

Finally, emotions share certain characteristics with states that are similar, but arguably not emotions themselves. Here I am thinking of states like moods, such as depression or anxiety or listlessness, and other states – like physical pleasures and pains – that have a distinctive feeling but which are perhaps only metaphorically termed emotional. Sometimes the distinctions will not be hard and fast: certain forms of anxiety appear to be rather close to fear. At other times the distinctions will be more obvious: a feeling of coldness isn't an emotional response, even though it might well generate one (e.g. of misery and unhappiness about standing at the bus stop for ages).

With these complications in mind, let us turn to some of the most popular theories of emotion, the reasons that some people have given for finding them plausible, and reasons that others have given for thinking them otherwise.

## 1.4 THREE THEORIES OF EMOTION

### 1.4.1 FEELING THEORIES

Emotions and feelings seem very closely linked – so closely, in fact, that some are tempted to *identify* emotions with feelings. After all, when we talk about our emotions we often mean to talk about our feelings, and vice versa: if I say that I am angry with you, this is understood to mean that I feel angry with you; if you say that you feel guilty about your behaviour, I take this to mean that you are guilty about your behaviour. If we are asked, moreover, to describe our emotions, and respond by describing how we are feeling, that answer is taken to be perfectly appropriate. By the same token, the question 'how are you feeling?' is understood to be a question about one's emotional state, rather than about one's current experiences of temperature or touch. Our language might therefore suggest that emotions and feelings are identical. So too might reflecting on our assessments of emotions as negative or positive. Shame, for instance, is clearly a negative emotion; and the obvious reason why it is a negative emotion is that shame *feels* bad. Joy, on the other hand, is a positive emotion, and here too the reason seems obvious: joy feels good.

The best-known proponent of the idea that emotions are identical with feelings is the nineteenth-century American psychologist

William James. (He developed his view at the same time as a Danish psychologist called Carl Lange proposed, independently, a very similar account. The resulting theory is often known as the James–Lange view.) In a famous paper from 1884 in the journal *Mind*, called 'What is an emotion?', James proposed a provocative and very influential answer: emotions are identical with the feelings or perceptions of certain bodily changes. The answer was provocative because it completely reversed the traditional view of emotion that was widely accepted to that point. On the traditional account, emotions are psychological states that occur once we perceive some object or event, and which then cause certain bodily changes to occur. These bodily changes – often referred to as visceral changes, referring to that particular location in the body – prepare the subject to act appropriately in response to the object or event. Consider, to illustrate, an instance of fear: as the time of the judge's sentencing approaches, I come to feel afraid, and this state of fear motivates certain bodily reactions – such as increased heart-rate, rapid breathing, sweating, trembling, and the like. The traditional view has it that emotions are psychological states that occur between a perception of some event (the judge's sentencing) and bodily reaction (trembling, etc.)

James argues that this is entirely the wrong way around. He writes: 'My thesis, on the contrary, is that the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion' (James 1884: 189). On his view, the bodily changes occur directly upon perceiving the object or event, and it is our feeling of these changes that is the emotion. The emotion doesn't come before the feeling of bodily changes, therefore. Instead, the feeling of bodily changes is the emotion itself. As James puts it, 'we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble' (ibid.: 190).

This was – and perhaps still is – a rather radical view. Indeed, James himself thought that 'the hypothesis is pretty sure to meet with immediate disbelief' (ibid.: 190). Nevertheless, he thought that there were very good reasons to believe that it is true, and that we ought to accept it, in spite of its radical nature. One argument that James gives – an argument that is supported by more recent empirical work – is that humans are biologically predisposed to

react with certain emotions when they perceive certain objects, without any intervening psychological states occurring. He writes:

The love of man for woman, or of the human mother for her babe, or wrath at snakes and our fear of precipices, may all be described ... as instances of the way in which peculiarly conformed pieces of the world's furniture will fatally call forth most particular mental and bodily reactions, in advance of, and often in direct opposition to, the verdict of our deliberative reason concerning them.

(James 1884: 190)

The thought is that perceptions of various pieces of the 'world's furniture' such as snakes or precipices will quickly and automatically generate bodily reactions, as a result of biological adaptation, which are then felt by the subject as they occur. Such feelings do not therefore occur prior to the bodily reactions, as the traditional view supposes, but are instead feelings of those bodily reactions. Moreover, there is good reason that nature has set things up in this way: creatures that respond quickly and automatically to potential threats have an adaptive advantage over creatures that need to deliberate and work out whether something in the vicinity is in fact dangerous. The additional time needed to do the latter increases the chances that the creature will succumb to the threat and not survive. So an effective fear mechanism might very well be one that operates by causing the bodily changes that motivate an appropriate behavioural response – to flee or fight – rather than one that requires a separate psychological state to occur prior to any bodily reaction. (Contemporary psychology and neuroscience provides good support for this account: see Ekman 2003 and LeDoux 1996, for example.)

