The Phenomenology of Emotional Expression

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1. Introduction

What is emotional expression? And what is the significance of the expressing subject's awareness of their own emotional expressions? I suggest that these two questions are usefully addressed together since the phenomenology of emotional expression, a characterisation of the awareness that each of us has of our own emotional expressions, provides an intuitive answer to the question of what unites the category. In §2 I set out some constraints on theories of emotional expression. In §3 I sketch an account of the phenomenology of emotional expression, saying something about both the expresser's and the observer's perspective. In §4 I consider theories of emotional expression that focus on the perspective of the observer. Each of these, in its own way, characterises emotional expression in terms of its communicative significance. Epistemic views understand emotional expression as behaviour that provides good evidence of the expresser's emotion. Perceptual views see emotional expression as enabling the perception of another's emotion. Design views elaborate on these accounts, understanding emotional expression as behaviour that is designed to provide such information. I argue that these views are subject to serious objections. In §5 I go on to describe a view that accords a central role to the expresser's consciousness of the relation between their emotion and its expression. I argue that this view is not subject to the concerns that cause trouble for the observer-perspective views, and defend it against some further objections.

2. What is a Theory of Emotional Expression?

How should we go about answering the question of the nature of emotional expression? An initial thought is that a theory of emotional expression will take the form of completing the biconditional (EX):[1]

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[1] Although (EX) explicitly allows that an expression could be either a mental or

(EX) For any subject *S*, emotion *E*, and mental or bodily event *A*, *S*'s *A* expresses *S*'s *E* if and only if […]

What should we require of completions of (EX)? The most obvious desirable feature is truth. That is, the left and right hand sides of the biconditional should be true of exactly the same entities. If not, the theory will not be extensionally adequate. Distinct from the question of truth, however, is the question of whether the biconditional serves as an analysis of the concept of emotional expression. Although there are a number of different ways in which the idea of analysis can be understood, I take it that a completion of (EX) could be true without in any sense being an analysis of the concept.

There is, I think, reason to suppose that at least *some* concern with analysis should be on our agenda. This is due to the way in which it is appropriate to pursue the simpler question, that of truth. How, we might ask, are we to evaluate theories of emotional expression for truth? How, that is, are we to decide whether, given some way of completing (EX), the left and right hand sides of the biconditional apply to exactly the same entities? There is, I suggest, a stock of core cases that uncontroversially do count as expressions and others that uncontroversially do not. So:

SMILE: If a subject feels joy and, as result, spontaneously smiles, this qualifies as an expression of joy.

SLAM: If a subject feels angry and, as a result, slams a door, this qualifies as an expression of joy.

BLOOD: If a subject feels fear and, as a result, there is an increase in their white

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bodily event, I will focus on bodily events, assuming that the paradigm of emotional expression is bodily behaviour. Despite this, I do take it that if a theory can accommodate the possibility of purely mental expressions, that speaks to some extent in its favour. Edith Stein, whose account of the phenomenology of expression I draw upon, certainly allows that mental activities can qualify as expressions of emotion (Stein, 1917, pp. 52-53).

blood cells, this does *not* qualify as an expression of fear.

MEDITATE: If a subject feels anxiety and, as a result, decides to meditate, this does *not* qualify as an expression of anxiety.

I assume that the classification of these cases is uncontroversial. As such, any theory of emotional expression must get these core cases right. But what is it to get the core cases right? The answer to this question suggests that a true biconditional isn't all that we demand from a theory of emotional expression. For if a theory of emotional expression leaves it as an open question, given our current state of general and scientific knowledge, whether one of the core cases is a genuine expression then that theory is wanting. These are cases that can be settled from the armchair. But it is possible that a completion of (EX) is true, yet we could only know it to be such by way of empirical work that is yet to be done. So we want a theory not just to be true but to 'get the core cases right' in a way that is recognisable for ordinary folk who know that smiling expresses joy, slamming doors expresses anger, and so on. And this strongly suggests that we should be concerned with something that might be called analysis. Exactly how to formulate this demand is a delicate matter, and not something that I will address here (Braddon-Mitchell & Nola, 2009; Williamson, 2007). All we need at this point is the thought that a theory ought not to leave the classification of core cases as an open question. Since the core cases are decidable from the philosophical armchair, an adequate theory of emotional expression should respect that fact.

Alongside these non-negotiable cases, there is a range of examples about which we are typically less certain. One such example is blushing as a potential expression of embarrassment, another would be imagining the worst as a potential expression of anxiety. Should these be thought of as in the same category as SMILE and SLAM or as BLOOD and MEDITATE? It isn't clear, to me at least, how to answer this question and, given this, I suggest that we can allow these and similar cases to be decided by theory. If an account gets the core cases right, then we can allow it to decide borderline cases by fiat.[2]

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[2] Cf. Green's remark that, 'any attempt to give a "when and only when" account of

3. The phenomenology of emotional expression

The phenomenology of expression can be approached from two perspectives: that of the expresser and that of the observer. It is evident that what it is like to express one's own emotion is quite different from what it is like to observe, even in an engaged, interactive way, the expression of emotion in another person. I begin with the expresser perspective before briefly saying something about that of the observer. What I offer in this section cannot be more than a sketch. There is much more to be said about features that I mention, but it will serve to orient the discussion that follows in §§4 and 5.

