

# The Behavioral Conflict of Emotion

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper understands mental attitudes such as emotions and desires to be dispositions to behavior. It also acknowledges that people are often ambivalent, i.e., that they may hold opposed attitudes towards something or someone. Yet the first position seems to entail that ambivalence is either tantamount to paralysis or a contradictory notion. I identify the problem as based on a reductive interpretation of the dispositional character of attitudes and of ambivalence. The paper instead defends a post-Davidsonian view of the basic rationality of human life. By focussing on desire and emotion we can see that the mutually exclusive ways of life involved in ambivalence are manifested in the person's conduct.

**P**ETER LONGS TO SEE HIS EX-GIRLFRIEND Sandra, even while he is also scared of such a meeting and repelled by the prospect.

Sandra's friend has won a professional position for which Sandra had also applied. She is both happy and unhappy that he has got the position.<sup>1</sup>

## I. THE PROBLEM

Human beings are very often ambivalent. Philosophers, however, often find ambivalence conceptually embarrassing. Much of the discomfort centers on the relation of ambivalence to behavior. One might fairly say that someone who is ambivalent holds two opposed attitudes towards something,<sup>2</sup> while a mental attitude captures a "thread" of a human life. In other words, attitudes underpin actual and potential behavior and consciousness. I shall accept (see note 8 below) that for current purposes we may ignore non-behavioral consciousness. The dispositional account suggests in this case that ambivalence can be thought of in terms of opposed dispositions to behavior. Yet, how could that be? How could ambivalence even imply opposed behavioral dispositions, let alone constitute them? It seems that a person in such a condition would not be able to act. She will not be even able to say "I am ambivalent," nor will she be able to express one pole of her ambivalence rather than the other. Most of the philosophers who deal with the problem of behavior without disavowing ambivalence altogether accept one of these alternatives. Either one's behavior (one's

<sup>1</sup>The examples are taken respectively from Philip J. Koch, "Emotional Ambivalence," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48 (1987): 257–79, and Patricia S. Greenspan, "A Case of Mixed Feelings: Ambivalence and the Logic of Emotion" in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie O. Rorty (Berkeley CA: Univ. of California Press, 1980), pp. 223–51.

<sup>2</sup>Two qualifications should be made. (1) The formulation is not a general definition of ambivalence. (2) The formulation must be understood in light of a concept of ambivalence (and more specifically, of emotional conflict, conflict of desires, etc.) that belongs to our life and language. In particular, the relevant sense of the "opposed attitudes" is such that the ambivalent person *holds* them *as* mutually opposed attitudes.

words included) expresses a mere opposition of attitudes (whereas the opposed poles are in fact lost), or the ambivalent person makes a choice in regard to action.<sup>3</sup> The explication that this paper elaborates makes it easier to see that both alternatives are at most modes of living with ambivalence among other modes.<sup>4</sup> But at the outset it is more important to see that neither of these treatments of ambivalence is of any help in alleviating the apparent problem of behavioral disposition. Worse, the presumed inconsistency in the notion of opposed behavioral dispositions makes it hard to see not only how the opposed dispositions can be acted on, but even what it means that they both exist. Must not such conflicting dispositions cancel each other out, thereby dispelling the ambivalence that they are supposed to characterize?

## II. A DISPOSITIONAL VIEW

First, a clarification. We have seen that if one wishes to understand attitudes in terms of dispositions to behavior without disavowing ambivalence, one encounters a problem. The ordinary philosophical response to this problem is in fact to disavow the phenomenon of ambivalence, or to re-interpret the language and phenomena of ambivalence, a re-interpretation that is tantamount to denying the phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> This paper aims both to offer a reminder that such an interpretation is invalid and to show that there is no need for it.

One may, however, presuppose that the very problem only arises under a certain dubious conception of attitudes. In this paper I accept a “dispositional view” and reject its reductive reading for the sake of a non-reductive one. Why should a dispositional view be accepted in the first place? My reply is that I am concerned

<sup>3</sup>Philosophers who see ambivalence and its expressions as pure oppositionality, when the conjoint and opposed attitudes are tantamount to confusion, dithering, stagnation, misery or indifference, include Harry G. Frankfurt, “The Faintest Passion” in his *Necessity, Volition and Love* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999) and Joan Stambaugh, “On the Meaning of Ambivalence,” *Philosophy Today* 24 (1980): 161–70. Among construals of ambivalent behavior in terms of a choice between the poles, see David Carr, “Virtue, Mixed Emotions and Moral Ambivalence,” *Philosophy* 84 (2009): 31–46; Patricia Marino, “Ambivalence, Valuational Inconsistency, and the Divided Self,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 83 (2011): 41–71; Martha Nussbaum, “Aeschylus and Practical Conflict,” *Ethics* 95 (1985): 233–67; Michael Stocker, *Plural and Conflicting Values* (Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 1990); and Susan Stark, “Virtue and Emotion,” *Nous* 35 (2001): 440–55. Philosophers may also divide ambivalence between these forms; see Kristján Kristjánsson, “The Problem with Ambivalent Emotions,” *Philosophy* 85 (2010): 485–510, esp. p. 509; J. S. Swindell, “Ambivalence,” *Philosophical Explorations* 13 (2010): 23–34. Work that acknowledges the possibility of significant action from both poles of one’s ambivalence together includes Greenspan, “A Case of Mixed Feelings”; Jacqui Poltera, “Is Ambivalence an Agential Vice?” *Philosophical Explorations* 13 (2010): 293–305; Amelie Rorty, “A Plea for Ambivalence” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (New York NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), pp. 425–44.