A second argument suggests that feelings of bodily change are at the very least *necessary* for emotion, such that we couldn't have an emotion without such feelings. James writes:

If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its characteristic bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind, no 'mind-stuff' out of which the emotion can be constituted, and that a cold and neutral state of intellectual perception is all that remains.

(James 1884: 193)

James here presents us with a thought-experiment, and one which you might try right now. Imagine yourself in a state of rage, and think of how that feels: your muscles are tense, your brow is furrowed, your teeth clenched, your heart is racing, your breathing is short. Now 'imagine away' each of these bodily states in turn: think of your muscles relaxing, your brow smoothing, your teeth unclenching, your heart-rate returning to normal, your breathing becoming calm. All of the characteristic bodily changes associated with rage are no longer present. Do you still have the emotion? James thinks that the answer is clearly 'no'. (What do you think?) We might still have the thoughts associated with rage – that the waiter was rude, the remark offensive, the driver an idiot, the outcome unfair – but we are no longer in the emotional state. Take away the feelings of bodily change and you take away the emotion itself.

A final argument James gives – perhaps more a number of considerations that are suggestive of a conclusion than an argument in itself – is to highlight the ways in which bringing about bodily changes will influence and modulate emotion. This might support the idea that feelings of bodily change are *sufficient* for emotional experience – for perhaps one can generate emotion simply by generating the bodily changes. Everyday experience supports the idea that modifying our body and behaviour can change our emotions: which is why we are advised to count to ten and calm our body down in order to modulate our anger, or why flight attendants are instructed to smile at passengers, so that they can regulate feelings of irritation generated by long-term exposure to the general public. (If you think that the flight attendant smiles at you because he or she likes you, you might want to think again. Perhaps you are just an unusually annoying passenger.) James puts the point about modulating emotion in this way better than I ever could:

Sit all day in a moping posture, sigh, and reply to everything with a dismal voice, and your melancholy lingers ... Smooth the brow, brighten the eye, contract the dorsal rather than the ventral aspect of the frame, and speak in a major key, pass the genial compliment, and your heart must be frigid indeed if it does not gradually thaw!

(James 1884: 198)

Such arguments are, nevertheless, subject to various criticisms. Perhaps it is true that certain 'basic' emotions are automatically and rapidly generated without anything in the way of thought, or any other psychological intervention. But the majority of emotions are not like this. Certain forms of fear require reflection and thought in order to be generated, and so are clearly not biological adaptations. Think, for example, of the dread you feel upon realizing that you have sent the highly irreverent and deeply insulting message to the wrong 'Tony' in your address book – to Principal Tony, in fact, rather than best-mate Tony. We're not biologically disposed to respond with dread to *that* kind of thing. Here it seems as though a good deal of psychological architecture needs to be in place in order for someone to have the appropriate bodily reaction.

Nor is James's 'subtraction' argument immune from worries. The idea that by imagining away feelings of bodily change we imagine away the emotion itself relies on the idea that our introspection about our emotions is infallible – such that if it seems to us that we are not emotional (having imagined away all feelings of bodily change), then we cannot be emotional. But why think this? Often introspection is unreliable as a guide to our emotions – witness the Hollywood cliché of the protagonists, who honestly profess to intense dislike of each other, actually turning out to be in love. Some people – Freud, for instance – think that it is perfectly possible for us to have unfelt or subconscious emotions, which are by definition not available to introspection. You don't have to be the founder of psychoanalysis to believe that someone might be in an emotional state and yet be introspectively unaware of this. Suppose, after a blazing row, you think that you have calmed down, are no longer angry, and honestly profess to your partner that this is the case. Your behaviour might, nevertheless, give them a good indication that you are, in fact, still angry – unbeknownst to you, but still true. This surely happens: we think that we are over the love affair, are no longer ashamed of our behaviour, honestly believe that the person is trustworthy, profess to being genuinely happy that the in-laws are visiting; and yet our behaviour gives the lie to our appraisals of how things stand with us emotionally. If so, then we can be emotional, even if it seems to us that feelings of bodily change have all receded and only a cold intellectual judgement remains.

Suppose that the supporter of the feeling theory can respond to these worries. Does this mean that there is good reason for us to accept the view? Unfortunately for James and his supporters, the answer is 'no'. Even if there are no problems with James's *arguments*, there might nevertheless be convincing reasons to object to James's *claim* that emotions are identical to feelings of bodily change. Here are some of them. The physiologist Walter Cannon (1927) pointed out that there can be emotions without feelings of bodily change, because there can be cases where any connection between the relevant parts of the body (the viscera) and the brain has been destroyed, and yet emotional experience remained. Cannon cited experiments where animals continued to display emotional behaviour – and so, we might assume, had the emotions – and yet couldn't be experiencing feelings of bodily change, given that the relevant connections had been destroyed.

