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Emotional Rationality as Practical Rationality

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In this essay I take as my target a messy set of intuitions about the extent to which and the dimensions along which emotions can be assessed for rationality. One strand in commonsense thinking puts emotions entirely outside the scope of rationality assessment. Everyone has heard such statements as, "But, that's how I feel"—uttered as if that ended the conversation. The view that emotions are outside the scope of rationality assessment gains strength from the perceived subjectivity of emotion—emotions vary so much from person to person and seem to depend so much on the agent's history that one can easily think that emotions can't be subject to rationality assessment,[1] that we can, at most, find emotions understandable (or not). But to say that emotions can be understandable (or not) is not to say that they can be rational (or not) since rationality is a normatively stronger notion than understandability.

Another strand in commonsense thinking is loquacious in its criticism of our own and of others' emotions and recognizes many kinds of assessment that seem to constitute rationality assessment. According to this strand, (1) a particular emotion might be ungrounded or insufficiently grounded in the evidence available to the agent. Jealousy often leaps ahead of the evidence in this way. Call this dimension of assessment *reasonableness*. (2) An emotion may fail to fit the features of the evoking situation and one may be, for example, angry when there is no slight. Call this dimension of assessment *aptness*. Aptness and reasonableness can come apart: one might, for example, have a panic attack that just happens to coincide with a nuclear catastrophe.[2] (3) Related to aptness, yet distinct from it, is *proportionality*: such a trifling slight merits only annoyance, not rage. That we separate emotions of different intensities shows the connection between proportionality and aptness, but they are distinct concepts. An evoking situation can merit not merely anger, rather than rage or irritation, but also only anger of such and such intensity. (4) Criticism of emotions can run even deeper: it can be objected that a kind of affective response, such as sexual jealousy, embodies an evaluative mis-

take. Or one might hold, as the Stoics did, that all emotions are in evaluative error. Call this dimension of assessment *evaluative correctness*. (5) Some emotions, in some contexts, are strategically unwise and lead the agent to fail to achieve her ends; emotions can thus be assessed according to the forward-looking dimension of *strategic wisdom*. Emotions that are out of proportion with their evoking situations will often be unwise, but they need not be (an extreme emotional response may be just what it takes to further the agent's ends),[3] and thus proportionality is not reducible to wisdom. For the same reason, strategic wisdom is not reducible to aptness or reasonableness.

These are not simply dimensions of assessment acknowledged in common-sense thinking; each has its advocate in philosophical discussion of the rationality of emotions. Jon Elster canvasses the idea of defining the rationality of emotion in terms of the reasonableness of the beliefs that cause the emotion; Ronald de Sousa rejects reasonableness and focuses on aptness; the Stoics focus on evaluative correctness; and Robert Solomon focuses on wisdom.[4] Not only is there no consensus on how to analyze the rationality conditions of emotions, but also there is no consensus on how even to approach the question. In addition to proposing and defending an account of rationality conditions for emotions, one of the goals of this essay is to get clearer about how to go about asking questions about the rationality of emotions.

A Slogan and a Constraint

My strategy in generating an account of the rationality conditions of emotions is to use a slogan and a methodological constraint to apply pressure to a substantive account of the nature of the emotions and thus extract from that account a picture of what makes an emotion rational. The conclusion of this essay is thus conditional: *if* you accept my preferred general account of the emotions, then this is what you *should* say about their rationality conditions, although—and I return to this—it is not what one advocate of a version of the preferred theory has in fact said.[5]

The slogan that provides the intuition behind my approach provides the title of this essay: emotional rationality is practical rationality. So as not to beg any questions, I could put the slogan in conditional form: if there is such a thing as emotional rationality, then it is a species of practical rationality. Put conditionally like this, it does not rule out the antirational assessment position, and those who think that emotions are subject to rationality assessment invariably think that such assessment has *something* to do with practical rationality. Of course, this agreement is a function of the slogan's vagueness: it is not at all clear what it means to say that emotional rationality is a species of practical rationality unless we further specify what we have in mind by practical rationality. As the argument progresses, the slogan will be given a more determinate meaning. By the end of the argument, it falls away as unnecessary since it has a heuristic function in helping us look in the right places to generate an account. The account, once generated,

stands or falls on its own merits. The slogan is thus a starting point that will be transcended; so, in the end, no questions need be begged.

A slogan itself does not give us enough of a handle on the question of emotional rationality. Something else is needed to press against. That something else is a methodological constraint: your account of what emotions are constrains your account of their rationality conditions. If anything is a truism, this constraint is; nevertheless, truisms can have substantive implications. Consider, for example, Solomon's account of emotions and his story of their rationality conditions. Solomon, like the Stoics before him, identifies emotions with evaluative judgments.

> [E]motions are interestingly similar to beliefs. We can now explain this by claiming that emotions are judgments, normative and often moral judgments. "I am angry at John for taking . . . my car" *entails* that I believe that John has somehow wronged me. (This must be true even if, *all things considered*, I also believe that John was justified in taking my car.) The (moral) judgment entailed by my anger is not a judgment *about* my anger. . . . My anger *is* that judgment.[6]

Having identified emotions with evaluative judgments, Solomon claims that an emotion is rational to the extent that it functions to meet the subject's ego needs.[7] On this account, emotions are subject to forward-looking, instrumental rationality conditions. But this commits Solomon to the view that judgments (remember, emotions just are judgments) are assessable for instrumental rather than representational rationality.[8] The Stoics give the *kind* of answer Solomon should have given: they say that emotions are always irrational because they are mistaken evaluative judgments that confuse things that are merely among the so-called preferred indifferents with components of the agent's happiness. We might dispute the claim that emotions necessarily contain evaluative error, but this account at least recognizes that what you say emotions are constrains what you can say about their rationality conditions.[9]

