



Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Collective emotion and the function of expressive behaviour

Book Section

How to cite:

Price, Carolyn (2016). Collective emotion and the function of expressive behaviour. In: Abell, Catherine and Smith, Joel eds. The Expression of Emotion: Philosophical, Psychological and Legal Perspectives. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 115–136.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2016 Cambridge University Press

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://www.cambridge.org/gb/academic/subjects/psychology/social-psychology/expression-emotion-philosophical-psychological->

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

This is the accepted manuscript of a chapter published in *Emotional Expression: Philosophical, Psychological and Legal Perspectives*, edited by Catherine Abell and Joel Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Collective emotion and the function of expressive behaviour

1. Introduction

It is uncontroversial that emotion has a strongly social character. Our emotional responses are profoundly influenced by the behaviour and expectations of people around us. Moreover, many emotions have social functions: they enable us to sustain relationships with others and to cope with a range of social challenges (see Helm, this volume). More controversially, it is sometimes suggested that emotional responses can *themselves* be social phenomena: that emotions can sometimes be experienced *collectively* in some sense. Whether we can make interesting sense of this claim is a question that is attracting increasing attention from philosophers, reflecting both a flourishing literature in the philosophy of emotion and a vigorous debate about other collective phenomena – collective action and collective cognition, in particular.¹

In this chapter, I shall explore a new way of approaching this question. Rather than beginning by asking whether emotions themselves can be collective, I shall focus, first, on particular emotional *phenomena* – specifically, on emotional actions and on processes of reasoning and reflection that arise in the course of an emotional response. I want to consider whether these phenomena can sometimes occur collectively. As I shall explain, this is an interesting question in its own right; moreover, approaching the issue in this way suggests a new way of understanding the claim that emotions themselves can sometimes be collective. As we shall see, investigating these phenomena involves understanding the nature and function of expressive behaviour. Hence, a discussion of expressive behaviour will play a crucial role in what follows.

I begin, in section 2, by explaining why it might be thought that emotions *cannot* be collective in any interesting sense, and by briefly considering some possible responses to this worry. In section 3, I introduce the question that is my primary focus in this chapter: I explain why it is an interesting question, and how it relates to the broader debate about collective emotion. In section 4, I sketch an account of expressive behaviour; and in sections 5 and 6, I draw on this account in describing some potential cases of collective emotional action and reflection. I end, in section 7, I by considering what conclusions might be drawn from these cases.

¹ For recent discussions of collective emotion, see Gilbert (2002; 2014); Schmid (2009); Huebner (2013); Salmela (2012); Slaby (2014).

2. Approaches to collective emotion

People often talk as if there can be collective subjects of emotion: crowds become enraged; communities grieve; nations are proud of their history. Still, there are ways of understanding these claims without supposing that crowds or communities or nations are themselves subjects of emotion. The claim that a community is grieving, for example, can be understood merely as shorthand for the claim that most of its *members* are grieving. Indeed, the suggestion that there can be collective emotions in any more robust sense might well look doomed from the start. This is because (it is assumed) emotions are conscious mental states, with a particular phenomenal character; conscious states, it is widely supposed, can be attributed only to individuals.

There seems, then, to be a simple argument against the view that an emotion can be attributed to a group:

P1: An emotion is a conscious mental state, characterised by a certain kind of phenomenal character.

P2: Only individuals can have conscious mental states.

Conclusion: So, only individuals can have emotions (emotional individualism).

In this section, I shall review, very briefly, three possible responses to this argument. Because I need to be brief, I cannot do justice to the details of the views mentioned here; hence, there remains much more to be said about the issues raised in this section. My aim is just to provide some background to the discussion that follows, and to motivate a search for an alternative approach.

The simple argument is not decisive: both premises are open to question. Consider for example, Margaret Gilbert's well known account of collective guilt. According to Gilbert (2002; 2014), collective guilt arises when a group of people (a Board of Directors, say) are jointly committed to behaving in certain ways – apologising, making reparations – when they agree that they have made some poor collective decision. As she acknowledges, they might do this without experiencing any feelings ('pangs or twinges') of guilt. Still, she argues, this is not an objection to her account. Emotions, she says, do not always involve feelings; in other words, they do not always have a particular phenomenal character (Gilbert, 2002: 119-120). Hence, Gilbert seems to reject P1.

