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The Emotional Action Analogy

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Abstract

I defend that emotions should be elucidated by reference to the kind of actions we do when we experience an emotion, namely, emotional actions. This claim is not trivial, as there are theorists that submit that emotion should be elucidated by reference to sensory perception (Tappolet, 2016) and others by reference to action in general (Naar, 2022). Both views are supported by analogies, given the pretheoretical similarities that we find between, in one case, emotion and sensory perception, and between emotion and action, in the other. Thus, in order to defend my claim, I show why both analogies are problematic. First, there are important disanalogies between emotion and sensory perception and an analogy with action is better (Brady, 2013; Naar, 2022). Second, I point out that the action analogy faces its own problems —as it does not account correctly for the phenomenology of emotion, nor is it able to individuate emotions types from one another (Ballard, 2021). Drawing ideas from the literature of the psychology of human emotional development, I present and defend an analogy between basic emotion and emotional action and, in order to extend it to emotion in general, I suggest a dispositional analysis for non-basic emotions. The resulting view is that non-basic emotions should be understood as dispositions to undergo basic emotions depending on the context, and such basic emotions should be analysed in terms of emotional actions.

Keywords: perceptual analogy - action analogy - emotional action - emotional development - basic emotions.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to defend a reasonable though not trivial claim, namely, that emotion should be elucidated by reference to the kind of actions we do when we experience emotions. What makes reasonable the claim is that we learn, as children, to ascribe emotions to others as well as to ourselves by attending and repeating the emotional actions done by the adults surrounding us (in particular, our caregivers). It is only in a later stage of emotional development that an emotion can occur without overt action due to the development of the

control of one's own emotional behaviour. In the same way, it is only over the course of our emotional development that we can experience certain kinds of emotions. One can not claim to know what an emotion is if, for instance, one does not know why infants cannot undergo the same emotions as we do as adults. Babies do not hate. Thus, if our aim is to pin down what emotion exactly is, there are two questions that the emotion theorist can not overlook: 'when do emotions emerge in development, and for whom are they most likely to emerge?' (LoBlue *et al.*, 2019). Accordingly, two recommendations are in order. The first one is that when comparing emotions to any other entities we should focus on right when it is more manifested, namely, in emotional actions. The second is that we should make emotions like 'admiration', 'hatred' or 'amae' the main object of study. On the contrary, I think one must focus on the most basic emotions, instances of which are directly manifested in emotional action. Once that is accepted—and I claim that it should be accepted—an analogy between emotion and emotional action can be fruitfully pursued.

The claim, I said, is not trivial. It is not trivial for two reasons. The first reason why it is not trivial is that it is not accepted by all emotion theorists. On the contrary, the emotional action analogy has to compete against at least two different analogies—the perceptual analogy (Tappolet, 2012, 2016) and the action analogy (Naar, 2022, 2024), the former more widespread and discussed than the latter. Accordingly, I will argue that neither of these two analogies is out of important problems. The second reason why it is not trivial is that it may seem circularly vicious to analyse emotions in terms of emotional actions. As I am using the term, emotional actions are not defined by being actions caused by emotions—though perhaps all emotional actions are caused by emotions. Even if they are closely related, as long as they are (at least prior to theorising) distinct entities, I do not regard the emotional action analogy as circularly vicious. What we get to learn from emotion, can lead to a better knowledge of emotional action, and the other way around—in this, it is not different from other analogies in the market.

Accordingly, my plan is as follows. I begin by pointing out in Section 2 that the main argument for perceptual theories—theories, as I understand them, that suggest that emotions are to be elucidated by reference to perception or regarded as being fundamentally alike—is an analogy between emotion and sensory perception—taken as the paradigmatic case, allegedly better known, of perception (Tappolet, 2012, 2016). I present the perceptual analogy in Section 2.1. I then turn to disputing the analogy. One finds reasons in the antiperceptualist literature that the similarity between emotion and perception is not as straightforward as the perceptualist claims. In particular, there are three ways of disputing the

perceptual analogy. The first is to argue that some features, even though they are shared, are not shared in the same sense. With Naar (2022), I will show that the phenomenon of recalcitrance emotions is relevantly dissimilar to optical illusions. The second strategy is to argue that there are features of emotions that the analogy fails to capture, namely, their having cognitive bases (Deonna & Teroni, 2014) and their being responsive to reasons (Brady, 2013; Naar, 2022). I pursue them in sections 2.2 and 2.3 respectively. The perceptual analogy is not rejected until a better analogy is presented. I present in Sections 3, 3.1 and 3.2 Naar's (2022, 2024) analogy with action. Section 3.3 is dedicated to arguing that, although it is better suited than the perceptual analogy, the action analogy faces its own problems. The main problems of the action analogy are (a) that it does not account correctly for the phenomenology of emotion, due to the lack of phenomenology of agency in emotion, (b) that it fails to distinguish subtly related emotions (Ballard, 2021) —and that the only way to do so is individuating them by the evaluation that occurs in them; and (c) that there are emotions that do not involve over action (Mitchell, 2021). I conclude that a better analogy is still pending. In Section 4 I present the emotional action analogy. I begin by stating some methodological considerations in favour of the emotional action analogy. Then in 4.1 I characterise the notions of 'emotional action' (following Frijda, 2010 and Scarantino, 2014) and 'basic emotion' as I will be using them. In Section 4.2 I review some literature on the psychology of human emotional development to defend that we are justified in focusing on emotional actions and basic emotions. Let me observe now that I do not move from the pretheoretical level in appealing to this literature. This is so because the term 'pretheoretical' here refers to the stage before accepting the conclusion of any of the mentioned analogies —so it is not a mere synonym for 'intuitive'. This is important because one argument that could be used to deny some emotions to children (even if they manifest behaviour typically associated with emotions) is to argue that, for instance, they lack the capacity of making evaluative judgments. This, in the context of pursuing an analogy, would be to beg the question. In Section 4.3 I put forward the emotional action analogy and defend that it is superior to the other two. Finally, in 4.4 I address some problems that arise when one follows what I am recommending. It is important to note right now that these problems arise only once the argument by analogy is accepted, and so they do not undermine the analogy itself. The problems arise, in particular, when one considers non-basic emotions which lack or seem to lack emotional action. My suggestion will be that a dispositional analysis of non-basic emotions in terms of undergoing basic emotions depending on one's context (both cultural and social) is promising. At any rate, while the problems that affect the other two analogies

appear before accepting the conclusion, and so make the argument less compelling, the problems that affect the emotional action analogy arise only when the conclusion is accepted, and so the question is different, namely, how to extend the analysis to the rest of the emotion domain. Section 5 concludes by recapitulating the argumentation and pointing out questions open for further research,

2. The Perceptual Analogy and its problems

The aim of this section is to disarm the perceptual theories of emotion of their main argument. The perceptual theorist elucidates the concept of emotion by exploiting systematic similarities between emotion and perception. In particular, the theorist argues that there are substantial analogies between emotion and sensory perception, the latter understood as the paradigmatic and best known case of perceptual experience. According to Tappolet (2012, 2016; also Döring, 2014, 2015; Naar, 2022 and Brady, 2024), for instance, the main argument in favour of a perceptual conception of emotions is an analogy with sensory perception, based on the reflection that emotional episodes and perceptions have important common features. As the analogy with sensory perception is an argument for the thesis that emotions are to be studied with reference to perception, those shared features must be platitudes of emotion (and of sensory perception) accepted both by the perceptualist and her opponents in the pretheoretical level.

My plan for this section is, then, the following. I begin by setting out the analogy between emotion and perception as put forward mainly by Tappolet (2012, 2016; cf. Döring, 2014). I will immediately turn to the task of disputing it. There exist in the literature two specific ways of opposing this analogy. The first strategy is to argue that, even though emotion and perception share relevant characteristics, they do not instantiate them in the same sense. The second strategy is to point out some other, equally important features of emotion that an analogy with perception fails to capture. I will present them in that order.

To maintain an overview of the general argument against the perceptual analogy, let me advance that the argument will not be complete unless another, more convincing analogy is presented. This is so because, even if the analogy with perception results somehow deficient, it might still be the case that it is the best available way to theorise about emotions. The third way to argue against the perceptual analogy, then, is presenting a better analogy.

