitivism involves treating emotions as attitudes towards propositions; that cognitivists wrongly exclude feelings from their account of emotions; and that no series of cognitive states can ever be sufficient for the experiencing of an emotion. I suggest two responses to this. The first is that only a small number of cognitivists have ever held that emotions are attitudes towards propositions, and the others are therefore immune to this line of attack. The second response is that the trend in recent cognitivist

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For a detailed account of the differing alternatives, see Kristán Kristjánsson, *Justifying*

*Emotions: Pride and Jealousy*, Routledge, Oxford 2002, pp. 8–35.

theories has been to allow feelings a role in the ontology of emotion, and I argue that this can be achieved within the overall cognitivist project, on the grounds that feelings are perceptions of the state of one's body, and this sort of perception is definable as a cognitive state. The price to be paid for the theory which emerges, one which I call 'complex cognitivism', is that we lose the theoretical simplicity of the more traditional cognitivist theories I shall be examining. I go on to develop this theory in the later sections. If correct, this theory would require that we give up the possibility of emotions being identifiable with a single sort of cognitive state such as a judgement or a belief. Instead, emotions should be seen as both outward looking, in the sense that they involve beliefs, judgements or perceptions concerning the external world, but also inward looking, in the sense that they involve perceptions of the state of one's body. An emotion is therefore the unity of a series of different cognitive states which are combined in consciousness.

The first sections of the article are largely exegetical, but with three distinct purposes. The first is to chart how cognitivists have tried to address the challenges to their positions over recent years. The second is to defend the claim that positive cognitivist theories (as against those which attack non-cognitivist accounts) are united by the single property of defining the essential nature of emotions as that of intentionality. The third purpose is to lay the groundwork for the positive theory of the final sections by setting out the problems which continue to beset existing cognitivist accounts.

## 2. What is a Cognitive Theory of the Emotions?

One starting point for understanding the claims which unite cognitivists is an opposition to what has been called 'primitivism' (Solomon 2004, p. 76). This position holds that emotions are identical with physiological states or feelings. Perhaps the best known feeling theory which has provided most cognitivists with a common historical target is the James-Lange theory (James 1884), which takes an emotion to be the perception of change within one's body.<sup>2</sup> We see the dangerous dog racing towards us and our heart starts racing. The fear just is the perception of the accelerated heart rate. More recent versions of primitivist theories are couched in terms of neurobiology, where emotions need not necessarily be felt, and are identified as a specific collection of physiological phenomena such as the neural patterns of the brain and changes in the autonomic nervous system which are claimed to be identical with different emotions (Ekman 1977, LeDoux 1998). For any cognitivist, there are at least two points where such theories go wrong. The first is that they fail to consider emotions from the standpoint of how they strike us.

Now I do not deny for a moment the fascinating work that these researchers have done and are doing, but I am interested, to put it polemically, in processes that last more than five minutes and have the potential to last five hours, five days, or five weeks, months, or even years. I am interested in other words, not in those brief "irruptive" disturbances but in the long-term narratives of Othello, Iago, Lily Bart and those of my less drama-ridden but nevertheless very emotional friends. I am interested in the meanings of life, not short-term neurological arousal (Solomon 2003, p. 2).

Cognitivists needn't deny that neurobiology can offer us many insights into the physiology of emotion, but the subject matter itself is said to demand an emphasis on what one might term the phenomenology of our emotional lives. We cannot hope to provide an account of what love is by focussing on the neural pathways involved in such experiences, because when we consider

such emotions “ordinary humans conceive them as mental states that play varied and complex roles in ordinary human, experience, action and explanation” (Roberts 2003, p. 38).

The second objection that any cognitivist is likely to make to such an approach is that it simply misses the point, for it fails to take account to the primary feature of emotions, which is that they are intentional states. My fear, love, disgust, joy or any other emotion is always directed towards some feature of the world. This leads us directly to the essence of any cognitivist theory, as such theories seek out the specific intentional state responsible for that engagement with the world, and this state is the defining feature of what emotions are. As emotions are intentional states, then feelings cannot be identical with any emotion, for how could the sensation of one’s heart beating rapidly (an internal state) be an engagement with a dangerous snake moving towards us (an external state)? If the physiology of emotion and feelings are excluded from our picture of what constitutes emotions, then it is the cognitive state providing them with their intentionality which is the essence of an emotion.

I take this sort of outline to be one which virtually any cognitivist would have found acceptable up until the end of the last century. Some may feel misrepresented by it, but this is inevitable given the wide range of theories gathered under this very broad tent. At any rate, it provides a sufficiently accurate characterisation to contextualise the key criticisms which cognitivism has attracted.

### 3. Cognitive Deficiencies

There is one broad point of attack on the cognitivist position which I wish to consider, partly because they unite most critics of cognitivism (Deigh 1994, Stocker with Hegeman 1996, Griffiths 1997, Goldie 2000), and partly because I consider it to be ultimately unanswerable from the kind of traditional cognitivist standpoint set out above. The criticism is that cognitivism involves an over-intellectualisation of the emotions in several different ways. The way in which ‘cognitivism’ is conventionally understood in any realm is closely related to realism. To be a cognitivist with respect to a particular discourse is to hold that discourse to be one which can be analysed into a series of truth functional claims. A cognitivist in ethics must hold that ethical propositions can be true or false, and that there can therefore be moral facts. The term cognitivism in the emotions therefore naturally leads to the assumption that anyone holding this position must hold emotions to be identical with, say, one or more beliefs, so that my fear of spiders is my belief that spiders are dangerous. One consequence of this position is that we face considerable difficulty when we come to the question of emotions in animals and pre-linguistic infants a point which critics of cognitivism have also alighted on (Deigh 2004). If emotions are attitudes towards propositions, then we must either argue that animals and infants can have attitudes towards propositions, or that they cannot experience emotions. The former seems palpably absurd, and the latter flies in the face of general practice of attributing at least some emotions such as fear and joy to some fairly simple, non-linguistic beasts. The most succinct attack on this overall claim comes from John Deigh, who suggests that “anyone who is afraid of s proposition needs to have his head examined” (Deigh 1994, p. 846).

