A THEORY OF EMOTIONAL CONTENT[1]

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The revived interest in the emotions has generated many articles and books of late. Analyses typically begin by considering the various features that are involved in emotional experience generally, for example, feeling, physiology, cognition, and behavior. This is often followed by explanations about the role of emotions in rationality, moral psychology, ethics, and/or society, as well as examinations of specific emotions like pride, jealousy, love, or guilt. Overall, the topic has been approached from a diversity of perspectives, including philosophy, evolutionary theory, physiology, and anthropology. In fact, it's not uncommon for a single author to assume more than one disciplinary perspective on the features and role(s) of emotions.

Although contemporary theorists commonly acknowledge that emotions have intentionality, few adopt the semantic perspective per se.[2] For example, no serious consideration is given to whether the contents of emotions are the same as those of higher cognitive states or whether they require an independent semantic treatment. In the discussion to follow, I address these neglected issues. I begin by suggesting why philosophers generally don't take emotional content seriously. Next, I argue for its uniqueness and its need of an independent semantic account. Thereafter, I develop at some at some length the groundwork for a theory based on a response-dependent framework. I conclude by defending the view against the 'force indeterminacy' objection.

1. The Feeling Theory and Cognitive Reductionism

It's natural to begin where others have begun, viz. with the Feeling Theory. The fact that emotions are typically accompanied by physiological responses and feelings has led some to identify emotions with such states and processes. Descartes, for example, maintained that "everyone feels passions in himself... [and] that what is a passion in the soul is usually an action in the body" (Descartes' *Passions of the Soul*, p. 328). And on the James-Lange model, emotions are (similarly) taken to be felt arousals of the autonomic nervous system. Rather than being caused by beliefs or judgments and going on to cause physiological

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[2] de Sousa is an exception (1987). While Wollheim (1999) and Goldie (2001) acknowledge the uniqueness of emotional content, neither sufficiently explains why this is the case nor develops the idea through an independent semantic treatment.

responses, James alleged "that the bodily changes follow directly [from] the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur *is* the emotion" (James 1890, II, p. 449).

If one were in the grip of the Feeling Theory, it's obvious why a semantic perspective wouldn't be considered. To give an account of emotional content presupposes that emotions *have* content. But since this is precisely what the Feeling Theory denies, no such account is taken to be required.

But, as is now commonly pointed out, neither Descartes nor James could be right. One problem is that cases have been presented in which no emotions are experienced by individuals even though their autonomic nervous systems are stimulated in ways that normally accompany emotional experiences; and other cases have shown that patients with spinal cord lesions, who exhibit no recorded autonomic changes from the neck down, are able to experience normal emotions. (See Schachter 1964 and Buck 1984, respectively.[3])

Moreover, although it seems correct to suppose that emotional experiences (as opposed to dispositions—see Alston 1971-1972 and Lyons 1980, pp. 53-57) are accompanied by feelings, not all feelings are emotions, for instance, aches, itches and tingles. The obvious way to distinguish emotions from mere feelings is to acknowledge that the former have intentionality. This is supported by the way we talk about emotion. We say, for example, 'Henry fears that he has lost his manuscript', 'William is angry that his brother is late', and 'Gertrude is happy that she is studying psychology'. Moreover, the co-referentiality of emotions reinforces this point: a grief that William James died may not imply a grief that Henry James' brother died (or vice versa); I may enjoy looking at the morning star but not enjoy looking at the evening star; and Lois Lane may love Superman but she may not love Clark Kent.

Although there are few vocal proponents of the Feeling Theory these days, it's apparent why someone unwilling to acknowledge the positive explanatory value of emotions would be attracted to the theory. After all, without intentionality, emotions couldn't figure into intentional explanations. As such, their role would merely be negative. Rather than justify action, emotions as feelings could at best excuse involuntary or irrational behavior, in the way a large wave might explain one's loss of balance but not one's reason for coming ashore.

In their landmark paper, "Cognitive, Social and Physiological Determinants of Emotional States," Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer suggest that emotions depend upon or are mediated by cognitive states. Some philosophers, who openly acknowledge the positive explanatory value of emotions, have gone one step further and suggested identifying or reducing emotions to some assemblage of beliefs, desires and/or judgments. Joel Marks, for example, claims that an emotion is a conjunction of belief and desire and

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[3] In the classic objection to the James-Lange model, Walter Cannon (1927) reported that dogs with severed nerve connections didn't have bodily arousals but nevertheless responded emotionally. The same observation has been made of human quadriplegics.

Martha Nussbaum maintains that it's an evaluative judgment.[4]

Given their reductionist tendencies, Marks and Nussbaum see no need for an independent treatment of emotional content. After all, by identifying emotions with cognitive and/or motivational states, they are identifying the intentionality of emotions with the intentionality of these states. Consequently, the cognitive reductionist sees no need for an independent theory of emotional content either.

But cognitive reductionists face a basic problem. The major difficulty is their inability to explain why the possession of the requisite belief, desire and/or judgment is insufficient for experiencing the corresponding emotion. For example, it is plausible that someone who believes that William died and who didn't want him to die does not experience grief that William died. Similarly, someone who judges that snakes are dangerous and who wants to avoid them may not fear them. Reductionists have attempted to account for these shortcomings by appealing to special kinds of beliefs, desires, or judgments. Marks, for instance, claims that the relevant desires must be "strong" insofar as they are accompanied by physiological responses and Nussbaum explains that the evaluative judgment must involve committing oneself to the content "with the core of [one's] being,... to realize in one's being its full significance" (Nussbaum 1994, p. 381).