3.1 The Expresser Perspective

Psychologists and philosophers have often appealed to expression in their analysis of emotion, sometimes employing Nico Frijda's term 'action tendencies' (Frijda, 2007, Ch.2). Though there are different ways of making the point, the basic idea is that emotions are, at least in part, individuated by the bodily behaviour to which they dispose us. Whether or not this idea is defensible as an account of the metaphysics of emotion, we can consider a related claim about the phenomenology of emotion. This is the thought that emotional experience is, at least in part, constituted by the feeling of being moved to various forms of behaviour. The experience of joy, for example, is partly constituted by a felt motivation to smile; the experience of fear, by a felt motivation to withdraw; and so on. This seems to me to be entirely correct. The experience of emotion is, at least in part, the experience of being motivated to activity.

In *On the Problem of Empathy*, Edith Stein describes expression in the following way,

as I live through the feeling I feel it terminate in an expression or release expression

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an everyday concept like the expression of emotion may well make the concept seem more precise than it is in fact since some borderline cases are necessarily left out. Still, the attempt may be justified in the interest of clarity if it is true by and large to the ordinary use of the concept' (1970, p. 551).

> out of itself. Feeling in its pure essence is not something which is complete in itself. As it were, it is loaded with an energy which must be unloaded […] feeling by its nature prescribes what expression and what volition it can motivate. By nature it must always motivate something, must always be "expressed" (Stein, 1917, pp. 51-52)

This, I think, is one way of endorsing the point about being motivated to activity. The experience of emotion is one that calls out for expression. She goes on to describe feeling as 'poured into expression', and of the two as forming a 'sensory unity' (Stein, 1917, p. 53).

How should we understand this notion of 'motivation'? The central idea, common to Stein, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, all of whom utilise the concept, is that motivation is the *intelligible* proceeding of one state from another in a way distinct from a mere causal connection (Stein, 1917, pp. 83-84; Husserl, 1952, §56; Merleau-Ponty, 1945, pp. pp.47-51). To say that emotional experience motivates expressive behaviour is to say, at least, that the expression *makes sense* to the subject in light of the emotion. In this way, Stein, following Husserl, sharply distinguishes explanation by motivation from causal explanation. But, despite the way in which classical phenomenologists sometimes present the matter, this is not yet to say that if *E* motivates *A* it is not the case that *E* causes *A*. Indeed, I assume that expressive behaviour is in fact a causal output of emotion. The point rather is that, from the perspective of the expresser, the experience of emotional expression is not one of mere causal connection. When I experience joy, and that motivates me to smile, I do not simply experience the joy as causing the smile. Rather, I experience the joy as 'pouring into' the smile which it seems to call for. Smiling makes sense of joy in a way that mere reflex behaviour does not make sense of its cause. Of course, the particular way in which an emotion is expressed will depend on a range of contingent factors and is likely to be highly context-specific. Nevertheless, in a particular case the motivated state seems like an appropriate, or fitting response to the emotion in question.

Not only is the experience of motivation distinct from that of mere causation, it is also distinct from the experience of intentional action. It has often been claimed that we have a distinctive form of 'action awareness' (Bayne, 2008). When we act, we are

aware of that bodily behaviour in a distinctive way, as an exercise of our agency that is responsive to reasons. We can think of a reason as a consideration that 'counts in favour' of a particular course of action. To experience my bodily behaviour as a response to reasons, then, is to find it intelligible in this light. So both motivation and intentional action involve an awareness of one's behaviour as intelligible. But the former need not be a response to something that counts in its favour. If it is raining, that counts in favour of raising my hood, and I experience my ensuing bodily movements as intelligible in just that way. But joy does not 'count in favour' of smiling in the same way. Joy is not a reason for smiling. Nevertheless, smiling is fitting for one in light of one's joy.

The concept of motivation, then, stands between mere causal explanation, on the one hand, and reasons-based explanation, on the other. There is, of course, a great deal more that can be said of the concept (O'Conaill, 2013; O'Conaill, 2014; Walsh, 2013; Walsh, 2022). However, I take it that the above is a promising start to the question of how it feels to express an emotion: one's bodily activity is experienced as one element of a 'sensory unity' with the emotional experience that motivates it.