A further way in which cognitivism is said to over-intellectualise the emotions is by excluding feelings. Common sense suggests that when my stomach is churning, my heart racing and my palms sweating, these feelings are not simply part of my emotion, they are more emblematic of it than any other aspect. When we talk of experiencing an emotion, it is these states that we are most inclined to think of, and a failure to give them a central role in our account seems intuitively wrong. One influential piece of research which has boosted the cognitivist position on this issue is that published by the experimental psychologists Stanley Schachter and Jerome E Singer in 1962 (reprinted in Calhoun and Solomon 2003), in which they reported on the results of experiments in which subjects were given drugs which induced physical symptoms indistinguishable with those associated with the changes experienced during certain emotions. Those who were told exactly what was to happen reported that they were aware of certain changes taking place in the body, but did not describe them as emotions. This contrasted with those who had been asked to recall a particular memory, such as the death of their parents or times when their children had been sick. This was suggested as they were being injected with adrenaline, and the general pattern was to trigger a response which the subject described as sadness, for example. The implication is that one needs some sort of cognition that one associates with the physiological changes in order to identify the overall state as a specific emotion or even as an emotion at all.

Yet even if we accept the findings of this research (which not everyone has<sup>3</sup>), this would not license the conclusion that emotions are exclusive of feelings. At most we could infer only that if we are interested in phenomenological accounts of emotions, and we take emotions to be conscious states we can identify introspectively, then emotions cannot be identical with feelings only, and must be individuated by means of the intentional states involved in them. A further problem in claiming that emotions need not include feelings is that it looks as if we can have all the relevant beliefs or judgements in place for an emotion, but still not experience it. For example, I may believe that the dangerous snake is slithering towards me, but still not feel fear, or find someone whom I know to be in possession of everything which makes someone worthy of love, yet not be in love with her. Clearly, if I can have all of the relevant beliefs or judgements, yet not experience the emotion one would expect, then the emotion cannot be identical with those cognitive states.

One response has simply been to deny the efficacy of the kind of straightforward counter examples I have offered. In his early work, Robert Solomon argued “an emotion is never a single judgement, but a system of judgements, and although one might well make one or several judgements of the system without having the emotions, my claim is that one cannot make *all* of them, and not have the emotion” (1980, p. 275). The problem is that this sort of response simply begs the question. Surely there *are* some very simple cases where the only relevant judgement might be the danger posed by the snake, yet we needn’t be experiencing fear. And if our theory states that all emotions are composed of judgements or cognitive states, then a single counter example does considerable damage to the whole theory.

#### 4. Cognitive Defences

Some of the attacks on cognitivism set out above rely what is little more than a caricature of the views actually held by those under attack, but it is instruc-

tive to consider why and how this caricature may have taken hold. Specifically, it is grossly inaccurate to attribute to cognitivists *en masse* the view that an emotion is an attitude towards a proposition. There are certainly points where some theorists tend towards an account of emotions which reduce them in the way critics have implied, with Ronald de Sousa claiming for example that “some emotions appear to be founded entirely on belief” (1991, p. 137). But to claim that cognitivists see emotions exclusively in these terms is to understate the complexity they find in the range emotions we experience. De Sousa sees only some emotions as comprehensible in this way, and argues that although emotions have a kind of rationality of their own, this is not entirely analogous that the rationality of our beliefs. Emotions have a functional role in helping us through our lives, and this role cannot be adequately understood in terms of truth functionality. Emotions aim not at truth, but at getting us through the day, and the rationality of the emotions lies in the coherence they often exhibit in helping to achieve this aim (1991, Ch. 7).

A similar position is held by Robert Solomon, who has probably done more than anyone over recent years both to promote interest in the emotions and his own form of cognitivism. Like De Sousa, he stresses the functional role that emotions play in our attempts to deal with the world around us.

“Emotions are rational responses to unusual situations... An emotion is a necessary hasty judgement in response to a difficult situation.” (Solomon 1980, pp. 264–265)

Emotions such as fear or disgust can provide us with shortcuts to behaving in ways which may save our skin due to the speed of response they produce in comparison to ways in which we might act after a longer period of reflection. Such an argument makes even more sense when set in the context of our evolutionary behaviour,<sup>4</sup> but we need to consider whether this special sort of judgement which Solomon identifies with an emotion escapes the claim that emotions will all come out as attitudes towards propositions on a cognitivist account.

Solomon is unequivocal in his rejection of the claim that all emotions are attitudes towards propositions, emphasising the common sense view that if “Fred loves Mary and hates spinach, the objects of his emotions are Mary and spinach respectively, not propositions” (2003, p. 4). But are things really this simple? The accusation that all cognitivists must take emotions to be attitudes towards propositions comes most prominently from John Deigh (1994). He argues that cognitivism in the emotions must be understood in the context of the wider historical development of analytic philosophy. This development involved our concept of a thought coming to be identified with propositions, and superseded the view which was held earlier in the twentieth century that thoughts were “all states of mind with objective content” (Deigh 1994, p. 827). That is to say, he sees cognitivism in the emotions as embedded within an essentially Davidsonian approach to the nature of thought in general. As thought had come to be seen entirely in terms of propositional content, then the move towards conceiving of emotions as one form of thought meant that emotions must in turn be fully analysable as a series of propositions. The success of this criticism is such that only three years later cognitivists were now rebranded the “propositional attitude school” (Griffiths 1997, p. 21).

<sup>3</sup> See Deigh 1994, p. 830, footnote 4.

