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Emotions and reasons

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ABSTRACT: This paper pictures emotions as able to provide reasons for action in so far as the beliefs and desires which make up reasons for action are constitutive elements of emotions themselves. It claims that the states of the world which prompt emotional attitudes “justify” them in so far as they render the beliefs constitutive of those attitudes true. Finally, it addresses the question what can make the desires or valuing ingredients ingredient to emotions appropriate to their objects.

KEYWORDS: Aristotle, Ben-Ze’ev, Davidson, de Sousa, emotions, evaluative attitudes, Nussbaum, reasons, value judgments

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is not about emotional arguments,¹ or nor about the role of emotion in argumentation.² It is about the *interplay between emotions³ and reasons*—something we need to be clear about before we can understand the role emotion can play in argument and argumentation.⁴

I take it to be uncontroversial that emotions often *explain* why we act as we do. That familiar fact gives rise to two questions:

- Q1) Whether and if so how emotions can give us *reasons* (good or bad) for acting as we do?
- Q2) Whether and if so how what prompts or *causes* us to adopt a particular emotional attitude toward something provides us with *reasons* for adopting that attitude toward it?

¹ As is for example Gilbert (1997: esp. 82-84); Carozza (2007), or Plantin (1999).

² As is for example Groarke (2010), Innocenti Manolescu (2006) or Karen Tracy’s keynote address at this conference, which concerns the proper role of emotional expressiveness in argumentative contexts.

³ Amélie Rorty (1980: 1); see also (1978/1980: 104-05) has observed that “[e]motions do not form a natural class” They “form a heterogeneous group: various conditions and states have been included in the class for quite different reasons and on different grounds, against the background of shifting contrasts.” De Sousa (1987: 20) endorses a similar view as well (though perhaps for slightly different reasons). If they are right, as I think they are, then it will be difficult if not impossible to make generalizations about emotions which will hold true of everything we’re prepared to call an emotion.

⁴ But see the comment about emotion and argument in the third paragraph from the end of section 3.1 below.

I also take it to be relatively uncontroversial that reasons for action involve both a cognitive element, such as belief, and another sort element—Davidson (1968) called it a pro attitude, Aristotle called it *orexis*⁵ (appetite or desire).⁶ Thus in Aristotle’s view (*EN* VI, 2, 1139a36ff)

[i]ntellect itself... moves nothing, but only the intellect which aims at an end and is practical.... Hence choice is either desiderative reason or ratiocinative desire, and such an origin of action is a man.

In the terminology I’ve been using for the last few years (Pinto 2006, 2009, 2010), actions flow from *conative attitudes* (such as intentions), the reasons for which lie in a combination of *cognitive (in particular doxastic or belief-like) attitudes*, on the one hand, and *evaluative attitudes*, on the other.⁷ The insistence that evaluative attitudes play such a role in supplying reasons for action gives rise to a third question:

Q3) What makes some evaluative attitudes *appropriate* to their objects and others not?

2. EMOTIONS AND THEIR OBJECTS

Our emotions have “intentional objects”—they are always directed toward or are “about” some person, thing or event of which we are conscious.

Many emotions (anger, love, jealousy, for example) have particular *persons* or things as their object or “target” (de Sousa 1987: 115f.), while other emotions (for example, embarrassment, shame, hope, guilt, regret) have only “propositional objects”—what I regret or am embarrassed *about* is *that* I acted in a certain way, or perhaps *that* I am a member of a certain group; what I hope *for* is *that* an event of a certain kind will occur in the future.

When an emotion has a particular thing or person as its “target”, having that emotion involves seeing or believing that the target has a specific property (de Sousa [1987: 116f.] calls it a *focal property*) “which is the motivating aspect of these emotions”—for example, I am angry with the person I’m talking to because I believe he has just insulted me.

⁵ See Nussbaum (1986/2001b: chapter 9) for an enlightening discussion of Aristotle’s ideas about the role of *orexis* in explaining the actions of animals and human beings. Note especially her recognition (pp. 283-86) that what takes place in adult humans capable of deliberation and choice is much more complicated than what transpires in the merely “voluntary” behavior of animals and young children. See also her presentation of Aristotle’s account of deliberation in chapter 10 of that work, which stresses the fact that he recognizes no exceptionalness general principles which can guide us in our choices, and that he takes decisions about what to do in concrete situations to be made on the basis of something *analogous* to perception. See note 17 below for the “essential motivational role” in human excellence which his account accords to appetite.

⁶ But see Nussbaum’s somewhat cryptic remark quoted at the end of note 20 below suggesting that “the tendency to explain actions in terms of two distinct sorts of items, beliefs or judgments and desires, needs to be made more complicated.”

