

WANTING, GETTING, HAVING

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I *Propositional Attitudes and Affective States*

I will be interested in the relation between two aspects of the complex conceptual apparatus we employ in psychological description. On the one hand, we use a variety of verbs followed by 'that'-clauses to attribute what philosophers have come to call *propositional attitudes*: 'Sandie believes that it is raining, knows that it will soon stop, hopes that tomorrow will be fine, but fears that it will only rain again.' While such constructions have traditionally been found problematic for systematic semantic theory, they are understood well enough by all of us (as speakers) for present purposes, and I shall have nothing to say about the problems. Nor will more be said than already has been, with the citing of these examples, and the allusion to received usage, to demarcate precisely and in general terms what the propositional attitudes are. On the other hand, we also have the apparently simpler practice of giving non-propositional descriptions of our states of mind. Here I am thinking of the application of those concepts such as that of being happy, or being afraid, or being disappointed, or being angry, no full account of which – whatever else it might involve – could omit mention of the distinctive way being in such a state *feels* to one who is in it. I will call such states *affective states*, in order to avoid having to attend to any distinctions there may be between feelings, emotions, and moods: these states are what are often called 'occurrent emotions', the intention in calling them affective states being to allude to the essential phenomenological dimension just mentioned.¹

A reference to affective states is involved in taking certain propositional attitude ascriptions at face value. For example, we say that Sandie is

happy that it has stopped raining, or disappointed that it rained for so long, or angry that she was not elected. We call the attitudes so ascribed *affective propositional attitudes*.² The literature on emotion makes frequent mention of directed emotions with specific objects. Arguably, so many different relations have been considered as 'the' emotion/object relation that this terminology does more harm than good.³ However, in the cases in which emotions are said by those given to this way of speaking to be directed toward *propositional* objects, it is affective propositional attitudes that are at issue (as in 'angry that – or: at the fact that – she was not elected' rather than 'angry with those who did not vote for her'). There is of course no suggestion that to have an affective propositional attitude at a time, one must actually be in the associated affective state at that time (in our example: be feeling angry).

Philosophers have paid considerable attention to the relationship between propositional attitudes and affective states, often noting that certain states are not available to an individual lacking an attitude falling within some range. For example, Philippa Foot (1958) cited the following examples involving ('directed') affective states with correlatively required beliefs: (i) *a*'s being afraid of *b*, *a*'s believing that in some way *b* is a potential danger to *a* (ii) *a*'s feeling proud of *c*, *a*'s believing that *a* is in some way favourably associated with (in the most straightforward case this being by being causally responsible for the merits of) *c*. Desires, too, have been amongst the attitudes it has seemed not unreasonable to require for certain affective states. We may use again the case of (occurrent) fear, with the associated desire – not, of course, one necessarily overriding all others – being to get away from that which is feared or else to in some other way remove the threat it is perceived as presenting.⁴ In what follows, we shall pursue connections somewhat less direct that appear to obtain between certain attitudes and states. Specifically, we will be concerned with the propositional attitudes of *wanting* and *being happy (that)*, the latter being one of the above-mentioned affective attitudes, and with the affective state of happiness (in the sense of *feeling happy*). In Section II, we note that there is actually something problematic about the classification of desire (wanting) as a propositional attitude; nevertheless it is a view we continue to work with, after finding a way of construing it so as to make it plausible. Section III suggests that the connections between this attitude and *motivation* have been overplayed at the expense of other connections it has with certain affective states

(principally happiness). The latter connections arise from more direct connections with being happy that such-and-such is the case, which will occupy us in Section IV.

II *Wanting and Having*

First, to clear up the situation with wanting. Let us see how much of a problem for the view that ascriptions of desire can always be presented in the verb + *that*-clause format befitting a propositional attitude is posed by examples not at first sight conforming to this pattern. Consider:

- (i) *a* wants to ϕ
- (ii) *a* wants *b* to ϕ
- (iii) *a* wants _____

where in (i), (ii), ' ϕ ' is schematic for a verb phrase and the blank in (iii) for a noun phrase. The first two seem unproblematically renderable in the preferred idiom, with sentential complements 'that *a* ϕ ' and 'that *b* ϕ ', as long as no fuss is made over the *de se* nature of (i), which it had better not be on pain of not counting '*a* believes that he/she will ϕ ' as a propositional attitude ascription. (No commitment is intentionally incurred here on the question of whether, given suitable senses of 'object' and 'proposition', propositions are in fact the objects of the propositional attitudes – on which see Lewis (1979), or Castañeda (1966), for the seminal observations. There is also an interesting question, raised in Lakoff (1970), skirted here, about a *de se* version of (ii) – giving rise to the construction '*a* wants himself/herself to ϕ ' – and how this is related to (i).) The third construction raises some difficult issues. Consider some instances:

- (A) Tom wants a house in the country.
- (B) Tom wants a glass of milk.
- (C) Tom wants a holiday in Fiji.