3.2 The Observer Perspective

When we perceive another's emotional expression we are aware of that bodily activity in a distinctive way. When we see somebody smile there seems to be no need to make an inference as to their mental state. Rather there is an intuitive sense in which we are perceptually aware of their joy. Put otherwise, they look happy. Variations on this view have been defended in a good deal of recent literature (McNeill, 2012; Smith, 2015; Sias & Bar-On, 2016). It is also present in the work of the classical phenomenologists mentioned in the previous section. So, for example, Stein writes,

The sad countenance is actually not a theme that leads over to another one at all, but it is at one with sadness. This occurs in such a way that the countenance itself can step entirely into the background. The countenance is the outside of sadness. Together they form a natural unity. (Stein, 1917, pp. 76-77)

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As already mentioned, the experience of emotional expression from the perspective of the observer is quite unlike the experience of the same expression from the perspective of the expresser. Nevertheless, this sense of unity connects the two. From both perspectives, the bodily activity is experienced as one element in a unified phenomenon that also includes the emotion expressed. From the expresser's perspective, the expression is motivated by and 'completes' the emotional experience; from the observer's perspective the expression reveals the emotional experience, giving us perceptual access to that which would otherwise be hidden from view.[3]

The fact that emotional expression can reveal a person's emotional life makes possible a direct form of non-verbal interpersonal interaction. Talk of the observation of another's emotional expression should not be taken to imply that such observation is neutral or disengaged. Far from it, the usual situation is that we care about and respond to the emotional expressions of others, often with our own appropriately related emotional expressions. This phenomenon has long been noted in the interactions between infants and caregivers (Trevarthen, 1979), but it certainly doesn't stop there. Very often our interactions with others take the form of recognising and responding to emotional expression, often with our own. The two perspectives, then, are related in complex ways.

4. Observer-Perspective Views

A number of theories of emotional expression focus on the perspective of the observer. I consider three such accounts — evidence views, perception views, and design views — and argue that each is subject to significant objections.

4.1 Epistemology

Some theories characterise emotional expression in terms of the epistemic position

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[3] Although I have focussed on the visual case, there is much that can be said of other modalities, in particular the auditory experience of another's emotional tone of voice.

in which it places a possible observer. This thought makes good sense since, as is widely recognised, emotional expressions are a central way in which we come to know about the emotions of others. The basic idea can be spelled out in a variety of ways, invoking different epistemically significant concepts such as knowledge, evidence, justification or good reasons (Green, 1970; Bach & Harnish, 1979). The view I will consider as a representative of this approach can be set out as follows:

> (EX-E) For any subject *S*, emotion *E*, and mental or bodily event *A*, *S*'s *A* expresses *S*'s *E* if and only if the awareness of *A* provides observers with good evidence that *S* is in *E*

A basic worry about this view is that it is too liberal, incorrectly classifying some core cases of non-expression as expressive. Consider what it will say about BLOOD. On the face of it, observing someone's rising white blood cell count can, in the right circumstances, be good evidence that they are afraid. The same can be said of MEDITATION. Again, in the right circumstances, that you are meditating can be good evidence that you are anxious. Generalising, the objection is that any causal output of an emotion can, in the right circumstances, put an observer into whatever epistemic position is singled out as the crucial one (in the case above 'possessing good evidence'). After all, coming to know a cause by observing its effect is hardly special to the realm of emotional expression.

It might be objected, at this point, that a great deal relies on the qualification that the circumstances be 'right'. What does this amount to? Might there not be a way of spelling this out that discriminates between expressions and non-expressions, thereby correctly classifying the core cases? Perhaps, though I am sceptical. The demand to spell out 'in the right circumstances' is really the demand for a theory of perceptual justification (or evidence, or knowledge, etc). As everybody recognises, there are circumstances in which one observes some state of affairs yet is not thereby put into the relevant epistemic position, say for example if one has good reason to believe that one's perceptual experiences are illusory. So we all need a theory of perceptual justification. This is not the place to defend such a theory, so we can let this stand as a challenge: the epistemic view of expression needs an account of the relevant epistemic

condition that classifies core cases correctly.

Another option is to add additional conditions to the basic epistemic account. To take an example, while O. H. Green (1970) defends an evidence-based view he adds the condition that expressions be open to control/modification by the expressing subject.[4] Allowing that emotions should be characterised, at least in part, by their behavioural manifestations, can this overcome the objection that epistemic views are too liberal? Perhaps it can do so for BLOOD, since one lacks any sort of direct control over such matters. But it is difficult to see how it answers the worry about the MEDITATION. For meditation is quite obviously behaviour that is typically under the control of the subject.