⁷ Such reasons will be good *prima facie* reasons only if it is reasonable for us to hold both the doxastic and the evaluative attitudes which comprise them. (See Pinto 2009). This is a variant, of course, on Davidson’s view that the primary reason for an action consists of a belief and a “pro attitude”. However Davidson (1963/1980) does not recognize intentions (conative attitudes) as distinct explanatory or justificatory elements. Later (Davidson 1970/1980) comes to recognize intentions as a distinct elements, but construes them as cognitive judgments of a certain kind—a view which I decidedly *do not* share.

According to de Sousa (p. 117), “a causal connection between the focal property and the occurrence of the emotion is a necessary condition for the former to be a motivating aspect,” though (pp. 117-118) a person may be mistaken about what the cause or motivating aspect actually is. On both these scores, I think de Sousa is correct. Additionally, he maintains (p. 118) that “[m]otivating aspects must be *rationally related* to the emotion they cause, in the sense that they must constitute *intelligible rationalizations* for the emotion.”

Though I have drawn this terminology and these observations from de Sousa (1987: chapter 5), to a considerable degree many of these same ideas are already present in Aristotle’s discussion of emotions in the first 9 chapters of Book II of the *Rhetoric*.

3. THE EVALUATIVE ELEMENT IN EMOTIONS

There is fairly widespread agreement that emotions *contain* cognitive and evaluative elements. Nussbaum (2001a, see esp. chapter 1) and Solomon (1993: 125-132) *equate* emotions with value judgments.⁸ Ben-Ze’ev (2000: chapter 3, see esp. pp. 56-59) counts cognitive and evaluative elements as but two of the four⁹ principal *components* of paradigmatic emotions;¹⁰ Pitcher (1965: 333-336) stresses that emotions require “evaluations” in addition to factual beliefs.¹¹ What is common to these views is the idea that beliefs and evaluations are not mere “triggers” of emotional states, but that they are *ingredient* to—are constitutive of—the emotional states themselves.

In order to get the evaluative element of emotion more clearly into view, I want to comment on two aspects of Nussbaum’s account of the “value judgments” she takes to be constitutive of emotions. Although she has not convinced me that emotions can be *equated* with combinations of factual beliefs and value judgments, I think that the sets of beliefs and evaluations she employs to type-identify various emotions are in fact central ingredients of those emotions. Despite the reservation just mentioned, I focus on her account because I find it exceptionally nuanced, insightful and genuinely illuminating.

⁸ Solomon (1993:126) says, “An emotion is an evaluation (or a ‘normative’) judgment, a judgment about my situation and about myself and/or about all other people.”

⁹ The other two principal components are feeling and motivation.

¹⁰ Nussbaum (2001a: 56), having asked whether there are parts to an emotion over and above “the evaluative thought”, adds a note in which she says, “It is here that my view differs most from that of Ben-Ze’ev (2000): his view is more open-ended, including appraisals, feelings, and motivations into the account of emotion. Because he does not look for necessary and sufficient conditions for emotion, but instead for prototypes, which particular cases may resemble to a greater or lesser degree, it is difficult to compare our views, or to say how he would deal with the problems I raise here for claims that feelings and bodily movements are necessary for a given emotion type. To that extent, his view and mine may not really differ.”

¹¹ De Sousa may also be classed among those who hold that emotion involves evaluation, since he says (1987: 167-68) that just as “the criteria of the rationality for action look partly toward desire, so the criteria of rationality for desire look at least partly to value. That is the *emotional* face of desire” (italics added).

3.1 *Should the evaluations requisite for emotions be construed as beliefs?*¹²

Having pointed out (2001a: 27-29) that emotions involve *intentional objects* about which we have *beliefs*,¹³ Nussbaum introduces (p. 30) the evaluative dimension of emotions by saying,

Finally, we notice something marked in the intentional perceptions and the beliefs characteristic of emotions: they are concerned with *value*; they see their objects as invested with value or importance.

She makes it clear (2001a, chapter 1, section IV, beginning on p. 37) that she takes evaluations to be a species of belief or judgment, anchoring her view in a Stoic account of judgment as the *acceptance* or *embrace* of the way things look or seem to me. She illustrates such judgments with the example (p. 39) of her reaction to the news her mother had died:

It strikes me, it appears to me, that a person of enormous value, who was central to my life, is there no longer.... The appearance, in however many ways we picture it, has propositional content or at least combination: it combines the thought of importance with the thought of loss, its content is that this importance is lost.

And she goes on to maintain (pp. 39-40) that her grief ensued when, but only when, she “accepted” that appearance.

Although Nussbaum holds (2001a, section VI of chapter 2) that the neo-Stoic account of emotion needs to be revised in order to be applied to animals and very young children, the revisions (p. 125-126) preserve the idea that certain “ways of seeing will always involve some sort of combination or predication—usually of some thing or person with an idea of salience, urgency, or importance.” Her consideration of animal emotions leads her to two principal observations:

- (A) that “the cognitive appraisals need not all be *objects of reflexive self-consciousness*” [p. 126]¹⁴
- (B) that it need not be the case that “the content actually uses linguistic symbolism, or is formulable in language without a degree of distortion” [p. 127].