<sup>4</sup> For a highly accessible and amusing account of the importance of emotion from an evolu-

tionary standpoint, see: Dylan Evans, “Why Spock could never have Evolved”, in: *Emotion: the Science of Sentiment*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, pp. 31–68.

Deigh's account has obvious force against some of the key thinkers in the cognitivist tradition, most obviously Davidson (1980). But many of the figures central to cognitivism in the emotions can scarcely be shoehorned into the camp of radical analytical philosophers. Solomon is a Nietzsche scholar, and Martha Nussbaum's work on the emotions is steeped in the Ancients.<sup>5</sup> Davidson's own theory of the emotions commands little authority in contemporary cognitivist accounts, and is ridiculed by Solomon (2003, p. 6). The idea of emotions as evaluative and normative judgements which Nussbaum and Solomon favour, or as "concern based construals" proposed by Roberts (2003) are dependent on a conception of thought closer to that which Deigh attributes to philosophers from the first part of the twentieth century. But even if Deigh's influence has been unfair in some instances, he has certainly prompted a clarification of what kind of intentional state a cognitivist is referring to when speaking of emotions, and it is at least partially in response to the accusation that cognitivism is obsessed with propositions that the most recent developments have taken place.

## 5. Contemporary Cognitivism

Before moving on to consider some of the recent attempts to rebut the criticisms cognitivists have faced, it is worth considering briefly the distracting effect that the very title of the movement has had on the debate. I stated earlier that the term 'cognitivism' is usually taken to indicate a position which can be analysed into truth functional claims, and I suspect the use of the term in this context derives in large part from the title of Davidson's key article in this area (1980). But this work lies at the fringes of the theories which are usually grouped under the heading of cognitivism.<sup>6</sup> In addition, there is a vast amount of work done by cognitive psychologists on the emotions, much of which tends towards what has been called 'primitivism' (Solomon 2004, p. 76), a view rejected by all those labelled as cognitivists. The term 'cognitivism' in philosophy of the emotions needs to be understood as a broad school of thought united by little more than opposition to primitivism and the view that intentionality is the defining feature of an emotion. Beyond this, cognitivists fragment into different groups, each of whom believes that a different sort of cognitive state is the one which best describes emotions on the grounds that this state best captures the intentional aspect. The picture is further clouded by the fact that many cognitivists allow in desires as essential components of any emotion (eg. Kristjánsson 2006).

In light of this, the term 'cognitivism' in the emotions is best understood to mean little more than the view that emotions are composed of one of more categories of intentional state, they are not composed of feelings, and they may include desires. This broad position then fragments into different groups, each of whom have settled on a particular sort of intentional state which they argue best describes the intentional nature of an emotion. These groups would include judgementalists such as Solomon and Nussbaum, and phenomenalist such as Roberts, who hold respectively that judgements and perceptions are the sort of mental states constitutive of emotions. The "propositional attitude school", which takes belief to be the appropriate intentional state, therefore constitutes only one group of cognitivists, but one which has brought down upon the movement as a whole one of the most influential criticisms of the last decade, the view that emotions are attitudes towards propositions. I suggest that few cognitivists actually hold this view.



I have claimed that some of the criticism levelled at cognitivism is therefore not valid for those theorists who distance themselves from the view that emotions are attitudes towards propositions, but there remains the issue of how such thinkers have dealt with other aspects of the question of over-intellectualisation. More specifically, could an emotion be identical with one or more intentional states? The approach taken in more recent theories has been to focus on a single sort of intentional state and to imbue it with a sufficient range of complexity such that it could be attributed to something as unsophisticated as a frightened badger, or as complicated as a joyous philosopher. Two of the prime candidates are perceptions and judgements, and I shall look at each in turn.

## 6. Construals and the Judgement of Solomon

In *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*, Robert C Roberts (2003) offers an account of emotions as a form of perception he describes as ‘concern-based construals’. This involves perceiving the world in a particular way (the construal), and also having a particular sort of interest in the way things are (the concern). In practice, this means that I see my wife talking to a man. I construe her behaviour as what is usually described as flirting, and I feel concern at this. The combination of my construing this behaviour in the way I do, and my concern at what I perceive allows us to conclude I am experiencing jealousy. This means there is an irreducibly subjective aspect to our emotional lives, in that they are dependent upon the way in which the subject interprets the world around her. If someone else were to see the same scene, her perception might be radically different because she might perceive the same behaviour as a transparent attempt to seem amused at the stories of a man whom she knows to be a terrible bore. The different construal of the same event might therefore result in sympathy rather than jealousy.

Roberts also argues that feelings may form part of an emotion, claiming that

“[P]hysiological changes often accompany emotions; sometimes they are felt; the feeling of them is not the feeling of the emotion, though it is characteristically an aspect of that feeling.” (2003, p. 61)

This is the familiar cognitivist claim that the feeling of one’s heart thumping cannot be identical with one’s fear because such a feeling can occur without one’s being afraid. His concession is to allow that when we do experience this sort of sensation, it should be perceived as a part of one’s fear.

To what extent does Roberts’ theory allow him to overcome the criticism over-intellectualisation through the exclusion of feelings as necessary conditions for the experiencing of an emotion? He is certainly alert to this danger, but argues that his own theory is immune from it.

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Solomon’s most extensive work on Nietzsche is *Living with Nietzsche*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004. For Martha Nussbaum’s theory of the emotions, inspired by Stoicism, see: *Upheavals of Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, pp. 1–88.

little to help their own cause. When one reads titles such as Jerome Neu’s *A Tear is an Intellectual Thing*, or De Sousa’s *The Rationality of Emotion*, it does little to dispel the impression that they see emotions as analysable into constituent beliefs.

