

Goldie's Puzzling Two Feelings: 'Bodily Feeling' and 'Feeling Toward'

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Abstract: Emotion theorists in contemporary discussion have divided into two camps. The one claims that emotions are reducible to bodily feelings; the other holds that emotions are reducible to belief, desire or evaluative judgement. In an effort to avoid such reductionist view, Goldie suggests that emotions involve two kinds of feelings: bodily feelings and feeling towards. In spite of Goldie's efforts, I argue that explaining our emotional disposition in terms of 'feeling toward' remains distinctly unsatisfactory. Furthermore, though sympathetic to his project, I give reasons for doubting that there are two such distinct kinds of feeling, one of which has only borrowed intentionality, while the other has intentionality intrinsically.

Keywords: Goldie, bodily feeling, feeling-toward, intentionality.

1 'Feeling-Toward'

In attempting to explain how feeling can be integrated into the world-directedness of emotion, Goldie distinguishes two kinds of feelings: bodily-feelings and feelings-towards.¹ These two sorts of feelings are both directed towards an object. "Bodily feelings", Goldie writes, "are directed towards the condition of one's body, although they can reveal truths about the world beyond the bounds of one's body – that, for example, there is something dangerous nearby." On the other hand "feelings towards are directed towards the object of the emotion – a thing or a person, a state of affairs, an action or an event; such

¹ Goldie (2000, Ch. 3); see also Goldie (2002, 235 – 245).

emotional feelings involve a special way of thinking of the object of the emotion."²

The idea of 'feeling towards' can best be understood in terms of comparing the states of beliefs and desires. Beliefs and desires are a person's attitudes towards propositional contents. We can distinguish these two states in terms of 'direction of fit'. Beliefs 'aim at' 'truth', whereas desires 'aim at' 'realization' or 'satisfaction.' But 'feeling towards' is, as Goldie remarks, "not an attitude which is defined in terms of any particular 'direction of fit'," for it differs from belief in that "it is not an attitude but is related to the will."³ If this is so, 'feeling towards' can be cashed out by the idea that we 'try to think of X as Y,' since trying to think of is sometimes subject to the will. This means that in 'feeling towards', we try to think of X as Y. However, we cannot try to believe something, for believing at will is impossible and a belief aims at truth by depending on evidence. We cannot try to believe, for example, "the pudding to be disgusting, whereas we can try to feel disgust toward it - by trying to think of it as disgusting (trying to think of it as vomit perhaps)."⁴ Another difference between belief and 'feeling towards' lies in the fact that "beliefs, once rationally arrived at on the basis of evidence, tend to persist until further evidence becomes available which should lead to their revision; whereas feeling towards something is much more episodic."⁵ The third difference between 'feeling towards' and belief is that feeling towards "tends to have a perceptual quality of a sort which is, at least usually, lacking in belief," since it involves perception and imagination, and it is 'frequently' imagistic. Such feelings "come and go and vary in intensity."⁶ The famous example which Goldie presents as the imagistic characteristic of feeling towards is: one can be in the grip of the sorts of visual imagination involved in sexual jealousy.⁷ He argues that the imagistic feature of emotion can be applied to emotions whose objects are of a less visually imaginable nature. According to

² Goldie (2002, 235).

³ Goldie (2000, 72).

⁴ I owe this example to Goldie (2000, 19).

⁵ Goldie (2000, 73).

⁶ Goldie (2000, 73).

⁷ Goldie (2000, 74).

him, in the cases of emotion which lack a visual character, we are disposed to have episodes of feeling towards with a visual or imagistic character.⁸ Yet, his famous example in his later work shows that the imagistic characteristic is not actually an important element of feeling towards. Let's consider the example:

You are in an audience at a conference and a new speaker takes the stand. A friend next to you observes that you are becoming increasingly restless; your fingers are drumming on your notepad, your foot is tapping, and your lips and jaw are tense. Your friend surmises, rightly, that you are becoming irritated by something about the speaker: his manner, what he is saying, or something. But you are not aware of this. You have not noticed that you are feeling irritated by the speaker, yet you do have feelings of irritation toward him. Then your friend passes you a note, asking what is irritating you; and *then* you notice, or become aware, that you are feeling this emotion. Before seeing the note, you had feelings of irritation toward the speaker but were not aware that this was so.⁹

In this example, when the audience member has feelings of irritation towards the speaker, do his episodes of feelings towards have an imagistic character? If he feels irritation towards the speaker's gestures and grimaces, we can say that he may have feelings of irritation towards the speaker. However, if the audience member has irritation towards what the speaker is saying, does it involve visualizing? I think the answer is no. Let us consider another example. Golfers are sometimes told to think of the club as pendulum. This may involve visualizing, but it need not; the advice may be acted on by simply handling the club in a certain way, refraining from trying to control how it swings. I assume this is not imagistic, yet it is what the teacher, who cares nothing for your mental images, is hoping for.

