INTRODUCTION

Emotions shape the landscape of our mental and social lives. Like the “geological upheavals” a traveler might discover in a landscape where recently only a flat plane could be seen, they mark our lives as uneven, uncertain, and prone to reversal. Why and how? Is it because emotions are animal energies or impulses that have no connection with our thoughts, imaginings, and appraisals? Proust denies this, calling the emotions “geological upheavals of thought.” In other words, what changes the Baron’s mind from a flat plane into a mountain range is not some subterranean jolt, but the thoughts he has about Charlie Morel, a person who has suddenly become central to his well-being, and whom he sees as inscrutable, undependable, and utterly beyond his control. It is these thoughts about value and importance that make his mind project outward like a mountain range, rather than sitting inert in self-satisfied ease.

A lot is at stake in the decision to view emotions in this way, as intelligent responses to the perception of value. If emotions are suffused with intelligence and discernment, and if they contain in themselves an awareness of value or importance, they cannot, for example, easily be sidelined in accounts of ethical judgment, as so often they have been in the history of philosophy. Instead of viewing morality as a system of principles to be grasped by the detached intellect, and emotions as motivations that either support or subvert our choice to act according to principle, we will have to consider emotions as part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning. We cannot plausibly omit them, once we acknowledge that emotions include in their content judgments that can be true or false, and good or bad guides to ethical choice. We will have to grapple with the messy material of grief and love, anger and
INTRODUCTION

fear, and the role these tumultuous experiences play in thought about the good and the just.

To say that emotions should form a prominent part of the subject matter of moral philosophy is not to say that moral philosophy should give emotions a privileged place of trust, or regard them as immune from rational criticism: for they may be no more reliable than any other set of entrenched beliefs. There may even be special reasons for regarding them with suspicion, given their specific content and the nature of their history. It does mean, however, that we cannot ignore them, as so often moral philosophy has done. It means that a central part of developing an adequate ethical theory will be to develop an adequate theory of the emotions, including their cultural sources, their history in infancy and childhood, and their sometimes unpredictable and disorderly operation in the daily life of human beings who are attached to things outside themselves.

Proust’s account of the Baron’s mind issues a challenge to conventional ethical thought in yet another way. It tells us something about what texts we need to turn to if we are to arrive at an adequate account of the emotions. If emotions involve judgments about the salience for our well-being of uncontrolled external objects, judgments in which the mind of the judge is projected unstably outward into a world of objects, we will need to be able to imagine those attachments, their delight and their terror, their intense and even obsessive focusing on their object, if we are ever to talk well about love, or fear, or anger. But then it seems that we will have reason to turn to texts such as Proust’s novel, which encourage us in such imaginings, deepening and refining our grasp of upheavals of thought in our own lives. If Proust is right, we will not understand ourselves well enough to talk good sense in ethics unless we do subject ourselves to the painful self-examination a text such as his can produce.

Furthermore, if emotions are as Proust describes them, they have a complicated cognitive structure that is in part narrative in form, involving a story of our relation to cherished objects that extends over time. Ultimately, we cannot understand the Baron’s love, for example, without knowing a great deal about the history of patterns of attachment that extend back into his childhood. Past loves shadow present attachments, and take up residence within them. This, in turn, suggests that in order to talk well about them we will need to turn to texts that
INTRODUCTION

contain a narrative dimension, thus deepening and refining our grasp of ourselves as beings with a complicated temporal history. It is for this reason that Proust's narrator comes to believe that certain truths about the human being can be told only in literary form. If we accept his view of what emotions are, we should agree, to the extent of making a place for literature (and other works of art) within moral philosophy, alongside more conventional philosophical texts. Once again: an account of human reasoning based only upon abstract texts such as are conventional in moral philosophy is likely to prove too simple to offer us the type of self-understanding we need.

Some of these claims might be maintained even by people who think of emotions as totally noncognitive: even such people might think that we need to understand human psychology better than we often do in order to write well about ethics. But if a cognitive/evaluative theory of emotions is correct, these claims have a particular salience: for what they mean is that not just a psychological adjunct to ethical thought, but a part of ethical thought itself will be omitted with the omission of emotions. Emotions are not just the fuel that powers the psychological mechanism of a reasoning creature, they are parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creature's reasoning itself.

Thus a theoretical account of emotions is not only that: it has large consequences for the theory of practical reason, for normative ethics, and for the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. Such an account has consequences for political thought as well: for understanding the relationship between emotions and various conceptions of the human good will inform our deliberations as we ask how politics might support human flourishing. If we think of emotions as essential elements of human intelligence, rather than just as supports or props for intelligence, this gives us especially strong reasons to promote the conditions of emotional well-being in a political culture: for this view entails that without emotional development, a part of our reasoning capacity as political creatures will be missing.

