

*Book Review*  
The Feeling Body:  
Affective Science Meets the  
Enactive Mind

Feeling Extended:  
Sociality as Extended Body-  
Becoming-Mind

Gary Bartlett  
*Central Washington University*

***The Feeling Body: Affective Science Meets the Enactive Mind.* Giovanna Colombetti. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014. xviii + 270pp., including references & index. \$42 hc. ISBN: 978-0-262-01995-8.**

***Feeling Extended: Sociality as Extended Body-Becoming-Mind.* Douglas Robinson. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013. viii + 256pp., including references & index. \$35 hc. ISBN: 978-0-262-01947-7**

---

Essays Philos (2016)17:164-188 | DOI: 10.7710/1526-0569.1547  
*Published online:* 12 February 2016. © Gary Bartlett 2016  
*Contact author:* gary.bartlett@cwu.edu

---

## INTRODUCTION

The ghost of Descartes still hangs over the philosophy and science of the mind. But there is disagreement about the extent to which the ghost is a beneficent spirit to be honored and respected, or a dark shade to be maligned and shunned. While we have exorcised the idea that the mind is immaterial, many think that the exorcism remains incomplete. We must also, they urge, cast out the very idea of the mind as a separate realm. Mind and body, mind and world; these are false dichotomies that hinder our understanding.

In the past two decades this strongly anti-Cartesian view has gained momentum and also diversity. There are now many approaches to the project of completing the exorcism. There are also some who think that even these approaches themselves are still tainted by dualism, and who therefore push for even more radical or comprehensive anti-Cartesianism. Here I review two books which take this stance towards two particular anti-Cartesian approaches. Giovanna Colombetti argues that the *enactivist* approach—pioneered by Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch in *The Embodied Mind* (1991), and now championed by Thompson—should expand its purview from cognitive science into the domain of affective science. Douglas Robinson argues that the *extended mind thesis* (EMT)—pioneered by Andy Clark and David Chalmers in ‘The extended mind’ (1998), and now championed by Clark—should reconceive the mind, and thus its extension, in terms of qualia rather than material events.

The two books have a certain affinity, hinted at by the fact that their main titles both feature the word ‘feeling’. Both authors want their respective anti-Cartesian approaches to place more emphasis on subjective or qualitative features of

the mind. Indeed, both of them think that some such feature is fundamental to the nature of the mind.

However, again, Colombetti and Robinson are working within different approaches: enactivism and the EMT respectively. And another difference is that while both offer revisionist views, Robinson's revisionism is very much more radical. He aims to reshape some basic assumptions of the EMT. By contrast, Colombetti accepts the basic assumptions of enactivism. Her revisionism takes the form merely of pressing for a new application of the approach.

I find Colombetti's book highly engaging and her arguments, in most respects, very persuasive. I would expect it to find a wide readership amongst enactivists, but I hope it also will be read by all philosophers, psychologists and neuroscientists working on the emotions.

My opinion of Robinson's book is less positive. I struggled to understand his views, often (it seemed to me) because of a lack of explanation and argument on his part. Further, he was often careless in handling the views and arguments of his opponents. Despite some thought-provoking ideas, then, overall the book is a frustrating and uneven read.

**COLOMBETTI, *THE FEELING BODY: AFFECTIVE SCIENCE MEETS THE ENACTIVE MIND***

Colombetti's book comprises seven chapters, not counting a brief introduction and an even briefer epilogue. The main body of the book could be loosely split into two parts: chapters 2-4 and chapters 5-7. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are broadly concerned with current affective science. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 then take a phenomenological perspective on affect and emotion.

As for chapter 1, it serves as background, advocating a “broader and deeper notion of affectivity” (p. 1) than is current in affective science. For Colombetti, emotions and moods are merely the most noticeable manifestations of a more fundamental phenomenon, which she calls *primordial affectivity*. She traces the roots of this idea through the work of several philosophers (from Spinoza to Jan Patočka), but thinks that the enactive approach allows for its fullest expression. According to enactivism, living systems are intrinsically *sense-making* systems: they evaluate their environment with regard to their own continued viability, and act to improve that viability. Even bacteria evaluate their environment for the presence of the sugar they need, and swim toward higher concentrations. So sense-making does not require a brain or even a nervous system. It is a function of the organism’s overall organization. Further, for the enactivist, sense-making just is *cognition*. This much is basic to the enactivist approach. What Colombetti adds is the claim that there can be no distinction between cognition and *affect*. So if all organisms are sense-making systems, and if sense-making just is cognition, and if cognition in turn just is affectivity—then all organisms are affective. Hence the notion of primordial affectivity.