But does a "strong" desire (along with the requisite belief) entail an emotional experience? What is it to commit oneself to a content "with the core of one's being" or realize its "full significance"? The problem is that both suggestions tacitly invoke a certain way of valuing an object, event, state of affairs, etc., which presupposes the very emotion being analyzed. As such, their reductionist methodology is violated. Without the presupposition, a belief coupled with a strong desire—even one accompanied by a physiological response typical of the emotion—would be insufficient to elicit the emotion. For example, someone who really wants to go to Paris may not feel joy if she goes or disappointment if she doesn't. Her desire may be informed by a purely instrumental valuation of her goal. Although this instrumental desire may be accompanied by a physiological response typical of joy, the response may be unrelated to the desire (which is possible since physiological responses are neither necessary nor sufficient for experiencing emotion). As Nash summarily puts it, "a phlegmatic agent need not be an apathetic one" (1994, p. 484). The same is true of the rather vague proposal that committing oneself with the core of one's being, say, to studying psychology is sufficient to produce the requisite emotion. Again, it's possible that one's commitment, one's evaluation of studying psychology, may be fully instrumental, in which case the desire, when frustrated or satisfied, will fail to elicit any emotion whatsoever.

But couldn't the reductionist appeal to feelings? The right kind of desire or commitment, it may be suggested, is one accompanied by a specific phenomenological type. I consider this proposal intriguing since it is plausible that each emotion is accompanied by

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[4] See Marks 1982 and Nussbaum 1994, chapter 10 and 2001, pp. 19-88. Robert Solomon, who has also endorsed cognitive reductionism (1977), has since renounced the view (as he explained in personal conversation).

a unique feeling.[5] However, it too has difficulties. For example, given that the account is meant to be reductive, it can be adequate only if feelings are individuated independently of the emotion being analyzed. Yet, to identify feelings with or reduce them to, say, neurological patterns, is to ignore the possibility that distinct neurological patterns may be responsible for one and the same feeling and the same neurological patterns may result in different kinds of feelings (due to the influence of other determining factors, like cognition, conditioning, and value). It also ignores the so-called 'Hard Problem of Consciousness' (Chalmers 1996, pp. 93-122.).

In the face of these problems, it's not surprising that the number of outspoken cognitive reductionists is dwindling. But the question is, why haven't more anti-reductionists paid attention to emotional content?

2. The Uniqueness of Emotional Content

The answer, I believe, is straightforward. To deny, as anti-reductionists do, that emotional *states* can be reduced to cognitive and/or motivational *states* is not to deny that the *kind of content* emotions have differs from the *kind of content* beliefs, desires and/or judgments have. After all, while it is far-fetched to suppose that desires can be reduced to (or identified with) beliefs, it is commonplace to assume that they share the same kind of content. Thus, to show that emotional content is unique and, thereby, in need of an independent semantic treatment, we'll need a different argument.

The argument I favor is based on the violation by the emotions of the force/content distinction, a distinction commonly drawn in language as well as thought. In language it involves distinguishing between *what* a sentence or utterance says and the *way* it's said. If, as many assume, content is individuated independently of force, the same content might be expressed by sentences with different moods, for example, indicative, optative, imperative or interrogative, or by utterances with different uses, for example, to make an assertion or wish, to issue an order or to ask a question (see, e.g., Stenius 1967 and Dummett 1973, p. 307). Similarly, if we assume that the content of an intentional state or event is individuated independently of its mental force, the same content might be presented through belief, desire, doubt, hope, etc. (see, e.g., Searle 1983, pp. 5f). Hence, just as I may assert that Henry writes novels and you may ask me whether he does, I may believe that he does and you may doubt it.

There are various reasons for acknowledging the distinction. However, the one most relevant to our concerns relates to logical complexity—in particular, conditional form. As Frege suggested, the force/content distinction is needed to account for how an assertoric content can be entertained or made conditional (see Frege 1892, p. 165). For if an utterance's assertoric force were an indissoluble aspect of its content (sense), then whenever the utterance appeared in the antecedent of a conditional, it would have to be *asserted* rather than *entertained*. But this is clearly not the case. While one may assert 'Henry writes novels', one can also entertain (without asserting) the content expressed by the assertion, for

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[5] See, e.g., Elster 1999, pp. 247-248. I defend this claim in section 7.

example, 'If Henry writes novels, he will be famous'. Similarly, to believe that if William teaches physiology, he will better understand the brain, doesn't require believing that William teaches physiology. Just as in the case of language, the force relates to the whole rather than the parts, thereby allowing the conditional structure to be exhibited. Without distinguishing content and force, it's doubtful that this kind of logical complexity could be explained. (Similar claims have been made about sentences and mental states that exhibit disjunctive or negative structure.)

While mental states like beliefs and intentions heed the force/content distinction, emotions, as some have argued, do not (Williams 1973, de Sousa 1987, Gunther 2003). The primary support for this claim is based on the failure of expressive utterances to exhibit full logical complexity. Yet, before I offer this support, let me say a word about the methodological assumption underlying it. The assumption is, of course, that the logical structure of expressives and emotions mirror one another. To appreciate this, we need to recognize that the relationship of expressives to emotions parallels the relationship of assertions to beliefs.

As Moore's Paradox suggests, one cannot (sincerely) assert that *p* and indicate that (at the time of the assertion) one does not believe that *p*. A sincere assertion presupposes that one has the corresponding belief (see Searle 1983, p. 9). Moreover, while it presupposes the belief, this does not imply that the assertion is *about* the belief. For example, the assertion 'Henry is William's brother' is not about the belief that Henry is William's brother. Rather, it is about what the belief is about, viz. that Henry is William's brother, which is just to say that the assertion and corresponding belief have the same content. If this were not the case, one would merely be able to assert *that* one believes that such-and-such rather than assert *that* such-and-such.