Core Features of Quasi-Perceptual Accounts of the Emotions

The family of accounts for which I'm interested in generating rationality conditions can usefully be called quasi-perceptual. Although there are differences in the details, Cheshire Calhoun, Ronald de Sousa, and Amelie Rorty each develop an account of this sort.[10] The core intuition that drives such accounts and that unifies them so that they may properly be called a family of accounts is the intuition that emotions operate at a different level from beliefs and desires: emotions *shape* both cognition and motivation but are not themselves to be identified with either beliefs or desires.[11] Emotions are able to shape both cognition and motivation through their effects on what we experience as reasons for belief and reasons for action. Proponents of quasi-perceptual accounts variously describe emotions as "cognitive sets, interpretive frameworks, patterns of attention," and "species of

determinate patterns of salience among objects of attention, lines of inquiry, and inferential strategies."[12]

According to quasi-perceptual accounts of the emotions, emotions have at least the following cognitive roles: they (1) focus attention, (2) direct inquiry, (3) shape interpretation, and (4) structure inference. Call a mental state that plays these four roles a *cognitive set*. These four characteristic ways in which emotions affect cognition interact: in the first instance, an emotion, such as fear, typically leads the agent to freeze and focus on the object (snake or stick?) that triggered the fear.[13] That focus may attach to specific features of the object (or evoking situation), features that are seen in evaluative terms.[14] Such evaluatively laden interpretations structure inference, making inferential moves come to seem compelling that would not have seemed compelling without the emotion: seen without anger, your remark might be quite innocent; seen with anger, it will be taken to reveal (yet again) your tendency toward superciliousness.

It is because of the control that emotions exert over perception and interpretation that they can "run away" with us. Evidence that might count against my anger will be interpreted through the lens of my anger. Thus the angry often—indeed, typically—have angry beliefs; that is, they typically form the evaluative judgments taken by judgmentalists to constitute the emotion. But they need not. An agent can resist these interpretative and inferential dispositions, reminding herself that there are other ways of interpreting the situation, that the inferences she experiences as compelling and has to struggle to resist would not seem compelling were she not angry. What the agent who assents to the emotional appearances and the agent who resists such appearances have in common are patterns of cognitive and desiderative focus.[15]

Generating Rationality Conditions

Preliminary Moves

Suppose—and I'm aware that I haven't given a defense of this claim—emotions shape both cognition and motivation and are constituted by patterns of salience, interpretation, and inference. When would it be rational for an agent to see the world through the lens of an emotion? Let me start by quickly canvassing two answers that might seem tempting but that are inadequate.

We might think that it is rational for an agent to see the world through the lens of an emotion only if she has an antecedently (or perhaps simultaneously) justified evaluative belief that the evoking situation instantiates the evaluative property that is the proper object of the emotion. For example, an agent's seeing the world through the interpretative schemata of righteous anger is rational only if that anger is grounded in a justified belief that the object of her anger has treated her disrespectfully. This proposal amounts to answering the question of the rationality of emotions in just the way a judgmentalist should—if you identify emotions with evaluative beliefs, then the emotion will be rational only if the evaluative belief is rational.

This answer rules out as irrational some emotional episodes involving so-called gut feelings that seem rational. No doubt gut feelings are sometimes irrational, but consider the following case. Suppose a woman has a firm belief that her partner is not having an affair. Moreover, she has excellent evidence to support this belief: she knows her partner and his character very well. In the past he has expressed sincere disapproval of such behavior on the part of others, and he is too much of a homebody to enjoy the intrigue that an affair would entail. Secure in this knowledge of his character, his partner has never felt jealous of his (many) friendships with women.

At a party to which they are both invited, the woman watches her partner interact with one of his women friends. She cannot articulate what it is about the interaction that bothers her; indeed, she can't be sure that it is anything at all about the interaction that does. She finds herself feeling insecure. She chides herself for this at first: "What is wrong with you? He has lots of friendships with women. This is no different." Nevertheless, her insecurity and the suspicion it generates lead her to focus closely on her partner's interaction with the friend and to go over in her mind various details of his recent interaction with her. As a result of following through with the patterns of attention and lines of inquiry characteristic of suspicious jealousy, she comes to the conclusion that probably he is being unfaithful. She is right. She is a pretty reliable detector of the subtle clues of body language and voice that indicate how things stand between people. Her distrust is well grounded in this evidence, though she could not have known that at first. Should we say, then, that had she believed at the outset that he was unfaithful, her belief would have been rational? It might indeed have been formed by a reliable ability to detect unfaithfulness, but it seems that it would not have been rational for her to form that belief on the basis of a vague hunch in the light of all the evidence that she had to support the belief that *of course* he couldn't be being unfaithful.[16] The evidence that would rebut the undermining belief that of course he's faithful is acquired as a consequence of having the emotion and is not in place when the agent first experiences the emotion. Yet it would seem that the emotion is rational from the start and doesn't just become rational when more evidence is in, for it would be odd to say that it is worthwhile to follow up on an irrational emotion, yet this is what we have to say if we suppose that the emotion becomes rational only when the evidence is in.

The suspicious jealousy case lets us see what is wrong with another answer that we might be tempted to give to the question of when it is rational for an agent to see the world through an affective lens. I've said that emotions give shape to the mind: they make some beliefs come to seem compelling and others not. They get us to focus on a partial field of evidence, and they get us to focus on this in a particular way, thereby supporting characteristic inferential patterns. In this way, emotional perception can become self-fulfilling: we see only what confirms our emotion because we see the world through the lens of the emotion. Even if the woman in our example had not been good at tracking unfaithfulness, she would, as likely as not, have found what *seemed to her* to be evidence for it once her suspicions were aroused. Twisting evidence in this way appears even more repre-

hensible once we remember that emotions also shape motivation and tend to give rise to characteristic sorts of action—I will want to retaliate against the persons whose action I see through anger. These observations might lead us to suspect that the answer we should give to the question of when it is rational to view the world through the lens of an emotion is *never*. There's a long tradition, both philosophical and commonsense, of associating emotions with incontinence and irrationality: the good reasoner is never emotional; the wise deliberator is always cool. In conceding that emotions get us to focus on a partial field of evidence and to interpret that evidence in patterned ways, quasi-perceptual accounts of the emotions might seem to have given up the game to those who are hostile toward emotions.

