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VII. Emotions, Rationality, and Mind/Body¹

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There are now quite a number of popular or semi-popular works urging rejection of the old opposition between rationality and emotion. They present evidence or theoretical arguments that favour a reconception of emotions as providing an indispensable basis for practical rationality. Perhaps the most influential is neuroanatomist Antonio Damasio's *Descartes' Error*, which argues from cases of brain lesion and other neurological causes of emotional deficit that some sort of emotional 'marking,' of memories of the outcomes of our choices with anxiety, is needed to support learning from experience.²

Damasio's work has interesting connection to such issues as how to understand psychopaths, agents who lack normal feelings of guilt and other moral motives based on empathy.³ It seems that psychopaths are not like the rational 'amoralists' of philosophic lore but rather are unable to follow through reliably on long-term plans they make in their own interests. A failure of emotional empathy—with one's own future self, in effect—apparently yields elements of practical irrationality.

On the other hand, Damasio wrongly sets up Descartes and mind/body dualism as a philosophic foil for his view.⁴ His real

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at a plenary session on emotions at the XIVth Interamerican Philosophy Conference in Puebla, Mexico, in August 1999, a conference on 'Rationality and Mental Health' of the Association for the Advancement of Philosophy and Psychiatry in May 2000, and at the Royal Institute for Philosophy conference on emotions at the University of Manchester in July 2001. Along with members of those audiences, I owe thanks, for comments, to Erich Dierse, Scott James, Stephen Leighton, and Kathleen Wallace.

² Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994).

³ Cf. Damasio, pp. 178–79. I take these suggestions further in 'Responsible Psychopaths' (unpublished).

⁴ See Damasio, pp. 247ff., for an explanation, towards the end of the book, of what he takes Descartes' error to be.

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target seems to be Fodorian computationalism and similar views in cognitive science ('the mind as software program').⁵ He even implicitly recognizes, at one point toward the end of the book, that his announced target, Descartes' *cogito*, does include emotions, or at any rate their mental aspect ('suffering'), and he cites Descartes' detailed account of emotions in *The Passions of the Soul*.⁶ But Descartes' explanation of emotions in that work in terms of 'animal spirits' (essentially an outdated predecessor of neurological impulses) seems to bridge body and mind (or soul), despite his official dualism. The title of both books—Damasio's and Descartes'—may be somewhat unfortunate.

More generally, the recent neuroscientific work on emotions seems to take all but neurophilosophy and similar approaches within philosophy as necessarily opposing the project of recognizing the cognitive or rational role of emotion. In a rough-and-ready way, emotions are assumed to fall entirely on the 'body' side of the 'mind/body' distinction for anyone who would allow that much talk in mentalistic terms.

There are other recent popular works dealing with evolutionary psychology and related subjects that do make use of some philosophic literature for insight into the moral role of emotion. These essentially follow Darwin's attempts to explain the development of the "moral sense" in terms of social emotions in animals.⁷ A particular focus is eighteenth-century British moral philosophy, with its attempts to base ethics on human emotional nature. Sometimes the approach is put to conservative political uses, by 'sociobiologists' and others, and sometimes it is dismissed on just those grounds by political opponents, especially feminists. A current popular book that attempts something less ideological (though still committed to a basis in the mind's innate structure, on a version of the view derived from Chomsky) is Stephen Pinker's *How the Mind Works*.⁸

One thing many of these discussions seem to have in common is an importance assigned to emotions in rational terms specifically for

⁵ See *ibid.*, e.g. p. 250; cf. p. 248.

⁶ See *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Vol. I, trans. by E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 331–99.

⁷ See esp. ch. 3 in Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: Modern Library, n.d. [1871], chs. 4 and 5.

