A Critique of de Sousa's Account of Emotional Rationality

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Opening

Can, and if so in what sense and to what extent, emotions be assessed for rationality? This is indeed a novel question. A commonsensical view is that emotions are not something that can be subject to assessments of rationality. A few emotion theorists however have explored the question and offered accounts of the rationality conditions for an emotion, one of them being Ronald de Sousa. In his book, *The Rationality of Emotions*, in which he advances a quasi-perceptual account of the nature of emotions, he dedicates a portion of the book to sketching an account of emotional rationality. He sets out six principles, based on what seems true of standard objects of rationality assessments such as beliefs and desires and then goes on to examine the applicability of these principles to emotions. The six principles, not intended as a complete characterization of rationality, suffice to frame his central question: *"What is the nature of the rationality involved in the assessment of emotional rationality?"*[1]

Following are six labeled statements taken from the book, each one a summation of one of the six principles, some which I shall explicate shortly.[2]

> (R1) *Success.* The formal object of a representational state defines that state's criterion of success, in terms of which the rationality of that state is assessed.
>
> (R2) *Minimal rationality.* It is a necessary condition of an intentional state or event's being describable as *categorically* rational, that under some true description it can properly (though perhaps vacuously) be said to be *evaluatively* rational.
>
> (R3) *Intentionality.* The teleology implicit in rationality applies only to intentional acts or states.
>
> (R4) *Origins.* The assessment of rationality of any act or belief looks both forward to consequences, logical and causal, and backward to origins.
>
> (R5) *Constraints.* Rationality never prescribes, but only constrains, by proscribing inconsistency and distinctions without a difference.
>
> (R6) *Cognitive and strategic rationality.* A representational state can be assessed in terms of the value of its probable *effects* (in the causal sense): this evaluates its *strategic* rationality, or utility. By contrast, a state is *cognitively* rational if it is arrived at in such a way as to be probably adequate to some actual state of the world that it purports to represent.

[1] Ronald de Sousa, The Rationality of Emotions, Cambridge MA, MIT Press., 1987, p. 164.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

As will become clearer, principles (R1)-(R5) are plausible for emotional rationality. The sixth principle embodies a distinction between cognitive and strategic rationality and in doing so allows for three possible answers to a question concerning the rationality of emotion; it might be strategic, or cognitive, or *sui generis*. De Sousa opts for the last of these three options, defining a third genus of rationality termed 'axiological rationality'[3], the notion of which will unfold throughout this paper.

Principles (R3) and (R5) are relatively straightforward. I shall shortly explicate and examine principles (R1), (R2) and (R4), in order to prepare the way for my two critical points, where I will be using a standard approach to the question of what makes a certain intentional state rational as my basis of assessment. It is not my intention to develop or suggest an alternative account of the rationality conditions for emotions, though I will suggest types of improvements which could be made to de Sousa's account given my criticisms.

But firstly, a look at 'paradigm scenarios', a notion paramount to de Sousa's account.

Paradigm Scenarios

De Sousa introduces what he terms 'paradigm scenarios', which he sees as arising in three stages: firstly, from our daily interactions as small children, secondly, from the stories, art and culture we are exposed to and thirdly, through literature. Paradigm scenarios involve two aspects[4]:

> (1) a situation type providing the characteristic *objects* of the specific emotion-type,
>
> (2) a set of characteristic or "normal" *responses* to the situation, where normality is first a biological matter and then very quickly becomes a cultural one.

Emotions have *formal objects*. "A formal object is a property implicitly ascribed by the emotion to its target, focus or propositional object, in virtue of which the emotion can be seen as intelligible".[5] We learn about formal objects via paradigm scenarios, which relate certain kinds of emotional responses to certain kinds of situations. The formal object of one's fear of a ferocious dog, for example, is the fearsomeness of the dog, constituted by features such as its aggressive stance, exposed teeth and bark.[6] This fearsomeness is fixed by certain paradigm scenarios, such as fearful canine confrontations involving threat to one's safety

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 164,169.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[5] Ronald de Sousa, 'Emotion', The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2003 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = ⟨http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2003/entries/emotion/⟩.