That's why, with Naar (2022, 2024), I will provide in Section 3 an alternative analogy, one between emotion and action.

2.1 The perceptual analogy

The features that emotion and perception share are, according to the perceptual analogy, the following (Tappolet, 2012, 2016; Naar, 2022). (i) Intuitively, we say that both emotions and sensory perceptions have phenomenology. They have a phenomenal character in that, when a subject instantiates them, the subject feels in a certain way, depending on what particular state she instantiates (Pineda Oliva, 2019: 24). When someone experiences fear in front of a dangerous bear or feels angry towards his boss, we say that the subject feels a certain way. Likewise, when perceiving the blue colour of the sky or the sharp pain of a knife, we also say that the subject feels a certain way. In the case of the emotional episode of fear, we say, the subject feels fear, whereas pain in the case of the painful. Although what the subject feels varies from type of experience to another, it is common that the subject feels in a certain way when she instantiates one of those types.

(ii) Another point of similarity between emotional episodes and sensory perceptions is their passivity insofar as emotions and perceptions seem to be things that merely happen to us, as opposed to things that we do. This distinction is important and we will return to it later. For the moment we should note that our ordinary speech distinguishes between things whose occurrence depends on us in some way —namely, that we have a certain control on whether it is the case or not— and things over which we have no such control. This distinction underlies our ordinary practice of attributing moral responsibility. Suppose I am climbing Everest along with Quine and Strawson. Strawson, because he has remembered Quine's critical review of his book on logical theory, pushes me in such a way that Quine ends up falling off the cliff, exactly as he had planned. Suppose, further, that I did not want to hurt Quine, on the contrary, I admired him, but I could not help it, for the push had caught me unaware. In a sense, it can be said that I brought about Quine's death. Even so, in this scenario we would typically judge that I am not morally responsible for Quine's death —we would say that the push was something that merely happened to me. Of Strawson, however, we would say that he is morally responsible for Quine's death, as he could have refrained from pushing me (this

example is adapted from Pineda Oliva, 2019: 193). Markers of such distinction are phrases like ‘it was not my intention to kill Quine’, ‘I did not want to do it’, or ‘it was by accident’.

In the case of emotions, it seems that we lack the control such that had we not wanted to undergo an emotional episode, we could have precluded it. Similarly, of the perception of the pain elicited by the knife piercing our arm, we say that it is unavoidable. There is a sense in which it is avoidable, namely by avoiding contact with the knife or by anaesthesia. But the crucial question is that, once in contact with the knife in a certain way, the painful sensation seems unavoidable. In the case of fear in front of a dangerous bear, it also seems only preventable if we do not encounter or think about it.

(iii) Both emotion and sensory perception are in general intentional. A case of perception is always a case of perceiving *something*—its intentional content—, say, the pain elicited by the knife. Equally arguable is that emotions always have intentional content. We say, for instance, that I fear the dangerous bear that I encountered on the mountain or that I am happy for my partner’s achievements. Matter of theorising is, however, what kind of content is the intentional object of emotions—an object (e.g. the bear), an object under a certain description (the dangerous bear) or a proposition (that the bear is dangerous), and if it is a proposition, what kind of direction of fit does it have.

(iv) One of the main tenets of perceptualism is that, always in the intuitive level, both emotions and sensory perceptions can conflict with belief or judgement (Döring, 2015). Here the references are, respectively, recalcitrant emotions and perceptual illusions, being the most typical examples optical illusions such as of Müller-Lyer. A recalcitrant emotion is one that persists despite the subject's better judgement (Döring, 2014). The typical example is one of Hume (2007: 100-101). When he discusses the probabilistic nature of our ordinary thinking about cause-effect relationships, the Scottish philosopher asks us to consider a case of a man, who being hung out from a high tower in a cage of iron ‘cannot forbear trembling, when he surveys the precipice below him, tho’ he knows himself to be perfectly secure from falling, by his experience of the solidity of the iron’ [...]. These examples reinforce the view of the passive character of emotions, being things for which we lack a certain kind of control. The same phenomena show, finally, that (v) there are appropriateness conditions against which tokens of emotions and sensory perceptions can be evaluated. In Hume’s example, we judge the man’s fear as inadequate. More striking is the example of a subject being afraid of flying (and not of driving) in spite of having been convinced that air travel is the safest mode of transportation. We consider inappropriate, ultimately, the perception that the lines are of different sizes in the case of the optical illusion.

The restant premise of the perceptual analogy is that the similarity of emotions to sensory perceptions —namely, (i)-(v)— is greater than to any other entity. The perceptualist infers, then, that emotions are fundamentally like perception and that the rest of their characteristics should be elucidated by comparison with sensory perception, allegedly more known (Tappolet 2012, 2016).

2.2 Shared features but in different senses

My next aim is to dispute this analogy. As mentioned, there are in the literature at least three ways of doing so. In this subsection I will argue that although emotion and perception share important features, they do not instantiate them in the same sense.

Consider conflict with belief or judgement. I said that in the literature the contrasted examples are optical illusions and recalcitrant emotions. What the perceptualist needs for her general analogy is that perceptual illusions and recalcitrant emotions to be analogous in the relevant respects regarding their conflict with belief or judgement. Now, there is a sense in which they present disanalogies. As Naar (2022) argues, whereas the sense in which emotion conflicts with one's better judgement is irrational, the sense in which perceptual illusions do so has nothing to do with rationality.¹ By irrational conflict it is meant the following. We typically expect that a subject, when convinced that flying is not dangerous, stops being afraid of the idea of flying, for instance. Returning to Hume's example, suppose that the man hung out from a high tower in a cage of iron (if he were not convinced before) is convinced that there is no danger in what he is doing. What we generally expect is what, *ex hypothesi*, does not happen, namely, that he stops being afraid. Döring (2014) argues that the subject in the grip of a recalcitrant emotion is not irrational because 'he is not contradicting himself'. It might be the case that the subject of the recalcitrant emotion does not contradict himself *stricto sensu* —because an emotion and beliefs or judgements are different entities, yet this is not the sense in which I indicated that the conflict between emotion and belief is irrational. What the perceptualist needs to deny is that what is generally expected from the subject who is convinced that flying is the safest mode of transportation (and that driving-related death

¹ I acknowledge the advisor of this paper the following. Naar (2022) says that the conflict between judgement and sensory perception is rational (rather than irrational). The conflict, I agree, is not irrational. But this does not make the conflict rational either. So perhaps saying that 'the conflict has nothing to do with rationality' captures better what Naar has in mind.

rates are the highest) is that she stops being afraid from taking a plane. And this is not denied by alleging that the subject does not believe or accept a contradiction.

On the contrary, the conflict with belief, in the case of optical illusions, is not irrational. Indeed, we generally do not expect that a perceptual illusion stops when the subject who is perceiving it is convinced that it is an illusion. What is precisely interesting about perceptual illusions is that it is expected that they persist regardless of the subject being aware of its illusional nature. The perceptual theorist might be tempted to point out that there is another kind of illusions in which the conflict is irrational, namely cognitive illusions (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Even if we admit that there are cognitive illusions (Gigerenzer, 1991; Kahneman & Tversky, 1996), the problem is what the perceptualist needs is that what can be in irrational conflict with belief be a kind of perception according to intuitive thinking, and whether a cognition is a kind of perception, I believe, is far from obvious.

Consequently, the conflict between emotion and belief is irrational (even if the subject does not contradict himself), while, in the same sense, the conflict between perception and belief is not irrational. Hence, the similarity between emotion and perception, in this respect, is not as straightforward as the perceptualist contends it to be.