However, it is not clear that P1 can plausibly be defeated in this way. As many theorists of emotion have pointed out, the phenomenal character of an emotional response is not easily viewed

as a mere accoutrement of emotion.² Rather it reflects key features of the response as a whole. These include not only changes taking place in the subject's body but also a range of psychological changes: the subject's intense attentional focus on the situation; how the scene looks and sounds; the thoughts racing through their head; the urgent desire to act. Were many of these features missing, it is hard to say why the response should be viewed as an *emotional* response. Plausibly, then, the absence of phenomenology is not merely the absence of an optional extra: it puts serious pressure on the claim that collective guilt, as Gilbert describes it, is a type of emotion.³

Another option might be to reject P2. This option has recently been investigated by Bryce Huebner (2013). It is at least conceivable, Huebner (2013: 112) suggests, that we might one day encounter a collective so vast and tightly organised that it is able to match the computational complexity of the human brain; if so, we could have reason to believe that it was capable of subjective experience. Arguably, then, P2 should be more cautiously phrased. Still, as Huebner also points out, there is no reason to think that groups of the kind we ordinarily encounter (Boards of Directors, teams of scientists) are sufficiently large or complex to generate conscious experience. Hence, assuming P1 is correct, it looks as if collective emotion remains at best a theoretical possibility.⁴

In contrast, Mikko Salmela (2012) does not try to challenge the simple argument. Instead, he sets out to develop a robust notion of *shared* emotion, entirely compatible with emotional individualism (Salmela, 2012: 44). Cases of shared emotion, he suggests, involve four elements:

1. The emotional responses of those involved are grounded in the same concern (for example, the success of a football club).
2. The individuals involved have the same type of emotional response, and undergo similar physiological, psychological and behavioural changes.
3. Mechanisms of attentional deployment, emotional contagion, facial mimicry and behavioural entrainment help to regulate and intensify the emotional responses of the individuals involved.
4. The individuals involved are aware that they share the same emotion (Salmela, 2012: 39-42).

² See, for example, Goldie (2000: 50-83); Montague (2006); Helm (2009). The worry that Gilbert underestimates the importance of emotional phenomenology has been voiced by a number of commentators: see particularly Wilkins (2002); Konzelmann Ziv (2009).

³ Some theorists might reject P1 on the grounds that bodily changes, rather than phenomenology, is central to emotion (see Sias and Bar-On, this volume.) This move, though, would not help Gilbert.

⁴ However, Huebner (2013: 244) also seems to suggest that a group such as an election campaign team can, in certain circumstances, be anxious or afraid. Presumably, then, he also rejects P1.

This concept of shared emotion, Salmela points out, is a matter of degree. In the strongest cases, he suggests, those involved are collectively *committed* to the concern that grounds the emotion; the concern is itself collective ('our jointly achieved success'); and the emotional response is relatively intense. An example might be the mutually contagious joy of the members of a football team as they stand together on the pitch having just won an important trophy for the club they all love (Salmela, 2012: 42-3).

Salmela, then, offers a middle path: his concept of shared emotion goes well beyond the boring thought that two people can experience the same *type* of emotion; nevertheless, his account is perfectly compatible with emotional individualism. The idea that there is room for a middle path seems right; moreover, Salmela's account looks promising. Still, there remains scope to question whether his account of shared emotion could be extended or improved: in particular, we might ask whether the four elements he identifies are the right ones. I shall return to this question at the end.

There remains, too, a more fundamental question. Should we now rest content with (something like) Salmela's notion? Or are there possibilities yet to explore – possibilities that might loosen the grip of emotional individualism? In what follows, I shall pursue this further question: in particular, I shall focus on the possibility that there are collective emotional *phenomena*.⁵ In the next section, I shall explain what I mean by this, and why I think that this possibility is worth investigating.

3. Collective emotional phenomena?

Getting emotional is complicated: it might involve changes to heart rate and skin conductance; changes to attention and motivation; memories, imaginings and ruminations; blushing, frowning, sighing, protesting, celebrating, fleeing a bear. Characteristically, these changes are generated by an evaluation of the situation; and, together, they generate a conscious emotional experience, with a specific phenomenal character. When I use the term 'emotion phenomena' in what follows, it is these changes – physiological, psychological or behavioural – that I have in mind. Emotional phenomena, then, include emotional evaluations, emotional feelings, emotional desires, emotional expressions, emotional actions, and so on. Together, these changes form a complex emotional response – for example, an episode of fear (Price 2012; 2015).⁶

To describe something as an emotional phenomenon is not to identify it as an emotion or even as a component of an emotion. Some emotional phenomena might be classed as causes or

⁵ In what follows, I use the term 'shared' when I am referring to a notion that, like Salmela's, is compatible with emotional individualism; I use the term 'collective' when I am referring to the idea that emotions or emotional phenomena can sometimes be attributed to groups.

⁶ Elsewhere (Price 2012; 2015), I use the term 'emotional phenomenon' to refer to complex emotional responses too. I am using the term a little more narrowly here.

effects of the emotion. Hence, the claim that there can be collective emotional phenomena is not equivalent to the claim that there can be collective emotions, as such. Nevertheless, it is an interesting claim in its own right. Suppose, for example, that it could be shown that some emotional actions are collective actions: such a finding would almost certainly have significant implications for the kinds of intentional content that emotional evaluations can have, for the kinds of emotional motivations there can be, and for the functions of other emotional phenomena, such as expressive behaviour. Moreover, we might well want to take account of this finding in explaining what it is for an emotion to be *shared*, in Salmela's sense.

