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How To Do Things With Emotions

Matthew P. Spackman

Brigham Young University

J.L. Austin (1975) described speech acts as utterances which are themselves actions, and not simply descriptions of actions or states of affairs. It is suggested that emotions are also actions, and are not simply results of actions. Emotions may be conceived as attunements in the phenomenological tradition, as means of experiencing the world. Understood as attunements, emotions are actions in the sense that they do not simply result from appraisal processes or social constraints, but are themselves our engagements with the world. Three insights into the nature of emotion achieved through the comparison of speech acts and emotions are discussed: (1) emotions may best be studied as acts, and not as elements such as cognitive appraisals, characteristic feeling states, or states of physiological arousal which often accompany emotions; (2) the study of emotions as acts may best be viewed as an exercise in uncovering rather than discovering knowledge; and (3) emotions are commitments to world views and, as such, are susceptible to moral evaluation.

In J.L. Austin's (1975) seminal lecture series, "How To Do Things With Words," he suggested that "it was for too long the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact'" (p. 1). A similar claim may be made with regard to emotions: it has been too long the assumption of emotion theorists and psychologists in general that emotions are simply reactions to or results of emoters' subjective interpretations of the world. An emotion is, according to the bulk of current thought on the topic, the result or signaling of the emoter's subjective interpretation of events, a consequence of appraisal processes (see Lazarus, 1991, for an example of such an appraisal theory).[1] It is

Requests for reprints should be sent to Matthew Spackman, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Brigham Young University, 1001 SWKT, Provo, Utah 84602. Email: matt_spackman@byu.edu

[1]It is certainly the case that not all emotion theorists are appraisal theorists. I would argue, however, that alternative theories, such as many constructivist-oriented theories (see Averill, 1980, 1983a; Gergen, 1995; Harrè, 1986, for examples of such theories), are also susceptible to this critique, as Faulconer and Williams (1985) suggest and as discussed below.

the purpose of this paper to show that emotions are, like speech acts, a species of act. They are things that we do and not things that happen to us. They are not results of actions, as many contemporary theories would suggest, but they are themselves acts. In order to show that emotions are a species of act, their similarity to speech acts will be shown. Such an analogy will not simply demonstrate that emotions are acts, but will also enhance our understanding of emotion in general.

Speech Acts and Convention

Austin (1975) defined speech acts as those utterances where the "issuing of the utterance is the performing of the action — it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (pp. 6–7). Examples of such performatives include the following (adapted from Austin's own list):

> "I do," stated in response to the question, "Do you take this man to be your husband," as in a wedding ceremony;
>
> "I christen this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*," stated while smashing a bottle against the hull of a ship;
>
> "I bequeath all of my worldly possessions to my brother," stated in a will;
>
> "I'll bet you ten dollars it will rain tomorrow," stated as two friends shake hands.

Whereas the uttering of any statement is an action of itself, speech acts constitute the "performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something" (Austin, 1975, pp. 99–100, emphasis in original).

In order for a speech act to be efficacious, however, it must function within a system of social convention. The uttering of the phrase "I do" during a wedding ceremony is an act only because it is conventional in Western culture to say "I do" in such circumstances. If I were to utter the phrase "checkmate" in the same circumstances, this utterance would not constitute my accepting my fiancé as my wife (unless, of course, we had agreed upon this odd convention beforehand). There are, then, rules which govern the employment of speech acts. It is important to note that these rules are, in Searle's (1965, 1969) terms, constitutive rather than regulative in nature.

The distinction between constitutive and regulative rules may be illustrated by contrasting rules of traffic and rules of tennis. Rules of traffic regulate an already existing practice, such as driving a car. If there were no rules of traffic regulating how we ought to drive (e.g., stopping at red lights, speed limits, etc.), we could (though unsafely) still drive. The rules of tennis, however,

constitute the game itself. If there were no rules of tennis, such as what constitutes a serve or a match, there would be no game of tennis. It is that constitutive nature of the rules of speech acts which grounds such acts in social convention. One cannot, for example, decide within oneself that "checkmate" constitutes acceptance of one's fiancé as one's spouse, say "checkmate" at the ceremony, and *be* married (though one could *consider* oneself married). To be married is to adhere to constitutive rules, just as to christen a ship, will one's possessions, and wager with a friend require adhering to certain social conventions. These conventions are, of course, malleable. They are also, for the most part, engaged at a tacit level (see Polanyi, 1962). That is to say, persons engage these conventions skillfully, but not necessarily consciously.