A second criticism, again made popular by Cannon (*ibid.*), is that bodily/visceral changes are too simple and uniform to be able to capture the wide variety of emotions and emotional experiences. One way to make this point is to note that the same bodily changes occur in different emotions – such as fear and rage – and also non-emotional states generated by exposure to cold or asphyxia. If so, then these bodily changes will clearly be insufficient for the existence of some particular emotion like fear. Whatever distinguishes fear and rage from one another, and from cold/asphyxia, will have to be some *other* element – in which case feelings of bodily change do not suffice for emotion.

This kind of consideration is further supported by a famous experiment by the psychologists Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer, which was the basis for a 1962 paper called 'Cognitive, Social, and Physiological Determinants of the Emotional State'. Schachter and Singer maintained that emotions involve feelings of bodily changes *and* cognitive interpretations of those feelings. In their words:

An emotional state may be considered a function of a state of physiological arousal and of a cognition appropriate to this state of arousal ... It is the cognition which determines whether the state of physiological arousal will be labelled as 'anger', 'joy' ... or whatever.

(Schachter & Singer 1962: 380)

They thought that feelings of bodily or physiological arousal *alone* were insufficient for emotion. In order to show this, they set up an experiment where feelings of bodily change that are associated with certain emotions were induced, but where the subject's beliefs or information about such changes varied. In the experiment, 184 students were told that they were being given a drug to improve their vision. Some of them were injected with adrenaline, others with saline solution. The former caused autonomic arousal (increased heartbeat, rapid breathing, increased blood flow to muscles and brain) while the latter had no effect. Some control subjects were told what to expect of the drug, while the others were not.

The subjects were then split into two rooms. In the first, they were seated with someone who was displaying playful behaviour – basically messing around and playing the fool. This person was, unbeknown to the subjects, part of the experimental team, and so a 'stooge'. Another stooge was in the second room, only this person was displaying angry behaviour – getting increasingly irate about an insulting questionnaire the subjects had to complete. After a while, subjects left the room and were asked to describe the emotions that they were feeling. The interesting finding was that subjects who were *not* told about the effects of the drug self-reported happy or angry emotions, and behaved happily or angrily, depending on the room that they were in. The control subjects, and those injected with saline solution, had much less of a response. Schachter and Singer concluded, on the basis of the difference in self-reports and behaviour in the non-control group, that 'given a state of physiological arousal for which an individual has no immediate explanation, he will "label" this state and describe his feelings in terms of the cognitions available to him' (Schachter & Singer 1962: 381). In other words: subjects will *interpret* their bodily feelings in terms of the situation as they saw it – in this case, as calling for happiness or anger – and come to feel the appropriate emotions. This suggested that physiological arousal alone was not enough for emotion – because those who were told about the effects of the drug tended not to feel the emotion – but that physiological arousal *plus* an interpretation of one's 'evaluative situation' does suffice for an emotional response. Each element is necessary, and jointly sufficient, for emotion.

The criticisms raised by Cannon need not be devastating to the feeling theory; its supporters have a number of things to say in

response. And Schachter and Singer's experiment has been subject to a raft of criticisms, and so it would be unwise to take this as a decisive refutation of James. However, a third kind of criticism does seem to be genuinely problematic for the feeling theory, and has inclined many thinkers to believe that the feeling theory cannot be correct. This is the idea that the feeling theory cannot capture what is known as the *intentionality* of emotion.

We saw earlier that theories of emotion are to be judged on whether they can capture or accommodate certain agreed features of emotion: the fact, for instance, that emotions feel a certain way, that they are connected to action, that they have effects on attention and memory, etc. One feature that we have not mentioned to this point, but which seems central to our understanding of the concept, is that emotions are *about* certain things; to use the rather technical philosophical terminology, emotions have *intentionality*. In one sense, this is the idea that emotions have *certain things* – objects or events – as their 'target'. So, for instance, when I'm disappointed about not getting the part in the play, then not getting the part is what my disappointment is about. This is the 'target' or 'intentional object' of my disappointment. Or when I'm overjoyed at winning the lottery, then winning the lottery is what my joy is about. This is the 'target' or 'intentional object' of my joy. However, emotions are intentional – they are about things – in another sense. To see this, note that there seem to be certain constraints or restrictions on our emotional experience: we cannot, for instance, be proud of just anything. Suppose I say, quite seriously, that I am proud of nickel plating. You might be understandably puzzled by my statement, and want to know more. Did my ancestors, or researchers at my university, invent nickel plating? Is nickel plating something that emerged from where I grew up in Manchester? Do I think that nickel plating has magical life-saving powers that I have granted the alloy? Or what? Suppose that no kind of positive answer to such questions is forthcoming. You might then rightly conclude that whatever warm feeling I profess to get when thinking about nickel plating, it just isn't, and nor can it be, pride. This is because there are certain *logical* constraints on an appropriate object of pride – as Errol Bedford pointed out in a famous paper called 'Emotions' (Bedford 1957). To be proud of something, you must in some sense think that it is valuable or an

achievement. It must, moreover, be a value or achievement that is in some sense related to you. As Gabriele Taylor (1985) puts it, and as we'll see in Chapter 4 when we return to look at the emotion of pride in more detail, there must be some relation of 'belonging' to a person in place, and where this is taken to reflect well on me. The second way in which pride, and other emotions, have intentionality is captured by the idea that they are about *evaluative features* of the objects or events that constitute their targets. So pride is about 'something valuable that belongs to me and where this relation of belonging reflects well on me'. This is what is known as the 'formal object' of pride. Of course, we don't explicitly *think* or rehearse these thoughts when we feel pride. Nevertheless, we must in some sense regard the object in this way, if it is pride that we are feeling. So pride involves an *appraisal* or an *evaluation* of the object under these descriptions.

