

Posidonius on Emotions and Non-Conceptual Content

BILL WRINGE

Department of Philosophy, Bilkent University, 06800 Bilkent, Ankara, Turkey
billwringesemail@gmail.com

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE / RECEIVED: 04–02–10 ACCEPTED: 27–05–11

ABSTRACT: In this paper I argue that the work of the unorthodox Stoic Posidonius – as reported to us by Galen – can be seen as making an interesting contribution to contemporary debates about the nature of emotion. Richard Sorabji has already argued that Posidonius’ contribution highlights the weaknesses in some well-known contemporary forms of cognitivism. Here I argue that Posidonius might be seen as advocating a theory of the emotions which sees them as being, in at least some cases, two-level intentional phenomena. One level involves judgments, just as the orthodox Stoic account does. But Posidonius thinks that emotions must also include an element sometimes translated as an “irrational tug”. I suggest that we see the “irrational tug” as involving a second level of intentional, but non-conceptual representation. This view satisfies two desiderata: it is a view which would have been available to Posidonius and which is compatible with the views reported to us; and it is a view which is independently attractive. It also makes Posidonius’ position less far removed from that of orthodox Stoics than it might otherwise do, while remaining genuinely innovative.

KEY WORDS: Emotions, Galen, “irrational tug”, non-conceptual content, Posidonius.

I Introduction

Analytic philosophers of mind rarely look to the history of philosophy – let alone to ancient philosophy – for inspiration. When they do, the links that they find between contemporary views and their historical predecessors tend to be ones which exist at a high level of generality. Contemporary philosophy of mind, properly informed by the deliverances of cognitive psychology and the neurosciences, is seen as completing the details of a picture which is at best vaguely sketched and at worst partially discernible beneath a wealth of dispensable, if engrossing detail mistakenly filled in by our illustrious predecessors.

However, if there is any area of the philosophy of mind to which this characterization is unfair, it is the philosophy of emotion. Over the past thirty to forty years, philosophical orthodoxy has been in favour of what might, broadly, be called cognitive theories of emotion, and those who have defended them have looked to a variety of sources: not only twentieth-century writers such as Wittgenstein and Sartre,¹ but also notably Aquinas and Aristotle.² More recently, Martha Nussbaum (1994, 2002) and Richard Sorabji (2000) have argued, in works that seek an audience beyond the narrow circles of Hellenistic philosophical scholarship, that the most sophisticated and most defensible forms of such a theory (as well as the most uncompromising) were developed by the Stoics, most notably by Chrysippus.³ These claims are advanced and defended not by reference to general programmatic statements but by means of detailed point-by-point argumentation of a sort that aspires to live up to the standards of rigour of the best analytic philosophy.

Nevertheless, even within the philosophy of emotion the tide has begun to turn. Cognitive theories of emotion have come under attack from several directions, with one critic going so far as to claim that the cognitivist research program in the philosophy of emotion is “bankrupt” (Griffiths 1997: chapter 2). If this is so, then one might think that the contribution of scholars working in the history of philosophy to the development of the contemporary debate either to diminish greatly or to alter drastically.

I shall argue that this conclusion is too hasty. My case will rest on a careful examination of the views of the unorthodox Stoic philosopher, Posidonius (as reported to us by Galen).⁴ I shall be claiming that Posido-

¹ Notably Solomon (1973), Kenny (1963).

² Kenny (1963), Lyons (1980).

³ Nussbaum (1994: chapters 9–10), Sorabji (2000: chapters 2, 11 and 12).

⁴ A brief note on sources is in order here. Our main source for Posidonius’ views of emotion is Galen (1981), which I refer to repeatedly throughout. The importance of Galen’s evidence for our knowledge of this aspect of Posidonius’ views can be appreciated by examining Kidd’s edition of Posidonius. In this, the standard scholarly edition, the overwhelming majority of texts on the emotions which Kidd gives are taken from this work of Galen’s. Furthermore, as Sorabji (2000) has pointed out, there are good reasons for consulting Galen’s text directly rather than just the excerpts from it presented by Kidd (and, *a fortiori*, in such anthologies as those by Inwood and Long and Sedley, which present an even more restricted selection). One is that Kidd only includes what he takes to be direct quotations from Posidonius in his edition. But, as Sorabji remarks, Galen often reports a view which, from the context we can see that he takes to be Posidonius’. A second is that Galen’s reporting of Posidonius’ views often enables us to place them in argumentative context that helps us to make sense of them, in a way in which Kidd’s thematic organisation of his remarks does not. Of course we need to concede that Galen’s use of Posidonius is polemical in intent and that in places he may misrepresent Posidonius’ views for his own purposes. But this is a problem we have to face up to in understanding Posidonius’ views

nius gives us important pointers towards an interesting post-cognitivist conception of emotion. In particular, I shall claim that Posidonius' arguments point us strongly in the direction of recognising that standard cases of emotion have two kinds of intentional content – one consisting of judgments and another which one might call sub-judgmental. I shall also argue that this distinction between judgmental and sub-judgmental contents lines up well with a more modern distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual content.⁵

If I am right, Posidonius can be seen as giving us good reasons for thinking that emotions have both conceptual and non-conceptual content. Although this view of emotions has not often been advocated in print,⁶ it has much to be said for it, for it enables us to retain many of the attractive features of the orthodox cognitivist account of the emotions while accommodating some of the most significant criticisms it faces.

II Cognitivism in Contemporary Philosophy of Emotion And Its Critics

I shall start by giving a brief characterization of cognitivism, in both its contemporary and Chrysippean guises. However, opinions vary as to exactly what it takes for an account of emotions to qualify as cognitivist. To ensure that my account of the problems which cognitivism faces is not vitiated by insisting on an excessively demanding answer to that question, I aim to make this characterization as broad as possible.

in any case: even if Galen was more scrupulous in quoting Posidonius than in expounding what he takes to have been his views – and of course selective quotation of an author's views can, on occasion, be just as misleading as unsympathetic reports. (See Section IV for further discussion. Those who still feel unhappy with attributing the views presented as Posidonius' by Galen as Posidonius' own should perhaps mentally substitute the phrase "the view to be found in Galen's text" for the phrase "Posidonius view" at appropriate moments.)

⁵ My interest in Posidonius was initially sparked by Sorabji (2000), and my understanding of his views has been influenced at almost every point by my reading of both Sorabji (1999) and Sorabji (2000), and in particular the suggestion that Posidonius' views point up the limitations of contemporary cognitivism. I claim no originality for these aspects of my view. However, the suggestion that Posidonius should be seen as arguing for the view that the contents of some emotions are non-conceptual has not previously been defended.

⁶ But see Charland (1995) for what he calls a two-level view of emotions, which has something in common with the view which I argue for here. The main difference between Charland's view and my own is that he is interested in a distinction between representations which are informationally encapsulated and those which are not rather than a distinction between representations which are conceptual and those which are non-conceptual. But it is possible (though it would take further argument to show it) that these two distinctions align with one another.

I shall count a view as cognitivist if it takes emotions to be identical with, or partially constituted by intentional states, some of which can be assessed as rational or irrational. The paradigmatic example of a cognitive view is one which identifies a given emotion with a particular judgment. For example, fear might simply be identified with the judgment

D: “danger is present”⁷

But a cognitivist might also hold that judgments like D are only one component (albeit a necessary component) of emotions. Other components may include feelings of pleasure and pain (Greenspan 1984, 1987); bodily sensations (Lyons 1980); further judgments (Nussbaum 1994, 2002); and so forth. They might also avoid commitment to the view that emotions involve judgments by arguing that emotions are wholly or partially constituted by some other kind of intentional state or states: beliefs (Solomon 1973), thoughts (Stocker 1987), complexes of beliefs and desires, or perceptual or quasi-perceptual states (de Sousa 1987).⁸ Typically some of these states will be propositional attitudes, and in particular propositional attitudes which are apt for assessment as true or false or along some closely related dimension.⁹

Whatever class of intentional mental state the advocate of a particular version of cognitivism view takes the constituents to be members of, she may further refine her view by insisting that only some examples of that kind of state can be constituents of emotions. Thus emotions may be identified not with judgments with a particular content, but with particularly vivid judgments with the appropriate content,¹⁰ and similarly for other kinds of mental state.