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Whilst cognitivists may have been misrepresented in some cases, they have often done

I have noted that many construals are not emotions; emotions are a subclass of construals, the ones in which an active concern of the subject is impinged upon by the other dimensions of the construal and thus the active concern is one of the concerns of the construal. Thus fear, for example, is not just construing one's present situation as involving a threat to one's well-being or someone else's well-being (*that* construal can be performed or undergone without emotion); it is, rather, construing one's present situation as involving a threat to something (oneself or someone or something one cares about) in such a way that an active concern for one's own or someone else's well-being is impinged on by the impression of threat and thus that the concern for what is threatened enters into the construal as one of its terms. I do not see how such a construal can be performed or undergone without emotion (2003, p. 101).

Intuitively, this seems a highly plausible line of argument. I see the snake before me. I perceive the snake as dangerous, I am actively concerned about my own well-being, and my heart is racing. On Roberts' account, my construal of the situation as dangerous combined with my concern for my welfare are the essential components of my fear, and my racing heart is a contingent aspect of that same emotion. Could I still be experiencing fear if I felt no bodily sensations such as an accelerated heart-rate? On Roberts' account I think we would have to say yes, and it seems to be credible that many instances of fear might involve no bodily sensations, such as a fear of my football team failing to achieve promotion.

Roberts' claim that one could not have an emotion without some sort of active concern therefore looks initially like an effective way of overcoming the criticism that one couldn't have an emotion without feelings, in that concern will fill the conceptual gap which had been demanded for feelings. But the reason why his claim is a problem is precisely the same reason it looks like a satisfactory solution to the exclusion of feelings. This is because concern *is* a feeling. Not all feelings need be the bodily sensations we often associate with emotions, such as our knees shaking or our stomach churning. Many feelings are much more subtle psychological, non-cognitive states such as unease, dissatisfaction or discomfort. Many of our emotions, such as moderate pride needn't involve the more extreme bodily sensations, but Roberts is surely right that they must involve a certain concern, and that concern is best described as a *feeling* of satisfaction.<sup>7</sup>

A further problem concerning Roberts' theory is whether or not he is trying to squeeze too much out of our concept of perception in order to be able to account for the very wide range of creatures which can experience emotions, and the enormous complexity of the emotions they can experience. This seems particularly problematic when it comes to more complex human emotions which rely heavily on our capacity for language. Let us say that I start thinking about a philosopher of whom I am not particularly fond, and I imagine his being shortlisted for a job which both of us want. I then picture his fawning over the panel's published work during the interview, which he has read for the first time only after being shortlisted. I then imagine his smug smile as he phones me to console me after hearing he has been offered the job. I sit in a state of rage at these thoughts.

Roberts is surely right to emphasise the role of the subjective interpretation playing an essential explanatory role in why I am enraged as against pleased for my rival, but are we right to think of the intentional state which partly constitutes the emotion as a perception? Would it not be more accurate to describe



the intentional state as an act of imagination or a thought, with the object of my rage being an imagined scenario? It is this sort of criticism which leads Solomon to reject the idea of a perception as being the sole sort of intentional state involved in emotion, whilst acknowledging that perceptions are often crucial.

“... [W]hen the trigger of an emotional response is a thought or a memory, the perception model loses its appeal. In general, when the object of emotion is something not immediately present, it makes little sense to say that the emotion is essentially a kind of perception.” (2003, p. 9)

Solomon’s alternative is the concept of judgement, which he claims has “the range and flexibility to apply from animal and infant emotions to the most sophisticated and complex adult human emotions such as jealousy, resentment and moral indignation” (2003, p. 10). This means that a judgement can be as crude as what an animal does when it views something as worth eating, or as complex as what a human does when we consider the truth functionality of a proposition. Although he does not fully commit himself to the claim that emotions are identical with judgements, he argues that “as a heuristic analysis, and a way of understanding the peculiarities of emotion” (2003, 10), judgements are the best concept we have of capturing what emotions are.

The additional key claim is that despite his rejection of the importance of feelings in his earlier work (eg 1980, p. 274), he has come to the view that feelings are indeed necessary for the experiencing of an emotion. But this does nothing to damage that claim that judgements are the key concept for understanding the nature of emotion, in that the kinds of feelings involved in emotion can be understood in this light. He tells us somewhat self-consciously that

“... a great deal of what is unhelpfully called ‘affect’ or ‘affectivity’ and is supposedly missing from cognitive accounts can be identified with the body, or what I will call (no doubt to howls of indignation) *the judgements of the body*” (2003, p. 11).

This claim is justified on the grounds that judgements needn’t be articulate or conscious, and that many forms of knowledge are non-propositional. Drawing on Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, he argues that many of our ‘knowing’ responses to the world involve habits and practices, which cannot be captured in terms of their propositional content. Our feelings are the body’s response to the world we encounter, and constitute an essential element in our emotional lives.

These are ambitious claims, and I suggest that Solomon is more successful than Roberts in trying to capture the essence of emotion with a single sort of intentional state, largely because his concept of judgement being so very broad.

“[T]hey are episodic but possibly long-term as well. They must span the bridge between conscious and non-conscious awareness. They must accept as their ‘objects’ both propositions and perceptions. They must be appropriate both in the presence of their objects and in their absen-

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The term used by Michael Stocker to describe the more subtle psychological states I am referring to is ‘psychic feelings’. Roberts’ work is an example of what I take Stocker to mean when he accuses many cognitivists as sneaking in ‘feeling-laden’ terms to their arguments. For further discussion of this, as well as the

concept of psychic feelings, see his *Valuing Emotions* with Elizabeth Hegeman (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 17–54), and “Psychic Feelings: Their Importance and Irreducibility”, in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 61, pp. 5–26.

ce. They must involve appraisals and evaluations without necessarily involving (or excluding) reflective appraisals and evaluations. They must stimulate thoughts and encourage beliefs (as well as being founded on beliefs) without themselves being nothing more than a thought or a belief. And (of considerable importance to me), they must artfully bridge the categories of the voluntary and the involuntary.” (2003, p. 11).