However, this response would be hasty. The shaping of cognitive terrain characteristic of cognitive sets is not limited to affective phenomena: there's evidence from cognitive science that such tendencies to interpret information are operative in many kinds of reasoning, including informal statistical reasoning, which proceeds by way of stereotype rather than the slower but more accurate set-inclusion method.[17] We might think that part of what happens when a scientist is inducted into a research tradition is that she comes not merely to acquire a set of beliefs and a set of abilities and skills but also to have the cognitive dispositions describable as cognitive sets.[18] If this is so, then the answer, "never," is indeed hasty. It is sometimes a good thing that the mind is prejudiced in its interpretation: sometimes such prejudices are exactly what we need to be able to see the evidence *aright* and thus to see the world *aright*.[19] Perhaps, then, we should say that a cognitive set is rational just in case having such a set, in the context in which it is had, nonaccidentally contributes to the formation, or confirmation of true beliefs. And, likewise but more precisely, an emotion E in situation S will be rational for agent A if and only if E nonaccidentally contributes to A's being able to arrive at or to confirm true evaluative beliefs. The partner in the suspicious jealousy case passes this test—she is a good tracker of signs of unfaithfulness, and her suspicions will tend to lead her to form true evaluative beliefs; thus this account lets us say that her emotion is rational.

The suggestion looks promising, but I want to argue that it is not quite right, that it forces a model of emotional rationality that remains too much patterned on the rationality of beliefs. In effect, the model asks us to reduce emotional rationality to the rationality of evaluative belief *formation*. However, emotions do much more than tend to give rise to evaluative beliefs, correct or otherwise. They also give rise to motives for acting—motives that cannot be reduced to the motives that follow from rational evaluative beliefs.[20]

If, however, emotions are to be assessed for rationality only according to whether they reliably produce correct evaluative beliefs, then we have to make the motivational aspect of rational emotions fit in under the heading of motives that follow from these evaluative beliefs. I argue that there can be cases in which an agent fails the test of having emotional states that reliably generate true evaluative beliefs but nonetheless has rational emotions, although this argument has to wait until we have in place some additional resources. In the meantime, I regard

as live the hypothesis that emotions are rational to the extent that they tend to give rise to or confirm correct evaluative belief. It gives us one way of cashing out the "aright" as it occurs in the claim that emotions, like other cognitive sets, are rational to the extent that they let us see the world aright.

There is, though, another way of cashing out the "aright," a way that focuses more clearly on the issue of practical rationality. So far, only the methodological constraint has been active in shaping the discussion. The slogan lets us see a direction in which to look for an alternative account: perhaps the relevant sort of correct vision is not primarily, if at all, a matter of true belief but rather a matter of seeing the situation aright from the perspective of practical rationality; that is, perhaps emotional rationality is the rationality of good practical perception. The first step toward exploring this proposal is to get a better understanding of how emotions affect practical perception, which in turn requires an adequate understanding of the phenomenology of decision making.

Deliberation from the First-Person Perspective

In beginning to reflect about deliberation and choice from the first-person point of view, one notices three things:

1. During deliberation, one's attention as an agent is generally firmly directed outward toward features of the world, not inward toward one's own wants and desires. When we deliberate, we are trying to work out what we should want to do, not what to do given what we want. The features that claim an agent's attention during deliberation or that strike her as important when deliberation is unnecessary are reason-giving features. They are the kinds of considerations that could be cited in answer to the question "Why did you do that?" and they show the favorable light in which the agent viewed her chosen course of action. They can include considerations such as "She needed my help" and "It would be fun." They rarely include "I wanted to" because, except for actions undertaken on whimsy, it can always be asked, "Why did you want to?" and the answer to that will cite some alleged property of the chosen course of action.[21]

2. Deliberation proceeds on the basis of a restricted set of such features.[22] On any given occasion for choice, there will typically be a large number of considerations that could intelligibly count for or against a choice of action. But the agent does not have all these features in mind: certain features strike an agent as mattering; others do not; and thus an agent comes to inhabit a world that is shaped and structured into a world of reasons. Sometimes, indeed, frequently, the set of reason-giving considerations that are salient to an agent is restricted in such a way as to make it simply obvious what the agent is to do: only one consideration strikes the agent as mattering, or as having such importance that other considerations fall from view and the agent simply "sees" what to do. Considerations can be salient to an agent in three quite different ways: a consideration can be judged by the

agent to matter and so, to that extent, be salient to her without being experienced as having valence, that is, without being apprehended in a motivationally lively way. The dangers of cigarette smoking are typically salient to a smoker in this, rather abstract way. Alternatively, a consideration (the pleasures of spiteful revenge, say) can be salient in virtue of being apprehended in a motivationally lively way without being judged to be reason giving. Finally, a consideration can be salient, engage with the agent's motivational set, and at the same time, be judged to be of genuine reason-giving force in the situation at hand.

3. Deliberation may overrule some of the considerations that an agent takes to be reason giving and may also transform her understanding of how these reason-giving features provide reasons for acting. A consideration that might at first blush have seemed to be a reason for acting in ways that would conflict with, for example, a requirement of justice can come to be seen as a reason for modifying the way in which the requirement of justice is met. In this way, rather than merely determining which consideration is, in the circumstances, the most weighty and letting it outweigh the others, deliberation seeks to make compossible respect for each reason-giving feature that an agent takes to be present in a situation.[23]

Together these three observations show how important it is for an agent to arrive at the correct view of a choice situation: much of the work of deliberation is carried out *before* an agent sets out to deliberate about how the reason-giving considerations best support action. The way in which an agent interprets a situation, and so highlights certain considerations while overlooking others, crucially affects the outcome of her deliberation, for the world, so seen, sets the terms for what will count as an acceptable solution to a practical problem.