The second feature that has received attention in the anti-perceptual literature is the existence of appropriateness conditions of emotions and perception. Naar (2022, 2024) argues that the sense in which there are appropriate conditions for emotions is not the same in which there are for sensory perception. In concrete, when we say that a sensory perception goes wrong, we mean that it does not represent the world how it actually is, whereas some emotions are inappropriate to the extent they are not ‘merited’ by (or fitting) what corresponds with the intentional content of the emotion in question. For example, my being afraid of a bear is fitting just in case the bear in question is dangerous: the bear does not ‘merit’ our emotional response towards it. Now, suppose, for instance, that I perceive the sky as red when in fact it is blue, and that I find a bear fearsome when it is not dangerous. If my emotional response is inappropriate, all the perceptualist needs to say, I think, is that I represent the bear as dangerous —when he is not— in the same way as I represent the sky as red when it is blue. Observe that for the perceptualist there is no more in the idea of merit or fittingness than representation. The anti-perceptualist might respond that this can be correct insofar as we accept the perceptual conception of emotions, which acceptance is precisely what is at stake at this stage of the dialectics. The problem I find here is that it is not clear that the antiperceptualist, which in this context means one that distinguishes fitting and

representing, has the resources to introduce the distinction, in general, at the intuitive level of the discussion. Thus, I suggest not to count the existence of appropriate conditions against which tokens of emotions should be evaluated as a pretheoretical feature of emotions, contrary to both sides (Tappolet, 2012, 2016; Naar, 2022, 2024).

2.3 Features of emotion that the perceptual analogy fails to capture

Recall that a second strategy to confront the perceptual analogy is to point out some other important features of emotion that the analogy fails to capture. I devote this subsection to presenting them. Firstly, as Deonna and Teroni (2014) argue, emotional episodes, in contrast with sensory perceptions, have ‘cognitive bases’. In this context, that emotions have cognitive bases refers to the fact that emotions do not seem to provide independent access to their intentional content. In order to be afraid of a bear, for instance, I must see, believe I see, or think of it in some way, which in any case is independent and (at least logically) prior to my being afraid of the bear. In this sense, Deonna and Teroni (2014) hold that the intentional content of an emotion ‘need not be perceptually present’. Sensory perceptions do not have cognitive bases in general, on the other hand. In fact, sensory perceptions arguably are our primary epistemic access to the world, and in particular to precisely what is perceived.

A second feature that distinguishes emotions from perceptions is that emotions are a kind of thing for which we can be criticised and, insofar as the subject is rational, emotions are typically responsive to reasons (Brady, 2013; Naar, 2022). Following Solomon (1973), if you should convince me that my boss has not wronged me, not only will my anger become unreasonable, but it will (typically) cease. Let me observe that this is compatible with the idea that there is no clear pretheoretical distinction between representation and fittingness. The reason is that how I represent the intentional content of my emotion can vary in the same way as my emotional response can change. To rephrase Solomon: should you convince me that the bear is not dangerous, I (typically) stop representing the bear as dangerous, and so my fear (typically) ceases. In contrast with emotion, sensory perception does not seem generally responsive to reasons. Should you convince me that the lines in a Müller-Lyer illusion are of equal size, I typically keep perceiving them as different—and this is precisely why sensory perceptions are not a kind of thing for which we can be criticised.

3. The action analogy and its problems

Let us recapitulate the steps that led us here. I began Section 2 by pointing out that the main argument in favour of the thesis that emotions should be elucidated in comparison with perception is an analogy between emotion and sensory perception as the paradigmatic case of perceptual experience (Tappolet, 2012, 2016). The perceptual analogy consists of two general parts. In the first stage, the perceptual theorist argues that there are important, systematic similarities between emotion and sensory perception. The second part goes by stating that no entity is more similar to emotions than sensory perception. After setting out the perceptual analogy in Section 2.1, I addressed the first phase in Sections 2.2 and 2.3. In the former I showed, with Naar (2022), that of the features that the perceptualist finds in common in emotion and perception, not all of them are instantiated in both cases in the same way—in particular, they are not similar as far as conflict with belief is concerned—, whereas in the latter we have seen that there are some relevant features of emotions that the perceptual analogy fails to capture—cognitive basis and responsiveness to reasons.

My aim in this Section 3 is to show that we have reasons to think that the second claim, namely, that no entity is more similar to emotions than sensory perception, can be contested. Indeed, one can pursue an alternative but not less systematic exploitation of analogies between emotion and some other kind of entity. If such analogies were available, then we would have reason to resist the temptation to elucidate emotions with reference to perception. Here is where enters the action analogy put forward by Naar (2022, 2024). The action analogy is the main argument in favour of the idea that emotions are fundamentally like actions and that emotions should be elucidated by reference to action in general.

Let me immediately observe that if such an analogy succeeds, it would be easier to explain the close relation that it seems to be between emotion and action, which any successful theory of emotions has to be able to explain. The explanation would be more straightforward than any explanation provided by the perceptual theorist. The perceptual analogy leaves unexplained why we have a tendency to act when we are under the grip of a determinate emotional episode. If the relation between action and emotion is considered to be causal, the perceptualist must defend this claim, because, in general, when we perceive something we do not feel inclined to act at all (eg. perceiving the sky as blue). In particular, the perceptualist needs to explain at least two things: if an emotion is a mere perception, why do we tend to act when we are under the grip of an emotion, and also why is there a

correlation between action types and emotion types. When I am angry at my boss, for instance, I am more likely to leave her company than to buy her concert tickets; and when I am ‘afraid of being robbed in a certain area of town’ I am more likely to stay at home than ‘to explore it alone at night’ (Scarantino, 2024). How exactly emotions and actions are related depends on how the action analogy is put forward.

I will present in Section 3.1 Naar’s (2022, 2024) version of the analogy. To lay things on the table, I think that, although it is better placed than the perceptual analogy, it has its own problems. My diagnosis of the problems of the action analogy is that they are due to the fact that it compares emotion with action in general. My proposal, which I will develop in the following sections, is that we have reasons to focus mainly on a certain subset of actions, namely, emotional actions.

3.1 The Action Analogy (I)

The action analogy goes as follows (Naar, 2022, 2024). Recall that one disanalogy between emotion and perception is that the former, but not the latter, are responsive to reasons. Now, actions, like emotions, are typically responsive to reasons and are done (or felt) for a reason. Naar (2022) argues that the relevant sense of reason here is the one of a normative reason. What he has in mind, I think, is that in order to accommodate the fact that emotions are something we can be criticised for, one needs to appeal to normative reasons. I think it is not needed. Normative reasons are to be contrasted with merely motivating reasons. The latter sense of reason is the kind of reason for which someone does what he does, reasons which we do not need to share. For instance, Meletus in accusation against Socrates alleged, among other things, that he corrupted the young. By mentioning his motivating reason, we get to understand why Meletus called Socrates into trial. Nonetheless, understanding is not justifying. What is generally conveyed by ‘normative reason’ is that the reason is well justified —eg. we all have a normative reason to oppose genocide.

Let us illustrate this distinction in the case of emotion. Suppose that my boss did something wrong to me: he does not allow me to take the vacations that I am entitled to by law, making me lose the money for the flights I bought a year ago. This being so, it gives me a reason both for punishing him (eg. by calling the labour inspector) and for being angry with him. The reason here is indeed normative —though the same reason can be also motivating.

But we can imagine an analogous example where the reason is only motivating: for instance, that he did not promote me but another colleague which I hate. Consider also the case in which I think my boss did something wrong to me when in fact he did not. So, I think that the proponent of the analogy needs not to restrict herself to the claim that the similarity holds only for normative reasons. The similarity between action and emotion as far as responsiveness to reasons is concerned is even greater: cases like the ones I just presented push towards the idea that reasons for action are of the similar kind of reasons for emotion.

Naar (2022, 2024) also argues that action, as well as emotion, and unlike perception, depends on the agent's mental states such as beliefs and desires which are quite independent of the action or emotion being in place. Not only are they independent, but they are also prior to action. Standard action theory (by which I mean what has been called Humeanism) (Smith 1987) states that the subject who acts has a pair of a belief and a desire (adequately related) when doing what he is doing, but the thesis that actions have cognitive bases is more general than Humeanism. All it is required is that my action of punishing my boss depends on the fact that I believe, or at least accept, that he wronged me. Observe also that an action is not reducible to the cognitive basis on which it depends. Similarly, then, according to the action analogy, an emotion is not reducible to the set (or some subset) of the agent's mental states on which it depends (*pace* Marks, 1982, since he identifies emotions with sets of beliefs and desires).