One natural line to take would be to say that the desires attributed to Tom in these cases are, respectively, a desire to own a house in the country, a desire to drink a glass of milk, and a desire to go on a holiday in Fiji. This would give a reduction to the form of construction (i), and thence by the earlier recipe, to the *that*-clause format. But wait. Perhaps Tom

wants only to *rent* a house in the country. It is still right to describe the real estate agent Tom consults in his search as knowing, when he goes through his files discarding various urban and suburban properties, that his client wants a house in the country. Yet (A) is not to be regarded as *ambiguous*, presumably. Think about (B). Perhaps Tom is a painter, who wants a glass of milk so he can put it on the table between the flowers and the bowl of fruit, for a still-life arrangement. We can hardly regard (B) as ambiguous between 'Tom wants to drink a glass of milk' and 'Tom wants to paint a glass of milk': pretty clearly, there will be no end to the number of such would-be disambiguations: a particularly virulent case of what transformational grammarians used to call the 'recoverability of deletions' problem.

From a linguistic point of view, we may get around the difficulty by supplying, in *e.g.*, the case of (A), 'Tom has a house in the country' as the sentential complement.⁵ The strategy seems general enough – whether he buys or rents it, if Tom's desire is satisfied, it will be true that he has a house in the country; and what the painter wants, no less than one who is thirsty, is to have a glass of milk; note also that (C) could reasonably be expanded to 'Tom wants to have a holiday in Fiji'. (The renting/buying, drinking/painting indeterminacies do not quite appear to afflict (C): there is very little you can do with a holiday in Fiji other than take – *alias* have – one.) But philosophically such a resolution of the difficulty may well seem less than satisfactory, as is noted by Anscombe in a suggestive passage from her (1957) which I shall quote at the end of this section. What exactly *is* the proposition that Tom has a house, anyway? Once we notice how much further afield our use of 'have' stretches than our use of 'own', its use appears so all-encompassing that it seems no more than a dummy verb. For reasons already rehearsed in connection with 'Tom wants a house in the country', we don't want to say that 'Tom has a house in the country' is *ambiguous*. The usual alternative is to say that we have simply a case of non-specificity. To say that Tom travelled to Europe is not to say anything ambiguous, though it *is* to leave it open whether he went by plane, by boat, or by some combination of these and/or other means of transport. But this doesn't quite seem to fit the present case. It's not that there are various ways of having a house, one of which is renting and another of which is owning: it's more that we don't have any generic conception of having a house to start with, of which these might be seen as further specifications. For what it's worth, the 'dummy verb' account of 'have' seems to me to be made even more plausible if

we switch from the proposed filling out of Tom's desire in (B), 'Tom has a glass of milk', to this variant: 'Tom has a glass of milk beside him'. What does this mean beyond simply: 'There is a glass of milk beside Tom'? And doesn't 'This hill has no sheep grazing on it.' mean just 'No sheep are grazing on this hill'? This suggests that the word 'have' comes in in the process of reallocating previous non-subject lexical material into grammatical subject role.

But could any such sketch be extended to cover all uses of 'have' (with the exception of perfect 'have' which I believe to be at most etymologically related to the homophonous main verb)? Notice how different 'Tom has a glass of milk' and 'Tom has a glass of milk beside him' are in at least the following respect: only the former has a genuine present progressive, because having a glass of milk (*i.e.*, drinking one) is something you can *do*, while having a glass of milk beside you is not something you can do. (This makes having a glass of milk unlike having a house in the country.) Nevertheless one has the impression that this 'have' is semantically neutral, merely indicating some sort of vague association between Tom and a glass of milk, which, people and glasses of milk being what they are, *defaults* to the more specific relation of drinking. When our expectations provide us with no such default setting, we are at a loss as to how to construe a 'have' sentence directly, and grope about amongst such analogies as occur to us. Thus, 'These plants have green leaves' poses no problem, while 'Those nurses have green leaves' does. You might say that the latter sentence, unlikely indeed to be heard outside of a science fiction context in which the possibility is being taken seriously of people spontaneously sprouting leaves, is straightforwardly false, and so the only problem it poses is the problem of how anyone might try to use it, such contexts aside, to make a reasonable assertion. And this problem won't arise if enough of a background is in place. Perhaps the nurses are given leaves of various colours to wear on their shoulders as indications of seniority, and you explain to someone who cannot see that group's leaves: those nurses have green leaves. Do not be misled by the proximity of the leaves to the nurses in this example, thinking of this as a relevant similarity with the case of the trees. It might instead be that each nurse is assigned a rank which is indicated in the register of hospital staff by the placing of an appropriately coloured leaf by that nurse's name: we can again say of some of the nurses that they have green leaves, of others that they have brown leaves.

It may here be worth entering a reminder that the move away from

proximity can also go the other way. A hill, to recall an earlier example, can not only have sheep on it but also have bumps on it: and these bumps are not just close to the hill, they are part of it. We say: things *have* parts. They also *have* shapes. Philosophers have often had occasion to remark on the diversity of what counts as having, for example, in criticizing an excessively perceptual model of sensation by accusing its proponent of assimilating having a toothache to having a toothbrush; or again in diagnosing one source of dualism as overlooking the possibility that 'People have bodies' may be more like 'Objects have shapes' than like 'Kings have palaces'.