She concludes (p. 129):

¹² De Sousa’s (2010) extremely useful overview of recent literature on the emotions classifies both Nussbaum and Solomon as examples of a “cognitivist” approach to emotions.

¹³ When she introduces the fact that emotions have *intentional objects*, she claims that what distinguishes one emotion from another is “the way in which the object is seen” (p. 28)—by which she seems to mean what it is seen *as*. When (later on the same page) she introduces *beliefs*, she does so by saying “these emotions embody not simply ways of seeing an object, but beliefs—often very complex—about the object.” She adds, parenthetically, that “[it] is not always easy, or even desirable, to distinguish an instance of *seeing X as Y*...from having a belief that X is Y.” In section VI of the next chapter, when she is discussing the cognitive element in animal emotions, she does so in terms of “seeing as.”

¹⁴ She had said much earlier (p. 51), in a different context, “it may be very important to certain emotions *not* to engage in a great deal of reflective weighting of the goodness of an object.”

What we need, in short, is a multifaceted notion of cognitive interpretation or seeing-as, accompanied by a flexible notion of intentionality that allows us to ascribe to a creature more or less precise, vaguer or more demarcated, ways of intending an object and marking it as salient.

I want to suggest, however, that although points (a) and (b) are clearly correct, Nussbaum is assimilating evaluative attitudes to cognitive or doxastic attitudes in ways that are questionable. On her account, even in animals what marks a “judgment” as an evaluation or appraisal appears to be the fact that something like a “value predicate” occurs in a propositional content whose “acceptance” the “judgment” consists in.

This sort of picture it makes it very difficult to understand how people can be mistaken or ignorant about what they actually value or about what is in fact important to them. Akrasia (unhelpfully called ‘weakness of the will’) occurs when a person’s *actions* are at odds with her *beliefs* about what is valuable or even with her beliefs about what she actually values. Such a person’s actions seem to reveal that what she *actually* values is at odds with what she *believes is valuable* and perhaps even with what she *believes that she values*.¹⁵ Moreover, something or someone can be terribly important to me without my realizing it—sometimes it is only when a person or a thing goes missing that I realize how much that person or thing had *mattered* to me all along. If this is so, then neither *believing* something to have value,¹⁶ nor *believing* that I value it, can be taken to be a necessary or a sufficient conditions of my *actually* valuing it.

Davidson has pointed out that the valuing essential to *reasons for action* is best conceived of as having propositional or proposition-like contents. As he says (1963/1980: 6) in his discussion of the “pro attitudes”:

Wants and desires are often trained on physical objects. However, “I want that gold watch in the window’ is not a primary reason and explains why I went into the store only because it suggests a primary reason—for example, that I wanted to buy the watch.

In Nussbaum’s story, it is usually the value of a person that takes center stage in the examples she develops, but such an object is seen as valuable because (p. 31) it is “seen as *important for* some role it plays in the person’s own life.” It is perhaps a short step from this idea to the idea that what *matters* to us—what we value—is *that* such persons play (or continue to play) this or that role in our life

I suggest therefore that instead of locating value as an element in the propositional content of a *belief* and instead of thinking of valuing as a species of belief or doxastic attitude toward certain propositional contents in which “value” has the role of something like a predicate, we think of doxastic attitudes and evaluative attitudes as two distinct species of conscious attitude toward propositional or proposition-like contents.

It is perhaps worth noting that a very long time ago Anscombe (1954/1969: 66),

¹⁵ I think we humans often convince ourselves that we value what our friends do, and what we’re told “decent people” value,” even when that’s not the case. Such self-deception may be part of how we “make do.”

¹⁶ My own view about “value judgments” is as follows. Taking something to have value—taking it to be good or valuable or desirable or important—involves the “thought” that it *deserves* to be valued, desired, pursued, or (in the case of ‘important’) preferred to many or most other things. When we put our value judgments into words, we are actually expressing a “second-order” evaluation of one or another first order valuing. If that’s correct, then the concept of value judgment cannot be appealed to in order to “explain” or clarify what valuing is, since the very notion of a value judgment presupposes a prior grasp of what both first-order valuing and second-order valuing are.

in her discussion of the practical syllogism, invokes an idea that's at least vaguely similar to the idea I'm suggesting:

The role of 'wanting' in the practical syllogism is quite different from that of a premise. It is that whatever is described in the proposition that is the starting-point of the argument must be wanted in order for the reasoning to lead to any action.

If we adopt this view of the evaluative dimension central to emotions, we can still preserve the idea that emotions are type-identified by certain core beliefs whose contents *intersect* with what we value. We would need, however, to implement that idea in a way that is subtly different from the way Nussbaum implements and exemplifies it. For example, Nussbaum has said (2001a: 28):

In order to have fear ... I must believe that bad events are impending, that they are not trivially but seriously bad, and that I am not entirely in control of warding them off.