What is true of pride is true of other emotions: the formal object of fear is danger or threat; the formal object of guilt is our own *moral wrongdoing*; the formal object of jealousy is potential infidelity; anger is about some wrong that others have done us; joy is about good things that are or that happen; disappointment is about violated expectations; and so on for the whole range of emotions. And we need to appeal to the 'formal object' of emotion – what it is about – in order to distinguish emotions from each other. Even though fear and rage feel quite similar, they have different formal objects, and embody different appraisals or evaluations: fear involves an appraisal of danger or threat, while rage involves an appraisal of serious wrong or insult. Emotions are to be distinguished, therefore, in part because of their intentional or formal structure. This is something that Schachter and Singer also recognize, with their talk of the necessity for an 'interpretation' of one's evaluative situation. The central worry for feeling theories is that they cannot explain or accommodate the idea that emotions have an intentional structure or involve evaluations. This is because bodily feelings are not the kinds of things that are subject to *logical* constraints, nor the kinds of things that are *about* our environment in the way that our thinking about emotions suggests. Visceral changes are not subject to logical laws, any more than a headache or a bout of indigestion is. We don't say that someone cannot be feeling indigestion, because they haven't over-eaten or haven't

eaten rich foods or haven't eaten at all. By the same token, we don't say that someone cannot be suffering a headache because they have suffered no damage or injury to their head. Feelings *happen* in response to *causes*, fair enough; but this kind of causal relationship is not a logical relationship and is not subject to logical constraints. As a result, the feeling theory cannot capture one of the central features that emotions are supposed to have. This has led many people to look elsewhere for a plausible theory of emotion.

#### 1.4.3 COGNITIVE THEORIES

We have seen that feelings are not the kinds of things that can be logically connected with objects and their evaluative properties in this way. So if emotions *are* subject to logical constraints, they must be the kinds of things that can enter into logical relations; and here the obvious candidate is *cognition*. It is quite difficult to say precisely what cognition is, but in rough terms it refers to both a process that centrally involves thinking, and the products of that process – typically, a mental state or attitude like a belief or a judgement. The idea behind cognitive theories of emotion are that emotions must involve some such cognitive element: they must be *thoughts*, as well as (or instead of) feelings.

The best known cognitive theory is *judgementalism*, which, as the name suggests, holds that the relevant cognitive element is a judgement. And the best known versions of this view are those developed, respectively, by Robert Solomon and Martha Nussbaum. Solomon writes

emotions are judgements – normative and often moral judgements. 'I am angry at John' for taking ... my car entails that I believe that John has somehow wronged me. The (moral) judgement entailed by my anger is not a judgement *about* my anger ... My anger is that judgement.

(Solomon 2003: 8)

But judgements, in Solomon's sense, are not simple propositional attitudes like beliefs. Instead, he holds that the judgements constitutive of emotion are:

- a particular kind of act, rather than acceptance of a proposition;
- systems of judgements, not single judgements;
- essentially tied to desire;
- dispassionate only in 'pathological or philosophical circumstances' (Solomon 1988: 184).

This kind of judgementalism thus identifies the emotion with one of the components introduced earlier. Solomon thinks that feelings are typically present, indeed might always be present; but it is judgement that is central.

Martha Nussbaum has developed a different version of judgementalism, grounded in Stoic thinking. Nussbaum thinks that 'what distinguishes fear from hope, love from grief, hate from hate – is not so much the identity of the object, which might not change, but the way the object is perceived: in fear, as a threat ... in grief, as lost' (Nussbaum 2001: 28). For Nussbaum, these ways of seeing are constituted by (often very complex) sets of evaluative beliefs about the objects. They differ from cold, intellectual judgements because they are grounded in things we care about. This makes the relevant judgements 'dynamic and not static':

when I grieve, I do not first of all coolly embrace the proposition 'My wonderful mother is dead' and then set about grieving. No, the real, complete recognition of that terrible event ... is the upheaval ... Knowing can be violent, given the truths that are there to be known.