⁷ One person who seems to advocate something like this view is Robert Solomon. It also seems to be close to the view that Nussbaum (Nussbaum 1994; Nussbaum 2002: chapter 9) attributes to Chrysippus – although there are reasons for doubting that this is in fact his view: see Sorabji 2000: chapter 2 and below section IV for discussion).

⁸ Any full-blown attempt to argue that a view of this sort is preferable to the baldest forms of cognitivism will of course require an argument that judgments, thoughts, perceptual states and so on are different kinds of items from beliefs. Depending on the type of state involved different strategies will be available – and have been adopted by different authors. Space does not permit a full review of all of them: for my (purely expository) purposes it is sufficient to observe that we do manage to distinguish between these different sorts of states for practical purposes – if only in a fairly rough and ready way.

⁹ On de Sousa’s account each type of emotion has a formal object which provides a norm for the belief, in the same way that truth provides a norm for belief and goodness a norm for desire.

¹⁰ Nussbaum (1994), (2002) suggests this as one line that might be open to a cognitivist.

Cognitive accounts of emotion are often thought to neglect or to give implausible accounts of the phenomenology of emotion.¹¹ This may not be a fair charge against all versions of cognitivism: those variants of the view which equate emotions with complexes of judgments and sensations can easily make room for the idea that emotions have a distinctive phenomenology. And even accounts of emotion which equate them with judgments or complexes of judgments need not have problems with the idea that emotions have a distinctive phenomenology: much here will depend on which particular class of judgments emotions are to be equated with, and on one's views on whether judgments have a distinctive phenomenology.¹²

A second problem for cognitivist theories of emotion arises from the link that they seem to suggest between the possession of conceptual capacities and the ability to have emotions. By accepting that emotions are apt for rational assessment, and by identifying them with, or taking them to be composed of such items as judgments, beliefs, thoughts and the like, proponents of cognitivist views often seem committed to thinking that possession of certain concepts is a necessary precondition of having emotions. It is arguable that one cannot judge, believe or think that one is in danger without having the concept of danger. So if a judgment, belief or thought that one is in danger is essential to the emotion of fear, then if one lacks the concept of danger then one does not have the capacity to fear.

Exactly how much of a constraint this puts on the types of creature that can have emotions will depend on what is involved in having concepts. Some views are fairly undemanding here. If having a concept involves nothing more than a capacity to classify presented instances of the concept together, or to respond in a particular way to stimuli of a particular sort, then it will not be too problematic to think of animals or young children as having concepts, and hence as being potential subjects of emotions.¹³ But if more is required – if, for example, having concepts involves having a capacity to find certain inferences compelling (or more demandingly, to find them compelling *in virtue of their form*)¹⁴ then the idea that children

¹¹ In this paragraph and those that follows I use the term “phenomenology” to refer to those aspects of emotions which account for the way in which emotions feel to their possessors. Despite its drawbacks – most obviously its failure to cohere with the usage of many philosophers who style themselves as phenomenologists within the Husserlian tradition, this usage is more or less standard among analytic philosophers of mind.

¹² Neglected within much analytic philosophy at least. Nussbaum argues that (some) judgments do have a distinctive phenomenology, so that there is no problem here for the sort of cognitivism that she is attracted to.

¹³ This seems to be Nussbaum's view in her (2002).

¹⁴ As Peacocke (1992) suggests.

or young animals have emotions – in the full-blooded sense in which mature human beings do – will be correspondingly more problematic.

A third problem faced by contemporary cognitivist accounts of emotions arises from the difficulty of specifying exactly which judgments are involved in particular emotions. As Michael Stocker has argued, it is very easy to find examples of individuals who experience emotions in situations where the judgment which we would normally expect to go with that emotion is absent (Stocker 1987). Consider someone who has a phobia about spiders. Although they are well aware that spiders are not usually a source of danger, this does not prevent them from being afraid.

Stocker solves this problem by suggesting that a cognitive theorist of emotion should identify emotions with a kind of thought rather than with an all-out judgment. The idea here is that one may have all sorts of thoughts about a situation which one would not, on balance, endorse. But while the distinction which Stocker appeals to here seems well-founded, and to solve this particular problem for the cognitivist, in the long run it does little more than move the bump under the carpet.¹⁵

The cognitivist should clearly not attempt an identification of emotions with thoughts *simpliciter*. For it is plausible that one might have the thought that one was in danger without being afraid (as for example in the case of an experienced rock climber starting on a difficult traverse). Similar things might be said about other specification of the content of the thoughts which are supposed to be identical with emotions. One can avoid this problem by saying that the thought has to occur to one in a particular kind of way (engaged rather than dispassionate, say). But it is not immediately obvious that this can be done in a way that is neither *ad hoc* nor circular.¹⁶

Martha Nussbaum (2002) has suggested a different response. As she points out, the case of the phobic who knows (and hence judges) that spi-

¹⁵ Notice that I am not denying (as at least one reader has suggested) that there is a significant difference between judgments and thoughts, nor that a cognitivist might gain some ground by appealing to it. The point is rather that appealing to this distinction should not exempt him/her from the obligation of specifying exactly *which* cognitive states (be they thoughts or judgments) are involved in emotions. Doing this will require two things: first of all, a specification of the contents of those states; and second, an explanation of how the states which have those contents differ from other states with the same content which would not constitute an emotion. The problem for Stocker is that, just as one might believe oneself to be in danger without being afraid, the thought that one was in danger might occur to one without one's being afraid.

¹⁶ In effect I shall be arguing that this can be done provided we appeal to the right kind of resources – but those resources are not ones which Stocker provides us with. See Griffiths (1997) for a similar sort of suggestion about Stocker – although he and I differ on the question of exactly which resources are required.

ders are not dangerous but who is still afraid of spiders only poses a problem to someone who equates emotions with judgments on the supposition that judgments cannot conflict with one another. But we frequently do make judgments that conflict with one another: weakness of will provides us with one sort of example; uncertainty provides us with another. There may be problems with understanding how this can be so,¹⁷ and the fact that it is so shows that we fall short of a certain kind of cognitive ideal. Still, no-one should doubt that it is so.

This response may seem plausible at first, since it appeals to a fairly common psychological phenomenon. However, one might think that it is *ad hoc*. Suppose a cognitive theorist suggests that an emotion of a certain kind is constituted by judgments to the effect that p. One might argue against this suggestion by providing prima facie cases of people who do not judge that p while still experiencing the emotion in question. Normally we take the fact that someone judges that p is not the case as evidence that they do not judge that p, since people do not normally make contradictory judgments. Now the cognitive theorist says that this not good evidence in this case, since *when they are in the grip of strong emotions*, people often make contradictory judgments. This does not seem a particularly compelling response as it stands – although it might be improved if it could be embedded in a more general theory of the circumstances under which people make contradictory judgments.

The cognitivist should also be wary of the appeal to the possibility of contradictory judgments because it makes it hard to decide how one might decide between two alternative specifications of a cognitive account – in other words between two alternative specifications of precisely which judgments are involved in the case of a specific emotion such as fear. Much of the evidence that we would want to appeal to here has been effectively ruled out of court. So even someone who is sympathetic to a cognitive account of emotion ought to resist Nussbaum's move. Or at least, they should do so if they hope that the cognitive account will give us some insight into the workings of specific emotions. And this hope seems reasonable: other things being equal, a cognitive account ought to be one that tells us something about which particular judgments are involved in a given emotion.