[6] Note that a *formal object* is an abstract property. Employment of this term is not to be confused with employment of the term *object*, which takes on a less technical meaning. In this example, the formal object is fearsomeness. The object or target of the emotion, is the fearsome dog, or more precisely features of the dog, which instantiates fearsomeness.

experienced as a child or scenarios of ferocious dog attacks conveyed through movies. Once our emotional repertoire is established, we interpret various situations we are faced with through the 'lenses' of different paradigm scenarios. When faced with a ferocious dog about to attack, the 'lens of fear' we interpret the situation through is a lens that was developed through experiencing the type of formative scenarios aforementioned. The importance of paradigm scenarios can be made clearer by relating them to the principles of rationality.

Principles of Rationality

(R1) De Sousa defines success as the "attainment by an intentional state of its formal object".[7] For example, the formal object fearsomeness is the criterion of success for fear; our fear succeeds when we fear the fearsome. If Harry is responding fearfully to being approached by a rabid dog exhibiting intimidating features, then since the dog is instantiating fearsomeness, Harry's fear succeeds. If, on the other hand, Harry is approached by a miniature poodle devoid of intimidating features and reacts fearfully, then his fear does not succeed; the object of his fear cannot be identified as an instance of fear's formal object. Similarly, if Harry notices a fearsome, poisonous spider on his lap and leaps up in fear, then his emotion has succeeded. If, however, he were overcome with joy upon noticing the spider and started laughing, then his emotion would not succeed, for joy succeeds when we are joyous of the enjoyable and this is not the case. Harry is instead joyous of the fearful, whereas he should be fearful. Such emotion can thus be considered inappropriate or irrational. The exact relationship between rationality and success is not the same for all types of states, where I use the term 'type' in the sense that beliefs, desires and emotions are all different types; I will elaborate upon this point in my discussion of the fourth principle.

(R2) Of this principle de Sousa writes "Any intentional state amenable to rational criticism must fit some true description that represents the state as rational"[8]. Therefore an emotion must fit some true description that represents the emotion as rational. A qualification is in order here, for the type of rationality we are talking about with regard to this principle is so called *minimal rationality*. As will be explained shortly, minimal rationality differs from *rationality*. A particular emotion is at least 'minimally rational' (or appropriate) if it occurs in response to a situation resembling the paradigm scenario for that emotion. So every irrational emotion, within the confines of some narrow context involving a paradigm scenario, is perfectly minimally rational. Fear of flying might be considered irrational if the subject does not fear certain terrestrial modes of transport which are statistically less safe. However, in the light of the narrow context involving a paradigm scenario of a plane crash and isolated from extrinsic considerations it is perfectly rational. Despite its relative statistical security, fear of flying cannot be criticized for inappropriateness because the object of

[7] de Sousa, 1987, *op.cit.*, p. 158.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

the fear is still something that is justifiably fearsome.

(R4) In general, rationality is neither a sufficient nor necessary condition for the success of an intentional state. For instance, rational beliefs can be false and true beliefs can be irrational[9]. Principle 4 deals with this partial independence of rationality from success by stating that as well as looking forward to assess consequences in terms of some characteristic standard of success, assessments of rationality for intentional states look backwards to their origins.[10] Origins are more often than not all we have to go by and "we typically scrutinize them in order to assess whether a state is likely to meet its characteristic standard of success".[11] For example, it might be that in assessing the rationality of a belief, it might not be possible to determine whether or not it is true (i.e. whether it is successful or not), hence we scrutinize how that belief came about in an attempt to determine whether it is likely to be true.

From what I can tell, this distinction between looking forwards and looking backwards collapses in the case of emotion according to de Sousa. He remarks that "for beliefs, origins are merely a clue to the likely attainment of the formal object; but here - in the form of paradigm scenarios - they constitute the formal object's very definition".[12] I find this remark of particular interest. If origins 'constitute the formal object's very definition', then it would seem that de Sousa is identifying the origins of an emotion with the paradigm scenarios associated with the emotion. Therefore in a sense, principles (R1) and (R4) can be merged with regard to emotion, for (minimal) rationality is not independent from success. An emotion, if (minimally) rational, is in response to a situation which resembles the emotion's paradigm scenario and thus succeeds; an emotion, if successful, is in response to a situation which resembles the emotion's paradigm scenario and thus is (minimally) rational. Therefore, *(minimal) emotional rationality is necessary and sufficient for the attainment of success.* I find this identification to be problematic and later consider at least how successful emotions can be irrational, even in a minimal sense.