Moreover, such a finding may yet have a bearing on whether emotions themselves can be collective. To explain why, I need to distinguish some different ways of answering the question 'What is an emotion?'

- (a) *Single component theories.* Some theorists identify emotions with a *single* emotional phenomenon. William James (1890) famously held that emotions are bodily feelings. More recently, many theorists have taken emotions to be emotional evaluations (though they disagree about what these evaluations are).⁷
- (b) *Complex process theories.* Peter Goldie (2000: 12-14) argues that an emotion is a complex *process*, which has many components, including perceptions, thoughts, feelings, physiological changes and a variety of emotional and behavioural dispositions. Jenefer Robinson (2005: 57-61) also holds that an emotion is a process, in which an affective appraisal triggers physiological and motor changes, action tendencies, changes in vocal and facial expression, and subsequent cognitive monitoring of the situation.⁸ Among psychologists, Paul Ekman (1982; 1992) has long argued that emotions are complex, organised responses involving a range of physiological, behavioural and psychological changes.
- (c) *An adjectivalist account.* My own view is different again. As I have explained elsewhere (Price, 2012; 2015), I am not convinced that the question 'What is an emotion?' *can* be settled in any satisfying way. Hence, I prefer to do my theorising about emotional *phenomena* – emotional evaluations, feelings, actions, and so on – and about the complex emotional responses that they compose. We can study these things, I want to say, without needing to decide which of them constitutes *the* emotion.

⁷ This view is endorsed by Solomon (1993); Helm (2009); Roberts (2003); Prinz (2004) among many others.

⁸ Compare Salmela (2012: 42).

Focus, first, on complex process theories. These theories tend to differ from single component theories in one crucial respect: while single component theorists tend to identify emotions with some kind of mental state (feelings or evaluations), complex process theorists generally allow that emotions include at least some non-psychological components. Admittedly, there is some disagreement about what the components of an emotion are. As I mentioned above, Robinson, Salmela and Ekman include certain kinds of expressive behaviour, while expressive behaviour is explicitly excluded by Goldie (2000: 13).⁹ Still, they all agree that emotions include at least *some* non-psychological phenomena. Hence, none of them are committed to P1: they hold that emotions include a *mix* of psychological and non-psychological components. As a result, none of them should endorse the simple argument for emotional individualism.

Still, this does not entail that they should reject emotional individualism as such: it may yet turn out that emotions are necessarily confined to individual bodies, if not to individual minds. Moreover, they all agree that emotions have some psychological components: hence, they cannot suppose that an emotion could be *wholly* collective. Nevertheless, there remains an interesting possibility – that emotions can be *partly* collective. Suppose, for example, there is some phenomenon – emotional reflection, say – that a complex process theorist normally regards as a component of emotion. Suppose, too, that it is established that emotional reflection sometimes occurs within groups, rather than individuals. This raises the possibility that such a process of collective reflection might itself be a component of an emotion.

At first blush, this suggestion certainly sounds odd. However, it sounds less odd if we take seriously the idea that emotions are processes. Processes can evolve in all kinds of ways: they can start in one place and end in another; they can involve different objects or people at different times; they can overlap, in part, with other processes going on at the same time. Suppose, for example, that two neighbours, Babs and Bob, are both busy tidying their gardens: most of the time they work separately, but they work together to trim the dividing hedge. Arguably, there are two (partly overlapping) processes here – Bob tidying his garden and Babs tidying hers – each of which includes their trimming the hedge together. The suggestion is that emotions, too, might sometimes include a collective stage.

⁹ For Ekman (1992) and Robinson (2005), the emotion consists of all the changes that are automatically triggered by the emotional appraisal: this, they think, includes non-voluntary expressive behaviour. I am not altogether clear why Goldie draws the line exactly where he does. The thought may simply be that we intuitively regard any kind of emotional behaviour as caused by, rather than part of, the emotion. For a worry about this approach, see Price (2012: 326-28).

For me, as an adjectivalist, the issue is slightly different. Because I take no particular view about what an emotion is, the question whether there can be collective emotions, as such, does not arise. Nevertheless, as I mentioned earlier, I am certainly interested in understanding emotional *responses*. An emotional response, I take it, is a complex process: it has a particular function and structure; and it includes both psychological and non-psychological components (Price, 2015: 2-8). Moreover, as I am using the term, an emotional response includes *all* the emotional phenomena that the subject produces or undergoes. These will include emotional phenomena that complex process theorists do not tend to regard as components of emotions. Consider, for example, non-expressive emotional actions (fleeing a bear or throwing a punch, say): none of the complex process theorists mentioned above list these emotional actions as components of emotions. Nevertheless, such actions will certainly be part of the broader emotional response. Hence, the discovery that there can be collective emotional phenomena would certainly raise the possibility that emotional *responses* are sometimes partly collective – whatever those phenomena turn out to be.