Speech Acts and Emotions

Speech acts are, then, actions which require the utterance of certain prescribed formulae in order for something to be accomplished by their utterance.[2] In order to show that emotions are a species of act similar to speech acts, it remains to show that emotions themselves (1) do something rather than simply result from something, and (2) accomplish the goals of the emoter through adherence to constitutive rules.

Doing Something With Our Emotions

A common misunderstanding of speech acts is that the speaking of the utterance itself is the action of interest (Austin, 1975). In this sense, then, demonstrating that having an emotion is the result of something that we in some sense do, is not sufficient for the purposes of this paper. Rather, it must be shown that emotions involve doing something, that they are themselves actions.

Contemporary cognitive theories of emotion typically present emotions as results of actions rather than as actions themselves (c.f., "I do" as a report of my acceptance of my fiancé as my spouse as opposed to "I do" as the acceptance of my fiancé as my spouse). This may be seen in illustrations of contemporary cognitive theories' perspectives on the following emotions:

> My anger at another driver who has cut in front of me in a long line of traffic on a highway;
>
> My embarrassment at being singled out for poor performance during the most recent sales period;
>
> My happiness at my now affianced's acceptance of my marriage proposal.

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[2]I use the term "utterance" here and elsewhere, though, as in the case of wills, the issuance of a speech act may be in written or any other form of interpretable communication.

According to the majority of cognitively-oriented theories, emotions are the result of a series of evaluations of one's environment (see Lazarus, 1991, 1999; Leventhal and Scherer, 1987; Oatley and Johnson–Laird, 1987). These evaluations are especially related to emoters' goals and the effects of environmental stimuli on the accomplishing of those goals (see Scherer, 1984; Smith and Ellsworth, 1985; Smith and Lazarus, 1993). My anger, for example, arose from my evaluating the other motorist's cutting me off as an obstruction of my driving along the highway. Likewise, my embarrassment at being singled out for poor sales performance resulted from my evaluating the singling out as a threat to my self-concept. And, my happiness at the acceptance of my marriage proposal resulted from evaluating the acceptance of the proposal as conducive to the achievement of the desired state.

For such theories, then, emotions are the result of evaluations of one's environment. They may loosely be described as actions in the sense that they are the result of something which people do, although the issue of responsibility for and control over one's emotions is still debated (see, for example, Sabini and Silver, 1998; Sankowski, 1977; Sartre, 1948; Solomon, 1993a, 1993b; Spackman, 1999b; Spackman and Parrott, 2001). They are, however, more accurately described, as viewed from the cognitive perspective, as results of actions (this distinction is one made anciently by Stoic philosophers, see Sorabji, 2000).

Emotions as Actions

I suggest that there are at least three categories of things we do with emotions — or, that emotions, as actions, accomplish three different sorts of tasks. First, emotions provide a means to present aspects of our selves (our beliefs, opinions, personalities, etc.) to ourselves and others. Second, emotions are means of evaluating and constituting our situations. And, third, emotions prepare us to act, to engage in subsequent behavior. Each of these categories of action has received abundant support in the literature and will be described only briefly below.

Presenting Our Selves

Since the publication of Goffman's (1959) seminal work on the dramaturgical nature of our social interaction, dramaturgical (see especially Averill, 1980, 1983b; Gergen, 1995; Harrè, 1986; Parkinson, 1995; Sarbin, 1986) and discursive (see especially Buttny, 1993; Edwards, 1997; Lutz, 1982, 1988; White, 1994; Wierzbicka, 1999) theorists have shown how emotions serve presentation purposes. They are roles we engage to present our perceptions of situations to ourselves and others (see also the work of ethologists on emotions informing

us of our own perceptions, especially Fridlund, 1994). Additionally, such theorists suggest that our emotions, as well as how we talk about them, are a means of negotiating situations, that they serve the function of situating us with ourselves and others socially. Emotions, then, act often as a means of communicating, of conveying information to ourselves and to others.

For example, Averill's (1983a) social constructionist account suggests that anger serves as a means of negotiating relationships. If a friend has not maintained her obligations to our relationship, I may engage the role of the slighted friend with the purpose of re-negotiating our relationship. My anger would be how I communicate my displeasure to my friend and how I might draw her into a process of re-defining or clarifying our responsibilities within our relationship.