Similarly, a sincere expressive utterance presupposes that the requisite emotion is experienced by the individual at the time of the utterance. Hence, thanking William (sincerely) for lending you his book presupposes experiencing gratitude for his lending you the book (at the time of the utterance); apologizing for making a mess presupposes experiencing regret for making a mess; and deploring someone's actions presupposes experiencing disgust at or disapproval of those actions. Moreover, just as in the case of assertions, expressives are not *about* the emotions they presuppose. Rather, their contents are the same as those of emotions. And it is for this reason that expressives can reveal something about the logical structure of emotional content.

What support, then, is there for claiming that expressives fail to exhibit conditional structure? Consider the following utterances:

Thank you for lending me the book
I apologize for making a mess

What is noteworthy is that neither expressive can be made conditional. I cannot thank you that if you lend me the book, I will read it nor can I apologize that if I make a mess, I will clean it. Such cases are grammatically awkward and reflect one way that counterexamples can be misbegotten.

Of course, in claiming that emotional content resists conditionalization, I am not claiming that utterances about emotions cannot be conditional in form. The following cases illustrate this clearly enough:

If you lend me the book, I will thank you
If I make a mess, I will apologize to you

But while grammatically sound, such utterances don't constitute counterexamples since they aren't expressives. Both are conditional assertions whose consequents specify a possible course of action, viz. thanking or apologizing, in anticipation of either the gratitude the speaker would experience if she were lent the book or the regret she would experience if she made a mess.

But don't emotional ascriptions suggest that emotional contents can be grammatically sound and conditional in form? While not expressives, they are about emotions and thus might be taken to reveal something about their logical structure. For example,

Gertrude is happy that if she is diligent, she will impress William
William is upset that if Gertrude leaves Radcliffe, he will lose a good student

Although initially plausible, these alleged counterexamples are also misbegotten. For unlike expressive utterances, emotional ascriptions don't have the same content as emotional states; they are, after all, *about* emotions. As such, they aren't reliable indicators of the logical structure of emotion. Neither ascription, after all, presupposes that the individual in question is experiencing the relevant emotion. Rather than experience happiness at the time of the first ascription, the interpreter is supposing that if Gertrude is diligent, she will be happy that she impressed William. Similarly, it isn't that William is upset at the time of the second ascription; rather, the interpreter supposes that if Gertrude leaves Radcliffe, William will feel regret that he lost a good student. In both cases, it is an emotional disposition rather than an experience that is ascribed to the individual.[6]

This is not to say, however, that there are no utterances that are grammatically sound, expressive of emotion *and* seemingly conditional in structure. For example:

If Henry leaves for Paris, damn him, he'll be sorry!

Like utterances whose point it is to thank, apologize, etc., when used sincerely, this

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[6] The disposition/experience distinction parallels the habit/act distinction. As Vendler points out (1972, p. 10), 'I smoke' doesn't imply that 'I am smoking' since it's consistent to say 'I smoke but I am not smoking now'. The same is true for dispositions. To say that 'Gertrude is happy that if she works hard, she will impress William' doesn't imply that 'Gertrude is experiencing happiness'. And this observation, I maintain, should lead us to conclude that emotional ascriptions are not reliable indicators of emotional content.

utterance requires that the speaker experience the requisite emotion, which in this case may be irritation, frustration or perhaps anger. Since there's no question that the utterance is grammatically sound, it may be regarded as an instance of an expressive that exhibits conditional structure.

But looks are deceiving. What is conspicuous about the utterance is that its conditional structure isn't genuine. If it were, the speaker should be able to *entertain* rather than *experience* the antecedent. But this isn't the case. The utterance requires that the speaker is *already* irritated (frustrated, angry), which seems puzzling given that the expletive appears only in the antecedent. By contrast, if the utterance represented a fact independently of emotion, then the content of the basic assertion could be entertained in a way consistent with conditionals. For example, in the conditional assertion, 'If Henry leaves for Paris, he will never return', the speaker need not *believe* the content *Henry leaves for Paris*. The antecedent in this case is entertained rather than asserted (believed, experienced) (see Williams 1973, pp. 210-212).

Why, it may asked, do such utterances appear to be logical complex when they're not? One explanation is that they're performing double duty. In fact, this is generally true when an expressive is logically complex. Take the example just considered:

If Henry leaves for Paris, damn him, he'll be sorry!

The utterance is arguably functioning as expressive and directive, an utterance whose point it is to get the hearer to do something (see Searle 1979, pp. 13-14). Specifically, it functions as a warning or threat, perhaps serving as an indirect way of getting Henry (and those in earshot) to conform to the speaker's will or advice. However, the emotional content being expressed here isn't conditional in form: it is, plausibly, an irritation about Henry's (potential) unwillingness to obey the speaker's advice.

Obviously, I can't review every case involving an utterance that seems logically complex and related to the expression of emotion. I submit, however, that each falls into one of three categories: it is either (a) grammatically unsound, (b) not an expressive, or (c) not genuinely conditional in form. If this is right, and if indeed there are no instances of expressive utterances that exhibit conditional structure, then I believe there is good reason to suppose that emotions violate the force/content distinction.

3. The Need for an Independent Theory

Assuming that this is the case, two noteworthy implications follow. First, the cognitive reductionist now faces an additional obstacle. If emotional force is an indissoluble aspect of emotional content, then it is difficult to see how emotions could be reduced to cognitive and/or motivational states, states whose contents presumably heed the force/content distinction. For if a failure to exhibit full logical complexity is best explained by the violation of the force/content distinction, then any reductive account that (in its *explanans*) appeals exclusively to intentional states whose contents heed the distinction would be inadequate since the account couldn't explain the failure of emotion to exhibit full logical

complexity.