Can there be collective emotional phenomena? As will become clear in sections 5 and 6, my answer to this question depends on some particular claims about the function of expressive behaviour. My next task, then, is to make those claims.

4. Expressive behaviour

The term ‘expressive behaviour’ has been understood in many ways in the philosophical literature.¹⁰ Here, I shall explain how I understand the term.

We might distinguish between three kinds of emotional behaviour:

1. Behaviour aimed at dealing with the particular challenge or opportunity that has elicited the emotion. This might include angrily thumping an adversary, fearfully fleeing a bear, guiltily buying flowers. It also includes certain kinds of cognitive behaviour: anxiously fretting about a problem, triumphantly gloating over a victory.
2. Behaviour aimed at managing one’s emotional response. This might include venting your frustration by swearing; blocking your ears to shut out the awful sound; working yourself up into a rage.
3. Expressive behaviour. This might include blushing; frowning; whimpering; turning a cartwheel; saying ‘Oh God, it’s coming this way!’; stroking someone’s face; wearing a black armband; sending flowers.

¹⁰ For some recent discussions, see Davies (1988), Goldie (2000), Green (2007).

Emotional behaviour often belongs to more than one of these categories. As I list the crimes of an adversary to a mutual acquaintance, I may be expressing my resentment, amplifying it and getting my revenge all at the same time. In particular, expressing an emotion is often a way of resolving the situation: expressing anger, for example, can be a way of deterring further offence; expressing love can be a way of cementing a bond. Nevertheless, not *all* emotional behaviour is expressive: fleeing a bear, for example, manifests fear, but it would seem odd to say that it *expresses* it.

Like other kinds of emotional behaviour, expressive behaviour is not all of a kind. Some of the examples listed above are automatic, involuntary behaviours, while others are intentional actions. Some seem to be hard-wired, while others presuppose a sophisticated background of cultural conventions, including linguistic or symbolic conventions. In other cases, expressive behaviour can be quite personal, even idiosyncratic: expressing one's rage by planting tulips, say.

Given the diversity of expressive behaviours, we might wonder what they have in common. First, expressive behaviour is itself *emotional* behaviour: it is either an involuntary response triggered by an emotional evaluation or a voluntary action motivated by an emotional desire. Hence, a 'thank you' present expresses my gratitude only if I give it out of gratitude – and not, say, out of duty. For the same reason, there is a difference between expressing emotion and merely reporting it. As we have seen, though, not all kinds of emotional behaviour count as expressive behaviour: fleeing a bear, for example, is not expressive behaviour. A natural explanation for this is that describing behaviour as expressive implies that it has a *meaning*: expressive behaviour is supposed to signal or convey how the subject feels. This might be taken to imply that expressive behaviour always has a *communicative* function: it functions to communicate one's emotional response to others.¹¹ This certainly seems right in some cases. However, there are two qualifications to make.

First, expressive behaviour does not always express the subject's emotional response *overall*: some expressive behaviour is concerned only with a specific component of the response. Crying out 'Oh God, it's coming this way!' might be described as expressing fear; more precisely, though, it expresses a particular fearful *thought*. Similarly, nervously tapping one's watch might express an anxious desire to leave. This point is particularly important in accounting for expressive behaviour that is symbolic in character. Goldie (2000: 134-5) describes a husband angrily smashing his wife's favourite vase in front of her. One possibility, he suggests, is that his smashing the vase

¹¹ Here, I am using the term 'communication' in a broad sense to include both intentional acts of communication (for example, telling someone the time) and non-intentional behaviour (for example, bees' waggle dances). For a detailed account of expressive behaviour as communicative in character, see Green (2007).

expresses, not simply his anger, but his angry desire to harm her: it does this by symbolising the harm he wants to do. On another scenario, smashing the vase might express an angry thought – for example, that the marriage is broken beyond repair.

Secondly, it can be questioned whether all expressive behaviour is communicative behaviour. Consider Hursthouse's (1991) example of angry Jane who grabs a photograph of her rival, Joan, and scratches out the eyes. Jane's behaviour does not seem to have a communicative character: we are not supposed to imagine that Jane damages the photograph in front of Joan – or anyone else. Goldie (2000: 130) suggests that Jane's behaviour can be understood as a case of wish fulfilment. Understood in this way, her behaviour has no particular function: it simply reflects the brute psychological fact that when people cannot fulfil some strong desire, they sometimes take satisfaction in symbolically acting it out. Nevertheless, Goldie classes this as a case of expressive behaviour: in symbolically acting out her wish, he suggests, Jane thereby expresses it (Goldie, 2000: 129-134).¹²

Is this right? I agree that Jane's behaviour might well be a case of wish fulfilment; but, if so, I am not sure that her behaviour should be said to *express* her wish. Earlier, I suggested that expressive behaviour is naturally viewed as behaviour that is supposed to signal or convey the subject's emotional response. If Jane is simply acting out her wish for her own satisfaction, her behaviour certainly manifests her wish; but it does not seem to express it, in this sense.

