**Emotions and Their Expressions**

James Sias

*Philosophy, Dickinson College*

Dorit Bar-On

*Philosophy, University of Connecticut*

**1. Introduction**

Expressions like “I *see* the anger in his face,” “I can *hear* the disappointment in her voice,” and “She *felt* him trembling with fear,” imply that the emotions of others are things that we can sometimes perceive – i.e., things that we can see, hear, and feel. However, one might think that, strictly speaking, the perceptual language here is misleading. One might, that is, think that when we say things like this, we do not really mean that the other’s state of mind is perceptible in the same way that ordinary objects in our visual field are perceptible. Rather, to say, “I see the anger in his face,” is to offer a kind of shorthand for something like this: I see him make a facial expression that people commonly make when angry, and so *infer* that he is angry. So, ordinary locutions such as “I see the anger in his face” are misguided. They imply that emotions, like ordinary objects, are perceptible, and that behaviors that express our emotions enable non-inferential knowledge of them by others. But in fact there is no literal perception of emotions; at most what is perceived are behaviors that express the emotions, and our knowledge of others’ emotions is always mediated by knowledge of other things, so that, even in paradigmatic cases where we take ourselves to recognize someone’s emotion in their behavior *directly*, what we do is infer the presence and character of the emotion *on the basis of* behavioral evidence.

Notice, however, that if our ordinary language is misleading in this way, then it is *also* misleading with respect to the relationship between emotions and their expressions. We often describe facesas happy or relieved, voices as anxious, joyful, or scared, bodily demeanors as embarrassed or confident, and so on. (Indeed, as one author has observed, there really appear to be no independently characterizable kinds under which, e.g., the facial expressions associated with sadness, or joy, fall, but that “can be described without reference to the emotions” (Peacocke 2004: 66).) Our descriptions of expressive behaviors suggest that we take the emotions to be embodied in the behaviors that express them – the relief is somehow *right there in his face*, the joy is somehow *right there in her voice*, and so on. In general, we take expressive behavior (at least sometimes) to *manifest* subjects’ emotions in a way that makes it immediately available for others to see, hear, or feel. When an emotion is expressed, it is *present* *in* the facial expression, the tone of voice, the bodily demeanor; it’s as though it rises to the surface, somewhat as the bubbles of boiling water rise to its surface. But if the recognition of others’ emotions is always mediated by the perception or knowledge of other things about them, then this way of conceiving the *expression* of emotions would seem to be mistaken as well.

There are various reasons to be drawn to the ordinary understanding of our expression and recognition of emotions. The commonsense conception, if it were correct, would go some way toward discrediting the oft-maligned Cartesian conception of the relation between mind and body, with its attendant and trenchant problem of our knowledge of other minds. Furthermore, the commonsense conception would seem to mesh well with recent findings from social psychology and neurobiology that point to distinct evolutionary socio-biological functions of the emotions and their expressions in humans and other animals (see, e.g., Damasio 1994, 1999; Ekman 1993, 2003). However, our purpose in this paper is not to offer a direct defense of the commonsense *or* the current scientific conception.[[1]](#endnote-1) Instead, we here wish to examine what philosophical view of the *nature* of emotions could vindicate these conceptions. In other words: What view of the nature of emotions would best enable us to take expressions like “I can see the relief in his face/sadness in her eyes”, “I can hear the joy/trepidation in her voice”, or “I felt the anxiety in her body” entirely at face value? What would sadness, joy, relief, and so on have to *be* in order for it to be possible to perceive such emotions through expressive behavior, in a way that does not require treating the behavior as observational *evidence* from which their presence is to be inferred?

We begin (in Section 2) with a critical discussion of a recent account of emotion expression, according to which behaviors that express emotions enable the perception of the expressed emotions in virtue of forming ‘characteristic components’ from which the emotions are appropriately inferred. That discussion will lead us to lay down a certain desideratum: to accommodate the commonsense view, we will suggest, a theory of emotions should allow that emotions can be made perceptible through expressive behavior in the sense that such behavior enables *non-inferential perceptual knowledge* of emotions. In Section 3, we offer a brief survey of leading philosophical theories of the nature of emotions. In Section 4, we argue that some of these theories are less apt to meet this desideratum and sketch a view of emotions that we take to be a more viable candidate that, moreover, can address some of the issues raised in Section 2 concerning the perceptibility of emotions through expressive behavior.

**2. Expression, Emotion, and Perception**

We humans have a great variety of ways of expressing our states of mind. At one end of the spectrum, we have so-called *natural expressions*, such as yelps, grimaces, gasps, tears, and laughter, where both the behavior and its connection to the expressed states are supposed to be inculcated by nature. The so-called *basic emotions* (e.g., fear, anger, happiness, disgust) provide paradigm examples of states of mind that have natural expressions. The behaviors that express these emotions are unacquired, are thought to be pan-cultural, and are ones we share with at least some other primates (see Hwang and Matsumoto, this volume, for evidence in favour of such a view, and Russell and Jack, both this volume, for criticisms of it).[[2]](#endnote-2) But, of course, many of our emotions go beyond this category, and among the nonverbal behaviors that express them are facial contortions, gestures, and bodily demeanors that are mimicked, or acquired, and are more or less conventional (e.g., giving a hug, jumping for joy, stomping one’s feet, tipping one’s hat, sticking out one’s tongue); yet such behaviors often become ‘second nature’. As individuals, we can also develop idiosyncratic ways of expressing our emotions (see Green 2007: 140-143). And, of course, as language speakers, we have a wide array of conventional verbal means of various types—less or more articulate – for expressing emotions and sentiments (e.g., “Rats!”, “Sorry”, “Thank you”, “What a nasty thing to do”).

It is useful in this connection to separate expressive performances or *acts* from the expressive *vehicles* used in them. Thus, upon seeing a friendly dog, little Johnny’s face may light up; or he may let out an excited gasp, pointing at the dog; or he may emit a distinctive sound (“Uh!”), or call out: “doggy!” as he reaches to pet the dog; or he may exclaim: “Wanna pet the doggy!” perhaps with no reaching. Johnny’s facial expression and his gasp are natural expressions; whereas his eager reaching and subsequent utterances are expressive behaviors he voluntarily or perhaps even intentionally engages in to give vent to his desire to pet the dog. Among the utterances, note, are English *sentences*, which have conventional linguistic meaning, and express propositions in(what Sellars calls) *the semantic sense* (Sellars 1969; see also Bar-On 2004: 216f. and *passim*). Still, these all seem genuine instances of expressive behavior (see Green, this volume, for an argument that speech acts are expressive). What renders them so has to do with similarities among the performances or acts, which equally serve to give vent to Johnny’s state of mind. These simila­ri­ties obtain despite significant differences among the *expres­sive* *vehicles* used. One can *give expression to a state of mind* (express in *the mental-state sense*) – e.g., one’s amusement at a joke – by laughing (where we may assume that laughter does not stand in a semantic representa­tional relation to being amused), as well as by uttering a sentence with a structured meaning, such as “This is so funny!”. These are similar expressive performances, yet they use different vehicles of expression.[[3]](#endnote-3)