(Nussbaum 2004: 194–195)

On judgementalist accounts, therefore, we can identify the emotion with a judgement, understood as a complex network of propositional attitudes. This network is itself passionate and tied to desire, and so essentially motivational. Judgementalism has, however, been subject to a raft of criticisms. One criticism is that evaluative judgements are not sufficient for emotion, because one can hold or make the relevant judgement and not experience the emotion. Thus I might judge that my behaviour was reprehensible but not feel ashamed, or judge that my partner is unfaithful but not feel jealous. This criticism might not be devastating, since judgementalists like Solomon and Nussbaum can (and do) say that the mere acceptance of the fact that one's behaviour was reprehensible

falls short of the kind of complex and dynamic judgement that is to be identified with emotion. Just as 'saying the words' doesn't always constitute a genuine apology, so accepting that one's behaviour was reprehensible doesn't always constitute an emotional judgement.

However, there is one particular criticism that has had genuine traction against judgementalism, and is generated by the phenomenon of *recalcitrant emotions*. These are cases where a subject experiences some emotion while having a judgement that appears to conflict with this. Such emotions are relatively common: you've experienced a recalcitrant emotion if you have ever been afraid of a house spider that you know to be harmless, or felt jealousy even though you know your partner would never cheat, or felt anger at unintentionally slow-walking pedestrians, or experienced fear of flying while knowing that it is the safest form of mass transport, or had any phobic reaction to the number 13, buttons, clowns, or the colour yellow. These experiences cause problems for any form of judgementalism. For the judgementalist will have to say that in these cases we make and hold *conflicting judgements*: we both judge that the spider is harmless and judge the spider is dangerous; that our partner would never cheat and that there is a chance that she will be unfaithful; that the pedestrians are not wronging you and that they are; and so on. Such contradictory judgements seem, if not impossible, extremely rare. Someone who both judged that house spiders in Scotland are harmless and dangerous would seem to display a highly irrational, indeed an incoherent, evaluative profile. There would be something *seriously* wrong with them. However, and as stated, recalcitrant emotions are commonplace. And even if there is some vague taint of irrationality if someone feels guilty even though they know they have done nothing wrong, they are certainly not incoherent or highly irrational. Since judgementalism cannot easily accommodate the phenomenon of recalcitrant emotions, many think that it ought to be rejected.

This line of argument has inclined some philosophers to adopt a version of cognitivism, but one which holds that the evaluative element or component is not a judgement or even a belief. Thus Patricia Greenspan wants to incorporate the insights behind judgementalism 'into a broader evaluative view, allowing for propositional attitudes that are weaker than strict belief: states of mind, like *imagining* that danger looms, that involve entertaining a

predicative thought without assent' (Greenspan 1988: 3). Since we can imagine things happening that we don't believe happening, this view would seem to allow for recalcitrant emotions. Others, like Robert C. Roberts, appeal to the notion of an evaluative *construal* to capture the intentional aspect of emotion. Like Greenspan, Roberts thinks that construals fall short of judgement or belief. Construals are like appearances or seemings, but also involve some kind of interpretation. A nice example of a construal is what happens in our responses to ambiguous figures – things that can look two ways, like the duck-rabbit figure. We can construe or 'see' the figure in one way, as a duck, but can also construe or 'see' the figure in another way, as a rabbit. Construals are in this sense partly down to the appearance of the figure, and partly down to our choice in interpreting it one way rather than another.

This leads to 'relaxed cognitivism'. On this kind of view, my anger at my colleague's remark is identical to the thought or construal that he has wronged me. Talk of appearances or seemings has, however, suggested to other theorists a different theoretical option. Rather than thinking that emotions are bodily feelings, or cognitive attitudes like thoughts or beliefs or imaginings, others propose that emotions are much closer to a different kind of mental state, and again one that we have already seen when we discussed the components of emotions earlier. This third theory gives priority to *perceptions*.

#### 1.4.3 PERCEPTUAL THEORIES

At the heart of perceptual theories of emotion is the idea that emotional experience is a kind of, or is at least closely similar to, perceptual experience – of the kind we get from our visual or auditory senses. In particular, the perceptual theory holds that the evaluative or appraisal element of emotion is (or is similar to) a perceptual experience of value: when we are afraid we see (or 'see') danger, when remorseful it appears to us that we have acted wrongly, when proud we have the impression that we are related to something good, and so on for other central cases. Support for the perceptual model comes from a variety of ways in which emotional experience is claimed to be similar to perceptual

experience. Thus both possess phenomenal properties, in the sense that there is something it is like to feel and perceive; both are passive, things that happen to us rather than things we do; both are capable of representing (and misrepresenting) the world, and are capable of getting things right (and wrong); and both can diverge or come apart from related beliefs and judgements. For instance, feelings of guilt can come apart from one's judgements about one's moral wrongdoing; and one's visual experience of the length of lines in the Müller-Lyer illusion can diverge from one's belief that they are the same length.

Perhaps the closest point of analogy between emotions and perceptions is, however, when it comes to how we gain knowledge about the world. The general thought is that emotions play a similar role when it comes to giving us information about the evaluative world to that played by ordinary perceptual experience when it comes to our knowledge of the non-evaluative realm. One of the main proponents of the perceptual theory, the philosopher Christine Tappolet, captures this idea as follows:

emotions are like sensory experiences in that they allow us to be aware of certain features of the world. Just as the visual experience of a blue mountain allows us to be aware of the colour of the mountain, the experience of fear would allow us to be aware of the fearsomeness of things.

