

Passioni e Ragioni. Un itinerario nella filosofia della psicologia, by Clotilde Calabi. Milano: Edizione Angelo Guerini e Associati, 1996. Pp. 157.

Emotions are often taken to be opposed to reason. Some, like the Stoics, went so far as to claim that emotions are illnesses of the soul which one has to try and get rid of. By contrast, many contemporary thinkers, be they philosophers or psychologists, have attempted to show that a proper understanding of the mind reveals intimate relations between emotions and mental states such as perceptions, beliefs and judgements; instead of being seen as waging a war against reason, emotions are thought to be part of a normal cognitive set. This approach is characterised by a more positive evaluation of emotional phenomena. Clotilde Calabi's book stands firmly in this tradition. The main claim which is argued for is that emotional experiences are objective and similar to perceptual experiences (116).

Independently of the intrinsic interest of the questions which it raises, this neat little book recommends itself by its clarity, the careful way in which claims and arguments are presented and the wealth of insights into our emotional life. Another remarkable feature consists in the detailed and informed discussions of the thoughts of major historical figures, such as Hume, Descartes, William James and Gilbert Ryle.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first of them offers an analysis of pride, one of Hume's favourite emotions. The Humean distinction between the object of pride and its cause is discussed and clarified. The related distinction between the cause of an emotion and its reason is also examined. In agreement with most contemporary philosophers, Calabi claims that beliefs, and in particular evaluative beliefs, constitute an essential component of pride: to be proud of possessing a beautiful house, I need to believe that I own a beautiful house. In reply to well-known difficulties with the thesis that such a belief is both causally and conceptually related to the emotion, the author follows Donald Davidson's claim that depending on the chosen descriptions of the cause and the effect, causal relations can be ascribed by analytic propositions. Thus, the analyticity of the proposition that the cause of the tempest caused the tempest is perfectly compatible with there being a causal relation involved. I should like to add that there is room for discussion here. One can accept the Davidsonian claim and still have some doubts where emotions are concerned. A characteristic of the tempest case is that there is a description under which the cause can be specified independently of its effect. Thus, the question is whether there is a similarly independent description of pride. If one takes seriously the claim that it is an essential feature of pride that it is related to certain beliefs, the answer seems to be that there cannot be such a description.

The second part of the book is more general in its scope. It considers some of the main classical theories of emotions – that is, those of Descartes, James, Watson and Ryle among others – and traces the relations between these theories and the conceptions of the mind in which they are embedded. Dismissing one theory after another, the author makes her way to the account she favours. This account, which shares features with the so-called *adverbial* theory of perception, underlines the analogy between emotions and perceptions. We are told that an emotion is “an experience that asserts the existence of determinate objects or states of affairs which possess particular properties (there are joy-

ful events, nice or odious persons, etc.)” (116). One way to interpret this claim is to read it as rather implausibly claiming that emotions are or involve evaluative judgements. However, this is not what the author means. In fact, Calabi denies that emotions can be decomposed into evaluative judgements, on the one hand, and feelings, on the other hand. Following C.D. Broad, she makes the following claim:

But it does not happen that I see the dog, judge that it is growling, evaluate that it is dangerous and, as a consequence, feel fear. I directly perceive the dangerousness of the dog and my perception is an experience of fear, that is, a perception characterised by a particular affective tone. (120)

The idea is that emotions are non-evaluative cognitive states which possess certain phenomenal qualities. Thus, paraphrasing Broad, one could say that according to this view, being afraid of a dog is seeing the dog *fearingly* – hence the analogy with the adverbial theory of perception, according to which ‘I see a square’, for instance, is taken to mean ‘I see squarely’, a proposition which does not seem to refer to sense-data. Seeing the dog in this way means that certain features of what we perceive emerge as salient:

To say that the dog is dangerous involves seeing as salient some of its characteristics, such as its dimensions, its sharp teeth, its barking, its frontal position, as opposed to the colour of its fur or to its race (...). (124)

The question which arises is how to understand the relation between the phenomenal properties of the experience and the patterns of salience (to use a phrase coined by Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1987). We are told that the affective tonality corresponds to an order of salience (125). However, if this is taken to mean that there is nothing more to an affective tonality than an order of salience, some doubts are bound to arise. It is not clear that having one’s attention taken by the size, the teeth, etc. of a dog amounts to having an experience of fear. One can surely close one’s eyes while still fearing the dog. And it seems one could focus one’s attention on the relevant features from mere curiosity. This suggests that the perception of the dog and its salient features has to be distinguished from the fear of the dog. This is not to deny, of course, that the fear in question is based on the perception of the dog and also that emotions are liable to determine a certain order of salience. Moreover, the thesis that perceiving the dog differs from fearing it is also compatible with the claim that the perception of the dog and the emotion of fear do not have to follow each other temporally: the perception of the dog can coincide with the arousal of fear. The point is simply that the same perception could have failed to trigger fear. To take this point into account, it can be claimed that in addition to a perception with a certain order of salience, fear also requires proprioception of a particular kind, that is, an awareness of the bodily changes which go with fear. This seems to be the author’s claim when she says that “the affective tonality corresponds to an order of salience on the one hand and is closely related to proprioception on the other hand” (125). If so, it would be possible to perceive a dog with the order of salience which is characteristic of fear while not feeling any emotion of fear.

The book closes with a discussion of the fascinating question whether machines could someday feel emotions. This depends on whether emotions can be defined in purely functional terms. The answer seems to be negative in so far as the emotions we feel depend on our physiology – emotions involve events in viscera, skeletal muscles

and endocrine glands. The author ends with an analogy between the question whether machines can feel emotions and that, discussed by Casanova, whether the true pleasure of smoking a pipe is one of the soul or of the senses. Casanova's answer is simply that what seems a pleasure is pleasure. In the same way, the question whether machines can feel emotions depends, we are told, on whether it can seem to a machine that it has an emotion. Such a seeming would be sufficient and cannot be ruled out. It can be added – and Clotilde Calabi would probably agree – that as long as the structure of the machine differs from our physiology, its states could hardly be claimed to be of the same kind as human emotions. So, whether the true pleasure of smoking a pipe is one of the senses or one of the soul, it does not seem that machines are likely to ever experience it.

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