

The Missing Intentionality in Prinz's Theory of Emotion: (Historical)

Reflections from Solomon

José Manuel Palma (Universidad de Granada)

It can be recognized in the actual debate about emotion two main lines of thoughts. Authors on the **intentional stand** defend emotions as intentional states. Intentionality is the property of such emotions of being *about*, being *directed towards* specific objects and events of the world, or to particular aspects of it. Generally speaking, defining emotions as intentional states is a way of pointing to the world in order to give their identity conditions. If emotions are about the world, it is more than possible that we can find identity conditions, at least in part, in some aspects or properties of the world, which would be the responsible of the elicitation of emotional responses. So, emotions are then defined appealing to some intentional component. Intentionality is a very special and difficult notion characteristic of language and thought. So, from the beginning, in these theories emotions have a strong link with language and, let me say, they share something like the same "structure". In this way, many proposals of the intentionality stand identify emotions with some characterization of thoughts, beliefs or judgments as evaluative. That is, as intentional mental states that appraises the world (Stoics, Spinoza 1677, Solomon 1976). For this reason, these different models of interpreting emotions have being grouped together in what is called the "*propositional attitude*" model. There is a sense in which emotions share essential features of language that makes them engage with propositional activities (as thinking and speak). So, in some sense, they have to present some propositional or linguistic "form".

The second main way of thinking about emotions is the **feeling stand**. Emotions are defined as feelings and their proponents apply a *perceptual model* to understand them. An emotion (feeling), like sense perceptions, is a perception of something. We can take back to Descartes (1649) for discovering the main lines of this perspective. Particularly, Cartesian model of perception presents the content of sense perception as an idea (*res cogitans*) generated by some impressions in our senses (*res extensa*). An emotion, in Descartes proposal, is like a second order perception of that idea generated by the *res extensa*; it is the idea over the sense idea. From this perspective, Hume's definition of emotions as "impressions of impressions" represents the same strategy. However, there was an important modification of that model of sense perception by one of the co-founders of modern psychology: W. James (1884, 1890). James, because of different reasons, felt uncomfortable with this model that sees emotions as *second order* perceptions or impressions. He brings to the debate of emotions a definition that sees them more naturally, as first order perceptions. They are perceptions of bodily changes. They are feelings of our body, not of our soul or *res cogitans*. Emotions, as feelings, are neither perceptions of some other ideas nor impressions of impressions. They are the direct perception of some bodily changes. So long, emotions are interpreted using the perceptual model, but now they are not second order perceptions. Therefore, still inside the perceptual model, James may defend a search of identity conditions of emotions in the *res extensa*, the body, being possible now a scientific study of them, something that was impossible with a second order concept of perception, such as the Cartesian, that only would admit introspection as a proper way to access or know anything about emotion.

As it is well known, both theories present big problems. Roughly speaking, on one hand, the intentional stand has difficulties explaining feelings and, because of that, the explanation breaks the continuity of emotions between linguistic and non-linguistic creatures. On the other hand, feeling stance has problems explaining intentionality, the part of the emotion that is directed towards particular aspects of objects and events of the world. The lack of a strong link between emotion and language, that makes possible to refer to a shared and structured world, makes difficult to properly accommodate emotions in the cognitive dimension

of linguistic creatures, and therefore, to explain properly this aspect of their intentional content. In feelings theories, emotions are reflects of goings on in our body (or mind), they are mental episodes that cannot explain the complexity and different roles in cognitions that some emotions plays in linguistic creatures. In this sense they are powerless, epiphenomenal states. Choosing one tradition in the search of identity conditions of emotions seems to advocate defining emotions only partially. It is in this context in which Prinz's theory makes its contribution. It is a serious attempt to cover the intentional demand, he would say cognitive, from James' concept of emotion.

Prinz recognizes the intentional problem in the traditional jamesian model and he confronts it wisely: he changes the model that sustains all emotion explanation. Emotions are still perceptions of bodily changes, but he is not going to explain perceptions as sense impressions. His concept of perception is derived from Dretske conception of mental representation. Let me call this the *representational model*, an interpretation of the perceptual mode based on dretskean representations. These representations are functional and a good and quick image of them is that of a *marker*, like a bright sign (which would be the feeling) that indicates us the presence of the emotional property. So, this somatic marker would represent the property that elicits it. Briefly sketched, when Prinz defines emotions as perceptions of bodily changes he is saying that emotions *represent* those properties of the world that elicit them. A property of events and situations of the world causes some bodily reactions. The somatosensory system *registers* these bodily changes (*nominal content*) and, because they have been reliably caused by those properties and somatosensory has the function of detecting them, *represents* those properties (*real content*). His appealing to core relational themes (Lazaru's cognitive account of emotions) for explaining these representations and the relational properties of the world responsible of them helps to think in this strategy as the adequate one for incorporating all the demands a theory of emotion has. In a conception where perceiving is representing in this dretskean sense, the identity conditions of emotions depends on, let's say, "both" nominal and real content. Better, if we think in perceiving as representing and the representation as a somatic marker, similar to a feeling that represents, nominal and real content are the same content, but heuristically analyzed from different points of view. In this way, it can be thought that Prinz does justice to both stands. The intentionality, (the properties of) the world that worried intentional stand (are) is included among the identity conditions of emotions along with feelings. Like good solutions, it is intended to show that both poles of the dilemma are pretty much the same saw from different perspectives.