(Tappolet 2016: 18)

The approach is also familiar from the psychological literature. Thus Gerald Clore and Karen Gaspar suggest:

beliefs are adjusted to be compatible with internal evidence in the form of feelings, just as they are adjusted to be compatible with external evidence from perceptual experience... Evidence from the sensations of feeling may be treated like sensory evidence from the external environment.

(Clore & Gaspar 2000: 25)

As with cognitive theories, there are a range of different kinds of perceptual theory. *Literal* versions hold that emotional experience is a genuine form or kind of perceptual experience of value. This

does not mean that emotional experience is identical with experience we get from one of our five senses. Instead, the idea is that feeling is itself a kind of perception, so that we 'see the world by feeling'. So my anger at my colleague's remark is identical to a perception of my feeling system that he has insulted me. *Non-literal* versions deny that it is feeling that constitutes the appraisal or evaluation in emotional experience. Instead, the evaluative element in emotion is non-affective, although feeling or affect is typically present when we are emotional. Robert C. Roberts can be regarded as presenting a non-literal version of the model. For Roberts, emotions are not literally sense perceptions, but involve (as we saw above) something like an 'evaluative construal'. Construals share certain features with perceptual experience, like immediacy, but they are not literally a kind of perceptual experience.

There is a lot to be said in favour of the perceptual model. Given the difference between kinds of perceptual theory, the view itself can seem to find favour in both feeling and cognitivist camps. For literal versions of the perceptual model can be seen as versions of the feeling view. Moreover, the central selling point of such accounts is that they can capture what the traditional James-Lange version could not, namely the idea that emotions are intentional phenomena, since they are modelled upon perceptual experiences, and these states are characterized by intentionality. (For more on this, see Jesse Prinz's development of a neo-Jamesian account in his book *Gut Reactions*; Prinz 2004) By the same token, non-literal versions of the perceptual view seem to be versions of cognitivist accounts, albeit ones that appeal to evaluative elements that resemble perceptual experiences. Proponents of non-literal versions downplay the necessity of feeling, and hence the necessity of feeling for appraisal or evaluation. Instead, evaluative information is conveyed by non-feeling components of the emotion, an important aspect of which is cognition (understood as something weaker than belief or judgement), perhaps in conjunction with attention and other cognitive changes and patterns. As a result, the perceptual model can come in versions that might find favour with those inclined towards feeling theory and cognitivist theory respectively.

However, there are worries about the perceptual theory. One is something that I have just alluded to: it seems as though different versions of the perceptual theory just collapse into one of the other

theories of emotion, in which case we might wonder whether the perceptual theory is a genuine rival to these views, whether it is a distinctive theory in its own right. A second worry is that the central selling point of the theory – the analogy between emotional experience and perceptual experience – is questionable. Although emotions and perceptions are similar in certain respects, they are different in others. Importantly, there seem to be significant differences between them when it comes to getting knowledge. Consider, to illustrate, the fact that visual experience is – in normal conditions at least – something of the 'gold standard' when it comes to getting information about the external world. If my eyesight is good, lighting conditions are normal, I'm free from the influence of hallucinogens, and so on, then my having a visual experience of something – say, a sparrow perching on the branch outside my window – is very good evidence that there is a sparrow perching on the branch outside my window. What better evidence could I have in this instance, after all, than seeing the sparrow there? It seems that my visual experience is in this case a *sufficient reason* for me to believe what I do about the bird, and – again in normal circumstances – for me to know that there is a sparrow there.

Contrast this, however, with emotional experience. Suppose that you are on an interview panel, and come to have a feeling of suspicion about one of the candidates as you are interviewing her: you get an emotional feeling that she is untrustworthy, let's say. And suppose that conditions are normal, you are not on drugs, and so on. Is this feeling, by itself, very good evidence that the person is untrustworthy? Could you know that she is, purely on the basis of your feeling? This seems difficult to believe. To see this, think of what would happen if you voiced your feeling as a reason when you are discussing with colleagues whether to hire the person. Or think of your putting your emotional response as a reason for not hiring her, on the form you submit to human resources. In the former case, your feelings would be dismissed as irrelevant to the question of whether she should be hired. In the latter, you'd probably be liable for legal proceedings. Your feelings in this case – and these are, remember, normal conditions – are far from sufficient reasons to believe that the person is untrustworthy, and it seems very doubtful that you can *know* that she is untrustworthy

simply on the basis of your feelings. But what is true of this kind of feeling seems true across the board: in the absence of any other evidence, my feeling guilty surely doesn't suffice for me to know that I did something wrong. Nor does my feeling jealous, without other reasons in mind, constitute a sufficient reason for believing that my partner is being unfaithful. So from the standpoint of providing evidence and knowledge – from the 'epistemic' standpoint, as philosophers like to say – emotional experience seems very different from perceptual experience.