III Chrysippus: A Stoic Cognitivist

Richard Sorabji (1999, 2000) has recently argued that the accounts of emotions proposed by the Stoics Chrysippus and Posidonius are superior in

¹⁷For a good introduction to the literature on weakness of will see Charlton (1988).

various ways to those put forward by contemporary cognitivists. In what follows, I shall argue that Sorabji has fact understated the significance of Posidonius' contribution. However, I shall start by commenting on his account of Chrysippus.¹⁸

According to Sorabji, Chrysippus holds that emotions involve two separate judgments: the first that some good or ill is at hand and the second that some form of reaction is appropriate. Like Sorabji, we can take anger as an example here. It is common to many cognitive accounts of emotion that anger involves a judgment to the effect that one has suffered some sort of undeserved harm. Chrysippus' view is distinctive because he thinks that anger also involves a second sort of judgment to the effect that retaliation is appropriate. If either of these judgments is missing the state in question is not one of anger.¹⁹

As Sorabji observes, this account has two virtues. First, it is admirably specific about the sorts of judgment that are involved in emotions. Secondly, it neatly avoids one sort of counter-example to which some versions of the cognitive account fall victim: those in which somebody makes a judgment about some good or ill, but in which it is plausible to say that they do not experience a particular type of emotion. For example, it deals well with the case of the experienced mountaineer who does *not* feel afraid while climbing a mountain, while continuing to appreciate that the activity she is involved in is very dangerous.²⁰

¹⁸ A similar account is given in Graver (2007). For a rather different view see Frede (1986). Since my main concern here is with Posidonius' views rather than Chrysippus', I do not enter into interpretative controversies about the latter's views here, beyond noting that Frede's view seems to have found few adherents.

¹⁹ In some ways the example is not ideal since Sorabji goes on to add that on Chrysippus' view in many cases the reaction which is judged to be appropriate is some kind of "expansion" or "contraction" and to argue that such "contractions" and "expansions" are physiological changes in the agent. This raises the question – which he addresses only briefly – of what it might mean to judge a physiological change to be appropriate to the presence of some good or bad, commenting only that the suggestion is phenomenologically plausible: we do in fact often feel, say, sinking feelings in response to some perceived setback, and we do often take them to be appropriate or inappropriate.

²⁰ A further possible virtue of the view is that although it does not directly explain the phenomenology of emotions it gives us some explanation of why we are strongly inclined to think that emotions have a phenomenological side. At any rate this is the case if we accept the suggestion that the reactions we judge to be appropriate or inappropriate are physiological ones – for presumably the physiological change will actually be one that occurs in case where we think that it is appropriate. Of course, on this view the expansion or contraction is not part of the emotion, so strictly speaking it is not the emotion itself to which the phenomenology belongs. But it is at least arguable that the most that one can non-question-beggingly insist needs to be explained is why we typically associate certain phenomenology with particular emotions.

On the other hand, as Sorabji notes, the Chrysippean view does not deal well with a range of cases where it is plausible to say that we have an emotion when one or other of the two Chrysippean judgments – and in particular the judgment that some good or ill is at hand – is absent. Among such cases are our emotional responses to music and fiction, and Stocker's case of the arachnophobe discussed in section 1. Nor, given standard Stoic assumptions about the sorts of minds that are capable of forming judgments – does it deal well with the emotions of animals and young children. Since – on orthodox Stoic views – they cannot form judgments, because they do not have reason, they cannot be subject to emotions, strictly so-called.

IV Posidonius: Stoicism without Cognitivism

As Sorabji emphasizes, Chrysippus presents us with a version of a cognitive theory of emotion that is admirably specific about the sorts of judgments which are supposed to be involved in emotions. Unfortunately, it faces problems which cannot be solved without either watering down its precision, or retreating from the full-blown, and typically Stoic view that emotions are judgments.

Sorabji suggests that a plausible response to some of the problems in Chrysippus' position can be found in the work of a later Stoic writer, Posidonius. Posidonius' views – which we know about largely through Galen's reports in his work *The Principles of Plato and Hippocrates* – have sometimes been regarded as representing a decline from the highpoint of Stoicism represented by Chrysippus,²¹ and it is clear that his views about emotions were regarded as unorthodox by later ancient writers.²² But it is arguable that this unorthodoxy enables him to consider views that might now seem attractive precisely because of their differences from Chrysippean cognitivism.

Any interpretation of Posidonius' account of the emotions needs to address the question of whether the polemical context in which Galen presents it is likely to distort our understanding of his views. So we need to say something about that polemical context. In *The Principles of Hippocrates and Plato*, our main source for Posidonius' views, one of Galen's primary concerns is with the location of the parts of the human being which are responsible for our various mental functions. In reporting Posidonius' views, Galen's agenda appears to have been to enlist him as an

²¹ See for example Rist (1969).

²² For an explicit statement to this effect see Galen V 463 (de Lacy, p. 339): "Posidonius... parted company with Chrysippus and followed Aristotle and Plato to a greater extent".

ally in arguing against the orthodox Stoic view that the soul was unified, and located in the chest, and for what he takes to be the correct, Platonic view that the soul has three spatially separated parts.²³

It has sometimes been taken for granted that if Galen says that Posidonius advocated a view like Plato's, involving, in particular, a kind of Platonic tripartition into rational, thumetic and epithumetic parts, then Posidonius must in fact have done so. However, in recent years a number of scholars have suggested that we should be cautious in accepting Galen's interpretation of Posidonius at face-value.²⁴ As Teun Tieleman (2003) has pointed out, drawing attention to apparent differences between a school's founder and later writers seems to have been a more or less standard polemical strategy in Hellenistic philosophy. Reports of such differences often involve exaggeration as well as uncharitable readings of texts. So we should consider the evidence carefully.

One significant point which Tieleman notes is that Galen is scrupulous enough to tell us that Posidonius talks – like Aristotle – of the soul having different powers, not different parts (Tieleman 2003: 34, quoting Galen 1980: VI 2.5). For Galen at least, talk of different parts brings with it a commitment to a spatial separation whereas talk of different powers does not (Tieleman 2003: 26ff). It also seems significant that although Galen presents us with plenty of evidence to show that Posidonius held that emotions originate somehow in some non-rational aspect of the mind – thus perhaps giving ground for distinguishing between rational and irrational powers of the mind, he says little that gives any direct evidence that Posidonius would have countenanced a further division among non-rational powers of the soul corresponding to Plato's tripartite soul (although he does, as we shall see, present Posidonius position in a way which makes it tempting to interpret Posidonius along Platonic lines).

Nevertheless, it seems plausible that where Galen appears to be paraphrasing or quoting directly from Posidonius he does so accurately, even if we have ground for thinking he does so tendentiously. If this is correct then it seems hard to deny that Posidonius' position involved the claim that emotions depend upon what Galen describes as an "irrational tug" (*pathetikê holkê*). Galen tells us this:

Posidonius censures him [sc. Chrysippus] on these points also, and tries to show that the cause of all false suppositions arises (through ignorance in the theoretical sphere and in the practical) through the irrational tug.²⁵

²³ Tieleman (1996) provides a helpful discussion of the context of Galen's work.

²⁴ See for example, Cooper (1999), Gill (1999), Graver (2007).