Of course in response to this, the reductionist might suggest that certain intentional states—motivational states, say—have contents which themselves violate the force/content distinction. As such, she might cite these motivational states in her *explanans* in hopes of accounting for the logical character of emotion. Yet, while this would be a step forward, it would not yet be sufficient. For in addition to establishing that the contents of these motivational states violate Force Independence, she would have to ensure that an individual's possession of the requisite motivational state (perhaps in concert with other intentional states) is sufficient for that individual's experience of the relevant emotion. But not only would every occurrence of the emotion have to be accompanied by that motivational state, the logical complexity of the motivational state would in each instance have to be the same as the logical complexity of the emotion. While I admit the matter deserves further attention, I don't regard the reductionist's prospects to be very promising.

Second, the violation of the force/content distinction suggests the need for an independent theory of emotional content. In the philosophy of mind and language, it is widely believed that a comprehensive theory of meaning (content) can be based on the semantics of indicative sentences and formulated in terms of truth conditions (see, e.g., Davidson 1967, McDowell 1976, Lewis 1983). Since such theories are meant to be comprehensive, they strive to account for the meanings of all sentences and intentional states, whether they have truth conditions or not. But this raises an obvious question: how could a truth theory specify the contents of desires, hopes and wishes, states governed, respectively, by satisfaction, realization, and fulfilment conditions?

The answer is that the type of normative conditions a sentence or intentional state has is linked to its force. And as such, a comprehensive theory of meaning presupposes a theory of force that enables one to map the contents of sentences or intentional states that don't have truth conditions, for instance, desires, hopes and wishes, onto the contents of ones that do, viz. beliefs or assertions.[7] Such mappings, of course, are justifiable only if truth conditional and non-truth conditional sentences and intentional states have the same contents. But this presupposes that all (contentful) language and thought heeds the force/content distinction (see, e.g., Stenius 1967, Dummett 1975, Searle 1983 and Stalnaker 1998). Without this assumption, the very idea of a comprehensive theory of meaning is put into jeopardy. In addition to a truth theory which would be used to specify the contents of beliefs and assertions, a satisfaction theory would be needed for the contents of desires, a realization theory for the contents of hopes, a fulfilment theory for the contents of wishes, and so forth.

The violation of the force/content distinction suggests a serious problem for the orthodox view. As is often observed, emotions are governed by *propriety* rather than truth conditions—or, as de Sousa puts it, "*appropriateness is the truth of emotions*".[8] For

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[7] Mark Platts refers to these mappings as the "monistic transformational component" of a theory of force (Platts 1980, p. 3).

[8] de Sousa 1980, p. 285 [italics in original]. The suggestion that *appropriateness* is the norm governing emotions is made by C. D. Broad (1952) and endorsed not only by de

example, all things being equal, the grief caused by the death of a loved one is an appropriate experience to have, as is the fear caused by encountering a dangerous animal or the amusement caused by a humorous anecdote. But because emotional contents cannot be individuated independently of their force, they cannot be mapped onto the contents of assertions or beliefs, as other non-truth conditional sentences and states can. Consequently, emotions are in need of an independent semantic theory based on appropriateness rather than truth.

What might such a theory look like? To begin with, there is the metaphysical (metaethical) issue concerning appropriateness. As an evaluative property, credulity would be strained if we saw it on par with truth. Appropriateness, after all, isn't *objective* in the way truth surely must be (see de Sousa *ibid*.) It is natural to liken it instead to secondary properties like color, smell, and taste. Of course, that's not to say that we should accept either an error theoretic or noncognitivist diagnosis of appropriateness—the property, after all, is real and has a positive explanatory value. It merely suggests that an adequate account will reveal that its extension is determined partially by a subject's responses.

The metaphysical point is complimented by semantic considerations. As suggested earlier, the distinction between content and force enables us to explain the conditional structure of content. However, it also plays an important role in distinguishing the subject-matters of psychology and semantics.[9] Roughly put, where psychologists investigate the nature and role of mental *force*, semanticists analyze the nature and form of mental *content*. Thus, while a psychologist might set out to explain, say, the evolutionary, computational or social role of mental states, a semanticist might attempt to specify the intentionality of these states through, say, a Fregean, neo-Russellian or possible worlds analysis. But as Frege emphasized—through his distinction of senses and ideas, which supported his general attack on the psychologism of logic—the semantic and psychological stories must be sharply distinguished from one another (Frege 1892).

While this division of labor is defensible in the case of many intentional states, it isn't in the case of the emotions. As their violation of the force/content distinction suggests, emotional force is an indissoluble aspect of emotional content. And as such, we should expect that a semantic treatment of emotion will involve psychological or subjective conditions. It is, therefore, fitting that the semantic norm governing emotions, viz. appropriateness—the norm upon which a theory of emotional content must be based—is partially determined by a subject's psychological responses and not merely by an objective, mind-independent world.

But what psychological responses might partially determine appropriateness? The answer is, I believe, feeling and belief. Although the Feeling Theory mistakenly denies that emotions have content and, thus, a genuine explanatory value in intentional psychology, it rightly recognizes the importance of feeling. And where Cognitive Reductionists

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Sousa (1987) but by Greenspan (1988), Roberts (1988) and Solomon (1976), among others. However, as Arms and Jacobson caution, this semantic sense of 'appropriateness' should not be confused with a moral or prudential sense (2000, p.71).