But what is it that makes a performance or act one of *expressing*?An idea that takes its inspiration from earlier philosophical work on expression, including remarks by Wittgenstein, as well as Ayer, is that distinctively expressive performances are not merely symptoms, nor even simply signs that reliably indicate states of mind. Instead, engaging in behavior that expresses one’s state of mind is making it manifest, or *showing* it (to an appropriately placed and suitably endowed audience), as opposed to merely reporting, or *telling* *of* it, on the one hand, and as opposed to hiding it, on the other hand.[[4]](#endnote-4) The showing involved is not that of a mathematical or logical proof or observational evidence; it’s not showing *that* something is the case. It’s also not like the modeling involved in various kinds of maps. When confronted with an animal baring its teeth in anger, a child squealing in delight, a man raising an eyebrow in surprise or shrugging shoulders in resignation, we may take ourselves to be *directly witnessing* how things are with the expresser. On the expresser’s side, the showing behavior relevant to expressing is behavior that springs spontaneously from – and exhibits, displays, or directly reveals – the expressed state of mind, as opposed to simply providing informa­tion or giving evidence about it (the way, e.g., someone taking an aspirin gives us evidence *that* they are in some kind of pain). On the audience’s side, the uptake of the behavior amounts to some kind of direct recognition of the expressed state, as opposed to requiring, say, inferring *that* the expresser is in the state on the basis of various features of the behavior coupled with contextual information and background knowledge.[[5]](#endnote-5)

At this point it seems useful to call upon the idea that at least some behavior that expresses states of mind shows those states in the sense of *enabling the (literal) perception* of the states themselves (by suitably endowed observers). The idea has found support especially in connection with emotions, which, like some sensations, are reliably associated with ‘signature’ expressions – typical, species-wide overt behaviors – whose perception, by a suitably endowed observer, can suffice for recognizing the presence and character of the emotion itself. Thus, for example, Mitchell Green (this volume and elsewhere) has recently defended the view that “it is possible literally to perceive the emotions of others” (Green 2010: 45). Here ‘literal perception’ is to be contrasted with merely perceiving *that* someone has a certain emotion, the latter being a correlative of having been (merely) provided with “strong evidence for the truth of a proposition” (Green 2010: 46; see also Green’s contribution to this volume). For Green, the kind of showing relevant to expression is a matter of *enabling knowledge*, including, but not limited to, perceptual knowledge.[[6]](#endnote-6) (Importantly, though, it turns out that Green thinks of all perceptual knowledge as a matter of drawing inferences based on evidence. See below.)

Green supports the view that emotions (*unlike* cognitive states of mind, such as intentions or beliefs) are made literally perceptible through expressive behavior by considering the expression of the basic emotions – anger, sadness, happiness, fear, surprise, and disgust – which, following Griffiths (1998, 2004), he takes to be “natural kinds” (Green 2010: 50). Behaviors that express such emotions are said to constitute observable *characteristic components* of the relevant states.[[7]](#endnote-7) This means that we can think of the perception enabled by emotion expressions on the model of “part-whole perception”: just as we can perceive an apple by perceiving its facing surface, or touch a building by touching part of its exterior wall, so we can perceive someone’s anger by perceiving a signature expression on her face, inasmuch as the (angry) facial expression is a component or part of the (whole) emotional state of anger (see Green 2010: 56f.).[[8]](#endnote-8)

In a critique of this proposal, Stout objects that “if the facing surface along with its observable properties can exist independently of the apple then seeing the facing surface by itself does not amount to seeing the apple. It amounts to seeing something that falls short of the circumstance itself, to use McDowell’s phrase, whereas what we were after was a way of understanding how we can see right through to the anger in someone’s face” (Stout 2010: 32).

This objection seems wrong-headed to us. Consider again teeth-baring and growling in, say, a leopard, which form the facial and vocal signature of (leopard-)anger. Of course, on a given occasion, an individual animal can show the typical visible and audible signs of anger without in fact being angry, for any number of reasons (and not necessarily through trying to deceive). In that case, no one could *see* the animal’s anger by perceiving the teeth-baring or *hear* it by hearing the growl; nor could we say that the animal is *showing* its anger (by growing and baring its teeth). Showing and seeing (and hearing, or feeling) are *factive.* But that is consistent with the idea that, on those occasions when the animal *is* angry and engaged in the relevant expressive behavior, an appropriately placed and suitably endowed observer can perceive its anger by perceiving the facial and vocal expression. Compare: We can see a tree by seeing a component of it – say, one of its branches – even though on occasion, if the branch were severed (but then invisibly propped back up), we might be seeing the branch *without* seeing the tree. If the tree *is* there, attached to the branch, as it were, we can see it by seeing its branch. Likewise, if our animal *is* angry, we can see its anger by seeing a characteristic component of it, despite the fact that it’s *possible* for the behavior to come apart from the relevant state (for discussion, see Bar-On 2004: 298f.).

In response to Stout’s objection, Green rightly takes issue with ‘McDowell’s Constraint’, viz.: that “if we take what is available to our experience of another’s mind as being compatible with that person’s not being in the mental state we impute to her, then we cannot know that she is in that state” (Green 2010: 57).[[9]](#endnote-9) However, by way of addressing the objection, Green makes what we take to be a false move. He proposes that we should think of part-whole perception – in *both* the case of emotion perception *and* the case of perceiving ordinary objects – as essentially an *inferential* matter.[[10]](#endnote-10) What vindicates our ordinary talk of literally seeing the (whole) apple by seeing its facing surface is that “perception of a facing surface *makes appropriate an inference to the presence* of an entire apple” (Green 2010: 48, emphasis added ). Similarly, what vindicates our ordinary talk of seeing the anger in someone’s face is the fact that here, too, there is an ‘appropriate inference’. Expressive behavior enables observers to have *perceptual* *knowledge*, despite the possibility of dissimulation (and other illusions), since “in perceiving a characteristic component of an emotion, *I am justified* in some instances *in inferring the existence of that emotion*, and that justification is part of what puts me in a position to perceive that emotion rather than just seem to do so” (Green 2010: 57, emphasis added). The justification in question is not *logical* or deductive; “[t]he characteristic components of emotion that are the touchstones of inferences to whole emotions, and which make affect-perception possible, do not logically entail those emotions” (Green 2010: 58).[[11]](#endnote-11) However, Green doesn’t think that this “block[s] knowledge of those emotions” (*ibid*.). The idea here seems to be that, insofar as what we perceive when witnessing the relevant expressive behavior is a *characteristic* component of the emotion, our inference to the presence of the emotion is sufficiently strong (albeit not deductive) to support knowledge.

Green uses the notion of inference in two different ways. On the one hand, he uses it to characterize the *perceptual* character of the knowledge enabled by expressive behavior (courtesy of the fact that the relevant behavior shows-α the emotion rather than merely *showing that* the subject has the emotion). The analogy he uses here is to the phenomenon of ‘filling in’, where “the visual system ‘infers’ the presence of a triangle from the cues available” (Green 2010: 49; see also this volume, p. XX ). This analogy – and another one he invokes, to the case of blindsight (Green 2010: 47f.; note the scare-quotes around ‘infer’) – is intended to draw on the *psychologist’s* notion of inference: automatic, nonconscious, subpersonal, non-propositional, niche-appropriate cognitive or representational transition.[[12]](#endnote-12) At the same time, as we just saw, he invokes the notion of proper (though non-logical) inference in arguing (against Stout, who follows McDowell) that *I* can be *justified* in e.g. *concluding* that my friend is angry, based on experiencing her grimace, where the angry behavior is supposedly *what* *gives me reason or evidence* for thinking that she is angry. And I can be said to have *knowledge* of her anger (as opposed to *merely* having evidence), despite the fact that the presence of the grimace provides no logical guarantee for the presence of the relevant emotion (that is, despite the fact that my evidence is not indefeasible).[[13]](#endnote-13) Here what seems to be at issue is the *epistemologist’s* notion of inference and its potential role in contributing to justification and thus to knowledge.[[14]](#endnote-14)