Of course, many will not grant all (or any) of those ‘if’s. Colombetti admits that her book is not a defense of enactivism, but simply takes it as a starting point. This is fair enough; other works offer that defense (especially Thompson 2007). The third ‘if’, however—that cognition is inherently affective—is her own, and her defense of it struck me as sketchy. Her argument seems to stem from a very broad conception of affect as any activity that concerns what is “meaningful, relevant, or salient” (p. 15) for the organism. When we combine that with the enactivist conception of cognition (i.e., sense-making) as a sort of

self-concerned evaluation, it is indeed natural to conclude that cognition is always affective. But Colombetti does not defend her very broad conception of affect, and such a defense is surely necessary.

All of that said, I agree with Colombetti when she remarks in her introduction that many of her ideas can stand independently of the enactivist framework. And the notion of primordial affectivity actually appears only once after chapter 1, and then only in passing.

As I said earlier, chapters 2-4 focus on current affective science. Chapter 2 critically reviews some prominent existing accounts of emotion. Chapter 3 presents Colombetti's own account. Chapter 4 (echoing themes from chapter 1) argues that we must not artificially separate the *evaluation* of a stimulus from the *emotional response* to the stimulus.

The main focus of chapter 2 is the theory of basic emotions (BET), which is the preeminent view of emotions today. Cross-cultural studies by Paul Ekman and colleagues in the late 1960s appeared to indicate that six 'basic' emotions—happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, and surprise—were universal. But Colombetti argues that the distinction between 'basic' and 'nonbasic' emotions is poorly motivated, and further that the decision as to *which* emotions are basic has been arbitrary. Ekman adopted the idea of basic emotions from Silvan Tomkins, but Colombetti sees little warrant for Tomkins' own hypothesis. Moreover, Tomkins hypothesized *nine* 'primary affects', not six. Colombetti relates a telling anecdote from a 2011 conference talk, where a former collaborator of Ekman's said that while they had intended to study all nine of Tomkins' affects, they were able to get suitable photographs only for six. Memory being what it is,

we should not simply assume that this recollection reflects the complete story. Still, Colombetti makes a good case that the concept of ‘basic’ emotions is due for retirement.

Colombetti also reviews two alternatives to BET: James Russell and Lisa Barrett’s psychological constructionist model and Klaus Scherer’s component process model. (Oddly, she does not mention Alan Fridlund’s behavioral ecology view.) Her discussion of these models is briefer than her discussion of BET, and I found it a little unclear why she rejects Scherer’s model; but further discussion in chapter 3 explained that the problem is that the model gives too much of a controlling role to appraisal.

As well as being skeptical of the ‘basic’ versus ‘nonbasic’ distinction, Colombetti thinks that BET wrongly conceives of emotions as a set of more or less programmed responses. Along with the idea of basic emotions, Ekman also adopted Tomkins’ idea of *affect programs*: genetically encoded, adaptive neural mechanisms which drive emotional responses. While Colombetti grants that BET is not wedded to a vision of emotions as rigidly prototypical, she nevertheless prefers to conceive of emotions in a more flexible manner. Thus in chapter 3 she draws on dynamical systems theory (DST) to suggest that emotions are “specific self-organizing forms... that recruit or entrain various processes (neural, muscular, autonomic, etc.) into highly integrated configurations or patterns” (p. 69). There are no internal affect programs which trigger prototypical bodily (especially facial) responses. Rather, emotional episodes are soft-assembled through the activity of a variety of factors. Some of these factors will reliably co-occur, by becoming (in the DST lingo) attractors in the system’s state space.