⁸ See Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), esp. ch. 6. For one of the more emotion-based versions of the socio-biological argument cf. Julius Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

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resistance to full rational control. Emotions are treated as cases of ‘rational irrationality’: They are of use to us rationally, in promoting our long-term ends, in part because they function as barriers to rational deliberation.⁹ They protect us from the need or the tendency to reason things out from scratch at every stage or in every respect, often to the detriment of rapid response or reliable follow-through or the ability to form relationships of mutual trust. In social terms, they serve as ‘commitment devices,’ making it demonstrably difficult for us to act as we otherwise would on the basis of narrow self-interest.¹⁰ The extreme case of uncontrolled anger, for instance, communicates a ‘hell-bent’ retaliatory urge in a way analogous to throwing the steering wheel out the car window in a game of ‘chicken’—Schelling’s classic game-theoretic case, with two cars hurtling toward each other, about to crash unless one of them swerves.¹¹

Just because emotions are somewhat recalcitrant to reason, then, they are accorded a crucial role in rational design—in creating a human nature (or a range of human natures) that is up to the human task—whether the design in question is evolutionary, cultural/political, or pedagogical. There are other recent works from a psychological or psychiatric perspective marshalling evidence for the role of emotional development in early childhood as a foundation for normal cognitive learning.¹² A further area of application to individual cases is psychotherapeutic redesign: there is a huge collection of psychological self-help and related literature (some of it theoretically respectable) dealing with emotions in rational terms. For that matter, the general line of thought here fits easily with self-developmental approaches within philosophy stressing Aristotelian notions of character-building or habituation in virtue.

However, there is still a kind of disconnection from contemporary philosophy (outside cognitive science) in the treatment given in many

⁹ Cf. Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), esp. p. 14.

¹⁰ See Robert H. Frank, *Passions Within Reason: The Strategic Role of the Emotions* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988); cf. my ‘Emotional Strategies and Rationality’, *Ethics* 110 (2000), 469–87.

¹¹ Cf. Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1980) esp. pp. 22ff.

¹² See esp. Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D. [no relation to the author] with Beryl Lieff Benderly, *The Growth of the Mind and the Endangered Origins of Intelligence* (Reading, Mass.: Perseus, 1997).

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of these works to understanding the nature of emotions, what emotions are. From within philosophy Paul Griffiths' informative book, *What Emotions Really Are*, exploits and widens this gap to the extent that it caricatures the main philosophical alternative and sweeps aside one of the central questions the latter attempts to deal with, essentially a normative version of Damasio's question of the bearing of emotions on practical reasoning.¹³ It is what philosophy has to teach on that subject that needs to be brought out in response to Damasio's error (and also, I think, Griffiths') of confusing ongoing attempts to understand emotions in mentalistic terms with a certain competing research program in cognitive science.

The effect of much contemporary philosophy of emotion has been to identify a rational or potentially rational (rationally assessable) content of emotions, at any rate in paradigmatic cases of developed human response. Griffiths calls this the 'propositional attitudes' approach. Emotions can be viewed as having a content expressible propositionally, or in terms of what they 'say' about their objects: personal anger, for instance, registers the agent's perception of a wrong someone presumably has done; pride registers the thought that the agent is somehow praiseworthy; fear registers a thought of danger, and so on.

This approach is generally discussed under the heading of 'emotions and judgments,' since it emerged from debate over more extreme versions that simply equated emotions with a subclass of evaluative judgments, as the category of propositional attitudes that philosophers were most at home with. But more fundamentally, what is at issue is a view of emotions as registering evaluative information and thus as susceptible to some sort of rational assessment themselves—not automatically to be consigned to the 'irrational' category.

There are overlapping theories in psychology that understand emotions in terms of cognitive 'appraisals' and similar notions.¹⁴ However, much of the current work in 'harder' areas of science (including 'cognitive science' areas of philosophy) eschews such talk

¹³ See Paul E. Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are: The Problem of Psychological Categories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Cf. my 'Practical Reasoning and Emotions,' in A. Mele and P. Rawlings (eds), *Rationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in progress).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Magda B. Arnold, 'Human Emotion and Action,' in *Human Action: Conceptual and Empirical Issues*, T. Mischel (ed.), (New York: Academic Press, 1969); cf. Nico Frijda, *The Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

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in favour of a treatment of emotional states as physiological or bodily reactions or reaction-clusters ('affect-programmes') capable of causal connection with rational thought and action but not themselves capable of rationality.