[9] I cannot hope to motivate this point in any detail here.

mistakenly cling to a reductionist methodology, they rightly emphasize the role of belief (cognition) as a precondition for emotional experience. In this way, both feeling and belief must be incorporated into a semantic account of emotion. However, we should avoid the mistakes of the Feeling Theorists and Cognitive Reductionists, by incorporating these psychological responses without either undermining the positive explanatory value of emotion or succumbing to a reductive methodology.

In short, the kind of account we're looking for should be subjective, nonreductive and real. Given these constraints, I believe that a semantics of emotion can be adequately captured within a response-dependent framework. For among accounts of subjectivity, response-dependence presents a unique alternative. While compatible with a nonreductive methodology, it advocates a realism about the target concept. This is true of none of the standard accounts of subjectivity. For example, while an idealist acknowledges the reality of secondary qualities, she does so only by reducing them to psychological states such as sensations or feelings. And while non-cognitivists and error theorists do not explicitly insist on a reductionism, they do so only by denying the reality of the target discourse and thereby its positive explanatory value. In acknowledging the explanatory value of subjective discourses, response-dependence is able to endorse a realism without insisting on reduction.

4. Response-Dependence

At the heart of response-dependence is Plato's Euthyphro Contrast. If all and only pious acts are loved by the gods, then with Socrates we might wonder, "is piety loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?"(*Euthyphro*, 10a) While Euthyphro initially endorsed a projectivism about piety, regarding acts as pious *because* they are loved by the gods, Socrates insisted on a detectivism, claiming that acts are loved by the gods *because* they are pious. Mark Johnston and Crispin Wright have suggested drawing a general distinction between subjective and objective discourses based on the contrasting views of Euthyphro and Socrates. On their proposal, the relevant form of subjectivity, dubbed 'response-dependence', can be explicated with an equation of the following sort[10]:

(1) *x* is *F* iff *x* elicits *r* from *s* in *NC*,

where *r* is a germane response to the property referred to by the concept *F* and *NC* are the normal conditions in which an object (event, state of affairs), *x*, is disposed to elicit *r* from a subject, *s*.

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[10] See Johnston 1989, p. 145 and Wright 1992, pp. 108ff. Proponents of response-dependence have offered different formulations, including dispositional and 'provisional' equations (see Wright *ibid*.). As the details motivating these alternatives don't concern me here (e.g. the problems with subjunctive conditionals and finkish cases), I will characterize the germane response throughout this paper as an actual response (as opposed to, say, a disposition).

While the equation is meant to be *a priori* true for secondary qualities like color, smell and taste, and perhaps also the evaluative properties of morality, aesthetics and comedy, it is at best *a posteriori* (and contingently) true for primary qualities like shape, mass and motion, or natural kinds like water, electron and lemon. For example, if *x* is red, the germane response will be 'looks red' and the normalcy conditions will describe a subject with normal vision in normal lighting conditions[11]:

(2) *x* is red iff *x* looks red to *s* in *NC*

Although similar biconditionals might be formulated for being square and being water, such biconditionals fail to be *a priori* true. The subjective/objective distinction thus turns on the biconditional's truth: a property denoted by *F* is response-dependent when an *a priori* true biconditional can be formulated for it.

Proponents of response-dependence have suggested two further constraints on the equation. First, in addition to being *a priori*, the description of the normalcy conditions must be *substantial*, i.e. they cannot be merely a matter of 'whatever-it-takes' (Johnston 1989, pp. 145-48; Pettit 1991, pp. 603-05; Wright 1992, p. 112). Hence, the normalcy of the subject and the circumstances in which she elicits her response must be described in sufficient detail, yielding a concrete conception of what it is for conditions to be normal. If *x* is red, it is not enough to say that the subject and the circumstances in which the object looks red are normal. A substantial account will, among other things, have to describe the subject as attentive, cognitively lucid and in possession of visual equipment which maximizes shade-discrimination, and the circumstances as involving an object that is visually unobstructed, relatively stationary and well lit. This is not to say that the specification of the normalcy conditions must be reductive. It is wholly consistent with the spirit of the proposal that the target concept is utilized in the description of the normalcy conditions on the right-hand side.

Second, although response-dependent accounts are generally nonreductive, given their ontological objectives (that is, objectives in fixing the referent of the target concept), the use of the target concept must be restricted.[12] Since the point of the account is to specify how the extension of the target concept is determined, one is not entitled to assume its extension anywhere on the biconditional's right-hand side. To do so would raise questions about whether the extended occurrence of the target concept wasn't doing all of the work in determining its own extension. Hence, while the response of looking red in (2) is tolerated, one could not go on to specify the normalcy conditions by appealing to the property red. For example, one could not describe a subject's normal visual equipment as the kind that

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[11] It is noteworthy that the subject need not know what the normalcy conditions are. That is, one can be in them without being able to specify them.

[12] See Wright 1992, pp. 120-23. Johnston distances himself from this constraint since he does not intend his account to be ontological. However, this raises questions about what he believes the account is supposed to do, a matter upon which he is less than clear. See Johnston 1993, pp. 121-26.

reliably picks out red things. Following Wright, I'll call this constraint the 'Independence Condition'.

5. Conceptual Content

There are two ways that response-dependence can be brought to bear on conceptual content. One might individuate such contents either by their truth conditions or by their possession conditions. In the case of the former, truth is treated as a response-dependent property. Specifically, it is the content's truth conditions that are taken to be determined partially by a subject's responses in normal or ideal conditions. For example,

(3) *Tomatoes are red* is true iff tomatoes look red to *s* in *NC*.