It will be useful to regiment the language in which we talk about the various stages of deliberation. Let's agree to call that set of considerations that the agent *takes to be reason giving*, and so to establish the parameters for a successful resolution to a deliberative problem, the *starting points of deliberation*.[24] The starting points of deliberation (or the features that will govern action when deliberation is unnecessary) are selected by a process that can be called framing: a situation framed in one way will highlight certain features; framed in another way, others will be highlighted. Framing is thus a process of interpretation that selects certain features as starting points for deliberation and rejects others as unimportant. A consideration rejected as unimportant can nonetheless continue to be salient to an agent. This tends to happen when the consideration is apprehended in a motivationally lively way. Such considerations clamor to be admitted into the starting points of deliberation and may affect the agent's deliberation and her ability to act on her decision.[25]

Rationality, Again

Armed with this phenomenology of deliberation, we can see at once the connection between emotions and practical rationality: it follows from a quasi-perceptual

account of the emotions that emotions will tend to influence how an agent frames a choice situation. Emotions make us experience considerations as reason giving. Considerations that emotions lead us to experience as reason giving claim a place among the starting points of deliberation. That claim can be rejected, but often it isn't. Indeed, sometimes emotions preempt deliberation by presenting a single consideration as of overwhelming importance, and we act straightaway and without reflection. Sometimes this is to our deep regret: "How could I have lashed out so blindly? Why was I not cool enough to see all the reasons that counted against my taking revenge then, in that self-destructive way?" But sometimes it is to our advantage. In a flash we see a threat, and just as quickly we respond.

These remarks suggest a way of cashing out the thought that emotional rationality is practical rationality: emotional rationality is the rationality of good practical perception. More precisely:

An emotion E in situation S is rational for agent A if and only if E enables A to form a rational framing of S.

We should not be troubled by the fact that the word "rational" occurs on both sides of the biconditional. What the proposal amounts to is the suggestion that we view the problem of emotional rationality as part of the larger problem of the rationality of framing, and as will be shown, in the particular case, the rationality of an agent's framing of a choice situation is not determined by whether the agent is experiencing a given emotion. Furthermore, although what constitutes a rational framing may be partly determined by facts about the agent's emotional life (e.g., by the fact that the other is her friend), on any plausible story of the nature of reasons what constitutes a rational framing is determined by a whole lot else besides—what else will become clearer in a moment. For these reasons, there is no problematic circularity, although as things stand the account is uninformative: we have no better handle on what makes for a rational framing than we have on what makes for a rational emotion.

In what follows, I want to make some suggestions about how to go about thinking about the rationality of framing. I will not be able to draw out all, or even most, of the implications of this way of thinking about the rationality of framing and its connection with the rationality of emotions. Instead, to have a manageable task, I focus on the ways in which the account lets us have a richer understanding of the rationality of emotions than the "generates true evaluative belief" model, as well as on how the account captures the grain of truth in the claim that emotions are subjective but does so without abandoning rationality assessment.

Progress can be made regarding the question of what makes a *framing* rational by thinking about what makes a *belief* rational. Although there is disagreement about what makes a belief rational, there's agreement on how to approach the question. You first identify success for a belief and then you ask what would make such success appropriately *nonaccidental*. A belief succeeds if and only if it represents the world as being the way the world actually is, that is, if and only if it is true. Rational beliefs are beliefs such that *if true*, it is no accident that they are

true. Irrational beliefs might still be true and rational beliefs false, but it will be a lucky chance if an irrational belief is true and an unlucky chance if a rational one is false.

This suggests that we begin by asking what makes a framing successful and then identify rational framings as framings that pass a nonaccidentality test such that, if they succeed, it is not a lucky chance that they succeed. Unfortunately, whereas there's a clear answer to what makes a belief successful, there's legitimate dispute about what makes for a successful framing. What I want to argue, though, is that on the least controversial conception of what constitutes a successful framing—a conception that presupposes no more than what Bernard Williams calls "internal reasons"[26]—a successful framing is about more than latching onto considerations that mesh with concerns an agent currently recognizes as valuable. That claim alone is enough to set up the practical problem for arriving at *correct* framings that emotional rationality contributes to solving. The practical problem that, I argue, a rational agent faces is this: she aims to latch onto those considerations that she *should* recognize as reason giving, and yet what she has to go on in achieving this goal is nothing more than her own mechanisms and methods, reliable and otherwise, for detecting these considerations, together with her own best take on what is valuable and her own best take on the limits and liabilities of the methods she uses to work out what considerations matter. The rational agent aims to steer a course between, on the one hand, being closed off to recognizing new considerations as reason giving and, on the other hand, being too willing to recognize such considerations and so running the risk of incontinent or otherwise mistaken deliberation. *Rational* emotions help the agent solve this practical problem. Thus, we can make progress in our understanding of the rationality conditions for emotions even while bracketing the (important) metaphysical and substantive value questions concerning what considerations an agent *ought* to recognize as reason giving and what explains why such considerations ought to be so recognized.

Let's begin building up the picture by asking what a rational agent is trying to do when she faces a choice situation. She is not, I have already claimed, focusing inwardly on her desires, trying to work out what she wants. Instead, she is trying to work out what she *should* want. Her focus is thus outwardly directed toward features in the world. But which features is she interested in? Here's a first answer: insofar as an agent is rational, she is interested in latching onto those features that, in this particular situation, mesh with or answer to concerns she values. She wants all and only such considerations to be salient to her—"all" to be sure that she will not have occasion to regret her choice as having been made in ignorance of some important consideration, and "only" to be sure that her deliberation will not be derailed by considerations that she does not think matter claiming a place among those that will govern her search for an acceptable practical solution. I use the vague terms "mesh with or answer to" as a way of gesturing toward the complicated and open-ended way in which practical concerns (themselves natural features of the world) come to be attached to natural features of the world. Suppose an agent values the well-being of others; then, depending on the situation, she might wish any of the following properties to be salient to her and

to engage her motivationally: that he is upset, that he has too many parcels to carry, that he is worried about his mother, and so on. Each of these, and each of the potentially open class of considerations that they illustrate, can be seen as a consideration that would support a helping response.

The suggestion that an agent is trying to latch onto those considerations that answer to valued concerns looks promising: it is able to capture one of the sources of regret that agents feel at having made bad choices. However, there's another important source of regret that it fails to capture, and this failure suggests that we haven't yet adequately characterized what it is the rational agent is trying to do. We regret missing considerations that mesh with our values, but we also regret choosing on the basis of values that we later come to repudiate as misguided and, equally, we regret choosing in ignorance of values. Just as we don't set out to work out what we want, but rather what we should want, we don't content ourselves with interpreting what we *should* want simply in the light of what we *happen* to value.[27] The agent's task is to latch onto those considerations that *really are reason giving* for her in S. That is, she wants to latch onto those considerations that mesh with what she, as a rational agent, *should* value.