There may be good heuristic or other practical reasons for adopting this nonmentalistic framework for certain purposes. Within philosophy, the aim is often to lend support to an interdisciplinary scientific research programme. Minimizing metaphysical assumptions avoids a lot of potentially divisive dispute. But of course it is the job of philosophy to inquire into assumptions. In this case, the point of doing so need not be particularly metaphysical—to push beyond the categories studiable by science—but rather, as I see it, is more concerned with specifying just how it is that practical reason puts emotions to work. The essential terminology is that of normative assessment rather than mentalistic talk per se.

Philosophers have exploited the possibility of representing the evaluative content of emotions in propositional terms since Aristotle, though not always with a distinction between content and causal accompaniments. The Stoics even made out emotions as evaluative judgments. However, unlike Aristotle they also advocated an asceticism that affects their treatment of emotions. Emotions for the Stoics amount to confused judgments, and their usual advice is to minimize confusion by cultivating more detached states of mind.

However, with all the many possibilities of confusion associated with emotions, they may sometimes embody more accurate perception of the value-laden world than we allow to affect our detached judgments. Our regard for them as quick responses resisting deliberative control is heightened by this assessment: they are not just 'quick-and-dirty' (rationally speaking) but often embody a point of view worth recording even where more reasoned judgments are to hand. There has therefore been a resurgence in recent years of a 'judgmentalist' approach with a more positive spin on the value of emotion.¹⁵

¹⁵ For the re-entry of what I am calling 'judgmentalism' into the post-Wittgensteinian Anglo-American literature see Erroll Bedford, 'Emotions,' in *The Philosophy of Mind*, V. C. Chappell (ed.), (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, 1962). Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions: The Myth and Nature of Human Emotion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday, 1976) expands the view and connects it with continental philosophy, especially Nietzsche and Sartre. A more qualified variant of the view with Jamesian physiological elements appears in William Lyons, *Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

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I would modify the approach with an account of emotional rationality that sets it apart from the logic of judgments by allowing for rational options, including conflicting emotional responses by the same person to the same situation—or for that matter, the suppression of emotional response.¹⁶ I refer to this as the ‘perspectival’ account, meaning that rational warrant for an emotional response varies with evaluative perspective—in a way not recorded in qualifications to the content of emotion, unlike what is supposed to be the case for judgment.

On the perspectival account, what emotions register, when the mechanism is working properly, is not necessarily the ‘all things considered’ view of things by which we assess our beliefs. To say that an emotion is reasonable, or rationally appropriate, is to say that a certain evaluative belief that represents the content of the emotion (for anger, for instance, that someone has done me a wrong) would be warranted by a significant subset of the evidence—significant in the sense of ‘worth holding in mind,’ perhaps for moral or other practical purposes.

This is a loose and variable standard, adding a further level of normative assessment (*of* the evaluative thought content of emotion as well as by it). Rationality in the relevant sense allows for emotional options and even emotional conflict or ambivalence. It does not imply the irrationality of an emotion with the opposite content—or of no emotion, emotional suppression or indifference. As a positive evidential assessment of an emotion, ‘rational’ means something like ‘rationally acceptable,’ or adequately grounded in the situational evidence, rather than ‘rationally required,’ or mandated by the evidence, as on the usual standard for assessing belief. What is assessed in the case of emotional evaluation is something

¹⁶ See ‘A Case of Mixed Feelings: Ambivalence and the Logic of Emotions,’ in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Explaining Emotions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 223–50; cf. my extended account in *Emotions and Reasons: An Inquiry into Emotional Justification* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1988). For a simpler explication of the current point see my *Practical Guilt: Moral Dilemmas, Emotions, and Social Norms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), ch. 5. I should note that my term ‘perspectival,’ here and in the second book, is not meant to evoke Nietzsche’s general perspectival theory of truth (or for that matter, various other uses of the term that apply specifically to desires and emotions). Cf. esp. the perspectival account that de Sousa opposes to Solomon’s view of emotions as ‘subjectivity’ in Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1987), pp. 146–49.