However, there is another possible explanation for Jane's behaviour – one that makes better sense of the idea that this is expressive behaviour. Sometimes, expressing a wish is not a way of communicating it to others, but rather a way of articulating it to oneself. Craving for chocolate, for example, I mutter: 'I wish I had some chocolate right now!' My utterance need not be aimed at anyone else: it might just be a way of *articulating* my desire – of holding it in consciousness. Similarly, I might close my eyes and imagine the taste, not because this satisfies my desire (far from it), but just as a way of attending to it: 'It is *this!*', I say to myself, 'It is *this* that I crave!' Conceivably, this might be what Jane is doing when she attacks the photograph: '*This!*' she says, '*This* is what I want to do to *you!*' On this scenario, Jane's behaviour can be regarded as expressing her desire – not because her behaviour has a communicative function, but because it functions to *articulate* her emotional desire.¹³ In other cases, expressive behaviour might articulate an emotional *thought*: by casting the photograph aside, for example, Jane might articulate the thought that Joan is someone

¹² Compare Green (2007: 36-7).

¹³ Compare Slaby (2014:36).

of no consequence. (Compare Bennett's suggestion, this volume, that expressive behaviour may be aimed at acknowledging or reflecting what is significant about the situation.)

I have suggested that expressive behaviour is highly diverse. It includes both automatic responses and intentional actions; it embraces hard-wired behaviours, conventional gestures and idiosyncratic performances, interpretable only by one's nearest and dearest. What these cases have in common is (a) that they are cases of emotional behaviour; and (b) that they function to communicate or articulate something about the subject's emotional response – either the subject's response overall, or a specific emotional thought or desire. In the next two sections, I shall describe two possible kinds of collective emotional phenomenon: collective emotional action and collective emotional cognition, drawing on the account of expressive behaviour sketched here.

5. Collective emotional action

Henry is a technician in a medium-sized company. Year on year, the managers have awarded themselves large bonuses, citing rising profits. This morning, Henry's manager, Sandra, has announced that, for the third year running, none of the technical staff will receive a rise. Having read Sandra's memo, Henry looks round at his colleagues and sees expressions of disbelief and anger on their faces. One flings herself angrily back in her seat, while another slams his hand on his desk. Angry mutterings develop into animated discussion. Eventually, action emerges: the technicians march together to Sandra's office to demand that the decision is reversed.

On the face of it, this looks very much like a case of collective action. Admittedly, there is some dispute about what exactly is required for genuinely collective action. Still, the current consensus seems to be that we can answer this question without attributing beliefs or intentions to the group itself, but rather by appealing to the goals, perceptions and dispositions of its individual members.¹⁴ In this case, the following points all seem significant:

1. Henry and his colleagues each act with roughly the same goal (getting the decision reversed).
2. Each is disposed to accept the others' help, and to coordinate their behaviour with the others, in order to achieve this goal.
3. Each is aware that the members of the group share this goal and these dispositions.

Given all this, I would suggest, it makes sense to say, not just that each individual protested, but also that the group itself protested *as a body*.

¹⁴ For some recent accounts of this kind, see Bratman (1993); Tuomela (2005); Tollefsen (2005); Isaacs (2011).

However, to establish that this is a case of collective action is not to establish that this is a case of collective *emotional* action. Before we can settle this there are two further hurdles to overcome.

First, for an action to count as an emotional action, collective or otherwise, it must be done out of emotion: it must be motivated by emotional desires or urges. The technicians' indignant response certainly involves an urge to protest; but it is not clear that we can appeal to this urge to explain why they protested *together*. It might be thought, rather, that the situation must have developed in something like the following way: having read Sandra's memo, each technician was seized by an indignant urge to go and personally remonstrate with Sandra; on reflection, however, each realised that they could achieve nothing by acting alone; as a result, they each *restrained* their immediate impulse to confront Sandra, and instead consulted each other – eventually agreeing to mount their protest together. Hence (the worry goes) when the technicians decide to protest *as a body*, they are not acting on their initial, indignant urge, but rather on a more considered desire to ensure that their voices are heard.

However, there is another possibility. Suppose that there is a particular *type* of righteous anger – one that that motivates the subject, not merely to resist the wrong, but to resist it *in concert with others*. (In what follows, I shall commandeer the term 'outrage' as a label for this form of anger.) The suggestion that there is such a type of anger strikes me as quite plausible. Certainly, it is easy to see how people would *benefit* by having an emotional propensity of this kind: when a perpetrator is too powerful, or insouciant, to be tackled by one person acting alone, people would do well to be motivated to act together with others. Moreover, angry people do often seem to have an urge to broadcast their wrongs – heatedly drawing others' attention to the situation and trying to gather others to their cause. Indeed, it seems plausible that there are other emotional responses of this kind: triumphant joy, for example, often seems to move people to celebrate *with* others; and it is not hard to imagine how people might benefit from this impulse. Suppose, then, that the technicians respond to Sandra's memo with outrage, in this sense. If so, it is possible that what motivated their joint protest is not a considered desire to be heard, but an outraged urge to act together. Hence, assuming that this is a real possibility, we can make room for the idea that the technicians protest together out of emotion.

