David Pugmire, Rediscovering Emotion (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 140, £14.95. (*Ratio* XIII, Sept 2000, 287-92)

> In philosophy, the idea that emotions may be treated as types of thought, judgemental or non-judgemental, has become almost an orthodoxy . . . . The pervading aim of the present work is the restoration of emotional affect, or feeling, as a free-standing, working concept in understanding emotion. (3-4)

In its own terms, this book must be regarded as a success and an important contribution to our philosophical understanding of emotion. If you wish to defend a (purely) cognitive theory of emotion, it is against the arguments of this book that you will need to defend yourself. I say a '(purely) cognitive theory' because Pugmire does not intend to leave the Church of Cognition, only to nail to its door a list of theses indicting the inadequacy of its conception of emotion. The Church currently has two broad doctrinal camps: 'propositional' (a.k.a. 'judgementalist') theories and 'construal' theories. Both are raked over the coals for attempts to explain emotional feeling in terms of cognition. Pugmire's anti-reductionism is not new, as he acknowledges (one can find it perhaps most notably in Michael Stocker's work), but he produces a powerful and original defence in its favour.

That emotions involve cognition is not at issue. Nor is it at issue whether emotions are felt in a way that distinguishes them from cognition more generally. Clearly, there are beliefs held and judgements made unemotionally. Likewise, there are construals – ways of seeing the world – that are not evocative of feeling; I can perceive a snake to be dangerous without feeling afraid. (These issues are dealt with in Chapters 1–3.) The question is what feeling an emotion consists in (Chapters 4 & 5). Cognitive theories maintain that 'emotional feelings are themselves thoughts, emotive thoughts, transfigured in the right way' (63). Central to the cognitive defence is the observation that the thoughts in question are evaluative. The cognitivist claim is that evaluative thoughts, when the evaluation is made from the first-person perspective, can impact on the subject in such a way as to be felt. The difficulty this analysis faces is specifying what is needed for the thought to constitute feeling, and it is this difficulty Pugmire exploits. But the real strength of his account is to back this up with an alternative explanation for the connection between evaluation and feeling. I shall look at his negative and positive arguments in turn.

Although some of his arguments against the propositional theory are not new, two things are noteworthy in Pugmire's discussion: first, the clarity and depth with which he explores the issues; second, the novel emphasis he places on the difficulties created by the propositional form of the judgement or belief. Attempting to specify the exact thought(s) of an emotion, one which can with justice be said to capture the content of the emotion, can prove 'a disarming challenge, even in simple and familiar cases' (70). This will be especially so if the specification is intended (a) to distinguish the thought as emotional; and (b) to distinguish it as the particular emotion that it is. To say that my disgust at the slug in the kitchen is constituted by thoughts of its slimy and polluting nature is to underdescribe it, for I am not disgusted when confronted with an oil spill, which is equally slimy and polluting. But it is hard to say what further thoughts about the slug are involved in my disgust. This difficulty is exacerbated when we consider a second objection, that of circularity: 'thoughts that succeed in pinpointing the evocative aspects of a thing tend to do so simply by referring to their power to evoke the feeling in question' (ibid.). The terms likely to

appear in such thoughts, such as ‘scary’, ‘disgusting’, ‘adorable’, derive their meaning from the feelings they evoke.

We cannot hope to overcome these difficulties by supplementing the evaluative judgement with the satisfaction or frustration of a desire (a suggestion made by Robert Gordon). Pugmire rightly comments that desires, as motivational states, may be ‘palpable’ but, unlike emotional feeling, need not be. If they are felt, the nature and intensity of this feeling is what needs explanation, so the mere having of the desire is insufficient to explain the feeling.

Although the construal theory fares better against the first objection to the propositional theory, as it need not claim that the ‘aspectual shape’ of the situation is formulatable in propositional terms, it still faces the second. The construal is presumably supposed to make sense of the emotion, to provide it with intelligible content (30). But in many cases, such as phobias, it will fail to do this. Take a case of agoraphobia: Either such specification of the construal as we can give does not motivate the emotion in those not already particularly susceptible to it (e.g. ‘the vastness of open spaces’) or it already *expresses* the emotion (‘the frightful and engulfing nature of vastness which leaves one vulnerable’). A common move is to supplement the first, neutral specification by the addition of ‘concern’ in order to motivate the emotion. But generic ‘concern’ together with construal still underdetermines which emotion is felt, and attempts to specify the sort of ‘concern’ involved ‘appeal to the character of different kinds of emotional arousal to understand the nature of the concern’ (73). A more promising response is to claim the construal does not always provide *independent* grounds for the emotion, but represents the world from the perspective of the emotion. Pugmire believes this is to abandon its cognitive nature, but I shall suggest otherwise below.