The approach is based on a pair of commitments which are commonly made by Verificationists. The first involves an anti-metaphysical commitment about truth, viz. that truth *is* verification in ideal conditions.[13] The second is a semantic commitment, expressed infamously by the Verifiability Principle, which links meaning and verification (Schlick 1932). The principle claims that if a sentence is non-analytic and genuinely meaningful (contentful), its content is its method of verification—a method which (at least in principle) should be accessible to the bearer of the content. When these two commitments are combined, a verificationist theory of truth might be used as a theory of conceptual content. And such a theory, as (3) illustrates, can naturally be formulated within a response-dependent framework.

However, within such a framework, the truth conditional approach faces difficulties. Truth, after all, is generally considered an "objective matter", on par (metaphysically) with primary qualities and natural kinds rather than secondary qualities and evaluative properties. It is intuitively plausible, for instance, that a conceptual content is true but not known to be true.[14] Moreover, as a semantic theory, Verificationism faces at least three problems. First, the Verifiability Principle is itself undermined by its own claim. That is, the claim that the content of a non-analytic and meaningful sentence is its method of verification lacks a method of verification itself; hence, as non-analytic, the principle by its own lights is meaningless. Second, because the principle is normative (rather than descriptive), it denies that metaphysical (examples), theological and fictional sentences (intentional states) have content since they lack legitimate methods of verification. To many contemporary theorists, this is an unacceptable circumscription, since a theory should be descriptive and comprehensive. And third, although sentences (intentional states) about past events (e.g. that Luther nailed 95 theses to the Wittenberg church door), theoretical entities (e.g. that proton, *p*, has spin, *s*) or laws of nature (that $E = MC^2$) are supposed to be

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[13] Or as Putnam puts it, "Truth is an *idealization* of rational acceptability... [it is to be explained] in terms of justification under ideal conditions."(1981, pp. 55-56)

[14] See Johnston 1993 for a more detailed discussion of the problems confronting the Verificationist Theory of Truth.

meaningful, it isn't apparent that a Verificationist can formulate accessible verification conditions for them.

All in all, while a response-dependent framework might be utilized by Verificationists, the resulting theory of content is far from compelling. Yet, there is another way response-dependence might serve to individuate content. Rather than embed a truth conditional theory within the framework, some have suggested embedding a possession conditional theory in it. On such an approach, a conceptual content is individuated by the psychological conditions that a subject is in when she grasps it. This, in essence, is the account adopted by Philip Pettit.[15]

Consider the following equation:

(4) *s* grasps *x is red* iff x looks red* to *s* in *NC*.

In (4) the occurrence of 'red' on the left-hand side indicates the content *red* rather than the property to which it refers. Its occurrence on the right-hand side ('red*') refers to a sensation or, possibly, a nonconceptual content.[16] It is noteworthy that his appeal to sensation is not intended in the spirit of the positivists—a subject need not be able to isolate the sensation or have the concept *sensation* in order to have the experiential response of looking red* (Pettit 1993, pp. 207-208).

Following Wright, Pettit emphasizes that normalcy conditions are to be specified substantially. However, there is an important difference in the way this is to be done, a difference based on the restriction that the Independence Condition places on the respective equations. Since a conceptual content rather than an extended property is being individuated, 'red' cannot occur in intensional contexts on the right-hand side of the equation, lest the account be question-begging. For if 'red' occurred within the scope of a subject's attitude, it would suggest that the subject already possesses the target concept, which is precisely what is being individuated. And for this reason only extensional occurrences of 'red' are tolerated in the specification of normalcy conditions. In Pettit's case, therefore, the Independence Condition has an inverted restriction: when the target is an intentional content, it prohibits intensional occurrences of the concept on the right-hand side; when the target is a property, extensional occurrences are prohibited.

However alluring it may initially seem, Pettit's account has a basic flaw. The problem is that, within a response-dependent framework, he lacks the resources to individuate co-extensive concepts. Consider, for example, the following equation for the

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[15] Pettit 1991, 1993 and 1998. Peacocke (1992) advocates a similar account, though seems to restrict his analysis to observational concepts. Pettit, on the other hand, clearly supports a global response-dependent thesis of concepts. See Pettit 1991, p. 606 and Pettit 1998.

. It is noteworthy, however, that Pettit endorses a Global Response Dependence ... [expand footnote]

[16] Peacocke advocates using nonconceptual content.

concept *triangle*:

(5) *s* grasps *x is triangular* iff x looks triangular* to *s* in *NC*.

In addition to individuating *triangle*, the equation individuates the concept *trilateral*. Under the same set of normalcy conditions, *x*'s looking triangular* will pick out the correct application of *trilateral*.[17]

Pettit seems aware of the problem. At one point in his writing, he remarks that the target concept might simply be posited on the biconditional's right-hand side:

> the disposition mentioned in this analysis must be subject to the qualification of operating in the right way and that there is no reductive way of expressing this; to operate in the right way is just to operate in accord with the rule. (Pettit 1990, p. 16)

By "in accord with the rule" Pettit seems to mean in accord with the concept. In other words, one must assume that the disposition to look triangular* is operating in accordance with the concept *triangle* rather than *trilateral*. And the assumption is defended on the grounds that the account is not intended to be reductive. But this is evidently misguided. In assuming that the disposition accords with the concept, Pettit is effectively assuming the very thing he sets out to individuate. The assumption, therefore, constitutes not merely the violation of a reductive methodology but, more to the point, a breach of the Independence Condition. By presupposing the target concept on the right-hand side, he is undermining the very point of the equation. To suppose that the subject already possesses the concept *triangle* suggests that the target concept may be response-independent. And consequently, by breaching the Independence Condition, Pettit has put his entire account into question.[18]

6. Emotional Content

Where response-dependence fails to adequately specify conceptual content, it seems well-suited for specifying emotional content. Consider the following:

(6) the *emotion that p* is appropriate iff *s*'s belief that *p* elicits f^e from *s* in *NC*

The emotional content is designated by the phrase *emotion that p*, emphasizing that its force is an indissoluble aspect of it. Because emotions don't have truth conditions, the relevant

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[17] It is noteworthy that the same problem faces a truth conditional use of the equation. For example, the verifiability conditions on the right-hand side of '*x is triangular* is true iff x is disposed to look triangular* to *s* in *NC*' also individuate '*x is trilateral*' is true.