Limitations of space prevent us from examining more closely whether, or how, a single notion of inference can play the above two roles. For our present purposes it will suffice to make the following observation. The combination presented by Green’s view – of expressive behavior enabling *literal perception* of emotions by providing *evidence sufficient for knowledge*, *from which observers infer subjects’ emotions*, seems to compromise rather than fully vindicate the commonsense view. That view is aptly described by Wittgenstein when he says:

“We see emotion.” – As opposed to what? – We do not see facial contortions and make the inference that he is feeling joy, grief, boredom. We describe a face immediately as sad, radiant, bored, even when we are unable to give any other description of the features. – Grief, one would like to say, is personified in the face. (Wittgenstein 1980: §570)

Now, Green appears driven to the aforementioned combination by (a) taking the ‘characteristic component’ view (inspired by certain neuroscientific work on emotions) to be the best way to address apparent difficulties with the commonsense view, including ones raised by Stout, and (b) taking the ‘part-whole’ model of perception to be the most promising model for emotion perception. But if the price of the combination is giving up crucial aspects of the commonsense view, as well as some of the key philosophical advantages of invoking it in understanding our knowledge of other minds, it behooves us to look for a better way of understanding the relations between an emotion, its behavioral expression by a subject, and the knowledge such behavior affords in the subject’s observers.[[15]](#endnote-15)

Before going on, however, we’d like to mention another puzzle raised by Stout, independently of his dispute with Green regarding the epistemology of perception. Stout thinks that the following two claims, both of which are relatively common and intuitive, together generate a puzzle for anyone who thinks that emotions can be literally perceived:

(1) Emotions *are* ‘*present in’* their expressions – e.g., I can see his anger in his face.[[16]](#endnote-16)

(2) Emotions *cause* their expressions – e.g., his anger caused him to make that face.

The puzzle is essentially this: How can (1) be true given (2)? That is, how can emotions be *present in* facial expressions and other behaviors (for us to perceive) if they are also the *causes of* those facial expressions and behaviors? If we think of causes and effects as distinct and independent entities, then it is hard to see how (1) could be the case – again, given (2). But if emotions are *not* present in the relevant bodily expressions, then it is incoherent to think that we can *perceive* them *in* those bodily expressions, as per the commonsense idea (Russell, this volume, levels a similar criticism against the Basic Emotion Theory). Stout then proposes an alternative to Green’s view that he thinks can solve this puzzle, which adopts an Aristotelian model of cause and effect, according to which causes can be *present in* their effects in virtue of the latter being *processes* in which the former are realized. On Stout’s alternative conception, “emotionally expressive behaviour must be taken to be a process of the emotion, considered as some sort of potentiality, being realised” (Stout 2012: 135).

As we’ll see later, we are not convinced that a move to an Aristotelian metaphysics of emotions is forced on us. But in the present context it’s worth noting that Stout’s ‘dynamic’ view of emotions (as processes rather than states) does not seem any better suited than Green’s to vindicate the idea of literal perception of emotions – *by Stout’s own lights*. Recall that Stout’s first objection to Green’s view was on epistemological grounds: characteristic components can exist without the wholes of which they are parts, so perceiving the former cannot amount to perceiving the latter. One obvious way this problem can arise for emotions is that one can clearly engage in, e.g., fear-behavior, without feeling afraid (on stage, for example, but not only). However, it’s very unclear how taking emotions to be processes rather than states can help address this problem, since it seems that processes, too, can be dissimulated (for discussion of expressive failures, see Bar-On 2004: 226-284). Still, we think that Stout is right to draw our attention to the fact that accommodating the commonsense idea about the perceptibility of emotions requires tackling directly the following question:

How should we think of the *nature* of emotional states and their relation to behaviors that express them so that it could make sense to think of emotions (as does commonsense) as made literally perceptible and non-inferentially known through expressive behavior?

**3. Philosophical Theories of Emotion: A Brief Overview**

Philosophical theories of emotion can, for the most part, be divided into roughly three camps: theories in the *feeling* tradition, theories in the *cognitivist* tradition, and *hybrid* theories that attempt to combine the virtues of theories in the two main traditions while avoiding their various pitfalls.[[17]](#endnote-17) According to a standard feeling theoryof emotion – like the one famously defended by William James – an emotion is a feeling of changes in, and to, the body.

Our natural way of thinking about […] emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My theory, on the contrary, is that *the bodily changes follow directly the* perception *of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur* is *the emotion*. (James 1950: 449-450)

There is something to like about this account of emotion, but plenty more to dislike. The thing to like is James’ rejection of the “natural way” of thinking about emotions as simply the *causes* of their bodily expressions. Rather than thinking of emotions as merely the mental phenomena that are causally antecedent to the relevant bodily changes – e.g., we are first afraid, and then the fear causes our hearts to race, etc. – James insists that we think of the bodily changes as somehow involved in the emotion *itself*.

As we said, though, there is nonetheless plenty to dislike about James’ account of emotion. Perhaps its most significant flaw is its apparent failure to adequately account for the relationship between emotions and their objects – i.e., the intentionality of emotion. Philosophers of emotion are nowadays agreed that emotions have at least two kinds of objects: formal objects and particular objects, or targets.[[18]](#endnote-18) Suppose I ask a friend to accompany me to a job interview, for moral support. He is notoriously a late person, but assures me that he will meet me at a local coffeehouse at a particular time before the interview. Unfortunately, but predictably, he is late again. As I sit there in the coffeehouse, eyes darting back and forth from wristwatch to parking lot, I begin to seethe with anger. In this case, the particular object of the emotion is my friend – *he* is the target of my anger. But as an instance of anger, the formal object of my emotion is the same as any other instance of anger – namely, an *offense*. Every emotion-type has a formal object; in fact, formal objects are what allow us to distinguish one type of emotion from another. Anger and fear are distinguished not so much in terms of how they feel, but rather in virtue of the fact that the former is related to *offense* in the same way that the latter is related to *danger*.

If James is right, and emotions are simply feelings of changes *inside* the body, then it is unclear how they could be directed at things *outside* of the body, like my absent and tardy friend. James himself thought the relationship between an emotion and its object to be a causal one, at one point saying that an emotion is “nothing but the feeling of the reflex bodily *effects* of what we call its ‘object’” (James 1884: 194, emphasis added). And more than a century later, contemporary philosophers of emotion in the Jamesian tradition still account for emotional intentionality in causal terms (see, e.g., Prinz 2004: 62f.). But there are good reasons for thinking that this approach to intentionality is mistaken. For one thing, it seems as if emotions are regularly directed at things that could not have caused them, like, e.g., fictional objects and future events. And for another, a single emotion might have multiple causes – e.g., my anger at my tardy friend might *also* be the effect of too little sleep and too much coffee on my part – but it is unclear, if emotions are supposed to be the effects of their objects, why only one of these causes should be the intentional object of the emotion.[[19]](#endnote-19)

The cognitivist tradition, as it is now known, arose primarily as a reaction to the feeling theory’s apparent failure to account for emotional intentionality. According to standard versions of cognitivism, an emotion is just a special kind of evaluative judgment. To be angry with someone, for instance, is to judge that he or she committed some offense; to fear something is to judge that it is dangerous; and so forth.[[20]](#endnote-20) Judgments, after all, are intentional in much the same way that emotions seem to be – e.g., my judgment that John was wrong to steal my car and my anger at him for doing so both have something to do with an *offense*, and are both about *John in particular*. Furthermore, thinking of emotions as judgments may help to explain some of their other features, often included under the umbrella of “the rationality of emotion” (de Sousa 1987). For instance, we can *justify* our emotions to others, just as we can justify our judgments, by pointing to reasons (Taylor 1975). In such cases, we might say that a person is rightfully angry, reasonably scared, and so on. But it seems we cannot say the same of feelings of bodily changes.