However, a carefully reading of Solomon can challenge this successful solution. From the very first book of Solomon (1976), and beyond the hackneyed use of Solomon's thesis that emotions are judgments, we can recognize in his proposal a rich searching of what it is important about intentionality. It is important to notice, from a beginning, that in a similar way to Prinz's view of emotions as feelings (bodily perceptions) with intentionality, Solomon applied something very similar to a perceptual model to his intentional stand. The notion he is appealing to is that of "perceptual judgments", on latter work, "kinaesthetic judgments" (Solomon, 2003), something that sound very similar to somatosensory perceptions. So, the propositional or linguistic character of his theory, proper of the intentional stance, it is not applied as the model he uses for explaining emotions. The judicative role that language plays in the theory it is not placed in the defense of a propositional, linguistic judgment as the model of emotions. The model is perceptual. The role of language is that of delimiting the place of the public dimension of emotions, "the politics of emotions" (Solomon, 1998). This public dimension refers to what can be shared, what would allow emotions participate, as cognitions, in public activities, as for example those of giving reasons. Using the famous statement of Pascal, it is not that "heart *has* reasons that reason [*<therefore>*, I would include in this context] cannot know", like in Prinz's view, where emotions are affects and cognitions are relegated as non emotional. Cognition is just input content, "calibration files" that causes emotions but are not part of them (like a folder has files but they are not the same). It is the idea of heart *is* a reason. Emotions are constituted under the background of language, which opens them to public

and shared aspects of the world. This public character of intentionality has to be explained. The role that language plays in this intentional theory is that of pointing to the public dimension of emotions, which is illustrated in the defense of the thesis that emotions, they themselves, may participate in our linguistic activities of giving reasons.

To elucidate this point a little bit more, we have to remember Solomon's influences. In particular, the phenomenological-existential tradition: Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger. In this tradition it is assumed, as Solomon endorses, the crucial influence of language in experience. It is not just in a labeling sense, a language that just put some labels to some linguistic-independent phenomena; but language as constitutive of the emotional phenomena, the phenomenological experience of which has a linguistic character, flavor. In other words, and echoing the words of another author also cited by Solomon, give or take some obvious differences: "*the limits of my language mean the limits of my world*" (Wittgenstein, 1922). Linguistic human beings have experiences linguistically structured, and for this reason they have experiences of a different kind from those of animals (and therefore we can *do* things with emotions that animals cannot). In Solomon's view of emotional experience, feeling theory, so long as it sees the core of emotions as the same as in non-linguistic creatures (as somatosensory markers), cannot account for this linguistically public dimension of emotional experience that tinges emotions in creatures engaged in linguistic practices. The core of this idea of intentionality is expressed by Solomon with the term "organic molecule" (Solomon, 1980): for example, "being-proud-of-my-reparation-in-my-car's-wheel". We cannot separate in our emotional experiences, as atomism in emotions does, this conjunction: the evaluation and the particular object, concrete aspect of the world to which this evaluation is directed towards, cannot be analyzed in two separate ways, like two combined but independent elements, when considering the whole emotional experience. For Solomon, the substantial difference that linguistically intentional emotions represent respect to animals is due to the fact that being directed towards *x*, in linguistic creatures, most times it is only possible thanks to a language, to be engaged in linguistic practices. This represents a difference for emotions, not only in their causal relation to some eliciting conditions (as Prinz's idea of calibration files that presupposes this kind of atomistic analysis), but a difference in emotion itself, in his experience. So, the concept of intentionality in Prinz's theory of emotion is not the one that the intentionalist stand remembers us as fundamental. Prinz's view of intentionality is his idea of real content, a representation as a sensory marker, that lacks the linguistic form of the particular intentionality Solomon is interested in and which explains the public or political conception of emotions.

