

# Insights and Blindspots of the Cognitivist Theory of Emotions

Andrea Scarantino

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## ABSTRACT

Philosophical cognitivists have argued for more than four decades that emotions are special types of judgments. Anti-cognitivists have provided a series of counterexamples aiming to show that identifying emotions with judgments overintellectualizes the emotions. I provide a novel counterexample that makes the overintellectualization charge especially vivid. I discuss neurophysiological evidence to the effect that the fear system can be activated by stimuli the subject is unaware of seeing. To emphasize the analogy with *blindsight*, I call this phenomenon *blindfright*. Cognitivists may reply that *blindfright* is nothing but an unconscious judgment subcortically elicited. This reply is in line with the strategy commonly employed by cognitivists against their critics. I call it the Elastic Strategy, because it consists of ‘stretching’ the notion of judgment in order to accommodate counterexamples. This strategy, I argue, turns cognitivism into a theory that is at worst unfalsifiable and at best trivially true. The final portion of my article aims to rescue cognitivism from the damage done by the Elastic Strategy. I distinguish three varieties of cognitivism, one concerned with what emotions essentially are (Constitutive Cognitivism), one concerned with what causes emotions (Etiological Cognitivism) and one concerned with what emotions represent (Representational Cognitivism). I conclude that what cognitivism has to offer to emotion theory are primarily insights concerning the causes and representational content of emotions. The constitutive identification of emotions with judgments, on the other hand, does more harm than good.

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## 1 Introduction

Philosophical cognitivists have long argued that emotions are special types of *judgments* (Solomon [1976], [2003]; Nussbaum [2001]).<sup>1</sup> This thesis has been widely criticized, because judgments appear to have distinguishing properties emotions lack (e.g., cognitive sophistication) and lack distinguishing properties emotions have (e.g., motivational power) (cf. Deigh [1994]; Griffiths [1997]; DeLancey [2001]; D'Arms and Jacobson [2003]; Prinz [2004]). Cognitivists have been largely unfazed by criticisms of this sort. Their standard reaction is to fine-tune the notion of judgment, and reply that, relative to such notion, emotions are indeed judgments. The purpose of this article is to move beyond this standard dialectic, which mixes terminological disputes on what judgments are with substantive disagreements on the nature of emotions.

The paper can be divided into three parts. In the first, I present a new counterexample to cognitivism, an emotion I call *blindfright*. Blindfright is a type of fear elicited without awareness of the eliciting stimulus, in circumstances analogous to those in which blindsight is manifested. Besides being an interesting phenomenon in its own right, blindfright is a striking example of what is wrong with the identification of emotions with judgments, under the understanding of judgment presupposed by anti-cognitivists. Cognitivists, however, reject such an understanding, and adopt what I call the *Elastic Strategy*. The strategy consists of stretching the notion of 'judgment' in order to accommodate counterexamples. Blindfright is bound to lead cognitivists to add the notion of a *subcortical judgment* to the already motley crew of items that qualify as judgments by cognitivists' lights.

In the second part of my paper, I explain what is wrong with the Elastic Strategy. In a nutshell, it has turned cognitivism into a theory that is (at best) trivially true. Furthermore, the Elastic Strategy has led cognitivists and anti-cognitivists to talk past each other; while they respectively affirm and deny that emotions are judgments, they mean different things by 'judgment'. Finally, the Elastic Strategy has prevented anti-cognitivists from gaining an appreciation of the insights of the cognitivist research program.

In the third part of my paper, I try to rescue cognitivism from the damage done by the Elastic Strategy. I distinguish between three varieties of cognitivism that have been historically important in philosophy and in the sciences of mind. One is concerned with the *essential nature* of emotions (Constitutive

<sup>1</sup> Other versions of cognitivism in philosophy are less radical (see, e.g., Deigh [1994] for further discussion). Greenspan ([1998]), for example, offers a cognitivist theory that makes room for the feeling dimension of emotions by suggesting that emotions are feelings of comfort or discomfort towards a stimulus-directed thought. Marks ([1984]) offers a belief and desire theory which makes room for the motivational dimension of emotions, proposing that an emotion results from the conjunction of a belief and a strong desire. I will disregard varieties of philosophical cognitivism distinct from pure judgmentalism in what follows.

Cognitivism), one with the *cause* of emotions (Etiological Cognitivism), and one with the *representational content* of emotions (Representational Cognitivism). This richer taxonomy will allow me to distinguish the genuine insights of cognitivism from some of its flaws or blindspots.

Here is how I will proceed. I begin with a brief history of the cognitivist theory of emotions (Section 2). Next, I discuss the scientific evidence for blindfright (Section 3), and show how blindfright can ground a new argument against cognitivism (Section 4). I then illustrate the Elastic Strategy cognitivists have developed to respond to counterexamples, and explain what is wrong with it (Section 5). Finally, I assess three cognitivist theses about the essence, cause and representational content of emotions (Section 6).

## 2 The Emergence of Cognitivism

The current form of the cognitivist theory of emotions emerged in philosophy in the 1970s and 1980s as an alternative to feeling theories of emotion.<sup>2</sup> At the time, the most popular feeling theory was still William James' ([1884], [1890]), according to which emotions are feelings, understood as perceptions of autonomic bodily changes. What is left of fear, James famously asked, when we subtract from it the bodily changes that typically characterize it, such as heightened heart beats, trembling, sweaty palms, and so on? His answer was: nothing at all, because fear, just like every other emotion, is essentially the feeling generated by perceiving a suite of autonomic bodily changes.

The cognitivists begged to differ. Firstly, they argued, emotions sometimes do not involve feelings at all. As first emphasized by behaviorists such as Watson ([1913], [1925]), Skinner ([1953]) and Ryle ([1949/1990]), emotion terms sometimes refer to dispositions to behave. Love for one's long-term partner, for instance, can be instantiated by virtue of a disposition to behave in loving ways towards such partner, rather than by virtue of any occurrent feeling of love. One may bracket dispositional emotions as a special case, or argue that they still involve, perhaps necessarily, dispositions to perceive autonomic bodily changes (Prinz [2004]). The trouble is that even non-dispositional emotions sometimes do not seem to involve the perception of autonomic bodily changes.

<sup>2</sup> Cognitivism broadly understood also counts representatives in psychology (e.g., Arnold [1960]; Schachter and Singer [1962]; Lazarus [1991]; Ortony *et al.* [1988]). As I argue in Section 6.2, psychological cognitivism is different from philosophical cognitivism in that it only aims to identify the cognitive causes of emotions, without assuming that such causes identify what emotions essentially are.

Consider the sort of unconscious emotions dynamic psychotherapy tries to unveil, say fear of failing in life, hatred for a dependent parent, or envy towards a more successful sibling. The emoter is unable to report that she is undergoing them, yet their ascription appears to explain a wide range of behaviors. It appears quite possible that such emotions may be instantiated without the perception of any autonomic bodily changes. One may respond by calling into question the very construct of unconscious emotion (Hatzimoysis [2007]), or by allowing perceptions of bodily changes to be unconscious (Damasio [1994], [1999]). Counterexamples, however, keep coming.

Consider what we may call calm emotions, namely garden variety emotions which are conscious and occurrent, but ‘more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation’ (Hume [1739/1992], p. 471). Examples may include delight at the sight of art work (which may lead you to buy it), fear that a certain politician will win the elections (which may lead you to vote for his opponent), anger at the injustices of the world (which may lead you to donate to Oxfam), or guilt about having missed a friend’s birthday (which may lead you to make an apologetic phone call). It seems that one could undergo such emotions in a genuine sense, but in the absence of any perceivable autonomic bodily changes. If this is the case, emotions cannot be essentially perceptions of autonomic bodily changes.<sup>3</sup>

Cognitivists had a further worry with respect to the feeling theory. They argued that feelings are not normatively assessable the way emotions are. Anthony Kenny emphasized one dimension of normative assessment in particular: ‘If the emotions were internal impressions [i.e. feelings] [...] there would be no logical restrictions on the type of object which each emotion could have [...] In fact, each emotion is appropriate—logically, and not just morally appropriate—only to certain restricted objects’ (Kenny [1963], p. 192). Kenny labeled these restricted objects *formal objects*, distinguishing them from the *material objects* of the emotion. Whereas ‘anything which can be  $\phi$ ed is a material object of  $\phi$ ing’, he wrote, the ‘formal object of  $\phi$ ing is the object under that description which *must* apply to it if it is to be possible to  $\phi$  it’ (Kenny [1963], p. 189).

<sup>3</sup> A standard attempt to incorporate calm emotions within the purview of the feeling theory of emotions is to propose, as Neo-Jamesians do, that autonomic bodily changes need not be actual, but only mirrored by the differential activation of the somatosensory brain regions which are responsible for autonomic bodily changes (Damasio [1999] calls these ‘as if’ bodily changes). It is an open question whether emotions always differentially activate somatosensory regions. The current evidence is inconclusive (see Barrett and Wager [2006] for a review). If it turned out that they do, the thesis that emotions are essentially perceptions of autonomic bodily changes would hold in such watered down form that many radical anti-feeling theorists would happily endorse it. This is to say that after a certain number of refinements, the notion of perception of bodily changes becomes so broad that all distinctions between opposing camps get lost. For a different contemporary version of the feeling theory, see (Robinson [2004]).

For instance, whereas the *material object* of anger may be any specific object (one's girlfriend), event (the event of being called a jerk) or state of affairs (the state of affairs constituted by the inequitable distribution of wealth) one is angry about, the *formal object* of anger is that description of the material object which *must* be true of it in order for anger to be appropriately instantiated (we can think of the formal object of anger as an *offence* of some kind). Material and formal objects constitute two aspects of the *intentionality* of emotions. According to the picture advanced by Kenny ([1963]), emotions are *about* material objects and they are *about* formal objects.

A standard move in the philosophy of emotions (e.g., Prinz [2004]; Salmela [2006]) is to describe *formal objects* in terms of what Lazarus ([1991]) labelled *core relational themes*. I will follow this practice and adopt the following working taxonomy of formal objects.<sup>4</sup>

Emotion	Formal Object
Sadness	Having experienced an irrevocable loss
Anger	A demeaning offense against me and mine
Fear	Danger
Guilt	Having transgressed a moral imperative
Shame	Failing to live up to an ego ideal
Pride	Enhancement of one's ego identity by taking credit for a valued object or achievement, either one's own or that of someone or group with whom we identify

**Figure 1.** Examples of characteristic formal objects for some common emotions

On this view, whereas one can in principle be sad, or angry, or afraid, or guilty, or ashamed, or proud about anything, each of these emotions is *logically appropriate*, to use Kenny's expression, only when the material objects of these emotions constitute, respectively, a loss, an offence, a danger, a moral transgression, a failure to live up to an ego ideal, and an enhancement of one's ego identity.