Turning now to his positive argument, we find that Pugmire contends that there is a *direct* link between evaluation and feeling, which is why in attempting to characterise the evaluative content of the emotion, we end up appealing – explicitly or tacitly – to emotional feeling (as opposed to cognition). He suggests that emotional feelings are *sui generis* ways things matter; they do not so much *register* value as *confer* value on their objects, on the basis that the object arouses the feeling (58). The feeling is a ‘constructive valuation’. This is why ‘the valuations emotions embody may be conveyed only by those parts of our critical vocabulary that are expressive of feeling’ (60). Cognition can play a role in emotional evaluation, though Pugmire later indicates that the ‘constructive’ model is widespread among the emotions, as it will be uncommon to find a ‘plausible informing conceptualisation’ that conveys the evaluative content of the emotion (103). (This is not to suggest that *all* value is a construct from feelings. We can make evaluations that are independent of how the object makes us feel.)

This additional, non-cognitive source of evaluation means that ‘emotions can fail to be a function of the cognitions appropriate to them’ (59). At this point, Pugmire makes the familiar observation that cognition of the object is only one possible cause of emotional feelings about it. Others include associations with the object, what it symbolises, or the chemical-physiological state of the person. These can cause the feeling and its evaluation of the object directly.

So how are we to understand the *relationship* between emotional feelings and cognition? Pugmire remarks

> A feeling can be not only a reaction to how things are perceived . . . it can also be a way of taking account of this . . . . In fact, the terms in which things are

> apprehended seems integral to at least many feelings . . . [which] presuppose a background of expectations and values. (60)

This suggests a close and two-way link between cognition and feeling, but cannot be considered a satisfactory analysis as it stands. When Pugmire returns to the question at the end of Chapter 7, the discussion is again brief and unsatisfactory. To make generalisations about the relation between cognition (either construal or judgement) and feeling in emotion is unwise, he claims, but emotions (a) will typically incorporate both and (b) should not be thought of as mere clusters of these elements.

Given these remarks, one particularly puzzling issue, unfortunately never addressed, is the relation between cognitive valuing and constructive valuing. A feeling can be a way of 'taking account of how things are perceived', and so of registering the value an object has, or it can 'fail to present a state of affairs outside itself' (59), and simply confer value on its object. We have an account of the latter, but what is involved in the former? Furthermore, what determines whether a feeling is registering or conferring value? How can we tell subjectively? Isn't it likely that symbolism and psychological association will often play some role in our emotional responses (as Freud, for one, thought)? Does this make all emotional valuing conferring? Are the two types of valuing mutually exclusive, or can they operate together within a single emotion? Or can an emotional feeling be both a response to certain beliefs and construals and simultaneously go beyond them in ways which fail to represent the world? The lack of discussion of these issues means we are not shown how an emotion is a unitary phenomenon.

Nevertheless, Pugmire's discussion has presented a strong challenge to traditional cognitive theories, for the evaluations involved in emotion can often only be expressed in emotive vocabulary. An important tool in this vocabulary is metaphor and Chapter 7 is an enlightening exploration of the links between metaphor and feeling. It defends the thesis that the sense of a metaphor is frequently only fully available from the point of view of feeling. Pugmire's purpose here is to show how metaphor can depict feeling in a way propositions cannot. But I would turn the material in this chapter to another use: to suggest that the evaluation embodied in feeling need not always be 'constructive'. Metaphors can be representations of properties and objects in the world without thereby becoming formulatable in non-metaphorical terms. One may need certain experiences to understand the metaphor (101), and even if we do not want to say the metaphor is 'true', we will say whether it is apt or not. So if the perspective of metaphor is often entangled with the perspective of feeling, we may claim that feeling registers aspects of the world – evaluative aspects – that cannot be expressed in other terms. It is not simply that metaphor best describes feeling, but that metaphor best describes the world from the perspective of feeling. It is the best representation of the emotion's construal we can give; and although this construal may often be 'constructive valuing', a 'gilding' of the world, is it impossible that an emotional (and so metaphorical) perspective is sometimes the most revealing, the most 'truthful' perspective to take? It is a common assumption of much work in philosophy of the emotions that that which cannot be expressed in 'neutral' propositional language cannot be part of reality. I have yet to hear a persuasive argument to this effect. Why should representation, in certain circumstances, not require a different, affective mode of consciousness and its content require an affective mode of expression? It is only the old dualism between reason and emotion, now strongly rejected, that leads us to think feeling itself cannot be genuinely representational.

I have not yet mentioned Chapters 6 or 8. The former is a very good discussion of the relation between feeling and knowledge – either of one's own feelings or those of another. Chapter 8 discusses 'factitious emotions', emotions that fail to be real examples of the emotions they purport to be because their origins are suspect (111). It is full of insights on self-deception and the way factitious emotions misrepresent our true values. It ends with a plea for spontaneity and self-honesty: 'true emotion demands a capacity for constantly renewable openness to the world and for acceptance of emotion even when it pulls against the diktat of cherished prescription' (131). Given the topics of the two chapters, it is a shame that Pugmire does not discuss unconscious emotions.

This book is written with clarity, insight and, appropriately, a good deal of feeling, which makes it both extremely readable and a highly significant contribution to our understanding of the nature of emotion.

Michael Lacewing
University of Reading
Reading, England.

m.k.lacewing@reading.ac.uk