Put this way, the "beliefs" requisite for fear include value *judgments* (e.g., that "bad events are impending" and that those events are not trivially but seriously bad)—they incorporate the badness of impending events within in the propositional content of one or more of my beliefs. But we can capture an idea that's very close to Nussbaum's without doing this if we reformulate her requirement for fear as follows:

In order to have fear, (a) I must *believe* that events of such-and-such a description are impending, and that I am not entirely in control of warding them off, and (b) I must have an *intensely negative evaluative attitude* toward the occurrence of events of that a description.¹⁷

Valuing and desiring are *intentional* episodes or dispositions (they have *intentional objects*) and are *conceptual* phenomena (their content is more or less *propositional*). We can acknowledge both these facts without turning valuing into beliefs or doxastic attitudes. If judging or believing is as Nussbaum says "accepting" (in effect adopting a *doxastic* attitude toward) a propositional content, valuing or desiring can be construed as adopting a different sort of attitude toward such content—what I call an *evaluative* attitude.¹⁸ By insisting on this point, we can preserve the idea that emotions contain both beliefs and appetitive elements that can comprise the core of reasons for action. Moreover, if reasons for action contain an element which is not a purely *cognitive* or doxastic element, an arguer who wants to provide a hearer with a reason for acting must either call attention to "factual information" which *intersects* with what that hearer *already* values or, more interestingly, find ways to *influence* that hearer's evaluative attitudes. It may turn out that, for *theoretical* reasons, arguments aimed at practical conclusions must have an even more intimate connection with emotion than even Aristotle imagined.

¹⁷ Nussbaum's discussion of deliberation in an earlier work (1986/2001b: chapter 10, section IV, esp. p. 307) notes quite explicitly that "the appetites and passions have an essential motivational role to play in human excellence—both in getting a child to excellence in the first place and in motivating continued action according to excellence in the adult." The context is one in which she is discussing Aristotle's account of deliberation. It isn't clear to me whether or to what extent she herself subscribes to that view in the context of the "neo-Stoic" account of emotions and human behaviour presented in Nussbaum 2001a.

¹⁸ And you can adopt both attitudes toward one and the same content:—you can *look favorably* (or unfavorably) upon what you believe (or suspect) to be the case.

We must also recognize that, irrespective of what their object or propositional content happens to be, evaluative attitudes can differ along at least two dimensions:

- (1) they can differ in *valence*—“positive” evaluative attitudes look with favor on their propositional content, “negative” evaluative attitudes look with disfavor upon that content (see for example Thagard 2006: 147-48).
- (2) they can differ in *intensity*.

I will not attempt, in the context of a short paper, to say much more about the nature of valuations or evaluative attitudes, beyond suggesting that (a) to get clear about them we must get clear about the precise role they play in practical reasoning, and that (b) a good place to start is with Brandom’s account of that role, most accessible in chapter 2 of Brandom 2000 (especially sections iii –v, but see also Brandom 1994, chapter 4, section V, and Brandom 2001).

3.2 Nussbaum’s commitment to eudemonism

Nussbaum (2001a: 30-31) claims that in emotions

[t]he valued perceived in the object appears to be of a particular sort. It appears to make reference to the person’s own flourishing. The object of the emotion is seen as *important for* some role it plays in the person’s own life.

She calls this sort of value *eudaimonistic*, “that is, concerned with the person’s flourishing”, and says that reflecting “on Greek eudaimonistic ethical theories will help us to start thinking about the geography of the emotional life” (p. 31). It would, however, be a mistake to take her to be saying that everything we value eudaimonistically is something we value as a “means” to flourishing—as having only instrumental value. For she says quite explicitly (pp. 31-32),

In a eudaimonistic ethical theory, the central question is, “How should a human being live?” The answer to that question is the person’s conception of *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing. A conception of *eudaimonia* is taken to be inclusive of all to which the agent ascribes intrinsic value: if one can show someone that she has omitted something without which she would not think her life complete, that is a sufficient argument for addition of the items in question. [emphasis by underlining has been added.]

This passage makes it clear that Nussbaum is not saying that that I always see things and events as important to me *because* I take them to have a bearing on my flourishing. Rather, it’s the other way around: many things and events have a bearing on my flourishing because I value them for their own sake.¹⁹ Of course, some things have merely instrumental value because of their relation to my goals and projects and must therefore derive their value from the value I attach to those goals and projects.

Her more extended account of eudaimonism in section V of chapter 1 appears to have 3 main components:

¹⁹ See Nussbaum (1986/2001b) for a more extended development of this point.