Green would respond by arguing that this case can be ruled out on the basis of his account of what counts as evidence. On his view, the evidence in question must be related to the definition of the relevant emotion.[5] Thus, whereas it might seem plausible to suppose that smiling is definitionally connected to joy, meditation is surely not so connected to anxiety. This sort of response is precisely an attempt to meet the challenge, set above, to give a more fine-grained account of the epistemic condition that makes the correct categorisations. It seems, however, that this particular view is unlikely to succeed. For while the focus so far has been on stereotypical expressions such as smiling and door slamming, there seems to be no reason in principle to exclude the possibility of highly idiosyncratic expressions. Thus, while an eye-roll might be an easily recognisable, stereotypical way to express disdain, some people might express that emotion by blinking, sniffing, or coughing in a particular way. Such expressions will still be motivated in the sense of §3.1, and can be the source of knowledge on the part of the observer. But it seems implausible to suppose that such a range of idiosyncratic expressions will meet Green's condition. At this point it is, I think, sensible to look elsewhere for an account of emotional expression.

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[4] Also, see Davis (1988) who requires that expressions be 'spontaneous'.

[5] "The term evidence […] is used in a special sense. When a person's behaviour provides *evidence* for saying that the person presently has the emotion expressed, the description of it will take the place of "φ" in the sentence, "E is the emotion a person ordinarily has when, among other things, he φ's in appropriate circumstances", where this sentence serves to set out a rough definition of the emotion word "E"' (Green, 1970, pp. 551-552).

4.2 Perception

A different way to respond to the problems with epistemic theories is to focus instead on the concept of perception. Perhaps it might be accepted that the notions of knowledge or evidence fail to discriminate between those causal outputs of emotion that are, that those that are not, emotional expressions, but nevertheless insisted that perception does a better job. In §3.2 I suggested that emotional expression can make another's emotional experience available to perception. The plausibility of perception as central to a theory of emotional expression, it might be argued, rests on the fact that not just any piece of behaviour associated with emotion will enable perception of that emotion.

How can this move be fleshed out? I will focus on a recent defence of a perceptual account by Trip Glazer. His headline claim is that 'a behaviour expresses an emotion just in case it enables perception of that emotion' (Glazer, 2017). In the terms I have been using, we can formulate this as follows:

(EX-P) For any subject *S*, emotion *E*, and mental or bodily event *A*, *S*'s *A* expresses *S*'s *E* if and only if the perception of *A* allows observers to perceive *S*'s being in *E*

Under what conditions does the observation of another subject's bodily activity enable the perception of the emotion that causes it? According to Glazer, 'a behavior A enables the perception of an emotion E just in case observers can perceive E (or perceive A as E) as a result of perceiving A without needing to perceive any other behaviours in between' (2017, p. 3622).[6] We can summarise this by saying that the perception in question must be 'direct'. So the condition is met if perceiving *A* means that one directly perceives *E*.

Why might the fact that an observer perceives *S*'s bodily activity encourage us to

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[6] For the sake of consistency I have changed Glazer's 'B' to 'A'. It might be pointed out that Glazer's focus on behaviour, rather than my more general 'mental or bodily event', makes it difficult to see how the account could allow for mental actions as expressions of emotion. If this is a problem, it is one common to observer-perspective theories. I will not pursue this issue further.

think that they thereby perceive *S*'s emotion? After all, the behaviour is one thing and the emotion is another. Glazer's answer is the familiar one that an observer can perceive an emotion by way of perceiving an expression for the reason that expressions are 'components' (parts) of emotions. As Glazer puts it, 'expressions are components of emotions and … perceiving a component of an entity is sufficient for having perceived that entity' (2017, p. 3629). So the reason why the perception of *A* enables the perception of *E* is that *A* is a part of *E* and the perception of a whole by way of the perception of one of its parts is a perfectly general phenomenon. In defence of the claim that expressions are parts of emotions, Glazer writes, 'for an expression to be considered a component it must be a coordinated change in the somatic nervous system … which occurs spontaneously as part of an emotional episode' (2017, p. 3629). This condition, he claims, is met by a range of bodily activity. This completes the view in its essentials.

There are a number of worries about this account. First, as Smith argues (Smith, 2018), if we follow the folk conception of emotion as expressed in the way we speak about emotions and their expressions, emotions are states and expressions are events. But it does not make sense, I argue, to think of events as parts of states. Second, if expressions are causal outputs of emotions, it is difficult to see how they could also be parts of emotions — the whole does not cause its parts, rather its relation to them is constitutive. But let us set these worries aside, supposing that they can be satisfactorily answered. Still, I think, we can see that the view will not do as an account of emotional expression. This is for the familiar reason that it is too liberal.