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more like attention to a *prima facie* belief—holding a certain thought content in mind—as distinct (in some cases) from all-things-considered assent.

Imagine letting oneself get angry about a consumer complaint for the sake of arguing more forcefully with the store.¹⁷ The propositional content of anger here would be something like: ‘The store has dealt with me unfairly.’ But I could think this—in the dispositional sense relevant to belief, or even as an object of occurrent attention—without necessarily reacting to it with characteristic phenomenological symptoms of anger. I may have reasons for ‘letting it go’ until I have more time, say, or out of sympathy for the overburdened clerk. On the other side, I have reasons for ‘letting it happen,’ setting up the conditions under which my anger will emerge (for instance, by reviewing the history of my interactions with the store), in order to get some action from the clerk. So I have options here for emotional reaction—appropriate reaction, as assessed in rational terms, relative to the evidence, for a more tolerant analogue of the notion of warranted belief. Either allowing or suppressing the feeling will be appropriate, in the sense of being adequately warranted by the facts of the situation.

To make more detailed sense of the account we need to distinguish the essentially cognitive notion of emotional rationality as appropriateness—evidential or representational rationality—from strategic or instrumental rationality, the practical notion that I refer to as ‘adaptiveness.’ Adaptiveness would include, say, a straightforward appeal to the usefulness of feelings of anger, in my example, in getting the clerk to yield—whether or not there is a real basis for the reaction. There are two senses of rationality in play in these cases and elsewhere, and they can sometimes come apart. However, I think the strategic notion (adaptiveness) does play a background role in determining the standard of evidence applicable to a given emotion, in contrast to warrant for belief.

That is, how much we demand in the way of evidential backing for an emotion is adjusted to reflect the usual value of its consequences, both for the individual himself and for people generally.¹⁸

¹⁷ See my ‘Emotional Strategies and Rationality,’ *Ethics* 110 (2000), 469–87.

¹⁸ See Karen Jones, ‘Emotional Rationality as Practical Rationality,’ in C. Calhoun (ed.), *Setting the Moral Compass: Essays by Women Philosophers* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming) for an argument that what is relevant here is not just type-by-type consideration of emotions, of the sort I had in mind in *Emotions and Reasons*, but also a particular individual’s emotional history.

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Less evidence is required, for instance, for anger seen as a healthy form of self-assertion with ameliorative effects in the long run than if we interpret it simply as arrogant and destructive. But we can still make a distinction between rational appropriateness as a kind of evidential warrant and social or moral appropriateness, the assessment of a response such as anger simply as fitting or failing to fit social or moral norms in the particular case.¹⁹ One might reject anger as undignified or uncharitable and still recognize that there are grounds for it in a particular case as opposed to others. There is a distinction, for instance, between appropriate emotion and emotion that is normal and understandable but not really warranted, on the order of blaming the messenger of bad news.

In general, the perspectival view is able to make sense of the rational validity of conflicting reactive standpoints (as in empathetic emotions) as well as our ability to shift perspectives in a way that allows for the combination of emotional uncontrol with a degree of strategy.²⁰ It appeals to a notion of the propositional thought con-

¹⁹ Cf. Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, 'The Moralistic Fallacy: On the "Appropriateness" of Emotions,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 61 (2000), 65–90. At the Manchester conference D'Arms raised the question why emotional appropriateness should be affected by adaptiveness at all. I think the answer has to do with my interpretation of appropriateness as not just the 'truth' of emotions (a measure of success or correctness as in de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotions*) but rather a matter of fitness to reasons. The relevant reasons are reasons for taking a given thought or state of affairs as meriting attention. My assumption is that these would naturally centre on strategic considerations, though my account is meant to make their influence indirect.