Evaluating and Constituting Situations

Cognitively-oriented theories have, since the time of Aristotle (1926a, 1926b), suggested that evaluations are important to emotions. Stoic philosophers (Epictetus, 1957, 1998; Plutarch, 1927; Seneca, 1928), however, made a distinction between holding that emotions are results of evaluations, or that they are themselves evaluations (Sorabji, 2000). Others suggest that emotions are, in fact, our means for evaluating, even constituting our situations (Sartre, 1948; Solomon, 1988, 1993a). In an early (though later amended) outline of his perspective on emotions, Sartre (1948) suggested that emotions constitute "magical" transformations of our worlds. In other words, emotions themselves constitute the lenses through which we view our world and can thereby transform our conditions. One example Sartre offered was fainting in fear at the sight of a wild animal. The fear here would constitute a transformation of one's condition to circumstances in which one has made the animal disappear from view. Seen as our means of constituting our situations, emotions are actions as they comprise our very way of making sense of our world.

Preparations for Further Actions

Much work has been concentrated in the area of the relation of emotion to bodily change (see Plutchik, 1994, for review). Whereas some theorists suggest that bodily change follows emotion (most notably the cognitive theorists, see Lazarus, 1984, 1991, 1999), others have suggested the opposite is true, that bodily change precedes emotion (most notably James, 1884; Schachter and Singer, 1962). However, a third possibility is that emotions themselves are preparations for subsequent actions and that the bodily changes associated with them (neither preceding nor following them, but, at

least partially, constitutive of them) are actions themselves; they are preparations for further actions (see Frijda, 1986).

Certainly this suggestion clouds our discussion of emotions as actions in the sense that we typically think of actions as behaviors of which we are at least somewhat aware, whereas the action readiness patterns of many emotions seem to be beyond our awareness (and, some would suggest, beyond our control).[3] I suggest, however, that we do, in fact, engage in physical actions of which we may not be aware which prepare us for subsequent actions. And, if this is true of physical actions, it follows that it may be true of emotions as well. For example, I would guess that basketball players whose intent it is to get a rebound are not typically aware of bending their knees in preparation for jumping. Here an action (bending the knees) is designed to facilitate a subsequent action (jumping). In this sense, action readiness patterns associated with anger and fear (e.g., increased heart rate, muscle tension, etc.) may serve as preparations for subsequent behavior.

Emotions as Attunements

If it is the case that we are doing something with our emotions, that they are actions, then it remains to locate this perspective in a theoretical tradition. An account of emotions which conceives of them as actions may be found in the phenomenological tradition of Heidegger and Husserl (see also Denzin, 1984, for a phenomenologically-centered account). Heidegger (1949, 1996) does not use the term "emotion" in his writings. Rather, he uses *Befindlichkeit*, roughly equivalent to "being in a mood or humour," to describe the way in which persons are "tuned-in" to their surroundings (the term Heidegger uses to refer to more specific moods or emotions is *Gestimmt*, which is related to the tuning of a musical instrument). This tuning-in is accomplished through what we would today term our moods or emotions (Heidegger makes no distinction here between moods and emotions, as contemporary theorists do, see Frijda, 1986). This concept of emotions as tunings-in, or attunements, is similar to Husserl's (1982) own concept of "position-takings," which addresses the way in which persons experience the world through the perspectives which they bring to, or positions they take toward it.[4] For both Heidegger and Husserl, these attunements or position-

[3]Though, see Damasio's (1999), discussion of the pianist Maria Joao Pires' ability to control her physiological responses associated with her emotions.

[4]I will use the term "attunement" to describe this concept of tuning-in or position-taking throughout simply because it is less awkward than tuning-in or position-taking. It should be noted, however, that I do not wish to suggest that by attunement I understand emotions to be states of being, as the term might suggest. I mean attunement to suggest an attuning to, or an action, as the more awkward terms tuning-in and position-taking suggest.

takings are essential to our being and are the means through which we exist in the world. In fact, Heidegger suggests that persons are always in a mood or experiencing emotions. This is because our moods or emotions are what attune us to the world and permit us to interact with it.