The last point I shall make to defend the suggestion – admittedly deserving further elaboration – that 'have' is a semantically neutral dummy concerns relational expressions. Consider, 'Tom has a sister'. It will not be hard to get agreement that this simply says someone stands in the *sister-of* relation to Tom. Taking 'has' as a two place predicate in its own right would lead one into such as invalidities as:

Tom has a sister.
 Every sister is a daughter.
 Therefore, Tom has a daughter

(This recalls an argument about small elephants which was popularly urged against classifying attributive adjectives as one-place predicates.) An even more obvious consideration in the present case would be the oddity of saying that if Tom has a sister and that sister is Sarah, then Tom has Sarah. Of course one can use the form of words, 'Tom has Sarah as (or 'for') a sister', but here we really have the semantically unstructured binary predicate '*x* has *y* for a sister', the converse of the relation '*x* is a sister of *y*'; if we take the above suggestion about the role of 'have' in indicating a re-allocating to cases role, one might almost say here, the *passive* of '*x* is a sister of *y*'. You may say that this is all very well for having a sister, having a daughter, and so on, but perhaps we could make out a case for hiving off *this* use of 'have' from the others, for which a more traditional account, as indicating a very non-specific-binary relation, might be salvaged. I defend the 'dummy verb' account by replying that this would be to make an ambiguity-claim which is very implausible in the light of such remarks as 'Tom is so fortunate: he has a magnificent house in the country, an interesting job, a beautiful wife and two lovely children', which induces no zeugma-reaction.

Where does all of this leave our working hypothesis that all wanting is wanting that? The situation is somewhat delicate. The attempt at reducing wanting a such-and-such to wanting that one should have a such-and-such was an attempt at procuring a uniform paraphrase in the canonical idiom for propositional attitude ascriptions, but we found that the apparent uniformity was spurious. The linguistically uniform results involved havings as relations of all sorts, and it seemed doubtful that we could postulate one sort of which they were all subsorts. A fallback position would be as follows. Drop the attempt at uniform paraphrase, and say instead that in any given case of an individual's wanting a such-and-such, his desire is a desire that p for some p . (Again, we suppress explicit *de se* complications here.⁶) To make clear what the desire is, you can specify the p , thereby producing an attitude ascription of the favoured form. But we pull back from the claim that the ascription so offered is a *paraphrase* of the bare ' a wants a such-and-such' form.

It remains to explain to those familiar with Anscombe (1957) how the point fussed over here differs from one she made much of there. Apparently less persuaded than I am on the secondary status of talk of wanting a such-and-such and the primacy of wanting *that*, she conducts her discussion in the former idiom, and holds that in all but special cases, a person cannot intelligibly 'just want' something, and must be able to supply an answer, which she calls a desirability-characterization of the object wanted, to the question 'What do you want it for?'. The famous case of the man who wants a saucer of mud, so amusingly described by Anscombe, is worth quoting in full:

But is not anything wantable, or at least any perhaps attainable thing? It will be instructive to anyone who thinks this to approach someone and say: 'I want a saucer of mud' or 'I want a twig of mountain ash'. He is likely to be asked what for; to which let him reply that he does not want it *for* anything, he just wants it. It is likely that the other will then perceive that a philosophical example is all that is in question, and will pursue the matter no further; but supposing that he did not realise this, and yet did not dismiss our man as a dull babbling loon, would he not try to find out in what aspect the object desired is desirable? Does it serve as a symbol? Is there something delightful about it? Does the man want something to call his own, and no more? Now if the reply was: 'Philosophers have taught that anything can be an object of desire; so

there can be no need for me to characterize these objects as somehow desirable; it merely happens that I want them', then this is fair nonsense. [(1957), p.70]

A person can't just want a saucer of mud, if Anscombe is to be believed. This is reminiscent of our conclusion, above, that the whole truth has not been told when we say that an individual wants a glass of milk: before we can know what is wanted we need to know if what the person wants is to drink the milk, look at it, paint it, or some other such thing. But this is *not* at all the same as what Anscombe is getting at, for while the completion I request is supplied when I am told that the man who said he wanted a saucer of mud tells me that he wants to sit beside it – for he has then told me what proposition has to be true for his desire to be satisfied – Anscombe's request to be told in virtue of which of its features he manages to find that prospect desirable remains to be met. In fact Anscombe briefly alludes to the distinction between these two different matters in the discussion of a man who wants a pin. Again, I must quote; the closing sentence can be regarded as having triggered the extended discussion above on the subject of the dummy verb 'have':

Now saying 'I want' is often a way to be given something; so when out of the blue someone says 'I want a pin' and denies wanting it *for* anything, let us suppose we give it him and see what he does with it. He takes it, let us say, he smiles and says. 'Thank you. My want is gratified.' – but what does he do with the pin? If he puts it down and forgets about it, in what sense was it true to say that he wanted a pin? He used these words, the effect of which was that he was given one; but what reason have we to say that he wanted a pin rather than: to see if we would take the trouble to give him one? (. . .) It is not at all clear what it meant to say: this man simply wanted a pin. Of course if he is careful always to carry the pin in his hand thereafter, or at least for a time, we may perhaps say: it seems he really wanted that pin. Then perhaps, the answer to 'What do you want it for?' may be 'to carry it about with me', as a man may want a stick. But here again there is further characterisation: 'I don't feel comfortable without it; it is pleasant to have one', and so on. To say 'I *merely want* this', without any characterisation is to deprive the word of sense; if he insists on 'having' the thing, we want to know what 'having' amounts to. (Anscombe (1957), pp.70f.)