- (1) Though she draws her account of *eudaimonia* or flourishing from “the ancient eudaimonistic picture,” her account diverges (pp. 50-51) from that picture in several respects. In addition to the fact that she thinks “ancient eudaimonism overestimates the order and structure in most people’s schemes of goals,” she notes three further differences: (a) my goals and ends, the things to which I attach importance, may contain some elements that I think good or valuable for myself, but do not especially commend to others”, (b) people often “cherish and value things that they do not think good, things that they wouldn’t commend to others as good”, and (c) “it may be very important to certain emotions not to engage in a great deal of reflective weighing of the goodness of an object.”
- (2) Something that “lies deep in ancient eudaimonism but is never explicitly recognized” is this: “Emotions contain an ineliminable reference to *me*, to the fact that it is *my* scheme of goals and projects. They are the world seen from my point of view” (p. 52).
- (3) The value at issue—importance—admits of degrees, and the “differences of intensity” among emotions “are explained by the importance with which I invest the object (or what befalls it) among my goals and projects” (p. 55).

I won’t attempt to take a stand here on how useful or essential the concept of *eudaimonia* is in getting clear about emotions. And I am not sure whether the difference of intensity among emotions is to be explained by the importance which we take the objects of our emotions to have, or whether perhaps it is the other way round: that differences in “importance” are to be explained by differences in the intensity of the evaluative attitudes ingredient to our emotional attitudes.

However, I believe that there is something sound—and crucial to a proper understanding of emotions—in Nussbaum’s insistence that the valuings ingredient to emotional attitudes reflect—at least for the most part—*personal* valuings whose validity need not depend on their being valid for other individuals. See, for example, Brandom’s (2000: 89-92) botanization of patterns of practical reasoning, which he takes to be the ground of different *types* of norms or values.

4. EMOTIONS AND REASONS FOR ACTION

Why does it make sense to *explain* people’s actions by reference to one or another emotion which may have caused them to act as they did?

Consider the list of emotions Nussbaum (2001a: 24) offers to illustrate the “family” of phenomena which is the subject of that work: fear, love, joy, hope, anger, gratitude, hatred, envy, jealousy, pity, guilt. Every one of them can be offered as a plausible explanation of one or another kind of behavior.

A woman flees a building because she’s *afraid*. I court a woman because I’m in *love* with her. After I’ve said something I know made you angry with me, I send you flowers because (a) I *cherish* our relationship and (b) I *hope* that when you receive them you’ll get over the anger. A man shouts at you—or alternatively refuses to speak to you—because he’s *angry* with you. I send you an expensive gift out of *gratitude* for a favor you’ve done for me. His *hatred* for Othello leads Iago to trick him into thinking Desdemona has betrayed him. And Othello’s *jealousy* leads him to murder Desdemona. I

buy a homeless person a meal out of *pity* for his plight. You send me an expensive gift, not out of gratitude, but because you feel *guilty* for having injured me in some way I'm actually not yet aware of.

If it is correct that beliefs and evaluative attitudes are ingredient to emotions, we can begin to see why explaining actions in terms of emotions can help to render such actions understandable. It is because such explanations suggest the *sort of reasons* an agent had for the actions she or he performed.²⁰ If we're told a person fled a building out of fear, we surmise that she *believed* that by quickly exiting the building she would avoid some sort of thing that might be about to happen to her, and in addition to holding that belief she had a strong *desire* not to undergo that sort of thing. The brief explanation in terms of fear does not pin down *precisely* what she believed could happen to her if she didn't flee—she might have believed she could be severely injured by a fire she saw developing, or have believed she might be attacked by suspicious looking characters she saw lurking in the building's shadows. Or she might have had only a vague sense that *something* she couldn't put her figure might be lurking in the shadows and might have harmed her in some unspecified way if she didn't leave immediately. In other words, this brief explanation in terms of fear indicates the *sort* of beliefs and desires which may have given her a reason to act as she did.

Of course, explanations in terms of emotions typically do more than suggest the "sort of reason" a person had for acting in a certain way; they also tend to situate the action within one or another familiar narrative. There is, after all, something to de Sousa's (1987: 182) hypothesis that we are "made familiar with the vocabulary of emotion by association with *paradigm scenarios*" which have a "dramatic" structure:

Paradigm scenarios involve two aspects: first, a situation type providing the characteristic *objects* of the emotion-types...., and second, a set of characteristic or "normal" responses to the situation, where normality is first a biological matter and then very quickly becomes a cultural one.

Notice, however, that although from a description of what somebody did we can very often hypothesize what sort of emotion may have prompted him or her to do it, the reverse doesn't hold: given the fact that X is angry at his boss for firing him, or that Y is grateful to a friend for a favor he did for her, or that Z is terrified of the men he sees lurking in the shadows, we can't predict with any confidence what actions those emotions will lead the-

²⁰ Solomon (1996: chapter 6, and pp. 220-21 of chapter 7, as well as his accounts of individual emotion types in chapter 8) sees a fairly strong connection between "the ideology" of emotions and specific types of action; Ben-Ze'ev (2000: 60-64; see also his analyses of specific types of emotions in Part II of the book) claims that emotions typically include a motivational component. However, Nussbaum (2001a: 135-36) sees a much looser connection between emotion and "desires for action". She writes that "it would be a mistake to identify them [emotions] with desires for particular types of action. Emotions direct us to an important component of our well-being and register the way things are with that important component. Sometimes this value-acknowledging, in combination with the situational perceptions and beliefs that are at hand, will straightforwardly give rise to motivations to act." And she adds, in a subsequent paragraph, "Emotions in short are acknowledgements of our goals and of their status. It then remains to be seen what the world will let us do about them. Desires may all contain a perception of their object as good; but not all perceptions of good give rise directly to action guiding desires. This suggests that the tendency to explain actions in terms of two distinct sorts of items, beliefs or judgments and desires, needs to be made more complicated. Emotions are judgments, but not inert judgments; on account of their evaluative component, they have an intimate connection with motivation that other beliefs do not."