²⁰ I should note that Griffiths' argument often seems to take for granted (or even to represent as a product of scientific theorizing) an assumption of 'passivity,' or emotional uncontrol, that essentially erects a barrier against the recognition of emotional strategies—dismissing them as mere 'pretences' of emotion in cases where the strategy is social or cultural and involves cultivating the sense of uncontrol; see esp. pp. 155–7, pp. 233f., pp. 242ff.; cf. p. 9, p. 16, p. 118, p. 120. Cf. my 'Emotional Strategies and Rationality.' At the Manchester conference Griffiths did allow for what he called 'Machiavellian emotions,' but the term suggests a degree of calculation that makes the phenomenon seem more limited than it is. In any case, it is not clear how his argument in the book can survive this modification, as it depends on ruling out cases that do not appear to be subject to evolutionary explanation. The main moral Griffiths drew from his earlier argument at the Manchester conference was that philosophers theorizing about emotions cannot afford to ignore the one area of solid

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tent of emotions, but my own inclinations in philosophy of mind are basically in the naturalist camp, if the term ‘naturalist’ is understood to allow for serious social influence on emotion. Though it is not set up to record the results of scientific inquiry into emotions, I would hope that the view can accommodate them.

Presumably, on a naturalist account, the full-blown or fully developed cases of human emotion that my own view takes as paradigmatic for purposes of rational assessment would ultimately be made out as involving a complex relation between cortical brain states and physiological states and events.²¹ By the same token, emotion on the view I have outlined in mentalistic terms involves evaluative thought content but also an element of positive or negative affect

²¹ Cf. the evidence in Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), of a subcortical pathway operating in less complex cases of fear, identified as such by a behavioural (‘freezing’) response, in both humans and lower animals. I take it that any feelings we have in these cases—note that LeDoux takes pains to point out that what he is discussing is fear as a behavioural system rather than a subspecies of fear experience (e.g., p. 28)—would not be subject to rational assessment, except perhaps derivatively, to the extent that they ‘track’ reasons applicable to a sufficiently developed organism. Hence they count as ‘deficient’ cases of my paradigm, but despite my somewhat stipulative use of ‘emotions’ in *Emotions and Reasons*, I do not object to calling them emotions. I would agree with Griffiths and others that emotions (on anything like our ordinary use of the term) do not constitute a natural kind. A different choice of paradigm would of course be appropriate for other purposes, e.g. explaining the origins of fully developed human emotions. But I take it that LeDoux and other neuroscientists working on emotions mean to allow for links between subcortical and cortical pathways. For discussion of psychological evidence on the subject, see Mohan Matthen, ‘Emotion and Learning’ (unpublished), which argues that even freezing (along with other anticipatory reactions) has to be explained by a kind of ‘displaced conditioning’ (involving instinctive causal reasoning) that is part of the process endowing emotions with cognitive content.

scientific evidence in the area, for ‘basic’ emotions as evolutionarily derived affect-programmes. I take this point but was moved to meditate on it while hiking in the Lake District after the conference: in my effort to avoid muddy patches in one area I often found myself perched on a rock that led nowhere. Griffiths himself discusses many of the difficulties one has in explaining the full range of human emotions in terms of the basic subset, and he grants that getting emotions into ‘the space of reasons’ raises further issues.

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that can be said to have that content—to be about what the associated thought is about. This ‘associated’ thought need not be present as a distinct occurrence. Rather, I take the affective element of (rationally paradigmatic) emotion as a propositional attitude, an attitude with an evaluative proposition as its content. But I often drop propositional attitudes talk—to avoid the logical and meta-physical overtones that worry many readers—and just speak of evaluative attitudes.²² Affect itself essentially evaluates something as in some respect good or bad—good or bad for the organism (to be sought after or avoided), in the most primitive cases. With cognitive development this evaluative content takes on the possibilities of semantical richness that we associate with propositions.

