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EMOTION AND EXPLANATION

by

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This thesis is my own work and was written while I was a research scholar of the Department of Philosophy, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.

  
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## PRECIS

It is suggested that not only psychologists and physiologists, but also philosophers, have created confusion in their various approaches to the study of emotion by seeking to isolate and describe one feature of emotion and to label this as the 'essence' or 'basis' of emotion. Further, philosophers have concealed many important complexities by employing in their investigations of the concept the method of analysis 'by standard cases'. The main contention of this essay, on the other hand, is that emotion words are employed to signify phenomena so various that it is unrealistic to seek a description which would cover all cases of emotion and hence provide an answer to the question 'What is emotion?'. To show why this is so, our uses of emotion words to refer to 'feelings', emotional states, moods, impulse and dispositional motives and character traits are here examined, and the differences in their relationships to the concepts of wanting and of thinking are considered. Moreover, since it is held that emotion words serve not only as descriptive and evaluative terms, but are also frequently employed to provide

explanations of behaviour, the various ways in which the uses of these words serve to make behaviour intelligible to us are examined.

Basic to this investigation is the belief that in this area, as in all those generally specified as belonging to the Philosophy of Mind, philosophical analysis conducted in ignorance of, or disregard for, the empirical findings of psychology and physiology is frequently seriously misleading. For this reason, an attempt has here been made to ensure that the upholding of particular philosophical positions has not involved conflict with established empirical findings.