It should be noted that this conception of emotions as attunements rejects the traditional distinctions between subject and object and internal and external (see Faulconer and Williams, 1985; Gillespie, 1992; Heidegger, 1996; Husserl, 1982; Polanyi, 1962). Whereas cognitively-oriented theorists suggest that some objective event external to an emoter is subjectively interpreted by the emoter, thereby resulting in an internal event (i.e., an emotion), an attunement perspective suggests such dichotomies as subject/object and internal/external are artificial. The act of perceiving one's world (or, of having an emotion) is an active process whereby persons are, to use Husserl's terms, "asserting, believing, judging, doubting, and denying" (Solomon, 1977, p. 173). By asserting a mediational process whereby an external object is internalized through cognitive processes, cognitively-oriented theories deny persons the ability to immediately engage their surroundings. A more phenomenologically-oriented approach to emotion suggests emotions themselves serve as our access point to our worlds and thus positions emotions beyond the internal realm of the self and in an essentially social setting.

This phenomenological account of emotions incorporates each of the three categories of action which I suggest emotions constitute. Heidegger and Husserl suggest that it is through our emotions that we experience the world. This idea incorporates not only the idea that emotions are evaluations or means of constituting our situations, but also the idea that we present our selves to ourselves and others through our emotions. Additionally, since our emotions are our primary means of experiencing the world, they are also our primary means for preparing ourselves to act in and engage the world. This phenomenological concept of emotions as attunements provides an account of emotions as species of acts similar to speech acts. It remains to describe how such attunements may be considered rule-based.

Constituting Our Emotions

Cognitively-oriented theories of emotion are inadequate for our comparison between speech acts and emotions because they present emotions as resulting from actions rather than as actions themselves. Such accounts do, however, offer explanations of the rule-based nature of emotions which, when combined with the phenomenological conception of emotion as attunement, give emotions a basis as a species of act similar to speech acts.

Research on the appraisals necessary to generate specific emotions demonstrates that certain appraisals result in specific emotions, that there is an

underlying logic to emotions (see Smith and Ellsworth, 1985; Smith and Lazarus, 1993). Emotions seem to be appropriate to certain contexts, and inappropriate to others. For example, if Smith and Lazarus (1993) are correct in suggesting that anger results when we identify some aspect of our environment as being related to a goal (e.g., driving down the highway to my destination), contrary to the achievement of that goal (e.g., increasing my distance from my destination), and another person as responsible for hindering the achievement of that goal (e.g., the driver of the other car), it would be unlikely that we would experience happiness. Anger or some related state such as frustration or rage would be far more likely under such conditions. Such patterns of logic inherent to emotions are perfectly compatible with a view of emotions as attunements. The two perspectives differ in that an attunement perspective suggests that the anger, for example, is not resultant from the evaluations specified, as cognitivist theories would suggest, but that it *is* the evaluation of the environment as such.[5] My anger at the other motorist would not, then, result from my realization that I have been cut off, it would *be* that realization.[6]

In addition to research on the role of appraisals in generating emotions, a great deal of research has also been conducted in an effort to show how emotions are socially constructed and culturally- and historically-relative (see Averill, 1983a; Harrè, 1986; Lutz, 1988; Spackman and Parrott, 2001; Stearns, 1994, as examples). This research has indicated the importance of social interactions and forces in the construction of emotions in persons and cultures. As stated above, Averill (1979, 1983a) suggests that anger occurs in certain social circumstances and serves a particular function in the negotiation of relationships. My anger at the other motorist (including any honking, gestures, or other expressions of that anger) might, according to this account, be an attempt to stop him from cutting in front of me, an assertion of my position relative to him. Constructionist theories, though certainly akin to cognitive theories (see Cornelius, 1996), suggest that it is not a simple case of individuals' appraisals of their contexts determining their emotions, but that the whole of our social milieus act upon us, generating in a (socio-)logical fashion our emotions. Such an appreciation of social influence on our

[5]See Solomon (1988) for discussion of dispassionate judgments, or the holding of the prepositional construct "I have been wronged," in the absence of anger. Solomon suggests that the holding of such constructs in the absence of the emotion anger is possible only when persons do not "take it personally," amounting to judgments different from those of the emotions.