Colombetti offers a nice analogy to explain how this dynamic model pictures the interplay of emotions and moods. Moods are like climate zones while emotions are like weather:

A climate zone... is a complex system characterized by distinctive conditions... that remain stable over time. Different climate zones are characterized by different weather, namely, short-lived manifestations of specific conditions. Climate zones are longer lived and set up the conditions for different weather patterns; in particular, some weather phenomena are possible only within certain climate zones and impossible in others....On the other hand, the reiteration of certain weather patterns may induce shifts in the climate zone, especially when in conjunction with changes taking place outside the climate zone itself. (pp. 78-79)

Similarly, moods tend to be stable over relatively long periods of time (from hours to months), and certain emotions manifest more than others within those periods. A grouchy person, for example, is more likely to show anger or jealousy than joy or gratitude. Yet if the environment (analogous to areas beyond the climate zone in question) changes in certain ways—an improvement in family relations, a new job, a paper accepted to a good journal—the resulting positive emotions, if there are enough of them, may alter the person's grouchy mood.

I was less convinced by a discussion of the intentionality of moods. Many philosophers think that the difference between emotions and moods is that the former are directed at particular objects, while the latter are either not

intentional at all, or are directed only at general or nonspecific objects. Colombetti's view is that moods are intentional, but she does not think that a mood can be about things in general. I agree. However, her solution is opaque. Appealing to a "non-object-oriented form of intentionality" (p. 81) offered by Husserl, she argues that "moods are intentional not in the narrow sense that they target objects but in the broader sense that they are 'open' to the world" (p. 80). Perhaps I reveal my analytic training here, but I get nervous in the presence of scare quotes, and the ones Colombetti uses here worry me. What is it to be *open* to the world in a way that is intentional yet directed neither at any specific object nor at the world in general? It is not that I think Colombetti is wrong, but that I wanted a less metaphorical explanation of her view. I was surprised that she does not invoke either DST or enactivism at this point, for it seems to me that they might provide the resources for a more concrete explanation. The wide-angle form of intentionality that she is gesturing at might, for example, be explained in terms of some sort of dynamic coupling of the agent with the environment, including other agents. So this struck me as a missed opportunity for Colombetti to extend the reach of her own favored approach.

Chapter 4 focuses on appraisal. The study of appraisal began, Colombetti explains, as a reaction against the James-Lange model's identification of emotions with perceptions of bodily change, which (critics claimed) couldn't account for the variability of emotional responses. But the reaction ended up "reducing [the body] to an undifferentiated pattern of physiological (i.e., autonomic) arousal" (p. 87), leaving it to the subsequent appraisal to determine the actual emotional state. As a rough analogy (mine, not Colombetti's), consider the 'check engine' light in your car. When that light comes on, you know *something* is wrong, but the light doesn't tell you what. You can only



infer, based on the context and other available information, what the problem might be. Similarly, psychologists in the 1960s and 1970s treated bodily arousal as a signal that something significant was happening, and argued that cognitive processes then used situational cues in order to label the response as a particular emotion. Such was the power of this picture, claims Colombetti, that both the physiological and phenomenological differentiation of arousal was ignored. Not only is bodily arousal far more differentiated than a check engine light, but it is also a mistake to think of that arousal as just a trigger for a more sophisticated appraisal. Here enactivism re-enters Colombetti's story in earnest, for appraisal theories are noticeably Cartesian in that they treat the body as a passive unit rather than an active participant in the formation of emotions. Colombetti persuasively argues that bodily processes are actually components of emotional processes, and thus components of the appraisal process.

The book now turns to issues of phenomenology. The broad thrust of chapters 5 and 6 is that affective science has paid too little attention to the bodily phenomenology and physiology of emotions.

Colombetti's main thesis in chapter 5 is that as well as bodily feelings which are actually *about* the body, there are also bodily feelings which present the world to us. Many emotion experiences are thus bodily feelings in the sense that "the lived or feeling body contributes to the quality of the emotion experience as that through which the object or event is experienced" (p. 114). In short, the body can be *present* in an emotion experience without being an intentional object of the experience. This is an intriguing idea, but I wonder about the details.