In sum, formal objects, which are fixed by paradigm scenarios, are the criteria of success for an emotion, in terms of which rationality assessments can be made. By way of this, paradigm scenarios provide the standards against which emotions are assessed for rationality. How exactly this is used in de Sousa's complete process of rationality assessment I will shortly describe in discussion of my first critical point. Before that, a look at one more principle formulated by de Sousa.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Principle of Emotional Continence

In order to evade the critical suggestion "that the rationality of an emotion is fixed irretrievably by its origins in socialization and that nothing can affect the appropriateness of an emotion provided the evoking situation fits the paradigm."[13], de Sousa formulates what he terms the 'The Principle of Emotional Continence'.[14]

> (PEC) *Principle of emotional continence.* Let your emotions be appropriate to the widest possible range of available scenarios.

This principle supports the idea that a dominating paradigm scenario can be challenged by other paradigm scenarios relevant to a given evoking situation and that over time it may come to be replaced by a different paradigm scenario. This new paradigm scenario would subsequently provide the standard against which emotion evoked in response to instances of the situation are assessed. Not anything goes with regard to the process of one paradigm being supplanted by another. To maintain rationality this process must be sufficiently grounded and there must be sufficient resemblance between the supplanting scenario and the evoking situations associated with the supplanted scenario.

Two issues with de Sousa's Account

I now come to an assessment of de Sousa's account, discussing two concerns I have with it. A standard approach as to what makes a belief rational first identifies success for a belief and then asks what would make such success appropriately *nonaccidental*.[15] Applying this approach to de Sousa's account, I shall examine firstly his identification of success for an emotion and secondly how he addresses the issue of accidentalness, in doing so substantiating the approach. Initially, my concern with de Sousa's account was confined to its lack of establishing what would make success for an emotion appropriately nonaccidental. Subsequently, I have also come to scrutinize the link he establishes between the success of an emotion and the rationality of that emotion.

Issue 1

As has been explained, for any given emotion, its criterion of success will be determined by the formal object associated with that emotion, which is itself fixed by a paradigm scenario. To what extent though can we apply the term 'rational' to a successful emotion which 'fits'

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[15] Karen Jones, 'Emotional Rationality as Practical Rationality', in: Cheshire Calhoun (ed), Setting the Moral Compass: Essays by Women Philosophers, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 341.

its evoking situation? As discussed earlier, at the very least by definition we can consider a fitting emotion minimally rational. However, this does not necessarily mean that the emotion is itself overall rational. "To call [emotions] 'minimally rational' [or appropriate] only means that the evaluation they involve is rational, under at least one description of the situation. The emotion itself is not really rational at all."[16]

In light of negative remarks as such, one might resign themselves to the view that this is the extent to which the term 'rational' can be applied to emotions within de Sousa's framework. Of course de Sousa though is keen on defining a stronger, general notion of rationality for emotions. In his paper 'The Rationality of Emotions', a precursor to the book with the same name, de Sousa concludes by remarking that

> the "all-things-considered" assessment of an emotion is determined in a complicated way: first, by determining whether the evoking situation is actually an instantiation of the paradigm [minimal rationality], and secondly, by confronting it with other applicable paradigms and working out the relations of compatibility, incompatibility, and hierarchic dominance between the relevant scenarios. This complicated process is at the center of our moral life.[17]

So basically, if an emotion is *minimally* rational (appropriate) and its corresponding paradigm scenario dominates all other paradigm scenarios applicable to (resembling) the evoking situation, then the emotion is *rational*. The 'all-things-considered' assessment of an emotion is de Sousa's bottom line account of the rationality conditions for an emotion and is certainly a progression of the paradigm scenario framework.

The account strikes me as suggesting that given an evoking situation, the rationality of an appropriate emotion sufficiently consists in:

1. its paradigm scenario's dominance of the set of paradigm scenarios resembling the situation with which a person is equipped.