Now one might resist the terminology, 'feeling towards', since it is not necessarily either propositional or evaluative, both of which are necessary for explaining the connection between evaluative judgement and response. But if this were true, one might argue that Goldie cannot explain the intimate tie between evaluation and action in terms of 'feeling towards', for in trying to think of X as Y with feeling, there

⁸ Goldie (2000, 74).

⁹ Goldie (2002, 242); see also Goldie (2004, 96 - 7).

seems to be no propositional content. This is because many believe that in order to explain action, we need to posit evaluative judgments, for example beliefs and desires, which have propositional content. Confronted with this objection, Goldie replies that 'feeling towards' can in fact explain the tie between our evaluation and action, since feeling towards has intentionality, which is directed towards the object of emotion in the world. Suppose that you visit a zoo. Looking at a lion in the cage, you are thinking of the lion as dangerous, but you do not feel fear, because it appears to be safely behind bars. Then you see that the door to the cage has been left wide open. When you see this, suddenly you put your thoughts – the lion is dangerous and the cage is open – together. Your way of thinking of the lion as dangerous is different from how it was prior to your noticing the open door. Once you see that the door to the cage is left open, dangerousness is emotionally relevant to you. If this is so we can say that the earlier thought before you saw the open door, 'That lion is dangerous', differs in content from the new thought in that the new thought occurs with a feeling. Now in feeling fear towards the lion you are emotionally involved with the world. You are poised for action due to the emotion.¹⁰ Hence you may run away. In this way, Goldie writes, feeling toward can explain the tie between recognition and response.

Although Goldie attempts to show with this example that feeling towards has intentionality, it is not obvious in what sense feeling towards has the intentionality ascribed to it, because thinking of lion as dangerous might simply be a matter of bodily behaviour, such as locking the door, rather than entertaining propositions. One might raise a further question: what is the difference between the earlier and later way of thinking the thought, 'that lion is dangerous'? One might say that what is new is a set of new beliefs or desires, such as the belief that the door is open and realisation that the lion could get you, which makes it reasonable to close it or hide. However, Goldie would say that the difference is not a new set of beliefs, but the fact that we are now emotionally involved with the world, and poised for action.

If this is so, another question arises: does the fact that you are emotionally engaged with the world always dispose you to move to act?

¹⁰ A similar example is presented by Goldie. See Goldie (2000, 61).

Suppose that you read about what Caligula did and feel angry toward the injustice he perpetuated. The propositional content of your emotion, anger, might be that Caligula is an awful person. However, seeing Caligula as an awful person does not by itself provide an end for action, and it won't dispose you to move to act. Since in this case there is nothing you can do in order to change the world in such a way that Caligula no longer appears awful to you. You may think what he did ought not to have happened, but realise that you cannot do anything about it. Let's apply this idea to another example: my hoping my favourite team will win their upcoming match. If, as Goldie argues, the fact that you are emotionally engaged with the world dispose you to move to act, how then does my emotion, in this case hope, move me towards action? I may not do anything to put it right. Rather, my desire involves an attitude toward (a pro-attitude) the winning: I want my team ought to win, but realise that I cannot do anything about it. If this is right, Goldie's idea that in feeling toward something you are emotionally involved with the world and you are poised for action due to the emotion is problematic. These considerations seem to show that feeling towards does not necessarily entail our being emotionally involved with the world, nor our being poised to act.