<sup>4</sup>It would be more accurate to say that actual mutual expressions of both poles may take the form of centering on the very opposition, or of preferring one pole. For example, if Sandra manifests excessive happiness, the sorrow might be revealed precisely in her exaggeration.

<sup>5</sup>The list of denials of ambivalence will not be much shorter than the list of philosophical works if it includes denials that are implicit or presupposed as non-problematic. Some philosophers, however, in view of the problem of opposed behavioral dispositions in a conflict of judgments (or of emotions under a judgmental or a perceptual account) re-interpret the judgments in such conflicts in terms of theoretical judgments, which as such do not motivate in the opposed directions. Davidson is a central example here (see Section V).

with attitudes in a way that ought to make their dispositional character undeniable. Part of the reply would, hence, be to stress what I am not asking in the above question. A “dispositional view” appears as one alternative in a discourse, one of whose concerns is irrelevant for our current inquiry.<sup>6</sup> In those debates in which the dispositional view is one alternative philosophers want to understand, at least in part, something about the brain when they ask what mental attitudes are. In this paper, however, the life of a person as the individual pursues it comprises the sole interest. A human life allows us to attribute a person with various points of view or mental attitudes towards various matters. It may be said that the points of view capture routes in our lives. Retaining some vagueness, I wish to reserve the term “attitudes” to points of view, including emotions, whose scope is wider than actual behavior, namely, dispositional points of view. Let us call “behavior” the concrete public sphere phenomena of our lives as creatures with points of view: anything we do that has a physical aspect.<sup>7</sup> Thus, to the extent that an attitude isolates a certain route taken by the agent, there is a sense that an attitude is a disposition to behavior.

### III. THE TASK: A RADICAL RENUNCIATION OF REDUCTION

To speak of attitudes in dispositional terms does not entail a Carnapian explication. I am not trying to translate the language of attitudes to a behavioral language. Thus, in speaking of behavioral dispositions, I do not posit a translation scheme. Instead, the terminology of dispositions to behavior is taken here in order to articulate the close conceptual relations between attitudes and behavior. This, however, requires that we do not interpret “behavioral disposition” reductively.

Two such reductions must be rejected at once. We should note, first, that no question of the translation of mental terms arises for us. Such a question does not arise because the explication of ambivalence in terms of opposed dispositions concerns people’s particular attitudes. The paper’s task begins with seeing that mental attitudes, such as Sandra’s happiness that her friend has won the position, must amount to dispositions to behavior. This, however, does not have to point to a possibility of analyzing happiness in terms of behavior. Nor does it suggest that some other mental concept that transcends the particular attitude, e.g., happiness about a friend’s success, may be analyzed in this way. Moreover, and this is the second irreducible precaution, nothing in the possibility of locating Sandra’s own emotion

<sup>6</sup>An explicit division of the field between dispositional and other views may be found, concerning belief, in Eric Schwitzgebel, “Belief,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward. N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/belief/>. I should add that I reject the received categorization, adopted also by Schwitzgebel, of Davidson as an interpretationalist. I suggest seeing Davidson, as well as Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York NY: Macmillan, 1953), as philosophers sensitive to the character of attitudes as dispositions that capture points of view. In any case, when such approaches are conceived as alternatives in “cognitivist” debates, their character is changed.

<sup>7</sup>Human behavior is unlike the “behavior” of a tree or a storm. We see and speak of someone sitting, or presenting a paper, i.e., of someone doing something from her own point of view (and typically—a closely related point—consciously doing it). I should also note that things that happen to people, and have physical aspects, can be included for our purposes in their behavior, so far as they happen to them from their own point of view. If someone hits me, my shrinking expresses my being hit as something that happens to me.

in her conduct suggests that her behavior expresses her happiness without reference to her other attitudes and further engagements.

In exposing the appearance of inconsistency between ambivalence and between behavior so far as it expresses attitudes, I aim to dispel this inconsistency and to understand how ambivalence and ambivalent behavior are possible. Ambivalence, however, comprises more than a difficulty for our conceptions regarding attitudes. It is an opportunity to revise our conceptions. We should allow the possibility of ambivalence to shed light on the sense in which to entertain an attitude is to be disposed to behave accordingly.

In negative terms this paper suggests that the embarrassment of the conjunction of the existence of ambivalence with the dispositional character of attitudes disappears if we stop thinking of the relation of behavior and attitudes—of behavior's relation with emotion and with emotional ambivalence—in reductive terms. It will not be sufficient, however, to understand attitudes as (1) the dispositions of particular people in particular times and (2) as constituted together with other attitudes and engagements. Thus, if (1) Peter's particular sorrow disposes him to do A when (2) he believes himself unwatched, whereas his happiness disposes him not to do A under the same belief, the true or false attribution to him of sorrow ambivalently mixed with happiness seems as perplexing as ever. This paper argues against two reductions whose survival of our acknowledgment of (1) and (2) is reflected by our perplexity. Insofar as ambivalence, understood as one's holding of two opposed behavioral dispositions, implies that ambivalence is paralyzing or impossible, it wrongly assumes, first, the reduction of attitudes to dispositions towards specific (even if unspecified) behavior; second, it *reduces* the concept of ambivalence to that of an opposition of behavioral dispositions.<sup>8</sup> We can think of emotional ambivalence, for example, in