As should be clear from the above, Glazer's view entails that one perceives *E* by perceiving *A* if and only if *B* is a component of *E* and one perceives *A*. And from this, alongside the headline claim that *A* is an expression of *E* if and only if the perception of it enables the observer to perceive *E*, it follows that any perceptible component of an emotion, i.e. any perceptible 'coordinated change in the somatic nervous system', is an emotional expression. But by this criterion, if it is possible to perceive the increase in someone's white blood cell count, then that will qualify as an expression of fear. Can one perceive an increase in white blood cells? Certainly not without perceptual aids. But this fact doesn't really offer any comfort for the view, since it is easy to see that the objection generalises. I think it reasonable to assume that sweating is a 'coordinated

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change in the somatic nervous system' occurring as a result of fear, and that it is perceptible. But it seems entirely wrong to think of sweating as expressing fear. It is a causal output of fear, but not its expression.[7]

It seems, then, that the perceptual account, at least on Glazer's formulation, fails. But this, it might be argued, is not a sufficient reason to abandon the perceptual approach. After all, it may well be that an alternative account of the perception of emotion can overcome the above objection. And, in fact, I think it can. An alternative account would present the view in terms not of *perceiving E* or *perceiving S's being E*, which need not entail any particular phenomenological claim, but rather in terms of the explicitly phenomenological *S's looking E*.[8] Such an account is defended in Smith (2015). In the present context the thought would be that we could rein in the overly-liberal consequences of Glazer's account by noting that not just any bodily event caused by E will make it the case that S looks E. So, while it is true that S can look joyful in virtue of their smiling, it is false that they will look afraid in virtue of their increased white blood cell count or anxious in virtue of meditating. The basic idea here is that the phenomenology of the observer perspective is sensitive to the difference between the expressed and the non-expressed, between the motivated and the merely caused, in a way that the perception of emotion is not. If this is right, and for the sake of argument I shall assume that it is, then a revised perceptual account can get the core cases right. We might articulate the view as follows:

(EX-P*) For any subject S, emotion E, and mental or bodily event A, S's A expresses

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[7] In his own account of the perception of emotional states, Mitchell Green restricts part/whole perception to cases in which one perceives a 'characteristic component'. Might this provide an answer to the present objection? Well, that will depend on what it is for a component to be characteristic. According to Green a component of an apple is characteristic if 'under normal conditions, perception of part of an apple's surface is enough to justify me in inferring (if only unconsciously) the existence of the entire apple' (Green, 2007, p. 86). So this suggestion takes us back to the original formulation of the epistemic view. As such, I don't think it will provide a plausible way to supplement Glazer's account. Nor, as will be clear from §4.3, does Green think it is. Rather, he offers a design account. For a critical discussion of the role of inference in Green's account see Bar-On & Sias (2016) and Green's (2016) reply.

[8] I use 'looks' for simplicity, though the account can be formulated for sense modalities other than vision, or amodally using the general purpose 'appears'.

S's *E* if and only if *S* looks *E* in virtue of *A*

Assuming that (EX-P*) gets the core cases right, it is surely an improvement over (EX-P). It is also a bonus that it does not rely on the questionable idea that expressions are parts of emotions. It is, however, still open to a serious objection: the same one that caused problems for the revised version of the epistemological view in the previous section. The worry is that the account cannot handle idiosyncratic expressions.

I suppose that it is entirely possible for *S* to expresse her disdain by blinking in a particular way, or her joy by chewing her top lip. I don't think that any plausible account of looks will entail that she looks disdainful, or joyful. If that's right, then the account will be insufficiently liberal, disqualifying some reasonably clear cases of expression. But is it right? Mitchell Green, in his account of emotion perception and recognition, argues that idiosyncratic expressions can enable the perception of the emotions they express (Green, 2007, §6.2). He does this on the grounds that although idiosyncratic expressions are not 'characteristic parts' of emotion types, we can think of them as characteristic parts of the emotions of particular individuals. But even if we accept this claim, it seems clear that it will not help in the present context. After all, we are not concerned with either the perception of emotions, or their recognition, but with the phenomenology of the observer perspective. And it just isn't true that the fact that an individual typically expresses their joy by chewing their lip means that they look joyful when they do so. They may look positively distressed! The issue of idiosyncratic expressions, it seems, is a real problem for a revised perceptual account of emotional expression in terms of looks.

4.3 Design

One suggestion for how to supplement epistemic or perceptual views is by requiring that emotional expressions be activities that are *designed* to play a certain epistemic role. A natural way to do this would be to say that expressions must be intended by the expresser to provide evidence, knowledge, perception, etc. of the relevant emotional state. It is reasonably easy to see, however, that such a view is inadequate. For the core case of spontaneous smiling seems to be a counterexample.

No intention drives this emotional expression.[9]

A more nuanced account comes in the form of Mitchell Green's signalling theory. On Green's account, the design in question can be evolutionary. Building on a 'showing' version of the epistemic view, we can characterise the design view as follows:

(EX-D) For any subject *S*, emotion *E*, and mental or bodily event *A*, *S*'s *A* expresses *S*'s *E* if and only if *A* both shows *S*'s *E* (or shows that *S* is in *E*) and signals that *S* is in *E*.[10]

As Green himself puts it, '[w]here A is an agent and B a cognitive, affective, or experiential state of a sort to which A can have introspective access, A expresses her B if and only if A is in state B, and some action or behaviour of A's both shows and signals her B' (2007, p. 43). The key notion here is that of a signal. According to Green, '[a] *signal* is any feature of an entity that conveys information (including misinformation) and that was designed to convey that information' (2007, p. 212). And, '[t]he design in question', Green tells us 'might be due to the work of an intelligent agent or agents, or but the product of evolution by either artificial or natural selection' (2007, p. 5). This view can be considered an elaboration of a broadly epistemic approach since the crucial notion of 'showing' will receive an epistemological elaboration. It is, however, the design aspect that will be the focus here.