The difficulties encountered by the feeling theory eventually led to the emergence of cognitivism. In its most paradigmatic formulation, the positive thesis

<sup>4</sup> I consider the description of *core relational themes* provided by Lazarus ([1991]) to be highly perfectible. But to provide a better account is not a job for this article. What matters for my purposes is that there exist good descriptions of formal objects, roughly approximated by Lazarus' ([1991]) preliminary descriptions. On this issue, see also (D'Arms and Jacobson [2003]).

of cognitivism in philosophy is that emotions are judgments.<sup>5</sup> 'I still hold the claim that emotions are judgments', states Solomon ([2003], p. 210). Nussbaum ([2001], p. 4) writes that '[e]motions are appraisals or value judgments'. The following passage illustrates what kinds of judgments emotions are supposed to be:

'I am angry at John for taking [...] my car' entails that I believe that John has somehow wronged me [...] My anger is that judgment [...] If I do not find my situation awkward, I cannot be ashamed [...] If I do not judge that I have suffered a loss, I cannot be sad [...] to have an emotion is to hold a normative judgment about one's situation (Solomon [2003], p. 8)

Solomon's ([2003]) suggestion is that anger is the judgment that a demeaning offence against me and mine has been perpetrated, shame is the judgment that I failed to live up to an ego ideal, sadness is the judgment that I have experienced an irrevocable loss, fear is the judgment that something dangerous is present, guilt is the judgment that I transgressed a moral imperative, and so on.<sup>6</sup>

The thesis that emotions are judgments in this sense seemed to provide a solution to the perceived problems of the feeling theory. Firstly, in the absence of perceptions of autonomic bodily changes, emotions can still be instantiated as long as the appropriate judgments are instantiated. Second, judgments seem to make sense of the intentionality of emotions. If my anger that John took my car amounts to my judgment that John's taking my car is an offence against me or mine, then my anger is about whatever my judgment is about: John's taking my car (material object) and an offence against me or mine (formal object).

In light of these comparative advantages, the cognitivist theory of emotions soon became very popular. The success of cognitivism, however, has not gone unchallenged.

### 3 Blindfright

The rallying cry of the anti-cognitivism movement is that the assimilation of emotions with judgments overintellectualizes the emotions. My first objective is to give the overintellectualization charge the best run for its money. In this section, I present a new counterexample to cognitivism consisting of a case of fear elicited without so much as awareness of the eliciting stimulus. I expect cognitivists to find my counterexample inconclusive. But this is precisely the

<sup>5</sup> This is the version of cognitivism I call Constitutive Cognitivism. In Section 6, I will discuss other varieties of cognitivism.

<sup>6</sup> I used Lazarus' ([1991]) descriptions of core relational themes instead of Solomon's original ones.

problem. If even fear without awareness of what one is afraid of qualifies as a judgment, hardly anything will convince a cognitivist that there exist emotions that are not judgments. This will lead me to argue that the standard argumentative strategy put in place to explain away counterexamples amounts to a pyrrhic victory for cognitivism.

Anti-cognitivists have often considered the fact that emotions can be triggered quickly and automatically to be a problem for cognitivism. As James put it, '[i]f we abruptly see a dark moving form in the woods, our heart stops beating, and we catch our breath instantly and before any articulate idea of danger can arise' (James [1884], p. 196). Cognitivists have responded to this sort of criticism by pointing out that judgments can also be triggered quickly and automatically. For instance, the judgment that setting a human being on fire is wrong can be elicited as quickly and automatically as fear of a dark moving form in the woods.

I want to push the standard anti-cognitivist line one step further, and argue that fear can be triggered not only quickly and automatically, but also by stimuli emoters are unaware of seeing.<sup>7</sup> This presents cognitivism with a potentially harder case to handle. What is missing in the sort of fear I describe is not just the laborious cognitive processing of fearful objects of awareness (the 'dark moving form in the woods' case). More radically, it is the very presence of awareness of fearful objects.

Let *blindfright* be the activation of the fear system in response to visually presented information registered without awareness. I understand awareness as the ability to make a verbal report in forced choice situations. Registering visually presented information without awareness is therefore registering information through the sense of vision without being able to report on the information registered even when forced to guess. I picked the word 'blindfright' to emphasize that what is being elicited is a variety of *fear* in circumstances analogous to those in which *blindsight* is manifested (see below).<sup>8</sup>

Fear is a member of the family of *basic emotions*, biologically based and pan-cultural suites of short-term, coordinated, and automated responses that include measurable physiological changes, stereotyped facial expressions, and action tendencies (Ekman [1999]; Griffiths [1997]).<sup>9</sup> Unlike other basic

<sup>7</sup> I want to thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to emphasize the differences between merely automatic emotions and the affective phenomenon I describe below.

<sup>8</sup> Blindfright is not really a kind of *fright*, i.e., intense fear. The terminological imprecision of calling a form of fairly mild fear (blind)fright is a price worth paying in order to emphasize the important analogies between blindfright and blindsight.

<sup>9</sup> There are forms of fear which do not fit the 'basic emotion' paradigm. For instance, fear that one will lose a chess match, progressively developed in the course of the game and lasting for several hours would not qualify as a basic emotion.

emotions, fear is fairly well understood at the neurobiological level (LeDoux [1996]; Davis [2000]). For instance, it has consistently been reported that fear-relevant stimuli generate differential amygdala activation (Aggleton [1992]; Adolphs *et al.* [2005]; Barrett *et al.* [2007]).<sup>10</sup> It has also been convincingly argued that there are dedicated neural pathways for at least some forms of fear (Le Doux [1996]).

For purposes of scientific investigation, the category of *basic fear* is still too broad. Fear scientists distinguish between different forms of fear associated with the detection of different degrees of *threat imminence*. Fanselow ([1994]), for instance, distinguished between *preencounter*, *postencounter* and *circa-strike* fear, characterized by partially distinct physiological profiles. Preencounter fear is the sort of fear a prey animal experiences when foraging for food in an area where a predator has attacked in the past. The environment is continuously scanned, skin conductance responses (SCRs) increase, heart rate (HR) decreases, and orienting behaviors are manifested. When the presence of an actual predator is registered, postencounter fear ensues, characterized by further increase of SCRs, decrease of HR, emergence of a potentiated startle reflex and of a freezing behavioral response. When the predator finally attacks, the sympathetic nervous system takes over, SCRs and HRs show a dramatic boost, and the prey animal displays the fight-or-flight behaviors commonly associated with fear.

Here is the key point: enhanced SCRs, potentiated startle reflex and differential amygdala activation can be elicited by visual stimuli registered without awareness. This is to say that there is such a thing as *blindfright*: subjects can register fear-relevant properties of a stimulus and become afraid of it without being aware of seeing it, just as in blindsight one can register the color and shape of a stimulus without being aware of seeing it.

Blindfright has been detected in both normal subjects and brain-damaged patients. This is important, because it suggests that the phenomenon is not simply a by-product of a dysfunctional vision system. The experimental setting that applies to normal subjects is that of backward masking experiments (Marcel [1983]), where a target stimulus and a masking stimulus are presented in rapid succession. When the interval between the two presentations is 30 ms or less, the masking stimulus *masks* the target stimulus entirely. In response to questions, normal subjects report that they are not aware of being exposed to the masked visual stimulus, and perform at chance level when forced to guess.

The second experimental setting concerns patients with damaged primary visual cortex. As it is widely known, some such patients maintain an

<sup>10</sup> Fear is not the only emotion to produce differential amygdala activation. See (Whalen and Phelps [2009]) for a state-of-the-art account of the role of the human amygdala in emotional processing.

impressive range of abilities with respect to force-guessing the position, color, shape, and orientation of visual stimuli in their blindfield (Weiskrantz [1986]; Stoerig and Cowey [1997]). In the last few years, a whole new range of residual affective abilities has been discovered in blindsighted patients.<sup>11</sup>

What is emerging from this converging body of research is that fear can be elicited both when normal subjects are exposed to masked fear-relevant stimuli and when brain-damaged patients are exposed to fear-relevant stimuli in their blindfield. For example, it has been demonstrated that a snake-phobic subject exposed to masked pictures of snakes produces enhanced SCRs, whereas this effect does not occur with neutral stimuli (Öhman and Soares [1993]).<sup>12</sup> In addition, a normal subject who acquired a conditioned fear response to images of spiders, snakes and threatening faces will also maintain enhanced SCRs to such images when masked (Esteves *et al.* [1994]; Öhman and Soares [1998]). Furthermore, subjects who have acquired a conditioned fear response to images of angry faces show amygdala activation under masking, whereas in the absence of fear-conditioning the same masked angry faces produce no amygdala activation (Morris *et al.* [1999]). Amygdala activation is also detected when subjects are exposed to masked fearful faces, whereas masked happy faces do not have a differential impact on the amygdala (Whalen *et al.* [1998]). Finally, subjects can acquire a conditioned fear response—as revealed by enhanced SCRs—to *masked* images of spiders, snakes and threatening faces (Esteves *et al.* [1994]; Öhman and Soares [1998]).

These results are nicely complemented by findings on patients with damaged primary visual cortex. These patients show amygdala activation when an angry face to which they have been fear conditioned is presented in their blindfield, but no such activation is detected with respect to the same ‘unseen’ angry faces in the absence of conditioning (Morris *et al.* [2001]). Similarly, amygdala activation is detected when fearful faces are presented in the blindfield, an effect disappearing when happy faces are shown instead (Morris *et al.* [2001]). An especially interesting experiment concerned a patient with Anton’s syndrome, the combination of bilateral blindsight with agnosia. The patient ‘was unable to grasp objects held into his visual field and did not orient to new visual stimuli, even when asked to do so’ (Hamm *et al.* [2003], p. 269). Despite failing to manifest the abilities commonly displayed by blindsighted patients, the patient *did* acquire a conditioned fear response—as revealed by a potentiated startle reflex—to a neutral stimulus, i.e., the image of

<sup>11</sup> De Gelder *et al.* ([1999]) refer to this body of literature with the term ‘affective blindsight’, to indicate that the experimental conditions are similar to those of blindsight, but the abilities detected are *affective* in nature.

<sup>12</sup> Altered SCRs, potentiated startle reflex, and altered HR are considered to be the main physiological changes characterizing fear. See (Öhman and Wiens [2003]) for a defense of this view.

an airplane, visually presented in his bilaterally blind field (Hamm *et al.* [2003]).

The experiments on masked and blind exposure to fear-relevant stimuli seem to me to provide strong support for the thesis that the fear system can be activated by means of information acquired visually, but without awareness. A few objections, however, could be raised against this interpretation.