Furthermore, both emotions and actions can conflict with one's better judgement in an irrational sense. Naar (2022) considers the example of a dieter whose better judgement is that he should not eat the piece of chocolate cake before him, but he ends up eating it anyway. The action of the dieter, namely, his eating the piece of cake, is irrational insofar as it conflicts with his better judgement. Similarly, suppose that I am punishing my boss for precluding me from taking my deserved vacations. Should you convince me that he did not, what is expected is that I stop punishing him at the very least. I am rightly called irrational if I persist in punishing him. Recall the case of recalcitrant emotions, which are typically called irrational—even if it is true that the subject who is under the grip of a recalcitrant emotion is not contradicting himself (Döring, 2014)—in the sense that they conflict with one's belief. If I am angry at my boss, like in the case of the dieter, provided you convince me that he did not wrong to me, it is expected that my anger ceases. Observe that it is still true that it is not necessary that my anger ceases—that's what recalcitrant emotions are—and that's why I think we should not reduce emotion to the cognitive basis on which it depends. If emotion is not reducible to its cognitive basis, then, the action analogy is better suited than if it were

reducible, insofar as both emotion and action are similar in that they are not reducible to the cognitive basis on which they depend.

Moreover, though I myself do not think it should be addressed at this stage of the dialectics (see Section 2.2), Naar (2022) considers that there are appropriateness conditions that ‘apply to certain action types in virtue of the kind of thing they are’. The idea is simple: punishment is fitting, for example, if and only if the object of punishment is punishable—where ‘punishable’ does not imply only possibility of being punished but above all a certain evaluation, namely, that the object of punishment deserves punishment. Admiration, to take another example, is fitting if and only if the object of admiration is admirable. The question that arises then is how to elucidate concepts such as ‘admirable’ or ‘punishable’ (in the evaluative sense) without making reference to what people generally find admirable or punishable. Otherwise, the term ‘fitting’ invoked here would be superfluous.

3.2 The Action Analogy (II)

Recall from Section 2 that there are three intuitive features of emotion that the perceptual analogy seems to succeed to capture, namely, intentionality, phenomenology and passivity. So far I showed that the action analogy is able to accommodate the features of emotion that the perceptual analogy was not able to do—responsiveness to reasons, cognitive basis and conflict with one’s better judgement. In this section I will show how Naar (2022, 2024) thinks that the action analogy is better suited for the remaining three features than the perceptual analogy.

Let us begin with intentionality. As stated above (Section 2.1), emotions are intentional. They are so at least in the sense that they are directed towards their intentional content—being this an object, a proposition, or what have you. Some actions are also intentional (or look like they have intentionality) in the same sense, for instance, when I punish my boss, my action is directed towards him. Given that an action, as opposed to mere behaviour, is not merely a body movement, it allows the construction of an intensional context for at least some action reports, which lead us to think that at least some tokens of the action type of, say, punishing are intentional in the same way as emotions seem to be so. Further, Naar (2022), argues that the Action Analogy does not imply that actions are representational, even though they are intentional. In particular, Crane (2009) argues that an

entity (he discusses the case of perception) being representational (or having ‘propositional content’) does not follow from the fact that it has appropriateness conditions (or ‘accuracy conditions’) nor from the claim that its content ‘can always be described in a sentence which expresses a proposition’. According to Naar (2022), following Crane (2009), actions need not be representational because all that is demanded is that an intentional entity requires a representation. What he has in mind is that the representation required can be provided by the cognitive basis on which the action depends. Accordingly, one consequence of the action analogy is that an emotion need not be representational as long as it depends on other representational states of the subject who is in the grip of the emotion.

In Naar’s (2022, 2024) version of the action analogy, the phenomenology of emotions is accounted for in a more straightforward manner. Observe that actions are, perhaps among other things, bodily movements. Such bodily movements involve physiological changes. Naar’s idea is that the phenomenology of action can be elucidated with reference to the phenomenology of bodily movements and physiological changes —and the phenomenology of the cognitive basis on which the action depends. His proposal is that the phenomenology of emotions should be elucidated in a similar way: the phenomenology of emotion is the phenomenology of physiological changes involved in bodily movements —and the phenomenology of the cognitive basis on which the emotion depends.

One might protest that the action analogy leaves, then, no room for the passivity of emotional episodes. The proponent of the action analogy can respond two things. Given that an agent, when she is in the grip of an emotion, feels the corresponding bodily changes, this feeling of bodily changes involved in emotions is what accounts, at least in part, for their passive character. And second, as Müller (2018) argues, emotions are not passive in the same sense as perceptual experiences are passive. One typically does not contribute to having a perceptual experience, it seems involuntary in the strongest sense of the word. Suppose I perceive the sky as blue, I do not have a say regarding having such experience or not. In contrast, my emotion of joy when perceiving the sky as blue is my way of responding to my perception of the colour blue. Thus, even though emotions typically have a passive component —which, according to Naar’s action analogy, should to be elucidated with reference to the phenomenology of bodily movements and perhaps to phenomenology of the cognitive basis of the emotion-token in question—, this can not be in detriment to the fact that emotions are part of the agent’s responses to her environment —though mediated through her sensory perceptions, which are part of the cognitive basis.

3.3 Problems of the action analogy

Although there is reason to think that the action analogy as put forward by Naar (2022, 2024) is superior to the perceptual analogy, it faces its own problems. Naar himself acknowledges some of these limits. Since those problems are related to the fact that some emotional episodes (as well as some emotion types) lack or seem to lack of overt action or tendency to act and that we lack, when emoting, the kind of control that we have when we act, he suggests an imperativism-inspired view of emotions, according to which emotions are ‘commands one imposes on oneself on the basis of reasons’ (Naar, 2024: 75). This is motivated, in particular, by the claim that the action analogy leads to a conception in which emotions are fundamentally like actions in the strongest sense. It might be true that this analogy with action supports such an imperativist view of emotions. But I will argue that the analogy is problematic.² I will then turn to proposing another kind but related analogy: one between emotion and emotional action, justification of which will require an independent argument. In particular, an argument that supports the idea that, when discussing the nature of emotion, the relevant subset of actions is the set of emotional actions. But, first, in this section, I will point out some relevant disanalogies between emotion and action in general.

The first disanalogy concerns phenomenology. According to the action analogy, the phenomenology of emotion should be elucidated by reference to the phenomenology of action. Following Naar (2022), ‘emotions do not seem to be the sort of thing that can be caused by the intention to «perform» them. And the idea that ‘emotions are literally things we can perform at will or voluntarily is highly controversial to say the least; coming to be angry with a friend certainly does not look like a product of choice’. The problem is that even granting that the phenomenology of emotion is exhausted by the phenomenology of action that it involves, the action analogy leaves unexplained why in action there is what has been called ‘the phenomenology of agency’ which seems lacking as far as the phenomenology of emotion is concerned.³ The phenomenology of agency refers, in general, to all those phenomenal states associated with first-personal agency, which include the idea that an agentive experience is the experience of a (not necessarily bodily) movement as an action of one’s own, that one is in control of, performed with effort and freely (Bayne, 2008). To be clear, there are sceptical positions that deny the existence of at least part of agentive

² Of course, it is still an open possibility that an imperativist account of emotion ends up being the true account of emotion. What I am claiming is that such an account is not supported by an analogy of this sort, if I am right.

³ I owe the advisor of this paper this point.

experiences (eg. Korsgaard, 1996), although then the problem amounts to arguing not only that there is no agentive experience, but also to explaining why we think we have agentive experiences. There might be actions (in particular, some stimulus-driven actions) that lack agentive experience. For example, Della Sala *et al.* (1991) report the phenomenon of ‘anarchic hand’, a disorder of agency in which patients describe their hand as ‘having a will of its own’, Della Sala and colleagues report behaviours like undoing ‘buttons that have only just been done up’ and the inability of the subjects to inhibit such kind of behaviour. In a similar way, Estingler *et al.* (1991) report that some patients, among other behaviours, ‘will put on multiple pairs of sunglasses, even when [they] are already wearing sunglasses’, an instance of what has been called ‘utilization syndrome’. The sceptic of agency phenomenology should explain the intuitive difference between those experiences and the experience of ordinary actions. It is not clear how she can do so without appealing to agency experience, existence of which she denies. As regards to appealing to these reports for the action analogy, nonetheless, I detect two problems. It is not clear that these instances of behaviour should count as actions understood as something that we do, as opposed to mere happenings. Both studies report that the subject’s actual behaviour is at odds with their goals—or at least does not conform to them. Second, even if they were actions, it seems clear that these are not the common kind of action to say the least. So, in any case, the action analogy cannot appeal to them to explain the phenomenology of emotion, because what is at stake in the action analogy is a comparison between emotion and action in general.