If you hold that there are external reasons that agents are rationally required to take into account in their deliberation regardless of whether they in fact care or can be brought to care about the values and concerns that underwrite the reason-givingness of those considerations, then you will think that rational agents should aim at latching onto these external reasons. However, even on the view that what reasons an agent has extend only as far as the reasons she can be brought to care about, beginning from her current motivational set and correcting it by using the resources of practical deliberation, it still follows that a rational agent aims at more than latching onto those considerations that mesh with concerns that she currently has. Williams allows that the resources of practical deliberation are hard to characterize definitively:

> There is an essential indeterminacy in what can be counted a rational deliberative process. Practical reasoning is a heuristic process, and an imaginative one, and there are no fixed boundaries on the continuum from rational thought to inspiration and conversion. To someone who thinks that reasons for action are basically to be understood in terms of the internal model, this is not a difficulty. There is indeed a vagueness about 'A has reason to *phi*', in the internal sense, insofar as the process which could lead from A's present S [motivational set] to his being motivated to *phi* may be more or less ambitiously conceived.[28]

This concession is enough to set up the practical problem that emotional rationality contributes to solving. The rational agent aims to get things right, that is, to latch onto those considerations that she *should* recognize as reason giving. However, her own current understanding of what considerations she should recognize as reason giving is necessarily limited, both on account of failures of perception—of failures, that is, to see which considerations, in a concrete choice situation, mesh with her values—and on account of failures in evaluative judgment.

She needs to remain open to seeing ways in which previously recognized values might be implicated in new situations and to remain open to recognizing new values in the light of her practical experience. Yet she does not wish this openness to lead her into error.

In the light of the fact that the agent aims for something beyond merely latching onto those considerations that mesh with her current values and yet also has reason to be concerned about incontinent or mistaken deliberation, what should we say about the rationality of a framing? Correct framings capture considerations that obtain in the situation and that mesh with concerns that the agent *should* value. As a first pass, then, we can say that rational framings are framings produced by a mechanism or method reliable at latching onto these considerations. Such mechanisms or methods must be reliably keyed to the reason-giving features present in the situation. In contrast, irrational framings are framings that are produced by an unreliable mechanism—a mechanism not keyed to the reason-giving features present in the situation.

Rational emotions are thus emotions that enable an agent to form framings of choice situations that reliably latch onto the considerations that are—in the circumstances—reason giving for her. Irrational emotions, in contrast, are emotions that hinder the agent from perceiving the choice situation aright. (Thus, phobic emotions are paradigms of irrational emotions.) Because emotions structure interpretation and inference through shifts in perception of considerations as reason giving, emotions can help agents become aware of how their values are engaged by a particular choice situation (compassion, for example, highlights considerations that call for a helping response).[29] They can also help agents correct a mistaken evaluative judgment, as when, for example, compassion leads Huck Finn to perceive Jim, a runaway slave, as a human being, a friend, and someone worthy of his help, despite Huck's avowed moral beliefs according to which Jim is property and helping him is depriving his owner of her property rights.[30] Provided that Huck's compassion reliably latches onto reason-giving considerations he ought to recognize—and, as portrayed in the novel, Huck's compassion is indeed reliable—then compassion toward Jim counts as rational, even if it here conflicts with avowed evaluative beliefs.

It turns out that this account of the rationality of framing, and thus of emotion, in terms of reliability at latching onto reason-giving considerations, will have to be refined to cover cases in which the framings are undermined, as can happen, for example, when the agent reasonably believes that the mechanism she is using is not reliable. But I leave this to one side to return to the alternative account of rationality conditions according to which an emotion E in situation S will be rational for agent A if and only if E nonaccidentally contributes to A's being able to arrive at or to confirm *true evaluative beliefs*. Recall that, like my preferred account, this alternative account exploits the parallel between the kind of shaping of interpretation and inference that is characteristic of emotions on a quasi-perceptual account of them with similar shapings of the mental terrain found, for example, in a scientist's induction into a research paradigm. Such shapings create bias in interpretation and inference, but in other areas we recognize such biasing as

rational when it contributes to the ability to "see the world aright." Both models accept this general-level description of the rationality conditions of emotions: where they differ is in how they cash out "aright," with the alternative model cashing this out in terms of reliably generating true evaluative beliefs, and my preferred model in terms of reliably latching on to reason-giving considerations. It turns out, however, that the two models are not extensionally equivalent; furthermore, I argue that the model that focuses on latching onto reasons offers a richer account of the rationality conditions for emotions and is one that recognizes their role in shaping motivation, as well as in shaping cognition.

The two models are best compared and contrasted by using some examples. The examples have two additional benefits: they let me bring out how my account responds to the objection that emotions are so subjective, so tied to particular facts about an agent's biography, that we can only talk of understandability and not of rationality; and they let me say something about the different dimensions of emotional evaluation and how we can see those dimensions as connected together.

Let's start with a trio of suspicion cases. Three women, Amy, Bethany, and Chandra each experience exactly similar encounters with Peter. Most people think Peter is charming, and indeed he is. But he is that sort of manipulative charmer who is, for some women, a hazard. In short, he is sleazy and would have a reputation were he not new in town. Amy, Bethany, and Chandra are each, in some degree, vulnerable to such men. That is, they would not find it amusing to try to out-manipulate a manipulator but would be harmed in some degree by an intimate friendship with such a person. All three value avoiding psychological harm, and presumably, any substantive account of the nature of reasons would include the avoidance of such harms among the considerations that an agent ought to take into account in her deliberation. Thus the cases do not introduce the complications that arise from allowing that the agent is trying to do more than latch onto considerations that mesh with concerns she currently values.