The first may be that blindfright is not really fear because there is no distinctive phenomenology attached to it. On this view, blindfright is a set of neurophysiological responses similar to those of fear, but it is not really fear. My first response is that it is not clear that blindfright lacks a phenomenology entirely. Experimenters have generally not reported data on the subjective experience associated with being mask exposed or blind-exposed to fear-relevant stimuli. This being said, the limited data available suggest that experimental subjects may become aware of being afraid, without being aware of the reason *why* they are afraid. For instance, after exposure to masked images of the objects of their phobias, phobic subjects in (Öhman and Soares [1993]) state they feel *high arousal, high disliking, and lack of control*. Notably, the way phobics rate their feelings on the arousal/disliking/control scale when exposed to, respectively, *unmasked* and *masked* phobic images are very similar. In the masked case, bodily feedback presumably informs them that their bodies are primed to deal with a threat they are unaware of.

My second response is that, even if there is nothing it is like to undergo blindfright (at least on some occasions), lack of phenomenology does not necessarily entail lack of emotion. To think otherwise is to subscribe to what is at this point a minority view on the relation between emotion and feeling. Most leading theories of emotions—e.g. cognitivism, affect program theory, Neo-Jamesianism—now allow for the possibility that some instances of emotion may have no experiential qualities. If this is right, blindfright can still qualify as a genuine form of fear in the absence of blindfright qualia, provided it fulfils properties of fear other than its characteristic phenomenology.<sup>13</sup>

A second objection is that blindfright not only lacks a phenomenology, but it also lacks other key properties of prototypical fear episodes. This may be another reason to think that blindfright has some similarities with fear, but is not really fear. The objection presupposes that the instantiation of emotions

<sup>13</sup> To conclude that blindfright is not a form of fear because it lacks a phenomenology would be like concluding that blindsight is not a form of sight because it lacks a phenomenology. In both cases, an opportunity to study what happens to mental states when conscious experience and ecological function come apart would be lost. As there is more to sight than what it is like to see, there is more to fear than what it is like to fear, namely a danger-detecting and danger-coping role.

commonly involves many, if not all, of their prototypical properties. On this view, fear episodes involve a suite of coordinated neurophysiological, phenomenological, and behavioral responses. On the contrary, emotion scientists have argued that ‘behavioral and physiological measurements in emotion often bear little relationship to each other, and are in turn poorly correlated with a verbal report of the subjective state’ (Lang [1993], p. 18). In other words, the degree to which the prototypical neurophysiological, phenomenological, and behavioral responses of an emotion are co-instantiated is significantly lower than our pre-theoretic intuitions would suggest (Barrett [2006]). The instantiation of an emotion by virtue of a small subset of its prototypical characteristics is the norm rather than the exception.<sup>14</sup>

The point is that the characteristics of blindfright are remarkably similar to those of one of the scientific explications of fear, namely postencounter fear (Fanselow [1994]). Just like postencounter fear, blindfright is characterized by differential amygdala activation, enhanced SCRs and potentiated startle activation.<sup>15</sup> It would be inconsistent to deny that blindfright is a form of fear while holding that postencounter fear is a form of fear. And to deny the latter because postencounter fear differs from a prototypical fear episode would amount to allowing ordinary intuitions about prototypical fear episodes to set the boundaries for the scientific exploration of fear. As convincingly argued by Griffiths ([1997]), emotion theory should not be hostage of ordinary language intuitions about the extension of emotion terms. The dissimilarity of postencounter fear (and blindfright) from prototypical fear episodes is not a good reason to conclude that emotion scientists, who routinely refer to *post-encounter fear* and what I have called *blindfright* as instances of fear, are either not speaking literally, or have changed the subject.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> A pathological example of poor correlation between physiological, behavioral, and verbal indexes is offered by patients afflicted by alexithymia (Lane *et al.* [1997]). Such patients are systematically unable to report on how they feel, failing to distinguish whether they feel, say, afraid or angry, even though they display physiological and behavioral manifestations characteristic of, respectively, fear or anger. I mention alexithymia because Lane *et al.* ([1997]) claim that it may be the ‘emotional equivalent of blindsight’. The analogy is very thin, because alexythimics are unaware of their emotions, whereas it is an open question whether blindfright subjects are similarly unaware. More importantly, there isn’t any similarity between the circumstances of elicitation of alexythymia and blindsight, whereas there is remarkable similarity between the circumstances of elicitation of blindsight and blindfright. The emotional equivalent of blindsight, I suggest, is blindfright rather than alexithymia.

<sup>15</sup> I am not aware of data concerning the behavioral changes associated with blindfright. This being said, it is likely that a subject who describes her feelings in terms of *high arousal*, *high disliking*, and *lack of control* (Öhman and Soares [1993]) will manifest behavioral changes. My prediction is that experimental subjects will show orienting behaviors and possibly the beginning of a freezing response, even though these responses are likely to be weaker than the ones shown in postencounter fear with respect to ‘seen’ stimuli.

<sup>16</sup> A further possible objection, recently presented by Starkey ([2007]), is that the conditions of elicitation of the experiments on emotional triggering without awareness are artificial, and consequently not relevant to figure out what emotions are like in cases in which they fulfill their proper functions. I disagree that experimental circumstances creating unusual eliciting

I conclude that blindfright, despite its differences from a prototypical fear episode, is indeed a form of fear. If so, it can qualify as a counterexample to the cognitivist theory of emotions.

#### 4 The Master Argument Against Cognitivism

A great many counterexamples to cognitivism are best understood as substitution instances of what I call the *Master Argument Against Cognitivism*:

- (1) For all  $p$ , judging that  $p$  presupposes that the judge satisfies requirements  $R_1, \dots, R_n$
  - (2) One can have emotion  $E$  without satisfying requirements  $R_1, \dots, R_n$
- Therefore,
- (3) To have emotion  $E$  is not necessarily to judge that  $p$

Premise (1) determines a set of requirements for the activity of formulating judgments. Premise (2) provides an example of an emotion  $E$  instantiated in violation of such requirements. The conclusion is that  $E$  is not necessarily a judgment that something is the case: there are tokens of emotion  $E$  that are not judgments. Notice that anti-cognitivists do not need to show that no emotions are judgments. Since cognitivism aims to tell us what *all* emotions are like, anti-cognitivists only need one counterexample. Over the last forty years, the debate between cognitivists and anti-cognitivists has focused on whether the Master Argument Against Cognitivism is sound once we flesh it out with specific propositions  $p$ , requirements  $R_1, \dots, R_n$  and emotions  $E$ .

Premise (1) has turned out to be the most contentious. Anti-cognitivists generally endorse a *conservative* understanding of judgment, according to which judging is engaging in a mental operation of *assent* with respect to a proposition  $p$ . The historical origin of this understanding of judgment can be traced back to the Stoic distinction between an *impression* (*phantasia*), a seeming that something is the case, and a *judgment* (*krisis*), a mental act of taking something to be the case (Sorabji [2000]). Whereas children, animals and adult humans are all capable of experiencing *impressions*, the Stoics argued, only human adults can *judge*, because judging requires the capacity

conditions for emotions do not shed light on what emotions are like in functionally normal eliciting conditions. The point of the experimental setting is precisely to bring up features of emotional processing which are hard to notice in normal cases, for instance that awareness of the stimuli can only explain part of the mechanism of emotional elicitation, since the emotion is triggered even without awareness. Moreover, even artificial eliciting conditions should count towards falsifying a theory aiming to describe what all emotions are like, without restrictions on their circumstances of elicitation. Insofar as blindfright counts as an emotion, a point Starkey ([2007]) would presumably not contest, we can use it as a counterexample against theories which aim to fill in the blank in universal statements such as 'for all emotions  $x$ ,  $x$  is \_\_\_'.

to assent (or withhold assent) to impressions which only comes with the faculty of *reason* (logos) (Sorabji [2000]).<sup>17</sup> For instance, one may have the visual impression that two lines have different length in a Müller-Lyer illusion, but refrain from judging that they have different length, because assent to the visual impression is withheld in light of background knowledge.

There are a number of distinctions between proponents of the conservative understanding of judgment that I won't get into. For my purposes, the conservative understanding of judgment can be broadly characterized by the assumptions that a judgment that *p* (a) is an expression of linguistic abilities, (b) presupposes conscious assent to *p*, (c) requires possession of the concepts featured in *p*<sup>18</sup> and it (d) affects behavior through practical reasoning by being combined with conative attitudes (Searle [1983]).<sup>19</sup>

If 'judgment' is understood along these lines, blindfright is a spectacular counterexample to cognitivism, because it appears to have *none* of the marks commonly associated with the conservative understanding of judgment. Far from being an expression of the truth-aiming linguistic ability to give or withhold conscious assent to concept-involving propositions, blindfright is an expression of the neural architecture of the fear system. There is growing evidence that some forms of fear rely on a quick and dirty neural pathway which by-passes the neo-cortex, projecting directly from the sensory cortex to the amygdala (LeDoux [1996]). Blindfright is likely to exploit such a pathway, the existence of which provides anatomical evidence that there are forms of fear, and consequently emotion, which do not presuppose *any* of the neo-cortical capacities associated with the conservative notion of judgment (e.g., language mastery, consciousness, concept possession, practical reasoning, etc.).

Blindfright, I conclude, represents a new substitution instance of the Master Argument Against Cognitivism:

- (1) Judging that danger is at hand presupposes language mastery, conscious assent, the possession of the concept of danger, and the ability to engage in practical inferences involving the danger concept.

<sup>17</sup> The Stoics thought that *logos* is acquired by humans at the age of fourteen (Sorabji [2000]).

<sup>18</sup> A common way to cash out the notion of concept possession is offered by Gareth Evans' ([1982]) *Generality Constraint*. According to this constraint, a subject *S* can be credited with possession of an *object concept* 'a' and of *property concept* 'P' insofar as *S* can exercise a and P in thought by entertaining, respectively, indefinitely many propositions of the form Pa, Qa, Ra for any property P, Q, R, . . . the subject can conceive of, and indefinitely many propositions of the form Pa, Pb, Pc for any object a, b, c, . . . the subject can conceive of.

<sup>19</sup> For instance, the judgment that Paris is the capital of France may lead one to going to Paris if combined with the desire to go to the capital of France, but it may lead one to refraining from going to Paris if combined with the desire to stay away from all European capitals. I will come back to the distinction between cognitive and conative attitudes in Section 6.3.

- (2) Blindfright is a form of fear which does not presuppose either language mastery, or conscious assent, or the possession of the concept of danger, or the ability to engage in practical inferences involving the danger concept.

Therefore,

- (3) Fear is not necessarily the judgment that danger is at hand.

The argument is valid, so I expect cognitivists to call its soundness into question. One option would be to reject premise (2), and argue either that blindfright is not fear, or that blindfright does presuppose the abilities listed in premise (2). Arguing that blindfright is not really fear is not a viable strategy, for reasons I considered in Section 3. Arguing that blindfright presupposes language mastery, conscious assent, concept possession, and the ability to engage in practical inferences strikes me as an equally hopeless strategy. There is no evidence that the neo-cortex, with which such abilities are associated, plays any role in the elicitation of blindfright.