As with James’ feeling theory, though, there are a number of very serious problems with simple versions of cognitivism. For one thing, if emotions are really just evaluative judgments, then it is difficult to see how emotions and their corresponding evaluative judgments could ever come apart, so that we could have one without the other. But, in fact, this seems to happen quite often, as when a person is afraid of flying despite sincerely judging that it is a very safe way to travel. Another problem is that our ordinary ways of thinking and talking about our emotions implicate the body in various ways, and this appears to be lost on simple versions of cognitivism. It cannot be merely incidental to the nature of emotion that we ordinarily use terms like ‘emotion’ and ‘feeling’ more-or-less interchangeably.[[21]](#endnote-21) Simple versions of cognitivism, it seems, do not adequately account for the affectivity of emotion.

In light of the serious problems faced by theories in both of the two major traditions, many philosophers of emotion nowadays defend hybrid views according to which emotions have both cognitive and non-cognitive parts (e.g., feelings). Greenspan describes emotions as involving “[a]n affective element ... [being] brought into connection with an evaluative thought or cognition” (Greenspan 2010: 547). Roberts models his own theory of emotion after another affective-cognitive phenomenon he calls “feelings of construed condition,” e.g., the feeling of being triumphant (Roberts 1988, 2003). These states are feelings, but not *mere* feelings, since they also (essentially) involve a kind of cognition that he calls a *construal* – e.g., construing oneself as triumphant. Oakley adds a conative element to his hybrid view, conceiving of emotions as complex states composed of beliefs, feelings, and desires (Oakley 1992).

We agree that hybridity is a promising way to account for the features of emotions upon which philosophers have often focused – especially their intentionality and affectivity – and take up our own hybrid view in a later section. Our earlier discussion, however, suggests that there may be an *additional* desideratum on theories of emotions, namely, that they accommodate the commonsense idea that others’ emotions are sometimes made directly available to perception through their expressive behaviors. In the next section, we ask whether a theory in one of the two major traditions, or some suitable hybrid, can meet this desideratum.

**4. What Can Emotions Be That They Might Be Literally Perceived?**

As indicated earlier, one of the main reasons for our interest in the possibility of literally perceiving others’ emotional states is that such a possibility would imply that our knowledge of others’ emotions can be non-inferential. Our discussion of the expression of emotions has suggested that taking seriously the commonsense idea that expressive behavior enables literal perception of emotions requires that we think of the behavior as showing the relevant emotion *in the sense of making it immediately, i.e., non-inferentially, available* to suitably placed observers. This is what would vindicate the idea with which we began, namely, that we sometimes perceive, e.g., joy, disappointment, fear *in* people’s faces, voices, bodies – and, in general, that we perceive the emotions themselves *through* expressive behavior. However, the views we briefly surveyed in the previous section do not appear readily to accommodate this idea.

Suppose emotions are, at bottom, just evaluative judgments, as per the cognitivist theory. Then the cognitivist would need to explain how an evaluative judgment can be made directly perceptible through expressive behavior. Cognitive states like judgments, beliefs, and intentions are often contrasted with ‘embodied’ states like emotions and sensations in terms of the former having a very loose and indirect connection to observable behavior.[[22]](#endnote-22) Granted, sometimes someone’s facial expression and other behaviors – e.g., crossed arms, shaking head, etc. – may *tell us all we need to know* about how she has judged a particular circumstance. And, of course, people’s *verbal* behavior can serve to express their judgments (“I think what John did is offensive”), so understanding what they say in relevant circumstances can suffice for knowing what judgments they are making. But it’s not clear in what sense we can say in either of these cases that *the judgment itself* is made directly perceptually available to observers. So, if there are good reasons for thinking that emotions *can* sometimes be directly perceived (again, it is not our aim in this paper to make a case for this), then this may amount to yet another reason for thinking that cognitivists are mistaken to neglect the body in their accounts of the nature of emotion.

Might feeling theorists fare better, then, since they focus a great deal upon the somatic aspects of emotional experience? The answer, we think, is that they do not – and the explanation here may reveal something important not only about the conditions necessary for others’ emotions to be literally perceived, but also about the very nature of emotion itself. According to a standard version of a (neo-)Jamesian feeling theory, a subject first becomes aware of some “exciting fact” – such as, say, the presence of a ferocious animal. This information is processed by the brain, which then sends signals to various parts of the body. Those signals then have the effect of producing a pattern of bodily changes – in the case of the ferocious animal, these changes will presumably include things like widened eyes, shortened breath, increased heart rate, tensed muscles, and so forth. It is the subject’s *feeling of* these bodily changes – or, it may be better to say, it is his feeling of his whole body as these changes occur – that constitutes the emotion.

So there is a pattern of bodily changes, on the one hand, and then there is the subject’s feeling of those changes, on the other; and the feeling theorist identifies the emotion with the latter alone. But at least on a standard understanding of what feelings are, by identifying emotions with feelings, feeling theorists actually put us in no better position than cognitivists to accommodate the idea of the literal perceptibility of the emotions of others. As a witness to your emotional episode, I may be able to perceive some of the *changes* you feel – your widened eyes, tensed muscles, etc. – but I cannot perceive *your feeling of those changes*. Indeed, some theorists maintain that feelings are by their nature subjective and private (see, e.g., Damasio 1999). So if there is any sense in which I literally perceive your emotions, it is very unclear that feeling theories can accommodate this any better than cognitivist theories.[[23]](#endnote-23)

Feeling theories may appear to have a kind of advantage over cognitivist theories in virtue of their attention to the somatic aspects of emotion; but there is a sense in which both theories locate the states that *constitute* emotions ‘inside’ subjects – they take them to be covert occurrences that bear only an ‘external’ relation to behaviors that are observable by others. Along these lines, Peter Goldie once complained in an interview that theories of emotion in both traditions identify the state which is emotion with something ‘inner’:

[I]f you think about virtually all emotion theories that are on the go at the moment, they identify emotion with something inner, something mental or bodily, more or less inside the skin. And it strikes me more and more that I’m not absolutely clear why that should be, why emotions should end at a certain point, namely, the inner. (Goldie 2010: 4)

Probably, the matter of emotion perception was not at the forefront of Goldie’s mind when he made these remarks. But – again, depending upon how strong the reasons are for thinking that emotions can sometimes be literally perceived – the perceptibility of emotions may be grist for Goldie’s mill. Whatever else we think about the nature of emotions, if we want to allow that they are sometimes made directly perceptually available to others, then it seems we have to conceive of emotions as consisting at least in part of something overt, or ‘outer’ (to play on Goldie’s terms).