Colombetti uses the following metaphor. Certain bodily feelings are like tinted windows, so that even if one is attending to the world, one may experience the world as affectively colored—just as we experience the world as tinted if we look through tinted windows. An example she offers is that if you are chased by a dog while riding your bike, your fear of the dog will be colored by a bodily sense of vulnerability and tension. Now the window analogy suggests that the affective coloration is not a property of the world itself, but is *attributed* to the world (just as the bluishness of a tinted window may be attributed to a tree outside the window). Yet this seems wrong, for you do not attribute vulnerability or tension to the dog. Colombetti says, “I have a nonattended sense of my body as rigid and ready to be attacked, through which I attend to the dog” (p. 122). This suggests that it is just a matter of attention: you are attending to the dog and not to your body. But that on its own does not explain how your body is nevertheless present in your experience. In the end, while your bodily sense of vulnerability surely does affect your experience of the dog in *some* way, it is not clear that Colombetti has explained just how that happens. The idea that you experience the menace of the dog *through* your bodily sense of vulnerability is intuitive, but I worry that it is a metaphor that breaks down on examination.

Chapter 6 attempts to add a bodily component to Varela’s (1996) neurophenomenological method. Colombetti dubs the result *neuro-physio-phenomenology*. She thinks that affective science currently pays too little attention to bodily processes, and to the phenomenology of affect (especially its bodily phenomenology). So the chapter offers a five-step method for incorporating the physiology and phenomenology of affect into empirical neuroscience. The main worry about such a method, of course, concerns the scientific validity of first-person reports of experience. But

Colombetti is cautiously optimistic that, with training and practice, both experimenters and their subjects can learn to make accurate and reliable self-observations. Even if the training itself *alters* the trainee's emotional experiences (and Colombetti is not convinced that it will), the resulting data will at least be stable and consistent, which will allow for better data on the relationship between consciousness and neurophysiological processes.

The final chapter concerns our interactions with other agents, exploring of the role of affect in face-to-face encounters. Now the standard Cartesian assumption here is that since the mind is an internal entity, grasping the mental states of others involves inference: that is, we have only indirect access to other minds. Colombetti rejects that assumption. As an enactivist she holds that the mind is embodied, and therefore that the minds of other agents are directly perceived in their actions. And she holds that this direct perception is a basic form of *empathy*. Later she argues that we nonconsciously mimic the facial and bodily expressions of others, and that this facilitates our grasp of their emotions. Of course, this starts to make her view sound like a variety of simulation theory, according to which we grasp the mental states of others by simulating them. Colombetti is aware of this, and emphasizes that she is not saying that mimicry is *necessary* for grasping the emotions of others. The suspicion remains, however, that even basic empathy (which does not involve facial or bodily mimicry) is still a matter of simulation at some more basic level. As Colombetti herself admits, we cannot *always* directly observe another's emotions, for people can hide their emotions. She rightly says that this does not entail that emotions are not embodied, but only that the externally-visible parts of the body may not always display an agent's true feelings. Yet this calls into question her claim that we *directly* perceive the emotions of others. Also

notable in this connection is that Colombetti lumps simulationism in with the theory theory as a view on which we deploy “an intermediate inferential process” (p. 172) in order to understand other minds. But some versions of simulationism are marketed as involving no inferences: rather, we simply embody the other’s experiences directly. So one might wonder just what the distinction is between Colombetti’s view and those versions of simulationism.

Muddying the waters further is the fact that Colombetti appears oddly hesitant in her exposition of the direct perception view. The hesitancy takes a form that I have remarked upon before in this review, namely, a sudden proliferation of scare-quotes for no apparent reason:

[I]n the concrete encounter it is more often the case that the other’s mental states are picked up ‘directly’ by the observer, namely, without the need to engage in theorizing or pretend states. Thus, for example, the idea is that I ‘directly’ see the other’s pain in his convulsions, as opposed to when I ‘indirectly’ infer that he is in pain because I see him taking a painkiller. (p. 175)

Obviously it is dangerous to read too much into something which could just be the written equivalent of a vocal tic. But in this case, the very next paragraph contains a further hint of why Colombetti might be holding the words ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ at arm’s length:

I shall call the phenomenological notion of directly perceiving the other’s subjectivity... *basic empathy*, to distinguish it from other more elaborate and mediated ways of grasping how others feel—like when I need

also to recur to my knowledge of the other and to imagination (I do not deny that sometimes empathy requires these processes, but I shall not discuss them here). (p. 176)

In the context provided by the previous passage, the parenthetical comment may be revealing. It appears to acknowledge that empathy—even *basic* empathy?—sometimes *is* mediated by certain kinds of processing. Perhaps, rather than maintaining a strict division between direct and indirect forms of perception of other minds, Colombetti would be better to theorize that there is a *gradation* of directness. This, it seems to me, would fit better with her overall approach. One of the strongest themes in the entire book is that affective processes are not monolithic, categorical or routinized, but rather are messy, contingent and constructed on the fly.