This leaves open to the cognitivist camp a second option: to deny premise (1). A cognitivist may propose that, relative to a more *liberal* understanding of judgment, blindfright is the judgment that danger is at hand. The cognitivist may ask: Why shouldn't we think of blindfright as a nonlinguistic, unconscious assent to the proposition that danger is present, relax our requirements on concept possession and accept that a judgment can be intrinsically motivational? On this view, blindfright is nothing more than an interesting example of how the judgment that something is dangerous can go subcortical. What neurobiologists have discovered, the cognitivist may suggest, is not that cognitivism is a flawed theory of the emotions, but rather that the judgment that danger is at hand can be formulated without relying on any of the abilities associated with the neo-cortex.

## 5 The Elastic Strategy

The strategy of fine-tuning the notion of 'judgment' has been the standard strategy employed to protect cognitivism from counterexamples. I call it the Elastic Strategy, to emphasize that the conservative notion of judgment described in the previous section is progressively 'stretched' to accommodate counterexamples. The failure to explain what is wrong with the Elastic Strategy strikes me as a central weakness of the anti-cognitivist movement. I intend to remedy it in two steps. Firstly, I provide textual evidence that the Elastic Strategy is the key tool developed by cognitivists to reject substitution instances of the Master Argument Against Cognitivism. Second, I argue that the Elastic Strategy makes cognitivism at best trivially true, and at worst unfalsifiable. To appreciate the extent to which the notion of 'judgment' has

been stretched in order to deal with counterexamples, let us consider a roster of five influential anti-cognitivist arguments:<sup>20</sup>

- (1) Animals and infants can have emotions, but they do not have the language mastery required for giving or withholding assent to the impression that something is the case. Therefore, emotions are not judgments.
- (2) Emotions often display a distinctive bodily phenomenology, but there is no distinctive way it is like to judge that something is the case. Therefore, emotions are not judgments.
- (3) Emotions are causally efficacious on their own, whereas judgments need to be accompanied by a desire in order to impact behavior. Therefore, emotions are not judgments.
- (4) Emotions can be elicited unconsciously and without deliberation, whereas judgments are deliberate and conscious. Therefore, emotions are not judgments.
- (5) Emotions can be insensitive to judgments about what it is the case, whereas judgments are sensitive to other judgments about what is the case. Therefore, emotions are not judgments.

Argument (1) moves from the realization that creatures without language emote, from which it follows that emotions cannot be judgments, *if judgments presuppose language mastery*. The cognitivist reply to (1) is to affirm that judgments do not require language mastery. Solomon ([2003], p. 187), for instance, writes: ‘I take it as uncontroversial that animals make all sorts of judgments (e.g., whether something is worth eating, or worth chasing, or worth courting), but none of these are articulated or “spelled out”, nor are they subject to reflection’. Nussbaum ([2001], p. 37), who begins from a general endorsement of the Stoic account of judgment according to which ‘a judgment is an assent to an appearance’, ends up liberalizing the notion of assent to accommodate the case of nonlinguistic (and prelinguistic) creatures: ‘When we understand assent in [a] broader way [...] we [...] will ultimately be able to ascribe emotions to young children and nonhuman animals, who, to a greater or lesser extent, lack the capacity to withhold assent from the appearances with which life confronts. Whenever they accept a way the world seems as the way it is, they can be said to have judgment in my sense’ (pp. 38–9).

Argument (2) moves from the realization that emotions often involve distinctive bodily feelings, from which it follows that emotions cannot be judgments, *if judgments do not have a distinctive bodily phenomenology*.

<sup>20</sup> See (De Sousa [1987]; Greenspan [1988]; Deigh [1994]; Griffiths [1997]; Goldie [2000]; DeLancey [2001]; D’Arms and Jacobson [2003]; Roberts [2003]; Robinson [2004]; Prinz [2004]) for more extended discussions of the various arguments.

The cognitivist reply to (2) is to affirm that judgments can encompass a distinctive bodily phenomenology. The most striking formulation of this point can be found in Solomon, who writes that '[o]ne can, and sometimes must, speak of bodily judgments' (Solomon [2003], p. 213). Nussbaum ([2001], p. 45) echoes this position: 'I am conceiving of judging as dynamic, not static [...] So why would such a dynamic faculty be unable to house, as well, the disorderly motions of [emotion]?' The disorderly motions of emotion Nussbaum refers to are what the Stoics called the 'movements of the soul', which included contractions and expansions, to be understood as physiological discharges and bodily sensations (Cooper [1999], pp. 453–61).

Argument (3) moves from the realization that emotions have a constitutive motivational dimension, from which it follows that emotions cannot be judgments, *if judgments lack a constitutive motivational dimension*. The cognitivist reply to (3) is to affirm that judgments can have a constitutive motivational dimension. Solomon is once again the most explicit on this matter. He writes that 'judgments in emotions are judgments which have a quasi conceptual connection with desires', adding that 'one might analyze the various emotions as judgmental structures enclosing a core desire which is both their motivation and their "conatus"' (Solomon [2003], pp. 105–6). The idea here is that the sorts of judgments which emotions are always come accompanied by a desire—hence the quasi-conceptual connection—which takes care of the motivational aspect of emotions.

Argument (4) moves from the realization that emotions can be elicited unconsciously and without deliberation, from which it follows that emotions cannot be judgments, *if judgments are deliberate and conscious*. The cognitivist reply to (4) is to affirm that judgments can also be nondeliberate and unconscious. According to Solomon, judgments are not 'necessarily conscious or deliberative or even articulate' (Solomon [2003], p. 210). Nussbaum points out that assent to an impression 'is not to be imagined as an act that we always deliberately perform' ([2001], p. 38) and emphasizes that by calling her theory of emotions cognitive 'I do not mean to imply the presence of elaborate calculation, of computation, or even of reflexive self-awareness' ([2001], p. 23).

Argument (5) moves from the realization that emotions are sometimes cognitively impenetrable, namely not sensitive to judgments about what is the case, from which it follows that emotions cannot be judgments, *if judgments are not cognitively impenetrable*. The cognitivist reply to (5) is to affirm that judgments can also be cognitively impenetrable. Nussbaum ([2001], p. 35) acknowledges that '[i]t appears that people sometimes change their minds about the beliefs that underlie their emotions, but continue to have the emotions nonetheless'. She gives the example of Sandra, who used to be 'terrified by a dog during childhood', and subsequently learns that 'dogs are no

danger to her well being', while nonetheless still being afraid of them. Anti-cognitivists take this to show that fear is not the judgment that danger is at hand, because the emotion can co-exist with the judgment that danger is not at hand. Nussbaum, on the other hand, argues that examples such as the one of Sandra 'do not support such a conclusion, for the simple reason that we often hold contradictory beliefs' ([2001], p. 35). Under this view, Sandra holds two contradictory beliefs, one that dogs are not dangerous (when asked to assent to the proposition) and the other than dogs are dangerous (when interacting with dogs).

The point of this roster of anti-cognitivist arguments and cognitivist rebuttals is to show that the Elastic Strategy is indeed the primary tool used by cognitivists to defend their theory from counterexamples. In general terms, the Elastic Strategy works as follows. The anti-cognitivist brings up a property P that emotions have (e.g., being causally efficacious, as per argument (3)) and judgments conservatively understood lack, or a property Q that judgments conservatively understood have (e.g., requiring language possession, as per argument (1)) and emotions lack. On this basis, the anti-cognitivist concludes that emotions are not judgments, and that cognitivism is therefore falsified as a general theory of emotions. The Elastic Strategy consists of arguing that, under a liberal understanding of judgment, judgments also have property P (they can be causally efficacious, as per Solomon's reply to argument (3)), or lack property Q (they do not require language possession, as per Nussbaum's reply to argument (1)).

Crucially, the addition of property P and the subtraction of property Q do not derive from a preexisting theory of judgment. Rather, they are offered in a piecemeal fashion in response to anti-cognitivist pressures, with the only justification that the notion of 'judgment' is allegedly flexible enough to allow for them. As Solomon puts it, '[j]udgments seem to me to be, all in all, the most versatile candidate in the cognitive analysis of emotion' ([2003], p. 188). The versatility at hand amounts to the ability to acquire whatever property P emotions may be found to have and lose whatever property Q emotions may be found to lack while still qualifying as a judgment.

There are two main problems with the Elastic Strategy. The first is that it has generated a massive amount of talking at cross purposes between cognitivists and anti-cognitivists, who have gone back and forth for decades respectively affirming and denying that emotions are judgments while meaning different things by 'judgment'. This impasse can be exemplified in miniature form with respect to blindfright. Relative to the conservative understanding of judgment endorsed by anti-cognitivists, blindfright is a counterexample to the thesis that emotions are judgments, because it lacks all marks commonly associated with judgments. Relative to the liberal understanding of judgment endorsed by cognitivists, blindfright is an example of how the judgment that

danger is at hand can be instantiated in the absence of awareness of the eliciting stimulus and without the involvement of the neo-cortex.

The second and more substantive problem is that the Elastic Strategy has insulated cognitivism from counterexamples at a high price, namely making it at best trivially true, and at worst unfalsifiable.<sup>21</sup> Consider first what would be required to *falsify* the thesis that emotions are judgments of a certain type T. One would have to either find a judgment of type T which is not an emotion, or an emotion which is not a judgment of type T. To do so, however, one would need a theory of what it is to be a judgment of type T that is independent of the cognitivist theory of emotions.

To the best of my knowledge, cognitivists have not offered a substantive theory of what it is to be a judgment of type T independent of their theory of emotions. They occasionally endorse a broad understanding of, say, judgment as the assent to an impression (e.g. Nussbaum [2001]), but they ultimately explain what counts as assenting to an impression in light of what they take an emotion to be.

If emotions do not require language, have a distinctive phenomenology, comprise a motivational dimension, are cognitively impenetrable, and so forth, *the same is true of assents to impressions*. What drives the understanding of judgment are whatever properties emotions are found to have. Notably, the properties emotion-judgments end up acquiring are not exportable to any other species of the genus 'judgment'.

But here is the rub: if the type of judgment T that an emotion is supposed to be is described in light of a pre-existing theory of emotions and progressively modified in response to counterexamples, the thesis that emotions are judgments becomes irrefutable. The historical record of the debate between cognitivists and anti-cognitivists shows that all instances of emotions eventually manage to find room in the unboundedly malleable and arguably unprincipled notion of judgment presupposed by cognitivists. As Nussbaum ([2001], p. 44) explicitly puts it, 'if the emotion is not there, we are entitled to say that the judgments are not fully or not really there'. Conversely, if the emotion *is* there, so is the judgment. How are we going to be able to falsify a theory so conceived?