The sort of phenomena listed by Solomon are surely present in many of our emotional experiences. Let us say I am walking across a park and turn to see a gang of knife-wielding thugs racing towards me. My heart starts pounding, I quickly drop my bag full of secondary material on Kant, and with all the athleticism of a true philosopher, trundle at top speed towards the gates of the park and safety. Solomon’s analysis suggests there is a perception of the men running towards me, and both an appraisal of them as thugs and an evaluation of my current situation as being dangerous. If we make the reasonable assumption that many such instances of fear involve lightning responses, then the appraisal and the evaluation must be unreflective or non-conscious. This sort of claim can be justified on the grounds that the habits we have acquired mean that we can respond quickly to situations without going through a longer and more articulate reflective process.<sup>8</sup> This is an example of ‘knowing’ in the broader sense Solomon is driving at, a product of experiential learning.

Where his later work is more problematic is over his characterisation of feelings. Are there any circumstances where my heart thumping can be considered a judgement? It is clear that such a bodily sensation could be part of my fear, and that the fear might involve the judgement that I am in danger, but it surely strains credulity to describe the specific feeling of my heart beating as any sort of judgement. Recent accounts of the nature of this sort of sensation have tended to describe it as a perception of the state of one’s body, with none of the additional complexity which Solomon builds into his conception of a judgement (eg Armstrong 1968, Martin 1998). One risky way out of this would be to define perception as a form of judgement, but he rules this out as part of his attack on Roberts; “judgement is fully conceivable apart from perception”.<sup>9</sup> The problem then seems to be that Solomon is committed to the view that feelings are necessary constituents of an emotion, and that emotions can best be understood as a complex of judgements. But if feelings are not judgements, then he must either acknowledge that emotions involve states other than judgements, or exclude feelings.

It may well have been in order to avoid this difficulty that he invokes Phenomenology, which allows him to incorporate bodily response as part of an overall emotional experience we have as we engage with the world. The mental and physical aspects of our emotions need to be seen as a holistic response to the world around us, and not as discrete phenomena related only contingently to one another, to be separated out into distinct elements. We should not think of the mind and body reacting in distinct ways with beliefs or judgements on the one hand, and feelings or bodily sensations on the other. It is better to think of a unified body acting within a world in which it is embedded, with part of that action being our emotions.

It is difficult to do full justice to Solomon’s decision to turn to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty as he has not yet elaborated on the fleeting references made at the beginning of the century, but it would appear at first blush that neither has an approach compatible with that of Solomon.<sup>10</sup> Heidegger saw ‘mood’ (*Bestimmung*) as being at an absolutely fundamental level of human existence, beyond the realm of analysis;

“... the possibilities of disclosure which belong to cognition reach far too short a way compared with the primordial disclosure belonging to moods, in which *Dasein* is brought before its *Being* as ‘there’.” (1962, p. 172)

Heidegger sees mood as prior to and beyond the realm of reflection, a phenomenon which conditions our existence and is prior to our judgements. This is consistent with Solomon’s discussion of the non-conscious and inarticulable aspects of our emotional lives, but cannot be reconciled with his views on those aspects of our emotional lives which are part of our conscious lives in such a way that they can be contemplated and analysed. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty’s work lays an enormous emphasis on trying to articulate our pre-reflective experience, and he aims “to correct the distortions of ‘objective thought’ prevalent in modern science and psychology” (Moran 2000). Once again, only the parts of Solomon’s work, which also stress the unconscious aspects of our emotional lives, seem compatible with such an approach. But his claims about our ability to analyse at least some of our emotions through the use of reason, and by considering their propositional content look likely to come out as just one more attempt to reduce aspects of human existence to the status of ‘objective content’.

One also wonders whether one could restrict one’s acceptance of Phenomenology purely to the consideration of the emotions, or whether one would also have to accept the wider commitments of this movement with regard, for example, to the status of the natural sciences (Heidegger 1993, pp. 267–306, Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 52–66). This would be a high price to pay, and seems inconsistent with the limited sympathy which Solomon shows for the work of his colleagues in the fields of neuroscience (Hatzimoyisis /ed./ 2003, p. 2).

If Solomon’s general approach cannot be reconciled with that found within Phenomenology, then this cannot provide an account of how feelings can be understood as judgements. We therefore find ourselves once again struggling to account for the place of feeling within emotion. Historically, many cognitivists have excluded feeling altogether, leading to the problem that one could have all the relevant beliefs (or other intentional states) and not experience any emotion. The more recent work I have considered finds a place for feeling, but still seems to struggle with what a feeling is, and how it relates to other features within an ontology of the emotions.

## 7. A Way Forward

My claim is that the cognitivist approach to the nature of emotion is essentially right, and that what is required is not pulling down the house, but simply rearranging the furniture. More specifically, one can overcome the sorts of problems raised earlier in this article by revising certain claims which have emerged from within the cognitivist camp. In the first place, the central fea-

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For a discussion of how our emotions come to be trained, such that we respond without reflection, see Paul Harris, *Children and Emotion*, Blackwell, Oxford 1989.

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Robert C. Solomon, “What is a Cognitive Theory of the Emotions?”, in: Anthony Hatzimoyisis (ed.), *Philosophy and the Emotions*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, p. 8.