<sup>8</sup>As mentioned above, I move from the opposed dispositions in a human life (when life includes phenomena of non-behavioral consciousness) to opposed dispositions to behavior, and I contend that the latter are indispensable to ambivalence, while both the dispositions and their opposition must be understood in non-reductive terms. The move is partly justified by the fact that the behavioral disposition of an attitude belongs to it, in a sense, as a partial disposition. This, however, raises the question whether behavioral dispositions, at least in some cases, might not be absent, or whether the opposition might lie elsewhere (rather than between them). I think that our constitutively public life demands that an attitude involves a behavioral disposition that reveals the attitude or its outlook, and accordingly that ambivalence must be revealed in the opposition of the respective behavioral dispositions. This necessity does not exclude cases in which one's conduct hardly expresses one's ambivalence, or one pole of it. For, "hardly expressed" means more subtle expressions and dispositions, e.g., if we *refrain* from speech or action, we are effectively avoiding certain conversations. I will not, however, dwell here on the constitutively behavioral character of attitudes. In any case, our topic is not an abstract idea; rather, we must understand ambivalence by the same token that we understand its modes and forms. Thus, while we encounter cases of ambivalence in which it is useful to speak of the ambivalence as divided between one's (sincere) behavior and one's "heart" or private thoughts, this is far from being the general rule. Moreover, the problem with a reductionist reading of our having opposed attitudes is not that behavior does not exhaust the phenomenon of ambivalence. It would not be solved by introducing non-behavioral phenomena of consciousness, if nothing else is changed.

It is all the more the case that the problem of ambivalence as opposed dispositions in a human life cannot be solved by adding phenomena that apply to people only in so far as people comprise mere objects of inquiry—phenomena like people's having certain neural states. This is because such phenomena are irrelevant to the topics requiring explication, i.e., to ambivalence, which belongs to our ordinary lives as they are lived in the first person, and as they are attributed in the third person as lived lives.

terms of opposed behavior and of opposed behavioral dispositions, but only insofar as such opposition is referred back to the emotional conflict. Thus conceived, the opposition of dispositions sheds light on aspects and forms of ambivalence. The following discussion rejects a reductive couching of attitudes and ambivalence in behavior, while presenting and supporting a non-reductive view.

Let us then treat an emotional ambivalence towards an object as a conflict in the life of a person between two opposing attitudes. Here a half-terminological point may be useful. This paper moves between two kinds of formulations, according to one of which ambivalence involves two attitudes, whereas according to the other ambivalence is itself an attitude. The articulation in terms of two attitudes (or in the primary example, two emotions) rather than as one tension-fraught emotion, can be rendered more or less satisfactory, according to the form of the particular ambivalence. It has, in general, the merit of pointing to the character of the two poles of ambivalence as competing over the perspective that the person would take towards the object. If, however, we take this formulation too literally, it is easy to slip from it into expecting that the ambivalent person would have two independent inclinations to behavior. We might also be inclined to turn, for an analysis of the ambivalent emotions, to an opposition between inclinations to behavior. Both these steps, while not completely wrong, are highly misleading.

#### IV. CONFLICTS OF DESIRE

It is my intention to focus on emotional ambivalence. However, the reader might well have another mode of ambivalence in mind, one that is interlinked with behavior in an even more definitive way, namely, ambivalence of desire. In this case, one might find it all too easy to think of the attitudes in ambivalence as independently determined and mutually exclusive inclinations to act since our life and language include a concept of "opposition of desires" and desires are paradigmatically tantamount to certain inclinations to act. Indeed, we can formulate ambivalence of desire as the holding of both a desire that P and a desire that not-P. At the risk of oversimplifying things, we can say, first, that a desire that P turns on a *desire* to act in order that P; and, second, that it turns on an *inclination* to act in order that P. Opposed desires are hence linked in principle to actions in opposed directions. Such actions are supposed to make contradictory sentences true.

Thus, this formulation brings our problems to the fore once again. Does it not mean that ambivalence of desire makes action impossible? In addition, what about the opposition of behavioral inclinations that is constitutive of ambivalence of emotion? Should it not be conceived as one or more oppositions of desires? And if so, does not ambivalence of emotion also negate action? Will Peter promote a meeting with Sandra or not? How can we even say that he is disposed to both things?

This array of concerns hampers even the work of those philosophers who acknowledge ambivalence. Thus, Bernard Williams<sup>9</sup> implicitly conceives of the ambivalent person as constrained to act on one horn of some dilemma. Williams undermines

<sup>9</sup>Bernard Williams, "Ethical Consistency" in his *Problems of the Self* (New York NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 166–86.

this picture without abandoning it, for he argues that ambivalence can be appropriate and functional by pointing to the behavioral remainder that “solved” ambivalence is likely to have. Around the supposedly primary behavior that pursues one pole of the ambivalence he draws attention to the marginal behavior of regret and compensation. Again, Michael Stocker’s sensitive treatment of ambivalence of value judgment and desire is impaired by his attempt to reconstruct the poles of ambivalence regarding what one ought to do as non-action-guiding.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Patricia Marino grounds her claim that ambivalence is consistent with action on a condition of prioritization of the conflicting desires.

## V. OPENLY INTERRELATED ENGAGEMENTS

Davidson famously articulated a version of the presumed inconceivability of ambivalence of desire (and of value judgment) in the case of weakness of the will. While ostensibly allowing internal conflicts in general, his view in fact deprives at least one pole of such “conflicts” of its motivational character, and thus of its being a disposition to action.<sup>11</sup> This is a pity because the concept of basic or constitutive rationality—namely, the core of Davidson’s analysis of the mental—directs us to a more appropriate understanding of conflicts of desires and of emotions.