There emerges from this discussion, then, a distinction between two kinds of answer to the ‘what do you want it for?’ question which Anscombe has been pressing. One kind of answer does no more than spell out what the desire *is*, by supplying a propositional object: ‘What do you want a pin for?’ – ‘I want to hold a pin with me as I walk around’. A second type of answer to the question, which may be re-asked at this stage, might be ‘Because it makes me feel comfortable’, or ‘To ward off rheumatism’. This is where the business about desirability-characterizations comes in. Supplying them makes the desires intelligible only in the sense of enabling one to understand the person’s having such a desire. But an answer to the question at the first stage is needed before one can even say what exactly the desire *is*. One might venture further here, and say that such an answer is required for one to even understand the desire-attribution, but I think this goes too far. If supplying the that-clause (or its infinitival reduction) were disambiguating a multiply ambiguous sentence, then this would be right, since, pending such a disambiguation, one would have no idea which sense was intended. But we found, in discussion of (A), (B), (C) above, that the multiplicity of would-be senses was too great to make the ambiguity charge stick with any plausibility.

III *Wanting and Getting*

The passages quoted in the last section from Anscombe appear in her (1957) close on the heels of one of that book’s most often cited *dicta*: the primitive sign of wanting is *trying to get*. Let us attend to the role of trying to get, and of what happens when one does or does not get, what one wants. The first thing to note is that talk of getting is paired with talk of wanting *a thing*, rather than the idiom I prefer to take seriously, of *wanting that* (subsuming *wanting to*). Transposed into this preferred idiom, the dictum becomes: the primitive sign of having a desire is trying to satisfy it. There is, this point aside, another disadvantage to Anscombe’s original formulation, nicely observed by Alan White⁷:

This common philosophical linking of wanting with getting is paralleled by the equally common linking of wanting with attaining some end. Philosophers have over-concentrated on examples like ‘I want my car today, so I’ll go to the car-park’ to the exclusion of examples like ‘I want my car today, so I cannot lend it to you’.

Here the desire it would be plausible to ascribe to the subject in each example, incidentally, would be the desire that he have the use of his car on the day in question. The second case is a bit complicated; White may have in mind the fact that no special effort is required to have the use of the car – one simply has to refrain from lending it, and so on. Here one should note that Anscombe spoke of the ‘primitive sign’ of wanting, rather than of a necessary condition. The ‘sign’ talk suggests that the trying in question be regarded as the display of a disposition, as one might say that the canonical display of solubility in water is: dissolving in water. So preparedness to try to realize the desire, should the need for effort arise, is what we expect from the wanter, when it is this aspect of the concept of desire that we have uppermost in our minds. (Some other aspects will emerge presently.) As White notes, an excessive zeal to connect wanting with trying to get may also betray a mistaken belief that one can only want what one does not have.⁸ The formulation in terms of propositional wanting covers, I take it, not only trying to get, but trying to keep: here there is a desire that something should remain the case rather than that something should become the case. Both sorts of desire share this feature: they concern the future. What about a person’s wanting, e.g., to be in the bath right now, as opposed to wanting to get into or to stay in the bath? There may be pressure here to change verbs. It might be said: if the person’s not in the bath, then the most he can do is wish he were or want to get in as soon as possible. This goes along with the line that desires whose unsatisfiability (given the circumstances) is evident to the desirer are not wants but (‘mere’) wishes. Next suppose that the person who wants to be in the bath right now *is* in the bath. Then it might be held that it would be misleading to say that he wants to be in the bath, and better to say that he is glad to be in the bath. I sympathize with the reaction to the first case, though we need not go into the subtle interplay between desire (used as a generic term here), perceived impossibility, and preparedness to act, which gives rise to our threefold distinction between wanting, wishing, and hoping. In the case of the person who is already, and knows he is, in the bath, I do not agree that there is anything wrong with saying he both wants to be, and is, in the bath. But it is, I suppose, correct to observe that there are dangers of misleading an audience by saying too little even when it is true. If I say ‘Sandie wants to be a university lecturer’ and no more, I tempt you to wonder ‘And what is she going to do about it?’, and it may be non-plussing for me to reply: nothing at all, she already is one. The oddity can

be cancelled, it would appear, by heavy stress on 'wants', in any case. What does seem useful about this response is the appropriateness of talk of the individual's being glad to be in the bath when his current desire to be is currently satisfied. Here we come face to face for the first time since we set them aside in Section I, with what were there labelled affective propositional attitudes. I take it of course that being glad or being happy to be ϕ is being glad or happy that one is ϕ .⁹