Happily, however, the latter three adjectives do not describe Colombetti's book itself. In closing I want to especially note its clarity of organization. A five-page introduction and a two-page epilogue preview and review (respectively) the entire work. This structure is then duplicated in the individual chapters, each of which begins with a short introductory section and ends with an even shorter concluding section, previewing and reviewing the chapter's content. This makes the book easy to navigate, and one is never in doubt about Colombetti's aims and theses in any given chapter. All in all, then, I strongly recommend her book to anyone interested in either the enactivist approach to the mind, or in the science (or philosophy) of the emotions. It brings these two areas of contemporary inquiry together in a fruitful and fascinating way.

**ROBINSON, *FEELING EXTENDED: SOCIALITY AS  
EXTENDED BODY-BECOMING-MIND***

Nominally Robinson's book comprises five chapters. But one could say that it really has seven, like Colombetti's. For it has an introduction and an appendix each of which is 30 pages long—which is as long or longer than three of the actual chapters.

Where Colombetti wants to bring to the enactivist approach a greater focus on affect, Robinson wants to bring to the extended-mind thesis (EMT) a greater focus on qualia. He contends that the mind extends in the form of qualia (hence his main title), which he thinks can be socially transferred between individuals (hence his subtitle). The social extension of qualia is covered in chapters 2 through 5. But I shall first consider the introduction, chapter 1, and the appendix.

Robinson says in his introduction that he intends to defend the EMT against the well-known criticisms of Fred Adams and Ken Aizawa (2008). However, he then states that the EMT is hamstrung by being based “in materialist claims about extension—that mind *actually* or *literally* does extend in some material sense” (p. 2). He proposes to abandon this materialist formulation of the EMT.

Robinson stresses that he is not arguing against materialism itself. However, he never says what he means by ‘materialism’. This sows confusion. The term's dominant contemporary use is for the view that everything that exists, including the mind, is material. In many places in the book Robinson plainly uses the word in this sense. But on p. 3, right after saying that he does not deny materialism, he says that he *does* deny that the mind is material. In this instance, then, he must be using ‘materialism’ in its older and weaker

sense, which is for the view that there exist material objects. So based on these initial pages, one would get the idea that he is a dualist. But this is something that he will deny later in the book.

The introduction also contains some puzzling passages specifically concerning Robinson's ontology of the mind. Perhaps the most puzzling is this:

The precarious position I propose to take here is a hybrid one. I accept the idea that... the mind's interactions with the body and the surrounding world are constitutive of thought and so inseparable from thought. And I accept the claim that these interactions are material events.... To the extent that we want to understand these interactions as *mind*, however, they are, or so I shall argue, phenomenologies, felt by human subjects—*not* material events. (p. 5)

A precarious position indeed. This is not *quite* a contradiction; but since Robinson offers no explanation of the crucial word 'constitutive', the reader is left to wonder how he proposes to avoid the threatened contradiction. Later, he notes that pre-publication reviewers of his book mostly concluded that he is an idealist. He replies that this is too simplistic. He says, "I'm a materialist who recognizes that everything we know about material reality is a quale, and an idealist who recognizes that qualia are human groups' ultimately inadequate attempts to represent and control material reality" (p. 15). He appears, then, to want to embrace both materialism *and* idealism.

How he proposes to do this is expounded in the appendix, which I advise reading before the book's five main

chapters. Robinson calls his view *liar-paradox (LP) monism*, and suggests that it solves the hard problem of consciousness. In attempting to explain LP monism, he discusses the liar paradox, and Oscar Wilde's essay 'The Decay of Lying'. Robinson's interest in the liar paradox is rhetorical rather than logical. Wilde's essay, he says, suggests "a *rhetorical* [model] of reality: it's not that reality *is* this way or that way, but that people work interactively with other people and with nonhuman objects to *negotiate* explanations of reality" (p. 201). We want to trust our qualia, but that trust is undermined by encounters with objects and people in which the world is presented in discrepant ways. We try to build a stable picture by studying the objects scientifically and by trying to reach agreements with other people; but we are never able to fully resolve the discrepancies. So LP monism "embrace[s] the dissonances, embrace[s] the complex phenomenality and rhetoricity of our engagement with the world" (p. 201).