Davidson emphasizes that mental attributions assume the agent’s basic rationality, or, in other words, that the ascription of an engagement consists in its implicit and explicit rational linking with other engagements of the person.<sup>12</sup> As I see it, what basic rationality captures is the character of engagements (actions, mental attitudes like emotions or judgments, etc.) as perspectives that the person has. Now, assertions on any topic may always need additional assertions in order to be understood. The central concepts of subjectivity require more than the dependence of propositions on other propositions. They require the dependence of a mental attribution on other propositions pertaining to a certain category, i.e., other mental attributions concerning this person. Moreover, this dependence must suggest the sense of such propositions for the person they concern and not only for those who ascribe them. Differently put, the concepts of subjectivity demand that our interest in the sense of an attribution to Sandra of a mental engagement has to do with the sense that the engagement has in Sandra’s life. The proposition that Sandra is happy at her friend’s success presents a point of view of Sandra. Now, since people are not “abstract points of view,” the question of the sense of an attribution of an engagement to her is a question of how

<sup>10</sup>See Stocker, *Plural and Conflicting Values*, esp. chap. 4.

<sup>11</sup>See Donald Davidson, “How is Weakness of the Will Possible?” (1970, reprinted in his *Essays on Actions and Events*), pp. 21–43. More accurately, the person is disposed to some action, but this action is other than the object of the “conflict.” Davidson transforms mental conflicts into theoretical and cognitive concerns of the person with potential reasons for judgment. Hence, people may be said to be disposed to suitable deliberation.

<sup>12</sup>His argument concerns propositional attitudes (especially beliefs and desires) and interlinks them with action. See “Expressing Evaluations” (1984, reprinted in his *Problems of Rationality*), pp. 19–39. Davidson, however, assumes that other engagements lead to beliefs and desires; see “Actions, Reasons, and Causes” (1963, reprinted in his *Essays on Actions and Events*), pp. 3–21. He finds them analogous to action; see “Incoherence and Irrationality” (1985, reprinted in his *Problems of Rationality*), pp. 189–99, esp. p. 193.

the engagement is related to other particular engagements of the person. For example, a certain behavior may fulfil a desire that expresses an emotion but conflicts with one's plans. Such relations are constitutive of the engagements that they link. Peter longs to meet Sandra *in a sense that* implies a desire on his part, and Peter's being shy about seeing Sandra is a shyness *with regard to* something that he longs to do. Such relations contribute to the identity of Peter's longing or shyness. By the same token, however, these relations are only partly constitutive. If they simply defined the interrelated engagements—as the concepts of a point and a straight line may jointly be defined by the Euclidean axioms—these “engagements” could not impart sense to each other.<sup>13</sup>

Let us look into what partial constitution means. This would be tantamount to seeing that a mental attitude (a desire, for example) cannot be a fixed disposition. We may begin by remembering that a desire and an actual or potential behavior (like any other interrelated engagements) always demand additional context in order to be interrelated. In order to know what Pedro, who wholeheartedly wants to meet his old friend Sarah, might do, we turn to what he judges comfortable or appropriate, to his worries of being intrusive, to his never-ending daily tasks, as well as to an array of beliefs and conventions. Without such additional linkages, Pedro's desire is meaningless. At the same time, any such linkage over-specifies the desire. Thus, a conversation, which is perhaps itself part of the pursuing of the desire to meet Sarah, could change Pedro's ideas regarding how it is appropriate to proceed and reveal the former “actual disposition” as misleading.

Accordingly, we often present attitudes in terms of certain (in any case vague) dispositions in order to emphasize some aspect of the attitude. For instance, a desire is a disposition to fulfil a certain aim, but this does not mean that if one wants something, one always, or only, fulfils one's aim. Rather, the perspective towards fulfilment, in which the desire consists, appears in some relevant way in the actual interlinkages of that desire. If he wishes to call his colleague Sandro this evening, Pedro might indeed do so, but he could also, for example, *forget about* it, being *startled*, perhaps, when it later comes to his mind. Alternatively, he might decline to call Sandro *because* he feels too tired, perhaps *leaving it for* the next day. Or,

<sup>13</sup>While for some purposes we might wish to distinguish pairs of engagements, of which one is part of the other, from pairs that are merely related, this is of no importance for the point here. The constitutive relation as well as the separateness jointly characterize both sorts of cases. Sandra's ambivalence regarding her friend's winning the position for which she also applied does not “contain her applying,” but the ambivalence “contains” her relation to that past engagement. On the other hand, Sandra's happiness for her friend partly consists in the warm congratulations that she offers, but only because these are two engagements that could—in line with other mental connections—come apart. Note also that the proposal that rationally-linked features can be separated is not to be read as the physicalistic-causal counterpart of Davidson's approach. The separateness aspect is part of the logic of the mental and it cannot be isolated from the constitution aspect. Another problem with Davidson's view is that he identifies basic rationality with certain patterns of rationality, mainly the practical syllogism and inference of belief (or his reconstruction of them). If, however, rationality is constitutive of the person and her engagements, this implies that a rational link is any link by which engagements impart sense to each other. For example, Sandra's happiness at her friend's success is understood and lived as a part of an ambivalence. In addition to this general rationality of the opposed emotions qua opposed, Sandra's ambivalence takes a particular shape that depicts how her happiness for her friend is rationally linked with her unhappiness, through further engagements.

maybe, on meeting Sandro's partner accidentally, Pedro would partly pursue his wish to call him by mentioning it, and so on.

Consider now another sort of instance in which we emphasize an aspect of the attitude by articulating it in terms of some disposition. We may note that a pole of ambivalence of desire presents a disposition that in fact is not carried out as such. Peter wants to meet Sandra, and this suggests a certain course of action. But he also does not want to meet her, and this invites conduct that is inconsistent with the first course. There is much that he could do in such case, but he cannot pursue both these mutually exclusive routes. On the other hand, such dispositions help to show the point of the things that one does. They allow one to see how the poles interconnect.<sup>14</sup>

I will not discuss here the logic of action in light of contrary desires. Let us attend, however, to an example of the distance that an action might have from conflicting inclinations even while one pursues them. We return to Peter's mixed feelings towards meeting Sandra. Now suppose that in accordance with these mixed feelings Peter wants to phone Sandra but is also deterred by it, and in the end leaves the house and turns on the answering machine.

All of this suggests several conclusions. First, we see that we have the conceptual tools needed to speak of inclinations toward opposed behavior, without rendering the attribution of the opposed desires self-contradictory. Second, it turns out that the behavioral dispositions that explicate desire in ambivalence and in other contexts refer back to desires that no actual or potential behavior can exhaust. Third, we see that an abstract ambivalent desire that P and that not-P might leave us rather clueless as to the character of the ambivalence. We know then that the agent is in some respect disposed to certain vague and changeable P-enhancing behavior, as well as that she is disposed to such P-preventing behavior. We also know that she wants that P but that she wants it as something she also, in some indeterminately given way, does not want, and that this is revealed in the character of her dispositions, under her ambivalence, to fulfil P and to fulfil not-P. Yet, what is the positive character taken by these structural relations, which are already known in regard to the abstract level? The interconnections of behavior, desire, and opposed desire must presuppose actual and potential relations with the rest of the person's life. Such relations would in the case of emotional ambivalence include the emotions that the desires participate in, constitute, and express.

## VI. CONFLICTS OF EMOTIONAL DISPOSITIONS: A CASE STUDY

At this stage, it should be possible to appreciate the character of attitudes as openly interrelated with behavior, opposed attitudes, and other engagements. Thus, we can return in a concrete way to the fundamental problem of the presumed impossibility or inexpressibility of ambivalence. We may now be able to reject various directions of behavioral reduction of the emotions and the conflict, and we can attend to irredemptive relations of emotions to behavior, desires, and opposed emotions.

<sup>14</sup>This formulation is still deliberately vague. When we emphasize the mutually exclusive routes, our focus can be on a notion of desires that we would have if they were not part of the ambivalence, as well as on a complete fulfilment of one desire, or alternatively of the other, under the ambivalence.

Despite the introductory discussion of desire, the primary domain for this analysis is going to be that of emotions and emotional ambivalence. Here the *interlinkages* between emotions and desires evoked above demonstrate the *difference* between two kinds of attitude, even while both are behavioral dispositions. After all, were we, on the contrary, to identify the behavioral disposition of emotion with a desire, the emotion would be the desire rather than be interrelated with it. Neither, as we see below, can we conceive of an emotion as a set of desires.

Our concern here is with ambivalence as behavioral conflict. We wish to dissolve the seeming conclusion that ambivalent attitudes are bound up with paralysis, and indeed that ambivalence is impossible. The direct relation of the concept of desire to behavior has brought the attitude of desire to the fore of our inquiry. This special relation, however, also diverts us from our general concern, whereas the differences between desire and emotion recommend that we study how emotional ambivalence is related to behavior. For emotional ambivalence in fact emphasizes at one and the same time the seeming difficulty that behavior confers on ambivalence and the irreducibility of ambivalence to an opposition of behavior.

The focus on emotion emphasizes the difficulty. When we think about emotional behavior, we are often interested in any behavior to which the person is disposed in so far as he possesses a certain emotion. Regarding desires, on the other hand, we have a more specific interest, namely, in dispositions to behavior that would comprise the intended fulfilment of the desire. If we acknowledge that the concern for fulfilment is narrower than that of the disposition to behavior in which a desire can be said to consist, we may feel that ambivalence of desire<sup>15</sup> does not in general threaten action out of the desires, even if it allegedly thwarts fulfilment.<sup>16</sup> Before turning, accordingly, to emotional ambivalence, let us tackle certain possible objections emerging from the analysis of emotion. One may suggest, based on one's preferred analysis, that emotions are not behavioral dispositions and thus the problem of the presumed meaninglessness of an opposition of such dispositions cannot arise.

<sup>15</sup>Indeed, ambivalence of desire may take the form of fulfilling one of the desires, while the contrary desire shows itself in other ways. This changes nothing. On the one hand, the behavioral dispositions in a conflict of desire stand in mutual opposition, as with any other conflict, and the disposition fulfilments are mutually opposed in an even stronger sense. On the other hand, though I do not offer a detailed analysis of it in this paper, conflicts of desires allow attempts and even some successes at joint fulfilment of the opposed desires.

<sup>16</sup>In an earlier footnote I enumerate some works that acknowledge ambivalence but tend to describe action in ambivalence as action in accordance with one pole. I have disregarded, however, the further subtlety of some of these treatments so far as they adopt some variant of the misconceived dismissal that I discuss above of the behavioral opposition. While they distinguish the fulfilment disposition of one desire, such proposals give some minor place to an opposed behavioral disposition. Thus Stark understands virtuous conflicts in terms of a desire acted on that is opposed to emotions that do not entail opposed desire but apparently are expressible in behavior. There are other variants, e.g., to allow both poles to be expressed in deliberation. Kristjánsson takes this approach to deliberation. I tend, however, to read his account of the achieved state of ambivalence, in which one acts with one pole, as non-ambivalent. Many others allow deliberative behavior in ambivalence while supposing the deliberation must end either in solving the ambivalence, or in a state of confusion. See Peter Bauman and Monika Betzler's introduction in *Practical Conflicts: New Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), pp. 1–26. Another variant would be to contrast a pole of ambivalence acted on to a pole that is repressed and expressed by symptoms.

The replies must differ here according to the objections. Thus concerning the thought that emotion *is* an occurrent feeling, I will do little more than mention the various lines of its rejection, in particular the two Wittgensteinian points. (1) Any feeling is possible only through the public character that its interlinkage with behavior confers on it, and (2) the scope of emotion goes beyond actuality. Even if we can speak of certain feelings that are not attitudes—a feeling of sadness that comes from listening to the sounds of night, perhaps—emotional ambivalence by definition requires attitudes. For when we say that an occurrent feeling, thought, or deed expresses ambivalence, we go beyond the actuality towards the two opposed points of view.<sup>17</sup>

It would be a very different objection to propose that emotions are judgmental or semi-judgmental rather than conative attitudes, and in fact a pseudo-objection. For emotions may have as much in common with judgments as with desire. How could this matter to us? Judgments must be lived, or expressed in behavior, just as desires are.<sup>18</sup>

In a third line of objection, one might also suggest that emotions are like perceptions, and that neither ambivalent perception nor perception as behavioral disposition is possible. I hope in another paper to examine these negations, as well as to ask how a perceptual account of emotion ought to be elaborated in light of emotional ambivalence. Such an inquiry would, in particular, draw on the acceptance, mentioned above, that emotions are attitudes, and also that ambivalence necessarily pertains to attitudes while emotions can be ambivalent. For our current purposes, these points simply entail that a legitimate perceptual account may not dismiss the need for the discussion that follows.

## VII. CONFLICTS OF EMOTIONAL DISPOSITIONS: WHERE IS THE PRESUMED REDUCTION?

The first thing to note is that conduct in accordance with emotions need not be purposive, namely, that it would not always pursue a mediatory desire that *P*. Thus, when a person smiles because he is content, the smile expresses his being content. It is possible, of course, but not necessary, that he smiles *in order* to express his being content. More ordinarily, if asked why he is smiling, he might perhaps answer “for no reason, I am just content regarding certain news.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Emotional ambivalence may be consciously felt at once. It may also happen that for some reason it only endures for a minute.

<sup>18</sup>Judgments are also thought of as negating the possibility of rational—or any—ambivalence on independent grounds and in fact Greenspan rejects a judgmental account of emotion in light of the possibility of emotional ambivalence. Tappolet takes on the task of showing that ambivalence permits judgmental and perceptual accounts of emotions. I agree that ambivalent judgments are possible, and may be rational, but reject Tappolet’s account. See Christine Tappolet, “Ambivalent Emotions and the Perceptual Account of Emotions,” *Analysis* 65 (2005): 229–33. Hili Razinsky, “Emotion, Ambivalence and the Concern with Objectivity,” in review.

<sup>19</sup>I suggest that we not postulate the existence of a desire in cases in which the desire would be supposed to be exhausted by the “desired” intentional action. Thus, it seems reasonable to think of smiling as intentional action. Many other non-purposive emotional actions are clearly intentional—think of singing a song, or helping somebody in need, as manifestations of happiness. But in ordinary cases of smiling (or

The connection of emotion to non-purposive behavior and action—"behavior" is used below as a shorthand—makes futile the attempt to *reduce* the emotional opposition to an opposition between behavioral inclinations.<sup>20</sup> In the role of an emotional expression, the behavior cannot appropriately be described as "done in order to . . ." <sup>21</sup> Once this is seen, however, the temptation of inconsistency in the notion of opposed emotional dispositions to behavior loses its hold. Without such a description we lack a notion of the opposition of actions (and, derivatively, of behavioral dispositions) as mutually exclusive. We have noted that such mutual exclusion captures, in a sense, the conflict of desires, for it articulates its core aspect of contradictory aims at (unequivocal) fulfilment. Without an analogue in the case of emotions, there is reason to judge that we need not worry that emotional conflict implies pairs composed of an act and its avoidance.

Before turning to a brief examination of non-purposive emotional behavior, I want to extend my point. Much emotional behavior relates in fact to mediatory desires. The desires arising out of different emotions, however, do not necessarily conflict.<sup>22</sup> For instance, Sandra may want, on the one hand, to stay away from her friend, unhappy as she is about her friend's success, and on the other, to hug her friend when they do meet, being happy that he won the position. Thus her emotional conflict does not make her pursue contradictory aims. Moreover, a behavioral inclination around an emotional desire is not identical to the desire's "fulfilment disposition." The course of life under an emotion involves fulfilments together with articulations of desires, announcement of them, postponing desires, finding substitutes for them, etc. Thus, conflicts of emotional behavior cannot be understood in terms of conflicting fulfilments.

Even if opposed emotions do not generally dispose us to opposed fulfilments, they are still opposed dispositions to behavior. Perhaps, then, we were too rash to

helping) out of happiness, to say "He wants to smile (help)" is redundant, for it means nothing beyond the actual behavior. In particular, a tendency to smile when feeling happy about something does not suggest a general concern with smiling that the happy person realizes in different occasions. See Hans Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, trans. J. Gaines and P. Keast (Chicago IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996) and David Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003). They suggest insightful studies of behavior beyond the model of desire fulfilment. Joas's book may represent a wide (in particular, pragmatist) literature that understands attitudes in terms of the behavior of agents. It may also represent the weakness of much of this literature, which lacks resources to understand attitudes apart from the actual ongoing behavior and so cannot even articulate ambivalence. Finkelstein's Wittgenstein-influenced work does not leave room for ambivalence.

<sup>20</sup>In the corresponding case of conflict of desires, the move has the merit of emphasizing the connection between desire and action. But it conceals the possibilities of actual ambivalent behavior.

<sup>21</sup>One thing that can happen is that potential emotional behavior will become an object of desire because of the ambivalence. One will *want* to smile.

<sup>22</sup>See Koch, III. Koch, however, distinguishes cases in which emotional ambivalence turns on behavioral disposition from cases in which it turns on other aspects, and reduces the former to oppositions of behavioral inclinations or desires. It is also interesting that conflicting emotions can sometimes find expression in a conflict of desire, when the emotions do not both invite the respective desires by themselves. Let's suppose that because Sandra is polite, she would easily congratulate people even though she is wholeheartedly unhappy about their success. Congratulations comprise an expression of the happiness that she ambivalently feels towards her friend's success, but she is deterred from it by her unhappiness.

dissipate the reductive approach to emotional ambivalence. In order to examine this, let us focus on smiles and their like, in which natural oppositions seem to occur.

Although emotions, like desires, have typical behavior, and although opposed emotions, in a sense, also have opposed typical behaviors, they are not in general opposed in the sense that pertains to the fulfilment of desires. We might, however, acknowledge an important resemblance between emotional and volitional behavioral oppositions. We saw that even the opposition between contrary desire-fulfilling actions is not determined independently. The opposition is between such actions as realizations of contradictory aims. Similarly, the opposition between the contrary emotions defines a contrast in regard to their respective characteristic behavior. Thus, crying and laughing stand in contrast due to the contrary emotions of sadness and joy that they typically express.

Here, however, the affinity ends. The difference lies in that the definition of laughter and tears in relation to joy and sorrow implies no linking of them to two contradictory sentences. Two points should be considered regarding this issue. First, in most cases, there are no contradictory descriptions regarding the typical behavior of opposed emotions. As said above, the opposed emotions do not convey such descriptions regarding them. Furthermore, clinging to behavior that is typical of opposed emotions, we could note that the sentences that relate to such behavior independently of emotions are usually not contradictory.<sup>23</sup> “He is in tears” is not logically opposed to “he is laughing.” Moreover, they are empirically liable to be true together. Forms of behavior that cannot be attributed to a person at the same time (e.g., “he is in tears” and “he is chattering”) usually characterize very different, rather than ambivalent, emotions. There are cases, however, in which certain characteristic behavioral expressions of contrary emotions contradict each other. It is typical for the joyous person to laugh, and for the sad person<sup>24</sup>—and even more so for the angry person—it is typical not to laugh.

The second point to which we are led by the lack of mutual exclusion between typical emotional behavior per se would be to ask what it could mean to state that emotional ambivalence is reduced to opposed inclinations to behave. We began by formulating emotional ambivalence in terms of such inclinations and faced the regrettable conclusions of a reductive interpretation of this formulation. Our closer inspection, however, reveals to us now that in the case of emotions there is no reductive interpretation to begin with. One can present the laughter (or certain sorts of laughter) as expressive of joy and the tears as expressive of sorrow. One can also try defining the sorrow through the tears and the joy through the laughter. This definition, however, hides the opposition between the emotions, unless it returns, circularly, to the joy and the sorrow themselves. Laughter and tears are not opposed except as expressions of opposed emotions. What then if we try and represent opposed emotional behavior by the most contradictory, but less paradigmatic, form? The inclination to smile and the inclination to refrain from it may perhaps establish ambivalence. At this level, however, the character of the ambivalence is

<sup>23</sup>This concerns descriptions that are independent of emotion as far as possible and as long as it is possible.

<sup>24</sup>At least when her sadness is neither ambivalent, nor bound up with discomfort, shock, etc.

altogether unclear. When we attribute to Peter—who in this version, has met Sandra by chance—both an inclination to smile and an inclination to refrain from smiling, we have not yet distinguished between what could be his ambivalence regarding the meeting and an alternative where his joy is unfortunately accompanied by an aching jaw.

I have argued that to understand emotional ambivalence in terms of behavior cannot suggest understanding it through mutually-exclusive behavioral pairs. At the same time, we saw in Section V that the opposition of inclinations to fulfilment well characterizes ambivalence of desire, only so long as it does not serve as its reduction. In particular, first, inclinations to fulfilment depend on actual desire and ambivalence, and desire and ambivalence are necessarily open to new mental interlinkages. Second, an inclination to fulfilment is bound up with non-fulfilling behavior. A desire is a disposition to any behavior that can be part of the route the agent takes in wanting that P. The agent's desire to eat an apple disposes him to eat one, or to go to the market, but also to look enviously towards someone else's apple.<sup>25</sup> Third, the opposition of fulfilment inclinations clarifies rather than exhausts the person's behavior, fulfilment included.

Let us conclude the case against the reduction of emotional ambivalence to ambivalent behavior by returning to emotions that are closely related to desires. The statement that an action done "in order that P" characterizes a given emotion is equivalent to a comprehension of the emotion through the *fulfilment* of a desire that P. In typical cases, the one who loves tends to get close and the one who dislikes draws away. The act of getting closer is "in order that I'll be near to . . ." and the act of drawing away is "in order that I will not be near to . . ." In these cases the opposed emotions may imply opposed desires.

Are we back with the impossibility of the ambivalence or its expression? Of course not. Such cases permit the emotions and desires to be expressed, and, moreover, they may also take the form of a reasonable fulfilment of both the opposed desires. For example, the character of the ambivalence may be such that a routine of meeting the person but only when other people are present is a reasonable compromise. The possibility of joint fulfilment is in fact far stronger than what we need, i.e., that conflicts of emotion are irreducible to contradiction, even to the extent that they are reflected by conflicts of desire.

Does the example even suggest that some emotional ambivalence may be understood, like desire, in terms of contradictory behaviors? A further consideration shows that the opposed emotional dispositions cannot be exhaustively defined in terms of opposed desires, even when an opposition of desires is a primary expression of the ambivalence, as in the example. This is demonstrable in the fact that from the desires alone one cannot deduce the existence of the emotions, i.e., the opposition of desire, in itself, does not make clear the character of the ambivalent opposition. Differently put, getting close versus drawing away are here inclinations that express certain mixed feelings. Or, we may say, an emotional purposive behavior may be bound up with the determining of purposes, rather than merely with pursuing them,

<sup>25</sup>Add to this that the fulfilment disposition cannot be delineated.

and acts that would fulfil contrary desires express emotional ambivalence also as the setting up of these changeable and conflicting purposes. The point being that the desires are interlinked with the emotions and the emotional ambivalence, and as such they only partially constitute it. Extending the example, the loving dislike that the agent bears may later come to mean that he prefers not to see the person concerned at all (the agent's love makes every instance of that person's rudeness more painful to him). The possibility of such a change of character in what we might still see as one and the same attitude is one way to argue that the desire-fulfilling dispositions did not define the emotions in the first place.

On top of all this, the term "the typical behavior of an emotion" does not indicate a determinable set of behavioral forms expressive of an emotion. Nor does the term deny that an emotion that will not be described as ambivalent may have expressions and even typical expressions that are themselves contrary. The admirer, for instance, sometimes will try hard to get close to his hero and sometimes will be concerned to keep away. Moreover, the term does not suggest that the typical behavior necessarily instructs us about the emotion. Thus, pulling someone's braid can express infatuation, or hate, or just boredom. Examples like these also allude to over-determination as a way of dealing fruitfully with ambivalence.

### VIII. DISSOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

In this paper I have raised the fundamental problem that behavior posits for the possibility of ambivalence. Ambivalence interlinks two attitudes towards the same object through their opposition, while mental attitudes involve and, in an important sense, are dispositions to, behavior. As such, ambivalence consists in opposed dispositions to behavior. This appears to depict ambivalence as self-contradictory or at best a non-expressible attitude. I have taken on the task of showing that this appearance is misleading and derives from an illegitimate reduction of attitudes to determinate behaviors and of ambivalence to independently given attitudes. In order to achieve this I have suggested a post-Davidsonian analysis of attitudes in terms of their basically rational interlinkage with other attitudes, behavior, and further engagements. Basically rational interlinkage implies that attitudes are understood in terms of behavior, but also that the behavior is understood in terms of the attitude and that the attitudes are understood as transcending the behavior that they are disposed to manifest. In a similar way, attitudes are related to each other by way of partial constitution. In particular, each of the poles of an ambivalence is understood through its opposition to the other pole, and, by the same token, as a separate attitude transcending this opposition.

Basically rational interrelations have thus given us the tools to examine that which invites reductive interpretation of the definition of ambivalence in terms of dispositions to behavior. One thing that supposedly invites a reductive approach is the definition of conflicts of desire in terms of dispositions to act in order to fulfil contradictory propositions. I have distinguished the behavioral dispositions that desires must comprise from the narrower fulfilment dispositions in terms of which they may be legitimately defined. Yet a problem of mutual exclusion is not created

on any level, or so I have argued. Instead, the formulation in terms of mutually-exclusive behavioral inclinations presents the impossible aims that are jointly expressed, and may in part even be fulfilled, in one's actual behavior. I have, however, made emotional conflict, in which the fundamental problem is more conspicuous, the primary object of the analysis. I have shown that the logic of emotions does not point to any formulation of conflicts in terms of mutually exclusive behaviors. Emotional conflicts are not generally defined in terms of opposed desires and when they do, the interlinkage with behavior is not tantamount to a definition in terms of the mutually exclusive aims. The typical behaviors of opposed emotions are consistent with each other, while in any case the behavioral dispositions of an emotion and an emotional conflict refer back to the actual emotion, including the opposed emotion and other attitudes.

Thus, emotional ambivalence does not make room for the notion of mutually exclusive behavior unless we presuppose that the dispositions that comprise the emotions exclude one another. As for this supposition, it would deny not only ambivalence but also emotions qua dispositions, which are basically rational and hence open to new interlinkages. And yet how can we abandon the analysis of an emotional conflict as a conflict of dispositions to action, if attitudes are behavioral dispositions? Why call a case of dislike mixed with love ambivalent unless, in disliking a person, one shapes a route that one's love for that person rejects? Well, why should we abandon the analysis of conflicts of love and hate or joy and sorrow as conflicts of behavioral dispositions? If one's emotions direct one in contrary ways, then—at least analytically speaking—one might have been emotionally engaged with the object in a way proposed by one pole of the ambivalence or by the other. That is, ambivalence of emotion suggests behaviorally wholehearted inclinations. A different emphasis can refer to opposed routes of conduct potentially taken by the person, were she to reshape her ambivalence in the form of clinging to one pole while repudiating and disregarding the other. In both versions the ambivalent person is disposed to behave in contrary ways that, by their mutual reference, account for what she does.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup>This paper has greatly benefited from the suggestions of Ayal Donenfeld, Mark Joseph, Maggie Little, and Liran Razinsky.