Along these lines, consider the approach to the nature of emotion taken by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio. Damasio is often counted as a neo-Jamesian, but there is some reason to wonder whether the label really fits. After all, as Damasio conceives them, emotions are *not* feelings. Recall the above distinction between the brain-induced pattern of bodily changes, on the one hand, and a subject’s feeling of those changes, on the other. Jamesianism is commonly referred to as the “feeling theory” of emotion precisely because it identifies emotion with the latter of these two phenomena. But Damasio identifies emotion with the former, i.e., the brain-induced pattern of bodily changes. He explains,

I see the *essence* of emotion as the collection of changes in body state that are induced in myriad organs by nerve cell terminals, under the control of a dedicated brain system, which is responding to the content of thoughts relative to a particular entity or event. (Damasio 1994: 139)

So, as Damasio construes them, emotions are not feelings; rather, they are things that we feel. This subtle-yet-important difference between Damasio and others in the Jamesian tradition may point us in the direction of the right answer to the question, “What would emotions have to *be* in order to be literally perceptible through behaviors that express them?” In fact, immediately following the above statement, Damasio himself adds,

Many of the changes in body state – those in skin color, body posture, and facial expression, for instance – are actually perceptible to an external observer. (Indeed the etymology of the word nicely suggests an external direction, from the body: *emotion* signifies literally “movement out.”) Other changes in body state are perceptible only to the owner of the body in which they take place. (*ibid*.)

Now, we think that Damasio is mistaken to *identify* emotions with (just) bodily changes, since it is unclear how such bodily changes could, by themselves, exhibit some of the other features of emotions upon which philosophers have often focused, noted in the last section – e.g., their intentionality, rational-evaluative aspects, and so forth. But there is nonetheless an important lesson to be gleaned from the perspectives offered by Goldie and by Damasio: if emotions are ever literally perceived in the expressive behaviors of others, then we had better find some way to include bodily changes (some of which are overt, or ‘outer’, in Goldie’s sense) – as opposed to the *feeling of* bodily changes (which is covert or ‘inner’) – among the constitutive aspects of an emotion.

It is a curious fact about emotions – one that is sometimes thought to distinguish them from other states – that they are often (though certainly not always) simultaneously both private and public affairs. Emotions, like sensations, seem to have something ineliminably subjective or first-personal about them. At the same time, emotions represent paradigm examples of parts of our mental lives that can be *shown* *to* and *perceived by* others, *in* and *through* certain expressive behaviors. This inner/outer (or private/public) duality, can be adequately captured, we think, by taking seriously the idea that the embodied aspects of emotions – the bodily changes of which Damasio and Goldie (inter alia) speak – constitute part of their very nature. When these bodily changes occur, it is as if the contours of the subject’s emotions were being outlined on a glass surface. Those on the outside can trace the contours more or less clearly, and directly, even if they do not experience the drawing of the contours ‘from the inside’, as does the subject. Similarly, the bodily changes that occur as part of an emotional state may be experienced in one way by the emoting subject, and in another way by the rest of us. Roughly: the subject *feels* what we *see*, *hear*, and so forth.

Where does this leave us with respect to our search for a theory of emotions that accommodates their literal perceptibility? Theories in both of the two major philosophical traditions struggle to explain how it is that emotions could ever be literally perceived, and for basically the same reason: on each theory, the state identified as the emotion is one that is too far ‘inside the head’, as it were, to be available to the perceptual experience of others. Hybrid theories currently on offer may fare better, though given that they comprise such a diverse lot, it’s a bit difficult to assess their prospects. But our observations so far nonetheless place constraints upon such views: to accommodate the possibility of the literal perceptibility of emotions, hybrid views must include among the constitutive parts of an emotion *the very bodily changes* that a subject feels in an emotional state – and not, or not merely, the *feeling of* those bodily changes, as is typically the case.

We now wish to sketch a kind of hybrid theory of emotion that we think satisfies many of the desiderata laid out in the sections above – most importantly, for our purposes, that of accommodating emotion perception in a way that vindicates common sense – before explaining how such a theory could help to adjudicate the debate described in Section 2 between Green and Stout.

In other work, one of us has defended a hybrid view that bears some resemblance to the views of Roberts and Oakley (Sias 2014, 2015). On this view, emotions are complex states consisting of *concerns*, *construals*, and *feelings*. Crucially, the view spells out a particular way in which the various parts or aspects of an emotion are related. Roughly, when a subject experiences an emotion, she construes something (an object, a person, or a state of affairs) in a way that either clashes or accords with some prior concern of hers,[[24]](#endnote-24) and this meeting of construal with concern gives rise to the sorts of feelings that we typically associate with emotions. A state of fear, for instance, involves the subject construing a thing as dangerous, in a way that clashes with her concern for her well-being (or the well-being of someone or something that matters to her), and which gives rise to such affective phenomena as the feeling of an increased heart rate, shortness of breath, and so forth.

In light of our discussion earlier in this section, to accommodate the perceptibility of emotions, the view just described would need to be amended so that its focus is less upon a subject’s *feeling of* changes in and to her body, and more upon *the bodily changes themselves*. So, on the amended theory, emotions are complex states consisting of concerns, construals, *and bodily changes*, some of which are (sometimes) literally perceptible to suitably equipped observers.

How does this theory accommodate some of the other features of emotion, noted during our critical overview of philosophical theories in Section 3? Emotions are intentional, on this view, in virtue of having construals as one of their component parts. The *particular* object of an emotion will always be the object of the relevant construal, and the *formal* object of an emotion is determined by the way in which the object is construed. When I am afraid of a bear, for instance, I construe the bear as dangerous: the bear is the (particular) object of my construal, and the emotion amounts to an instance of fear partly in virtue of the way in which I construe the bear – namely, *as dangerous*. This view avoids the cognitivist’s issues with fear-of-flying, however, since construals – unlike judgments – are not belief-entailing. I can construe a thing one way (as dangerous), despite sincerely believing it to be another (perfectly safe). Furthermore, emotions are rationally and morally evaluable, on this view, because concerns and construals are rationally and morally evaluable. Fear of a bear is (or can be) rational, since bears are rightly construed as dangerous. Fear of Yogi Bear, however, would be irrational, since cartoons are *not* rightly construed as dangerous. And anger is a right, or fitting, or morally appropriate response to injustice since this is something about which we ought to be concerned (for a related but distinct account of emotions, see Helm, this volume).

An emotional state, on the amended view, has as one of its constitutive parts or aspects outwardly observable, expressive bodily changes. We should note two important contrasts between our view of the nature of emotion and the one that Green adopts from Griffiths.[[25]](#endnote-25) For one thing, it is unclear whether Green counts expressive bodily changes or merely *dispositions to* expressive bodily changes as among the component parts of an emotion. Of anger, for instance, he writes, “it comprises an interrelated set of phenomena: physiological response, behavioral disposition including disposition to facial-expressive behavior, as well as a cognitive disposition to make judgments of a certain sort” (Green 2010: 50). If anger is partly composed of a disposition to make a certain facial expression, and not the facial expression itself, then it seems that an angry face could only be *evidence* on which to base an *inference* that someone is angry. Second, Green, following Griffiths, quite explicitly limits his view only to the so-called basic emotions, leaving it unclear how the rest of our emotions – indeed, the vast majority of them – could ever be made perceptible. Our view involves no such limitation, perhaps in large part because we do not share Green’s initial assumption (also borrowed from Griffiths) that emotions are, or ought to be thought of as, natural kinds.

On the amended view, emotions are by their nature expressible, embodied states of individuals. (This doesn’t mean, however, that one cannot be in an emotional state unless one exhibits the relevant expressive behaviors. For one can modulate and even suppress the overt aspects of one’s emotion upon feeling their imminent occurrence.[[26]](#endnote-26)) There is a clear sense, then, in which emotional states are not subjective, private mental states as traditionally conceived; they are not states *‘inside’* individuals. Instead, they are states (whole) *individuals are in*. When you are angry, it is not that there is some internal state in you with overt symptoms that others can use as the outer signs of something inner; rather, there is a certain state *you* are in. (Compare: when a chair has a broken leg, the chair is in a particular state; but being broken is not a state inside the chair. Similarly for non-emotional states of individuals, such as being ready to leave the house. For a proposal along these lines, see Bar-On 2004: 423f.)