Cognitivists may retort that the malleability of the notion of judgment is neither unprincipled nor unbounded, and reject the irrefutability charge. They may propose that even though animals and infants can formulate judgments under the liberal understanding of judgment they recommend, trees and rocks cannot. And they may further add that, even though judgments may be non-deliberate, unconscious and subcortical, they still require a brain, so unicellular organisms could not possibly issue them. Limitations of this sort may

<sup>21</sup> I want to thank an anonymous referee for suggesting that I consider the triviality option alongside the unfalsifiability one.

indicate that cognitivism is not *literally* an irrefutable thesis. If a tree or a unicellular organism were shown to have an emotion, the cognitivist theory would be falsified even under the liberal notion of judgment cognitivists have so far proposed.

I am not sure cognitivists would react to the alleged counterexamples by giving in. They may well suggest that there is a sense in which trees and unicellular organisms also make judgments (e.g., they ‘judge’ that the light comes from a certain direction). These sorts of modifications to the notion of judgment do not strike me as significantly more radical than those already proposed in response to arguments (1)–(5).

But let us accept for the sake of argument that there can be counterexamples to the thesis that emotions are judgments, even under the notion of judgment proposed by cognitivists. If this is the case, cognitivism can be upgraded from being unfalsifiable to being trivially true. If judgments are the sorts of things that animals and infants (but not trees, rocks and unicellular organisms) can formulate, then they can be bodily, unconsciously elicited, directly motivational, cognitively impenetrable, and subcortical, it is hard to imagine anyone disagreeing with the thesis that emotions are, in this extremely liberal sense, judgments.

As I will argue, cognitivism has much more to offer than a trivial truth. To appreciate its genuine insights, we need to get rid of the Elastic Strategy, and make a number of distinctions cognitivists have failed to draw.

## 6 Three Varieties of Cognitivism

My analysis at this point of the article broadens; I want to include in my discussion not only the version of cognitivism prevalent in philosophy, but also versions of the cognitivist theory of emotions proposed in the sciences of mind. Whereas cognitivist philosophers discuss emotions primarily in terms of ‘judgments’, psychologists and neurobiologists discuss them in terms of ‘appraisals’ or ‘cognitions’.

The assimilation of emotions with judgments/appraisals/cognitions has had three basic functions in the history of cognitivism. Failure to keep them distinct has led to much confusion. The first is to account for the *essential nature* of emotions, the second is to account for the *cause* of emotions, and the third is to account for the *representational content* of emotions. My objective is to sort insights from blindspots of each variety of cognitivism.

### 6.1 Constitutive Cognitivism

*Constitutive Cognitivism* is the thesis that emotions are judgments of a particular sort. It is the variety of philosophical cognitivism I have focused on so

far, and the one the Master Argument Against Cognitivism attempts to falsify. The basic thesis of Constitutive Cognitivism is the following:

*Constitutive Cognitivism:* For all emotions *E*, *E* is theoretically identified with the judgment that the formal object of *E* is instantiated (by some material object *O*)<sup>22</sup>

For example, according to Constitutive Cognitivism to judge that a bear is running towards you and that this constitutes danger is to fear the bear, to judge that your grandmother died and that this constitutes an irrevocable loss is to be sad about her death, to judge that you have been caught in bed with a woman other than your wife and that this constitutes a failure to live up to an ego ideal is to be ashamed about being caught in bed with a woman other than your wife, and so on.

Constitutive Cognitivism is what philosophical cognitivists generally have in mind when they assimilate emotions with judgments. After having defended her liberalized notion of judgment, Nussbaum ([2001], pp. 43–4) writes that ‘we are in a position to conclude not only that judgments of the sort we have described are necessary constituent elements in the emotion, but also that they are sufficient’. Solomon ([2003], p. 8) mirrors this position when he writes that ‘[m]y anger-at-John-for-stealing-my-car is inseparable from my judgment that John in so doing wronged me [...] My anger is my judgment that John has wronged me’.

Constitutive Cognitivism is afflicted by what I call the *Problem of Multiple Components*. Consider an episode of intense anger directed by a scholar towards the colleague who informed her that she was denied tenure. At first blush, we can distinguish in the complex phenomenon that is anger several parts: an *evaluative* component (e.g., evaluating being denied tenure as a slight), a *physiological* component (e.g., increased heart rate and blood pressure), a *phenomenological* component (e.g., an unpleasant feeling), an *expressive* component (e.g., fixed stare, loud voice, erected body), a *physical action* component (e.g., insulting, storming out of the room), and a *mental action* component (e.g., focusing attention, planning an appeal, remembering previous slights).

In the presence of this multiplicity of heterogeneous parts, the identification of emotions with judgments leads to two equally undesirable alternatives. If judgments are conservatively understood, as suggested by anti-cognitivists,

<sup>22</sup> The parenthetical is due to the fact that, even though emotions generally have material objects, they do not have them all the time. In objectless anxiety, for instance, the world at large appears to be threatening, without any object *in particular* appearing to be threatening. Cases of this sort can be handled in one of three ways. Objectless emotions can be handed out to a theory of moods, or they can be considered to be emotions with peculiar material objects (e.g., the world at large), or they can be considered to be emotions without material objects. The discussion of which alternative is best lies outside the scope of this article.

Constitutive Cognitivism is falsified on a grand scale, both for its overintellectualization of the evaluative component (think of the evaluative component of blindfright, which does not even involve awareness), and for its inability to capture all nonevaluative components of emotions (think of the physiological discharges of blindfright). If judgments are understood as proposed by cognitivists, on the other hand, evaluative and nonevaluative components are squeezed *by fiat* into the notion of judgment. As I have argued in the previous section, the price to pay for judgments to become subcortical, bodily, unconscious, cognitively impenetrable, and so on is that Constitutive Cognitivism becomes (at best) trivially true.

A cognitivist may ask: why is this so bad? Shouldn't we gladly accept that in this limited sense Constitutive Cognitivism is true? The trouble with settling for the thesis that emotions are judgments very broadly conceived is that we get little understanding of the emotions out of it. When we search for a theoretical identifier for emotion *E*, we are not looking for a placeholder to designate the complex condition *C* whose fulfilment makes something an instance of *E*. We are looking for that very condition *C*, in all of its complexity. Introducing a seemingly unitary construct such as judgment (or appraisal or cognition for that matter), and turning it into a mongrel of evaluative, physiological, phenomenological, expressive, behavioral and mental components leads us to lose track of the way in which such components contribute toward something being an emotion *E*. It becomes unclear what really is necessary and sufficient, if anything, for *E* to be instantiated.<sup>23</sup>

Cognitivists such as Nussbaum ([2001], p. 196) are fond of saying that emotions can 'be defined in terms of judgment alone'. But this qualifies as false advertisement, because we are not told which complex of evaluative, physiological, phenomenological, expressive, behavioral, and mental components must be fulfilled in order to be a judgment of that type. This is the equivalent of saying that to be water it is necessary and sufficient to be *X*, list a number of properties *X* has (e.g., it is transparent) and a number of properties *X* lacks (e.g., it is not combustible), keep silent on what condition must be fulfilled for being *X*, and conclude that one has defined water 'in terms of *X* alone'.

Constitutive Cognitivism, I conclude, faces a *Placeholder Blindspot* fatal to its prospects of success. This is the flaw of wrongly assuming that the identification of emotions with judgments—understood as *placeholders* of unspecified logical form for a heterogeneous collection of component parts—can

<sup>23</sup> There are good Wittgensteinian reasons to be sceptical about the possibility that the logical form of the condition of membership *C* for ordinary emotion categories such as fear, shame, guilt, etc. will take the form of a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient properties for being *E*. For alternative proposals grounded in the prototype theory of concepts, see (Fehr and Russell [1984]; Ben-Ze'ev [2000]).

really tell us what emotions are. Constitutive Cognitivism does not shed more light on what emotions are than a mere list of prototypical emotion components would do.

The main novelty of my argument against Constitutive Cognitivism is that it *cannot* be evaded through the application of the Elastic Strategy. This is because I have argued that the Elastic Strategy is not the solution to cognitivism's problems. The Elastic Strategy *is* the problem.

## 6.2 Etiological Cognitivism

In the sciences of mind, the notion at the core of cognitivist accounts of the emotions is that of 'appraisal' (or 'cognitive appraisal' or 'cognition'). Broadly speaking, an *appraisal* is 'an evaluation of the personal significance of what is happening in an encounter with the environment' (Lazarus [2001], p. 40). Whereas 'judgment' is commonly taken by philosophical cognitivists to refer to the emotion as a whole, 'appraisal' designates only its evaluative component. This leads me to introduce a second variety of cognitivism whose basic tenet is the following:

*Etiological Cognitivism*: for all *E*, emotion *E* is caused by the appraisal that the formal object of *E* is instantiated (by some material object *O*)

Consider fear, sadness and shame once again. According to Etiological Cognitivism, appraising that danger is instantiated by a bear running towards you is the cause of fear, appraising that your grandmother's death instantiates an irrevocable loss is the cause of sadness, and appraising that your being caught in bed with another woman by your wife instantiates a failure to live up to an ego ideal is the cause of shame. For Etiological Cognitivism, appraisals are causes and possibly component parts of emotions, rather than their essence as proposed by Constitutive Cognitivism.

Whereas Constitutive Cognitivism is the standard bearer of the cognitivist research program in philosophy, Etiological Cognitivism has been championed and developed primarily by psychologists.<sup>24</sup> The notion of appraisal,

<sup>24</sup> This being said, Etiological Cognitivism is hinted at in the philosophical literature as well, without being clearly distinguished from Constitutive Cognitivism. For instance, Solomon writes: 'All emotions presuppose or have as their preconditions, certain sorts of cognitions—an awareness of danger in fear, recognition of an offense in anger [. . .] if a person is demonstrably ignorant of a certain state of affairs or facts, he or she cannot have certain emotions' (Solomon [1993], p. 11). Cognitions of danger or offense are in this case conceived as *causal preconditions* for emotions, rather than as *theoretical identifiers* of, respectively, fear and anger. Nussbaum also refers to an interpretation of her theory along the lines of Etiological Cognitivism in this passage: 'To call an emotion cognitive [. . .] is just to say that it involves processing of information, and in the case of my theory some sort of rudimentary appraisal of the situation relative to the agent's goals' (Nussbaum [2001], p. 115). The rudimentary appraisal of the situation relative to the agent's goals is to be understood as the cause of the emotional response, not what is necessary and sufficient for having the emotion as stated by Constitutive Cognitivism.

implicitly present in the work of a great many emotion theorists since Aristotle, became the object of scientific investigation with the work of psychologists Magda Arnold ([1960]) and Richard Lazarus ([1964], [1991]).<sup>25</sup> Arnold ([1960], p. 171) wrote that '[t]o arouse an emotion, the object must be appraised as affecting me in some way, affecting me personally as an individual with my particular experience and my particular aims'. She proceeded to identify the properties of emotional appraisal, describing it as 'direct, immediate, nonreflective, nonintellectual, automatic, "instinctive", "intuitive"' (p. 175).<sup>26</sup> Call this form of emotional appraisal *primitive*.