²⁵ Galen (1980: V 442 [de Lacy, p. 321, translation emended. The words in brackets correspond to a conjecture by de Lacy]). There is a dispute in the literature as to the sound-

The “false suppositions” which Posidonius appears to have in mind here are the judgments which – on a Stoic view – constitute, or at least partly constitute emotions.²⁶

Posidonius’ point appears to be that these judgments do not simply spring from nowhere: they need to be explained. It is the “irrational tug” that explains them. Galen’s presentation of Posidonius’, position suggests that the “irrational tug” is also supposed to explain why we find it natural to be attracted to things other than virtue – something which he thinks a Stoic ought to find particularly puzzling. Shortly before the passage I have already cited he writes:

...it is not surprising that he [ie Chrysippus] was perplexed about the origin of vice. He could not state its cause or the ways in which it comes to exist; and he could not discover how it is that children err. On all these points, I think, it was reasonable for Posidonius to censure and refute him. (Galen 1980: V 461 [de Lacy, p. 319])

In fact, we should not be surprised to find that the irrational tug should have both these roles. As we have seen, for an orthodox Stoic such as Chrysippus, false judgments about what is good – hence false moral judgments – are important constituents of emotions. So the role of the “irrational tug” in producing emotions and its role in explaining the origin of vice are two sides of the same coin.

Galen links the role that the irrational tug plays in causing mistaken judgments about the good to the question of whether animals and young children can have emotions, suggesting that it might help to solve the problem that the Stoics have in reconciling the apparent existence of emotions in animals and small children with a view on which, on the one hand, emotions are equated with judgments, while on the other, neither animals nor young children are taken to be capable of making judgments. For example, shortly before the passage that I have just cited in which he mentions the “irrational tug,” he reminds us that we see children

ness of the text at this point. I follow De Lacy, Kidd and Pohlenz in thinking that there is a lacuna in the text, and I accept the emendation suggested by De Lacy. But it should be noted that both Fillon-Lahille (1984) and Cooper (1999) deny that there is any need for an emendation, with Cooper suggesting that we should see the text as talking only about a particular class of false suppositions in this context – namely the ones associated with emotion – and saying *of them* that they are all accounted for by the irrational tug (Cooper 1999: footnote 37). Even if Cooper is right about this, the point does not materially affect the status of this passage as evidence for the claims I make in the text – nothing I say depends on the purely conjectural parts of the text.

²⁶ False because they involve (what is to a Stoic) the judgment that something present at hand, and other than virtue is good or bad.

angry, kicking, biting, wanting to win, and get the better of their own kind, as some animals do when no prize is offered beyond victory itself. Such behavior is clearly observed in quails, cocks, ichneumons, the asp, the crocodile and thousands of others.

It is worth noticing here how Galen stresses certain aspects of Posidonius' view which might lead us to equate Galen's "irrational tug" with what Plato calls the *thumos*, or honour-driven part of the soul. Consider, for example, the emphasis in the quotation given above on the way in which both children and animals fight, not just to get things that they want but also simply for the sake of winning ("when no prize is presented other than victory itself"). However, as I have already noted, Galen does not present us any evidence that Posidonius saw any reason to make a distinction between different kinds of irrational tug, along the lines of the distinction which Plato makes between *thumos* and *epithumia*. We should, then, be somewhat cautious in attributing a fully-fledged tripartitionist view to Posidonius. Fortunately, the case which I am making does not depend on the correctness (or indeed the incorrectness) of such an attribution. But we should not exaggerate the degree to which this warrants skepticism about other things Galen tell us. Unless we regard Galen as an out-and-out liar, rather than merely a tendentious over-interpreter of Posidonius' views, it seems hard to deny that Posidonius thought there were a number of phenomena that the orthodox Chrysippean view did not deal well with and that his supposition of an "irrational tug" could help to explain them.

Galen's reports suggest that Posidonius emphasized the role of *images* in producing emotions (cf. Sorabji 2000: 14). He quotes Posidonius as saying:

For I fancy that you have long observed how men do not experience fear or distress when they have been rationally persuaded that an evil is present or is approaching, but they do so when they get an image of those same things. For how could you stir the irrational by means of reason unless you place before it a picture as it were that resembles a picture perceived by the eye. (Galen 1980: V 454 [de Lacy, p. 330])

Given the placing of this passage, which occurs several pages after the others which I have cited, we should perhaps be cautious about simply identifying the images which are mentioned in this passage with the "irrational tug". On the other hand, unless these images are in some way associated with the "irrational tug" we will be presumably be committed to thinking that Posidonius thought of the emotions as having two distinct kinds of non-rational cause. Without further evidence for such an unecological interpretation of Posidonius, we should be wary about accepting it. At any rate one might suppose that it would count in favor of an

interpretation of Posidonius' view that it should say something about the relationship between these "images" and the "irrational tug".

One might also regard it as suggestive that the passage about images occurs in close proximity to a discussion of the way that the Posidonian account can, but the orthodox Stoic account cannot explain our emotional responses to music.²⁷ It is reasonable to think that Posidonius is talking about the "irrational tug" here, since we are told that he thinks that a proper understanding of the cause of emotions will lead us back towards a correct, and Platonic, account of the role of music in moral education; so there must be some connection between the irrational tug and music. What matters here is whether one thinks that Posidonius would have thought that music affects us by giving rise to images – a question which should perhaps remain open.

V Interpreting Posidonius' Account

Now that I have sketched the main points of Posidonius' account – at least as Galen presents it to us – we can turn to the question of how it might be best understood and whether it does, as Sorabji suggests, represent an advance on the standard Stoic view. I shall start by recapping some of the main points which the account needs to capture. First, the "tug" needs to be something which is capable of existing in both animals and children; and also in mature, non-virtuous individuals, where it somehow gives rise to mistaken judgments about what is good and bad. It is also, presumably, something which is capable of being overcome, in the virtuous individual. Furthermore, it also involves something which could plausibly be regarded as a "faculty" which is distinct from reason, which may involve images and which is susceptible to being influenced by music.

One claim which will be important in what follows, and which I think the evidence warrants, but which Galen does not inform us about in so many words – perhaps because it would not have interested him – is that the "irrational tug" should be seen as some kind of intentional state. There are two reasons for thinking this. First consider the way in which the "irrational tug" is supposed to account for the emotions of children and animals (Galen 1980: V 440). These emotions are, presumably, intentional states. But they do not – on an orthodox Stoic view, which I take Posidonius to have shared – involve judgments. So their intentionality must derive from somewhere else. The most obvious place to take it as deriving from is the "irrational tug". Secondly, the view that emotions are intentional but non-conceptual states makes intelligible how such states could give rise to

²⁷ As Galen (1980) mentions explicitly at V 453 (de Lacy, p. 331).

judgments in mature thinkers. They do so by presenting the mature thinker with certain aspects of their objects in the light of which judgments might be made. But states which present objects in a certain light – as for example, perception does – are intentional states.

This is not the only account one might give. An alternative would be that Posidonius could have viewed emotions as complexes of (intentional) judgments and (non-intentional) irrational tugs, with their intentionality arising from the fact that the judgment component is intentional. But this is a less attractive suggestion for at least two reasons. First, the account would be weak in precisely the place that Posidonius seems to have taken his account to be superior to Chrysippus' – namely, in accounting for the emotions of children and animals. For on this account the emotions of children and animals would not be intentional states, they would simply be non-intentional tugs. Secondly, the position simply seems *ad hoc*: the non-intentional "irrational tugs" seem to do no work in the theory other than that of being postulated to account for problematic phenomena. (It is also worth noticing that if this account was correct there would seem to be no reason for thinking that Posidonius' view was in any way superior to the proposals of Nussbaum and Stocker. While this does not show that the view canvassed could not have been Posidonius', it at least gives us reasons for giving alternatives to it serious consideration.)