In the first part of the book I shall develop a conception of the emotions that fleshes out the insight expressed in Proust's description, suggesting that diverse phenomena of our emotional life are well explained by a view that has its antecedents in the ideas of the ancient Greek Stoics.
INTRODUCTION

This view holds that emotions are appraisals or value judgments, which ascribe to things and persons outside the person’s own control great importance for that person’s own flourishing.¹ It thus contains three salient ideas: the idea of a cognitive appraisal or evaluation; the idea of one’s own flourishing or one’s important goals and projects; and the idea of the salience of external objects as elements in one’s own scheme of goals. Emotions typically combine these ideas with information about events in the world; they are our ways of registering how things are with respect to the external (i.e., uncontrolled)² items that we view as salient for our well-being. Focusing on a complex example of grief involving the death of a parent (an example chosen because of its ubiquity, as an apt device for encouraging readers to mine their own experiences of grief), I shall show how this particular type of cognitive account does justice to our experiences of emotion.

My strategy is to state the view initially in a relatively simple form, providing it with a preliminary defense (Chapter 1). Once we have seen its general structure, we can then consider several modifications that it needs to undergo in order to become more adequate. These modifications were not made by the Stoics themselves (so far as we know from the fragments of their work on this topic that survive). The view undergoes refinement and reshaping in four distinct stages. By the time we are finished with it, a general core will remain, but it will be a lot more subtle than the view first announced. The view that emerges may justly be called neo-Stoic, and I shall often use this term. But it has an independent character, emphasizing, as it does, the commonality between humans and other animals, the role of social norms, and the complexities of an individual human history.

To modify the view, we need, first, simply to elaborate it further, taking up issues the Stoics are not known to have addressed. We need to consider the role of imagination in emotions of various types. We need to make distinctions between general and particular emotions,

¹ This analysis of emotion in no way entails the Stoics’ controversial normative view that the evaluations involved in emotions are all false. It is this view that explains their recommendation that we extirpate all emotions, seeking an undisturbed life. For exegesis of both the analysis and the normative view, see Nussbaum (1994); for the normative view, and my critique of it, see Chapter 7.
² Externality is a metaphorical way of referring to the fact that these elements are not securely controlled by the person’s own will; in that sense many things inside the person’s own body (health and disease, for example) are “external.”
INTRODUCTION

and between “background” and “situational” emotions. We need to ask how the diminution of grief over time can be explained within a cognitive/evaluative theory. We need to ask carefully whether all the evaluations involved in emotion do indeed relate to uncontrolled “external goods,” and whether the object of emotion is always valued for some relation it bears to one’s own flourishing. And, finally, we need to devote a good deal of attention to the thorny question of whether there are elements other than cognitive attitudes that are involved in emotion: feelings, bodily movements, dense perceptions that are not exhausted by the emotion’s propositional content. In the latter half of the first chapter, I begin the refinement of the Stoic view – or, we might also say, the construction of a contemporary neo-Stoic view – by mapping out these further distinctions and confronting these further questions.

Second, any contemporary cognitive/evaluative view needs to advance a plausible account of the relationship between human emotions and the emotions of other animals. The original Stoics had an implausible account: they simply denied that nonhuman animals had emotions. This denial has led some thinkers to reject their view. But we need not take this course, since we may, instead, reject their low estimate of the intelligence of animals. At this point we need to turn to modern work in ethology and cognitive psychology, asking what forms of cognitive appraisal it is plausible to ascribe to animals of various types. I argue in Chapter 2 that we can give an adequate account of animal emotion in the general spirit of the Stoic view, but we need to broaden the Stoic account of evaluative cognition, focusing less on language and the acceptance of linguistically formulable propositions and more on the general ability to see X as Y, where Y involves a notion of salience or importance for the creature’s own well-being. At this point I also focus on some general issues of emotional content, addressing the connection between animal emotions and the perception of helplessness, arguing that emotional health requires the belief that one’s own voluntary actions will make a significant difference to one’s most important goals and projects.

At this point in the argument, we are also in a position to discuss three important distinctions that help us to map further the geography of the emotional life: distinctions between emotions and appetites, between emotions and moods, and between emotions and motives for
INTRODUCTION

action. Showing that the view can provide an adequate account of these distinctions helps to strengthen our claim that the view provides a good account of emotional experience. These discussions conclude Chapter 2.

But a contemporary cognitive/evaluative account also needs an adequate account of the role of diverse social norms in constructing a society's emotional repertory. The original Stoics gave an important place to social norms in their accounts of emotion, but they said nothing about how variations in norms entail variations in emotion. The third major modification we must make in the simple view first advanced is, then, to pursue this issue, offering a sensible account of the role of “social construction” in the emotional life. Anthropological studies of emotion have yielded rich material on emotional variety, which I draw on in the third chapter in order to pursue these issues. The simple view is transformed yet again: and yet its main features (its emphasis on appraisal and on the role of important goals and projects) remain constant.