[6]In this respect, it may be seen that an attunement perspective not only endorses the findings of cognitive theorists, but can also explain the findings of those advocating the primacy of affect model (Laird and Bresler, 1990; Zajonc, 1980, 1984; Zajonc, Murphy, and Ingelhart, 1989). Emotions that adherents to the affective primacy model would suggest require no cognitive elaboration can be explained by the attunement perspective simply as means of evaluation without the need to address the issue of cognitive or affective primacy.

emotions is perfectly acceptable to an attunement perspective of emotions. Where attunement and constructivist theories differ is that an attunement perspective suggests that social forces do not act to construct emotions, but that emotions are one's attunement to the world, and that one's attunement encompasses one's social situatedness. One's attunement is not, however, the passive result of social forces. It is an active means by which one explores and experiences the world. In other words, my social-situatedness does not cause my anger at the other driver; my anger is how I situate myself with the other driver (c.f., Russell, 1973, 1978).

Lessons from Linguistics

Whereas it is the case that emotions may be understood to be species of acts similar in many respects to speech acts, it is what we may learn about emotions from exploring their similarities to speech acts that justifies the comparison. I suggest three (though there may be more) ways in which emotion theory and research may be clarified when emotions are understood as a species of act similar to speech acts: emotions are not emotion-relevant phenomena, the work of emotion researchers is to uncover practice, and attunements are commitments.

Emotions and Emotion-Relevant Phenomena

Whereas speech acts are constructed from word and sound combinations, there is an important distinction between the uttering of particular word or sound combinations and particular speech acts. The basis for this distinction, and the reason that identical utterances can constitute different speech acts (e.g., "I do" constituting acceptance of one's fiancé as one's spouse versus "I do" constituting an objection to the proposed marriage of two persons), is that, as Searle (1965) suggests, speech acts have meaning and persons mean something by the uttering of them (see Wittgenstein, 1997).[7]

It is with regard to the importance of context that the constitutive nature of the rules governing speech acts must be addressed. To mean that I accept my fiancé as my spouse when I say "I do," it is not enough to be at my wedding (to be in the appropriate context). It must also be the case that saying "I do" in such a context is the conventional way of accepting my fiancé as my

[7]By "meaning something" I am not speaking simply of semantics, but of intending something as well, as in the colloquial, "What do you mean by that?" It is in this respect that Skinner's (1957) concept of the mand, though influential to later work on performatives, may be seen to differ markedly from the concept of speech acts. Whereas Skinner's primary interest was in the behavioral results of a given utterance, analyses of speech acts are concerned with the speaker's intent in her utterance.

spouse. What makes a speech act an act is the fact that persons have agreed upon the sounds and words, as well as upon the definition of the context in which those sounds and words are to be uttered, and not the sounds, words, or contexts alone.

Considering emotions actions in the sense that speech acts are actions would suggest that the presence or absence of any of the suggested elements making up an emotion experience (e.g., cognitive appraisal, characteristic feeling state, physiological response, etc.) is not what makes an incident an incident of emotion (see Spackman, 1999a, for discussion). Additionally, such a focus on the elements of emotion experiences will not allow for sufficient differentiation of emotions from one another. It is only by analysis of the meanings of emotions that these topics can be sufficiently addressed.

For example, what is the difference between an angry and a hateful attunement to the world? We might initially examine the more behavior-intensive nature of anger as opposed to hatred. Or, we might discuss the short-lived nature of anger relative to hatred. However, we are bound to meet with exceptional cases for every distinction we might draw on the basis of the elements of the emotions. If we take a meaning-based approach, as suggested by Searle's approach to speech acts, we can distinguish the two. What does it mean to be attuned to the world in an angry or hateful fashion? Aristotle (1926b) suggested that anger is the perception of a wrong with an accompanying desire to exact vengeance for the wrong. Solomon (1993a) defines hate as a mutual antagonism between two persons who share a relationship of equals with an accompanying desire to "demolish" the other. Anger, then, would be an attunement to the world in which one is wronged (by anyone) and wishes vengeance. Hate would be an attunement to the world in which one has an antagonism toward someone with whom one shares a relationship and an accompanying desire to win-out over him. In these definitions of anger and hate is seen the meaning of the emotions. These meanings and the accompanying desires and intentions are the constitutive rules of the emotions. They, and not the emotion-relevant elements which may accompany the emotions, define what it is to be angry or hateful and allow for distinguishing the two.