Another problem for the action analogy as regards the phenomenology of emotion is that there are some emotions that do not involve physiological changes. As Mitchell (2021) argues, some ‘cool’ emotional experiences, such as admiration, reverence or regret, can occur without any attendant bodily phenomenology. Mitchell asks us to consider the following case. ‘Out walking in the Alps, Gill feels moved when confronted with a particularly stunning vista. Isn’t it plausible that someone can experience such an emotion without any action-ready bodily phenomenology? A similar question is put forward by Robinson (2020): if we are to compare emotion and action, how should aesthetic emotions be analysed? Aesthetic emotions, she maintains, though traditionally characterised as ‘distant and disinterested’, are emotions nonetheless. Observe that the perceptual analogy is better suited to account for these emotions: if emotions are perceptions of values, say, admiration is the perception of something admirable (a view, a piece of art, and so on). Mitchell (2021) uses this kind of examples to push towards his own theory of emotional experience according to which it should be analysed as some kind of feeling toward value.

A third limitation of the action analogy is that there is no mapping between emotion types and action types. This problem is twofold. For one, there are emotions packed together with only subtle distinctions among them. Ballard (2021) considers the class of anger emotions, such as ‘resentment, indignation, frustration, hatred, and contempt’. The problem for the action analogy is that the same kind of actions we typically do when we are under the grip of resentment can be of the same kind of actions we do under hatred, for instance. The perceptualist has again a straightforward way to individuate such emotions. The perceptual theorist, indeed, may appeal to the idea that, in each distinct emotion, the value one perceives is different. Ballard’s suggestions are that in contempt ‘one looks down on something’, whereas in hatred ‘one is preoccupied with the intense badness of the thing, without focusing on its «beneathness»’ (Ballard, 2021: 855). I think that this problem is not fatal for the action analogy, since, on independent grounds, the evaluation can be posited in the cognitive basis on which the emotion depends. We compared, as an example of how the action analogy can be put forward, punishment and anger. Naar could appeal to the fact that if a certain behaviour is not preceded by an evaluation of the kind that ‘my boss did wrong to me’, then it is not clear that it should count as punishment. In fact, and I follow Ballard (2021), the action analogy suggests that for an emotional episode to occur, it should be preceded by an evaluation. But the problem persists because, if we are to follow the action analogy, those emotions should be individuated independently from the kind of evaluation it occurs; and, in any case, if the evaluation has to be so fine-grained to distinguish, for instance, resentment and hatred, then I do not see why would the action analogy be superior to the perceptual analogy in this respect.

For another, even considering one single type of emotion, when we act under the grip of an emotion, we typically manifest some degree of behavioural flexibility (Scarantino 2014), that is, the same emotion can lead to different actions. For example,

in fear we may run, but also freeze, shut a door, make a phone call, brandish a gun, keep as quiet as possible, and so on. Similarly, we may slap someone out of anger, but also push them, yell at them, spit on them, threaten them verbally, report them to the police, and so on (Scarantino, 2014: 158-159).

The flexibility of behaviour involved in emotion means, thus, that the same emotion type can lead to a number of different actions. To acknowledge this kind of data and the existence of cultural differences as regards the behaviour related with emotions, Frijda and Parrott (2011)

have posited the technical concept ‘ur-emotion’ to replace the notion of ‘basic emotion’ in order to highlight the ‘abstract nature of emotion universals’. For instance, ‘the ur-emotion of submission can be part of an emotion of shame [...] of amae (abandoning to the tender care of a partner; [...]), of awe, of admiration, humility, and respect’ (Frijda & Parrott, 2011: 411). The idea is that an emotion includes different ur-emotions and that different emotions can share some ur-emotions (depending on the cultural context). However, appealing to ur-emotions would not help, because the action analogy is intended to be a comparison between action (in general) with emotion (not ur-emotions). It should be noted, however, that one’s behaviour when under the grip of an emotion, though flexible, is not entirely chaotic. As mentioned earlier (Section 3), when I am angry at my boss, let us say, I am more likely to leave her company than to buy her concert tickets. But what we do when we are under the grip of emotion depends on the context in which we are—in particular, it depends on its cognitive basis, in terms of Deonna and Teroni (2014). This dependency suggests that emotion types should be contrasted not with action types like kissing, punishing or fleeing away, but more abstractly with actions defined by ‘the end result aimed at’ (Frijda, 1986: 70), say, avoiding dangers.

I conclude from this list of problems and limitations of the action analogy, that while it seems to aim in the right direction, a better analogy is still pending. In Section 4 I propose a different analogy, namely, an analogy with emotional action, which, I claim, preserves the gains of the action analogy while it is better suited to account for the problems that the latter presents.

4. The emotional action analogy and its problems

The aim of the following sections is to present and defend an emotional action analogy. The main argument in favour of the idea that we should focus mainly in emotional behaviour and emotional action when comparing emotion and action is methodological: since the exact nature of emotions is so difficult to pin down—evidence for such difficulty are 1) the limitations of both perceptual and action analogies; 2) the merits of both analogies in spite of the striking difference between perception and action; and 3) the proliferation of a great number of theories of emotion—, it seems to me appropriate to study the phenomena of emotion focusing on right where it seems more manifested, namely, in emotional action. I

will argue that we have reasons that we should proceed by focusing on emotional behaviour and emotional action. The reasons will come from the literature of the psychology of emotional development. I will offer a characterization of what I am referring to by ‘emotional action’ following Frijda (2010) and Scarantino (2014) in the following section.

However, there is one concern I must address immediately. It seems circularly vicious to recommend analysing emotion by reference to emotional action.⁴ I argue that it is not, for the following reason. Recall that an argument by analogy, in general, compares two a priori distinct entities in the pretheoretical level. For example, the perceptualist recommends us to compare emotion to sensory perception. By ‘pretheoretical level’ it is conveyed the idea that when comparing the two entities, one should not take the conclusion of the analogy for granted. The perceptualist, if she wants to convince us, can not take for granted that emotion should be analysed by reference to perception in this stage. Nonetheless, ‘pretheoretical’ is not a synonym for ‘intuitive’. We are allowed to introduce whatever theorising about the two entities in question, with two related provisoes, in order to be convincing: (a) the facts regarding the two entities should be widely accepted or considered platitudes about them, and so (b) those facts can not take for granted the conclusion of the argument. It is in the conclusion of the argument (a posteriori, so to speak) that the two a priori distinct entities appear as being identical or in some sense fundamentally alike. I will recommend to contrast emotion and emotional actions as a priori distinct entities, meaning that we attribute different properties to each one of them in the pretheoretical level —for instance, emotions seem mental, whereas emotional actions seem not. It is only in the conclusion that we find the claim that emotion should be analysed by reference to emotional action. Now, emotional action, as a distinct subclass of action, is not defined by being caused by emotion, although it is typically caused by it. Consider for now the following case. Suppose that out of hatred I draw a complex and very detailed plan to kill Strawson, one that will take one year to bring about its end —to avoid suspicion. Although my action of planning and those consisting in the execution of the plan are done out of hatred, they do not count as emotional actions in the sense that I am concerned with. What defines ‘emotional action’ are the three features that I am pointing out in the next section, namely, impulsivity, flexibility and bodily underpinnings (following Frijda, 2010 and Scarantino, 2014, though I am not sure whether they identify the class of emotional action with the set of actions caused by emotion or define it by the mentioned characteristics). It is perhaps open to maintain that in this case, although they are

⁴ This concern was well observed by the advisor of this paper.

explained by mentioning that I do them out of hatred, my actions are not caused by the emotion. For the purposes of the emotional action analogy, this latter claim makes no harm, as long as the claim is made entirely general, that is, that emotions, though explain actions, do not cause them. I fail to see, however, how can one accept the first claim—that in the imagined scenario the emotion does not cause the mentioned actions, while denying the second claim—that emotions do not cause actions. Thus, I hold that not all actions caused by emotions are emotional actions. Another question is whether there are emotional actions that are not caused by emotions. Given that what defines ‘emotional action’ as I am using it are the mentioned three characteristics, it is an open possibility there being emotional actions not caused by emotions, although it is difficult to see how an action could have such features without being caused by an emotion (in particular, impulsivity). Finally, since emotion and emotional action are at least a priori distinct entities and that one is not defined in terms of the other, I think there is no vicious circularity in pursuing an analogy between emotion and emotional action. The only redoubt of circularity arises when the analogy is assumed— so in the theoretical level. But I find no problem here. Given the close relation between one and the other, what we know and learn of emotional action, should affect what we know of emotion, and the other way around.