Peter's charms do not work on Amy, Bethany, or Chandra. They all react to them with wary suspicion—they feel that he isn't trustworthy. Amy, it turns out, is a genuine tracker of untrustworthiness in these sorts of contexts. Here's why: she has had the opportunity to watch her older brother, who is exactly like Peter. Perhaps she can't quite say why her brother and Peter are alike, but something in Peter's manner suggests a similarity. Immediately, she views Peter through the lens of her suspicion. She becomes attuned to the things in his manner that indicate that he is untrustworthy, forms the evaluative judgment that he is, and takes herself to have reason to avoid him. Both the models generate the answer that her emotion is rational: it reliably produces true evaluative belief, and it is no mere lucky chance that her emotion lets her latch onto the reason-giving features that are present for her in the situation.

Unlike Amy, Bethany and Chandra are not reliable trackers of untrustworthiness in this domain. Both return too many false positives to count as reliable. Bethany tends to be a suspicious person across a range of domains of interaction, both intimate and otherwise. We can tell a story about how this came to be so:

her parents were rather cold and untrusting people (and, if we like, we can tell another story about how her parents came to be like this—we could even tell a story in which their lack of trust was rational; but let's leave that to one side). Bethany's emotion is not keyed to features in the situation. What explains her response are facts, *not* about her situation, but about her. (In contrast, what explains Amy's response are facts about Amy—her history and the abilities it has honed—together with facts about the situation.) Bethany's suspicion has been insulated from confrontation with evidence that could undermine it: indeed, she seldom sees such evidence because, being a suspicious person, she interprets what might be evidence against her suspicion through the lens of her suspicion. She thus finds it difficult to form the kind of intimate relationships that might provide her with lessons in trusting, even though this is something she very much wants. Bethany forms the evaluative belief that Peter is not to be trusted as a result of interpreting his manner through the lens of her suspicion. As the case is described, it should be obvious that Bethany's suspicion is not rational. It is *apt*, since we are supposing that Peter really is untrustworthy, but it is only accidental that the emotion fits the evoking situation. Were Peter not sleazy, Bethany would still have responded to him with wary suspicion. Both my model and the "reliably produces true evaluative belief" model return the verdict that the emotion is irrational, and both models are surely right on this.

Now consider Chandra. Like Bethany, Chandra is not a reliable tracker of untrustworthiness in this domain. She doesn't invariably find men, or charming men, untrustworthy, but she returns too many false positives to count as a reliable detector of untrustworthiness. Here's why: Chandra is a survivor of sexual abuse and, as is quite common among survivors, tends to be quick to read sexual overtones into encounters in which others find no such overtones. However, as a result of this experience, Chandra is also exceptionally vulnerable to being manipulated and will suffer great psychological harm if she is. Chandra thus cannot afford false negatives in this domain. This is what separates her from both Amy and Bethany, who are only ordinarily vulnerable to men like Peter. Chandra provides the test case that lets us separate the two accounts of rationality conditions. Suppose Chandra, like Amy and Bethany, views Peter through the lens of suspicion and comes to form the belief that he is untrustworthy. The belief is formed by an unreliable mechanism: her emotion, like Bethany's is apt, but on the "reliably produces true evaluative belief" model of emotional rationality it is not rational. On the "rational framing" model, however, the emotion is rational. That is, her suspicion—though not reliable at producing beliefs about trustworthiness—does *reliably* latch onto considerations that ought to figure as reasons in her framing of this situation. How so? Given Chandra's vulnerability, Chandra has reasons that Bethany doesn't share. Chandra has a reason to avoid someone if there is a real, albeit small *possibility* that he is manipulative. Her suspicion, we are supposing, is keyed to *this* reason-giving feature, although it is also leading her to have false beliefs about trustworthiness.

Chandra's suspicion, we are supposing, is not distorting her perception of the *other* reasons that obtain for her in a situation. Her suspicion is hair-triggered but

not invariably triggered. If it were, she would see reasons for self-protection when there weren't any and she would be disabled from seeing possibilities for intimate (and even ordinary) friendships when they existed. Bethany's suspicion, in contrast, is distorting—it prevents her from forming relationships that she would very much like. It is true that, in the case of Peter, her suspicion protects her, but she purchases that protection at a price it is not rational for her to pay since she does not have a reason to avoid somebody if there's only a small possibility that he is manipulative.[31]

Let's use these examples to return to the objection that emotions are so tied to the biography of the subject that the very enterprise of trying to talk about their rationality conditions is muddle-headed. This objection just conflates biographical subjectivity—that is, the fact that what emotions someone will experience in response to a situation is a function of her past affective experience—with epistemic subjectivity, or the idea that there can be no standards for assessment and that at most we can find emotions understandable (for an agent) or not.[32] The examples show that this objection is confused. The biographies of the three characters do indeed explain why they experience the emotional response that they do, when others similarly situated might not. But those biographies also contribute to explaining who has a rational emotion and why the emotion counts as rational. Past experience makes for reliable or unreliable affective mechanisms. And past experience makes for differing vulnerabilities and thus for differences in the reasons that the agents have, where such reasons follow from facts about that vulnerability. In this set of examples, the agents shared common ends (avoidance of psychological harm). Our next pair of examples show how biography affects the rationality of emotions through its influence on the ends that the agent has. But again, such influence is seen to be compatible with rationality assessment.

Consider two fathers, each with a standing emotion (i.e., an emotion of long duration) of grief at the loss of his child. Let us suppose that, with respect to their loss, they are similarly situated: both children were young, both deaths unexpected. Both deaths occurred a year ago, and so the first acute pain of grief has faded to standing but not yet to dispositional grief. Both men have correct evaluative beliefs about their situation—the loss resulting from death is irreparable, to die when so young is unfair, and to never again see their child is more than can be withstood. Their tendency to see the world through the lens of their loss only serves to confirm these evaluative beliefs. It reaffirms the permanence of the loss and the importance and wonderfulness of the person lost. The difference between the fathers is this: one lost his only child, the other is father to two more children. Both parents' grief is apt, let us agree (if anything merits grief, the early loss of your child does), but for all that, their grief need not be equally rational. Suppose I continue the story like this: the father with two living children is seeking out occasions that call his loss vividly to mind; he is reading situations as instantiating loss or the threat of loss. And this is beginning to affect his other children, who think, rightly, that they can't make up for their sibling's loss, but who are beginning to think that with all the faults of the living they can never win their father's attention and affection. This father's grief contributes to making him unable to

see the reason-giving features that are present for him in virtue of his having other living children. His grief is apt, but he needs to find a different way to grieve. That need not be the case for the now childless father.