se individuals to perform. Z may try to flee from those he's terrified of, or may call for help, or may simply be paralyzed by fear. X may angrily tell his boss what he really thinks of her, or plan some sort of "revenge", or simply kick the wastepaper basket when he gets back to his desk, or may shout at his wife and children when he gets home. There are at least three distinct reasons for this asymmetry:

- (1) As de Sousa points out (in the text quoted above) the second "aspect" of the paradigm scenario associated with a given emotion consists of a set of characteristic or 'normal' responses to the situation type providing the characteristic objects. Without further information about a person's beliefs and preferences, we aren't in a position to deduce which (if any) of the "normal" responses she will choose.
- (2) The set of beliefs and valuings which more or less "define" a type of emotion provide at best a *prima facie* reason for acting in one way or another. What a person actually does is likely to depend on what she has reasons for doing "all things considered"—which means that other beliefs and desires the agent has will come into play and help shape his or her response to the situation which has elicited the emotion.
- (3) Even if we suppose the certain emotions by definition "call for" a certain type of action—as Aristotle (*Rhetoric* II, 2, 1378a 31-33) does when he defines anger as "an impulse... to a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight..."—the specific form which that type of action will take must be decided upon by the agent. What Nussbaum (2001a: 50-51) says about "the role of specification of general ends in a eudaimonistic theory of value (and in many of our deliberations in life)" will apply to the agent whose emotion involves seeing his or her situation as calling for one or another general type of response.

Nevertheless, at this point, we can see that there are two distinct ways in which emotions can supply reasons for action.

- (1) A belief that I'm in the grip of a certain emotion can give me or someone else a reason for acting in a certain way—as when I shun somebody I'm furious with in order to avoid an unpleasant and potentially destructive interchange with him or her if I have a conversation with her while I'm still furious, or when—to use an example from Gilbert (1997: 83)—I cite the fact that I love a certain person as a reason for that person to marry me. In this sort of case, it is a belief about an emotion that constitutes (part of) a reason for action.
- (2) The beliefs and evaluative attitudes which are ingredient to my emotion can constitute a reason—or the core of a reason—for me to act in a certain way, as when my fear of an approaching train contains beliefs and evaluative attitudes that give me a reason to get off the train tracks as quickly as possible.

Of these two, the second is, I think, the more important and contains the germ of a much more *interesting* answer to question Q1 in section 1 above.

5. DO THE CAUSES OF EMOTIONAL ATTITUDES SUPPLY REASONS FOR ADOPTING THEM?

Recall question Q2 from section 1. To answer it, we need to make two distinctions.

- (1) First, a distinction between two ways in which something gives me a reason for doing something: (i) the way in which a *fact*—something that has actually happened—gives me a reason for doing something and (ii) the way in which my beliefs and evaluative attitudes give me a reason.
 As Davidson (1963/1980: 8) points out, citing the reason which consists of a belief and a pro attitudes will merely *explain* my action, whereas if that belief is *true*, “the facts will justify my choice of action.” A few sentence later he adds, “The justifying role of a reason ... depends on the explanatory role, but the converse does not hold. Your stepping on my toes neither explains nor justifies my stepping on your toes unless I believe you stepped on my toes, but the belief alone, true or false, [merely?] explains my action.”
- (2) Second, a distinction between two sorts of case: (i) what we might call the standard case, in which the emotion would disappear if the person having the emotion should discover that a belief which is shaping it is false and (ii) non-standard cases, like those studied by A. Rorty (1978), in which emotions persist even though the emoter has discovered that the belief which shaped it is false.

In a case that Rorty analyses, Jonah resents his boss Esther, and insists that he does so because she is domineering to the point of being tyrannical—something that pretty clearly is not the case and which Jonah eventually comes to realize is not the case. Despite that realization, Jonah continues to feel a strong resentment toward her. Rorty argues that the cause of Jonah’s resentment may lie in the experiences he had as a child with women in positions of authority. If that should be so, what prompts Jonah’s resentment isn’t anything that gives him a *reason* for resenting *Esther*.

So the answer to Q2 is that *sometimes* what prompts an emotion provides a reason for it, and *sometimes* it doesn’t. Roughly, when the facts that prompt an emotion are facts that make the beliefs ingredient to the emotion *true*, those facts supply a *reason* for adopting the emotion in the sense that they justify its adoption. But when the facts that prompt an emotion fail to make the beliefs ingredient to the emotion true, those facts won’t supply a *reason for* adopting the emotion (though they may constitute the reasons *why* the emotion was adopted).