I now turn to characterising emotional action in some more detail.

4.1 Characterization of emotional action

Emotional actions share three characteristics as a distinctive class of actions: impulsivity, flexibility, and what Scarantino (2014) calls bodily underpinnings. Let us consider them in order. An emotional action is typically done impulsively, which according to Frijda (2010), means two things. Firstly, it means that in this kind of action there is a sense of urgency in the sense that there is both an expectation of gain after performing the action and ‘haste to fulfill it’ (Frijda, 2010: 571), which in the literature it is analysed in terms of ‘preference for early action than over late action’ (Scarantino, 2014: 157). That an emotional action is one done impulsively also means that it is characterised by the ‘use of only part of the available cues that might indicate the adequacy of action’ (Frijda, 2010: 571). This aspect, in turn, is twofold. In emotional actions, the amount of time that the subject spends gathering information about how to act is rather limited. But also due to the time limit, the usage of the

available information is affected. For instance, while in the grip of emotion, one's ability to draw inferences is time limited.

The second characteristic of the notion of emotional action that I seek to pin down is flexibility. I already introduced the notion of flexibility when dealing with the action analogy (Section 3.3). Recall that behavioural flexibility in this context denotes that the same emotion type can lead to a number of different actions depending on the context. But we have also seen that the number of different actions that an emotion type can lead to is limited and this suggests that, though there is no perfect correlation between emotion types and action types, it is still open to define the relevant kind of actions by the result they aim at.

Finally, in performing an emotional action we generally manifest involuntary bodily changes that include 'facial and vocal changes, postural expressions, and changes in the autonomic nervous system'. For instance, according to Scarantino (2014: 159), when we slap someone out of anger our act is 'often accompanied by involuntary expressions such as fixed stare, eyes widened, and bared teeth and by autonomic physiological changes such as increased heartbeats and tremors'. I should note, however, that there is evidence that those bodily changes are too variable to individuate emotions in general (Ekman, 1999). What Ekman thinks can individuate emotions (from other emotions and other affective phenomena), or at least some of them, is that 'when an emotion occurs we are dealing with current fundamental tasks in ways which were adaptive in our evolutionary past' (Ekman, 1999: 56), which is compatible with individuating the relevant kind of actions by the results they aim at.

4.2 Emotional action and emotional development

In this subsection I will argue that we have reasons to treat a certain set of emotions distinctively when pursuing an analogy with emotional action, as well as treating the latter as distinctive from actions in general. Although there is no unifying theory of emotional development, there is greater consensus than in theory of emotions in general and, as regards to my purposes, disagreement is lesser (Buss *et al.*, 2019, Camras, 2022). The idea is that children learn to ascribe emotions by reference to actions (eg. slapping) and responses (eg. crying) in which emotions are expressed, namely, emotional behaviour. A second idea is that there is a correlation between the kind of emotions they can ascribe and the kind of emotions

they can experience. Finally, in early development, children both ascribe and experience only a certain kind of emotions, those which are manifested in action. Only in later phases humans can undergo other, more ‘distant’ or ‘cool’ emotions.

In the literature of the psychology of human emotional development one identifies two different but related questions.

First, ‘development’ refers to the fact that, as a human being develops, the range of emotions that she can experience expands over the years (cf. Izard & Malatesta, 1987; Holodynski & Seeger, 2019). For instance, current theories of human emotional development agree that humans experience anger long before we can feel pride and even longer before we can feel admiration (Dollar & Calkins, 2019; Camras, 2022), or that fear probably emerges earlier than shame, since the former requires less ‘cognitive and evaluative processing’ than the latter (Lewis, 2008). At this point I will use the label of ‘basic emotion’ to refer to two related things: anger is a basic emotion compared to pride and admiration in the sense that humans are able to undergo anger before feeling admiration. Second, not all instances of anger are equally basic. Compare the following two cases. In one, a toddler experiences anger because his mother took away his pacifier because he is already too old. In the other, the same individual, now grown up, experiences anger toward the vice-president because she has reduced the state budget for research by five percent (contrary to what she promised). Since it requires lower cognition, the first case is basic compared to the latter. Cases like the first are those on which we should focus, as it is where the emotional response is more directly manifested.

There is also consensus that complex emotions emerge from more basic emotions: the question is to pin down exactly how —Izard (2007) suggests that basic emotions become components of ‘emotion schemas’, that is, mental structures that involve ‘interactions among emotion feelings and higher order cognition (eg. thoughts, strategies and goals), which can account for non-basic emotions like pride, while, in turn, Holodynski and Seeger (2019) agree with Lewis *et al.* (1989) in that emotions that require self-consciousness (eg. shame, pride, embarrassment and guilt) emerge from sadness and disgust once the child becomes self-conscious (between 1 and 2 years old) and acquires certain standards and rules (between 2 and 3 years old).

Matter of divergency regarding basic emotions like anger is to indicate exactly when children experience them. For example, Lewis (2008) reports that the first anger manifestation is in 2 month old infants, while Stenberg *et al.* (1983) reported that anger does not emerge till between 4 and 6 months. The problem amounts to specifying what kind of

behaviour counts as anger manifestation, which relates with the second kind of human development across lifespan, namely, that how emotion is manifested varies as we grow—for instance, the flexibility of behaviour increases as new forms to respond emotionally become available, say, punching—and what elicits emotional responses (Camras, 2022, chapter 1). To put a simple example, adults can respond emotionally to distant memories and verbal insults, while young children do not seem to do so, or at least not in the way we do it.

The final question—how children learn to identify others' emotions—is closely related to how their emotional behaviour is shaped. The main research hypothesis is that they do so by reference to emotional actions and responses of (primarily) their caregivers and with social interaction with others in a later stage (Camras, 2022). As Holodynski and Friedlmeier (2006) argue, a crucial aspect of human emotional development is learning to recognize others' emotions through their emotional behaviour. The idea is that infants and children learn how to appraise and respond to their context by observing others' emotional reactions. In particular, Holodynski and Friedlmeier identify four processes involved in emotion learning and socialisation. The first one is the selection of context, in which adults (and in particular caregivers) determine the kind of experiences to which infants are exposed. Adults with which children interact responding to their emotional behaviour (eg. crying, which is diffuse in the sense that it occurs in different types of emotion) by showing exaggeratedly the adequate more specific emotional behaviour. Thirdly, social referencing, in which the infant turns her attention towards the others for 'information about how to interpret an emotionally ambiguous situation'. The fourth process is 'acting as if the emotion has already occurred, in which adults interpret the child's ambiguous behaviour as reflecting a particular emotion and reinforce that emotion by labelling it, praising it, and/or responding in an emotion appropriate manner' (Holodynski & Friedlmeier, 2006, 2010; Camras, 2022, chapter 1).