We are now in a position to return to the debate between Green and Stout concerning the perception of emotions, discussed in Section 2. Our preferred hybrid theory of emotions seems apt to accommodate Green’s basic claim that we perceive another’s emotion by perceiving one or more of its component parts or aspects. However, on our view, when you see a certain facial expression, or hear the tone of someone’s voice, there is no need for you to *infer* that the subject is in the relevant emotional state. It’s not as though you perceive one (outer) bit and make a projection to other (inner) bits, to yield the information that the subject has this or that emotion. When water boils, it is in a particular state. But when we observe the bubbles on its surface, we do not infer on that basis the presence of some ‘inner’ state of boiling; rather, we literally perceive (a part or aspect of) the state the water is in. Similarly, when we observe an emoting subject’s facial expression and other expressive behaviors, we do not infer the presence of some ‘inner’ state of emotion; rather, we literally perceive the emotional state the subject is in, since to perceive a constitutive part or aspect of it isto perceive *it*. Your perception of the other’s emotional state, like your perception of the state the water is in, is in this sense direct or immediate. It is not underwritten by an inference that, in turn, *supports* (or enables) your knowledge of the other’s emotion. Your knowledge of the subject’s emotion, like your knowledge of the water’s boiling, is non-inferential.

(Two comments: First, the mere possibility of the part being present without the whole of which it is part does not impugn the possibility of seeing the whole by seeing a part, nor does it imply that the perception of the whole must involve inference. After all, even in cases (if there are such) when one *can* perceive a whole, there is a possibility of illusion. If one is deceived about O, one cannot be said to see (hear, feel) O; but that is just a consequence of the facticity of seeing (hearing, etc.) that we mentioned earlier; it does not entail that perception must be mediated by inference. Secondly, it may be that, psychologically speaking, even the literal perception of O by perceiving one of its parts requires, at the subpersonal level (as Green maintains), some kind of ‘filling in’, or transitioning from one representational state to another. Still, there is no reason to take this to imply that the *individual* perceiving the part must be drawing some inference to the presence of the whole of which it is part, or of its unperceived parts.)

Now, although we have rejected James’ feeling theory, the hybrid view we just sketched agrees with James on this point: the relationship between emotions and expressive bodily changes is not purely *causal*, but partially *constitutive*. Emotions have the relevant bodily changes as their parts. (As you’ll recall, James identified the claim that bodily changes are related to the emotions purely causally as the “natural way” of thinking about the relation between emotions and their expressions in the body. And he explicitly rejected that view in favor of one that *involves* those bodily changes *in* emotions.) This means that we can avoid the puzzle Stout raises for any view that embraces the causal claim along with the claim that emotions are ‘present in’ their expressions. For, with James, we reject the causal claim. Yet we do not think this requires resorting to Stout’s Aristotelian metaphysics of cause-and-effect. On our proposal, anger is present in a facial expression in virtue of having the facial expression as one of its component parts or aspects.

**5. Concluding Remarks**

Our discussion suggests that an adequate theory of the emotions that pays heed to commonsense ideas about their perceptibility must attend to considerations about expression, perception, and the nature of emotions – somehow all at once. For we saw how too narrow a focus on just one of these ‘moving parts’ can lead us astray. In articulating our amended hybrid view of emotions, we have been guided by psychological, epistemological, and metaphysical desiderata inspired by the commonsense idea that emotions can be literally perceived in the bodily behaviors that express them. This idea seems to gain support from the neuroscientific findings concerning the socio-biological functions of the bodily changes associated with emotions. Yet traditional views of the nature of emotions, we saw, do not readily accommodate it. On the other hand, as we also saw, at least one recent attempt to spell out the idea (the ‘characteristic component’-cum-‘part-whole’ view) seems to compromise rather than vindicate it. If we are right, we can retain many of the advantages of the traditional views, while incorporating recent insights concerning the possibility of perceiving emotions, and without compromising the commonsense idea.

Inevitably, however, what we have said raises a number of issues that we cannot address here. In explaining how our view avoids difficulties we found with the ‘characteristic component’ proposal, we adverted to talk of embodied states *individuals are in* as opposed to (mental) states *in individuals*. Clearly, more needs to be said about what this distinction amounts to, and about the appropriate metaphysics for embodied states of individuals – a lot more than we can say here. We think the humdrum examples we have invoked – of the state of water when it’s boiling, the state a chair is in when one of its legs is broken – as well as additional examples, such as that of the state a shirt is in when it’s stained, or a room when it’s tidy, or the process a building undergoes when it’s being demolished, or a person when she is (or is getting) ready for a party, are suggestive. Our ordinary talk seems rife with reference to states and processes that have observable aspects or parts, where such reference cannot be readily construed in terms of providing evidence for what is ‘inside’ or ‘hidden’. It remains to be seen, however, to what extent understanding talk of emotions and their uptake along these lines can be made to fit with a proper metaphysics of mind, as well as with an adequate psychology and epistemology of perception. Our hope is, however, that we have provided motivation for further exploration of these issues.

**References**

Armstrong, D. 1961. *Perception and the Physical World*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Ayer, A. J. 1952. *Language, Truth, and Logic*. New York: Dover.

Bar-On, D. 2004. *Speaking My Mind: Expression and Self-Knowledge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bar-On, D. 2010. ‘Expressing as “Showing What’s Within”: On Mitchell Green’s *Self-Expression*’, *Philosophical Books* 54(4): 212-227.

Bar-On, D. 2013. ‘Origins of Meaning: Must We ‘Go Gricean”?’, *Mind and Language* 28(3): 342-375.

Bar-On, D. 2015. ‘Expression: Acts, Products, and Meaning’, in Gross, Tebben, and Williams (eds.), *Meaning Without Representation: Essays on Truth, Expression, Normativity, and Naturalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 180-209.

Damasio, A. 1994. *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*. New York: Avon Books.

Damasio, A. 1999. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciouness*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Darwin, C. 1872. *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. New York: New York Philosophical Library.

de Sousa, R. 1987. *The Rationality of Emotion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ekman, P. 1993. ‘Facial Expression and Emotion’, *American Psychologist* 48: 384-392.

Ekman, P. 2003. *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life*. 2nd Ed. New York: Owl Books.

Gallagher, S. 2008. ‘Direct Perception in the Intersubjective Context’, *Consciousness and Cognition* 17: 535-543.

Goldie, P. 2010. ‘Interview with Peter Goldie’, *Praxis* 2(2): 4-12.

Gordon, R. 1987. *The Structure of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Green, M. 2007. *Self-Expression*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Green, M. 2010. ‘Perceiving Emotions’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplemental Volume* 84: 45-61.

Greenspan, P. 2010. ‘Learning Emotions and Ethics’, in Goldie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 539-559.

Griffiths, P. E. 1998. *What Emotions Really Are: The Problem of Psychological Categories*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Griffiths, P. E. 2004. ‘Emotions as Natural Kinds and Normative Kinds’, *Philosophy of Science* 71: 901-911.

Helm, B. 2010. ‘Emotions and Motivation: Reconsidering Neo-Jamesian Accounts’, in Goldie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 303-323.

Jackson, F. 1977. *Perception: A Representative Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

James, W. 1884. ‘What is an Emotion?’, *Mind* 9(34): 188-205.

James, W. 1950. *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. 2*. New York: Dover.

