

**Review of Jean Moritz Müller, *The World-Directedness of Emotional Feeling*. Palgrave
Macmillan.**

Despite being a short monograph (comprising four chapters), Jean Moritz Müller's 'The World-Directedness of Emotional Feeling' is an excellent contribution to the philosophy of emotion. It displays high-level argumentative rigour, navigating issues which involve blending philosophy of mind, phenomenology, and theory of value. This review provides an overview of Müller's project and then critically assesses central claims made in Chapter's 3, 4 and 5.

Müller is concerned with 'an adequate philosophical account of the nature and significance of emotional feelings as they feature in common everyday experience' (p.10). The introduction (Ch.1), makes clear that he thinks of emotional feelings as *intentional feelings*; emotional feeling is not *mere feeling* but exhibits directedness toward the world (see also Goldie, P. [2000] *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Poellner, P. [2016] 'Phenomenology and the Perceptual Model of Emotion' in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. CXVI, Part 3, 1-28; Deonna, J. and Teroni, F. (2015) 'Emotions as Attitudes' in *dialectica* 69 (3), 293-311). Within this framework, the aim of the book is two-fold: to criticise a particular intentionalist view of emotional feeling, namely the axiological receptivity view (AR hereafter), and replace it with a 'position-taking' view (PT hereafter).

After more foregrounding discussion in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 sets itself the task of showing that the AR 'seriously misrepresents the role we ordinarily recognise emotional feeling as playing in our psychological lives' (7), and therefore should be rejected. According to the AR emotional feelings are *presentations of value*; the experience of fear (*qua* emotional feeling) is a *presentation of the dangerousness* of its particular object (this view finds adherents in classical phenomenology and contemporary philosophy of emotion; see p.57, fn.8). Consider the analogy with sense-perception. Much as in a sense-perceptual experience we enjoy a presentation of the relevant object's sense-perceptible qualities, in emotional feeling we enjoy a presentation of the relevant objects' evaluative properties. Müller claims that this is at 'odds with the phenomenology of emotion' (57) since emotional feelings are manifestly *not presentations of value*. To motivate this, Müller contrasts a perceptual experience and an emotional feeling. Say you are enjoying a visual experience of a vista, seeing its colour and spatial properties, and so *registering what is presented*. You are then overcome with admiration for the scene's beauty. You are now related to the beauty of the vista. But is this merely a matter of being 'presented' with that beauty, so registering it in the way you registered the sense-perceptible properties? Arguably not: 'in having a positive emotional feeling towards the landscape you are not simply registering the scene, but *take a favourable stand* toward it' (59).

To garner more support for this phenomenological claim Müller considers how emotions are states which we are in for reasons in a way that contrasts with perception (pp.63-5; note Müller thinks that the very directedness of emotion is a matter of our having them for reasons). We ask for and provide

reasons for emotions in a way which seems unnecessary in the case of sense-perception. It makes sense to ask *why do you regret sleeping with him*, or *why do you fear her reprisals*, in a way it does not to ask *why do you see the red ball*. But the defender of the AR might respond as follows. On one version of the AR, namely Perceptualism, emotional experiences essentially involve perception-like experiences of evaluative properties. But evaluative properties are higher-order properties, and as in the case of other forms of higher-order perception – say perceptions of kinds — it makes sense to ask *why do you see that as a willow tree*. So, it is questionable whether perceptual experiences are states which we are never in for reasons, and for which we don't provide reasons. Müller considers this response (see p.65 fn.19, and 77-8) and makes explicit that the relevant contrast is between direct perception *as presentation*, and 'seeing as' understood as an act or process which yields, but is distinct from a presentation, and suggests the disanalogy still holds *qua* direct perceptions vs emotional experiences. Although it is not entirely clear why a defender of Perceptualism cannot appeal to forms of direct perception of higher-order properties to diffuse the worry (see Tappolet [2016] *Emotions, Values and Agency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 39).

Nonetheless, Müller's central claim that emotional feeling is a kind of affective response undermines the AR. Consider the following precisification of that phenomenological insight. Affective Phenomenology claim: The primary sense in which emotional experience includes a phenomenology of response should be understood in terms of *being moved* by the object of the experience and its evaluative properties. If this claim holds the intentionality of emotion and presentation are disanalogous. As Müller glosses this, 'emotional feeling and perception seem to relate to their objects in different ways' (67). There is much in Ch.3 for proponents of the AR to grapple with, and while there is overreliance on semantic and linguistic evidence (pp.66-9), the phenomenological insight is sound; emotional feelings *qua* evaluative phenomenology, are not (or at least not merely) *presentations of value*.

Moving on, one of the central claims of Ch.3 is 'the observation that emotional feelings are directed falsifies AR. If for them to be directed implies that they are responses to apparent value, then emotional feelings do not present or otherwise apprehend value. Rather, emotions are consequent upon an apprehension of value' (73). I have provided commentary on views of this type (see Mitchell [2019] 'Pre-Emotional Value Awareness and the Content-Priority View in *Philosophical Quarterly*, 69 (277), 771-94). Here I on focus on Müller's PT view. Chapters 4 and 5, clarify (a) the response dimension and (b) the pre-emotional apprehension of value, as the evaluative foundation of emotional feeling.

Concerning (a), Chapter 4 details Müller's conception of emotional feelings as responses in terms of *taking a (dis)favourable* position towards the relevant object and its evaluative properties (pp.91-109). As he paraphrases the view: 'To (dis)approve of something is to *find it (dis)agreeable*, that is, concordant (discordant) with oneself or one's evaluative outlook (pp.100-101). Müller's position-takings, therefore, have a 'personal' dimension, as 'stances informed by our complex background of cares and concerns'

(110). This theme also runs through the elucidation of (b), provided in Chapter 5. Müller's view is that emotional feeling is founded on aspectual evaluative construals (analogous to 'perceiving as', although not necessarily requiring conceptual capacities; pp.127-132), where the psychological background is the subject's specific cares and concerns, as a 'concern-based construal' (see Roberts [2003] *Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). The resulting view is a sophisticated articulation of the PT.

Let me close with three worries about the PT. First, if it is a necessary condition on having emotional feeling that it is a response to value given through a concern-based evaluative construal, then it becomes puzzling how we can experience *new and unfamiliar* emotions. Indeed, some emotional responses can be entirely disconnected from the background of cares and concern of the subject, and not merely in that the subject does not *notice* how the situation bears on them prior to having the emotion. Secondly, one might worry about the ability of the view to deal with quick-fire emotional responses. Consider an instance of terror: it hardly seems we have any conscious apprehension of *something as terrifying* and then a disfavourable response to that terror. Instead there is a phenomenological immediacy to a confrontation with the terrifying object which seems emotional from the offset. The view might respond that the worry assumes an emotion being preceded by a prior state must be phenomenologically verifiable, and that is contestable: emotions can be preceded by prior states without our being aware of it in the throes of the experience. However, this arguably undercuts some of the phenomenological motivation for the PT. Finally, there is an issue about how we get from emotional feeling to evaluative *judgements*. One dimension to emotions as evaluative phenomena is their feeding into judgement; I judge that X is dangerous *because* I am afraid. On the PT we could go straight from aspectual value apprehension to value judgement, bypassing emotional experience. But if that's the case, the idea that emotions play a critical epistemic role *viz.* providing reasons for evaluative judgements is undermined. Notwithstanding these critical points, this book should be read by those with interest in emotion. It is a perspicuous development of a distinctive view of emotional feeling.

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