The alternative way of cashing out *aright* in terms of generating true evaluative beliefs does not capture a case of this kind, and this is so even if we stretch that model to cover beliefs about the reasons that one has. The grieving father may not form any mistaken *beliefs* about the reasons he has: he may well know that he has reasons to watch out for the well-being of his remaining children. His problem is rather that those reasons tend to get crowded out of his attention, which remains focused on the loss of his dead child. It might be objected that, in cases of this sort, the agent does indeed form mistaken beliefs about the reasons he has, and so these cases can be handled within an extended version of the "generates true evaluative belief" model that takes the beliefs in question to be beliefs about what reasons one has. The grieving father may not be mistaken about his *general* reasons (e.g., that he has reason to look out for the welfare of his remaining children), but he does form mistaken beliefs about his *particular* reasons, that is, about what, all-things-considered he should do here and now. Certainly, grief can lead to mistaken judgments of this kind, but it need not. The agent may be able to form all-things-considered judgments about what he ought to do, but he may find himself unable to act on those judgments: the irrationality of the emotion reveals itself by giving rise to framings that make it difficult for the agent to act on his all-things-considered judgment since competing considerations remain apprehended in a motivationally lively way, thus giving rise to distortions in how the choice situation is framed.

These two sets of examples show, I think, that in searching for the rationality conditions of emotions on a quasi-perceptual account of them, it is preferable to cash out arightness in terms of giving rise to rational practical perception rather than in terms of generating true evaluative beliefs. In addition, they show that the biographical subjectivity of emotions doesn't preclude rationality assessment.

The examples also help us understand the relationship between the account of rationality conditions defended here and the various dimensions of assessment identified in the introduction. The cases of Bethany and the grieving father with children show that it would be a mistake to identify the rationality of emotions with aptness; aptness may be accidental in a way that precludes rationality (Bethany), and in any case we look for more than nonaccidental aptness when we look for rational emotions (the grieving father). Of the theorists who have advanced quasi-perceptual accounts of the emotions, Ronald de Sousa is the only one to have attempted to give an account of their rationality conditions, and he identifies rationality with aptness: "true irrationality of an emotion involves the perception of a situation in terms of a scenario which it does not *objectively* resemble, in such cases we are well advised to see unconscious links and transformation rules that have turned one situation into another."[33] De Sousa's account of the rationality of emotions focuses on "fit" between the emotion and evoking situation at the expense of focusing on how such fit came about. Thus, accidental aptness appears to meet his criterion for rationality. Perhaps his reason for focusing on aptness is

that "paying attention to certain things is a source of reasons, but comes before them";[34] and thus, since emotions are constituted by patterns of attention, emotions must come before reasons and so must not be subject to the "backward-looking" requirements of evidence or reliability. However, whether patterns of attention are rational depends, I have argued, on the etiology of such patterns and, thus, whether following up on them is likely or unlikely to reveal to us features of the world. An account like mine, which focuses on the distinctive contribution of affective cognitive sets to the perception of reason-giving features is more consistent with the intuitions behind a quasi-perceptual account and avoids confusing rationality with aptness.

What should we say about the dimension of strategic wisdom? Some accounts of rationality conditions reduce this dimension to fulfilling ego needs or to bringing the agent happiness. Such a reduction ignores altogether the role of evidence and reliability in the rationality of emotions. If all that matters is strategic wisdom understood in terms of fulfilling ego needs or producing happiness, then we can—*rationally*—feel whatever it is that will make us feel good. Although recognizing a role for something like strategic wisdom, my account does not reduce it to mere ego fulfillment, nor does it consider it an entirely independent dimension of assessment to be used in calculating (additively, perhaps?) the rationality of an emotion. Consider Chandra and the grieving father: what made Chandra's emotion rational was the cost to her of a false negative; what made the father's emotion irrational was the way it interfered with his ability to meet his other obligations. Rational framings will be framings that recognize the reason-giving considerations grounded in an agent's other ends. Deliberation based on rational framings will therefore be deliberation able to further such ends (in most cases; we can go wrong here). However, an emotion is not made rational just in virtue of it's being able to further the agent's ends. It must also pass a reliability test, though the reliability test is not that of generating true evaluative beliefs but rather of generating rational framings. Because such framings involve perception of considerations as reason giving and reasons are forward-looking insofar as they serve to justify action, my account incorporates something like a forward-looking dimension into the rationality assessment of emotions.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the biographical subjectivity of emotions and its implications for the possibility of assessing emotions as appropriate, see Cheshire Calhoun, "Subjectivity and Emotion," *Philosophical Forum* 10 (1989): 195–210.

2. For this distinction between reasonableness and aptness, see Patricia Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons: An Inquiry into Emotional Justification* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 83–85.

3. For example, being both prone to anger and willing to display one's anger can alter one's adversaries' expected utilities by increasing the anticipated cost of their non-compliance. For this argument and references to the larger literature, see Robert Frank, *Passions Within Reason* (New York: Norton, 1988).

4. Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 315–317; Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 184–198; A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 412; Robert C. Solomon, "Emotions and Choice," in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 277–278; and Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday, 1976), 191.

5. Theorists not persuaded by the merits of the preferred account can nonetheless take away the following lessons: (1) any account of the rationality of emotions needs to engage seriously with work on the rationality of deliberation; (2) any account of the rationality of emotions must recognize the constraints inherent in the best account of what emotions are.

6. Solomon, "Emotions and Choice," 258.

7. Solomon, *Passions*, 191.

8. I do not mean to claim that Solomon ignores the constraint, rather that the account he gives is not in fact compatible with it. In the appendix to "Emotions and Choice" (276–278), Solomon identifies the inference that would defend the move from emotions being judgments to their being subject to forward-looking rationality assessment. The missing premise is that judgments, being things we make, are things we do and therefore actions of a kind. From thus it would follow that they can be subject to forward-looking assessment. It is this inference, however, that I find implausible.

9. Furthermore, the account offers one way of explicating the slogan since the beliefs in question display a mistake in practical reason.