In fact, an act-oriented approach to emotion which permits for an analysis of the meanings of emotions will facilitate a fuller comprehension of the elements associated with emotions. In this respect, it is helpful to remember Reid's (1814; Robinson, 1995b) analysis of the dependence of artificial languages upon the existence of natural languages. Reid suggested that no artificial language or symbol may be created in the absence of an underlying, natural language. With respect to the elements associated with emotions, it might be suggested that no such elements would exist in the absence of the underlying meanings of the emotions. So, my honking at the motorist cut-

ting me off on the highway would not exist in the absence of my understanding him as having wronged me. Not only does an understanding of emotions as acts suggest we ought to start our analysis at the level of meanings, but it also suggests the artificial language of the elements associated with emotions can only be understood when these meanings are first uncovered, as is described below.

Uncovering Practice

The study of speech acts is part of a larger area of study known as ordinary language philosophy (see Hanfling, 2000, for discussion of the history of ordinary language philosophy and a defense of its practice). This method of analysis takes the ordinary usage of words as its subject matter in the study of "the realities we use the words to talk about" (Austin, 1970, p. 182). There has been much debate as to whether such "data" as ordinary usage can constitute a meaningful study of philosophical or linguistic issues. Chief among the criticisms leveled at ordinary language philosophy is the suggestion that usage, and consequently meaning, may vary across persons. If this is the case, then how can an analysis of usage be termed "ordinary" language philosophy? Is there an "ordinary" manner in which persons use language?

Two possibilities for investigation of ordinary language use have been suggested (Mates, 1958). An extensional approach to the analysis of usage would involve observing usage in multiple cases and then attempting to identify commonalities in circumstances across the cases. The deficiency of this approach is, however, that, as discussed above, it is the meaning or intentionality of a speech act, or language in general, and not the sounds, words, or contexts of usage themselves, that give usages their efficacy.

An intensional approach, on the other hand, would involve the questioning of a speaker as to her meaning or intention in the use of a speech act in a sort of Socratic dialog. This approach seemingly gets at the important issues of meaning and intentionality which the extensional approach cannot access. It does, however, provide the difficulty for the researcher of knowing whether she has studied the subject's own usage, or, in the process of the discussion, influenced that usage.

The extensional and intensional approaches to usage are both problematic. The importance of the meaning of utterances is not recognized by the extensional approach and the intensional approach is compromised by the possibility for researchers to bias their results. The outlook for the study of ordinary usage is seemingly bleak. Hanfling (2000) suggests, however, that, "Being himself a speaker of the language, the philosopher already knows what the word [or speech act] in question means; hence his position, unlike that of an empirical researcher, cannot be one of 'finding out.' The answer he

seeks is one that — in a sense — he knows already" (pp. 57–58). The problem for the linguistic philosopher is not one of finding an answer, but of formulating it.

What Hanfling suggests is that linguistic philosophers take seriously their own linguistic experience as a source for investigation. His plea for recognition of our expertise in language might be echoed with regard to our emotions. We are in the same position with regard to our emotions as we are with regard to our use of speech acts and other linguistic practices: we already know the answers. As with our use of language, we instinctively engage the grammar or constitutive rules of our emotions each day. Our difficulty in understanding emotions is, as with speech acts, not in finding their meanings, but in uncovering or explicating them.

If it is indeed the case that we are possessors of the knowledge we are in search of with regard to our emotions, the question we might well ask is how to go about uncovering this knowledge. From the discussion of extensional and intensional approaches to studying speech acts and other linguistic practices, it may be seen that an extensional approach to emotions will be (and has been, I suggest) problematic in uncovering the meanings of emotions. Extensional approaches yield regularities of elements of emotions, but do not allow access to what emoters *do* when they have emotions. Intensional approaches to emotion (interview or case study formats investigating the experience of the emoter as he has a particular emotion, see Katz, 1999, for examples), which are quite rare in the literature, though offering important advantages over the extensional approach in uncovering the meanings of emotions, remain problematic for reasons discussed above.

Given the difficulties inherent to extensional and intensional approaches to uncovering what we are doing when we have emotions, one potential alternative would be to return to what I would suggest to be the original method of inquiry regarding emotions: a rational approach. This is the approach to emotions employed by philosophers since at least the time of Plato.[8] Though it has fallen out of fashion since the nineteenth century rise of materialism in psychology (Robinson, 1995a), it is a method uniquely suited to an investigation of the meanings and intentionalities of our emotions (see Sabini and Silver, 1998, for examples of studies employing this approach). This is not a suggestion that we abandon extensional or intensional investigations in the study of emotions. Such methods are uniquely suited for investigation of what I have called elements of emotions, those aspects of emotion experiences such as cognitive appraisal, subjective feeling state, and physiological response which often accompany emotions. I simply

[8]Calhoun and Solomon's (1984) edited collection serves nicely as a history of rational approaches to emotion.

suggest that a search for what we do or what we mean with our emotions is best approached in a more rational fashion.