2. a following of the PEC in this process

The second point is admittedly loaded. Going by de Sousa's discussion, what exactly, the PEC means in practice, is dubious. However we needn't be occupied by this issue, as my cause for concern is independent of the room for interpreting the PEC afforded by de Sousa's thin sketch.

I believe that unlike de Sousa's account, a legitimate paradigm-scenario-based account of emotional rationality should be equipped with the means to step outside a situation's 'web

[16] C. Behan McCullagh, 'The Rationality of Emotions and of Emotional Behaviour', Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 68, No 1, 1990, p. 53.

[17] Ronald de Sousa, 'The Rationality of Emotions'. In Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, (ed.). Explaining Emotions. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980, pp. 127-151. Previously published in: Dialogue, 18 (1979). Accessed at http://www-personal.umich.edu/~lormand/phil/teach/mind/readings/de Sousa - The Rationality of Emotions.htm

of resembling paradigm scenarios' in order to scrutinize the origins of each paradigm scenario within the set, particularly for situations involving more socially complex emotions, where characteristic responses are largely cultural matters

Behan McCullagh comments that "the suggestion that an emotional response to a situation is rational because it conforms to the convention enshrined in some paradigm scenarios, is quite unacceptable."[18] He points to the similarly unacceptable view of Mary Warnock, according to whom "an emotion is rational, or 'justified' as she put it, if it accords with what society accepts as an appropriate response to the kind of situation which elicited it".[19] For example, Warnock comments that "the feeling of hatred can be justified only by being shown to have been caused by something which is generally permitted to inspire hatred."[20], a quote that conveys a notion which is arguably entailed by de Sousa's account. This will not do, because general agreement on the appropriateness of an emotion does not mean it was arrived at rationally.

To illustrate my point I draw upon characteristics of the typically Southern American society of the 1800's portrayed in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. According to de Sousa, "racist disgust, while obviously morally inappropriate, is nevertheless intelligible in terms of its link to paradigm cases of disgust"[21], that is, it is minimally rational. Given the prevalent attitudes of the time and place, it is unsurprising that there could be racist emotions, which could be fixed (although not irretrievably) by their origins in socialization. The evoking situations of such emotions would resemble a dominating paradigm scenario, which is of course possible given that one's experiences from daily life as a small child in such a society, reinforced by the culture to which they are exposed, would imbue racist emotions.

The rationality of such racist emotion is thankfully not fixed irretrievably by their social origins. One can strive for greater emotional rationality and repudiate certain paradigm scenarios associated with racist emotions. Demonstrating the Principle of Emotional Continence and the 'all-things-considered' assessment of an emotion, Huckleberry Finn rises above racist principles and refrains from turning in Jim, the fugitive slave.[22]

Huck's change in emotional disposition, his *emotional maturing*, is obviously worthy of praise, and de Sousa's account paves the way for such an increase in emotional rationality. Despite this however, as far I can tell his account does not entail that a retention of racist emotion and failure to reach this moral high-ground is irrational, for reasons I will now explain.

A repudiation of racist emotions is indeed a step towards "*greater* emotional rationality"[23], though de Sousa's 'all-things-considered' account does not necessarily entail that

[18] McCullagh., *op.cit.*, p. 53.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

[20] Mary Warnock and A.C. Ewing, 'Symposium: The Justification of Emotions', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, supp. vol XXXI (1957), pp. 56 and 57.

[21] de Sousa, 2003, *op.cit.,*

[22] de Sousa, 1987, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

racist emotions do not involve emotional rationality, albeit *lesser*. Imagine a hypothetical situation involving a display of racial disgust by an individual named Rudiger in the society depicted in Twain's novel, with the emotion having been evoked in response to a situation resembling a paradigm scenario.

