

## ***Emotion as Functional states: a reductio ad absurdum***

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### *Abstract*

Notwithstanding many decades of research in affective science, “we are apparently not much closer to reaching consensus on what emotions are than we were in Ancient Greece” (Scarantino 2016, 37). While researchers generally agree on the *typical* properties of emotion, they disagree on their definition, i.e. on which properties should be regarded as *essential*.

A popular solution to this thorny definitional issue is adopting Emotion Functionalism (EF), i.e. defining emotion as functional (or dispositional) states:

[EF] to be in Emotion X = given an external input Y, to produce (or be more inclined to produce) a response pattern Z

Some variant of EF has been undescribed by various philosophers and scientists, e.g. Ryle (1949/2000), Plutchick (1970), and recently Adolphs (2016). EF is luring because it allows to cluster together emotions in human and non-human animals, due to the *Multiple Realizability* (MR) of functional states.

However, precisely in virtue of MR, EF is way too inclusive. In order to demonstrate it,

(1) I expound Casati’s (forthcoming) theory of four modes of exploiting a same cognitive task, e.g. navigation: M1, fast-and-frugal; M2, controlled and reflexive; M3, aided by some cognitive artifact; M4, completely farmed out to some cognitive artifact.

(2) I briefly sketch various thought experiment wherein the functional definition of emotion is fulfilled according to M1—M4;

(3) I discuss why EF is unsuitable either as a descriptive (a) or as a prescriptive (b) thesis (cf. Strawson 1959 on descriptive/prescriptive metaphysics);

(3a) descriptive-EF is too counterintuitive, e.g. it assigns emotion to non-living things and to extended subjects (Clark and Chalmers 1998);

(3b) prescriptive-EF fails to distinguish between functional states produced by homologous mechanisms (Basic Emotions in human and other animals) and those that do not (artificial ‘emotions’).

(4) I draw some reflections on the evolutionary significance of these artificial ‘emotions’.

## References

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