I do not want to suggest that Solomon's theory of emotion is the solution for closing the gap between animal feelings and linguistic emotions. Even though the new role Solomon gives to feelings and the body in his last writings (vehemently neglected as parts of emotions in his first texts) through the concept of "judgments of the body" (Solomon, 2003), I think he cannot reach the bridge, he just points at it. It is still a problem for the intentionalist explaining emotional experiences in animals, mostly the continuity in feelings with us that they seem to express. For responding to these questions one has to put so many matters up for discussion, and this is not the place here. I just want to highlight, as a point in time, that Solomon saw that the key of the answer to these conflicts rests on the category of action. I think Solomon thought about action as the sustenance of those things called emotions. References to Merleau-Ponty, Merleau-Ponty's example of Dewey, etc. show this. In my opinion, this is why Solomon always thought of emotions as an ethical matter, and insists so much on that concept of action in his last writings. For example, in the summary of his thoughts on emotions that his last book represents, he locates the concept of "engagement" as the starting point of his theory (Solomon, 2007). The way I interpret these ideas of Solomon it is not just to see how emotions influence our ethical decisions, but how emotional experiences themselves are publically modeled by actions, by interactive practice between subjects among themselves and with the world. So, I restricted my thesis to show that Prinz's theory of emotions does not satisfy this public criterion of intentionality that, through a language, allows emotions to be directed towards particular aspects of the world only linguistically structured. He probably does not want to do so. This matter affects the most

primitive intuitions we have about emotions. However, I do not want to discuss these matters. I just wanted to show the unsatisfactory response of Prinz to the problem of emotion through the eyes of one of the most influential exponent of the intentional stance. For defending such idea, I have showed that Prinz is not really using the concept of intentionality that Solomon defends as the starting point of emotions' analysis. For concluding, I would like to show these different conceptions of intentionality in the analysis of other affective phenomena also very related to emotions: moods. In the explanation of moods it is crucial how it is conceived intentionality. If my thesis is right, and there is a difference in the concept of intentionality they are using, then they have to explain moods differently.

Moods are the best examples I found for illustrating this thesis. Other good examples are the so known Penfield cases. Moods are special for this matter because they are felt like emotions, but they seem to lack intentionality, the relevant sense of intentionality for Solomon: they are not directed towards *particular* objects or *concrete* aspects of events of the world linguistically structured. If my thesis is right, this should lead to a different conception of moods. And it is so. For Prinz, moods are intentional in the same way emotions are: they represent core relational themes as emotions, but they are caused by a calibration file with a wider scope, determined by a reliable causation of some more general eliciting conditions. Despite some doubt, Prinz affirms "I am inclined to conclude that moods are just a special case of emotions. They are not an independent category" (Prinz, 188: 2004). And it has to be so. Since he has affirmed that these calibration files (cognitive elements) are not part of emotions, this cannot make a substantial difference for excluding them as emotions. On the opposite, Solomon's view maintains that moods lack intentionality at all. They are not directed to particular aspects of the world, so they can be describe as being directed towards "all" aspects or towards "none", in the sense that they are indifferent, out of the reach of intentional considerations. If they describe so differently moods, this means they are deploying different concepts of intentionality. What is, from Prinz's perspective, a cause non-constitutive of emotions, and the intentionality they involve, it is rescued as the fundamental part of the core of emotions from Solomon's view of intentionality.

REFERENCES

- Descartes, R. (1649): *Las pasiones del alma*, Editorial Tecnos, Madrid, 2006.
- Prinz, J. (2004): *Gut Reactions: a perceptual theory of emotion*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Prinz, J. (2004): 'Embodied Emotions', in Solomon, Robert C. (2004): *Thinking About Feelings: contemporary philosophers on emotions*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Solomon, Robert C. (1976): *The passions: emotions and the meaning of life*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1993.
- Spinoza, B. (1677): *Ética demostrada según el orden geométrico*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1988.
- Solomon, Robert C. (1980): 'Nothing to be Proud of', in Solomon, Robert C. (2003).
- Solomon, Robert C. (1984): 'Emotions' Mysterious Objects', in Solomon, Robert C. (2003).
- Solomon, Robert C. (1998): 'The Politics of Emotions', in Solomon, Robert C. (2003).
- Solomon, Robert C. (2002): 'Emotions, Thoughts and Feelings: What is a "Cognitive Theory" of the Emotions and Does it Neglect Affectivity?', in Hatzimoysis, A. (ed.) (2002): *Philosophy and the Emotions*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Solomon, Robert C. (2003): *Not passion's slave: emotions and choice*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Solomon, Robert C. (2007): *True to Our Feelings: What our emotions are really telling us*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1922): *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Alianza editorial, Madrid, 1999.