There is a second hurdle to jump. The technicians, we are supposing, share an outraged urge, not merely to protest, but to protest together. Still, they might not yet be in a position to act *effectively* on this motivation: they may first need to decide exactly what to do. This might well require an explicit process of planning and coordination. Once again, the worry will be that this will require them to *restrain* their outrage, so that they can discuss calmly how to organise themselves.

But if so, this looks problematic: for on this scenario, it is not altogether clear that their protest, when they mount it, is an *emotional* action, or at least not a purely emotional action. Even if their protest was initially motivated by an outraged urge to protest – and even if this urge continues to strengthen their resolve – nevertheless, by the time they actually mount their protest, they are not acting directly on this urge, but rather on a plan that has been formulated, and endorsed, in cold blood. Matters would be different, it seems, if we could suppose that their planning is not calm at all, but emotional – directed by outraged thoughts, imaginings and desires – just as someone might angrily plan an act of personal revenge. If so, it would be much clearer that their protest is an *outraged* protest – motivated, planned and performed wholly in the grip of emotion.

How, though, could this come about? The answer, I take it, lies with expressive behaviour: for it is through expressive behaviour that the technicians are able to communicate their outraged thoughts and desires – and to do this heatedly, rather than calming reporting their emotional state. John Michael (2011) has already offered a helpful analysis of the ways in which expressive behaviour might facilitate collective action. By allowing us to recognise others' emotions, Michael suggests, expressive behaviour helps each individual to predict what the others are likely to do; and the emotional rapport shared by the members of a group may lead them, quite unconsciously, to move in alignment. Michael's concerns, however, are not quite the same as mine: he is concerned with collective action in general, while I am concerned only with collective *emotional* action. As a result, my account departs (at least in emphasis) from his in two specific ways.

First, I want to stress the importance of verbal or symbolic expressions of specific emotional thoughts and desires. This is because I want to allow that there can be collective emotional actions of a relatively sophisticated kind. Almost certainly, planning and coordinating these actions will require the participants to communicate, not just the broad tenor of their emotional response, but specific emotional thoughts, imaginings and desires. (These might include, for example, thoughts about what might make for a particularly telling protest, or the desire to get others involved.) Secondly, Michael is chiefly concerned with the way in which expressive behaviour facilitates collective action. In contrast, I want to stress that, when it comes to collective emotional action, the role of expressive behaviour is not only causal, but also constitutive. It is partly *because* the technicians' protest was planned in the grip of outrage – planned, that is, in response to behaviour that expressed outraged thoughts and desires – that it counts as a clear case of collective *emotional* action.

I have argued that some cases of collective action might turn out to be cases of collective emotional action. This will be possible, provided that there are some types of emotional response that motivate people to act together. Moreover, if we are to allow for collective emotional actions of

any sophistication, we must also allow that collective actions can be planned and coordinated in an emotional way. This is possible, I have suggested, because people can employ expressive behaviour in planning actions of these kinds.

6. Collective emotional cognition

Emotional responses frequently involve processes of thought or reasoning. Most obviously, they involve processes of practical reasoning: in anxiety or anger, people cast around for a way to avert the catastrophe or redress the wrong. Other types of emotional response characteristically involve an element of reflection or rumination: in grief, the subject is often moved to reflect on their loss – to try to understand what they have lost and why (Price 2010). Anxious fretting and sorrowful reflection are often solitary activities. We might wonder, though, whether emotional cognition can sometimes be collective.

Questions about collective cognition have often been pursued within the context of a wider debate about collective intentionality: it is often thought that to describe a cognitive process as collective implies ascribing beliefs or intentions to groups.¹⁵ However, this is not the only way in which collective cognition can be understood. Ronald Giere (2002) has argued that we can understand collective cognition without positing collective psychological states: the only psychological states required are those of the individual members of the group. Indeed, we might try to model collective cognition much as we modelled collective action in the last section: the idea will be that people can work together to solve a problem or to form a plan, just as they can work together to mount a protest.

With that in mind, it is not hard to find possible examples of collective emotional cognition. Consider, first, the case of Henry and his colleagues: to act together, they must coordinate their behaviour, and – as we have seen – this may involve a degree of explicit planning. As I suggested in the previous section, to the extent that this involves the expression of emotional desires and thoughts, this will be a case of *emotional* planning. Arguably, there can be cases of collective reflection too. Consider the case of grief: in many cultures, rituals of mourning encourage the bereaved to reflect together – for example, by exchanging memories of the deceased. Exchanging memories can be comforting, but arguably, it also has an epistemic function: by reflecting together, the mourners are able to reach a shared understanding of their loss.