The slamming of a door might be considered as designed by way of intelligent agency. Perhaps because the subject themselves intended for it to communicate anger, or perhaps because it is culturally designed: slamming doors is a culturally specific and widely recognised way of showing one's anger. Smiling, on the other hand, will count as an expression because it has been designed by evolution to show joy.

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[9] As we shall see in §5, Goldie takes it to be a necessary condition on emotional expression that it not be performed 'for some further end' (Goldie, 2000, Ch.5). Though I do not accept the claim, if it were right then not only are some expressions not intended to show one's inner state, none are.

[10] Green is concerned with what he calls 'self-expression' rather than the plain old expression. As such, it may well be that Green would not himself endorse the design view as I have presented it.

The signalling account has the resources with which to address the problem that causes trouble for epistemic and perceptual views. Those views are too liberal, lacking the ability to rule out cases such as Blood as examples of emotional expression. But it seems obvious enough that a raised white blood cell count has not evolved in order to show the subject's fear. It has an entirely different function. As such, we can consider the signalling view as an improvement on the epistemic approach it builds upon.

But even if we agree that the view is not too liberal, it may have the opposite defect of not being liberal enough. In §2 I suggested that an acceptable theory must do more than just be compatible with the correct classification of the core cases. A theory cannot leave it as an open question, for example, whether spontaneous smiling as a result of feeling joy qualifies as an expression of joy. If it does do this then the account will have done little to elucidate what it is that we all understand when we grasp the concept of emotional expression. But it would seem that this is exactly what the signalling theory does.

Spontaneous smiling is the result of either cultural or natural selection. In either case, it was either selected for its function of showing joy, or that function is a side-effect of selection for some other purpose. Since spontaneous smiling in joy is a largely universal phenomenon (Ekman & Friesen, 1982; though see, Jack et al., 2012), there is some reason to think that it is amenable to an explanation by way of natural selection. According to the signalling theory, spontaneous smiles will qualify as expressions only if they evolved to have a communicative function (if they are adaptations). The alternative view is that smiling evolved for some other purpose, and its communicative function is a happy side-effect (an exaptation). This issue is not one that can be settled from the armchair. In fact, it remains an open empirical question, as Green recognises, 'Darwin, in holding that [facial] expressions are exaptations would be committed to denying that facial expressions are signals … we will need to learn more from the fossil record of early hominid origins before this question can be settled' (Green, 2007, pp. 134-135).[11] If this is correct, and it seems reasonable, it follows that, according to the signalling theory, whether spontaneous smiling counts as an expression of the joy that

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[11] The details of Darwin's view are contested. For discussion, see (Hess & Thibault, 2009; Barrett, 2011).

causes it depends on the fossil record. But this is obviously to flout the demand that a theory of emotional expression get the core cases right, in the sense that their classification not be left as an open question. It simply isn't an open question whether spontaneous smiling expresses the joy of which it is the causal output. Consequently, the account of emotional expression in terms of design is inadequate.[12]

A defender of the design view might respond in the following way: although we may not know the explanation of smiling's initial selection, it surely serves a signalling function now given the cultural norms of interpersonal interaction in which it is embedded. That is, we can think of smiling as a signal regardless of what it was initially selected for. But this response misses its mark. To be a signal, spontaneous smiling must have been designed for its communicative role. That it was designed for communication is certainly compatible with its being initially selected for some other reason since it could have subsequently been coopted. But the question remains whether it *was* subsequently coopted and, as we might put it, redesigned. And this is a question that, for spontaneous smiling, we seem unable to answer from the armchair. We can all agree, from our armchairs, that smiling plays a role in communication. What seems to require further investigation is the contention that this is what it was designed for.

I have rejected three different accounts of emotion expression that focus on the observer perspective. It should not be supposed, however, that I reject the claim that an expression can give an observer good evidence that the expresser is in the relevant emotion, or that it can enable the perception of that emotion, or that it can be designed to convey the information that they are. Far from it. These are all claims to which I am sympathetic. The claim of §4 is not that expression lacks these interpersonal, communicative features. It is rather that these features will not serve in an analysis of emotional expression itself.

5. An Expresser-Perspective View

An alternative to observer-perspective views is to focus on the perspective of the

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[12] For a distinct, though related, criticism of Green, see (Martin, 2010).