I agree that it seems inapt to describe this view as idealist. LP monism seems more like a form of ontological quietism. But I do not understand it, and I do not see how it solves the hard problem of consciousness. (Nor do I understand why it is a form of *monism*, despite Robinson's claim to address that precise question on p. 203.) Still, the appendix provides some useful background when it comes to interpreting some of Robinson's claims in the book's main body.

The book's main title, *Feeling Extended*, has a double meaning. Firstly, it hints at Robinson's central claim that qualia (i.e., feelings) extend beyond the body. As he notes, the EMT's foremost defender, Andy Clark, denies this. Robinson argues, however, that Clark is actually committed to the extension of qualia by two requirements that Clark and Chalmers (1998) impose on their famous case of Otto. They suggest that for Otto's notebook to be part of his mind, the



information he retrieves from it must be “automatically endorse[d]” and must also have been “consciously endorsed at some point in the past” (p. 17; qtd. in Robinson, p. 9). Robinson claims that since endorsement is itself a quale, it follows that Otto’s use of the notebook is also a quale.

Robinson may be onto something here, but his point is poorly developed. For starters, the inference is shaky: even if Otto’s endorsement of the notebook’s information is a quale, why does this imply that his *use* of the information is also a quale? But further, the premise itself is dubious. While Otto’s *past* endorsement of the information was conscious, it is not so clear that his *present* endorsement is too; and Robinson offers no defense for the premise. He says that “it preconsciously *feels* to [Otto] as if his mind is extending to incorporate the notebook” (p. 12)—but his own word ‘preconsciously’ suggests that Otto is, as Clark claims, using the notebook *automatically*, with no conscious endorsement.

Again, there may be a good point here somewhere. There is a *phenomenology* to the effortless, habitual use of tools for thinking, and little attention has been paid to that phenomenology in discussion of the EMT—despite Clark’s own occasional hints at its importance, as Robinson notes. But Robinson (by contrast, I may remark, with Colombetti) does not attempt to investigate that phenomenology.

The second meaning of the book’s main title hints at another key thesis: that your mind extends if it *feels* as if it extends. Robinson says that “[f]rom the perspective of liar-paradox monism... the only principled answer to [the question of whether cognition literally extends into the environment] is ‘It *feels* as if it does, and so I want to assert that it does, but of course I could be lying (to myself)’” (p. 55).

Since I have already noted my puzzlement about LP monism, let us ask why Robinson might think that the *feeling* of mental extension is evidence that the mind *does* extend. He knows that this inference will meet with resistance, yet he does surprisingly little to defend it. For example, in §1.2 he makes a case study of his regular exercise of swimming laps in a pool, and in particular the motivational impact of different ways of tracking how far he has swum in a given session. Should he count laps, or lengths, or both? Robinson emphasizes that this is a matter of *conation* (will, motivation) more than *cognition*. His interest seems to be in the integration of a counting system—an external tool—into one’s repertoire of mental skills. But beyond that, his point is unclear. He focuses on the feeling of facility in the use of a counting system, but he never explains how this is supposed to support the EMT. It might better support the enactivist approach, but Robinson mentions that approach only occasionally in the book.

This sort of ambiguity appears throughout the book. Robinson’s writing is discursive and suggestive rather than argumentative, which often makes his points obscure. I often advise my students that it is not enough just to *tell* your readers something; you must also tell them *why* you are telling them that thing. Colombetti’s book is exemplary in this regard. Not so Robinson’s. Sign-posting is especially lacking in chapters 2-5, where he makes his case for the extension of qualia into and through the social environment. These chapters feature discussions of the work of authors including Derrida, Austin, Bakhtin, Aristotle, and Peirce. I was often unsure of just what these discussions were *for*, however, because Robinson seldom explicitly tells us how they relate to his overall project.