How then can feeling towards explain cases of recalcitrant emotion: believing that something is not dangerous, yet at the same time, feeling afraid of it? According to Goldie, recalcitrant emotion is possible, when the tie between recognition-response is weaker. If someone fears grass snakes, Goldie could say that via his or her fear a person is unreflectively emotionally engaged with the world. In this type of case we can say that the tie between recognition and response is weak or broken. Thus we can say that the breaking or weakening of the tie between recognition and response when one is unreflectively emotionally involved in the world is what makes recalcitrant emotion possible. Why then does the breaking or weakening of the tie between recognition and response happen? This is because of the alleged passivity of feeling. Many philosophers argue that we are sometimes passive in the sense of being unable to control our emotions. Goldie's answer to the above question is that we should consider the circumstances, character-traits and moods that the person has. He writes: "someone can be educated to recognise situations as emotion-

invoking, and to respond with appropriate motivations, and can still, on an occasion, fail to be so motivated.”¹¹ Thus Goldie claims that “our emotions, moods, and character traits, broadly conceived, can interweave, overlap, and mutually affect each other.”¹² What then about the standard of the appropriateness of those emotions? The appropriateness of a person’s emotions can be found “through considering the history of his psychological development and not every time a situation presents itself.”¹³ Goldie seems to argue that emotional appropriateness differs from truth. However, in his recent work, he seems to betray some ambiguity on this point by claiming that ‘our emotional dispositions can, so to speak, *attune* us to the world around us’ and appropriate emotions ‘enable us to get things right.’¹⁴ The lack of clarity arises due to the fact that such idiom as ‘getting things right’ is usually used in the case in which the truth predicate is available, while emotions are not capable of being true or false. Thus, in order to explain the appropriateness of emotion, he should show a way to explain the idea of ‘getting things right’ without being committed to having the epistemic warrant. However, he remains rather unclear about this matter.

2 Bodily Feeling

One might raise a question: how can Goldie handle bodily feeling? When we say that emotions involve feeling, Goldie writes, this means both ‘feeling towards and bodily feeling. For example, when I say that I *feel* fear of a snake, first, there is the bodily feeling: my body shudders and my hands sweat. Second, I have a feeling of fear towards the snake, which is inseparable from bodily feelings, but not identical with them. What then is it that holds bodily feeling and feeling towards together? Goldie argues that both are inextricably linked by virtue of their phenomenology and intentionality. In order to appreciate this, let us consider an example:

¹¹ Goldie (2000, 37).

¹² Goldie (2000, 235).

¹³ Goldie (2000, 37).

¹⁴ See Goldie (2004, 99).

A man, while walking down a path sees a snake. He suddenly realizes that the place is inhabited by snakes. Then the place stimulates his fear.

Here we can say that there are two types of mental state: a phenomenological and intentional one. The man evaluates the situation as dangerous. So he says to himself, "I'd better be very careful: watch my step; and keep my eyes peeled." The intentional state, that is, the thought, gives itself as a maxim of behaviour which, if the man follows it, will lead him to avoid the snake. The other mental state, the phenomenological, also contributes to the evaluation in virtue of its particular 'feel.' The moment would be one of terror. In the grip of terror the man trembles and quivers, and he will get out of the wood as fast as his feet can carry him.

Now to answer the above question, namely, what it is that holds bodily feeling and feeling towards together in our minds when we have emotional experience, Goldie maintains that in the phenomenology of emotion, "we experience bodily feelings and feeling towards almost as one."¹⁵ Goldie locates the root of this idea in Descartes, since Descartes remarks that in the emotions, mind and body are "very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled."¹⁶ The way in which bodily feeling and feeling towards are intimately connected is as follows: when we have bodily feeling, "it is essentially phenomenological, but it is also essentially intentional, being directed towards a part of one's body as being in a certain condition."¹⁷

Goldie calls the bodily feeling 'introspective knowledge' in the sense that it reveals "our thoughts, emotions, and the condition of our bodies," whereas he calls feeling towards 'extraspective knowledge' in the sense that it reveals "things about the world beyond the bounds of our bodies."¹⁸ He goes on to argue that a bodily feeling is intentional in the sense that "the feeling is directed toward an object, one's body, as being a certain way or as undergoing certain changes."¹⁹ Fur-

¹⁵ Goldie (2002, 247)

¹⁶ Descartes (1984, 56).

¹⁷ Goldie (2002, 249).

¹⁸ Goldie (2002, 92).