Holodynski and Friedlmeier further integrate these four processes into a larger model of emotional development across lifespan, what they call the internalization model. The notion of 'internalization' is borrowed from Vygotsky's (1987) view of the development of language and thought. The main idea is that a child's cognitive development begins by 'external' interaction till the individual internalises such interaction. In the case of language and thought, in particular, the latter is understood as the internalisation of the former: the language is understood as a corpus of signs socially given, the child then attends to adult's usage of those signs in context and repeats them. Over time, the individual learns to represent these kinds of interactions and to use language with herself without overt manifestation in order to guide her own behaviour—and that is what thought is claimed to be. Similarly,

Holodynski and Friedlmeier suggest that emotional development starts with interaction with adults and attending to their external manifestation —the mentioned four processes of emotion learning and socialisation. Over the course of development —it is required the development of regulative control over one’s behaviour, for instance—, the individual can generate ‘purely mental representations’ of such interactions and responses which can serve to guide her own behaviour (Holodynski & Friedlmeier, 2006, chapter 3). The internalisation model of emotion, however, faces two objections (along with methodological problems such as relying too much in self-reports). The first one is that, while it starts from a well attested claim, namely, that children learn to identify and attribute emotions by attending to adult’s emotional actions and responses and by repeating these actions themselves, the whole model of emotion internalisation is not sufficiently supported by the available data —Holodynski and Friedlmeier acknowledge this lack of empirical support and propose to regard the model as an integrative research hypothesis (Holodynski & Friedlmeier, 2010: 305). The second objection is that the model suggests, in a later stage of development, the existence of fully disembodied emotion (Camras, 2010). This objection is better overcome. Indeed, the authors reply that all what they argue for is that the ‘expressive component of an emotion can become miniaturized up to a point at which observers can no longer perceive any expressions, whereas the actor nevertheless clearly experiences [...] sensations of expressions as part of his/her emotion episodes —similar to the experience of inner speech’ (Holodynski & Friedlmeier, 2010: 304). The first objection is crucial for our purposes, as it forces us to disregard the whole model as far as an argument by analogy is concerned —it does not satisfy, in concrete, the first proviso mentioned in Section 4, namely, that all claims made in this stage of the dialectics are to be widely accepted in the pretheoretical level. For the emotional action analogy, fortunately, we need not to commit to the whole model of internalisation of emotion. What is needed, I submit, is the more conservative claim according to which our emotional learning depends on attending to the emotional actions of others and of oneself in an early stage of development. The picture that emerges is that, in an early stage of development, emotions are manifested in over emotional action and other emotional responses and, in a later stage, along with the development of regulative control over one’s behaviour, one can refrain from acting, even though one is in a state of action readiness or has a tendency to act.

4.3 The emotional action analogy

From this review of the literature of the psychology of human emotional development I propose, as regards to building an alternative analogy to the action analogy presented by Naar, two things. The first one is that we are justified in focusing on the most basic emotions (eg. fear, disgust, joy, anger) and not more complex emotions which emerge in a later phase—after we are able to identify basic emotions and perhaps after a certain development of regulative control over one’s own behaviour—in this stage of the dialectics. And second, that we should contrast these basic emotions with emotional actions, the kind of behaviour in which emotions are manifested. The emotional action analogy is the main argument toward the idea that we should elucidate (basic) emotions by reference to emotional action. Only after putting forward the analogy, I suggest how this analysis can be extended to more complex emotions—in Section 4.4.

The emotional action analogy goes as follows:

(i) As well as perception and action in general, emotional action is intentional in the sense that it is directed toward an intentional content. The reason to think that an emotional action is intentional is the same for which we think that action in general is intentional, namely, that it allows the construction of an intensional context for at least some emotional action report.

(ii) Emotional action can conflict with belief in an irrational sense, the same sense in which action and recalcitrant emotions can conflict with belief. Suppose that I am punishing my boss out of anger for precluding me from taking my deserved vacations. Should you convince me that he did not, what is expected is that I stop punishing him—although I may not stop. As regards to conflict with belief, then, the emotional action analogy and the action analogy are equally suited, in contrast to perception.

(iii) Like actions in general, emotional actions have cognitive bases (in terms of Deonna & Teroni, 2014) in the sense that emotional actions are not the primary epistemic to the actor’s environment. In particular, for the purposes of the current analogy, emotional actions related to basic emotions may include evaluations of the relevant stimulus—eg. that the bear in front of me is dangerous. As I will argue, in extending the idea that emotions should be analysed by reference to emotional action, we do not need to posit more fine-grained evaluations to account for emotions like resentment or hatred. Retain for the

moment that, as far as having a cognitive basis is concerned, both action and emotional action analogies are equally well suited.

(iv) Both emotional action (like action in general) and emotion are responsive to reasons. And what's more, they are responsive to reasons of the same kind. To recall our previous examples, suppose that my boss did, or I think he did, something wrong to me, I have a reason both for punishing him and for being angry at him.

(v) Finally, emotional action and emotions are similar in their phenomenology and in their having a passive as well as an active component. In this respect, I find the emotional action analogy superior to Naar's (2022) version of the action analogy. The reason is as follows. Given that an emotional action involves non-voluntary bodily movements, and, in particular, facial and vocal changes, postural expressions, and changes in the autonomic nervous system (Scarantino, 2014: 159), the emotional action analogy can account for the passive component of emotion better than the action analogy. Unlike action in general, there is reason to doubt that there is agency phenomenology in emotional action, precisely due to those involuntary bodily underpinnings involved in it, which lack in actions like playing basketball. Notwithstanding, there is still an active component in emotional action as opposed to mere emotional behaviour—as long as one retains a certain degree of control in the onset of the action. Accordingly, I think, and following Müller (2018), this control should account for the active component that is found in emotion and seems lacking in mere perception and so the active component of basic emotions can be understood as one's response to certain circumstances or stimuli previously evaluated, let us say, as dangerous.

Now recall Ballard's (2021) and Mitchell's (2021) objections that the action analogy faces. I will show that these are no problems for the emotional action analogy. First, Ballard argues that there are emotions packed together with only subtle distinctions among them. This, I argued, is a problem for the action analogy insofar as the same kind of actions we typically do when we are under the grip of one of such emotions can be of the same kind of actions we do under the grip of a subtly related emotion. Let me note that a successful theory of emotions has to explain how can we individuate each emotion from another (as well as from other affective phenomena) and, last but not least, to explain why these emotions are subtly related.

The problem for the action analogy is that it makes no room for the first requirement, while it is well suited for the second, as what we do under the grip of resentment might be of the same kind of actions we do under the grip of hatred. I suggested, with Ballard, that the perceptual theorist has a straightforward way to account for the first requirement, because

according to the theorist an emotion is a perception of value. Ballard's proposal was to consider that in contempt 'one looks down on something', whereas in hatred 'one is preoccupied with the intense badness of the thing, without focusing on its beneathness' (Ballard, 2021: 855).

The problem for the perceptualist comes from the second requirement, as she has trouble in giving an account for the relation between the emotions we undergo and the actions we do when we are under the grip of emotions (as I pointed out in Section 3). Now, given that we are, in this stage of the argument, comparing emotional action with basic emotions, there is no problem of individuation regarding subtly related emotions. The reason is that there do not seem to be any subtly related basic emotions. Ballard examples are resentment, indignation, frustration, hatred and contempt. All of these emotions are related in some sense (I will say more about it in the next section) to either anger or disgust or both. Some instances of anger and disgust are indeed basic emotions in the sense I am using the term (for disgust see Rozin *et al.*, 2008; and Rottman *et al.*, 2019, for its development), and the actions we do under the grip of anger are not of the same kind of actions we do under the grip of disgust. Ballard's objections will arise after accepting the analogy I am proposing; in particular, in extending the treatment of basic emotions to the rest of emotions. I advance that the idea will be that non-basic emotions are to be understood as dispositions to undergo basic emotions depending on the circumstances (in concrete, on what happens to the intentional content of the emotion). What we gain, compared to Naar's action analogy, is that we do not need to posit fine-grained evaluations in the emotion's cognitive basis, and so we do not need to individuate non-basic emotions in terms of evaluations, as I argued Naar is forced to.