Chapter 2 critiques what Robinson calls ‘rationalist philosophy of language’ (RPOL), the view that communication

between humans is exclusively propositional. According to RPOL, says Robinson, thought exists only in the head, and language is just a set of cognitive labels: “sender S produces a propositional thought T, representing informational content I, which S then translates... into a coherent utterance U in natural language L; receiver R... retranslates the somewhat disorderly natural language of U back into the propositional clarity of T as a representation of I” (p. 67). As this quotation suggests, Robinson equates RPOL with the language of thought hypothesis (LOTH). So it is jarring when he claims that Clark adheres to RPOL—for Clark has been a major critic of LOTH. Robinson knows this, but says that Clark’s criticisms of LOTH are superficial, as he “doesn’t really challenge the bivalent logic of LOT vs. natural language” (p. 69). This plays into the hands of Adams and Aizawa, Robinson continues, whose critique of the EMT relies on a sharp distinction between the intrinsic, nonderived content of brain states versus the merely conventional, derived content of natural language.

After arguing that the RPOL/LOTH picture is inadequate, in chapter 3 Robinson offers an alternative picture of language as “a channel of communicable (transferrable) bodily force—a conative force that energizes/mobilizes other bodies” (p. 85). This force is (or is composed of) *qualia*. Chapter 4 investigates the nature of *qualia*. Finally, chapter 5 explores empathy and affective communication as the sharing of *qualia*.

Robinson never identifies anyone who holds RPOL. Frankly, this is not surprising: I doubt that any philosopher has held that “all communication between humans is linguistic and propositional” (p. 118), for this would collapse all *communication* into *language*. There is no reason for any LOT theorist to deny the existence of

nonlinguistic communication. Robinson also asserts that “LOT theorists were determined to reduce language to neural events and other dependencies found in material nature” (p. 87). Yet LOTH’s originator, Jerry Fodor, is well-known for his anti-reductionism (e.g. Fodor 1974).

These errors are not isolated incidents. On several occasions Robinson inaccurately describes an opponent’s viewpoint. His characterizations of the views of Clark, and of Adams and Aizawa, are often near-caricatures, and he sometimes offers borderline *ad hominem* commentary into the bargain. For example:

[T]he most telling of the anti-connectivist or anti-collectivist sentiments that seem to fuel Adams and Aizawa’s radical intracranialism is their argument that language is noncognitive because it is public, conventional, and non-original. That, I submit, is the utterly unconvincing claim that tips their hand: that *your* thought, spoken aloud or written in a language I can read, never shapes *my* thinking. If they are willing to go to such lengths to protect the sanctity and inviolability of intracranial thought, there is more to their critique of the EMT than a quest for truth.... [I suggest that] intracraniality is for them more an ideological hobby horse than a skeptically tested truth. (p. 172)

I’m not sure which is more egregious here: the claim that Adams and Aizawa think that one person’s thoughts, even when verbalized, cannot affect anyone else’s; or the claim that their position stems from unexamined ideology rather than a concern for truth.

Here is another example of Robinson's carelessness with the work of other authors. Chapter 4 begins by looking at Owen Flanagan's (1992) claim that qualia are (contrary to what most have thought) available to third-person evaluation. Robinson quotes a single sentence from pp. 67-68 in Flanagan which he thinks is Flanagan's explanation of how qualia can be subject to third-person evaluation. Yet it is clear in Flanagan's text that that sentence is *not* his explanation at all. The explanation actually appears on pp. 71-72. As a result, Robinson constructs a version of Flanagan's argument which bears little resemblance to what Flanagan actually says.

There are other kinds of errors too. I was irked by the fact that on at least a half-dozen occasions Robinson refers to, or even quotes from, sources that are not listed in his references section. The most glaring example is on p. 18, where a substantial list of points, taking up at least half of the page, is attributed to a source identified as "Jackson (1988)". No work by anyone of that name appears in the references section. While editors must bear partial responsibility for this sort of thing, it further amplifies an impression of unscholarly sloppiness on Robinson's part.

Let me return to Robinson's argument. In chapter 3 he claims that speech acts convey a *conative force* which "puts pressure on its targets to behave differently" (p. 102). In chapter 4 he contends that this force consists of qualia. It is not clear, however, what he thinks qualia are. Partly this is because of the vagueness of his background ontology, LP monism. But the problem is exacerbated by further ambiguity over whether he thinks that qualia are *representational*. Much of chapter 4 concerns the views of Charles Peirce, who originated the concept of qualia. While I am uncertain what Robinson wants us to get from this analysis, the main question seems to be whether Peirce held

that all qualia are (to use Peirce's term) *interpretants*. And that question seems to be similar to the contemporary question of whether all qualia are representational. And that raises a problem. For on p. 120 Robinson casually remarks that "it should be relatively uncontroversial" that "qualia are mental representations". Yet by p. 136 he seems to have forgotten this, saying that "[q]ualia may or may not all be *representations*" (orig. emphasis).