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expresser themselves. Expresser-perspective approaches seem natural since it is plausible that our certainty that some behaviour (e.g. spontaneous joyful smiling) is expressive and some behaviour (e.g. meditating as a response to anxiety) is not is, at least in part, grounded in our own experience of expression.[13]

It should be noted that not all observer-perspective accounts are entirely silent on the perspective of the expresser. For example, Mitchell Green's account, already discussed, includes the requirement that an expressed mental state be one to which the expresser has 'introspective access'. He uses this condition to explain why it is that we think that some states (for example, fear) are expressible whereas others (for example, integrity) are not (Green, 2007, p. 39). Perhaps this is a good explanation, perhaps not. But, importantly, the constraint itself isn't something that Green justifies. Why should we expect there to be an introspectibility constraint on expression? Given the observer-perspective approach of epistemological, perception and design views, it is not obvious what to say here. A focus on the phenomenology of expression from the perspective of the expresser, however, can be of help. For if the expresser's phenomenology is what unities the category of emotional expression then there is a very obvious explanation of why only 'introspectively accessible' states are expressible, for only they will possess a phenomenal character.[14]

I suggest that we think of the nature of emotional expression in terms of the phenomenology of motivation. We can give an initial formulation of such a view along the following lines:

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[13] Since writing this paper I came across the excellent (Bäckström, 2016) which argues for a view of expression that is similar in a number of ways to that which is presented in this section. The most important difference is that while I speak of the subject's awareness of their emotions and expressions, Bäckström speaks of the subject's *self-consciousness* of these. This isn't the place to dive into the relation between phenomenal consciousness and self-consciousness and I cannot hope to do justice to Bäckström's detailed analysis. I will only say that a formulation in terms of consciousness rather than self-consciousness, at least in its full-blown reflective form, strikes me as more easily able to accommodate the expression of emotion in less conceptually sophisticated creatures. That, I think, is a mark in its favour.

[14] Although I am not defending an full account of the conditions under which one possesses the concept 'emotional expression', such a point suggests that any such account ought to privilege the first-person perspective in something like the way that Peacocke's account of the concept of action does (Peacocke, 2008, §6.5).

> (EX-M) For any subject *S*, emotion *E*, and mental or bodily event *A*, *S*'s *A* expresses
> *S*'s *E* if and only if *S* experiences *A* as motivated by and in a 'sensory unity' with *E*

Such a view would justify Green's introspectibility constraint since only an introspective state can be part of a motivated sensory unity. It also seems to correctly characterise the core cases: smiling is experienced as motivated by joy; slamming a door is experienced as motivated by anger; an increase in white blood cells is not experienced as motivated by fear; meditating is not experienced as motivated by anxiety. What about the case of blushing? Is it experienced as an outpouring of embarrassment? The answer to that question isn't clear to me, but perhaps that is how it should be.

The motivation view is not, then, open to the same objections that can be levelled against the epistemological, perception, and design views. But there are other worries that might be raised. I mention three: the view is objectionably subjective, the condition is not necessary, the condition is not sufficient.

The first concern can be dealt with quickly. The worry is that since the motivation theory provides no objective condition (beyond being a causal output of emotion), assessable from a third-person perspective, then it is consistent with classifying just any piece of behaviour as an emotional expression. The condition is therefore practically useless. I don't think that this objection ought to move us. Some things are subjective, determinable only from the first-person perspective. But that's not to say that anything goes. If there is a fact of the matter whether a causal output of emotion is experienced as a motivated sensory unity, then there is a fact of the matter whether it is an emotional expression.

A more serious objection is that the view fails as a necessary condition for the reason that some emotional expressions are unfelt and therefore not felt as a part of a sensory unity. The first thing to point out is that this objection cannot make do with expressions that are simply unnoticed. For something may be felt, and felt as a sensory unity, while remaining unnoticed by the subject. The phenomenological view is consistent with this possibility. The objection only really bites if there are emotional expressions of which the subject lacks any experience whatsoever. But it seems

plausible to suppose that there are. If, for example, one is anaesthetised or otherwise desensitised, then it may be that one simply cannot feel one's face and therefore cannot feel one's face to be smiling. Such a smile may surely be an expression of joy even though it is not experienced in a sensory unity with the emotion that causes it. The right way to respond to this objection, I think, is to concede it and modify the account. What is needed is some reference to a 'normal case' in which one is aware in the normal way of one's bodily activity. We should say that some behaviours count as emotional expressions because they are such that if one's sensory apparatus were functioning properly then one would experience them as outpourings of emotion. We might put this as follows

(EX-M*) For any subject S, emotion E, and mental or bodily event A, S's A expresses S's E if and only if, if S's sensory apparatus are functioning normally, then S experiences A as motivated by and in a 'sensory unity' with E

Although this is a concession, it retains the distinctive character of the motivation view and continues to classify all the core cases correctly.