Lazarus ([1991], [2001]) added to Arnold's ([1960]) picture the idea that appraisal is a *structured process* made of parts.<sup>27</sup> Lazarus organized such parts under two headings: *primary appraisal*, which aims to determine whether any of the subject's goals are at stake, and *secondary appraisal*, which aims to determine how to cope with the specific form taken by the furthering or thwarting of the subject's goals.

More specifically, primary appraisal comprises three components: (i) an appraisal of *goal-relevance*, aiming to establish 'whether an encounter is viewed by a person as relevant to well-being' (Lazarus [2001], p. 55), (ii) an appraisal of *goal-congruence and incongruence*, aiming to establish 'whether the conditions of an encounter facilitate or thwart what the person wants', and (iii) an appraisal of *type of ego-involvement*, aiming to establish what kind of involvement of the ego is at stake, including 'self- and social esteem, moral values, ego-ideals, meanings and ideas, other persons and their well-being, life goals' (p. 57).

Secondary appraisal also comprises three components: (iv) an appraisal of *blame or credit*, aiming to establish 'who or what is responsible for a harm, threat, challenge or benefit' (p. 56), (v) an appraisal of *coping potential*, aiming to establish whether and how the person can 'ameliorate or eliminate a harm or threat or bring to fruition a challenge' (p. 56), and (vi) an appraisal of *future*

<sup>25</sup> All appraisal theories that have appeared in the last forty years are 'based, at least in part, on the pioneering efforts of Arnold and Lazarus' (Scherer *et al.* [2001], p. 28).

<sup>26</sup> Arnold also compared appraisals with 'sense judgments', and contrasted them with 'intellectual judgments': 'When the elephant tests the ground with his foot, he makes a sense judgment. When the physicist tests a hypothesis by an experiment, he makes intellectual judgments. What we call appraisal or estimate is close to such a sense judgment' (Arnold [1960], p. 175).

<sup>27</sup> In one of the earliest experiments on the nature of appraisal, Speisman *et al.* ([1964]) showed that subjects exposed to a film depicting what looked like a painful ritual operation on the genitalia of the young members of an African tribe found the movie stressful to different degrees depending on its commentary. A *trauma* commentary, which emphasized the pain of the subjects involved, was associated with more stress than a *denial* commentary, which suggested that no pain was involved, which in turn was associated with more stress than an *intellectualization* commentary, which encouraged subjects to take a detached attitude on the events portrayed. Lazarus took this experiment to show that between a stressor event and the experience of stress there must be an intervening process, which in this case was assumed to be that which the commentary allowed to be manipulated experimentally.

*expectancy*, aiming to establish whether the ‘troubled person-environment relationship will change for better or worse’ (p. 57).

Lazarus’ thesis is that each emotion *E* is *caused* by a specific configuration of the six components of primary and secondary appraisals which combine to form the appraisal that the formal object of *E* is instantiated (by some material object *O*). Under the interpretation offered by Etiological Cognitivism, the formal object (or core relational theme) of *E* is ‘a terse synthesis of the separate appraisal components into a complex, meaning-centered whole’ (Lazarus [2001], p. 64). Here are some examples of configurations of appraisal components corresponding to distinct emotions:

Emotion	Primary and Secondary Appraisal Components
Sadness	Goal relevance, goal incongruence, ego involvement of some kind, low coping potential, no blame, unfavorable coping potential (open: future expectancy)
Anger	Goal relevance, goal incongruence, involvement of self or social esteem, blame (open: coping potential and future expectancy)
Fear	Goal relevance, goal incongruence (open: ego involvement, coping potential, blame or credit, coping potential, future expectancy)
Guilt	Goal relevance, goal incongruence, involvement of moral transgression, blame to oneself (open: coping potential and future expectancy)
Shame	Goal relevance, goal incongruence, involvement of ego-ideal, blame to oneself (open: coping potential and future expectancy)
Pride	Goal relevance, goal congruence, enhancement of self or social esteem, credit to self (open: coping potential and future expectancy)

**Figure 2.** Examples of the configurations of appraisal components underlying the causation of some common emotions.

Consider sadness. According to Lazarus’ ([1991], [2001]) theory, my sadness about my grandmother’s death, due to cancer, is caused by the primary appraisals that her death is relevant to my well being (goal relevance), that it thwarts what I want (goal incongruence), that it involves the well-being of a person dear to me (ego involvement), and by the secondary appraisals that no one is to blame for her death (no blame), and that there is nothing I can do about it (low coping potential) (with various possible future expectancy appraisals concerning whether my situation with respect to this event will change for better or for worse in the future).<sup>28</sup> There are several other theories

<sup>28</sup> The idea that appraisals are structured into component parts is echoed in the work of philosophical cognitivists. Solomon ([2004], p. 83) argues that an emotion ‘is a complex of judgments’, by which he means judgments roughly along the lines of primary and secondary appraisals. Nussbaum ([2001], pp. 27–8) points out that ‘[i]n order to have fear—as Aristotle already saw—I must believe that bad events are impending; that they are not trivially, but seriously bad; and that I am not entirely in control of warning them off. In order to have anger, I must have an even more complex set of beliefs: that some damage has occurred to

concerning the structure of appraisal, the discussion of which lies outside the scope of this paper (see Scherer *et al.* [2001] for a recent collection of papers on appraisal).

Now, is Etiological Cognitivism a good theory of emotional causation? This version of the cognitivist theory of emotions has been harshly criticized for characterizing appraisals as *necessary* for emotional causation.<sup>29</sup> Zajonc ([1980], [1984]) has influentially argued there are many instances of emotions not caused by what he labeled ‘cognitive appraisals’.<sup>30</sup> Consider a rabbit confronted by a snake. ‘If the rabbit is to escape’, Zajonc remarked, ‘the action must be undertaken long before the completion of even a *simple cognitive process*—before, in fact, the rabbit has fully established and verified that a nearby movement might reveal a snake in all its coiled glory’ ([1980], p. 156, emphasis added). Zajonc’s critique presupposes that ‘cognitive appraisal’ is a sophisticated form of information processing involving laborious cognitive engagement and requiring language possession. We can call this form of emotional appraisal *sophisticated*.

Zajonc’s point was that emotions are often caused so quickly that a sophisticated appraisal of the eliciting stimulus simply does not have the time to occur. Zajonc ([1980]) also pointed out that infants and animals have emotions but lack the resources to engage in sophisticated forms of information processing. With remarkable prescience, he also suggested that there may be neural pathways specifically dedicated to affect, a hypothesis that has received some degree of confirmation in recent years (see Phan *et al.* [2002] for a meta-analysis of the available evidence). For all these reasons, Zajonc concluded that Etiological Cognitivism is a false theory of emotional causation: appraisals are not needed to cause emotions.

Zajonc’s argument, however, involves a problematic assumption, namely that appraisals must necessarily be sophisticated. In point of historical fact, Zajonc’s understanding contrasts with the one proposed by Arnold, who conceived of appraisals as primitive (i.e., direct, immediate, nonreflective, nonintellectual, automatic, instinctive, intuitive, etc.). What I am suggesting, however, is not that we should follow Arnold in thinking of appraisals as

me or to something or someone close to me; that the damage is not trivial but significant; that it was done by someone; probably, that it was done willingly’. Notice the resemblance between these judgments and the species of primary and secondary appraisals proposed by Lazarus ([1991]).

<sup>29</sup> The *sufficiency* of appraisal is more commonly accepted. See (Siemer *et al.* [2007]) for a discussion of the evidence on the necessity and sufficiency of appraisal as a cause of emotion.

<sup>30</sup> See (Lazarus [1982], [1984]) for a response to Zajonc ([1980], [1984]). Zajonc’s critique, *mutatis mutandis*, has been reformulated in recent years by other psychologists (e.g., Frijda and Zeelenberg [2001]).

primitive. Etiological Cognitivism would be a false theory of emotional causation whether we think of appraisals as *primitive*, as suggested by Arnold ([1960]), or as *sophisticated*, as suggested by Zajonc ([1980]). This is because it is neither the case that emotion-causing appraisals are always primitive nor the case that they are always sophisticated. In the case of a rabbit noticing a snake, the fear-producing appraisal is indeed primitive. In the case of Othello becoming jealous of Cassio, however, the jealousy-producing appraisal is sophisticated, and it involves laborious cognitive engagement with the information provided by Iago.

A viable Etiological Cognitivism, I suggest, needs to conceive of ‘appraisal’ as lying on a *continuum* between primitive and sophisticated forms of information processing. Understood in these terms, Etiological Cognitivism contains an important insight: stimuli cause emotions not *per se*, but contingently upon how they are interpreted. Call this the *Perspectival Insight* of Etiological Cognitivism.

Etiological Cognitivism provides the best explanation for three related phenomena: (a) events of the same type can generate an emotion in some individuals but not in others, (b) events of the same type can generate different emotions in different individuals, (c) events of the same type can generate different emotions in the same individual in different circumstances. The explanation for (a)–(c) is that what causes emotions are not events in themselves, but events under some perspectival interpretation. Flying on airplanes causes no emotion in some people, elation in others, fear in others, and different emotions at different times in the same individual (e.g., before and after a class in panic management). The best explanation for these facts is that the event of flying on an airplane is *appraised* in different ways by different people and by the same person at different times.

I have argued that Etiological Cognitivism can be preserved from falsity if we think of appraisal as lying on a continuum. A few more wrinkles, however, have to be considered. Even though emotions are commonly caused by appraisals, there are exceptions. There is some evidence that emotions can be chemically induced, brought about by brain manipulations, and generated by simple facial feedback (Izard [1993]). The evidence is not conclusive at present, but there is no reason for a principled exclusion of forms of emotional causation other than appraisal.<sup>31</sup> This problem can be easily solved. The scope of

<sup>31</sup> Emotions fulfil their functions when they are elicited in some circumstances rather than in others. The appraisal process has precisely the job of matching emotions and circumstances of elicitation. Mechanisms of elicitation such as chemical induction, direct brain stimulation or facial feedback, on the other hand, do not represent the outcome of an evaluation of circumstances, so they are likely to constitute a residual case.

Etiological Cognitivism should be restricted. Instead of being a theory about *all instances* of emotional causation ('for all  $E$ '), Etiological Cognitivism is best interpreted as a theory about *standard instances* of emotion causation ('for most  $E$ ').

The main problem faced by Etiological Cognitivism in this restricted form is what I call the *Problem of Levels of Appraisal*. In order to encompass all standard cases of emotional causation, appraisal needs to be understood as occurring at different levels of cognitive complexity. As a result, the class of appraisals becomes very heterogeneous. Notice that the problem is not simply that there are important difference between, say, fear appraisal and jealousy appraisal, but that there are important differences within the classes of fear appraisals and jealousy appraisals themselves.