The larger issue, though, is how a quale can be a *force* which affects people's actions if it is not *material*. Now, again, as I have noted, it is extremely unclear what Robinson means when he says that qualia are not material. Which reflects the overarching problem that I have also already noted: that it is often impossible to determine exactly what Robinson is claiming.

Chapter 5 proposes a mechanism for the transfer of qualia between agents: mirror neurons. Clark and Chalmers (1998) claimed that we automatically rely on external objects in a way that makes those objects part of our minds. Robinson proposes that, via the operation of mirror neurons, we automatically rely on *other people* in much the same way. Does he think that as a result, our minds become united with the minds of those other people? I am not sure. Here I shall quote a somewhat lengthy passage which seems to lay out Robinson's view as clearly as any:

[I]t is specifically the body-sensing neural systems—proprioception and enteroreception—that simulate the body states of another human actor, suggesting... [that] those neural systems sense the states of both the central actor's own body and various peripheral actors' bodies, and in simulating

the latter blur the distinction between other-awareness and self-awareness....

This model, obviously, would explain the contagiousness of yawns, or of affective states like hilarity and depression.... Body-sensing consists of *qualia*: we have a qualitative feeling or sensation or experience of a body part or body state. The blurring of the distinction between other-awareness and self-awareness would entail the generation of locationally indeterminate qualia: we have a feeling of a body state but are unable to distinguish its precise source, whether it is my body or your body (or both). (pp. 153-154)

Now it seems to me that all that we can conclude from this passage is that it is sometimes hard to tell whether the ultimate *cause* of your affective state is something happening to you or something happening to another person. But in speaking of “locationally indeterminate qualia”, Robinson doesn’t just mean that it’s hard to tell whether their content is (say) your own hilarity or Sally’s hilarity. He means that the qualia do not determinately *belong* to either you or Sally; or (perhaps) that they belong to both of you. He follows the quoted passage with a rhetorical question: “If we can’t always *feel* or *experience* the difference between my affect and yours, how can we confidently state that affect doesn’t extend?” (p. 154). His implied answer, of course, is that we can’t. This again reflects the second reading of the book’s title that I noted earlier: if it *feels* as if your mind is extended beyond your body—and in this case, extended in a way such that it blends with another person’s mind—then your mind *does* so extend. Robinson appears to think that there is no real

criterion for distinguishing your qualia from mine. Yet surely there is an obvious criterion with which we might at least begin: that if *you* can feel a quale, then it's *yours*! Even if this criterion is wrong, it is stunning that Robinson does not even consider it.

Invoking mirror neurons here doesn't help. Even if they exist (and there is some controversy about that), the mere fact that we are able to automatically simulate the emotions of others does not show that we *literally* share their qualia. Robinson will resist my word 'literally', perhaps invoking LP monism to argue that we cannot even understand what that word means here. I readily grant that there is conceptual unclarity in this area. We are far from being sure how to individuate or localize qualia. But that means it is crucial for discussions of these issues to be conducted with as much care and precision as possible. Unfortunately, Robinson's discussion in *Feeling Extended*, while containing some thought-provoking ideas, suffers badly from a lack of these crucial features.

## REFERENCES

Adams, F., & Aizawa, K. (2008). *The bounds of cognition*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Clark, A. (2008). *Supersizing the mind: embodiment, action, and cognitive extension*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195333213.001.001>

Clark, A., & Chalmers, D. (1998). "The extended mind." *Analysis*, 58, 7-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/analys/58.1.7>



Flanagan, O. (1992). *Consciousness reconsidered*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Fodor, J. A. (1974). "Special sciences (or: the disunity of science as a working hypothesis)." *Synthese*, 28, 97-115.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00485230>

Thompson, E. (2007). *Mind in life: biology, phenomenology, and the sciences of mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (1991). *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Varela, F. J. (1996). "Neurophenomenology: a methodological remedy for the hard problem." *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 3, 330-350.