The Greek and Roman Stoics had no apparent interest in childhood, nor did they ever ask how early experiences shape the mature emotional life. Indeed, they appear to have had the implausible view that children, like animals, do not have emotions. We can see that this was an error— that the “geological upheavals of thought” that constitute the adult experience of emotion involve foundations laid down much earlier in life, experiences of attachment, need, delight, and anger. Early memories shadow later perceptions of objects, adult attachment relations bear the traces of infantile love and hate. Although this narrative dimension is a ubiquitous part of adult emotional experience, and in that sense should be a part of the analysis from the beginning, it could not be adequately described before we had elaborated the second chapter’s flexible account of cognition and the third chapter’s account of social variation. At this point, however, we can ask how the human infant’s combination of extreme neediness and cognitive maturity, of intense attachment and nascent separateness, shapes, for better or for worse, the geography of the emotional life. On these questions, rarely treated by philosophers and almost never treated well, a philosopher needs to turn to psychology and to literature for help. Recently there has been an unprecedented degree of convergence and even cooperation between cognitive psychologists and psychoanalysts, especially those in...
INTRODUCTION

the object-relations tradition, where some of these issues are concerned. I draw on this material – but also, and centrally, on Proust, in some ways the most profound object-relations psychoanalyst of all. The simple view thus undergoes yet one more stage of modification – this one being perhaps the most dramatic.

My account of childhood emotions focuses on the role of the imagination in promoting a good outcome to early emotional crises. My later accounts of compassion and love develop this insight, focusing on the role of the arts in cultivating these emotions. The Interlude and Chapter 5 therefore turn to experiences of emotion we have in connection with works of art. The Interlude develops a general framework for thinking about emotions directed toward works of art. Chapter 5 then focuses on music, since this case is much more difficult to treat than the case of literature, and yet crucial if we are to satisfy ourselves that the account we are developing is on the right track. Music is an especially rich source of emotional experiences and has frequently been taken to offer us insight into the nature of the emotional life. Many cognitive/evaluative views of emotion have difficulty explaining these phenomena; I argue that mine does not, because of its flexible nonlinguistic account of cognition. Indeed, it enables us to cut through a dilemma that has vexed analysts of musical experience. Mahler’s music, and his remarkably perceptive statements about his music, are my guides here, and I offer interpretations of two songs from the Kindertotenlieder to show what the view can make of a complex case of the musical expression of grief, love, guilt, and helplessness.

Thus Part I ends: with a far more complicated version of the view first mapped out in Chapter 1 – incorporating nonlinguistic cognitions, social norms, and individual history – and with an example of the way that such a view can go to work explaining a harrowing and yet subtle experience.

It will be evident that Part I focuses on some emotions more than others. Grief plays an especially prominent role in all of the chapters, as do the closely related emotions of fear and hope. (The focus broadens in Chapter 4, when shame, disgust, envy, and anger all become prominent.) And yet, despite this focus on certain cases, it is also clear that my project is to construct an analytical framework for thinking
INTRODUCTION

about emotions in general. This procedure requires comment, because some would claim that there is no interesting common ground among such a wide range of phenomena. One can only defeat that kind of skepticism by forging ahead and proposing an account that is illuminating, and yet does not neglect significant differences among the emotions. Differences are repeatedly confronted by the fact that the account does draw on an increasingly wide range of cases as it goes along. Starting with a detailed mapping of a single type of emotion, it eventually includes analyses of many others. Parts II and III expand the range still further. I agree with the skeptical critic to the extent that I think any adequate account of emotions needs to go into complex details about the specific content of particular emotions; little of interest can be said without that. Nonetheless, when we do get into the analysis of particular emotions, we find that there are close relationships among them, both conceptual and causal, that we need to trace if we are to have a good understanding even of the specific varieties.

We will find, too, that the common ground within the class of emotions is actually greater than we might suppose if we simply looked at our casual and frequently loose use of words such as “feeling,” “emotion,” and “passion.” Although, as I shall describe shortly, I do rely on people’s ability to classify pretty reliably experiences of a particular type of emotion, even here my methodology makes room for error that will ultimately be corrected in dialogue with a theoretical account. Where large generic categories are concerned, ordinary use seems to me far less precise and thus less reliable than it is with the particular categories; so I will not take it for granted, for example, that every use of a term such as “feeling” designates a single phenomenon. There are multiple ambiguities in use, and a theory ought to be prepared to point this out. Such a critical theory can nonetheless arrive at an interesting