Kenny, A. 1963. *Action, Emotion, and Will*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Millikan, R. 2004. ‘On Reading Signs: Some Differences between Us and the Others’, in Oller and U. Griebel (eds.), *Evolution of Communication Systems: A Comparative Approach*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 15-30.

Morton, A. 2010. ‘Epistemic Emotions’, in Goldie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 385-399.

Nussbaum, M. 1997. ‘Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance’, in Bilimoria and Mohanty (eds.), *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond: Essays in Memory of Bimal K. Matilal*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 231-251.

Nussbaum, M. 2001. *Upheavals of Thought: the Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oakley, J. 1992. *Morality and the Emotions*. London: Routledge.

Parr, L. and Maestripieri, D. 2003. ‘Nonvocal Communication in Nonhuman Primates’, in Maestripieri (ed.), *Primate Psychology: The Mind and Behavior of Human and Nonhuman Primates*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp. 324-358.

Peacocke, C. 2004. *The Realm of Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pettit, D. 2010. ‘On the Epistemology and Psychology of Speech Comprehension’, *The Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic, and Communication* 5: 1-43.

Price, C. 2012. ‘Doing without Emotions’, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 93(3): 317-337.

Prinz, J. 2004. *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Recanati, F. 2002. ‘Does Linguistic Communication Rest on Inference?’, *Mind and Language* 17: 105-126.

Roberts, R. C. 1988. ‘What An Emotion Is: A Sketch’, *Philosophical Review* 97(2): 183-209.

Roberts, R. C. 2003. *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rorty, A. 1980. ‘Explaining Emotions’, in Rorty (ed.), *Explaining Emotions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 103-126.

Rorty, A. 2004. ‘Enough Already with “Theories of the Emotions”’, in Solomon (ed.), *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 269-278.

Schroeder, M. 2009. ‘Hybrid Expressivism: Virtues and Vices’, *Ethics* 119(2): 257-309.

Sell, A., Cosmides, L., and Tooby, J. 2014. ‘The Human Anger Face Evolved to Enhance Cues of Strength’, *Evolution & Human Behavior* 35: 425-429.

Sellars, W. 1969. ‘Language as Thought and as Communication’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 29: 506-527.

Sias, J. 2014. ‘Ethical Intuitionism and the Emotions: Toward an Empirically Adequate Moral Sense Theory’, *Journal of Value Inquiry* 48(3): 533-549.

Sias, J. 2015. ‘Being Good and Feeling Well’, *Res Philosophica*, 92(4).

Smith, J. 2015. ‘The Phenomenology of Face-to-Face Mindreading’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90(2): 274-293.

Solomon, R. 1980. ‘Emotions and Choice’, in Rorty (ed.), *Explaining Emotions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 251-282.

Stout, R. 2010. ‘Seeing the Anger in Someone’s Face’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplemental Volume* 84: 29-43.

Stout, R. 2012. ‘What Someone’s Behavior Must Be Like If We Are to Be Aware of Their Emotions In It’, *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 11(2): 135-148.

Taylor, G. 1975. ‘Justifying the Emotions’, *Mind* 84: 390-402.

Wittgenstein, L. 1980. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1. For a recent attempt to defend a perceptual account of (what the author describes as) “face-to-face mindreading”, see Smith 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For discussion and references, see Bar-On 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Sellars (1969) distinguishes expressing in the semantic sense from expressing in the *causal* and the *action* senses. Bar-On (2004) distinguishes between an *act* of expressing and its *product*, on the one hand, and between the *process* and *vehicle* of expressing, and defends a ‘neo-expressivist’ construal, according to which an avowal such as “I’m so glad to see you!” ‘a-expresses’ *the speaker’s joy* at seeing the addressee, using a vehicle that ‘s-expresses; the self-ascriptive *proposition that* the speaker is glad to see her addressee (see especially Chs. 6-8). For a recent exposition, see Bar-On 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. This is a contrast that informed, for example, Ayer’s discussion when introducing his influential emotivist view of ethical discourse and distinguishing it from the subjectivist view; he says: “…if I say, “Tolerance is a virtue,” I should not be making any statement about my own feelings or about anything else. I should simply be evincing my feelings, which is not at all the same thing as saying that I have them” (1952: 109).

For recent developments of this view, see, e.g. Bar-On 2004 and Green 2007. See also Bar-On 2010 for a critical discussion of Green, on which the present section partly draws. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. A related distinction is drawn by ethologists and biologists when they describe animals’ ‘affective displays’ as ‘merely expressive’, meaning that they are directly tied to, and directly manifest animals’ affective states. Such displays are contrasted with *intentionally produced* behaviors that are designed to provide an audience with information about the producer or her environment that the audience can then derive, using contextual clues and other knowledge. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. For Green, expressing one’s state of mind *can* also be a matter of showing *that* (in the sense of providing strong evidence sufficient for knowledge) one is in the state. Bar-On (2010) argues that this robs Green’s account of being able to ground the aforementioned contrast between showing one’s state of mind and (merely) telling, or reporting it. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Relevant here is pioneering work done by psychologist Paul Ekman (1993, 2003) on human facial expressions (directly inspired by Darwin’s seminal 1872 work on expression), as well as more recent applications of it to nonhuman primates (see, e.g., Parr and Maestripieri 2003).

Note that a characteristic component need not be an *essential* component, nor do we need to suppose that, e.g., being angry necessarily requires showing one’s anger through behavior. So the present suggestion can be divorced from logical behaviorism. For discussion, see Bar-On 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Green extends the idea of characteristic components to *idiosyncratic* expressions, which we set aside here for simplicity. In recent years, it has been suggested that even linguistic interactions among human beings are best characterized in terms of perception, as opposed to propositional-inferential information processing (see, e.g., Gallagher 2008, Millikan 2004, Pettit 2010, and Recanatti 2002). However, Green demurs; he thinks that the uptake of *linguistic* expressions can at best be thought to be ‘perception-like’ (see Green 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Joel Smith has pointed out to us that one might accept McDowell’s internalist constraint, but still deny that, when e.g. a perceived branch is attached to the tree, ‘all that is available to our experience’ as perceivers is the branch, rather than the whole tree. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. It may be more appropriate for him to say that the *knowledge* afforded by perception is inferential knowledge. But, as we’ll see below, Green speaks of (a certain kind of) inference *both* as being the hallmark of perception and as characterizing the kind of justification the relevant beliefs enjoy (and which renders them genuine *knowledge*). This seems to us problematic.