Although an absence of certain positive paradigm scenarios precludes Rudiger from repudiating his racist emotion, the 'all-things-considered' assessment of this racist emotion might very well deem it a rational emotion, though, as I will argue, the emotion is in fact irrational. In accordance with the 'all-things-considered' account, firstly and simply, the evoking situation resembles the paradigm scenario associated with that emotion. Secondly, after confronting it with the *limited* amount of other applicable paradigm scenarios with which Rudiger is equipped and working out the relations of compatibility, incompatibility, and hierarchic dominance between the relevant scenarios, it is quite possible that the paradigm scenario for this racist emotion dominates and therefore the emotion is rational. Despite the 'all-things-considered' verdict of 'rational', it is fair to say that since the dominant paradigm scenario of the process was cultivated in the culture as a result of quite irrational prejudices against a minority, then as a result of this irrational basis the emotion is overall irrational.

It might be retorted that this example, although cogent, is rather contrived. In practice, a racist individual such as Rudiger is actually equipped with positive, humanitarian paradigm scenarios of human interaction. He is so immersed in a morally impoverished set of paradigm scenarios however that he fails to embrace the Principle of Emotional Continence. In light of this failure, on de Sousa's account the emotion can be considered irrational.[24]

Although this might arguably be the case, it does not definitively thwart the crux of what I am saying, which is that if de Sousa's account is to be a watertight account of emotional rationality, it must introduce an aspect/stage of the assessment process which is external to the paradigm scenario framework, which serves to preprocess elements of the 'all-things-considered' process. It cannot solely rely on internal 'safeguards' such as the Principle of Emotional Continence. It should not rely on the assumption that given a situation there will be *always* be a subset of the greatest possible set of applicable paradigm scenarios, such that this subset contains 'good' paradigm scenarios and an irrational emotion can always be explained away as being associated with a dominating paradigm scenario that is not a member of this subset because of some failure.

It is not inconceivable that the greatest possible set of applicable paradigm scenarios contains only paradigm scenarios with irrational origins, and therefore the dominating paradigm scenario will by default have irrational origins.

Take the following example. A young person named John is old enough to have his emotions assessed for rationality though has a limited range of available paradigm scenarios in general. As a young child, his mother instilled in him the superstition that walking under ladders brings bad luck. Subsequently, he had two relevant experiences, both of which he

[24]This point was brought to my attention by Karen Jones in discussion

remembers. On one occasion, he observed someone walking under a ladder, which was being used by a painter. Due to the painter's carelessness, no sooner than that someone walked under the ladder, an astray paint tin swamped them with paint. On another occasion, John accidentally walked under a ladder and subsequently tripped over a rock a few metres away from the ladder. Not surprisingly, John is suspicious, perhaps even fearful, of walking under ladders.

Now, given these few relevant paradigm scenarios, it would seem fair to say that the rationality assessment process of de Sousa's account would assess John's suspicion/fear of walking underneath ladders as rational. Given these *few* applicable paradigm scenarios John has, the next situation involving a walking path under a ladder would justifiably have these paradigm scenarios as resembling dominating paradigm scenarios. Given the applicable scenarios John has, his emotions are appropriate to the widest possible range of available scenarios, to paraphrase the Principle of Emotional Continence.

Yet, given that on both occasions the mishaps were purely coincidental, it is fair to say that had John's mother not instilled in him this irrational superstition, he would not even have remembered these two occasions, they would not have served as paradigm scenarios and he would not be suspicious/fearful of walking underneath ladders. John's suspicion/fear is irrational. Not because the 'all-things-considered' account tells us so, but because the causal basis of the paradigm scenarios involved is one of irrationality.

The second aspect of paradigm scenarios is "a set of characteristic or 'normal' responses to the situation, where normality is first a biological matter and then very quickly becomes a cultural one."[25] Biological matters of course cannot be assessed for rationality, but cultural matters can. Some primitive emotions might be exempt from having their basis assessed for irrationality, however the more thought and cultural dependent emotions should not be exempt. To its detriment, I do not think that de Sousa's theory entails the following desirable principle:

If the causal basis of a 'normal' response for a dominating paradigm scenario has irrational elements, then emotions whose appeal to rationality is a resemblance between an evoking situation and that paradigm scenario are irrational.