6. HOW CAN WE DISTINGUISH BETWEEN EVALUATIVE ATTITUDES THAT ARE APPROPRIATE TO THEIR OBJECTS AND THOSE THAT ARE NOT?

We regularly distinguish between emotional responses which are reasonable and those which are not. Sometimes we judge a person’s anger as unreasonable because it isn’t reasonable for that person to hold one of the beliefs which ground his or her anger. But at other times we judge anger unreasonable because we think there is something wrong with the evaluative attitude from which it springs— for example, you are furious with me for

not sending you a Christmas card, even though you know I don't celebrate Christmas, and we think your *intensely* negative attitude toward such an "omission" is unreasonable.

There are cases in which it is easy to see what makes it reasonable or unreasonable for someone to value one or another thing and to value it to the degree he or she does. This is especially the case where something is valued as a means to something else—that is to say, where someone wants X only because she believes that obtaining X will enable her to obtain Y, which she wants. In these cases, it will be *reasonable* for her to want X if and only if (a) it is reasonable for her to believe that obtaining X will enable her to obtain Y and (b) it is reasonable or appropriate for her to want Y.

But it is obvious that not every case can be handled so easily. There must be things that are valued, not merely as a means to something else, but which are valued "for their own sake"—the sort of things which, on reflection, we take to have "intrinsic" value. What makes valuing something "for its own sake" reasonable or unreasonable raises deep and complex questions which would lead us far beyond the scope of this paper. I want to suggest, however, that *one* factor we do, and ought to, take into account is whether a person's evaluative attitude toward an object is *appropriate* or *inappropriate*. What follows are two considerations which may shed some light on what shapes—and in my view ought to shape—our judgments about the appropriateness of such attitudes.

6.1 The effect of "character" on how we judge the appropriateness of evaluative attitudes

Aristotle (*EN* VI, 2, 1139a 32ff) says²¹

The origin of action...is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to the end. This is why choice cannot exist without reason and intellect or without a *moral state*; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and *character* [italics added].

Aristotle is making it clear that in his view the desirings or evaluative attitudes that anchor *human* action are shaped by "a moral state" and/or character. These references to "moral state" and to "character" point back to the discussion of moral virtue in *EN* Book II.²²—a discussion in which he makes the point (1106a 17-24) that:

... both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well: but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive and in the right way, is what is intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue.

Moreover, we should not forget Aristotle's remarks (1109b: 15-23) about the difficulties in determining for concrete cases "how and with whom and on what provocation and how long we should be angry"—difficulties which lead him to conclude that such things

²¹ This passage immediately precedes the passage from Aristotle quoted in section 1 above,

²² See 1106b36-1107a5: "Virtue, then, is a state of character lying in a mean..., this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) would determine it."

are not easy to determine by reasoning, any more than anything else that is perceived by the senses; such things depend on particular facts and the decision lies with perception.²³

As well, these references also point ahead to the account of *phronesis* in chapters 12 and 13 of *EN VI*, especially to VI, 12 1144a7-9:

... the work of man is achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom as well as with moral virtue; for virtue makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means.²⁴

When Aristotle (*EN*, III, 4) raises the question how we discriminate between real and apparent goods, his answer seems to be that what is truly good is what is desired or “wished for” by the good man. We might say, analogously, that the “measure” of what it is reasonable or appropriate to “aim at”—to value for its own sake—is what the person of practical wisdom, whose choices are guided by moral virtue, would aim at.²⁵ Nussbaum herself (1986/2001b, p. 311) attributes to Aristotle the view that “[t]he standpoint of the person of practical wisdom is criterial for correct choice” and calls attention the potential circularity in which such a view appears to entangle us: “how do we characterize this person and his procedures in a way that does not already make reference to the good content of his choices?” There is an additional problem as well: how can I know what the practically wise person would aim at in this or that concrete situation unless I myself am able to reason about that situation as the practically wise person does—that is to say, unless I myself am practically wise and of good character?

There is a still further consideration that might give us pause. On Aristotle’s account, we aren’t born with the moral virtues: we acquire them through habituation. That process is one in which we are guided by our parents and teachers (see Nussbaum [1986/2001b, p. 286] on Aristotle’s idea that education and exhortation play a crucial role in shaping *orexis* in human beings). Moreover, in Aristotle’s view that process is crucial-

²³ See Nussbaum’s comments (1986/2001b: 300-3002) about this passage, and her emphasis (alluded to above in note 5) on Aristotle’s view that “universal principles” cannot be a reliable or straightforward guide in such matters.

²⁴ See also VI, 13 1144b30-32: “...it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise [that is, possessed of *phronesis*] without moral virtue.”