Consider for instance the appraisal of danger, identified by Etiological Cognitivism as the cause of fear. In the case of blindfright, the appraisal of danger is extremely quick (it occurs in less than 30 ms), mandatory, unconscious, insulated from higher forms of cognition, mediated by subcortical and evolutionarily old neural pathways, and most likely homologous to forms of appraisal of danger available to nonlinguistic and prelinguistic creatures.

Compare blindfright with the kind of fear experienced by a pilot who notices his airplane is becoming lighter, checks on several cockpit instruments, consults with his co-pilot, calls the control tower, performs some mathematical calculations, and eventually confirms that the airplane will exhaust its fuel reservoir within ten minutes while still flying over the ocean. In the case of the airplane pilot, the appraisal of danger is slower, nonmandatory, fully integrated with higher forms of cognition, verbally reportable, served by neo-cortical and evolutionarily younger neural pathways, and unavailable to nonlinguistic and prelinguistic creatures.

Describing the cause of fear in both cases as the appraisal of danger glosses over the important differences between lower and higher levels of information processing in terms of speed and automaticity, neural pathways, evolutionary history, insulation from higher thought processes, and so on.<sup>32</sup> Some preliminary work has been done on distinguishing between levels of appraisal (e.g., Leventhal and Scherer [1987]; van Reekum and Scherer [1997]; Teasdale [1999]), but much remains to be understood concerning how many levels of emotional appraisals there are, what distinguishes them from one another, and how they interact.

<sup>32</sup> This problem would not be solved by knowing the *structure* of the appraisal process, namely the components into which it breaks. For instance, knowing that sadness appraisal breaks down into six kinds of primary and secondary appraisal does not tell us at what distinct levels of cognitive complexity these six appraisals can be performed, and how appraisals at different levels interact.

The Problem of Levels of Appraisal is analogous to, but less crippling than, the Problem of Multiple Components faced by Constitutive Cognitivism. In Constitutive Cognitivism, the notion of *judgment* stands for a heterogeneous variety of component parts that are evaluative, physiological, phenomenological, expressive, behavioral, and mental. The notion of *appraisal*, on the other hand, only stands for a heterogeneous variety of forms of evaluation. The degree of heterogeneity of ‘judgment’ (as understood by constitutive cognitivists) is several orders of magnitude higher than the degree of heterogeneity of ‘appraisal’ (as understood by etiological cognitivists). Besides including all dimensions of heterogeneity affecting the evaluative component of an emotion, it also includes all dimensions of heterogeneity affecting the physiological, phenomenological, expressive, behavioral and mental components of emotions.

This is why I have recommended the sound rejection of Constitutive Cognitivism, whereas I recommend the development of Etiological Cognitivism. What future Etiological Cognitivism needs to achieve is the elimination of its own Placeholder Blindspot, which emerges from wrongly assuming that the identification of the *cause* of emotions with appraisals of formal objects—understood as placeholders for a variety of levels of information processing—can truly shed light on how emotions come about. Eliminating this blindspot demands accounting for what cognitive resources are mobilized at different levels of appraisal, and for how appraisals performed at different levels cooperate and compete in adaptive functioning.

### 6.3 Representational Cognitivism

There is a third important variety of cognitivism often confused with the previous two. Its basic tenet is the following:

*Representational Cognitivism*: for all *E*, emotion *E* represents the formal object of *E* (as instantiated by some material object *O*)

Representational Cognitivism is the thesis that emotions have *representational content*. Consider fear, sadness and shame one more time. According to Representational Cognitivism, fear represents danger (as instantiated by a bear running towards you), sadness represents loss (as instantiated by your grandmother’s death), and shame represents that one has failed to live up to an ego ideal (as instantiated by being caught by your wife in bed with another woman). Whereas Constitutive Cognitivism and Etiological Cognitivism identify the essence of emotions and the cause of emotions with, respectively, the judgment and the appraisal that the formal object of the emotion is instantiated, Representational Cognitivism states that emotions, whatever they are and however they are caused, are *intentional states* of a particular sort.

The focus here is neither on the identity nor on the causal history of emotions, but on their intentionality. In this article, I understand intentionality as follows:

Every intentional state consists of a representative content in a certain psychological mode [...] to say that [X] is a representation is simply to say that it has a propositional content and a psychological mode, that its propositional content determines a set of conditions of satisfaction under certain aspects, that its psychological mode determines a direction of fit of its propositional content. (Searle [1983], p. 11)

These distinctions can be exemplified with respect to propositional attitudes, which are paradigmatic intentional states. For instance, the propositional attitude of believing that *p* is *satisfied* when *p* is the case, because its *psychological mode* determines a mind-to-world *direction of fit* for *p*. This is to say that the belief is satisfied when what the mind believes, namely *p*, fits the world. The propositional attitude of desiring that *p*, on the other hand, is *satisfied* when *p* is brought about, because its *psychological mode* determines a world-to-mind *direction of fit* for *p*. This is to say that the desire is satisfied when the world fits what the mind desires, namely *p*.

On this view, danger, loss and failure to live up to an ego ideal describe the *conditions of satisfaction* of, respectively, fear, sadness and shame in the particular *psychological mode* characteristic of each. What Representational Cognitivism is committed to, on this understanding of intentionality, is that emotions have conditions of satisfaction under a particular psychological mode.

Representational Cognitivism originated in philosophy, but it is at this point a widely shared position in emotion theory (e.g., Damasio [1999]).<sup>33</sup> In one of the earliest cognitivist papers in philosophy, Broad ([1954]) made the connection between *cognition* and *intentionality* explicit. He wrote: 'Every emotion is an [...] intentional experience, i.e. it is always a *cognition*, either veridical or wholly or partly delusive' (Broad [1954], p. 286). According to Broad ([1954]), cognitions differ from pure feelings because, whereas the key question to ask about the former is 'How does it feel?', the key question to ask about the latter is 'What is it about?'. Nussbaum pointed out that emotions are 'not about their objects merely in the sense of being pointed at them and let go, the way an arrow is released towards its target', but in the sense that '[t]heir aboutness is more internal, and embodies a way of seeing' (Nussbaum [2001], p. 27).

<sup>33</sup> Ratcliff ([2005]) has recently argued that, contrary to common belief, even William James considered the intentionality of emotions essential to understanding them. For two sophisticated attempts to show that the intentionality of emotions can be reconciled with a feeling-centered approach, see (Prinz [2004]; Goldie [2000]).

They are internal because the connection between an emotion and its formal object is a necessary rather than a contingent connection. Emotions are contingently directed towards their targets (or material objects) the way arrows are, but they necessarily embody a way of seeing because they *must* represent a certain formal object in order to be the types of emotion they are (Kenny [1963]). Solomon makes the conceptual nature of the restriction at hand explicit in the following passage: ‘What emotions are “about”, as in beliefs, can be identified only under certain descriptions, and those descriptions are determined by the emotion itself [...] the connection between my being angry and what I am angry about is a *conceptual* and not causal connection’ (Solomon [2003], p. 5).

In the same way in which a belief would not be a belief if it did not constitutively aim at truth, and a desire would not be a desire if it did not constitutively aim at being realized, fear would not be fear if it did not constitutively aim at dangers, sadness would not be sadness if it did not constitutively aim at losses, shame would not be shame if it did not constitutively aim at failures to live up to an ego ideal and so on.<sup>34</sup> Obviously, episodes of fear can be elicited in the absence of danger, episodes of sadness in the absence of loss and episodes of shame in the absence of failure to live up to an ego ideal. The point is that when they do, they do not fulfil their conditions of satisfaction, just like beliefs do not fulfil their conditions of satisfaction when they are false, and desires do not fulfil their conditions of satisfaction when they are unrealized.

Representational Cognitivism contains a fundamental insight. I call it the *Representational Insight*: emotions have aboutness or the ability to represent. This insight has been largely neglected in the history of emotion theory. An explicit denial of the intentionality of emotions can be found in Hume, the most influential feeling theorist of the eighteenth century. Hume ([1739/1992], p. 415), who referred to the emotions as passions, argued that ‘a passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification’. Hume was wrong on two accounts. Emotions have representative qualities with respect to both their material objects and their formal objects. The anger of the scholar denied tenure represents being denied tenure, and it represents an offence against me or mine.

In recent writings, Solomon ([2004]) has suggested that the central job played by the concept of ‘judgment’ in cognitivism is precisely to highlight the *aboutness* of emotions: ‘Emotions are about the world. With my concept of judgment I had tried to make clear that this was not a marginal fact about

<sup>34</sup> I will qualify the sense in which emotions constitutively aim at their formal objects shortly.

(some) emotions but the essence of all of them' (Solomon [2004], p. 77). The problem with this line of reasoning is that the intentionality of emotions is assimilated with the intentionality of judgments. If we understand judgments as suggested by cognitivists, namely through the Elastic Strategy, Representational Cognitivism faces its own version of the Placeholder Blindspot. In other words, if we say that emotions represent the way judgments represent, but then turn the way in which judgments represent into a placeholder for a heterogeneous variety of ways of representing, we have not really shed light on the intentionality of emotions.

But if we understand judgments as anti-cognitivists propose, i.e., as presupposing language mastery, conscious assent, the possession of concepts, and the ability to engage in practical inferences, Representational Cognitivism collapses into what I call *Conceptualist Representational Cognitivism*. This understanding of emotional intentionality is also to be rejected. The first problem with Conceptualist Representational Cognitivism is that it neglects to account for the fact that the content of (some) emotions is *nonconceptual*. For simplicity of reference, let us refer to the nonconceptual content of emotions as *affective content*.<sup>35</sup> The difference in kind between affective content and the content of judgments can be defended in a variety of ways. I sketch two reasons to conclude that affective content differs in kind from the content of judgments: the phenomenological richness of affective content, and its lack of inferential articulation.<sup>36</sup>

Consider a phenomenologically salient emotion episode (not all emotion episodes are), for instance the one I mentioned before of the scholar denied tenure. Imagine now moving from this complex anger experience to a judgment about what is the case comprising a long conjunction of propositions. If the anger content were of the same kind as the content of a judgment, the judgment would be able to capture the content of anger in its entirety, at least in principle. But the anger content appears to be more fine-grained than the judgment content in the following sense: it is the sort of content such that there is always more of it than can be captured by any judgment.

The scholar is engaged in an experience involving many features that concepts can hardly begin to describe. The experience has a multidimensional richness that includes the expression of embarrassment mixed with pity of the colleague, the familiar contours of the office soon to be abandoned, the

<sup>35</sup> I am not committed to the claim that every instance of every emotion has nonconceptual content. Nor am I committed to the claim that having non-conceptual content precludes having other types of content. I am committed to the following claim: there are emotions with non-conceptual content, namely a content differing in kind from judgment content. I add that most instances of emotion have non-conceptual content, but I will not argue for this point in this article.