There are considerable differences between emotions and perceptions at the level of rationality as well. It is not, I take it, irrational for you to see the lines in the Müller-Lyer illusion as having different lengths. Indeed, it is normal to see them this way, this is how they appear to people whose visual systems are working properly. But there is something irrational about feeling ashamed of my northern accent even though I know that there is nothing shameful about having a northern accent. Recalcitrant emotions like this seem to be very different from visual illusions when it comes to rational assessment. But how could this be, if emotional experience was a form of, or very similar to, perceptual experience? The obvious answer to this question is that emotional experience is, in fact, rather different from perceptual experience, at least if we understand such experience on the model of vision or other sensory perceptions. This point about rationality is explicable because emotions are the kinds of things that are *responsive to reasons*, whereas sensory perceptions are not. You aren't irrational for seeing things a certain way, because it doesn't make sense to say that you have reasons to see things a certain way, or that your seeing things in this way is somehow a response to any reasons you have. You just *do* or *do not* see things in a certain way; reasons don't enter into the picture, any more than arguments to see or hear or taste things a certain way enter into the picture. But emotions *are* responsive to reasons. The fact that the principal has awarded himself a pay rise while everyone else is being forced to take a pay cut is a reason for staff to feel angry; the fact that you have just won the lottery is a reason to feel overjoyed; the fact that your daughter has been awarded a first-class degree is a reason for you to feel proud; and so on. All of this means that emotions are very different kinds of things to sensory perceptions.

### 1.5 A DIFFERENT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Where are we? An honest answer might be: lost and confused. For given significant problems with all three of our main theories, we might think that we are no closer to knowing what emotions are than we were at the start of our survey. This is often the way when we do philosophy: we sometimes end up *less* confident in our views, after reflecting on deep questions about ourselves and our world, than we were prior to such reflection.

However, it does not follow from the fact that each theory of emotion is problematic that we are all at sea when it comes to knowing what emotions are. For it is plausible to suppose that the problems for each theory are generated by the fact that they cannot explain or accommodate *all* of the experiences we want to characterize as 'emotional'. Feeling theories are implausible because they cannot accommodate the idea that certain emotions are intentional and evaluative states. Judgementalism is difficult to accept because it cannot handle the fact that some emotions clash with associated judgements. The perceptual model is undermined by the thought that certain emotions are responsive to reasons whereas perceptions are not. But this suggests the following and more modest picture of the relation between theories of emotion and different kinds of emotional experience: namely, that each theory of emotion is correct with respect to a restricted domain of emotional experiences. In this way, our three theories of emotion turn out not to be rival explanations of a single, unified phenomenon. Instead, they each constitute an adequate account and explanation of different kinds or categories of emotion. (As noted, this is the line favoured by the philosopher Paul Griffiths.) There are *similarities* between these kinds or categories, of course; each must, for instance, involve enough of the components or elements we identified earlier. But not all emotions are, on this view, the same kind of thing.

This more modest explanatory account is, to my mind, very attractive. Perhaps the main consideration in its favour is something that we saw in §1.3, when we looked at various complications to our explanatory picture. There we saw that the term 'emotion' applies to very different things. Some emotions really do seem to be little other than instinctive bodily reactions: startle and physical

disgust are obvious candidates here. And it is plausible to propose that the feeling theory can be regarded as telling us about the nature of this subset of emotions. For note that worries about the feeling theory don't seem to get much purchase when we restrict the theory to these emotions. The central criticism of the feeling theory, as stated above, is that it cannot capture the idea that emotions have intentionality. However, startle and disgust *don't* have much in the way of intentionality; they don't seem to involve an appraisal or evaluation of their objects, for instance. (We might say, of the loud noise and rotting meat, that they are 'startling' and 'disgusting', respectively. But these seem to reflect appraisals that we make 'after the fact' of our emotional experience, rather than evaluations that are a part of the experience itself. The experience itself is arguably too fast, automatic, and reflexive to involve evaluation or appraisal on our part, a claim that empirical work by Joseph LeDoux and others supports.) Instead, bodily changes, facial expression, and a very strong action tendency are at the heart of these emotions. As a result, the feeling theory might be viewed as the correct account of emotions like these.

Other emotions seem essentially bound up with evaluative judgements: *Schadenfreude* is one such case. Judgementalism can be regarded as an accurate account of the nature of *Schadenfreude* and other similarly highly cognitive and structured emotions such as indignation, contempt, and admiration. (Recall our description earlier of *Schadenfreude* involving a whole network of thoughts and cognitions, in fitting with Solomon's account of judgementalism. Something similar can be said about the structure and complexity of these other emotions.) Once again, criticisms of judgementalism don't seem applicable when we restrict the theory to emotions like these. For it is difficult to imagine someone experiencing *Schadenfreude* who doesn't judge that it's good in some sense that a rival is experiencing misfortune. Emotional recalcitrance doesn't seem possible with respect to emotions like *Schadenfreude*, contempt, or admiration, in which case the main criticism of judgementalism fails to be telling in these cases.