¹⁹ Goldie (2002, 93).

thermore, he claims that the bodily feelings can provide prima facie reasons for believing that one is experiencing a certain sort of emotion, and for believing that there is something in the environment that has the related emotion-proper property. However, bodily feelings alone do not reveal much about the object of one's emotion.²⁰ For bodily feeling can only tell you that "there is *something* in the environment that has a certain property, such as the property of *being frightening*."²¹ It does not provide an epistemic route for us, like belief, to the object of the emotion *as such*. Suppose that you have heard some strange sounds while you were sleeping, and it suddenly wakes you up. You may feel that the hairs on the back of your neck are standing up, and this feeling can tell you that there is something frightening nearby. But this feeling cannot tell you that this something is a *burglar*. Now in order to explain the object of fear in this case, Goldie holds that there must be the other kind of emotional feeling, which is directed at the specific object itself, in this case, for example, the fear directed at the burglar. The other feeling, which is directed toward the object of one's emotion *as such* is what Goldie calls 'feeling towards.'²²

With regard to this example we need to ask whether feeling towards is simply another type of bodily feeling, which arises as a consequence of the more basic revelation of the condition of one's body, as opposed to being a distinct kind of state. Furthermore, one might wonder if feeling towards can provide an epistemic route from bodily feeling to a belief about the object of our emotion as such. Goldie does not offer a clear answer to these questions. Instead, he presents a rather puzzling remark: "feeling toward is unreflective emotional engagement with the world beyond the body; it is not a consciousness of oneself, either of one's bodily condition or of oneself as experiencing an emotion."²³ Goldie himself presents conference example as we have seen before, in order to illustrate this characteristic of feeling towards. He provides the example to show that one can be unreflective-

²⁰ Goldie (2002, 96).

²¹ Goldie (2002, 94).

²² Goldie (2002, 96).

²³ Goldie (2002).

ly emotionally engaged with the world. It shows someone undergoing an emotion without being reflectively aware of having that emotion.

If in undergoing feelings towards we are unreflectively emotionally engaged with the world, Goldie writes, this has the advantage of enabling us to explain recalcitrant emotions. That is, how is it one can, without being irrational in the sense of having conflicting beliefs, feel afraid of something and yet, at the same time, believe that it is not dangerous. The person's recalcitrant fear is possible through his or her unreflectively regarding something as dangerous, due to his or her childhood trauma or character-traits, for example. If so, we can say that the difference between bodily feeling and feeling towards, if there are any differences, is as follows: as far as phenomenology is concerned, bodily feelings are reflectively emotionally engaged with the condition of one's body, whereas feelings towards are unreflectively emotionally involved in the world beyond one's body. Now as far as intentionality is concerned, feelings towards are feelings which are directed towards the object of our emotion as such. On the other hand, Goldie writes that 'bodily feelings' have a restricted form of intentionality in that they are directed only toward the condition of the body. The bodily feelings 'borrow' their intentionality from the intentional states, such as beliefs, that they occur in conjunction with. Thus another way of specifying the difference is as follows. Bodily feelings are intentional – they are directed at the condition of the body – and they have a cognitive element. Feelings towards are intentional – they are directed at the world – but they lack a cognitive element. These two sorts of feelings, according to Goldie, are "'united in consciousness' in being directed towards its object: united 'body and soul,' 'heart and mind.'"²⁴ Even if we accept this view, we can say that there need not be a conceptual connection other than the fact that both are needed for something to be an emotion.

3 Conclusion

I am sympathetic to Goldie's view in that he notes that certain feelings are inextricable from experience of the world and have directed-

²⁴ Goldie (2000, 55).

ness towards things. However, I do not accept his claim that there are two distinct kinds of feeling, one of which is merely bodily and has a restricted intentionality. Goldie himself recognizes that these are potentially problematic issues, and claims that “the bodily feeling is thoroughly infused with the intentionality of emotion; and, in turn, the feeling towards is infused with a bodily characterization.”²⁵ These characterizations of bodily feeling and feeling towards support the claim that feelings of the body and feelings towards objects in the world are two sides of the same coin.²⁶ Yet he still holds a distinction between two kinds of feelings when he argues that bodily feelings have only a borrowed intentionality, while feelings towards have intentionality intrinsically. He argues that the claim that all emotional feelings are of the same type is dogma.²⁷ However, as Rattcliffe points out, we can subsume this distinction under the single category of feeling towards, some of which have parts of the body as their object, and some of which have parts of the world as their object.²⁸

Pace Goldie, if bodily feeling and feeling towards are not distinct, that is, if they are two sides of the same coin, then the real problem of explaining emotion is how we can develop a thorough account of how emotions dissolve the distinction between thoughts and feelings, or cognition and affect.

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²⁵ Goldie (2000, 57).

²⁶ A similar point has been made by M. Rattcliffe. See M. Rattcliffe (2005, 47).

²⁷ Goldie (2000, 56).

²⁸ C.f. Rattcliffe (2005, 47).

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