Two qualifications should be made with regard to this suggestion. First, there is the question of how to establish the accuracy of a rationally derived explanation of an emotion. In the absence of empirical evidence, how can an explanation be judged? As with the evaluation of ordinary language investigations, the standard of evaluation is one of "Does it sound right to me?" We can compare a proffered explanation to our own experiences and judge its explanatory value on that basis. Such a standard of judgment would require what science has always sought to achieve: a community engaged in an attempt to further knowledge through cooperative and critical efforts.

Certainly this idea of cooperative, critical effort is complicated by discussion of cross-cultural relativism. The procedure I would (cautiously) recommend here would be evaluation of proffered explanations by persons of a background similar to the investigator offering the explanation. I make this suggestion cautiously because I wish to avoid what I perceive as a growing movement toward an asocial, solipsistic conception of experience advocated by certain postmodern philosophies. While a prudent caution to attempt to judge explanations from the unique perspective of those whose experiences are being recounted is necessary, the idea that my own experiences are uniquely mine and therefore inaccessible for judgment by those of a different background is, I think, ultimately harmful to the growth of understanding.

The second qualification of my suggestion that the study of what we do with our emotions ought to be approached from a rational perspective is that I am not suggesting that, because all humans experience emotions, everyone is an expert on the topic. This is not a plea for folk psychology (though I see great value in folk wisdom, especially where emotions are concerned). Whereas there is something to be said for the insights of laypersons unfettered by academic psychologists' theories (see the deficiencies of the intensional approach discussed above), I would not suggest that a body of knowledge and skills are unnecessary to the study of emotion. Doing things with our emotions is something with which all persons have experience. The ability to explicate what it is that we are doing requires knowledge and skill not possessed by all persons (c.f., the idea of emotional intelligence as depicted in Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

Attunements and Commitments

One of the primary functions of speech acts is the making of a commitment of some sort (see Searle, 1969). Examples include "I promise to . . . ," "I'll bet you that . . . ," "I do" (in a wedding ceremony), each of which is a commitment to a particular state of affairs of the world. In fact, speech acts

do not simply commit the speaker to a worldview. In appropriate circumstances they bring about the state of affairs. As Fingarette (1967) suggests, a motto for speech acts might be "saying so makes it so" (p. 39).

As attunements, emotions are also commitments to states of affairs. My anger at the other motorist is, by Aristotle's account, a commitment to a state of affairs such that the motorist has wronged me and I want to exact revenge upon him. Each emotion is, then, a commitment to a particular view of the world, a way of tuning-in to it (or, tuning it). It is the commitment entailed in emotions that constitutes what it is we do when we have an emotion. It is also this idea of commitment which makes emotions (and, for that matter, speech acts) susceptible to moral evaluation.

Aristotle's (1926a) explanation of how emotions are a matter of morality is one grounded in showing that emotions are a species of act, a committing to a state of affairs (for a more complete discussion of Aristotle's perspective on emotions and morality, see Spackman, 1999b). A primary difficulty in asserting that emotions are acts and therefore morally-relevant is that they are often experienced as unwilled or involuntary, as forces that come upon us. This view of emotions as unwilled is one with which Aristotle took issue and one which cannot be accurate if emotions are acts. Aristotle suggested that, though our emotions may seem involuntary, such seemingly involuntary actions are actually chosen.

Aristotle was able to claim emotions are voluntary actions because of a distinction he drew between actions of deliberated choice (*prohairesis*), and those chosen in the moment. Though he considered both sorts of actions voluntary, the former are truly chosen, whereas the latter are merely voluntary. Aristotle suggested that acts associated with anger and appetite are voluntary, but not truly chosen. In this way, Aristotle has provided a distinction between the sorts of choices associated with deliberated actions and those associated with emotions while preserving responsibility for both. In this formulation, then, persons are not simply responsible for rationally deliberated or truly chosen actions, but for actions in which actors have some degree of choice. This implies a continuum of choice in our actions, with moral responsibility attributed for actions according to the degree of choice in the matter one possesses. So, whereas I may not have truly chosen to be angry at the motorist cutting me off on the highway, I did, according to Aristotle, have some degree of choice in the matter. The degree of responsibility I bear for my anger, would, then, correspond to the degree of choice I had in the matter of my getting angry.