10

Heidegger’s discussion of ‘mood’ comes principally in Division I, Section V of *Being and Time*, Blackwell, Oxford 1962. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of judgement is part of his wider theory of perception, which is set out in greatest detail in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, London 1962.

ture in the work of all the thinkers considered so far is that they consider intentionality to be the defining characteristic of our emotions. The next move is to select a single sort of intentional state as the one which best captures the nature of emotion, and it is this second move which leads to the problems set out at the end of the previous section. As soon as one tries to identify a single category of intentional state as the one which captures the nature of emotion, it invites both counter examples to the claim that this particular sort of state really is identical with an emotion, as well as inviting the counter argument that unless there is a feeling involved, one needn't be experiencing an emotion. The attempts to confront these claims have generally involved stretching the concept of the single preferred intentional state beyond its conventional conceptual boundaries, and then finding some means of incorporating feelings either overtly or covertly. I have suggested that each of these moves is unsuccessful.

As an alternative, I suggest one can make two moves which can address the problems encountered above. The first is that one can retain the claim that all emotions are essentially intentional, but then claim that they often involve more than one sort of intentional state. The attempt to capture emotions in the form of perceptions only, or judgements only or beliefs only is appealing on the grounds of simplicity, but the range of complexity possible in emotions, and the range of different creatures which experience them increases the likelihood that our account of emotion is going to have to be more rather than less complex. The second move is to accept that all emotions are partly constituted by feelings. This need pose no threat to the claim that emotions are essentially intentional if we accept the view that the kinds of feelings we are talking about are perceptions of the state of one's body. Given that perceptions are intentional, then our account of emotion will come out as a phenomenon which is composed of a combination of different sorts of intentional states, one of which is always a feeling.

When we experience an emotion, the feeling may be combined with various other sorts of intentional state depending on the kind of creature involved and the specific sets of circumstances. If we take the example of a pre-linguistic infant experiencing anger at not being given the food she wants, this may involve (minimally) the perception of her twin sister's being given the food, the desire for the food, and a feeling of frustration. If we compare this to the anger of a philosopher at being refused research funding, this may involve a wide range of complex value judgements about the quality of her proposal, certain beliefs about the prejudice against her particular branch of philosophy, a series of imagined scenes in which rivals smile with satisfaction at her failure, and a feeling of her heart pounding. The fact that each experience involves an unpleasant feeling at the frustration of one's wishes allows us to call each a case of anger. But this is a single concept which we apply to a vast range of differing experiences often united by only the slightest of family resemblances. It is the enormous variety in the complexity of emotions which means that they escape easy categorisation under the banner of any single intentional state, and demand analysis using in terms of a complex series of different states.

One potential objection is that we seem to be engaged in the discussion of a very odd sort of intentionality, in that a single state such as anger seems to involve the mind being directed both towards an external object such as an annoying rattle in the car, and an internal state such as one's accelerated heart-rate. But the attempt to oversimplify the rather quirky ontology of our emo-

tions is precisely what leads to the problems encountered by both primitivists and standard cognitivist accounts. Indeed, given the very distinctive nature of our emotional lives it would be surprising if they could be described in simple terms, and it is this difficulty which has led at least one major contemporary theorist to argue that the concept could usefully be abandoned altogether (Griffiths 1997). But this would mean dispensing with what seems on the surface to be both a widely used and apparently useful concept for describing certain states, and I suggest we are therefore better off embracing the conceptual complexity of emotions and striving to address the kinds of questions this raises. In pursuance of this, I shall outline how one might answer some of the obvious objections to what I have said so far.

One concern is the conceptual disunity which complex cognitivism implies. If I have a perception of a growling dog running towards me, and a feeling of my heart racing, then in virtue of what am I entitled to think that these disparate phenomena form part of the same mental state? One quick response to this objection is simple common sense, in that if anyone in such a situation were asked if she could explain why her heart was beating so fast then she would probably point to the hound tearing towards her. But it is not clear that this causal relationship justifies the claim that the different perceptions are part of one and the same mental state, as against two different perceptions, only one of which is the emotion. This sort of problem appears to play into the hands of the feeling theorist, who may claim that the feeling is the emotion, and the belief is the cause of the emotion. The response to this concern is one which I suggest strengthens the hand of the complex cognitivist.

I have suggested throughout that one of the most difficult problems confronting cognitivism is that one could hold all the relevant beliefs or judgements, but not experience the emotion. But if we include feelings then does this not lead us to the point where the cognitive states which were previously regarded as defining an emotion might now be seen as important in some extraneous role rather than as a part of them? This is the line taken by Jesse Prinz (2004, 2005), the foremost, contemporary feeling theorist. He develops this line in response to what is seen as one of the great difficulties of such theories, which is that one can experience a range of different emotions which have the same phenomenal feel. The problem this generates is that we commonly distinguish introspectively between the different emotions we experience. But if the feelings we experience during bouts of different emotions are the same, then feelings cannot be the features of emotion which we pick out to tell them apart. Cognitivists claim it must be that they are partly constituted by cognitive states such as beliefs or perceptions, and it is my belief that I am in danger which allows me to recognise that I am afraid, and my belief that I have been wronged which allows me to recognise another state as one of anger, even if the both states might be indistinguishable in terms of their phenomenal feel.

Prinz's ingenious response is to acknowledge that the cognitive content is critical, but not in the manner the cognitivist has argued. He claims that the way we distinguish between different emotions is due to their causal history, and more specifically in light of their 'eliciting conditions' (2005, p. 19). In practice, this means that when we feel a lump in our throats and our head hangs low, "it is in virtue of recalling the eliciting condition" (ibid.) that we can know we are experiencing guilt rather than sadness. As such, the role of the beliefs relevant to the emotion is not as a constituent part of the emotion, but as a means of identifying its cause. Once we have done this, we know what the emotion is.