In the case just described, the mourners' expressive behaviour plays a communicative role: it enables them to communicate their sad thoughts. In other cases, it seems more natural to think of

¹⁵ For some discussions, see Hutchins (1995); List (2008); Huebner (2013).

the process as functioning to *articulate* a certain way of understanding what has occurred. This makes better sense of cases in which mourners come together to perform some ritual action. Suppose, for example, that a community has come together to build a cairn for the deceased – expressing, perhaps, some sad but consoling thought. As each individual solemnly adds a stone to the cairn, it would seem strange to think of their behaviour as communicating this thought to the others – each contributing some piece of information that the others lack. Rather it seems more natural to think of their behaviour as collectively highlighting, or even endorsing, that thought: together, they are *framing* the situation in a certain way. (Again, compare Bennett, this volume.¹⁶)

I have suggested, then, that we can make room for the idea of collective emotional cognition without positing collective psychological states. All these cases essentially involve expressive behaviour. Indeed, understanding the role of expressive behaviour in both communicating and articulating emotional thoughts and desires can help us to recognise the different forms that collective emotional cognition might take.

7. Shared and collective emotion

In the last two sections, I have identified two possible kinds of collective emotional phenomena: collective emotional action and collective emotional cognition. To do this, I have stressed, involves taking account of our capacity to express emotion in diverse and sometimes nuanced ways. I shall end by considering what further conclusions we might draw.

I shall start with Salmela's notion of shared emotion. As we saw, Salmela takes this to involve four elements: sameness of concern, sameness of response, mutual regulation and mutual awareness. He does not, though, accord a role to emotional action or cognition. I would like to suggest that these phenomena also have a role to play in cases of shared emotion. Consider Salmela's example of a team's joy at winning a trophy together. Imagine, first, that the players are standing together, aware of each other's feelings, and physically attuned to each other, just as he describes; moreover, each player is excitedly thinking about the team's victory and engaging in individual acts of celebration – dancing about and punching the air. Contrast this with a case in which the players are doing all these things, but also celebrating *together* – hugging each other and dancing around as a group; imagine, too, that they are excitedly *discussing* their victory, creating a shared understanding of their achievement. Plausibly, the second case represents a significantly more robust example of shared joy than the first. There is scope, then, to extend Salmela's analysis to take account of these further aspects of an emotional response. Moreover, this might well involve

¹⁶ Indeed, it was hearing an earlier version of Bennett's paper at a workshop on 'Emotion and Expression' at the University of Manchester in 2012 that drew my attention to this kind of case.

reconsidering the role of expressive behaviour in cases of shared emotion. For as we have seen, collective emotional action and cognition characteristically depend, not only on the sub-personal processes emphasised by Salmela, but also on the verbal or symbolic expression of specific emotional desires and thoughts.

In section 3, I raised a further possibility: that complex emotional responses, perhaps even emotions themselves, might sometimes include a collective stage. Consider, first, an emotional *response* – an episode of outrage, say. The thought will be that, just as an episode of indignation might include some individual act of protest, so Henry's outraged response includes the collective protest mounted by Henry and his colleagues.

It might be objected that this is not the right thing to say. This is because there is a more modest alternative available: Henry's outraged response, we should say, includes, not the collective protest, but only Henry's individual *participation* in the protest. However, there is scope to resist this suggestion. To do this, we need to take seriously the idea that Henry's outraged response is a process, which has a particular function, and which is supposed to unfold in a particular way. The function of Henry's outrage is not, presumably, to ensure that he *participates* in redressing the wrong, but to ensure that the wrong is redressed – something Henry cannot achieve alone. Thus, what would *satisfy* Henry's outrage – what would bring it to its proper conclusion – is not Henry's *participation* in redressing the wrong,¹⁷ but – more simply – the fact that he and his colleagues got the decision reversed. Similarly, in a case of collective reflection, it is not *my participating* in some collective act of reflection that helps me to move on in my grief, but – more simply – the fact that we have found, together, a way to make sense of our loss. The thought is, then, that, if we want to understand how these emotional responses unfold and how, ultimately, they are supposed to be resolved, we need to view these collective phenomena themselves as stages in the process.

This is as far as an adjectivalist can go. Might a complex process theorist say more? As I explained earlier, it is open to a complex process theorist to claim that emotions themselves might sometimes be partly collective. They might have reason to do this, I suggested, if it turned out that some phenomenon that they would normally regard as a component of emotion can sometimes be attributed to a group. On this criterion, the possibility of collective emotional actions looks like a red herring; for, as I explained earlier, complex process theorists do not generally view non-expressive emotional actions as components of emotions.¹⁸ Cases of collective emotional cognition, however, hold more promise. Goldie, at least, suggests that thoughts are components of emotions (Goldie,

¹⁷ He might, of course, feel proud of his personal contribution.

¹⁸ See footnote 9. As I indicated there, there is room for debate about this; but this is not an issue I can pursue here.