Preparedness to act on a desire ('trying to get') is, then, one aspect of having that desire. Now that the affective propositional attitudes are back in play, we can discern another. Being happy at the satisfaction of a desire seems to me to be not just a contingent feature of desire satisfaction. The 'trying to get' theme, however it is eventually to be worked out, focusses on the motivational aspects of desire but ignores the emotional side of the picture. This feature helps to create the oddity in Anscombe's pin-wanting example. We imagine the man taking the pin and saying in a very impassive sort of way 'Thank you. My want is gratified.' He puts the pin down and walks away from it, just as miserable as he was before we went to all those efforts on his behalf to procure that pin. In a television documentary about a beauty contest, the winner, newly crowned, wipes away the tears and says: I never realised how much I wanted to win. Presumably she was reflecting not on how much effort she had put in – she knew that already – but on how good it made her feel to have won. This affective dimension competes with the 'trying-to-get' dimension as a measure of the strength of desires. Anticipation of great pleasure on the satisfaction of a desire may not go hand-in-hand with preparedness to expend great efforts to procure that satisfaction. You might say: then the subject does not really much want whatever it is. But this is only one way to measure the strength of desire – the beauty contestant used another. We have both dimensions, neither of them the right way to tell how strong a desire really is, each of them providing a legitimate notion of strength of desire.¹⁰

We need to attend to both of these respects in which a desire may be strong, for example, to get a reasonable understanding of what laziness is. It is hard to understand the way we feel about laziness if the strength of a desire is just given by its motivational efficacy. If I just happen to prefer lying here on this couch to working on the wall-papering, then, other-regarding repercussions aside, what's wrong with my acting on the stronger desire, the desire which shows its greater strength by the fact that I'm still here on the couch? Is it that my longer term interests are thereby

jeopardised? Well, yes: but what does this mean? In this example, there is no pleasure to be got out of wall-papering, though there is plenty to be got out of having finally finished the job. Change the example. Instead of lying on the couch, I could be playing badminton, and moreover, know that this very activity, rather than some end to which it is a means, would give me more pleasure than remaining here. But I just can't be bothered. Measured by emotional payoff, I prefer the prospect of the game to the prospect of extended languishing. Measured by motivating force the direction of preference is reversed. This seems to be what is involved in our conception of laziness as something like a fault in (practical) rationality. There is a violation of a normative principle we might call

'GO FOR IT': Make your efforts at satisfying desires proportionate to the extent to which you'd be happy to have them satisfied.

Stated baldly thus, this principle may not seem very appealing. It ignores, in particular, both the cost of efforts at desire satisfaction and the probability of their not being successful. But it does not seem impossible that some reasonable variation on the 'Go For It' theme will emerge, a principle which enjoins a matching up of the two measures of strength of desire.¹¹ Indeed, the injunction to maximize expected utility may already be such a principle, given an appropriate understanding of 'utility'. The *inappropriate* understanding is that on which this goes by preference satisfaction, with strength of preference revealed by choice of action. When subjective probabilities are similarly calculated from observed behaviour, everyone turns out to be maximizing expected utility all the time: if you think not for some case, that just shows you miscalculated the strength of desires and beliefs for that case. So for the principle to have normative bite, the notion of utility should be that of the extent to which one would be happy to see various outcomes, rather than the extent to which one is motivated to secure those outcomes. You might say this is just replacing preference egoism by hedonistic egoism, by analogy with the parallel distinction amongst utilitarianisms, but there are several things wrong with saying this. First, the suggestion of egoism is wrong – you may anticipate being happy that others are doing well as part of your altruistic desire that they should do well. Second, I am trying to claim that the term 'preference', meaning wanting one thing more than another, because it involves a comparison between strengths of desires,

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can cover both the action-producing measure of strength and the more affectivity-oriented notion. There is not a change from preference to something else. Third – the appropriateness of terms like ‘hedonistic’ in this connection is as yet unsettled, because we may wish to interpret ‘Go For it’ as alluding to the affective propositional attitude of being happy that something is the case, rather than in terms of the affective state of being happy. Nothing has yet been said on the relation between these two things. It will occupy us a little in the following section.

In the meantime, I conclude this discussion of the affective dimension of desire by mentioning a third measure of the strength of desire. This is the extent to which one would be, as far as one can now judge, unhappy to see the desire unsatisfied. (Like the second measure, then, this consideration connects with affectivity rather than with motivation.) Again, let us remain neutral as to what exactly this means – whether it means how unhappy, *tout court*, one would be should that happen, or on the other hand how unhappy one would be that it happened. I am also fudging here, as in the discussion above of happiness at having one’s desires satisfied, the question of which we count, *a*’s estimation of how unhappy *a* would be, *vs.* the extent to which *a* in fact would be. At the moment all I want to say is that something like one of these – the relation between them being touched on in the following section – gets into the act when we assess strength of desire, and that it need not march in step with either the ‘trying to get’ measure, or the ‘how-happy-you’d-be-if-the-desire-is-satisfied’ measure. To show the contrast with the former, consider the case of a man devastated by the departure of a wife he was not prepared to do anything to keep from leaving, or – a mismatch in the opposite direction – your own case when you learn how little you wanted the job you’d been trying your hardest for by noting how little disappointment you feel at not getting it. As to the contrast between the positive and the negative affective measures of strength of desire, we may do worse than to consider, as an attempt to nullify the contrast, this principle that might be put forward as a norm of rational attitude-management:

PRINCIPLE OF PARITY: *Make the extent to which you would be happy that something is the case be equal to the extent that you would be unhappy that it wasn’t the case.*

Again, considerations of probability make this principle implausible just as it stands. For example, while you might be ecstatic, or at least highly delighted to win the state lottery on the next draw, you will not be correspondingly upset not to win. Such an imbalance does not seem to indicate that your attitudes are in any kind of tension. What about when you rate the chances of the thing you want at about 50-50? Say you have applied for a job for which you and one other candidate, reckoned by you to be of roughly equal merit in the eyes of the appointment committee, have been shortlisted. There does seem to be something odd in being of such a mind that the following two conditionals are both true: (i) if you were to fail to get the job, you would be heartbroken; (ii) if you were to succeed in getting it, you would be either indifferent or at best, mildly pleased. It would be interesting to spell out what is involved here, making a case for some modified form of the principle of parity. Some of the relevant considerations will be aired in the following section. In the meantime, let us simply note that if the other job candidate is violating the principle in the opposite direction (he too rates his chances at about 50-50, would be over the moon if he got the job but not at all mortified to miss out) then there is no simple answer to the question which of the two of you wants the job more. As I say, there are simply several different – I've mentioned three – independent dimensions along which strength of desire can be measured. 'Independent' here means that the measures involved can (and often do) come apart, not that this may be so even for someone whose desires are perfectly in order – a point which would of course be contested by a defender of 'Go For It' or of the Principle of Parity.

IV *Affective Propositional Attitudes*

We will soon be back in the area of normative considerations about appropriateness and reasonableness of affective states, but first a few ground-clearing remarks and questions about the affective propositional attitudes are called for. We will concentrate on the example of a person's being happy that something is the case. Compare (1) with (2):

- (1) John is happy that *p*.
- (2) John is happy because *p*.

Well, a common observation to make about sentences like (2) is that they are ambiguous. Perhaps what is intended is a causal explanation, or at

any rate some kind of explanation whose correctness is not jeopardised by John's failure to believe that p , entertain the thought that p , or even be so conceptually equipped as to be capable of entertaining that thought. On the other hand, we may be trying to give John's reasons for being happy. But taken either way, (2) entails that John is happy. It is his being in a certain affective state that we are trying to explain, whether externally or 'from the inside'. (1) on the other hand, does not seem to entail that John is happy, *tout court*.¹² John might be happy that p and unhappy that q at the same time, where we can take 'unhappy' to imply at least 'not happy'.¹³

So much for ground-clearing. Now a question. Would something like the following do as an account of how the attitudes are related to the states in such cases? Being happy that p is being such that were one to fill one's mind with reflection on one's belief that p , to the exclusion of distractions, one would be happy. (Actually it would need to be added that the belief in question was true – the construction in question being 'factive' – and perhaps even a piece of knowledge.) Thus although there is a distinctive way it feels to be happy, and no distinctive way it feels to be happy that p , being happy that p is to be understood in terms of one's feeling the former distinctive way under certain conditions.¹⁴ There may, however, be insurmountable circularity objections to any such account offered as an *analysis*. (What are the distractions to be excluded, if not the things one is not happy about?) Whatever its merits, I think it may be useful to consider some everyday aspects of the kinematics of the emotions with an eye to the role that focussing of attention has on converting affective propositional attitudes into affective states.¹⁵

Consider, for example, the phenomenon of consolation, self- or other-administered. Your house has just been burgled and you've lost your television and video recorder. Still, says consoler, at least they left the record-player and all the furniture, and did no structural damage. Or you've broken your right leg while skiing – but, says consoler, the man in the next bed has broken both legs and his collar-bone. Consolation works, when it does work – and perhaps as often as not one just feels like saying 'Get lost; this morning everything was fine and just look at me now' – by releasing the latent affectivity in your being pleased not everything was taken, or glad that it was only a leg you broke. However miserable you may be, the consoler – who may, as I said, be you yourself – wants to turn the fact that you are happy *that* things aren't worse into happiness, or at least a moderation in your unhappiness, *because* things

aren't worse. And the process works by focussing your attention on the proposition your 'happiness that' was directed on, and distracting it from those other propositions you are inclined to dwell on.