[18] It is noteworthy that the Verificationist's truth conditional approach faces the same problem. For example, the verification (truth) conditions on the right-hand side of '*x is triangular* is true iff x looks triangular* to *s* in *NC*' also individuate the content *x is trilateral*.

semantic norm is appropriateness. The response, f^*, designating a feeling, is not to be regarded as a mental property that the subject must be able to isolate or have a concept of. Just as in Pettit's appeal to sensation, my appeal to feeling presupposes neither. In fact, in providing the account we need not suppose that the feeling can be individuated by a theorist independently of the emotion since, unlike cognitive reductionism, the account is nonreductive.[19]

Consider the following equation for the content of a grief:

(7) the *grief that William died* is appropriate iff *s*'s belief that William died elicits grief* from *s* in *NC*[20]

The equation, of course, must meet the Substantiality and Independence Conditions. To do so, we have to assume that the conditions in which grief* is elicited can be substantially specified without appealing to the content of grief itself.

Just as the normalcy conditions in the individuation of red are meant to check cases where something that isn't red looks red, in the present case they're meant to check cases where grief is inappropriate but nevertheless accompanied by the germane feeling, viz. grief*. What kinds of cases are inappropriate? In spelling this out, we must take care not to confuse the semantic notion of appropriateness with either the moral or prudential notion (see footnote 7). Moreover, bearing in mind that emotions violate the force/content distinction, semantic appropriateness will have a psychological dimension (in the way the norm governing intentional states that heed the force/content distinction, viz. truth, does not).

An obvious example involves desire. Suppose that a subject who wants William dead nevertheless experiences grief* at learning of his death. If we assume that the subject doesn't reassess her desire (i.e. in the face of its satisfaction), it would seem that her grief that William died would be inappropriate. Several factor may be responsible for allowing her belief that William died to elicit grief* even though she desires William's death: repression, pharmacology, an irregular physiology, etc. And these are obviously factor that the normalcy conditions would have to rule out. However, one might insist that the emotion

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[19] The occurrence of 'is appropriate' as an intransitive verb in the equation is deliberate. The temptation among philosophers is to regard appropriateness as a relational property, one understood in terms of a correct fit between the emotion and the object. This is clearly what guides the metaphysical discussions of de Sousa, Goldie, Arms and Jacobsen, and others. But this appeal to a *correspondence theory* of appropriateness is unnecessary within a response-dependent framework and, I believe, mistaken. Among its advantages, it avoids positing objective evaluative (relational) properties.

[20] As formulated, the emotional content has a subject-predicate form. However, emotions can also have object-contents, e.g. the fear of a snake or the love for your child. In such cases, it would allegedly be a belief that snakes are dangerous or a belief that your child is loveable that would appear on the right-hand side, since higher cognitive states (especially judgments) generally don't take object-contents.

would be inappropriate even in the case where subject lacked the desire for William to stay alive. In other words, appropriateness presupposes a relevant desire.

This may seem like a problem. As the discussion of cognitive reductionism revealed, the satisfaction or frustration of a desire, whether it is a wanting to William to stay alive, a wanting to go to Paris, etc., may be insufficient to elicit the germane feeling. What is required is an emotional as opposed to an instrumental desire. But, recall that identifying the right kind of desire was a problem for the reductionist since the distinction between instrumental and emotional desires cannot be made without appealing to emotions, which constitutes a violation of the reductionist's methodology. If one insisted that the inclusion of only an emotional desire among the normalcy conditions would guarantee that the appropriateness of the emotion in question, one might wonder whether the same problem wouldn't face a response-dependent account. The answer is, no. Since the account is nonreductive, it is legitimate to assume that the subject's desire is informed by an emotional rather than instrumental valuation of an object, event, etc. Hence, in the present case the right kind of desire is one whose frustration typically elicits grief*. The desire, which we might specify as 'the desire^{grief} to see William alive', is thereby distinct from an instrumental desire which, when frustrated, fails to elicit grief*.

The normalcy conditions should also rule out the possibility that the subject has various beliefs or commitments that would typically trump the experience of grief*, but, due to repression, pharmacology, an irregular physiology, etc., are prevented from doing so. In other words, while the subject may want William to stay alive, she may believe that life is pointless or that in death William will find bliss, commitments which would typically prevent her from experiencing grief*. To avoid these kinds of cases, we should assume that any relevant beliefs (ones that would typically trump the experience of grief*) are not repressed or otherwise inhibited by anti-depressants, opiates, a neurological disorder or even a lobotomy.

Furthermore, we should emphasize the certainty of the belief and the rationality of the subject. For example, if one doubted that William died, irrespective of its basis—whether due to conflicting news, the reliability of the source, the improbability of the event, etc.—but nevertheless felt grief* this would also be inappropriate. This is not to say that the belief must be true; after all, it's plausible to suppose that an emotion can be appropriate even though its feeling is elicited by false or fictional beliefs. It merely emphasizes that doubt, as a psychological (or epistemic) condition, can render an emotion inappropriate. In fact, self-deception and wishful thinking might have similar effects.