10. Cheshire Calhoun, "Cognitive Emotions?" in *What Is an Emotion? Classic Readings in Philosophical Psychology*, ed. Cheshire Calhoun and Robert Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Ronald de Sousa, "The Rationality of Emotions," in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, "Explaining Emotions," in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

11. For discussions of the role of affect in cognition and references to the larger literature on this topic, see Joseph Forgas, ed., *Feeling and Thinking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

12. Calhoun, "Cognitive Emotions?" 340; and de Sousa, *Rationality of Emotion*, 197.

13. For a discussion of the role of the "low-road" fear system in focusing attention, see Joseph Le Doux, *The Emotional Brain* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). There's evidence that not all responses that folk psychology labels fear are subserved by the same neurophysiological systems. A quasi-perceptual account of the emotions is thus committed to disputing Paul Griffith's account, in *What Emotions Really Are* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), of how to divide emotions into kinds: emotions are to be classified into kinds according to characteristic patterns of cognition and

motivation. Because these patterns of cognition and motivation are fundamentally *practical* orientations toward the world, emotions constitute what might be called practical kinds.

14. Quasi-perceptual accounts need not be committed to the view that such interpretations invariably involve the agent's entertaining thoughts that contain evaluative concepts—sometimes the fact that the evoking situation is interpreted in evaluative terms may reveal itself in the *pattern* of thoughts that the agent has about the situation. It may be up to interpreters to discern this pattern. Thus, to use an example from Calhoun, "Cognitive Emotions?," a woman may see her partner as a "manipulative exploiter" without those concepts figuring into her thinking; she may instead tend to dwell on the amount of free time he has compared with the amount she has, on the fact that he *never* vacuums, and so on. We see the unity or pattern in these tendencies to entertain thoughts when we subsume the case under the evaluative term "exploitative."

15. Thus quasi-perceptual accounts are able better to account for phobic emotions than are judgmentalist accounts, which require attributing to the agent inconsistent evaluative beliefs. See ibid., and Patricia Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons*, 83–85.

16. For a related case but without tracking, see Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons*, 5–11, on intuitive suspicion and the salesman.

17. For a summary of this empirical work on statistical reasoning, see Alvin Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 307–311.

18. This analogy is proposed by Ronald de Sousa, "The Rationality of Emotions," 139.

19. For a defense of this claim and its significance for naturalistic epistemology, see Louise Antony, "Quine as Feminist: The Radical Import of Naturalized Epistemology," in *A Mind of One's Own*, ed. Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1993).

20. I take this to be a key insight of Greenspan's account, *Emotions and Reasons*, of the justification conditions of emotions.

21. Compare Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 121; Philip Pettit and Michael Smith, "Backgrounding Desire," *Philosophical Review* 99 (1990): 565–592; and T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). This claim and, indeed, the rest of the essay, is intended to be neutral with respect to substantive accounts of that in virtue of which a consideration counts, for an agent, as a reason. What it rules out is the thought that the desires that an agent has are, in the typical case, in the forefront of her deliberation, but as becomes clearer in the following section, it says nothing about the relation between an agent's motivational set and whether a reason giving consideration is in fact reason giving for her.

22. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, 46–47, observes that the class of consideration that comes to be on an agent's "deliberative agenda" is limited relative to the class of considerations that could engage the agent.

23. Both John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *Monist* 62 (1979): 331–350; and Barbara Herman, "Agency, Attachment and Difference," *Ethics* 101 (1991): 775–797, defend accounts that provide alternatives to a weighing model of deliberation. I need claim nothing as strong as a silencing model, however. It is enough if deliberation *seeks* to come up with an action option that respects all reason-giving considerations that are present.

24. The concept of the starting points of deliberation assigns a conceptual, rather

than a temporal, priority to the selection of considerations as reason giving. For example, if deliberation is unable to arrive at an action option that respects all the reason-giving considerations that the agent takes to be relevant, the agent might revisit the question of which considerations belong in the starting points of deliberation.

25. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, "Where Does the Akratic Break Take Place?" *Mind in Action: Essays in the Philosophy of Mind* (Boston: Beacon, 1988).

26. Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

27. Compare Richard Moran, "Making Up Your Mind: Self-Interpretation and Self-Constitution," *Ratio* 1 (1988): 135–151. What the claim amounts to is that the rational agent's practical question of working out what she wants is transparent to the theoretical question of working out what there is best reason to want. One question is transparent to another just in case one cannot answer the first without thereby doing what one would need to do in order to answer the second.

28. Williams, "Internal and External Reasons."

29. For a defense of this claim, see Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

30. For a discussion of ways of resolving the conflict between compassion and bad moral theory, as well as of the Huck Finn case, see Jonathan Bennett, "The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn," *Philosophy* 49 (1974): 123–134.

31. It is worth briefly comparing the verdicts of this account of emotional rationality with that offered by Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons*, with which it bears some similarity. According to Greenspan, an emotion is comfort or discomfort directed at an evaluative thought. Comfort or discomfort give spurs to action and thus provides the agent with reasons to act *additional* to those contained within the evaluative thought. The evaluative thought is the internal object of the emotion, and that which the thought is about is the external object of the emotion. An emotion is appropriate (what I'm calling rational) just in case (1) the internal object of the emotion is causally grounded in some significant pattern of perception (85–107) where the threshold for significance is a function of the adaptiveness of the kind of emotion in question; (2) the affective component of the emotion is proportionate to the role of holding the internal object of the emotion in mind. The accounts are not extentionally equivalent: Greenspan does not require that the agent be able to track reasons (85–86). If Bethany, though generally unreliable at detecting untrustworthiness, were to be able to latch onto a property that indicated untrustworthiness on account of some special feature of the situation, then the emotion could count as rational, even though in general her emotional responses prevent her from tracking her reasons (86). The account thus does not capture the thought that rational emotions enable an agent to *navigate* according to her reasons. On my preferred model, emotions' distinctive contribution to the agent's practical rationality lies in their ability to enable the agent reliably to latch onto her reasons and thus deliberate and act on the basis of them.

32. For this distinction, see Calhoun, "Subjectivity and Emotion," 195–210.

33. De Sousa, "Rationality of Emotions," 146.

34. Ibid., 139.

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