One might nonetheless think that there is a significant problem with the suggestion that Posidonius' irrational tugs are intentional states. For one might wonder whether it is possible – either for us, or for someone operating with Posidonius' assumptions – to make sense of the idea of a kind of state which is intentional, but not a fully-fledged judgment. I think there is a way in which both we and he could do so. In what follows, I shall start by formulating this suggestion in terms drawn from contemporary analytic philosophy rather than in the sort of terminology which Posidonius and his fellow Stoics would have used. Once I have explained the view, I will then show how it would fit naturally within the framework of ideas which Posidonius would have used. Finally I shall address the question of whether the view formulated is one we might now find attractive.

VI Non-Conceptual Content: The Recent Analytic Debate

Put briefly, the suggestion is that Posidonius should have regarded emotions as having an intentional content which is partly non-conceptual. To elucidate this claim I need to say what I mean by non-conceptual content, and explain why we should think that emotions, or any other kinds of states, have contents which are non-conceptual.

I shall start by saying what it is for a subject to possess a concept. Christopher Peacocke has argued that concepts are inferential capacities (Peacocke 1992). On his account, to possess a concept is to be disposed to find certain kinds of inference “primitively compelling” in virtue of their form. An inference is “primitively” compelling just if there are no more basic inferences whose compellingness explains the compellingness of the inference in question (see Peacocke 1992: chapters 1–2).

It is not obvious that every creature that is capable of being the subject of content-bearing states need have any inferential capacities at all. This gives us a reason for thinking that there might be some states which have non-conceptual content. Creatures which are capable of having intentional states but which do not have any inferential abilities would be creatures whose mental content had non-conceptual content.

This only raises the possibility of there being mental states with non-conceptual content. It does not tell us much about what such states might be like. We can add more detail by considering Gareth Evans’ (1980) suggestion that for a creature to possess a concept it must meet what is often called the Generality Constraint. Here is a rough formulation of this constraint.

A subject possesses the concept F, just in case there is a range of objects a, b, c... such that the subject is capable of entertaining all of the thoughts Fa Fb Fc...

In this form, the constraint talks about subjects’ possession of concepts, but does not say anything about what sorts of states are to be regarded as involving concepts. However, it is not too hard to develop Evans’ point in a way which does so. We can take concepts to be states which are capable of entering into an indefinite range of combinations, and saying that a state has a conceptual content is to say that it can be regarded as involving parts or sub-states that have this capacity for combination. Saying that a content-bearing state has a kind of state which is non-conceptual, by contrast, is to say that it has content in a way which does not require that it be composed of recombinable substates.²⁸

²⁸ One might be curious about the relationship between Peacocke’s suggestion that concepts are inferential capacities and Evans’ claim that in order to count as being conceptual, a thinker’s states must satisfy the Generality Constraint. Couldn’t there be thinkers who had extremely localised inferential abilities – so that they counted as concept possessors without satisfying this constraint? The answer to this is no. For on Peacocke’s view, possession of a concept involves finding certain inferences in which that concept figures compelling *in virtue of their form*. To do this one has to appreciate that certain inferences involving a concept instantiate a particular form. But it is plausible that one can only do so if one appreciates that the concept is one that could conceivably apply to a range of different objects. But to appreciate this just is to satisfy the Generality Constraint.

This provides us with an abstract characterisation of what it is for a state to have non-conceptual content. However, it does not provide us with any reason for thinking that there are any such states. So why should we think that there are?

A number of authors have argued that perceptual states have non-conceptual content.²⁹ For reasons of space, I shall concentrate on one line of argument put forward by Tim Crane (1991), which involves reflecting on the ways in which the content of perception appears to be inferentially isolated from central cognition. This line of argument seems especially significant in the current context, since there appear to be clear parallels between the way in which perception is independent of central cognition and the way which (as Posidonius tells us) the emotions are sometimes in conflict with (and thus not under the control of) reason.³⁰

The fact that perception is sometimes independent of central cognition is illustrated by the fact that when presented with instances of the well-known Müller-Lyer illusion, we typically see the two horizontal lines as having different lengths, even if we know that they are in fact the same length. Crane argues that facts of this sort show that even if we regard perceptual states as having components we should not see them as inferentially relevant components, and hence as conceptual.

It is worth noticing that there is a significant analogy between the point which Crane makes about the inferential isolation of perceptual states, and a point that one might make about emotions. Consider again Michael Stocker's case of the arachnophobe who knows that spiders pose him no danger, but nevertheless remains afraid, discussed in section II. It is natural to compare the persistence of the arachnophobe's fear in the face of countervailing belief with the persistent appearance of the lines of the Müller-Lyer illusion as having different lengths.³¹

Paul Griffiths (1997) has argued that this is not simply an isolated case: something similar is true of some of the representations involved in certain emotions – those which are known by Ekman and others as “basic emotions”. If Crane's argument succeeds in showing that perceptual states have non-conceptual contents it should show something similar for this kind of emotional state.

But one might have doubts. Might there not be states which are inferentially isolated, but nonetheless conceptual? Consider beliefs in the Freudian unconscious. One might take such beliefs to be inferentially iso-

²⁹ Peacocke (1992), Martin (1992), Crane (1991).

³⁰ For further arguments for the same conclusion see Heck (2007).

³¹ See also Tappolet (2000), Döring (2009).

lated. They are, after all, repressed, and one might take the fact they are repressed to mean that they cannot figure in inferences – or at least not in conscious inferences. Might they, nonetheless, still be conceptual representations?³²

This objection does not seem especially compelling. Even if one is not skeptical about the status of claims about the existence of the Freudian unconscious, it is not obvious why one should take such unconscious beliefs to be conceptual states. If one does, it will presumably because one is impressed by the way that such states can interact with other states on the basis of their content to give rise to such things as revealing slips of the tongue, wish-fulfillment dreams and the like. To the extent that this is true, it seems odd to think of these states as being wholly inferentially isolated.

We should also note at this point that there are reasons other than Crane's for believing that perceptual states can have non-conceptual content. I mention these last two arguments for the sake of comprehensiveness.³³ Unlike Crane's argument, there is no obvious parallel to them in anything Posidonius says about emotion. Some, but not all, of them seem to generalize from the case of perception to that of emotion. So, for example, claims that perceptual content needs to be non-conceptual in order to explain how reference can be experientially grounded seem unlikely to have analogues which generate similar conclusions for emotions. On the other hand arguments which are based on the existence of perceptual states whose character is too fine-grained to be captured by anything one has a concept of do seem to have such analogues (Peacocke 1986).

The same is true of arguments based on the possibility of remembering being in a perceptual state whose correct characterization involves the possession of concepts which one did not possess at the time, but which one now has. For example, suppose one remembers the ovoid shape of a rugby ball one saw when one was a very young child (Martin 1992). The fact that there is a memory there at all suggest that we have some kind of representation. Nevertheless it might be that when we formed the memory we did not have the concept ovoid. If so, the concept cannot have been involved in that initial representation. Nevertheless it seems that one might legitimately say that one remembers the ovoid shape of the ball. If so, this will be a case of non-conceptual perceptual content. There seem to be obvious parallels in the emotional sphere: imagine learning the term "schadenfreude", and

³² This point was raised by an anonymous referee for *Prolegomena*

³³ And at the urging of an anonymous referee for *Prolegomena*, whom I thank.

immediately recognizing that it applies to an experience which one knows but did not previously have any way of articulating.

VII Non-Conceptual Content in Posidonius

In the previous section I have tried to explain why someone might think that some sorts of states have non-conceptual content, and why emotions might be among those states. But why attribute a view of this sort to Posidonius?

There are two main reasons. The first is that the aspect of Posidonius' view of which we can be most confident is his view that emotions do not (*contra* Chrysippus) belong to our *logistikê*, or rational faculty. Galen repeatedly asserts that this was his view,³⁴ and it seems to be part of the point of insisting that animals and young children, who do not, on Stoic views, have a *logistikê* nevertheless have emotions.³⁵ Saying this seems to entail that having emotions does not require the possession of general concepts: again, it is part of Stoic orthodoxy that one can only have general concepts if one has a *logistikê*, and that animals and young children do not.³⁶

However, we should not attribute to Posidonius the view that emotions are not intentional. On a view like this Posidonius' view would mark a step back into intellectual darkness, rather than an advance on Chrysippus' position. However implausible that position might be, one of its strengths is precisely that it does accommodate the intentionality of emotion.