3 See Griffiths (1997).
4 See also Ben-Ze’ev (2000), Solomon (1999).
5 Of course, each single type has tremendous internal variety, as my account stresses. I argue in Chapters 3 and 4 that social norms and personal history are sources of great diversity in the experience of grief.
6 It is particularly odd that Griffiths, who is a stern critic of the reliance on ordinary use and ordinary conceptions, should rely on them himself in a quite uncritical way when arguing that the category “emotion” contains such great heterogeneity that no interesting single account is possible. He uses the word quite loosely in order to establish that the things falling under it are multiple and not unified; and yet it is he who holds that our loose use is to be distrusted.
INTRODUCTION

unified account of a core group of phenomena that do have significant commonalities. The reader must judge whether the theory has sufficient flexibility to explore differences among the different emotions, and among different experiences of a given emotion, while retaining enough definiteness to illuminate the diverse phenomena.7

What, then, is the starting point of the investigation? It is plain that it must be experience. Moreover, even when, as here, the results of scientific investigations are prominently consulted, the terrain of the *explanandum* has to be identified in some way that is, at least initially, independent of the explanatory theories scientists bring forward. Thus scientists who investigate the emotions typically rely on their subjects’ (and their readers’) ability to identify experientially instances of a given emotion, and to name them pretty reliably. The whole enterprise is one of establishing correlations—between a neural phenomenon, say, and the emotion of grief. So instances of grief have to be identified in some other way, usually by self-report. It is difficult to see how even the most parsimonious scientist could proceed otherwise: without experiential classification and the subsequent correlation, we would have simply a description of neural activity, and it would not hook onto any question that scientists typically ask. In a similar way, my own account assumes the general ability of readers to identify and classify instances of emotions such as grief, fear, and envy; intuitive judgments about these cases are consulted throughout, along with the results of philosophical and scientific investigations.

Two qualifications, however, must be firmly entered at this point. First, relying on people’s ability to classify instances of emotion does not mean relying on people’s theories about what emotions are.8 Consider field linguists: they rely on the ability of their subjects to identify more or less correctly instances of proper and improper use. They do not rely on their ability to construct a correct theory of the language in

7 Admittedly, it is not always easy to draw a line between emotions and other closely related experiences, such as moods and appetites. The distinctions are slippery, and some cases may be genuinely indeterminate. This situation obtains, however, with many complex phenomena of human experience that philosophers try to investigate. Concepts such as belief and consciousness, virtue and justice, look far more difficult to specify in any interestingly unified way. And yet this has not stopped philosophers from investigating commonalities and saying things that are genuinely illuminating as a result.

8 Surprisingly, Griffiths (1997) does not seem to notice this distinction; his attack on “folk psychology” would appear to cover intuitions of both types.
INTRODUCTION

question, and of course it would be ludicrous to rely on that. Most people have no idea how to write the grammar of their language, although it is to their competence that any grammar must be accountable. Consider, again, the career of Socrates. His procedure, as Plato records it, relied on the ability of his interlocutors to identify, more or less correctly, instances of a given virtue. Candidate definitions of courage, or justice, are standardly attacked by discovering what both Socrates and the interlocutor consider to be a genuine case of the virtue, not covered by the definition – or else by finding that the definition covers phenomena that neither Socrates nor the interlocutor is prepared to count as a genuine case of the virtue. What his procedure reveals is that people are more reliable when they are grouping instances than when they are trying to give them a theoretical explanation. That is not surprising, because the identification of instances is a ubiquitous part of their lives, part of being a competent speaker of that language and participant in that culture – whereas theory construction is usually something to which they have devoted no sustained thought at all. My procedure, then, is Socratic: it relies on the ability of readers to identify the instances that constitute the range of the explanandum, but it does not rely on them to produce good explanations. Indeed, my own explanation seems quite counterintuitive to start with, just as do many Socratic definitions. My hope is that it will ultimately seem convincing as a valuable explanatory theory.

Second, relying on people’s ability to be generally correct in classifying phenomena does not mean assuming that they are always correct. If I am searching for a scientific definition of water, I will have to begin somewhere: presumably, with instances of water identified by competent speakers of the language. But once I get the definition, in terms of a chemical analysis of water, the phenomena will need to be regrouped: if the speakers didn’t know that ice was an instance of the same chemical compound, their classifications will have to be corrected. A core range of phenomena will have to remain, or else we will wonder whether the explanation is really explaining the thing that we began to investigate. But it is only natural – given that people, as I’ve

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9 Again, the possibility of an account of emotion that is both responsive to experience and critical seems to be ignored by Griffiths, in his contemptuous dismissal of most philosophical work on the topic.

10 That is the problem that has often been found in Plato’s Republic: some interpreters hold that Socrates’ definition of justice in terms of the order of the soul has moved so