There are two major problems with this account, both of which lead us back towards complex cognitivism. The first is that Prinz equivocates of over exactly what the cause of an emotion is. At one point he tells us that “guilt is a case of sadness that happens to be caused by acts of transgression” (ibid.), but on the next line he states that “The belief that ‘I have transgressed’ is not a component of the emotion; it is a cause” (ibid.). It is unclear whether it is the act of transgressing itself or the belief that I have transgressed which is the cause of my guilt. This distinction becomes more evident if we take a simpler example such as my fear of the bull elephant charging towards me. Am I afraid because of the charging elephant or because of my belief that there is a charging elephant? Most of Prinz’s examples suggest that he takes the intentional object to be the cause of an emotion, but where does this leave beliefs in his overall account? The danger of overdeterminism now rules out the possibility of claiming they are causes, but he is still committed to the view that they are essential for distinguishing between emotions.

One obvious inference is that they are part of the emotions themselves, and this conclusion receives support from the second problem with Prinz’s account. He has acknowledged that different emotions have similar bodily responses, but we can tell we are feeling guilty rather than sad. His explanation is that we can tell the different as a result of the ‘eliciting conditions’. But what if we can tell which emotion we are experiencing without knowing these conditions? Let me adapt one of Prinz’s own examples to make the point. He states that

“If I feel a lump in my throat after cheating on my wife, I assume that feeling is the result of bringing harm to a loved one, and I realise the feeling is guilt.” (2005, pp. 19–20)

Let us say that Prinz’s next book is published to rave reviews and he goes out for a riotous celebration with his colleagues. He returns home very late and wakes up next to his wife early the next morning with no memory of anything which happened between leaving work and stumbling home. Beyond his concern about his lack of memory, the only other thought which assails him is an overwhelming sense of embarrassment. He is clearly in the throes of an emotion which he identifies introspectively, but has no knowledge of a cause which lies infuriatingly hidden in the depths of his blurred memory of the night before. We must attribute to him the belief that he has performed some hideously embarrassing public act, but it seems entirely plausible that he might feel this way without recalling what the act was or even if he did no more than contemplate the act. If such cases are plausible, then we can know which emotion we are experiencing without knowing what has caused it. This in turn means that knowledge of the eliciting conditions of the emotion cannot be necessary conditions for identifying what the emotion is.

The obvious cognitivist line here is that Prinz is right to pick out beliefs as the means by which we identify emotions, but he has mistakenly left them out of his basic ontology. Emotions are necessarily intentional, bringing us into contact with the world around us, and it is beliefs, perceptions, judgements, assumptions and a wide range of other such world-directed mental states which constitute this intentional aspect. It is when such intentional states are combined in consciousness with another category of intentional state, feelings, that we are experiencing an emotion. But this leads to another possible objection to the theory as it now stands, to the effect that I have over-simplified the kind of role feelings can play in our engagement with the world around us.



## 8. Feelings

I have suggested that there are two sorts of feelings which might be involved in an emotion. We might have a bodily feeling such as the tightening of one's stomach muscles which might feature in my anger at government policy in Iraq. Or we might have a psychic feeling, a perception of a more subtle psychological state, such as a feeling of satisfaction involved in my pride at winning a chess match. The cognitivist is generally seen to be on stronger ground here, given that such feelings appear to have no obvious relation to states of affairs outside the body, and therefore fail to explain the intentionality of our emotions, but this claim is also challenged by Prinz.

He suggests that feelings are related to mental representations *via* what he calls 'emotion attitudes', which he defines as "a propositional attitude that established a causal link between an emotion and the representation of an object or a state of affairs" (2005, p. 20). This means that when I am bored with my novel, I have feelings tiredness and disinterest which are my emotion. I have a perception of the novel. And I have an emotion attitude, which is an attitude concerning the causal link between the emotion and the novel. Prinz claims it is in this way that my emotions become hooked up to the world around me, and come to be directed towards certain specific objects of my intentional states, which are also the intentional object of my emotions.

Prinz is right to think of feelings as having intentionality, but as should be clear from what I have already said, I suggest he has got the intentional objects of feelings wrong. Feelings are perceptions, and the intentional objects of the feelings involved in emotions are states of one's body, or of mental states.<sup>11</sup> The phenomenology of our emotions means that the disparate parts are run together in the mind, such that the feelings may be thought of unreflectively as being directly related to the novel. It is therefore easy to see why one might think of the novel as being the direct object of the feeling, but this is simply an example of what Peter Goldie illuminatingly calls the 'borrowed intentionality' of feelings (2000, pp. 54–57). Our feelings have their own set of intentional objects – perceptible changes and states of the body. It is only when they are combined in consciousness with cognitive states whose intentional objects are external to us that the feelings are now part of our engagement with the wider world in the form of an emotion.

Where Prinz's work provides far greater insight is when he talks of 'emotion attitudes'. Any theory of the emotions must be able to explain how two apparently disparate sorts of intentional state come to be associated with one another. Why should we think that a feeling of a lump in one's throat and a perception of the ruins of a city are related within an emotion of sadness? I have already argued that the perception should not be thought as the cause of the feeling, but as a part of it. But we must still posit the mental act of unifying the perception and the feeling, and we may still call it an emotion attitude even if it is not seen as a causal connection.<sup>12</sup> I take it to be entirely consistent to accept his argument about the existence of emotion attitudes in the modified form set out above, and to suggest that such attitudes bind together the

<sup>11</sup> I do not wish to imply a mind/body dualism, merely to suggest that we often draw a distinction between perception of non-mental states on the one hand such our a lump in one's throat, and mental states on the other, such as unease.

<sup>12</sup> If we consider the question of why it should be possible for us to perform this mental act, then perhaps the best starting point would be to look at the evolutionary development of emotions. From among the legion of works on this subject, see Griffiths (1997).

differing sorts of perceptions involved in emotions, including the relevant feelings.