I think of the affective element of emotions in crude terms as comfort or discomfort—discomfort that some wrong has been done me, in the anger example, say. Discomfort here amounts to a representation in affect of the negative aspect of the emotional evaluation. It (or the various physiological feelings the term covers) can be seen as a ‘marker,’ to use Damasio’s terms in *Descartes’ Error*, of practically significant thoughts—in the sense of propositions it is ‘about,’ not necessarily propositional thoughts held in mind in some

²² Many people like the term ‘construals’—as suggested by Robert C. Roberts, ‘What an Emotion Is: A Sketch,’ *Philosophical Review* 79 (1988), pp. 183–209—but for reasons I would want to resist: a construal is not necessarily either propositional or evaluative. My broad use of the term ‘affect’ is meant to leave open questions about the primacy of inner and outer, or mental and bodily, reactions. Though I sometimes speak in terms of feeling, I prefer ‘affect’ as a term less naturally used in the plural, which makes it less tempting to think of emotions as specific introspectible contents—and also to take emotions as episodic (cf. Malcolm Budd, *Music and the Emotions*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985). However, I do mean to be discussing occurrent emotions as ongoing states of affective evaluation. The term ‘propositional attitudes’—besides carrying suggestions of logical and semantical complexity that I mean to cancel for typical cases of emotion—is standardly used for states of mind taking a propositional object: belief that *p*, desire that *p*, and so forth. Though fear that *p* is also on the standard list, emotions as a general category do not fit this pattern. Love, for instance, normally just has a person as its object. In *Emotions and Reasons* I distinguished internal components of emotion—in the case of love, e.g., we might have discomfort that one is far from the love object—and applied the standard account of propositional attitudes to the affective aspect of the components, taking propositions as ‘internal objects’ of emotion; but the result confused many readers. I can do without object-terminology and just speak of propositional content here.

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independent sense. Discomfort also adds a practical or motivational significance of its own, as a bad or aversive state for the agent to be in, that affords it a role in rational decision-making.

This is definitely not meant to say that the only important property of the affective element of emotions is its positive or negative aspect; there obviously is much more to feeling than that (or in some cases, such as surprise, possibly less).²³ Other features of affect such as degree of arousal can enter into the description of an emotion as a felt quality, and for that matter its classification as the particular sort of emotion it is. Early arguments for judgmentalism exploited the inadequacy of affect as a basis for distinguishing different emotion types, but it does not follow that affect adds nothing relevant. My own simple categories are set up for the purpose of rational assessment, not to give a full account of the nature or value of emotions.

I sometimes speak of affect and evaluation as ‘components’ of emotion, but this is meant in an analytical sense, not implying separable parts. The two components (aspects, elements) are internally connected insofar as emotional affect has an evaluation as its content. The assumption of intentionality at this level of basic feeling can sound mysterious, but in principle it is no more so than in more familiar cases involving units of language and thought. In fact, I suspect that the historical or evolutionary account of thought would start with feelings, assigned ‘meanings’ by their significance for the organism in a sense that includes their role in behavioural response—meanings in a sense that becomes mental only with later cognitive development.²⁴ Thought content in this sense, even at later stages of development, need not be a separable mental element; it is the content of a feeling.

Even if there is a more ultimate explanation of emotional intentionality in naturalistic terms, I think we need to speak in terms of propositional content in order to address normative questions of rationality. Consider, for instance, a possible alternative approach based on appeal to the causal histories of emotions. This would involve taking an emotion as rationally appropriate on the basis of

²³ Cf. David Pugmire, *Rediscovering Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), esp. 65ff.

²⁴ Griffiths in some ways creates an opening for this kind of account with his defence of an alternative to propositional ‘content schemata’ in terms of ecological significance for the organism; cf. p. 231. Cf. the evolutionary ‘functionalist’ or teleological conception of intentionality defended in Ruth G. Millikan, *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1984).