A third objection is that the phenomenological view is not sufficient since there is a range of causal outputs of emotion that are experienced as parts of sensory unities with emotion yet which are not intuitively classed as emotional expressions. These are what Goldie refers to as 'actions out of emotion' (Goldie, 2000, Chs. 2 & 5).[15] Goldie distinguishes between expressive actions, such as slamming a door in anger, and actions which are in some sense explained by emotion but which are not themselves expressive. Examples of the latter would include slamming a door because you wanted to display your anger. The difference between these two, at least on Goldie's view, is that while an action 'out of' emotion is done for some further end (in order to show), a genuinely expressive action is not. That is, the explanation of why one engages in an

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[15] A different range of potential counterexamples would include sweating, racing heart, etc. These, it might be claimed, are not expressions but can nevertheless be experienced as parts of a sensory unity with the emotions that cause them. In response I suggest that while they form a part of the overall phenomenal state of someone who is experiencing emotion, they are not experienced as *motivated* by that emotion in the same sense as are activities such as smiling or slamming doors.

action out of emotion cites some reason beyond the emotion itself, and this disqualifies it from being genuinely expressive. If we agree that actions out of emotion are not expressions, and if it is nevertheless the case that they can be experienced in a 'sensory unity' with the emotions that motivate them, we thereby have reason to doubt the above account.

An initial response to this objection would be to insist that whenever there is some further end for which an action is performed the alleged sensory unity between action and emotion, the motivation of expression by expressed, is broken. This is for the reason that thought of the further end distances the two. Indeed, when introducing the notion of motivation I explicitly distinguished it from the case of intentional action. If there is some further end for which one acts, then it might be insisted that this is not a case of motivation in the relevant sense. This seems like the right thing to say about MEDITATION, in which one meditates as a way of regulating one's anxiety. It is not as though one's anxiety pours itself out as an act of meditation. Rather, the relation between anxiety and meditation is mediated by the thought that by meditating one can reduce the anxiety that one feels. Similarly, one might argue, slamming the door to show onlookers that one is angry is not experienced as part of a sensory unity with one's anger. It is not experienced as one's anger's outpouring, as motivated by that anger. Rather, the relation between emotion and action is mediated by the thought that the slamming will be a good way to show others how one is feeling. As such, the objection fails.

While this line of response will work for a good many cases, it is not obvious that it will account for all. Goldie, for example, argues that one is not always aware of the further ends for which one acts out of emotion. In some cases, for example, things happen too quickly. Goldie offers an example in which one is walking across the road and sees a bus coming towards one: 'In fear, you throw yourself out the way of the bus' (Goldie, 2000, p. 46). Presumably this is a case in which one is moved by the further end of self-preservation. But this case seems quite unlike that of mediation. As far as one's experience goes, the fear that one feels and one's action of leaping out of the way do not seem to be mediated by the thought of an end in the same way as does seem plausible in the case of anxiety regulation. So if this action is not an emotional expression then it might be thought to constitute a counterexample to the

phenomenological account.

There are at least two ways in which one might respond to this revised objection. First would be the concessive move of accommodating the example by adding a 'no further end' condition to the account. It is not obvious to me, however, that this concession is forced upon us since it is not obvious that the example should not be classified as an emotional expression. It is certainly true that one's leap serves a function. That alone, however, is not sufficient to show that it is not an expression. After all, the case is not so different from the paradigm of expression in which one jumps in fear and surprise, as in Darwin's well-known example,

> 'I put my face close to the thick glass-plate in front of a puff-adder in the Zoological Gardens, with the firm intention of not starting back if the snake struck at me; but, as soon as the blow was struck, my resolution went for nothing, and I jumped a yard or two backwards with astonishing rapidity' (Darwin, 1872, p. 43)

As Goldie himself points out, there is something odd about the idea that this sort of action is explained by beliefs and desires. As he puts it, '[i]t is though we almost have to *post-rationalise* the bus story by ascribing the right beliefs, in order to throw light on the context in which it is set' (Goldie, 2000, p. 47). One might account for this sense by classifying the action as one which is both expressive of emotion and at the same time, in some sense, explicable by reference to some further end.[16] That is, we can think of a range of behaviours as both motivated and as responsive to reasons, but where the motivation rather than the reasons-responsiveness is the salient phenomenological feature. As such, I think that this line of objection fails to dislodge the plausibility of the motivation account.

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[16] The plausibility of this move is reason, I think, to doubt that the 'no further reason' account could alone serve as an account of emotional expression (as Goldie comes close to suggesting, (2000, pp. 139-140)). The fact that something is done for no further reason does not seem necessary for emotional expression (cf. Müller & Wong, Forthcoming).

6. Conclusion

There is a great deal in this paper that requires a more detailed defence. However, I hope to have made a compelling case for the claim that the phenomenology of motivation is central to the nature of expression. While there is no doubt that getting clear about the observer perspective is important for thinking about emotional communication, and our knowledge of others more generally, it is not the best approach to thinking about the nature of emotional expression. When thinking about the expression of emotion it is crucial to keep in view the perspective of the expressing subject.

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