<sup>36</sup> These two reasons have often been invoked to explain why perception has nonconceptual content (see Bermúdez [2003] for a map of the nonconceptual content literature).

fleeting image of the department chair saying not to worry about the outcome of the tenure review, the recent memory of a sleepless night spent dreading the possibility of being denied tenure, and so on. These elements are all part of the way the scholar's anger feels, but they escape capture into a judgment that something is the case. Too many details appear to go into the experience for it to be fully judge-able and fully say-able. The scholar may find herself at a loss for concepts suitable to describe the experiential details of what she is going through.<sup>37</sup> More importantly, there does not seem to be any specific judgment that corresponds to the experience in full. The transition from what is felt to what is judged always appears to leave a remainder. This may explain why emoters often give up on trying to put their emotional experiences into words. They commonly say: 'no words can really capture how I feel'.

Besides being phenomenologically richer than judgment contents, affective contents lack the inferential articulation of judgment contents. Consider a phobic patient, who represents a snake held in a cage as dangerous by fearing it. Imagine now moving from fearing the snake to judging that the snake is dangerous. Judging that the snake is dangerous is inferentially articulated in the sense that it introduces the judged content into a wide network of inferential relations of incompatibility and logical consequence. For instance, judging that 'this snake is dangerous' is not compatible with judging that 'this snake is not dangerous', it follows from judging that 'either this snake is dangerous or this turtle is dangerous, and this turtle is not dangerous', and it implies judging that 'there is at least one dangerous reptile'.

If the fear content were of the same kind as the content of the judgment, the two contents would have the same inferential articulation. But they do not. The phobic patient by fearing the snake does not introduce the feared content into the same wide network of inferential relations of incompatibility and logical consequence that characterize judged contents. For instance, fearing the snake is compatible with judging that 'this snake is not dangerous',<sup>38</sup> it does not follow from judging that 'either this snake is dangerous or this turtle is dangerous, and this turtle is not dangerous', and it does not imply judging that 'there is at least one dangerous reptile'.

The intentionality of emotions does not differ from the intentionality of judgments merely on account of the nonconceptual nature of affective content. It also differs from the intentionality of judgments on account of the specific *psychological mode* of emotions. The second problem of Conceptualist

<sup>37</sup> See (McDowell [1994]; Brewer [2005]) for a defence of the idea that the problem can be solved by demonstrative concepts, and (Heck [2000]; Kelly [2001]) for some reasons why this solution should be rejected.

<sup>38</sup> The fact that emotions are often in contradiction with judgments has historically been one of the main grounds of anti-cognitivist dissatisfaction with the cognitivist program, and it is at the foundation of the dichotomy between reason and passion.

Representational Cognitivism is that it neglects to account for the fact that entertaining emotion content differs from entertaining judgment content in terms of *direction of fit*. Consider once again the phobic patient, who represents a snake held in a cage as dangerous by fearing it. Imagine now moving from fearing the snake to judging that the snake is dangerous. Judging that the snake is dangerous has a *mind-to-world* direction of fit, in the sense that it is satisfied when what the mind judges fits the world, i.e., when the snake is dangerous.

This judgment will motivate only when joined with a mental state with a *world-to-mind* direction of fit, and it will motivate in different ways depending on the *content* of the *world-to-mind* mental state. For instance, the judgment that the snake is dangerous will motivate to *avoid* the snake when joined with the desire to avoid dangerous snakes. On the other hand, the same judgment will motivate to *approach* the snake when combined with the desire to approach dangerous things.

If fearing that the snake is dangerous and judging that the snake is dangerous shared their psychological mode, they would determine the same *direction of fit* for their contents. But they do not. By fearing the snake the phobic patient neither engages in a mental state that will motivate only when joined with a mental state with a *world-to-mind* direction of fit, nor engages in a mental state that will motivate *in different ways* depending on the *content* of the *world-to-mind* mental state with which it is conjoined. On the contrary, representing the snake as dangerous by fearing it is *sufficient* for being motivated in a specific way, namely to avoid it.<sup>39</sup>

The psychological mode of emotions merges the directions of fit of *cognitive propositional attitudes*, which represent contents as obtaining, and *conative propositional attitudes*, which represent contents as to be made to obtain. This Janus-faced psychological mode cannot be captured by a *conjunction* of the psychological modes of cognitive attitudes and conative attitudes.<sup>40</sup> A conjunction of a cognitive attitude and a conative attitude presupposes that each conjunct has an existence separate from the other. In contrast, in emotion the representation of what obtains is inseparable from the representation of what is to be made to obtain. From fearing a snake it does not even follow that one judges the snake to be dangerous, a striking example of the fact that the cognitive component of fear is not freely employable in practical inferences. Similarly, being motivated to get away from a snake while fearing it is inseparable from representing it as dangerous and not freely employable in practical inferences, as the desire to get away from a snake would be.

<sup>39</sup> This is not to say that this motivation will be expressed, because fear can be inhibited.

<sup>40</sup> As we saw earlier, this is what Solomon ([2003], p. 106) suggested when he wrote that 'one might analyze the various emotions as judgmental structures enclosing a core desire which is both their motivation and their "conatus"'.

To capture the psychological mode of emotions, I introduce the notion of an *affective psychological mode*, understood as a mode that determines what I call a *mind-to-world-to-mind* direction of fit for emotion content.<sup>41</sup> A mental state *S* has a *mind-to-world-to-mind* direction of fit when it is satisfied just in case what is made to obtain *fits* what obtains. This in turn requires that what *S* represents as obtaining actually obtains (the *mind-to-world* part), and that what *S* represents as to be made to obtain is actually made to obtain (the *world-to-mind* part). The central intuition is that a state *S* with a *mind-to-world-to-mind* direction of fit aims to vary as the world varies so as to direct behaviors appropriate to the presence of the properties it tracks.

On this view, emotions do not *merely* represent formal objects as obtaining, they also represent what is to be made to obtain when formal objects obtain. This gives us a new understanding of what it is for an emotion to be *satisfied*. An emotion is *satisfied* when what it successfully represents as to be made to obtain fits what it successfully represents as obtaining. In such case, the emotion fulfills both its *cognitive job* (by occurring when the appropriate state of affairs is instantiated), and its *conative job* (by guiding behavior appropriately with respect to the state of affairs represented as being instantiated).

For example, we can think of fear as being *satisfied* when it motivates the emoter to avoid dangers, of anger as being *satisfied* when it motivates the emoter to get back at slights, of shame as being *satisfied* when it motivates the emoter to repair failures to live up to an ego ideal, of disgust as being *satisfied* when it motivates the emoter to expel noxious substances, and so on. Conversely, an emotion *E* can be *unsatisfied* because it fails to occur when the appropriate state of affairs is instantiated, or because it fails to guide behavior appropriately with respect to the state of affairs represented as being instantiated. An episode of fear occurring in the absence of danger instantiates a *cognitive failure*, whereas an episode of fear not conducive to the avoidance of danger (for instance because the emoter faints) instantiates a *conative failure*. In both case, we can speak of fear as being *unsatisfied*.

Conceptualist Representational Cognitivism, I conclude, is a problematic theory of the intentionality of emotions. It faces the *Affective Content Blindspot*, which consists in the erroneous identification of the representational content of emotions with the representational content of judgments (conservatively understood), and the *Affective Mode Blindspot*, which consists in the erroneous identification of the psychological mode of emotions with the psychological mode of judgments (conservatively understood). The process of conceptualization of emotions into judgments, I have argued, misrepresents the intentionality of emotions by transforming it *in kind*. It turns

<sup>41</sup> This account is inspired by Millikan's theory of pushmi-pullyu representations ([1996], [2000], [2004]).

*nonconceptual* into *conceptual content* and *affective psychological mode* into *cognitive psychological mode*.

To circumvent the Affective Content and Affective Mode Blindspots and develop the Representational Insight that emotions have representational content, Representational Cognitivism will have to develop a positive theory of *affective content* and an understanding of the norms governing states with a *mind-to-world-to-mind* direction of fit.

## 7 Conclusion

The three varieties of cognitivism I have distinguished in this article have been confused with one another ever since cognitivism emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as the dominant force in emotion theory. For instance, Solomon tells us at the same time that '[m]y anger is my judgment that John has wronged me' (Solomon [2003], p. 8) (Constitutive Cognitivism), that '[a]ll emotions presuppose or have as their preconditions, certain sorts of cognitions [such as] recognition of an offense in anger' (Solomon [1993], p. 11) (Etiological Cognitivism) and that 'the connection between my being angry and what I am angry about is *conceptual*' (Solomon [2003], p. 5) (Representational Cognitivism). These are three orthogonal theses. Whether or not anger is the judgment that an offence has been committed is a separate issue from whether or not anger is *caused* by the appraisal that an offence has been committed, which is a separate issue from whether anger is *satisfied* when an offence against me or mine has been committed.

Constitutive Cognitivism, which aims to tell us what emotions are essentially, is probably the most popular variety of cognitivism. My argument against this variety of cognitivism, differently from previous arguments, cannot be evaded through what I called the Elastic Strategy. If 'judgment' is understood conservatively, as anti-cognitivists recommend, Constitutive Cognitivism is massively falsified. I have provided a further counterexample to Constitutive Cognitivism in this article, namely the emotion of *blindfright*. If judgments are understood through the lenses of the Elastic Strategy, as the cognitivists recommend in response to counterexamples such as blindfright, emotions are assimilated to a mongrel of heterogeneous components, but no fruitful theory of what emotions are is actually provided.

Etiological Cognitivism, on the other hand, contains the important insight that stimuli cause emotions depending on how they are appraised. To develop Etiological Cognitivism, what is needed is an analysis of the different levels of appraisals, and of their basic causal structures. Representational Cognitivism, finally, contains what I consider the most significant insight of cognitivism, which is that emotions have intentionality. A central task for future emotion theory will be to understand the nature and origin of emotional

representations, which, I have argued, differ in kind from conceptual representations on account of both their content and psychological mode.

It is my hope that the long debate between cognitivists and anti-cognitivists, dogged by absence of clarity on the theses at stake and by terminological disputes on what judgments are, will be eclipsed in favor of debates between *constitutive* cognitivists and anti-cognitivists, *etiological* cognitivists and anti-cognitivists, and *representational* cognitivists and anti-cognitivists. My guess is that, once the options are clearly on the table, most anti-cognitivists will conclusively reject Constitutive Cognitivism, but embrace both Etiological Cognitivism and Representational Cognitivism. At that point, cognitivism will have exhausted its historical function. The debate between different theoretical factions will take place within shared cognitivist boundaries, and all interesting distinctions will be drawn between *varieties of etiological cognitivism* and *varieties of representational cognitivism*.

*Department of Philosophy  
Neuroscience Institute  
Georgia State University  
P.O. Box 4089  
Atlanta, GA 30302-4089, USA  
ascarantino@gsu.edu*

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