Furthermore, there are good reasons for denying that Posidonius' view could have represented such a backward step. For although Posidonius holds that our emotions do not belong to our *logistikê*, he also thinks that in a virtuous individual they will still be subject to the *logistikê* (Galen 1980: V 446). But for an emotion to be capable of being overcome by *logistikê*, it must have some sort of intentional content. It is hard to see what could be meant by suggesting that something that was merely a bodily disturbance could be mastered by reason. We can make sense of the idea of the *logistikê* being either troubled or untroubled by such disturbances – we might talk of someone as overcoming pains in this way. But this is not the way in which our emotions are supposed to be mastered on the Stoic view. They are mastered by being shown to have a mistaken representational

³⁴ Most obviously at Galen (1980: V 443 and V 453).

³⁵ See Galen (1980: V 431 [de Lacy, p. 295]): "Posidonius...was ashamed to defend the doctrine of the other Stoics that...since the affections belong to the reasoning part of the soul irrational animals have no share in them and children do not share in them either because obviously children too are not rational".

³⁶ As the passage from Galen cited in the previous footnote suggests.

content. And this is only possible if they have a content: in other words, if they are representational states.³⁷

We might wonder whether Stoics – or any ancient thinkers – can really allow for the existence of states which are intentional without being conceptually informed. However, the evidence seems to be clear that this was not a view which was unheard of in ancient times. Aristotle allows for such a position when he argues that animals should be seen as having appearances rather than beliefs, precisely on the grounds that we have to see them as having representational states of some sort in order to explain their behaviour, but that they cannot be seen as having general concepts. And the evidence seems to be that the Stoics followed Aristotle at this point (see Sorabji 1996).

Still we might ask at this point why Posidonius does not speak of the irrational tug as involving appearances, if this is the sort of view he has in mind. To this there seem to be two answers. First, we cannot be entirely sure that he did not: the most we can say is that Galen does not report him as having done so.³⁸ Given Galen's own agenda, it is possible that the point did not strike him as one worth reporting. Secondly, to some extent the objection misses the point I am making. I am not saying that Posidonius held that emotions involved appearances rather than judgments: all I am saying is that it was open to him to hold that emotions involved a species of representation that were like appearances in being intentional but not conceptually informed.

VIII The Attractions of the Posidonian View

Richard Sorabji (2000: 58–9 and *passim*) has argued that Posidonius' view of the emotions is preferable both to its Chrysippean predecessor

³⁷ Supposing that Galen was right to claim that Posidonius held – like Plato in the *Republic* – that the soul has three parts, one might advance a further argument. If we deny that states belonging to the emotional part of our soul are correctly characterised as intentional states, on the grounds that a Stoic can make no room for the idea of states which are intentional without being conceptually informed, then it may be unclear why Posidonius could have been committed to a tripartite rather than a bipartite model of the soul. Platonic arguments for the tripartition of the soul certainly seem to require that each part has states with intentional contents – if they did not, then they would not be able to come into conflict with one another in the way that the tripartite hypothesis is originally invoked to explain in the *Republic*. But the point is not unanswerable: I have already noted the case for being skeptical about Galen's report that Posidonius was a tri-partitionist (p. 196 *supra*). In any case, it is possible that Posidonius might have based his case for the tripartition of the soul on the suggestion that the different parts had different physiological underpinnings. Galen himself certainly seems to have held such a view.

³⁸ It is suggestive, though not conclusive, that Posidonius does speak of emotions as involving images: Galen (1980: V 454 [de Lacy, p. 331]). See pp. 196–197 *supra*.

and to many forms of contemporary cognitivism on a number of different grounds. While my interpretation goes beyond his in suggesting that the contemporary analytic notion of non-conceptual content illuminates Posidonius' account, I endorse the high regard he has for Posidonius. It seems as though Posidonius' views retain what is attractive in the Chrysippean conception, while giving a more plausible account of such phenomena as the attribution of emotions to animals and young children; the role that music can play in arousing emotion and the question of how we could have emotions that were in conflict with our better judgments – as in Stocker's case of the arachnophobe (Sorabji 2000: 125–7; 85–6; 132).

Sorabji also suggests that Posidonius' account can help us to give a plausible account of cases where our emotions seem to be less than those which our judgments would seem on the Chrysippean view to demand – for example, the case which Sorabji mentions of lack of emotional response due to inattention or exhaustion: again I agree (Sorabji 2000: 115). Central to the explanation of these cases will be the idea that conceptualized judgments can come apart from unconceptualised element in emotion; just as perception can come apart from the judgments to which it standardly gives rise. The view compares favorably with the alternative put forward by Nussbaum, and discussed above, that here we have a case of the more common phenomenon of conflicting judgments. That view might initially seem more promising, despite my earlier suggestion that it is *ad hoc*. But Posidonius suggests that there is a further problem with it – namely that an adequate theory will not merely postulate a conflicting judgment at this point but will give some explanation of its source (Galen 1980: V 454 [de Lacy, p. 331]). The idea of an irrational tug provides us with such an explanation.

One might worry that this is too quick. Following Sorabji and Griffiths, I have made much of the criticism that contemporary cognitivists are not explicit about the content of the judgments that are supposed to be involved in emotions (Sorabji 1999, 2000). One might worry that Posidonius' view was inferior to Chrysippus' because of just such considerations. However, the advocate of the position that I am defending has a good rejoinder at this point. It seems fair to ask the cognitivist to state explicitly which judgments are involved in emotions is that our judgments ought, in principle, to be articulable. But it is not so obvious that the contents of non-conceptual representations need be transparent to us in the same way. Indeed there is no guarantee that any particular individual has a sufficiently rich conceptual repertoire for us to be able to articulate the content of those emotions precisely in every case.³⁹

³⁹ Perhaps they would be capable of being so articulated by a Stoic sage. But such individuals are, in the stock phrase, rarer than the Phoenix.

IX Two Qualifications

I have argued that Posidonius should be seen as holding that emotions sometimes involve representational states with non-conceptual content. However, I am not claiming that he would have held that all the states we would classify as emotions involve states with non-conceptual content. Nor would he need to have held that in the case of those states in which non-conceptual representations are implicated, the emotion consists only of such states.

Start with the first qualification. Stoic writers do not, of course, speak about emotions – they speak about *pathê*. It is far from clear whether “emotion” is a fully adequate translation of *pathos*. Stoics saw *pathê* as being, literally, pathological: something which we would be better off without, and something which the virtuous agent or sage would not be subject to.⁴⁰ However, it does not follow from this that we have to see the Stoic sage as an emotionless robot.⁴¹ Stoic sages are characterised as being subject to what the Stoics call *eupatheiai* which differ from *pathê* in two respects: they are not disturbing, and they are not based as are *pathê* on false beliefs about what is good for us.

The fact that the Stoics make a distinction of this kind might lead us to want to translate *pathos* not as “emotion” but as “disturbing emotion”. This leaves room for us to allow that *eupatheiai* are emotions too, and hence that the Stoic sage is not emotionless. Points of translation aside, the significance of this for the current topic is that, while, if I am correct, Posidonius would have had good reasons for thinking that *pathê* have non-conceptual content, it isn’t at all clear that he would have had to say the same about *eupatheiai*. For the argument for thinking that *pathê* have to have non-conceptual content depends on the idea that in order to account for our being subject to *pathê* at all we have to postulate an irrational tug. In the case of *eupatheiai* it is not clear that anything similar is involved.