Paradigm scenarios might not be a completely wrong measure of rationality, but the reasons why certain scenarios are paradigmatic in the first place needs to be scrutinized. Rational emotions need to have a 'rational lineage'. The fact that an emotion is firstly paradigmatically appropriate and secondly rightly dominates the hierarchy of resembling paradigm scenarios does not mean that the paradigm by which it is assessed was rationally brought about. If paradigm scenarios are to feature in an account of emotional rationality, then it is essential they be accompanied by some type of heredity condition, whereby a paradigm scenario that is a constituent of a person's emotional repertoire can inherit irrationality from its sources. I cannot find anything in de Sousa's discussion which suggests

[25]de Sousa, 1987, *op.cit.,* p. 115.

such a requirement.

Issue 2

A second concern I have with de Sousa's account, related to the first, is its treatment of accidental success. It has been argued by some, to which I agree, that de Sousa's account of the rationality conditions of emotions "focuses on 'fit' between the emotion and evoking situation [i.e. success] at the expense of focusing on how such fit came about. [Consequently], accidental aptness appears to meet his criterion for rationality".[26]

In fairness to de Sousa, his plausible claim that "true irrationality of an emotion involves the perception of a situation in terms of a scenario which it does not objectively resemble"[27] does not necessarily entail the claim that *perception of a situation in terms of a scenario which it does objectively resemble is sufficient for the rationality of an emotion.* However, he does not seem to address the question of what would make the success of an emotion appropriately nonaccidental.

As a consequence, de Sousa's account lacks what I consider to be an essential condition; that an emotion is irrational if it has been shaped only by irrelevant causal factors[28]. For under his account, it could be the case that although an instance of emotion has been shaped only by irrelevant causal factors, the evoking situation sufficiently resembles the dominating paradigm scenario associated with that emotion, hence the emotion is 'rational'. Some simple examples will illustrate how accidental aptness precludes rationality and the insufficiency of aptness as an isolated criterion of rationality.

One way to start this is by investigating how the link between the cause/s and object of an emotion bears upon its rationality. To what extent are the objects of emotions to be identified with their causes? Although in general the object of an emotion can be identified with an element of its causes, there are exceptions.

If Sue gets angry at Jan for some entirely trivial matter, drunkenness may have *caused* Sue's anger, yet it is in no sense its object. Its object may be the utterance of some innocent remark by Jan, which occasioned the anger yet is in no way its cause. In fact the object of the anger might be a certain insulting quality in Jan's remark which Sue entirely imagined and so could therefore not possibly be its true cause.[29]

Must the object of an emotion be identifiable with an element of its causes for that emotion to be rational? In this example, it is fair to say that Sue's emotion is irrational, precisely because no such identification can be made; there was no good reason for Sue to get angry, in the sense that a reason is constituted by such an identification. De Sousa's account similarly would classify the emotion as irrational; there are no elements of the

[26]Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

[27]de Sousa, 1987, *op.cit.,* p. 188.

[28]This is an appropriation of a line from John Elster, to the effect that beliefs and desire are irrational if "they have been shaped by irrelevant causal factors", see [9] footnote #12

[29]de Sousa, 2003, *op.cit.,*

evoking situation that resemble anger's formal object (i.e. the situation does not involve Jan doing something angering towards Sue), so the emotion is irrational.

In fact, a counter-example to the generalization that irrational are emotions for which their object cannot be identified with an element of their causes, does not come to mind. Yet unless accidental aptness is ruled out, it is easy to construct examples of emotion instances which are rightly deemed irrational according to this generalization yet would be deemed rational according to de Sousa's account.

It is entirely conceivable that it might have been the case that although the object of Sue's emotion is not an element of its causes, her display of anger coincides with certain remarks made by Jan which happen to instantiate anger's appropriate formal object. Jan could have in fact made an insulting remark towards Sue, although Sue, in a drunken state, did not actually pick up on the insult, and was instead angered, due to the drunkenness, at the mere fact that Jan made an utterance, not its insulting quality. In this case there is an element in the evoking situation which resembles the emotion's formal object, however the appropriateness and rationality (at least minimal) of this emotion is accidental; it just so happens that the evoking situation resembles a paradigm scenario.