2000: 12); and it seems a small step from there to suppose that emotions include *processes* of thought. Indeed, if an emotion is itself a process, it might make more sense to view its cognitive components as processes, rather than discrete mental acts. But if a complex process theorist regards processes of reasoning or reflection as components of the emotion, then they have some reason to allow that emotions might include collective reasoning and reflection too.

It might be objected, perhaps, that the two cases are not as closely analogous as I am implying. In particular, individual processes of reasoning and reflection are internal psychological processes, involving only the thoughts of the individual subject. Collective reasoning, in contrast, is a public, social phenomenon: it involves people saying or doing certain things, and perceiving and understanding each other's behaviour. Still, it is not clear that the contrast is as stark as this implies. After all, individual cognition is not always confined to the head: people sometimes think out loud; they solve problems by manipulating objects and symbols. Moreover, as I have stressed, complex process theorists *already* take emotions to include non-psychological components. Hence, a complex process theorist need not be committed to the view that the cognitive components of emotions are always purely internal psychological processes, even in cases involving a single subject. If so, this suggested disanalogy between individual and collective emotional cognition is not as significant as it might seem.

In this chapter, I have identified two kinds of collective emotional phenomena – collective emotional actions and collective emotional cognition; I have argued that these phenomena depend, in part, on our capacity for expressive behaviour. These collective emotional phenomena, I take it, are significant in their own right; but they also point to some further conclusions. In particular, I have suggested that Salmela's account of shared emotion should be extended to take more account of emotional action and cognition. I have also suggested that a good case can be made for the claim that emotional responses can sometimes have a collective component or stage; moreover, on a complex process theory, a case could perhaps be made for emotions themselves. If so, expressive behaviour has the power to extend, not only the influence of emotion, but its boundaries too.

References

- Bratman, M. (1993) 'Shared intention', *Ethics* 104 (1): 97-113.
- Davies, W. (1988) 'Expression of emotion', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (4):279-291.
- Ekman P. (1982) 'Biological and cultural contributions to body and facial movement in the expression of emotions', in A. Rorty (ed.) *Explaining Emotions*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 73-102.
- Ekman, P. (1992) 'An argument for basic emotions', *Cognition and Emotion* 6(3-4): 169-200.
- Giere, R, (2002) 'Distributed cognition in epistemic cultures', *Philosophy of Science* 69: 637–644.
- Gilbert, M. (2002) 'Collective guilt and collective guilt feelings', *The Journal of Ethics* 6 (2): 115-143.
- Gilbert, M. (2014) 'How we feel: understanding everyday collective emotion ascription', in C. von Scheve and M. Salmela (eds.): 17-31.
- Goldie, P. (2000) *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Green, M. (2007) *Self-Expression*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Helm, B. (2009) 'Emotions as evaluative feelings' in *Emotion Review* 1 (3) 248-55.
- Huebner, B. (2013) *Macrocognition: Distributed Minds and Collective Intentionality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hutchins, E. (1995) *Cognition in the Wild*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Hursthouse, R. (1991) 'Arational actions', *Journal of Philosophy* 88 (2): 57-68.
- Konzelmann Ziv, A. (2007) 'Collective guilt revisited', *Dialectica* 61 (3): 467–93.
- List, C. (2008) 'Distributed Cognition: A Perspective from Social Choice Theory' in M. Albert, D. Schmidtchen and S. Voigt (eds.) *Scientific Competition: Theory and Policy*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck: 285-308.
- Michael, J. (2011) 'Shared emotions and joint action', *Review of Philosophical Psychology* 2:355–373
- Montague, M. (2009) 'The logic, intentionality and phenomenology of emotion', *Philosophical Studies* 145(2): 171-92.
- Price, C. (2012) 'Doing without emotions', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 93(3): 317-337.
- Price, C. (2015) *Emotion*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Prinz, J. (2004) *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, R. (2003) *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, J. (2005) *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music and Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Salmela, M. (2012) 'Shared emotions', *Philosophical Explorations* 15 (1), 33-46.

- Salmela, M. (2013) 'The functions of collective emotions in social groups' A Konzelmann Ziv and H. Schmid (eds.) *Institutions, Emotions and Group Agents*. Dordrecht: Springer: 159-176.
- von Scheve, C. and Salmela, M. (eds.) (2014) *Collective Emotions: Perspectives from Psychology, Philosophy and Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmid, H. (2009) *Plural Action: Essays in Philosophy and Social Science*. Hamburg: Springer.
- Slaby, J. (2014) 'Emotions and the extended mind', in C. von Scheve and M. Salmela (eds.): 32-46.
- Solomon, R. (1993). *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Tollefsen, D. (2005) 'Let's pretend!' Children and joint action', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 35 (1): 75-97.
- Tuomela, R. (2005) 'We-intentions revisited', *Philosophical Studies* 125 (3): 327-369.
- Wilkins, B. (2002) 'Joint commitments', *Journal of Ethics* 6 (2): 145–55.