It's interesting that not just any old truths can be expected to be paraded by the consoler before you with any chance of success, however glad you may be that they *are* truths. Suppose that after the burglary, someone says: 'Never mind, at least you don't have a dentist's appointment tomorrow', or after the accident, someone says: 'Well, look on the bright side – at least you had the good fortune twenty years ago to be educated at Oxford University'. The trouble here is that to work well the bright side has to be the bright side of the same general picture as you were previously focussing on the darker side of. (Under some circumstances, such as when trying to get an overall perspective on your life while you wait to die, this may well work: here the picture is bigger.) The need for some kind of relevance in the propositions the consoler makes salient is especially clear when part of the consolation would have you feel *relieved* that things weren't worse, rather than just happy they weren't. If everyone else who had been burgled had lost more than you, or the man in the next bed had his accident as a result of the same avalanche as you, relief has a chance of setting in. You say '*Whew* – that nearly happened to *me*. Thank heavens I got away so lightly.' There is, by contrast, no chance if, when you are distressed by the inconvenience of the intermittent nosebleeds you've been suffering for the last month, someone says '*You* should worry – there was once a man in Tibet who bled to death after his hand was ripped off by a tiger.' There seems no way in which you can respond by seeing your admittedly, by comparison, minor problem, as a lucky break to have escaped *his* fate.

Though consolation works especially well to bring about a favourable mood change when the element of relief is present, relief has no special connection with consolation. After all, you may be relieved not only that things aren't worse, but that they aren't bad at all: for example relieved that you were found not guilty. Here, as always, a bad prospect is lurking, and its salience, as in the burglary and injury examples, is due to its non-negligible probability of eventuating.

Another way for the bad prospect to be made salient is for it, or more accurately something very much like it, to have been recently experienced. You are relieved when a pain stops even when you were absolutely convinced that it was going to stop then. The contrast is provided not by the likelihood of the pain being present but by its all too recent actuality.

I think that something close enough to relief for it to be petty to quibble about the name can arise when neither your recent nor your feared-present life harbours what you're relieved not to be going through. Seeing how bad it is for ill-treated prisoners somewhere as you watch a television documentary (or even a fictional film) may leave you not only sorry for them but relieved not to be undergoing what they are. The bad prospect is made salient by empathy with the victims rather than by a past or risked involvement on your own part.

As a past misfortune recedes relief loses its grip but we are still glad it's over. The consolation move would have us dwell on this where that may help to dispel, for example, brooding resentment over the incident's having happened at all. Is some such move always legitimate? Here you are, happy that something is no longer the case but unhappy that it ever was in the first place. Which of these, let's suppose perfectly appropriate affective attitudes, is the one that deserves to determine occurrent affective tone? We should resist the reply that whenever you are happy that p and unhappy that q , what you should be is happy, *tout court*, rather than unhappy, because it's a better state of the world for more rather than fewer people to be happy. This, or some egoistic analogue of it, may be a good answer to some question, but not the one we were considering. Something more like our usual conception of justification for beliefs, as distinct from a parading of practical reasons for holding them, surely arises for emotions too.¹⁶ The way it would be consequentially advantageous to feel just might not be the way it's appropriate to feel under these circumstances. And a negative verdict on this score need not come in only for those affective states which are sustained by false beliefs. But I have no theory of these matters. (Have you ever had anyone try and cheer you up by saying, 'There's no point being sad about it now – that won't do any good'? As if you were being sad for a *point*.)

People notoriously differ in temperament as to which way, if either, to resolve the affective tone question. Two who have been through the same bad experience may focus, one on its badness, the other on how good it is that it's over. Of another pair who grew up together under idyllic circumstances but have now fallen on harder times, one will be happy because, and not just happy that, things were so good, using – for example – reminiscing as a 'focussing' device, while the other will be unhappy because, and not just unhappy that, it's all over. Actually such temperamental differences may even extend further, so that, in the case of the latter individual he is not only not made happy by reflection on past

happiness but isn't even pleased *that* things went well in the past. After all, not every marriage between a theory of value and a philosophy of time will yield amongst its offspring the claim that if it was good that something happened at a past time, then it is now good that it did happen then. The person we were just imagining denies this claim. There seems no inconsistency. But it's a disconcerting style. Getting off the plane and making for home, you say: Wasn't that the most *marvellous* holiday! – everything went so well. They say: Yes, but that was *then*. It doesn't help us *now*.

Let me close with an example not involving present-to-past contrasts. Suppose I have been looking forward to attending a party at which there will be a chance to meet up with some good friends I haven't seen for a long while, but unfortunately, I have just come to be afflicted by a distressing but not incapacitating sore throat. It is nasty, not only 'in itself', but because it would certainly take the edge off enjoying the party. On the other hand, the party would at least offer some distraction from the sore throat. Given that the party is on, I'd rather not have the sore throat than have it (well that would be the preference anyway, but *especially* given the party); but given the sore throat, I'd rather the party were on than not. So what's the problem? – you ask, tabling my preferences:

1. Party, no sore throat
- (2. No party, no sore throat)
3. Party, sore throat
4. No party, sore throat

The second-ranked item is in parentheses as its position is not forced by my description of the situation – just a plausible enough filling out of the case. I reply that I know all about the preferences, and all about my propositional attitudes, affective or otherwise, and that I am now on my way to that party. But I don't know how to feel. Because of the sore throat, I'm glad the party is on; because of the party I'm (extra) annoyed about the sore throat. These affective attitudes entail no particular affective states, though. It may seem far-fetched to entertain the possibility of normative principles for bridging this logical gap; I hope only to have raised interest in its existence.¹⁷