In an example such as this, it is clear that it is necessary for the object of the emotion to be identifiable with *an element* of the emotion's causes for the emotion to be rational; something that caused an emotion must be relevant to that emotion's fit with the evoking situation, this to be determined on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note my emphasis of 'an element', for there might not be a strict one-to-one correspondence of identification between cause and object. For example, Sally is a normally sanguine, submissive individual. Due to a general level of stress, she uncharacteristically yet aptly reacts with anger to a provoking comment made by a colleague.[30] The two causal elements of her anger, both necessary, are stress and the provoking comment. Out of these two elements, only the latter can be identified with the object. Although Sally's stress 'pushes her over the edge', the provoking comment is still a *cause* of the emotion (rather than just *occasioned* the emotion, as in Sue's case), for the focus of Sally's emotion is the provoking quality of her colleague's comment.

Other examples, not questioning the relationship between cause and object, emphasize how accidental aptness precludes rationality and why we need to rule such cases out.

A person's irrational phobia may lead them to form an emotion which is paradigmatically appropriate given an evoking situation, despite the fact that the emotion was not rationally brough about. Examples are easy to construct; following is a brief one.

Bob and Jim, both shopkeepers in a shopping centre, experience similar situations involving the mistrust of a teenager, Tom. Whilst Tom is browsing through goods in their stores, something tells them to keep an eye on Tom and not pop into their store's backroom for a second and leave the store unattended. Each has a different reason for doing so. Bob was recently informed of a kleptomaniacal teenager (actually Tom) arrested at the shopping

[30]This example was suggested in discussion by Karen Jones

centre on two recent occasions. He does not know it is Tom, but the physical description he was given of this juvenile delinquent strongly matches Tom's physical characteristics. He thus decides to remain and keep a watchful eye on Tom. Jim is unaware of such justifying information. He, on the other hand, exercises his ephebiphobic[31] tendencies, using some excuse to remain present. Obviously, Bob's mistrust is rational and Jim's mistrust is not rational.

These examples illustrate that an account based on de Sousa' account needs to be tightened to rule out cases of accidental aptness, by adopting a position to the effect that *an emotion will be rational if and only if the emotion nonaccidently succeeds.* Particular emotions are not rational just because they are paradigmatically appropriate; particular emotions are only rational if a relevant causal factor can be established. What is meant by 'relevant' is admittedly a little hazy and addressing this issue is an open problem.

We might start by identifying the core aspect of a given evoking situation. This core aspect must necessarily be a causal factor of the person's emotion, so that if this core aspect were to be eliminated from the situation, the emotion would not have come about. This goes towards ensuring that an identification can be made between the emotion's object and an element of its causes. In the first case discussed above, the core aspect is the insulting quality of Jan's comment. Sue's emotion is irrational, because if Jan's comment was devoid of insulting quality, Sue would arguably still have responded in the same way. Sally, on the other hand, though stressed, would not have responded angrily had her colleague *not* made a provoking comment. Similarly, if Tom had not fit the description, Bob would not have given Tom's presence in his shop a second thought, whereas Jim would still have responded to him warily. Similarly involving the issue of accidentality, perhaps responses to the *Gettier problem*[32], in particular something akin to the addition of a *defeasibility condition*[33] might be worth investigating. These are just some preliminary thoughts.

Closing

There is no doubting that de Sousa's account, despite its inadequacies, is a seminal work. I am noncommittal as to whether his account can be salvaged or whether a completely alternative account is the way to go. Nonetheless, I have argued that an attempt to derive a viable account of emotional rationality from de Sousa's account would have to address at least two issues. Firstly, that the origin of an emotion's criterion of success (fixed by a paradigm scenario) must be assessable for its (ir)rationality and that measures must be introduced to factor this assessment into the overall process of rationality determination. Secondly, more than just aptness is required for rationality assessment.

[31] an irrational fear of or prejudice against teenagers

[32] See [4].

[33] See [7].

References

[1] de Sousa, Ronald. 'The Rationality of Emotions'. In Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, (ed.). Explaining Emotions. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980, pp. 127-151. Previously published in: Dialogue, 18 (1979). Accessed at http://www-personal.umich.edu/~lormand/phil/teach/mind/readings/de Sousa - The Rationality of Emotions.htm

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[3] de Sousa, Ronald. 'Emotion', The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2003 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = ⟨http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2003/entries/emotion/⟩.

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