Frank Jackson makes a similar point in his critique of inferential accounts of perception (see Ch. 1 of Jackson 1977). In particular, he focuses upon the distinction between mediate and immediate objects of perception, and how philosophers often characterize the distinction in terms of the former, but not the latter, depending upon an inference of some sort. Reflecting upon an example from Berkeley, in which a subject hears the sound of a coach, Armstrong argues that perception *of the sound* is immediate, but perception *of the coach* is mediate, depending upon an inference from past experience (Armstrong 1961: 20-21). But, Jackson insists, while the subject’s *belief* (or *knowledge*) that he hears a coach may be inferential, his perception of the coach no more depends upon inference than his perception of the sound – provided that the sound is, as a matter of fact, that of a coach. Later in the same chapter, Jackson addresses part-whole conceptions of the mediate-immediate distinction (1977: 13-15). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. It seems inappropriate to speak of the *characteristic components* (the growling, scowling, etc.) as failing to *entail* logically, as they belong to the wrong category. This way of talking may be endemic to Green’s dual use of the notion of inference that we go on to mention. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. As Green elaborates, “relative to niche *N*, a bird properly infers (in the current sense of ‘infer’) the presence of a seed from its facing surface if whole seeds tend with sufficient regularity to be connected to their facing surfaces in *N*” (2010: 49). See also Green 2010: 50, this volume. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. We should note that Green doesn’t put the point in terms of reasons, but this way of putting it seems very natural, given his discussion (especially 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Smith (2015: 274f.) makes a related distinction between a psychological and epistemological readings of perceptual accounts of ‘’mindreading’ and *contrasts* perceptual accounts with inferential accounts. (It is indeed standard for proponents of perceptual accounts to presuppose that if others’ emotions are literally perceived, then our knowledge of them is non-inferential.) He notes that there are views that take perception to be inferential, but remarks that it is not clear “whether the ‘inferences’ proposed by such accounts are inferential in the same sense as are the inferences with which we are familiar from ordinary conscious reasoning”; his own attempt to support a perceptual account is conducted under the assumption “that perceptual experience … does not involve inference” (in the relevant sense) (2015: 275). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. In the present volume, Green clarifies that the inference made in perception is merely ‘low-level’ inference – this is the *psychological* notion we mention below. However, it seems that appeal to that notion will not be apt in replying to the Stout/McDowell objection. Green notes that “inferential processes, of either the high-or-low-level kind, are subject to norms: where there is inference there must be the possibility of fallacy or an analogue thereof” (p. XX). But, arguably, epistemological norms are different from psychological norms; and from the fact that there are norms governing psychological transitions among subpersonal cognitive states it surely doesn’t follow that such transitions are subject to norms of reason – that it even makes sense to speak of one state providing *good evidence* or *reason* for another. Yet the latter norms are what is relevant to the question whether perception enables knowledge (and if so, of what kind); it is thus the latter that are relevant to Green’s response to the Stout/McDowell objection. Green may be caught in the following dilemma. He can insist that undergoing a ‘low level’ psychological process of inference *ipso facto* (and contrary to the commonsense view perceptualists are trying to capture) involves one in a ‘high-brow’ inference, whereby our perceiving, e.g., someone’s smile always constitutes only the *epistemic basis, evidence, or reason for* believing she is feeling joy. Or he can deny that ‘low-level’ inference necessarily brings ‘high-level’ inference in its train, but then that the account of perceptual knowledge he appeals to in response to the Stout/McDowell objection is not adequate as it stands. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Stout says: “I start with the assumption that emotional states are perceivable features of emotionally expressive behavior. The key thing about this assumption is that emotional states are taken to be *present in* this expressive behavior” (2012: 135, emphasis added). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. In what follows, we set aside work by those philosophers who argue that the class of states commonly referred to as “emotions” is too heterogeneous to be subsumable under a single theory (see, e.g., Griffiths 1998; Price 2012, this volume; Rorty 1980, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. We borrow the terms ‘formal’ and ‘particular’ from Prinz (2004: 62f.), who gets them Kenny (1963). Solomon picks up the same distinction from Kenny, and adapts it to his own cognitivist theory of emotion (1980: 272-274). And arguably, something like this formal-particular distinction underlies Nussbaum’s discussion of emotional intentionality in Nussbaum 1997.

We say that emotions have “at least” these two kinds of objects because some philosophers of emotion add others. Helm, for instance, adds a third object which he calls an emotion’s *focus*, i.e., “the background object having import to which the target is related in such a way as to make intelligible the target’s having the evaluative property defined by the formal object” (2010: 310). If I am angry with my kids for tracking mud into the house, for example, then the focus of my anger is something like *having a clean house*, since this makes intelligible why such an action should count as an *offense*. We think this phenomenon is best accounted for by a hybrid theory of emotion that includes some conative component among the parts of an emotion, and defend such a theory below. But we will not pursue this particular issue any further here. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Prinz’s teleosemantic account of emotional intentionality is meant, in part, to explain why emotions pick out some causes as their objects and not others – roughly, because they were *designed* (by evolution and learning) to be caused by those things. Anger is directed at offenses, he thinks, because anger was designed to be “set off” by offenses, and not by a lack of sleep or excess of coffee. Even if this works as an account of the relationship between emotions and their *formal* objects, though, we think Prinz’s account of the relationship between emotions and their *particular* objects is nonetheless subject to the worries we raise here. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. This is how cognitivist theories of emotion typically account for the relation between emotions and their formal objects: the formal object of an emotion is just whatever property is attributed to an object in the relevant judgment. All instances of fear, for instance, involve an attribution of the property *being dangerous* (or the like) to some object – so *danger* is the formal object of fear. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Nussbaum attempts to avoid this latter problem by adopting a neo-Stoic view of the nature of judgment formation. Very roughly, the idea is supposed to be that the process of forming a judgment is one in which the subject reconciles her whole self to the way a situation seems to her. Sometimes this can be done coolly and calmly (e.g., when we judge that one person is taller than another), but other times, it involves what Nussbaum calls an “upheaval of thought” (e.g., when we judge that we’ve lost someone dearly beloved) (Nussbaum 2001). Whatever an “upheaval” is, it presumably includes some of the very felt bodily changes that Jamesians identify as central to emotional experiences. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. The ‘characteristic component’ view, for example, does not seem readily applicable to the case of evaluative judgments. What would the behaviors be that could be thought to constitute ‘parts’ of evaluative judgments, to express those judgments, and to be perceptible by others (in the relevant way)? Notably, Green limits the ‘characteristic component’ view and the ‘part-whole’ perception to the case of emotions, to the exclusion of cognitive states. Expressions of beliefs, intentions, and such can at most show *that* someone believes that *p*, intends to *phi*, etc. For critical discussion, see Bar-On 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. By the same token, if, as many assume, someone’s else’s (being in) pain is perceivable, pain, too, should not be conceived to be a state exhausted by the subject’s own perception of some damage to her body. (Thanks to Joel Smith for prompting this remark.) [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. This idea of construals either “clashing” or “according” with one’s concerns is similar to Robert Gordon’s suggestion that all emotions involve either “wish-frustration” or “wish-satisfaction.” As Gordon sees it, all of our emotional responses are rooted in prior attitudes toward, or concerning, the things to which we respond emotionally. He prefers to speak of these prior attitudes in terms of *wishing something to be so*. So for instance, he writes, “When *S* is angry about the fact that *p*, S believes that *p* and wishes it not to be the case that *p*. Since what *S* believes is the contradictory or at least the contrary of what *S* wishes, we can say that S’s wish is *frustrated*” (1987: 31). What he calls *wish-frustration* is analogous to what I (Sias) would call a *clash* between S’s concerns and the way in which S construes something. Gordon continues, “The same [as was said of anger] holds for all of the negative emotions we have considered. The positive emotions, by the same token, seem to involve a wish that is *satisfied*” (*ibid*.). Analogously, on my view, positive emotions involve a kind of *according* of our construals with our concerns. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Griffiths (1998, 2004) describes the basic emotions, or affect programs, as biologically adaptive affective responses that are (a) informationally encapsulated, (b) triggered by automatic, largely unconscious information processing, (c) culturally universal, and (d) present in some non-human animals. Even if all of this is true, though, it is hardly a *theory of emotion*. (Of course, this would not concern Griffiths, as he does not think that there can be such a thing as a “theory of emotion.” For a critique of Griffiths’ views, see Roberts 2003: 14-36.) [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. There is increasing evidence that many nonhuman animals are capable of modulating and suppressing expressive behaviors under a variety of circumstances and for a variety of reasons. For discussion, see Bar-On 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)