By the same token, the perceptual model is arguably true with respect to a different category of emotions, ones that really do seem to embody or be akin to evaluative perceptions. Given the prevalence of phobias, emotions like fear, guilt, and shame might

be like this, since it is all too common to be afraid about something that one doesn't believe to be a threat, or to feel guilty about something that one knows isn't wrong. Here too a standard criticism of the theory – that it cannot accommodate the fact that emotions are responsive to reasons – isn't germane. For phobic reactions like fear, guilt, and shame don't seem to be responsive to reason. Those who are afraid of buttons aren't afraid of buttons for any good reason, for instance; and nor is it the case that pointing out reasons not to be afraid of buttons will have any influence over their fear. So certain kinds of fear are not, after all, reason-responsive. Similar things can be said about many forms of guilt, shame, and the like. As a result, the perceptual model can be regarded as the correct account of emotions like these, ones that involve an evaluative appearance, but which don't seem to be responsive to our reasoning and reflection.

If this is correct, then each theory of emotion can be viewed as presenting a plausible account of the nature of a restricted range of emotional experiences, rather than an account of the whole domain. If we ask 'which theory of emotion is correct?', the surprising but rather plausible answer is: 'all of them'. Now those who favour one theory or another might very well argue that we suffer an explanatory loss if we divide emotions into roughly different kinds and propose that different theories are true in their own domain. The idea that each theory promises to capture the truth about a limited range of emotions, rather than all of them, seems theoretically messy and complicated. But this response isn't convincing. As we have seen, emotional phenomena are *themselves* messy and complicated, and so we might expect that the correct account of their nature won't be neat and tidy either. Moreover, there is no great explanatory loss if we have to appeal to three theories, rather than one, in order to understand the kinds of things that emotions are. Think of a parallel: the theory of general relativity seems like a very good explanation of how the universe works on a large scale – at the level of stars and planets. Quantum mechanics seems like a very good explanation of how the universe works on a very small scale – at the level of molecules and atoms. But we currently lack an overarching theory – a grand theory of everything – that unifies and makes compatible these two perspectives. There is, in other words, no one theory of the universe

that is plausibly true at all levels – at least not at present. Despite this, it would be implausible to claim that general relativity and quantum mechanics don't tell us anything about the nature of the universe. It seems equally implausible to claim that we don't learn anything about the nature of emotion if we have to rely upon three theories of emotion rather than one.

The idea that each theory of emotion is correct with respect to a restricted domain of emotional experience will be a controversial answer to the question of what emotions are, but it might nevertheless be one that we ought to adopt. (If you disagree, then you might like to think for yourself about which of our three theories you prefer, and why. You'll now be immersed in one of the main debates in the philosophy of emotion!) But as I said in the Introduction, we'll only get a fuller picture of the nature of emotion once we answer the question about what emotions *do*. So let us turn our attention to this question, and begin to investigate the roles that emotions play in our lives.

## FURTHER READING

Two introductory books on emotion that nicely complement this one are *Emotion: A Very Short Introduction* by Dylan Evans (Oxford University Press, 2001), and Carolyn Price's *Emotion* (Polity Press, 2015). Price's first chapter surveys different kinds of emotion, and there are interesting chapters on the nature and rationality of emotion. For an excellent introductory text that is rather more demanding, see *The Emotions: A Philosophical Introduction* by Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni (Routledge, 2012). The first chapter of my book *Emotional Insight* (Oxford University Press, 2013) also outlines the theoretical options, and later chapters offer some criticisms of the perceptual theories. Three online resources are particularly helpful. The first is the entry on 'Emotion' in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2018) by Andrea Scarantino and Ronald de Sousa. This is a very comprehensive introduction to the main themes and debates in the philosophy of emotion, and has an excellent bibliography and summary of the main ideas of many contemporary philosophers working in the area. The entry for 'Emotion' by the late Peter Goldie in *Philosophy Compass* (2007) offers a clear and helpful overview of desiderata for theories of

emotion, and a critical discussion of how the main theoretical options fare in respect to these. And my entry for 'Emotion' in *Oxford Bibliographies* is an online resource that provides bibliographic entries with commentaries on the main areas of research in philosophy of emotion. A somewhat more difficult and comprehensive overview of contemporary debates in the field is the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, edited by Peter Goldie. For a historical perspective, readers might like to consult Keith Butler's *Emotion: A Brief History* (Oxford University Press, 2004), which is a relatively short but sophisticated account of the evolutionary and cultural history of emotions from a leading psychologist. Perhaps the most comprehensive reference book – which covers psychology, neuroscience, sociology, clinical, and biological perspectives – is *The Handbook of Emotions*, edited by Lisa Feldman Barrett, Michael Lewis, and Jeanette M. Haviland-Jones (Guilford Press, fourth edition 2018), although the cutting-edge discussions here can be somewhat difficult and high level. For an overview from many different disciplinary perspectives, however, it is a definitive work.