If Aristotle is correct in suggesting that there is a continuum of choice in our actions, then we might assume that we may also have degrees of control over our emotions. Aristotle attributed our varying degrees of control over our actions to our dispositions. For Aristotle, to say that one is disposed to

act a certain way is a judgment of that person's character, as dispositions reflect persons' commitments to pursuit of virtue, a pursuit Aristotle believed to be an objective responsibility of all persons. He held that the ability to obtain to a virtuous state is inherent within each of us, but that we can and must acquire and train our dispositions so as to actually attain such a state (Aristotle, 1926a, II.1).

The difficulty with the idea of holding people morally responsible for emotions or other actions because they are related to dispositions is, however, that the dispositions reflected in the actions are developed in the past. It seems unjust, of course, to hold people responsible for actions over which they have no control at the moment of acting. For Aristotle, however, such seemingly unwilled or unchosen actions were especially reflective of one's character. As stated earlier, Aristotle held that we are morally responsible for our efforts in pursuit of virtue, and, because our characters and dispositions are reflective of this pursuit, we are therefore morally responsible for our characters and the emotions deriving from them.

If we grant that our attunements to the world are, in some sense, reflective of our very characters and that we have an objective obligation to a pursuit of virtue, as Aristotle suggested, then these attunements are a matter of morality. They are a basis on which we might justly be ascribed praise or blame. Certainly our societal emphasis on experiencing emotions proper to our contexts and to the appropriate degree (Aristotle's mean) evidences such an idea (see Parrott, 1993; Sherman, 1999; Stearns and Stearns, 1986; P.N. Stearns, 1994). If emotions were not commitments to some view of the world, as speech acts are, if they were not, in other words, acts, then there would be no basis for such moral accountability.

In fact, it is in this respect that one of the primary advantages of an act-oriented approach to emotions may be seen. Whereas a cognitively-oriented approach allows for responsibility to be attributed to emoters for their evaluations, but not for their emotions themselves — as emotions are, by the cognitivist account, simply results of evaluations and not actions themselves — an act-oriented approach sees emotions themselves as acts and therefore susceptible to moral evaluation. The same is true of a constructivist approach. Such an approach allows for responsibility to be attributed to emoters for embracing moral norms of which their emotions are, according to the constructivist account, reflections, but not for the emotions themselves. If emotions are themselves recognized as acts, persons can be held responsible for emotions, and not simply for some element of them.

Conclusion

There are, as has been shown, clearly similarities between speech acts and emotions, with what I suggest are important insights into the nature of emotion gained from the comparison. Speech acts are linguistic constructions whereby speakers do something and where the accomplishment of the act is dependent upon social conventions surrounding the intended result of the act. Emotions are also actions, ways of attuning oneself to one's world, and are dependent upon conventions surrounding their particular attunements. When emotions are recognized as attunements, at least three conclusions follow: (1) emotions may best be studied as acts, and not as elements of emotions such as cognitive appraisals, characteristic feeling states, or states of physiological arousal which often accompany emotions; (2) the study of emotions as acts may best be viewed as an exercise in uncovering rather than discovering knowledge; and (3) emotions are commitments to worldviews and, as such, are susceptible to moral evaluation.

Certainly there are more ways in which speech acts and emotions are related. To list a few: speech acts and emotions arise (develop) through social interaction, and not as natural (biological) forms (see Robinson, 1995b); they both serve communicative functions; both are intended to have an effect on the "hearer"; both may be localized within homogeneous subgroups; both require certain anatomical structures. Despite numerous similarities between speech acts and emotions, there are, of course dissimilarities as well. One example is that some emotions seem to actually be inappropriate to their contexts. (That I suggest emotions are acts does not imply I also hold them to be functional or rational in every case.) Such inapt attunements are not paralleled in speech acts. I suggest, however, that uncovering the reason for this dissimilarity will, like the similarities between speech acts and emotions, add to our comprehension of emotions. My intent here has not been to be encyclopedic, but to simply suggest that, in the comparison of speech acts and emotions there is, to use Austin's phrase, "gold in them thar hills" (1970, p. 181).

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