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its occurrence in a situation that resembles in relevant respects a situation originally associated with it—whether in early childhood, as in Ronald de Sousa’s ‘paradigm scenarios’ account of emotional rationality, or in an earlier evolutionary environment; and whether or not the connection is socially mediated, as on ‘social constructivist’ views of emotion.²⁵

Consider male sexual jealousy, or particularly the anger component of jealousy. Imagine someone who feels jealous anger when his wife exchanges glances with another male at a party. To use Aristotle’s definition of anger in the *Rhetoric*, he is reacting to an unjustified slight—or at any rate, what he sees as a slight, or as indicating that a slight is imminent.²⁶ But this is a first-level normative judgment (an evaluation of the situation) that requires interoperation of past events and their natural and conventional meanings—what a glance means or can mean, what legitimate expectations a relationship confers, that a glance involves or might lead to intimacies that violate those expectations—on a level that is unlikely to correspond in any simple way to connections among brain and physiological states interpreted just with reference to a descriptively characterized situational context.

On the level of second-order normative assessment (of the emotion), jealousy might sometimes be assessed as inappropriate to the current situation—if the agent finds out, say, that his wife and the recipient of her glance, a colleague in her area, are reacting to a professional faux pas on the part of someone else at the party—even where situational cues naturally give rise to jealousy because of their resemblance to some sort of paradigm scenario. To explain which cues render an emotion appropriate, rather than merely natural or understandable, given that assessments of practical significance may have changed since the paradigm scenario was established, we seem to need at least implicit reference to the notion of a propositional content, as what the emotion still essentially ‘claims’ about the situation.

Even supposing that a feeling is ultimately explainable in biological terms or in terms of biology plus social learning—meaning that its occurrence is thus explainable—those are not the terms in which we assess it, or could assess it, as rational or irrational in the instrumental as well as the representational sense, for purposes of self-regulation and social life. If we got to the stage where we could treat jealousy reliably with drug therapy, say, someone would have to decide whether it should be treated, and she would have to

²⁵ See de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, esp. pp. 181–4.

²⁶ See Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 1378a31–b5.

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deliberate on the basis of at least some assessments containing further normative elements.

For a full theoretical understanding of much that goes on in human behaviour, moreover, we need to be able to recognize cases where an agent uses emotional response for his own purposes, healthy or not. For instance, we can make sense of someone talking himself into feeling jealous on flimsy or imagined grounds just in order to provoke a kind of interaction with his spouse—to exert control, perhaps, or perhaps just an occasion to express and enhance affection. Though the jealous episode may start out as a ‘pretence’ of sorts, some pretences are self-fulfilling.

An account without propositional attitudes would seem to be unable to capture all the causal histories and strategic aims that are relevant to assessments of emotional rationality. But the standards of appropriate response come to be internal to an emotion (anger, for instance, gets set up as a response to some sort of perceived slight), even if its affective element is first found in infancy as a response to something more basic such as physical restraint. So propositional attitudes also affect the way we identify emotions and in that sense what they are.

However, my own emphasis is not on what emotions are but what they do. The question of what they are seems to me to lead to a non-terminating dispute in which, in one way or another, the rationality of emotion get slighted: either by assimilation to more familiar rational categories or by hasty dichotomy. To end with a ‘sound bite’ summing up the alternative approach I have tried to defend: *Affect evaluates!* Emotional affect is itself evaluative—and the result can be summed up in a proposition.

In short, I think we can have it both ways about judgment versus feeling or bodily response as the nature of emotion—and not by simply conjoining separable components. My own view emerged from criticism of judgmentalism, but it can be thought of as a version of the ‘feeling’ view with enough judgmental or propositional structure to allow for rational assessment of emotions. It does not make out emotions as thoughts with hedonic tone but rather as feelings with evaluative content. This content amounts to a ‘thought,’ but not in the sense of an occurrent mental event, at any rate apart from feeling. Rather, it is what feeling registers or conveys. By isolating it for analysis in the form of a proposition, I have tried to show how we can begin to understand the role of emotions in practical reasoning.