A more complete specification of normalcy is evidently required. However, what should be apparent is that by appealing to a desire^{grief} and grief* the Independence Condition has not been violated. Since the target is an intentional content (the *grief that William died*), the condition restricts only intensional occurrences of 'grief'. The occurrence of 'grief' in 'desire^{grief}' and 'grief*' is not intensional. Moreover, the appeal to the content of the belief that William died is also not restricted given that beliefs have conceptual content and emotions, as I've claimed, have contents that are not conceptual (insofar as force is an indissoluble aspect of these contents).

The advantage the account has over Pettit's is its ability to explain co-extensive

emotional contents. Because experiencing an emotion generally depends on possessing a corresponding belief, it is the belief which helps to ensure the determinateness of the emotional content. For example, an account of the *grief that William James died* and the *grief that Henry James' brother died* will differ in virtue of their antecedent beliefs. The former equation will utilize the belief that William James died and the latter the belief that William James' brother died. And while possessing a belief may not be sufficient for experiencing an emotion, I am suggesting that the experience of a corresponding feeling elicited by such a belief in substantially specified normal conditions is.

7. An Indeterminacy of Force?

There seems to be another form of indeterminacy that remains unchecked by belief content. Because force is an inextricable part of an emotional content, one could have an indeterminacy of content by having an indeterminacy of force. Within the present framework, I have assumed that a feeling is a reliable indicator of the force of an emotion. For example, although the accounts of the *grief that William died* and the *fear that William died* may outline similar cognitive preconditions (e.g. a belief that William died and a desire to see him alive), they will differ with respect to the elicited feeling. On the former account, the belief and desire elicit grief* , whereas on the latter they elicit fear*. However, this might be denied. If the feeling that accompanies one kind of emotion also accompanies another—that is, if 'grief*' and 'fear*' name one and the same feeling—then the elicitation of grief* would be insufficient to ensure that the *grief that William died* as opposed to the *fear that William died* is individuated. And if this were the case, the account would be vulnerable to an indeterminacy of force, which in the case of the emotions is tantamount to an indeterminacy of content.

William Lyons offers several arguments in support of the view that emotions do not have unique phenomenological types (Lyons 1980, pp. 133-35). First, he observes that words like 'throb' and 'twinge', which he claims denote specific feelings, can be connected to an emotion by phrases like 'a throb *of*.'.. or 'a twinge *of*'...', where the blank is filled in with the name of a specific emotion or, for that matter, something besides an emotion such as a disease or wound. "The implication is that feelings such as throbs and twinges are not invariably associated with emotions and much less with particular emotions" (*Ibid.*, p. 133). The observation, however, implies nothing of the sort. All it suggests is that we have a limited vocabulary for our phenomenological types. It's a mistake to presume that a single feeling is picked out by the phrases 'the throbbing *of* love', 'the throbbing *of* anger', or 'the throbbing *of* a scraped knee', in just the way it's a mistake to suppose that a single shade of red is picked out by the phrases 'the redness of hair', 'the redness of a sunburn', and 'the redness of the rocks of Santa Fe'. Feelings, like colors, are more fine-grained than the nouns most of us have at our disposal.

His second argument is based on the evidence we use to identify occurrent emotions. According to Lyons, "it seems impossible to assert that one is in the grip of such and such an emotion just by introspecting the quality or type of one's present feeling" (*Ibid*.). In other words, without beliefs about one's environment or one's cognitive preconditions, for

example a belief about who one is in love with, one cannot identify one's emotion as love.

But this too is misguided. To begin with, it's mistaken to suppose that we are generally able to isolate an emotion's feeling from its cognitive preconditions. That is, to claim that we cannot identify emotions by feelings alone assumes that *when* we isolate them we generally fail to classify the requisite emotions. But the scenario is contrived since in most cases we do not and cannot disassemble emotions through introspection so readily. This is not to say that feelings characteristic of an emotion cannot occur independently of usual cognitive preconditions or environmental cues. In some cases they do, for example when individuals are injected with procaine. However, in such cases individuals *can* identify the requisite emotion-type based on the feeling alone. As Servan-Shreiber and Perlstein explain, such individuals report

> a range of affective experiences, including euphoria, sadness, fear and anxiety... [These] procaine-induced experiences seem related to the essential 'qualia' of some emotional states such as euphoria or fear. Subjects are able to unambiguously name their experience, yet, they cannot report cognitions or environmental clues that could have evoked this affect or even justify its experience *a posteriori*.[21]

Finally, even if feelings *could* be isolated and even if an individual failed to identify the emotion she is experiencing, this wouldn't imply that occurrent emotions don't have distinctive feelings (or sets thereof). As I've suggested, feelings may be more fine-grained than our vocabulary. An inability to classify a feeling as one of grief may result from the failure to master the concepts of feelings; or, it may be the result of irrationality (e.g. wishful thinking) or a classification error, one where the subject unintentionally mistakes grief* for fear* or fatigue*. Irrespective of its source, the possibility of erroneous identification doesn't imply that emotions are not accompanied by distinctive feelings.

If this is right, and if normalcy conditions could guarantee the elicitation of a feeling characteristic of a specific emotion, an indeterminacy of force (and thus of content) would be checked. The elicitation of the distinctive feeling would ensure that the correct force is individuated, even if this weren't apparent to the subject experiencing it.

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[21] Servan-Shreiber and Perlstein as cited from Elster 1999, p. 248.

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