NOTES

1. See Stocker (1983) for the view of occurrent emotion here assumed.
2. A closely related concept is isolated under the description 'emotional thoughts' in Stocker (1987).
3. Such a case is made out in Nissenbaum (1985).
4. See also the more general discussion in Thalberg (1964).
5. See McCawley (1972), p. 525.
6. As well as suppressing a further complication – also, as it happens, first uncovered in the work of Castañeda – raised by examples such as 'a wants to rescue the victims of the next Mexican earthquake' in which it is no part of what is wanted that there should be an earthquake; see for example. Castañeda (1967), and, for further references and a discussion focussing on desire-attributions, §4 of Humberstone (1982).
7. In White (1975), p.109.
8. The same point was made in Matthews and Cohen (1967).
9. As these constructions figure in the above examples, that is. Of course, there is also the construction with 'happy', as in 'a is happy to go' in which 'happy' means something like '(very) willing'. (This does not exist for 'glad': we have only 'a would be glad to go'.)
10. There would be a circularity in using real or anticipated happiness as a test for desire if happiness were itself construed simply as the state of having one's desires satisfied; but of course the view of the text is that happiness is an affective state, more specifically a matter of feeling good. Even many who take the alternative satisfaction-of-desires line on happiness acknowledge the existence of a genus of containing pleasure, contentment. etc., which is what they are keen to distinguish happiness – as they see it – from. There is, however, a certain hard core opposition, represented perhaps by Ryle (1955) for example, which would deny that any affective state or (to use Stocker's term) 'psychic feeling' can be intrinsically pleasurable. The argument for this view runs: let X be any type of state a subject S can be in; surely it must remain an open possibility that S should be in state X and not enjoy being in state X. Thus no type of state, whether physical or psychological, can be of its very nature such as to please any subject in that state. To react to the argument we should disambiguate the part about the possibility of being in state X and not enjoying being in state X. The sense in which this may have to be a possibility is when this means: and not be happy that one is in state X. But what the argument needs is: and not be happy, even though one is in state X. And this is question-begging: for where has it been shown that we may not take state X to be happiness itself, to get something which is certainly not an open possibility?
11. Talk of a matching up suggests that our formulation of 'Go For It' leaves open the question of what is to be got to match what. Compare the request to 'make the lengths of stick A and stick B equal', which could be done by changing the length of stick 1 to match that of stick 2, or *vice versa*, or by changing both. For the application to laziness below, one would have in mind the more specific injunction to match one's efforts to the (actual) extent to which one would be happy to see one's desires satisfied. Turning from a non-specificity to an ambiguity in 'Go For It', we note that the 'you'd be happy to see them satisfied' can be understood (to use the terms of Hare (1981) along now-for-then or along then-for-then lines; this is not an ambiguity we need to resolve for present purposes.
12. An alternative response would be to hold that 'John is happy' does indeed follow from 'John is happy that p', appearances to the contrary being explained in the manner of Grice as due to our reluctance to assert that John is happy, *tout court*, lest this give a misleadingly rosy impression. This would be somewhat analogous to a view according to which a wall which is partly white and partly red counts as white (and also as red). We need not debate its merits since even if this line is taken the irreducibility of 'happy that p' to 'happy because p' is not threatened.
13. In her discussion (Greenspan (1980). p. 229f.) of conflicting emotions, Greenspan writes that 'philosophers may try to dismiss their logical conflict by fiddling with the object of contrary

emotions, building into it the reasons for a positive or negative reaction, so that contrary emotions may be taken as directed toward different objects'. There is no 'fiddling' going on here: one just *can* be happy that *p* but unhappy that *q*. The element of conflict that Greenspan worries is being buried here emerges when the question of which affective attitude is to be chosen as determining affective tone, a question raised in these terms below. It remains an interesting further question, not considered here, why only *some* instances of (e.g.) being glad that *p* and being sorry that *q* issue in the experience we describe as having mixed feelings.

14. If some such suggestion is correct, this partly legitimates the 'fudging.', in Section 3, between affective states and affective propositional attitudes over the interpretation of such principles as 'Go For It'. One imagines the situation of learning that *p*, when one has been trying to realize the desire that *p*: this is a situation in which one's thought is appropriately focussed on the fact that *p*, so that being happy and being happy that *p* coincide, according to the suggestion.

15. Here we have attempted to throw light on being happy that *p* by saying something about being happy *tout court*; for an attempt to reverse the direction of explanation, giving an account of happiness in terms of *being happy that*, see Davis (1981). There need be no tension between the two proposals, though the latter account – which, as Davis spells it out, measures happiness by the extent to which one is happy that *p*, over the various propositions *p* that one occurrently believes – risks losing sight of the affectivity involved in being happy. The remarks in Section VI of Davis's paper about 'looking on the bright side' are very much in the same spirit as the discussion of relief and consolation below.

16. Cf. the talk of appropriateness of emotions in the editor's introduction to Rorty (1980).

17. I am very grateful to discussions with Michael Smith on the topics of this paper; notes 10 and 11 were directly prompted by his comments.

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