We should not overstate the significance of this. Posidonius also holds that in order to have a chance of becoming virtuous we need to have the emotional part of our soul educated in the right way with music and gymnastic training (Galen 1980: V 446 [de Lacy, p. 327]). We could take this insistence in one of two ways. One interpretation would be that we need to do this in order to make the part of our soul which supplies us with the representations involved in *pathê* inactive. A second possibility is that properly trained, this part of the soul will provide us with non-misleading representations which are capable of being transformed by reason into

⁴⁰ As Frede (1986) emphasises.

⁴¹ See Frede (1986), Irwin (1999).

eupatheia. We probably don't have enough evidence about Posidonius' views to know which interpretation is correct here. However, if it is the second, then it seems as though even in the case of *eupatheiai* we will have some non-conceptual representations.

The second qualification is as important as the first. I have argued that Posidonius ought to see *pathê* as involving non-conceptual representations. But I have not argued for the stronger claim that all of the representations involved in *pathê* are non-conceptual. The view that *pathê* in mature human beings involve only non-conceptual representations does not seem particularly plausible. Nothing that Posidonius is reported as saying directly commits him to this view, and some of the views he holds seem to conflict with it. So interpretative charity suggests that we should not attribute the view to him. Instead, we should take his view to be that in mature human beings, *pathê* typically involve a mixture of representations, some of which are conceptual and some of which are not.

Consider an emotion such as anger – something which most of us are subject to on some occasions, and which would certainly count as a *pathos* for Posidonius. On Posidonius' Platonic account we will have a tendency to be subject to this emotion insofar as we have not received the right sort of musical and gymnastic education to ensure that we are not supplied with recalcitrant representations to the effect that we have been injured and that an appropriate response would be to harm the person who has injured us. But even those of us who are in this unfortunate state – that is to say, most of us – need not be overpowered by this emotion. One way in which we can prevent ourselves from being so overpowered is by reflecting on our anger and on whether it is justified. True, this will not always be effective, and it may still leave us *feeling* angry. But it may nonetheless mitigate our anger – at least to the extent of preventing us from acting on it.

Now consider how we are to distinguish between the three cases of the person who does not become angry at all, the person who masters their anger by reflecting on it (but still feels angry), and the person who does not attempt to master their anger, or who ends up endorsing their non-conceptual representations. In the first case we can say that they have none of the representations, either conceptual or non-conceptual, which are characteristic of anger. To distinguish between the second and third cases we are likely to want to say that one of them has some representations that the other lacks. So this suggests that there are two different sorts of representation here – one of which gets removed by reflection, and one of which does not. But it is hard to see how non-conceptual representations can be got rid of by reflection. Part of the original characterisation of these representations was supposed to be that they were not penetrable by inference. (Consider the analogy with the Müller-Lyer illusion: we cannot

reason ourselves out of seeing one set of lines as being longer than the others, but we can refuse to endorse a belief or conceptual representation to that effect.) So we have to conclude that the difference between the person who masters their anger and the person who does not must lie at the level of their conceptual representations. But this forces us to say that anger – in the case of someone who is capable of reflecting on it rationally – must involve some conceptual representations.

So much for a defense of the claim that *pathê* in mature human beings will typically involve both conceptual and non-conceptual representations. Would Posidonius be in a position to endorse this defense? The answer seems to be that he would. The only reason for not doing so would be if he denied that – for a non-sage, or someone who has not received the right kind of education – reason can even help us to master our emotions. And if he had thought this, it would have left him so far from the orthodox Stoic view (as represented by Chrysippus) that it is highly unlikely that Galen, who loved to show up divisions between the Stoics, would not have said something about it.

X Some Objections Addressed

I have argued that Posidonius should be interpreted as having held a view on which emotions involve representations with non-conceptual contents. I have also argued that Posidonius' view – as I understand it – has much to be said for it. In doing so, I have drawn heavily on recent work on the role of non-conceptual content in perception. However, the view that perception has a content which is partly non-conceptual is controversial. It is worth considering whether objections to the idea that perceptual content has a non-conceptual aspect undermine (what I take to be) the Posidonian view. I shall argue that they do not.

It will be helpful to start by rehearsing a distinction, due to Christopher Peacocke, between two different kinds of non-conceptual content which seem to be involved in perception: “scenario content” and “proto-propositional content” (Peacocke 1992: chapter 3). The distinction is important, because I shall be arguing that if it is plausible to think that emotions do involve non-conceptual content, then the kind of non-conceptual content which they involve is proto-propositional content. By contrast, many of the most frequently rehearsed objections to the idea of non-conceptual content seem to be objections to the existence of something like Peacocke's “scenario content”.

Peacocke characterizes the scenario content of a perceptual state as a positioned three dimensional colored mosaic centered on the subject of the experience. He argues that we should see scenario content as involv-

ing non-conceptual content because an accurate characterization of that mosaic may well involve reference to shapes and shades of colors which do not fall within the conceptual repertoire of the individual whose states they are.

However, Peacocke argues that scenario content cannot exhaust the non-conceptual content of perception, because there are mosaics which might be seen in one of two ways by a subject. For example, a mosaic containing a square with one corner at the top may be seen in two different ways. In one the square is seen as a square – that is to say, as a shape with four equal sides meeting one another at right angles; in the second as an equiangular rhombus – a shape with two pairs of parallel sides meeting one another at the same angle. Furthermore, if – as Peacocke thinks, and as I have accepted in this paper – having a concept involves having an inferential capacity, then seeing the shapes these ways need not require one to have the concepts of square and rhombus in one's conceptual repertoire. For there is no reason to think that someone whose experience takes the forms described here need be capable of any inferences at all. So there are perceptual experiences which involve a kind of non-conceptual content which is not scenario content. This is what Peacocke calls "protopositional content."

Peacocke's example suggests that unlike scenario content, proto-propositional content is only contingently non-conceptual. In other words, if there is such a thing as the proto-propositional content of a perceptual state, it is the kind of thing which is at least in principle expressible in propositional form – provided that the subject is sufficiently conceptually adept. (The perceptual content is still non-conceptual because having that particular experience does not *require* one to be adept in the way that would be necessary to express the concept involved.) By contrast, it is not clear that the scenario content involved in any given perceptual experience could be fully articulated in conceptual form.

If Peacocke's argument for the existence of proto-propositional non-conceptual content is correct, then it is plausible that we have at least the possibility of such content whenever a subject has an experience which could be interpreted in conceptual form in one of two ways and that difference can be represented in perception. One might think that emotion-laden cases of perceptual experiences provide further instances where this notion is applicable. Thus, it seems plausible that a certain gesture made by another person might be seen, as being either threatening or neutral, in such a way that whether it is seen one way or another can correctly be said to involve an aspect of the experience of the gesture. Furthermore, someone might be capable of having either kind of experience even when they did not have the sorts of inferential capacities which would be required in

order for an attribution of the concept of a threat to them to be correct. (An animal or a young child might flinch from a threat; and the fear that lead them to do so plausibly has a content which is both intentional and has an experiential aspect to it but need not – if the arguments of this paper are correct – require the possession of a *concept* of threat or of danger.)

These points suggest that – at least as far as Posidonius is concerned – the non-conceptual content of emotions should be seen as being analogous to proto-propositional content rather than scenario content. For, as I have already suggested, Posidonius would presumably be well-advised to hold that the non-conceptual content of emotions was, as it were, homogeneous with the contents of judgment. If the “irrational tug” provides us with judgments which are conceptualisable but not actually conceptualized, we can see how they could be the sorts of thing which were, in principle, correctible by reason – as a Stoic should presumably take them to be.