There is one further dimension of the discussion of feelings which I shall raise here in light of its importance, but will not consider at any length as it does not conflict with the substance of my own theory and there is not space to develop it fully. I have claimed that the feelings present in any emotion are either bodily or psychic feelings. But there are other sorts of feelings which are of enormous importance to our emotional lives. These have been discussed under various names, including ‘mood’ (Heidegger 1962), ‘background feelings’ (Damasio 1995), ‘feeling towards’ (Goldie 2000), and ‘existential feelings’ (Ratcliffe 2005). The discussions differ considerably in style, but in each case they refer to what one might think of as the hidden structure of our engagement with the world. Ratcliffe describes existential feelings as “a background which comprises the very sense of ‘being’ or ‘reality’ that attaches to world experience” (2005, p. 46). It is such feelings which help us find our way in the world, directing us towards certain projects or persons rather than others, often in an unreflective way. I suggest the way in which such feelings relate to our emotions is that they break through into consciousness when we confronted with atypical or exceptional circumstances. I may have general but largely unreflective sense of the danger of dogs which expresses itself through a largely unthinking avoidance of them. But when I enter my neighbour’s house and find myself sitting opposite a hungry-looking, panting Alsatian, and my heart begins thumping, then my ‘feeling towards’ dogs which has structured my behaviour in a largely unconscious way now breaks through in the form of fear. Feelings thereby play a multifarious role within our emotional lives, not only in the sense that they partly constitute all of our emotions, but also in the sense that they structure the overall shape of our emotional engagement with the world.<sup>13</sup>

## 9. Conclusion

I have claimed that the cognitivist project in philosophy of emotions is essentially right. This can be seen more readily once one recognises that the essential feature at the heart of all such theories is that emotions must be seen as intentional states. Where cognitivism has gone wrong is in insisting both on the exclusion of feelings and on the reduction of emotions to a single category of intentional state. This has the considerable advantage of greater explanatory simplicity, but lays the position open to the kinds of counter arguments which it has attracted since the mid-1990s. Once one accepts the irreducible complexity of emotions, then a fuller understanding becomes more possible in light of being able to identify the various constituent elements, one of which is always a feeling, and the rest of which may include a variety of world directed intentional states such as judgements, perceptions or beliefs. I have also suggested that this conclusion cannot license a return to the idea of feelings as being solely constitutive of our emotions, as this cannot account for their distinctive intentionality. The complexity of our emotional lives is inescapable.<sup>14</sup>

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### Stephen Grant

#### Emocija, kognicija i osjećaj

##### **Sažetak**

*Tekst propituje novija istraživanja i razvoj kognitivnih teorija emocija te nastoji razviti originalnu teoriju unutar tog pristupa. Tekst se posebno usmjerava na kritičizam koji takve teorije pre-intelektualiziranih emocija reducira na stavove prema propozicijama i isključuje osjećaje. Tvrdim da je svega nekoliko kognitivista zastupalo navedenu teoriju te da je moguće tvrditi da su emocije djelomično konstituirane od osjećaja i da ostaju unutar parametara kognitivne teorije. To je moguće ako je valjana činjenica da kognitivisti smatraju da su emocije sastavljene od intencionalnih stavova. Ako definiramo osjećaj kao percepciju stava o nečijem tijelu, tada se osjećaj može razumjeti kao jedan od intencionalnih stavova uz, primjerice, uvjerenje o moći prosuđivanja koje djelomično konstituira svaku emociju. To poziciju nazivam »kompleksnim kognitivizmom«.*

##### **Ključne riječi**

Emocija, kognitivizam, osjećaj, prosuđivanje, percepcija

### Stephen Grant

#### Emotion, Kognition und Gefühl

##### **Zusammenfassung**

*Der Artikel hinterfragt neuere Entwicklungen in kognitiven Emotionstheorien und versucht von diesem Ansatz ausgehend eine originelle Theorie zu entwickeln. Es wird insbesondere der Kritizismus in Erwägung gezogen, der Theorien überintellektualisierter Emotionen reduziert auf Einstellungen zu Propositionen und Gefühle ausschließt. Ich bin der Ansicht, dass nur einige wenige Kognitionswissenschaftler die genannte Theorie vertreten, sodass man behaupten kann, dass Emotionen teilweise aus Gefühlen konstituiert sind und dabei im Rahmen der Parameter der kognitiven Theorie bleiben. Dies ist möglich aufgrund der Tatsache, dass Kognitivisten die Meinung vertreten, dass Emotionen aus intentionalen Einstellungen bestehen. Wenn wir das Gefühl als Perzeption der Einstellung zu jemandes Körper definieren, dann kann das Gefühl als eine der intentionalen Einstellungen verstanden werden, neben der Überzeugung, dass die Urteilskraft teilweise jede Emotion konstituiert. Diese Position bezeichne ich als „komplexen Kognitivismus“.*

##### **Schlüsselbegriffe**

Emotion, Kognitivismus, Gefühl, Urteil, Perzeption

**Stephen Grant**

**Émotion, cognition et sentiment**

**Résumé**

*Le texte examine les recherches récentes et le développement de la théorie cognitive des émotions, et cherche à développer une théorie originale dans le cadre de cette approche. Le texte s'oriente particulièrement sur la critique qui réduit ces théories des émotions trop intellectualisées à des attitudes selon des propositions et exclue les sentiments. Je tiens que quelques cognitivistes seulement ont représenté ladite théorie, et qu'il est possible d'affirmer que les émotions sont partiellement constituées de sentiments et qu'elles restent à l'intérieur des paramètres de la théorie cognitive. Cela est possible si les cognitivistes considèrent que les émotions soient constituées d'attitudes intentionnelles. Si l'on définit le sentiment comme la perception d'une attitude envers le corps de quelqu'un, alors on peut entendre le sentiment comme l'une des attitudes intentionnelles, tout comme la conviction de discernement qui constitue partiellement toute émotion. Je nomme cette position le « cognitivisme complexe ».*

**Mots-clés**

Émotion, cognitivisme, sentiment, jugement, perception