²⁵ David Hitchcock has suggested, in conversation, that an alternative approach to these matters might be sought in Pollock’s account of practical reasoning (Pollock 1995, see esp. section 5 of chapter 1). In that account (p. 12), “[s]ituation-likings provide the ultimate starting point for rational deliberation”—i.e., supply the rational bases of the valuations on the basis of which we choose our goals. Even though Pollock describes a situation-liking (p. 13) as “a pro attitude toward one’s current situation,” he insists (p. 12) that it “is a feeling rather than a propositional attitude.” As Pollock’s full story unfolds, it is actually “*feature-likings*” (which he describes on p. 20 as “conative reactions to *imagined* situations” [italics added]) which do the crucial work in his account of deliberation. I’m tempted to say that in Pollock’s account, token situations and situation-types are not the “intentional” objects or contents of such “likings” but are rather *causes* of them: we discover by introspection whether actual or imagined situations prompt the “feeling” which he calls a liking.

Quite apart from the technical difficulties which must be solved to make the details of Pollock’s account work, the sorts of actual or imagined situations that elicit feelings of liking vary over time and an Aristotelian would insist that what we like or take pleasure in at a given time is a function of our *character* at that time (see Aristotle *EN*, 1104b4-13).

ly affected by the “laws” under which we live as we grow up.²⁶ If that is correct, the general culture in which we simply happen to have grown up will have had a profound effect on our character. And I submit that if that is the case, it will also have had a profound effect on how we judge the *appropriateness* of the evaluative attitudes we ourselves and those around us adopt toward objects and situations of various kinds. Does this mean that such judgments merely reflect that “prejudices” of the culture in which initially learned how to think and to feel?

6.2 *Ways in which experience and reflection can carry us past the point to which our culture has brought us.*

Though we have all grown up in one or another historically contingent culture which has initially shaped our values, we are not prisoners of that culture, as is clear from the fact that the values which most of us currently hold are values we ourselves arrived at by modifying an “initial position” through *rational* means.²⁷

Let me indicate, if only very briefly, three of the ways in which, taken either singly or together, we may be led to value things in ways quite different from—and better than—the ways we were “brought up” to value them.²⁸

- (1) *Simple (or common sense) reflection on our current values.* Gauthier (1986, chapter 2) distinguishes between what we might call “raw” preferences and what he calls “considered preferences”—the latter being more or less stable preferences that we retain after careful reflection upon them. He also distinguishes between *sets* of preferences which are coherent and those which are not.²⁹ Simply thinking through the implications of a current preference, or trying to come to grips with the incompatibility of some of our preferences, can set us on the path to modifying them—sometimes in small ways, sometimes in profound ways.
- (2) *Experience:* actually obtaining things we’ve desired from afar and finding out what it’s really like to obtain or attain them, or seeing what has happened to others as a consequence of obtaining them, can modify our evaluative attitudes toward those objects. Or being forced to endure something we were determined to avoid can radically alter our evaluative attitude toward it. Or again coming by accident to experience something we neither avoided nor pursued, and discovering that we

²⁶ See *EN*, 1103b3-6: “...legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one.” This remark is offered as confirmation of the fact that “we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.”

²⁷ This point is analogous to a point I made in another context (Pinto 2001: 140) about the critical practice which guides our evaluation of arguments and inferences.

²⁸ See for example Nussbaum’s (1986/2001b: 313-317) analysis of the “deliberation” expressed in one of Hecuba’s speeches in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*. Nussbaum uses the passage to illustrate her own reading of Aristotle’s account of deliberation, but it illustrates the extent to which Hecuba is portrayed as both rooted in and transcending the valuing acquired in the culture which has shaped her.

²⁹ See Brandom (2001) for a critique of Gauthier’s overall approach to preferences which nevertheless finds the concepts of *considered preference* and *coherent sets of preferences* useful and important.

find it deeply satisfying or deeply disturbing, can engender evaluative attitudes toward it that may have an impact on our existing evaluative attitudes.³⁰

- (3) *Encountering actual or possible ways of thinking and feeling foreign to our own.* If we come to like or respect someone from another culture or subculture and are willing to take her cognitive and evaluative attitudes seriously, we may come to understand *why* she thinks and feels the way she does. Seeing the world from the point of view of another can often have an impact on how we ourselves see it and on how we feel about what does or what might transpire in it. In addition, literature is an especially fruitful source of such insight, since the best of fiction and drama portray in great detail *possible* ways of seeing and feeling that may be quite different from our own.³¹

Of course, modifying our evaluative attitudes as a result of each or all of these factors involves something like bootstrapping. For none of them can occur unless we are *already* willing to reflect, *already* open to new experiences, *already* curious about ways of thinking and feeling foreign to our own and willing to approach them seriously and with respect.

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³⁰ It is perhaps here that Pollock's "situation likings" discussed in note 25 above may have an important role to play.

³¹ For one aspect of this, see Nussbaum's insistence (2001a: 236, and "Interlude" on pp. 238-248) on the importance of "narrative artwork" and of literature in general for understanding emotions.

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