Seeing the non-conceptual content of emotions in this way also has advantages from the point of view of contemporary debate, since it allows us to bypass a number of possible objections. For example, in a famous discussion of non-conceptual content, McDowell suggests that arguments for non-conceptual content which are based on the idea that our experience represents more differences than could plausibly be captured in our experience fail because we can see those features of our experience as falling under indexical recognitional concepts such as “that shape” and “that colour” (McDowell 1994: lecture 3). McDowell’s claims have attracted considerable skepticism.⁴² But we need not discuss whether or not this skepticism is deserved, since this argument seems to be aimed against reasons for believing in scenario content rather than against the possibility of proto-propositional content.

A second objection to the idea that non-conceptual content plays a role in perception is based on the alleged role which experience plays in justifying our beliefs. McDowell (1994) and Brewer (1999) have both argued that states that are not conceptualised cannot function as reasons – and that if we do not see perceptual experiences as providing reasons for our beliefs we cut ourselves off from the possibility of holding that our beliefs are “answerable” to the world. This line of argument does not seem to undermine the position that I am arguing for. The idea that non-conceptual emotional representations need to function as reasons is one that is considerably less compelling than the thought that perceptual experiences must do so. But even if it was compelling it need not present a problem here. For there do not seem to be strong reasons thinking that a state which

⁴² For one expression of which see Dokic and Pacherie (2001).

is non-conceptual, but conceptualisable could not play a reason-providing role (cf. Heck 2000). Furthermore, this view is compatible with the idea that sometimes the emotions of mature human beings do give them non-derivative and non-belief dependent reasons of at least one sort – namely, reasons for action, because, on the account which I have offered, the emotions of mature human beings can also include conceptualised representations – and there is no reason why these representations cannot constitute reasons for action.^{43 44}

XI Conclusion

In the central sections of this paper, I set out a view of emotions (or at least *pathê*) as involving, but not being completely constituted by non-conceptual representations. I also tried to make a case for thinking that a view like this was available to, and could have been endorsed by Posidonius. I have not claimed that he actually endorsed such a view: there is no direct evidence for this. But the arguments that he is reported as having put forward would certainly support such a view better than any other that was available to him. So, if he had a coherent view (which, of course, we cannot be sure of) it is likely to have been this.

However, I have tried not only to provide an interpretation of Posidonius' position, but to argue that such a view should be attractive to contemporary philosophers. My reasons for thinking this should already be apparent: here I shall just try to summarise them. The view that I have outlined has many of the advantages of mainstream cognitive theories of emotions: it agrees with them that emotions are intentional states and can stand in rational relationships with other kinds of mental states. However, it also accommodates some points which mainstream cognitivist views seem to have difficulty with. In particular it can easily allow for the fact that animals and young children have emotions. It can also explain how we can have emotions which run counter to our explicit beliefs. This is possible because we can have a non-conceptual representation whose content contradicts the content of our conceptual representations.

Furthermore, unlike some of the contemporary cognitivist accounts which I criticised at the beginning of this paper, the position that I am discussing can accommodate these points in a way that does not seem *ad hoc*. The claim that we have non-conceptual representations as well as conceptual ones, and that these representations are implicated in standard cases

⁴³ Assuming, *contra* Dancy (2000), that mental states are the right sorts of things to be reasons.

⁴⁴ For an argument which has this thought as its conclusion see Döring (2003).

of emotions are based on general theoretical considerations and not just on a need to deal with perceived counter-examples to a particular version of cognitivism. We need to specify that a particular *kind* of non-conceptual content is involved – namely proto-propositional; but again, the existence of non-conceptual content of this sort can be motivated on other grounds.

In short, the view that emotions have non-conceptual contents is one which is remarkably plausible. It is also prefigured to a striking degree in Posidonius' writings – or at least those reports of them which have come down to us from Galen. We would do well to appropriate Posidonius' views.

Bibliography

- Bain, D. 2003. "Intentionalism and pain", *Philosophical Quarterly* 53, 502–23.
- Brewer, B. 1999. *Perception and Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Cooper, J. 1999. "Posidonius on Emotions", in Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen (1999), reprinted in his *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- Crane, T. 1992. "The non-conceptual content of experience" in T. Crane (ed.), *The Contents of Experience: Essays on Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Dancy, J. 2000. *Practical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- De Sousa, R. 1986. *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press).
- Dokic, J. and E. Pacherie 2001. "Shades and concepts", *Analysis* 61, 193–202.
- Döring, S. 2003. "Explaining action by emotion", *Philosophical Quarterly* 53, 14–30.
- . 2009. "Why be emotional", in P. Goldie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Ekman, P. 1972. *Emotions in the Human Face* (New York: Pergamon).
- . 1980. *The Face of Man* (New York: Garland).
- Evans, G. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Fillon-Lahille, J. 1984. *Le de Ira de Seneque et la philosophie stoicienne des passions* (Paris: Klincksieck).
- Fodor, J. 1983. *The Modularity of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT).
- Frede, M. 1986. "The Stoic doctrine of the affections of the soul", in M. Schofield and G. Striker (eds.), *The Norms of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

- Galen 1981. *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, edited and translated by P. De Lacy, 3 volumes (Berlin: Akademie Verlag).
- Gill, C. 1999. "Did Galen understand Platonic and Stoic thinking on emotions", in Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen (1999).
- Graver, M. 2007. *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Greenspan, P. 1980. "A case of mixed feelings-ambivalence and the logic of emotion", in A.O. Rorty (ed.), *Explaining Emotion* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- . 1988. *Emotions and Reasons* (New York: Routledge).
- Griffiths, P. 1997. *What Emotions Really Are* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Heck, R. 2000. "Non-conceptual content and the 'space of reasons'", *Philosophical Review* 109, 483–523.
- . 2007. "Are there different kinds of content?" in B. McLaughlin and J. Cohen (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Irwin, T. 1998. "Stoic inhumanity", in Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen (1999).
- Kenny, A. 1963. *Action, Emotion and Will* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- Kidd, I. 1971. "Posidonius on emotion", in A. Long (ed.) *Problems in Stoicism* (London: Athlone Press).
- . 1988. *Posidonius Volume II: The Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Lyons, W. 1980. *Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Martin, M. 1992. "Perception, concepts and memory", *Philosophical Review* 101, 745–63.
- McDowell, J. 1994. *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).
- Nussbaum, M. 1994. *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- . 2001. *Upheavals of Thought* (Chicago: Chicago University Press).
- Peacocke, C. 1986. "Analogue content", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement* 60, 1–17.
- . 1992. *A Study of Concepts* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press).
- . 2001. "Does perception have a non-conceptual content?" *Journal of Philosophy* 98, 239–264.
- Pitcher, G. 1965. "Emotion", *Mind* 74, 326–346.
- Pohlenz, M. 1898. "De Posidonii libris *Peri Pathon*", *Fleckeisens Jahrbuch für klassische Philologie* supp. 24.

- Rist, J.M. 1969. "The imprint of Posidonius", in J. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Sihvola, J. and T. Engberg-Pedersen (eds.). 1999. *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers).
- Solomon, R. 1973. "Emotions and choice", *Review of Metaphysics* 17, 20–41.
- Sorabji, R. 1996. "Rationality", in M. Frede and G. Striker (eds.), *Rationality in Greek Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- . 1999. "Chrysippus – Posidonius – Seneca: a high-level debate on emotion", in Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen (1999).
- . 2000. *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Stocker, M. 1983. "Psychic feelings: their importance and irreducibility", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 61, 5–26.
- . 1987. "Emotional thoughts", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24, 59–69.
- Tieleman, T. 1996. *Galen and Chrysippus on the Soul: Argument and Refutation in the De Placitis, Books I-III* (Leiden: Brill).
- . 2003. *Chrysippus' "On Affections": Reconstruction and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill).
- Tye, M. 1995. *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT).