

## Anger and Chess

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Gert, Heather J. "Anger and Chess," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. XXII, *Philosophy of the Emotions*, P. French & H. Wettstein, eds., University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1998, pp. 249-265.

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In this essay I take what I think of as a Wittgensteinian look at emotions. I do not mean by this that I am going to explain Wittgenstein's view of emotions. His primary claims are negative; emotions are neither states nor processes.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, keeping in mind his negative claims, along with the reasons and illustrations he gives in support of them, I hope to say something positive and interesting about emotions. My project is also Wittgensteinian in the sense that I take seriously his claim that philosophers should focus on descriptions, rather than on explanations.<sup>2</sup> I am not sure that philosophy can offer no useful explanations, but I am sure that philosophers should do more describing than they usually do before attempting their explanations. In keeping with this perspective, I will begin by looking at a situation in which a person gets angry, and consider what we might say about the sorts of descriptions that are appropriate in that situation.<sup>3</sup>

### THE STORY

Here is my story. Keep in mind that the initial project is merely one of description. At this stage we are not worrying about how things must be, despite initial appearances. We are not looking for an explanation.

Lenny is a devoted Packers fan, and he is quite fond of his green and gold Packers cap. Imagine that he is somehow persuaded to let his friend Jason borrow the cap, and Jason loses it. When Jason confesses, Lenny is very angry. At first Lenny jumps up and down and shouts all sorts of nasty things at Jason. But after a short while (maybe an hour or two) he begins to calm down. Of course, this does not mean that he ceases to be angry after only an hour or two. For days, or weeks, or even months, angry thoughts pass through his mind, and once in a while he says something about how angry he is that Jason lost his Packers cap. Lenny might continue to be angry at Jason for an awfully long time, but as time passes he will think about the incident less and less often.

Now imagine that a couple of years have passed since Jason lost Lenny's cap. Although Lenny had not been speaking to Jason, eventually they fell back into their old routines. At the time our story continues Lenny has not thought about Jason's losing his cap for a few months. Now I come for a visit. Jason and I are sitting around talking, and I ask him if Lenny is still angry about the fact that he lost his cap. Jason assures me that things are back to normal, and Lenny is not angry anymore.

Is Jason's description of the situation correct? Is Lenny no longer angry? As mentioned above, not only is it the case that Lenny does not mention the incident to Jason, he really has not thought about it in a long time. Moreover, let us stipulate that he exhibits no unconscious hostile behavior towards Jason, is having no unexplained nightmares, etc. Given all of this, it seems to me that Jason's description is correct: Lenny is not angry anymore.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, suppose that I am a bit mischievous, and after talking with Jason I go looking for Lenny. When I find him I ask him if he is still angry with Jason. He says, "Hey, I'd forgotten all about that. Now that you mention it, yes I am still angry!" and he immediately phones Jason to cancel their plan to meet for beers at the Chapter House.

Is Lenny right? Is he still angry? Is his description of the current situation one that we would naturally accept? I think that it is.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that Lenny is angry, so the only question is, is he still angry, or is he angry again? It is easy to imagine a slightly different scenario in which, regardless of what Lenny said, it would be more appropriate to describe him as angry again. In this alternative scenario Jason apologizes profusely, buys Lenny another Packers cap and a case of Guinness, and Lenny sincerely forgives him. The incident comes up from time to time, but Lenny neither feels nor acts angry, and he recalls that he has forgiven Jason. Again, he eventually forgets about the incident, but, when I show up Lenny is having a bad week, and is quite peevish. As in the previous story, when I ask about the incident he claims that he is still angry.

In contrast with the original situation, it is clearly correct to describe this new scenario by saying that Lenny is angry again. In the new scenario, during the intervening time Lenny's attitude towards the event had changed from one of anger to one of forgiveness, whereas in the original case the only attitude he ever had toward it was anger. That is, although in the original scenario there was a time when Lenny did not have any attitude towards it, there was no time when he had an attitude towards the event that was incompatible with being angry. In contrast in the second version of the story the original episode of anger had ended, and the current episode is a new one. (Although this contrast is suggestive, I do not pretend that it is conclusive evidence that in the first scenario Lenny's claim that he is still angry is correct.)

Thus, my first intuition was that Jason was correct when he described the situation by saying that Lenny was not still angry. My second intuition is that Lenny is correct when he later describes himself as still being angry. These intuitions appear to present me with a conflict. If Lenny is correct in saying that he is still angry, then it looks as if it follows that Jason cannot have been correct when, in referring to a time between the original event and Lenny's latest assertion of anger, he describes the situation by saying that Lenny is not angry.

One way to avoid the prima facie conflict is to simply admit that my initial intuition about Jason's description was mistaken. Indeed, when I return to Jason and tell him about my conversation with Lenny, he will surely be committed to saying that Lenny was still angry, and that his own earlier statement was incorrect. Despite this, placing myself at the time of Jason's original assertion, I find my initial intuition concerning the truth of that claim surprisingly resilient. Maybe there will be some time in the future such that at that time the correct thing to say will be that Jason was wrong. Does it necessarily follow from this that at the time of the assertion the correct thing to say is that he is wrong? I am not certain.

Although the rest of this essay is my attempt to deal with my intuitions about Jason and Lenny, the discussion should be of interest even if one does not share these intuitions. In the following section I will compare the situations I have just described with how participants in a game of chess might describe their own situation. Next I will give some reasons for thinking that we should not invoke inner states or dispositions in our explanations of anger. And, finally, I will argue that the descriptions we have been discussing are accommodated if we think about anger and chess games in terms of series of events.

## ANOTHER STORY

Before I say more about how seemingly conflicting intuitions might be reconciled, let us look at a parallel example having nothing to do with emotion. This example is vaguely suggested in §459 of Wittgenstein's *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I: "'Don't you feel grief now . . .?'—is that not as if one were to ask 'Aren't you playing chess now?'"<sup>6</sup>

Here is the example:

Michael and David are engaged in a game of chess by mail. Usually, when one receives a move, he replies by return post. But sometimes other obligations intervene and it is impossible to get back to the game for a week or two. Sometimes even a month.

Now imagine that Michael receives a letter from David, but is unable to respond immediately. One thing comes up after another, and Michael postpones thinking about the game. Eventually, he forgets about it altogether, and even though he is no longer busy, he does not send David a response. A few months after David sent Michael his last move, I ask David, "Are you and Michael still playing that game of chess?" David says, "Well, we never finished it, but it fizzled out. No, we aren't playing that game any more." Later I run into Michael, and I ask him if he and David are still playing. He says, "Oh my goodness, I forgot all about it. Let me see, what would I do? Oh, yes." He scribbles off a note to David and says, "Yes, we are still playing."

My intuitions in this case are parallel to my intuitions concerning Jason and Lenny. When I ask David whether he and Michael are still playing, he is correct in saying that they are not. If I had said nothing to Michael, the game would not have continued. But when I talk with Michael, his action (at least if it is followed up by further appropriate actions by himself and David) makes it the case that they are still playing.<sup>7</sup>

## DISPOSITIONS

We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we shall know more about them—we think. But that is just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter. For we have a definite concept of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that we thought quite innocent.)—And now the analogy which was to make us understand our thoughts falls to pieces. So we have to deny the yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium. And now it looks as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we don't want to deny them.<sup>8</sup>

Many philosophers have been tempted to explain the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, etc., associated with anger by hypothesizing an underlying disposition (a state). Sometimes this is due to the fact that they lack the intuitions I have just described, but sometimes it is despite sharing such intuitions.<sup>9</sup> ("What other explanation is possible!?" ) It should be noted, from the beginning, that to talk of dispositions is to move from a description of what is observed to an explanation involving the postulation of something that is not observed. Prima facie, where there is a conflict between such a description and an explanation the description should take precedence.<sup>10</sup> (What is being explained?) Thus, if your intuitions about Jason and Lenny are like mine, you should be somewhat reluctant to accept the disposition hypothesis. (It is interesting to note that there is much less of a temptation to offer this kind of explanation in the case of the chess game, although the cases are in many ways parallel.)

There are other reasons to be wary of the disposition hypothesis as well. Although answers in terms of dispositions are notoriously difficult to provide, this is not my primary reason for rejecting the attempt in this case. (Philosophical solutions in general are notoriously difficult to provide!) My worry is that, as far as I can see, no account of dispositions will provide states of the right sort. Or, better, the descriptions that are appropriate when we talk about anger are of a different form than appropriate descriptions of dispositions.

In what follows I will often need to refer to the sorts of thoughts/beliefs,<sup>11</sup> desires, feelings and behaviors characteristically experienced or exhibited by a person who is angry. Unfortunately, there is no term that covers all of this. Thus, I will often use "SCEEPA" (pronounced "see-pa") to talk about Stuff Characteristically Experienced or Exhibited by Persons who are Angry. Just as it is possible to experience a feeling characteristic of anger without actually being angry, one can experience or exhibit SCEEPA without being angry. The term is intended merely to indicate certain types of feelings, behaviors, etc., and not to assert anything about their actual connection with a particular instance of anger.

Presumably, the claim that anger is a disposition would be the claim that a certain sort of state (or disposition) gives rise to angry behaviors, feelings, desires, etc., in the appropriate circumstances, and that being angry is a matter of possessing this sort of state (or of having this sort of disposition). On this view, displaying or undergoing SCEEPA cannot be sufficient to determine that one has the appropriate disposition. The actual disposition which, in a particular instance, gives rise to feelings, desires, etc., characteristic of anger, might not

be a disposition that would generally give rise to SCEEPA experienced or exhibited in these ways in the appropriate circumstances. For example, the sort of scowl that is characteristic of anger might, in a particular instance, be caused by indigestion. (This scowl might even cause someone to believe that I am angry.) If indigestion is, or involves, a disposition to scowl in this way, we have an example of a case in which a disposition underlies SCEEPA even though that disposition is not anger, or in any interesting way associated with anger. In other words, the mere fact that SCEEPA occur does not guarantee that they arise from the sort of disposition with which one would want to identify anger.

On the other hand, neither would complete failure to exhibit or experience SCEEPA about a particular event mean that a person did not possess that disposition. It may simply be that the appropriate circumstances never arise. Dispositions need not be actualized. A glass is brittle even if it never breaks. Thus, it makes sense to describe something as possessing a disposition regardless of whether or not that disposition ever expresses itself in any way. So, happenings characteristic of a disposition do not guarantee the presence of that disposition. And the presence of the disposition does not guarantee that it will actually cause anything. Is anger similarly independent of such public and private SCEEPA? I think that we can see that it is not.

Let us return our example. Although Lenny exhibited SCEEPA in the actual story, we need not suppose that his inner states guaranteed that he would have experienced or exhibited such SCEEPA regardless of how the future unfolded. Perhaps his inner states were such that there were very few alternative contexts in which he would have experienced or exhibited any of them. Maybe my asking him my question in just the way I did, at just that time, was merely unfortunate, and if I had asked at a different time, in a different tone (or not asked at all), Lenny would never again have thought, or felt, that he was still angry with Jason. Putting it another way, maybe in most of the possible worlds closest to that in which our original story occurred, Lenny exhibits no further SCEEPA, and sincerely claims that he is not still angry with Jason. Regardless of all of this, regardless of the fact that Lenny's outburst and subsequent feelings, etc., are the result of unfortunate coincidence, and regardless of the fact that he is not angry at parallel points in many close possible worlds, it seems clear to me that he is angry here and now.

The fact that Lenny is actually still angry poses a problem for one who wants to claim that being angry is a matter of possessing a disposition. It follows from the above discussion that the apparent SCEEPA he experiences or exhibits do not guarantee that the disposition behind these SCEEPA is to be identified with anger. (They may have been brought about by other dispositions.) One might try to claim that the possession of the appropriate disposition does not require that there are many situations in which it causes anything. That is, one might want to claim that being such that there are even a few situations in which one would experience or exhibit SCEEPA over an event is sufficient to guarantee that one is still angry about that event. But if this is so then the defender of dispositions must allow that possession of this kind of disposition is sufficient for being angry even if those situations never arise, and the SCEEPA never actually occur. But then the defender of dispositions is claiming that we are all still angry about an awful lot of stuff! For just about any event that you have- been angry about, there is at least one context or accessible possible world in which you are provoked to experience or exhibit SCEEPA over that event at some time in the future. Surely, this does not make it now the case that you are angry about all of these events.

We can push this point a little further. In the above example we were talking about a very small set of SCEEPA; Lenny's verbal reaction to my question and a few immediately following thoughts/beliefs and feelings. But it might be that a series of unlikely accidents continue to remind Lenny that Jason lost his cap, and remind him of it in such a way as to cause him to experience or exhibit SCEEPA. This might be so even though, each time, if he had been reminded in just about any other way no SCEEPA would have been produced. Surely the fact that he experienced or exhibited SCEEPA because of unlikely accidents, and would not have otherwise, does not undermine the fact that, given these accidents and his reactions to them, Lenny is still angry. But for exactly the same reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph, a dispositional theory of anger cannot say that the mere fact that Lenny experiences or exhibits SCEEPA, even at relatively brief intervals, is enough to make it the case that he is still angry. It is not sufficient to guarantee that he has had the right sort of disposition. Just as above, to say

otherwise, to say that even this weak disposition is enough to constitute being angry, would make all of us angry about implausibly many things for an implausibly long time. This is so because in saying this the defender of dispositions also commits herself to the view that we are angry even when we do not actually experience or exhibit SCEEPA, as long as there are even just a few instances in which we would have experienced or exhibited SCEEPA had we found ourselves in those circumstances. Thus, either the dispositional theory must deny that Lenny is still angry in this case, or it must insist that there is a great deal more anger around than we realize.

What we have just seen is that conditions that are sufficient for making it correct to describe a person as still angry are not sufficient for attributing an 'angry disposition' to that person. On the other side, we can also show that it need not be correct to describe the person as angry even though they are strongly disposed to experience or exhibit SCEEPA. That is, it is also reasonable to reject the identification of anger with a disposition (state) that would result in SCEEPA in many appropriate circumstances, if none of those circumstances arise, and so none of the SCEEPA occur. Imagine that Lenny's situation was precisely the same as in the first scenario, except that I did not remind him that Jason lost his cap, and stipulate that there are many other situations in which he would have been prompted to experience or exhibit SCEEPA. Nevertheless, imagine that no circumstances ever actually arise which prompt him to experience or to exhibit, consciously or unconsciously, any further SCEEPA towards Jason, etc. In that case, can we describe Lenny as still angry? For how long? Do we really want to say that he is angry because of what would have happened if things were different? When Lenny dies, would it be correct to say that for the rest of his life he remained angry about Jason's losing his cap—even though it never again crossed his mind? To say of Lenny, sitting in a nursing home reminiscing about happier days in Ithaca, that he is still angry that Jason lost his cap is, at best, misleading. While not as extreme a problem as in the previous cases, note that this also makes it the case that we are angry about stuff we currently have no reason to think we are angry about—and may even be pretty sure, forever, that we are not angry about. On virtually any theory of dispositions such an unmanifested disposition is possible. But to say that Lenny was still angry insofar as he continued to have the appropriate disposition is to allow that even in this case he may still have been angry right until the day he died, regardless of any actual experiences or behaviors.

Is a person courageous if she is never presented with an opportunity to exhibit courage? Is she cowardly if she is never faced with a situation in which she behaves in a cowardly manner?<sup>12</sup> One widely accepted view holds that being courageous or cowardly is a matter of moral luck: if you never have the good luck to be in an appropriately dangerous situation, you do not have the opportunity to be courageous." If you behave courageously on a particular occasion you are rightly said to have been courageous; no underlying state ensuring that you will act in a similar way in the future is necessary. Can we not say something similar about anger? (I do not mean to say that courage and anger are parallel in every regard.) If, as a result of being in the situations he is actually in, Lenny frequently experiences or exhibits SCEEPA concerning Jason's losing his cap, then he is (and continues to be) angry about it. If he is never in these situations, and never again experiences or exhibits these SCEEPA, he is not. Whether or not one continues to be angry over a period of time does depend on the circumstances in which one finds oneself.

Here is one more story intended to show that anger is not merely a matter of possessing a certain disposition or underlying state. Imagine a pleasant society in which persons very rarely experience or exhibit SCEEPA. Not only do they rarely behave in an angry manner, they rarely feel angry. It would be natural, and I contend correct, to describe this as a society in which persons are rarely angry. Now, it might turn out that the reason that persons in this society rarely experience or exhibit SCEEPA is that they have developed customs about how to behave in situations in which a person is likely to otherwise be provoked to anger. Imagine this is the case, and that these customs are reasonably subtle; it is not merely a matter of saying things like, "You're right. You're certainly right. Of course, you're right." They might involve providing certain distractions, etc., and precisely what the customs dictate depends on the situation. Sometimes it merely takes a moment, sometimes it involves a series of actions that take place over a week or more. Finally, let us suppose that if you took a person out of this society and plunked him down in the U.S., he would get angry just as often, and in just the same way, as the rest of us do. Would this last observation require us to revise our original description of the society?

Would we have to say that although persons in that society rarely feel or act angry, they really are angry just as often as we are? I do not think so.

What this example shows is that even if there were a state which, in our society, reliably resulted in SCEEPA, that same state might not reliably result in SCEEPA in another society. (More outlandish examples involving brain implants, or alternative evolutionary developments, could be used to make the same point.) Again, mere possession of a certain internal state (disposition) cannot constitute being angry.

Finally, it might be thought that the advocate of dispositions can avoid these difficulties by specifying the relevant disposition by reference to what it is responsible for bringing about in relevant circumstances: A disposition identified with anger just is whatever disposition/state results in SCEEPA in these circumstances. Although the primary means of identifying a disposition may be by means of what it causes to happen, if there is no additional way of characterizing it, no other way of identifying the state or states giving rise to these happenings, then the appeal to dispositions loses its explanatory power. If possession of any state (even a changing state) giving rise to SCEEPA counts as possessing the disposition underlying anger, no matter how dissimilar those states are in other respects, then the fact that a person possesses an 'angry disposition' is no explanation of why she behaves in a certain way, or has certain experiences, when she is angry. It is merely a matter of definition. Thus, one cannot avoid the above criticism by defining the relevant disposition in terms of what one wants to explain. Nor does it amount to much of a description. Once the circumstances and effects are described, it adds nothing to talk about a disposition.

#### A SERIES OF MANIFESTATIONS

But what is the alternative to dispositions? Here is a picture of what I have in mind, and then I will say something a bit less metaphorical:

Imagine a string that comes into being as just a speck when someone gets angry. (The same thing might be said about what happens when a game of chess begins.) As time goes on the string gets longer. Each time that appropriate SCEEPA occur the string is stretched tight and the current end is tacked down; so we have a string with a series of tacks in it. After each such occurrence the string continues to grow, the section of the string that grows after the most recent SCEEPA is not tacked down, and so flutters freely. When a person who has been angry sincerely forgives the person at whom he was angry, the string is snipped, straightened, tacked down at a prior moment, and it ceases to grow. Exactly where the string is to be cut may depend on a variety of factors. Sometimes the person who has been angry will remain angry right up until the moment of forgiving. At other times he may sincerely claim that he has not been angry for some time. In this case there may be no exact point at which he ceased to be angry. (The story with chess games will be slightly more complicated because, unlike anger, a game of chess can be put on hold. We can accommodate this, however, by saying that when a game is put on hold the string temporarily stops growing, and starts again when the game is resumed.)

Although we use the imagined string to keep track of the course of a person's anger, it does not represent anger. Rather, it represents a span of time during which a person might continue to be angry. The placement of the tacks at specific points on the string represents the frequency with which SCEEPA over this incident occur, and the length of string that is tacked down represents the length of time during which the person was angry. When there is a clear point at which the person ceases to be angry (or, perhaps, when a very long time has passed since the last SCEEPA) the string stops growing, but until that time the string continues to grow so that future episodes can be recorded if need be.

It seems to me appropriate to describe the time represented by the part of the string that is fluttering as time during which that person is not angry, or at least that this is an appropriate description when a sufficient length of it is fluttering; no doubt there is some gray area here. When I ask Jason if Lenny is still angry, there is a long bit of string fluttering about. Therefore, Jason is correct (and not merely justified) when he denies that Lenny is angry.

During the moment Jason produces his utterance there is nothing about that moment that makes it time during which Lenny is still angry—because it is not flanked by appropriate SCEEPA.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, it is a moment that could come to be flanked by SCEEPA, because it is after a number of SCEEPA, and before any incident explicitly marking the end of Lenny's anger. At the time Jason makes his utterance, the point on the string that represents that moment is not on a straightened point between two tacks, but it could come to be. Were this to happen, then it would come to be a moment in the middle of a span of time it is appropriate to describe as the time during which Lenny was angry. If I had put my question to Lenny when he was in a better mood, his response might well have been to say that he had not been angry in some time; in this case, all other things being equal, it would never come to be the case that Lenny was angry during the time I spoke with Jason. As the story goes, however, when I ask Lenny about Jason's losing his cap, his blood pressure rises, he has violent desires in regards to Jason, and the string is pulled tight and tacked down. Now his anger reaches back, through the moment of Jason's utterance, all the way to the point at which it began.

To put the point less metaphorically, to talk about anger over a particular event is to talk about a series of SCEEPA, the sorts of desires, feelings, thoughts/ beliefs, and behaviors that are characteristic of anger. If a distinction is made between being angry in the sense that one can be angry about an event for a year (it should be clear why I hesitate to call this a dispositional sense) and what many philosophers talk about as a more occurrent sense, as a first pass we might put the point by saying that one is angry for a year insofar as, during that year, one experiences a series of appropriately related instances of occurrent anger over that event.<sup>15</sup>

This raises some questions. For instance: What are philosophers talking about when they talk about occurrent instances of anger over a particular event? And how must these instances be related in order for it to be correct to say that a person has been angry for an extended period of time?

Let us begin with the first question. What is an occurrent instance of anger? It is tempting to assume that if one is experiencing an occurrent instance of anger one must, at that time, have thoughts about that about which one is angry. But this is not true. One can act in a peevish way, and later realize that one acted in this way because one was angry about such-and-such, something that had not crossed one's mind at the time. On the other hand, one can certainly experience an occurrent episode of anger without exhibiting this in one's behavior. Nor is there any particular feeling that one must be experiencing during an occurrent episode of anger; anger can involve a frantic, knots-in-the-stomach feeling, or a calm planning-for-revenge feeling, among others; and most, if not all of these feelings can be experienced in connection with different emotions. Neither are occurrent desires necessary or sufficient in order for one to be occurrently angry.

The usual way philosophers talk about occurrent instances of anger allows that these instances can last for varying amounts of time. Some talk as if an occurrent instance of anger can last for an hour or more, and it must certainly be possible for such an episode to last more than five minutes. In any case, whatever the length of time one occurrent episode of anger can last, it must last some amount of time; anger is not instantaneous. Thus, I propose that even with what are sometimes called occurrent episodes of anger, what we have is a series of characteristic thoughts/beliefs, desires, feelings and behaviors occurring in relatively quick succession. (Perhaps they also sometimes occur simultaneously, but they need not.) There is nothing intrinsic to any individual feeling, behavior, etc., that guarantees that it is part of an occurrent episode of anger.

When we describe a person as being angry in the sense that she can be angry for a year or more, it is easy to see that a moment cut out of the time during which she was angry need not be such that it would constitute a moment of anger outside of that context. For many moments during the year, there will be no temptation to describe them as moments of anger; a moment during which she is asleep, for instance. But even a moment during an occurrent episode of anger will be such that it could not be described as anger when taken out of context. For instance, shouting at a person, or reveling in thoughts of harm coming to him are paradigm candidates for what happens during an occurrent episode of anger, but neither of these, taken out of context, need be part of such an episode. Fear, or showing off, might prompt the same kind of shouting. And reveling in

thoughts of harm is not an occurrent episode of anger if these thoughts are not conjoined with the belief that the person deserves harm—which is not to say that these thoughts and beliefs must be simultaneous.

Similar things can be said for moments during a chess game. Two persons may still be playing a game of chess even though both of them happen to be daydreaming for a moment. Obviously, if that moment were put in another context, it would not be correct to describe those persons as playing chess during that time. But even a moment when both are concentrating on the game, even when one is moving a piece, would not be correctly described as a moment of playing chess if not for the surrounding context.<sup>16</sup> For instance, in order to teach me how to deal with a certain situation, someone might set up the board in a certain way. The moment during which we are looking at the board and thinking about what move to make might be intrinsically indistinguishable from an instant during the playing of an actual game. Nevertheless, in this context we are not playing a game of chess. Moreover, if, during an actual-game, I pretend to myself that the current situation is the one just described—someone has set the board up this way in order illustrate a point—I am still actually playing the game.

Thus, even the SCEEPA that go to make up an occurrent episode of anger are only parts of an occurrent episode of anger in the appropriate context. Anger of the sort that lasts a year is not different in kind from what we call occurrent anger. In both cases what we have are a series of SCEEPA spread across time with greater or lesser frequency, none of which would be correctly described as instances of experiencing or exhibiting anger in all other contexts. Nevertheless, anger over an extended period of time is dependent on more occurrent anger in the following unsurprising way; it is only correct to describe one as angry over an extended period of time if there have been moments at which it would have been correct to describe one as angry right now.

Returning to our second question: How must the SCEEPA we have been discussing be related so as to count as members of a single series? In other words: under what conditions does another SCEEPA indicate that a person is still angry about a given event? As we have seen before, the tempting answer is that all these SCEEPA must be caused by a single disposition; they must all be explained, in part, by the existence of a single ongoing state. But, for the reasons given above, this will not do. Unfortunately, I do not have a detailed story to tell about the appropriate conditions. Nevertheless, my suggestion is that in order for the variety of thoughts/beliefs, feelings, desires, and behaviors to be part of a series in virtue of which one is correctly described as still being angry about a particular event, those thoughts, feelings, desires, and behaviors must have that event as a common cause.

This will be more than a little tricky. For one thing, we want to be able to make the distinction between the cause of one's anger and that at which it is directed. Similarly, we will need to be able to take into account situations in which one is angry, but the event about which one takes oneself to be angry is merely anticipated or is only mistakenly believed to have occurred. Perhaps Lenny believes that Jason lost his cap, but Jason did not. Perhaps Jason returned the cap by slipping it through the mail slot in Lenny's door, but a burglar, who also happened to be a Packers fan, broke in that day and stole it. Of course, if Lenny is unaware of these circumstances, he would say that he was angry that Jason lost his cap. But would he be correct?

Robert Gordon's discussion of emotions provides a useful way to approach this last issue.<sup>17</sup> Gordon argues that for any emotion E, falling under his label "factive emotions," to say of someone that he is E that p involves making the claim that p is true. (Anger is a factive emotion, as are annoyance, pride, amusement, delight, and many others.)<sup>18</sup> Thus, if I say that Lenny is angry that Jason lost his cap, I am at the same time asserting that Jason did lose the cap. If I do not mean to assert that Jason lost Lenny's cap, then I can at most say that Lenny is angry because he believes that Jason lost his cap. Of course, if I falsely believe that Jason lost the cap, I can sincerely claim that Lenny is angry that Jason lost his cap, but I will be mistaken for exactly the same reason I would have been mistaken, in that case, if I asserted that Lenny knew that Jason lost his cap. For just the same reason Lenny will also be mistaken in his claim to be angry that Jason lost his cap. His claim assumes that Jason lost his cap, but Jason did not.

Thus, it seems to me that the truth of the claim that S is angry that p depends on the fact that S is experiencing or exhibiting SCEEPA and that p is at the beginning of one or more causal chains leading to these SCEEPA. (In addition, no doubt it depends on more specifics about which types of SCEEPA are experienced or exhibited as part of the same series. I do not have the room to pursue the project to this level of detail here.) The SCEEPA may be caused in very quick succession, in which case many philosophers will talk about an occurrent episode of anger, or they may be caused over an extended period of time. Thus, to say that Lenny is angry that Jason lost his cap is to say that Lenny has certain thoughts/beliefs, feelings and/or desires, and behaviors, etc., all of which are caused by the occurrence of p. To say that he is still angry that p is to say that he continues to experience or exhibit SCEEPA caused by p, and that there has been no 'official' end to this series of SCEEPA. The relevant SCEEPA need not be directly related—one need not cause the other, for instance—but they must be related insofar as they share the event of Jason's losing Lenny's cap as a common cause. Of course, this does not require the existence of a single continuing state grounding these assorted SCEEPA.

To see that no such state is necessary it may be useful to consider another case in which we can say that something continues to have (a series of) effects, even though it is clear that there is no continuous underlying state. Consider a natural disaster, such as an earthquake. Nowadays, after a major quake we are careful to inspect buildings left standing to see that there is no hidden damage causing them to be unsafe. But suppose we did not do this. If we left these buildings standing, and did not repair the hidden damage, from time to time a building would fall. Over time we might say that the quake caused a series of building collapses. This is so even though there is no single state underlying all of these collapses. It might also be that many of the people who experienced the earthquake continue to have nightmares about it. Again, there will be no single state underlying all of these nightmares, much less a single state underlying the nightmares and the building collapses. Nevertheless the quake can be said to have had a series of unfortunate effects. It might also have happened that the earthquake shifted the course of a stream, and there may be various consequences of this.

Some businesses might have been helped by the quake, and others harmed. In all of these cases we would still be feeling the effects of the quake for quite some time, even though no continuous state was involved in these effects, nor would we need to appeal to a standard progression of states in order to say that each of a number of different quakes caused a series of otherwise unrelated effects.<sup>19</sup>

Consider all the ways in which one's anger may be experienced or exhibited: desires, behaviors, stomachaches, etc. Just as in the case of the building collapses and the nightmares, there is no a priori reason to assume that all of these SCEEPA are the result of a single state. Moreover, a brain changes in many ways over time, so that there is no reason to assume that the state that underlies a given experience or behavior one time must be precisely the same when that experience or behavior occurs again in the future. The internal state responsible for the fact that Lenny says, "Jason is an irresponsible creep" today might not be precisely the same internal state that was responsible for his saying it last month—even though there is likely to be a historical connection. What makes it appropriate to say that Lenny is still angry that Jason lost his cap is that all of these various SCEEPA—some perhaps parts of distinct causal chains—can be traced back, in appropriate ways, to the fact that Jason lost Lenny's cap.

#### WHY DO WE TALK THIS WAY?

If there is no unified state of anger, why does the way we speak lead us to believe that there is?<sup>20</sup> If Lenny scowls when Jason's name is mentioned, it is natural to say that he is scowling because he is angry with Jason. Following this up, if one then asks why Lenny is angry, it is natural to answer that he is angry because Jason lost his Packers cap. The most obvious way to interpret such a sequence of questions and answers seems to be to say that Jason's losing Lenny's cap caused Lenny to be angry (to be in a particular state), which in turn caused Lenny to scowl. Of course, similar things could be said about why Lenny's stomach is churning, and why he called Jason to cancel their date to drink beer. But while postulating a state called "anger" is tempting for these reasons, we have also seen reasons for thinking that our purposes in giving an account of anger will not be well served in this way. If what was said above is plausible, we should resist the temptation to claim that being angry is a matter of possessing an internal state in virtue of which one will experience and exhibit SCEEPA if one

encounters the appropriate circumstances. There is no a priori reason to suppose that the various ways in which a person experiences or exhibits anger over a particular event must have been caused by a single concurrent state, or even that they be part of a single causal chain of events. In fact, given the wide variety of SCEEPA, wouldn't it be at least as surprising if all SCEEPA were found to be the result of a single state?<sup>21</sup>

Why, then, do we talk as if we are referring to a particular state when we say that someone is angry? While this is an interesting question, it is not a philosophical one; the answer is almost certainly empirical, involving facts about human psychology, and possibly specific historical events. Here is one possibility. Clearly, there is what we might call an anger syndrome. A person who has angry thoughts/beliefs and desires prompted by the fact that so-and-so did such-and-such is likely to engage in predictable sorts of behaviors. It is not likely that we will be able to predict precisely what he will say or do, but general predictions will probably be correct. Similarly, if he behaves in certain ways, it is likely that he is having certain sorts of desires, etc. The fact that he is doing something like this gives us reason to expect he will do something like that. And so on. Because behaviors and other SCEEPA tend to cluster in this way, knowing that one SCEEPA has been experienced or exhibited is useful; it lets you know that other SCEEPA are likely. And you can learn that other SCEEPA are likely without being told which particular SCEEPA has already been experienced or exhibited.

Insofar as the purpose of saying that so-and-so is angry is to warn others, or something like this, it is useful to tell them to expect behaviors, etc., of a certain sort. We cannot simply give a list of behaviors: our predictions are not that precise—different things are to be expected in different situations, and we do not know which situations he will be in. Moreover the assortment of behaviors to be expected even in a single situation is simply too great.<sup>22</sup>

Nor is it always a simple matter to warn others by telling them that so-and-so has already behaved in a certain way, or has a certain desire, etc. Whether or not a behavior or a feeling is indicative of the syndrome is exceedingly context relative. Simply to say that he stomped his foot, or even that he shouted, does not tell others to expect further behavior characteristic of anger. Maybe he was killing a cockroach, or trying to be heard over a passing train. Context matters in much more subtle ways than this, and although we are very good at recognizing when a foot stomp or a shout signals the likelihood of more SCEEPA, we are not always good at offering a description that makes this clear—without saying that he is angry. Thus, here is another reason to name the syndrome. Then we can give the warning without worrying about providing a long and complicated description of the event and its context.

The 'explanation' I have offered here for why we might use the term "anger" and its cognates as we do is obviously sketchy, and I have no intention of defending it as the true explanation. (As a philosopher, that is not my job.) It is merely my intention to illustrate that an explanation for this way of talking need not involve postulating the existence of a state referred to by the term. My early discussions, I hope, have demonstrated that they should not. There is no internal state referred to by the term "anger." But there is certainly plenty of angry people in the world.

## NOTES

I would like to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities for providing the funding that allowed me to attend the Summer Seminar at which the bulk of this essay was written. I would also like to thank John Heil, the Seminar director, both for his help during the seminar and for his useful comments on a later draft. Finally, I would like to thank all of the Seminar participants, especially the Pirates—and most especially Lenny Clapp, both for his comments on the penultimate draft and for listening to me prattle on about anger all summer long.

1. Or, perhaps better, there are no states or processes that are emotions.
2. This sentiment is evident throughout Wittgenstein's later work. Among other places there is an extended discussion in *Philosophical Investigations* third edition, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1958), §§109-33. It is also discussed in many sections in *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*,

vol. I, ed. by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), including, §22, §§256-57, §§633-38, and §927.

3. It is interesting to note that although we will be talking about descriptions one might give of a person who is angry, or that such a person might give of himself, our job as philosophers is not to provide such descriptions, but to ponder them. That is, if we follow Wittgenstein's advice regarding descriptions during our investigation of anger, then our final report will be filled not with descriptions of anger, but with descriptions of our descriptions of anger. See my "Wittgenstein on Description," *Philosophical Studies* 88, no. 3 (Dec. 1997): 221-43.

4. It is interesting to note that even when we talk about unconscious anger we mean anger that 'comes out' in certain ways. A person who manifests anger over a certain event from time to time is not said to be unconsciously angry during the intervening time. Roughly, a person who is unconsciously angry experiences feelings, desires, etc., and/or exhibits behaviors that are characteristic of anger (or, perhaps, that are interestingly similar to the feelings, desires, behaviors, etc., that are experienced or exhibited when one is angry), but does not naturally attribute any of this to being angry.

5. Try not to worry, yet, about how this fits with what Jason said.

6. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I, §459. This example was also, and independently, suggested to me during a conversation with Michael Watkins and Jody Graham.

7. One important difference between anger and chess games is that while it is possible to take a break from playing a game of chess, it is not possible to take a break from being angry. That is, it is possible to come back to a game that had been truly stopped; it is possible to have been playing a game earlier, to have stopped playing the game, and then to be playing the same game later. The following is a legitimate description of one's activities: "We were playing for a while, but we've taken a break for lunch and we'll get back to the game sometime this afternoon." Thus, it may be correct to say that two friends have been playing the same game of chess for fifteen years, because they keep having to put it on hold for extended periods of time. But the same is not true for anger. Although one can put the demonstration of one's anger on hold, one cannot literally put one's anger on hold and come back to it later. If you truly manage to *stop* being angry, any later instance of anger counts as a *new instance*—at 'best' you would be angry about the same thing *again*.

8. *Philosophical Investigations*, §308. Most of my discussion in this section will be concerned with dispositional explanations of anger insofar as these explanations invoke a continuous state supporting that disposition. Even plausible counterfactual analyses of dispositions postulate such states. If the states responsible for the truth of a consistent counterfactual fluctuate, it seems implausible to maintain that a single disposition is maintained. See C. B. Martin, "Dispositions and Conditionals," *Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (1994): 1-8; and David Lewis, "Finkish Dispositions," *Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (1997): 143-58. Although my discussion focuses on those who assume that being angry over an extended period must be supported by a continuous state, very similar points might be made against theories that claim that a standard process underlies being angry. Theories that do not invoke an independently described unified state or standard process will *be* discussed briefly at the end of this section.

9. In discussing my own intuitions with friends both inside of philosophy and outside of it, I have found that a significant number share my intuitions, and a significant number do not. Although this survey is admittedly limited, my conclusion is that the intuitions split fairly evenly. For reasons cited below, this is not of serious concern to me. See note 14.

10. Let me emphasize that this is only *prima facie* true. Descriptions can be mistaken.

11. My use of the phrase "thoughts/beliefs" should not be interpreted as my taking a stand on the debate as to which cognitive or pre-cognitive states are relevant to anger. I believe that the debate is an important one (although I would recast the terms in which it is held), but it is not one I am prepared to enter into here. I use the awkward phrase "thoughts/beliefs" because, for many of the same reasons that I believe it is incorrect to think of anger as a state, I am uncomfortable speaking about cognitive *states*.

12. It is generally acknowledged that a prior *feeling* that one is courageous or cowardly has little to do with whether or not one actually is courageous or cowardly. Many who are sure that they could perform feats of great daring if given the chance flee when faced with true danger, while many who are sure they would faint dead away if threatened have no fear when actually placed in such a situation.

13. This example is borrowed from Michael Dummett. Dummett discusses this example in a number of places, for example, see "Realism," in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 148-150. Although the example is borrowed from Dummett, my use of it is somewhat different from his.
14. To tell the truth, I am somewhat less concerned to defend the claim that Jason was correct at the time than I am to defend the claim that there is no current fact of the matter at the time I talk with him in virtue of which he is wrong. Perhaps this is enough to account for my intuition that he is not wrong at the time he makes the original claim. If Jason is mistaken, it is in virtue of a future fact, the future fact of Lenny's manifesting anger in the appropriate way.
15. Not surprisingly, having qualms about saying that one can be angry in a dispositional sense, I also have qualms about talk of an occurrent sense. Nevertheless, many philosophers do talk this way, and I will help myself to the phrase for the time being. My own view of what such talk comes to will be evident by the end of this section.
16. See *Philosophical Investigations*, §200.
17. Robert M. Gordon, *The Structure of Emotions: Investigations in Cognitive Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), esp. chapter 3.
18. See *ibid.*, 27 for a more extensive list of factive emotions.
19. Similar stories might be told about our brains as well. Perhaps different parts of the brain are responsible for the various manifestations of anger, so that it is misleading to attribute all of these manifestations to a single state. Maybe the initial shock of hearing that his cap had been lost affected different parts of Lenny's brain in different and independent ways. Moreover, through time there will *be* many intrinsic changes in the brain, such that the state that is today responsible for Lenny's utterance, "Jason is an irresponsible creep" is unlikely to be identical with the state that was responsible for the same utterance last month. (Or, to put the point in terms of processes, the process that culminates in the utterance "Jason is an irresponsible creep" today is unlikely to be intrinsically identical with the process that culminated in the same utterance last month. Of course, on this view there is the added difficulty that if being angry over an extended period of time is a matter of an ongoing process, then both utterances must be part of the same—token—process.)
20. At best, whether or not there is a unified state (or standard process) underlying all 'true' manifestations of anger is an empirical question. Even if you are convinced that there is such a state (or process), you must admit the possibility that empirical investigations will show that there is not. In that case, is there no anger? What Wittgenstein says about pain seems relevant here: "Imagine a person whose memory could not retain *what* the word 'pain' meant— so that he constantly called different things by that name—but nevertheless used the word in a way fitting in with the usual symptoms and presuppositions of pain"—in short he uses it as we all do. Here I should like to say: "a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism" (PI §271). The point seems even stronger when applied to anger, a state which, if the dispositionalist were correct, we would have no direct awareness of most of the time it was there.
21. One might reply that while there may be a variety of states responsible for the variety of types of characteristic manifestations of anger, nevertheless it is perfectly legitimate to add these states together and to talk of a single complex state. This reply does not address the objections to dispositions given above.
22. When I say "behaviors to be expected," I do not mean that it is expected that all of these behaviors will manifest, but that all of these are behaviors such that it would not be unexpected were they to manifest themselves.