Mitchell (2021), on the other hand, suggests that in some emotions there is lack of action or action tendency. Recall that his examples are the emotions of admiration, regret and reverence —eg. Gill, who, out walking in the Alps, admires a particularly stunning view. Now, in the pretheoretical level we can only claim two things. First, these are again examples of non-basic emotions and I argued that we are justified in treating, in this stage, basic emotions and leave aside non-basic emotions for the theoretical phase. Accordingly, this is not an objection to the emotional action analogy, whereas it is indeed an objection to Naar's action analogy, as I argued in Section 3.3. And second, we should be cautious when claiming that there is no action nor action tendency in admiration. While it is true that in some sense when I admire the view I do not act nor I tend to act, it is not less true that, precisely because I admire the view, when I find out, let us say, that the view is sullied by a hiker who has dumped rubbish in the valley, I act or tend to act accordingly (and if we accept what

recommends the emotional action analogy, we can say that I undergo anger); and equally true is that I tend to act accordingly when I find out that the valley is in danger. In the next section I will propose to consider—in the theoretical level—a dispositional analysis of this kind of non-basic emotions like admiration.

4.4 Problems of the emotional action analogy

From now on I take for granted that the emotional action analogy is better than both perceptual analogy and Naar's (2022) action analogy. That is, I accept the claim that basic emotions are to be elucidated by reference to emotional actions. This suggestion, however, is not trouble free. I address its problems in this section. To begin with, recall that a limitation of the action analogy is the fact that there is no mapping between types of emotion and types of action (Frijda & Parrott, 2011; Scarantino, 2024). This being so, leads to two options. One is, like Frijda and Parrott, abandoning the notion of basic emotion as I have been using it and consider, instead, ur-emotions which may be part of different emotions (for instance, acceptance, nonacceptance, avoid, reject and so on, see Section 3.3) —which implies abandoning the emotional action analogy. The second open possibility is that the emotional action contrasted with basic emotions should be individuated by the result aimed at. I recommend taking this second option. The appeal to the aim of emotional action in order to individuate them is unavoidable even if we introduce ur-emotions. The reason is the following. The aim of the emotion theorist is to elucidate emotional concepts like 'anger', 'admiration', 'contempt', or 'amae'. According to Frijda and Parrott, each emotion consists of different ur-emotions. But what individuates the emotional concepts in terms of ur-emotions is the result they aim at. For instance, 'avoid' is part of the emotion of fear if the aim is avoiding dangers, and part of disgust if the aim is avoiding contamination. Due to conceptual economy, I propose to maintain the emotional action analogy along with the claim that the relevant actions are to be individuated by the result they aim at.

A crucial problem for the emotional action analogy as I put it forward is the existence of basic emotions where the lack of overt action is what is distinct of the emotion. This emotion, in particular, is the emotion of sadness. This problem is not the same as Mitchell's objection. In admiration, he claims, there can be no action or tendency of action of any sort. In sadness, on the other hand, what is lacking is overt emotional action. Basic instances of

sadness —instances of sadness when the individual has not yet developed control—, however, include emotional actions and responses (for instance, see Campos *et al.*, 1989). Again, it is only over the development of regulative control over one’s own behaviour that sadness can be manifested without overt behaviour (Zeman *et al.*, 2019). Even still, non-basic instances of sadness —instances of sadness when the individual has developed control— typically include tendencies to withdraw: the organism gets prepared to refrain from acting in circumstances in which it is usually expected to act (Scarantino, 2014: 171).

Finally, recall from the previous section that I advanced a dispositional analysis of non-basic emotions.⁵ The motivation for this was also advanced. Consider the emotion of admiration. While it is true that in some sense when I admire Susan Stebbing I do not act nor I tend to act, it is not less true that, because I admire her, I feel anger and tend to act accordingly in certain circumstances, for instance, when his work and ideas are unfairly dismissed and I feel joy when a good book on his thought is published, again because I admire her (or the idea I have of her). Similarly, suppose that Strawson hates Quine. While he is working in his office at Oxford far away from Quine, Strawson does not act nor has any tendency to act towards him. However, once he hears that Quine wins the Rolf Schock Prize, he undergoes anger —to simplify the example, suppose that Strawson is not jealous—, and he feels joy when he pushes Quine off the cliff from the top of the mountain. In general, thus, I propose that non-basic emotions should be understood as dispositions to undergo basic emotions depending on the circumstances, and such basic emotions should be analysed in terms of emotional actions or tendencies to act emotionally. The gain of introducing a dispositional analysis of non-basic emotions is that it introduces a contextual component, which should account for the cultural variety of emotions (eg. *amae*, Frijda & Parrott, 2011), while, at the same time, preserving the universal character of basic emotions.

⁵ I owe the advisor of this paper the idea that this possibility is at least in principle open. His suggestion was that emotions like admiration or hatred can be analysed as sentiments, and those in terms of dispositions —though I do not know whether he holds this view. The upshot of this analysis is that one is then able to explain why these emotions take an object, rather than a proposition, as their intentional content. One, for instance, admires views, pieces of art or persons. I can not, however, claim this gain, as I extend it to other emotions like contempt, resentment, pride, jealousy, and so on. Matter of further theorising is to judge whether all these emotions (which I call non-basic emotions) take an object as their intentional content. As for now, it seems to me that at least a great amount of them do so.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, let us recapitulate our argumentation. I began in Section 2 by pointing out that the main argument in favour of the perceptual theories of emotion is an analogy between emotion and sensory perception (Tappolet, 2012, 2016). I presented it and then turned to the task of disputing the analogy by highlighting the pretheoretical differences between sensory perception and emotion using arguments that already exist in the literature against perceptualism. In particular, 1) they differ as far as conflict with belief is concerned (Naar, 2022) —although I defend the perceptual analogy from the claim that it fails to make room for a distinction between representation and fittingness— and 2) perceptions, unlike emotions, lack cognitive basis (Deonna & Teroni, 2014) and are not responsive to reasons (Brady, 2013; Naar 2022, 2024).

The argument against the perceptual analogy is only completed by offering an alternative analogy: I introduced and defended Naar's (2022) version of the action analogy (in sections 3.1 and 3.2). Even though I find it superior to the perceptual analogy, there are reasons to think that a different analogy is pending. The main problems of the action analogy are (a) that it does not account correctly for the phenomenology of emotion, due to the lack of phenomenology of agency in emotion, (b) that it fails to distinguish subtly related emotions like resentment, indignation, frustration, hatred and contempt (Ballard, 2021) —and that the only way to do so is individuating them by the evaluation that occurs in them; and (c) that there are emotions that do not involve over action (Mitchell, 2021). I finally proposed, in Section 4, a different analogy. Attending the literature on the psychology of human emotional development, I claimed that, before pursuing an argument by analogy, we are justified in focusing on basic emotions and emotional actions, given that it is where the emotion is more manifested and we, as children, learn to ascribe emotions to others and to ourselves (especially Holodyski & Friedlmeier, 2006, chapter 3; Camras, 2022, chapters 1 and 2). In section 4.3 I defended that the emotional action analogy is superior to an analogy with action in general. It is superior, in particular, in that it accounts better for the passivity of the phenomenology of emotion —though without detriment its active component— and in that it does not face the rest of the objections in the pretheoretical level. Once the emotional action analogy is put forward and accepted, I proposed to extend the idea that we should analyse basic emotions by reference to emotional actions to the domain of emotion in general. The resulting view, if I am right, is that non-basic emotions should be understood as dispositions

to undergo basic emotions depending on the circumstances, and such basic emotions should be analysed in terms of emotional actions.

Further research, nonetheless, has to specify the content of the latter claim—for instance, in which circumstances, when one admires a piece of art, one undergoes anger, joy, sadness, fear, or disgust; and similarly for other emotions. Another question is the elucidation of concepts of value like ‘admirable’ or punishable’. As I defended, one upshot of the emotional action analogy (against both action and perceptual analogies) is that we do not need to posit them in the emotion’s cognitive basis. I speculate that such concepts can be elucidated by reference to our emotional actions, and, thus, that some version of metaphysical sentimentalism is correct—roughly, the claim that moral evaluation is grounded in human sentiment (D’Arms & Jacobson, 2000). To finish, let me mention that this paper began as (and I think it still should be understood under the topic of) an investigation of the relation between affective states and reasoning. Paul Grice, in The John Locke Lectures of 1978-79, speculated that the faculty of reason and so reasoning could have originated as some kind of mechanism to regulate one’s own passions (Grice, 2001: 25)—in which I include primarily one’s own emotional responses. To pin down what this claim exactly means and whether it is true is what motivated this paper and, if Tyche allows it, further investigation.

6. Bibliography

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