

# The Poetology of Emotions

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## Abstract

I present a philosophy of human emotions as poetology. First, I provide examples for the extent to which our emotions contain poetry and what that means. Then I show that attempting to formally rationalize emotions directly creates a problem in science: it does not leave emotions as they are but turns them into what I call pseudo-concepts. Thus, I present an indirect approach to emotions under the name of a poetology and show its merits. I argue that the poetology of emotions fulfills all seven aspects of a good theory of emotions recently formulated by Charlie Kurth (2022). Then I address some perspectives on how a poetology of emotions can be a fruitful dialogue partner in the science of emotions.

## 1. What is the poetry in our emotions?

How do we express our emotions? Have we learned to use certain designations for certain mental experiences? Do we know all our emotions? Can emotions be listed? Are we able to identify them correctly? Is there an adequate awareness of them? Can we communicate our emotions in a comprehensible or even empathetic way? Are they somehow related to our intellect? Is there a science of emotions?

If the answer to such questions is *no*, then this text must end here. We then not only have to remain silent about particular

emotions but cannot even use the general term *emotion* in a meaningful way.

But if we say *yes*, we get caught up in a dense web of challenges. In order to understand these challenges, four introductory examples of speaking about emotions are given in the following four paragraphs.

*Untranslatables*: We've all probably felt *wabi-sabi* sometimes while reading a philosophical essay or needed a dose of *Waldeinsamkeit* afterwards. If we had to read or write the essay in a foreign language, we might have experienced *dépaysement*. Or we felt *ubuntu*, maybe even an *işq*, while interpreting it. Or the essay didn't work out for us and rather left us with a persistent impression of a personal *toska*. Maybe only *Blümeranz* remained within our hearts.

Such games with so-called *Untranslatables* highlight the profound seriousness of referring to emotions. In claiming to be untranslatable, such terms raise the question of whether their corresponding emotions can be understood or depicted at all. Let's take the adjective *blümerant*. This German term is said to have been taken from the French *bleu mourant*, thus expressing the emotion of 'dying blue'. We can ask ourselves: do we know what it's like to experience the emotion of *dying blue*? What is it to spontaneously feel like *dying blue*? Anyone who speaks English may have a very good idea of it though, as an English speaker can also feel *blue*. But does 'feeling blue' mean the same thing as 'feeling blümerant'? How would one be able to explain what is meant by such expressions? Anna Wierzbicka (1999) already addressed this issue through the cognitive-linguistic analysis of human behavior decades ago. She shows very explicitly how difficult it is to interculturally categorize expressions of emotions in an integrative way and also points out that not

even the term 'emotion' and other similar expressions should 'be taken for granted' in every language (ibid. p. 9). Mary Besemeres (2004) exemplifies this perspective by exploring the untranslatability of expressions for emotions in Polish and English. There are numerous comparisons between other languages too and they repeatedly criticize ethnocentric approaches from one single dominant language like English (e.g. Alba-Juez 2022; Ng, Cavarallo 2019; van Brakel 1994).

*Metaphors:* When theorizing about emotions, Untranslatables are not the only problem. We can also regard one single language. Can we explain how we 'boil with anger' or 'are crippled by fear' or 'have butterflies in our stomachs'? Different languages seem to use different or sometimes similar imaginative metaphors and analogies for different phenomena of the world to ensure the expression, clarification and communicability of emotions. How should we imagine 'carrying the burden of guilt'? In his book *Metaphor and Emotion*, Zoltán Kövecse (2000) presented a concise overview of the different roles of metaphorical expressions of emotions. He shows the constitutive importance of metaphors even for the emergence of emotions (ibid. 192 ff.). There has been a rich debate on the manifold relevance of metaphors for decades now (cf. Lakoff, Johnson 1980) and it has also spread to the intercultural sector, pointing to considerable differences in metaphor formation through different languages (e.g. Osman 2018; Liu 2013; Sauciuc 2009).

*Synaesthesia:* Moreover, the challenge of grasping emotions by analogies and metaphors is intensifying when we highlight their synaesthetic character. Emotional events can be described as 'cold', 'warm', or 'fulfilling'. Sometimes we are

‘under a lot of pressure’ or feel ‘empty inside’. Emotions are associated with temperature. They can be circumscribed using the domains of space, amplexity, or absence. Sometimes they're considered as ‘nerve-stretching’, other times as ‘tingling’, yet another time they're related to certain colors. We often connect them synaesthetically to other modes of experience. In research, the function of synaesthesia continues to be primarily attributed to particular cognitive phenomena such as color- or sound-perception. However, there are also studies that identify it as a holistic ‘key factor in the processing of reality’ (Latelleur-Sommer 2015, 29). Synaesthesia should then be connected to the entirety of human consciousness and thus also to emotional processes (see also Neckář 2017, pp. 8–19). In addition, emotions are often linked to each other, e.g. when we are ‘happily in love’ or talk about something being ‘intriguingly scary’. Here again we can ask what we aim at with such expressions.

*Names:* But why stop at those questions? For we can also raise the question of simple names for seemingly distinct or given emotions. Can we rely on a fixed definition of terms like ‘happiness’, ‘fear’, ‘anger’, ‘surprise’ or ‘astonishment’? Perhaps these terms are far too blurry even within one language, let alone between different languages. Is it possible that not everything that is called ‘happiness’ actually *is* ‘happiness’? In addition, this problem is broadening, when we emphasize e.g. the findings of Lindquist, Gendron and Satpute (2016). They show how the modes of naming emotions is able to shape and maybe even create them. We seem to *do* and *fabricate* something with certain names for emotions. Thus, the question emerges if there could be *other* emotions than the ones designated by us. Maybe we never have enough or correct names for them. Maybe all names

are correct. Do we maybe have too many names when we think of closely related terms like ‘fearsome’, ‘eerie’, and ‘terrifying’? Is there a definitive criterion for distinguishing and naming particular emotions? Are human emotions woven into a historical or interpersonal process? Maybe new ones are created constantly while old ones are being abandoned.

The foregoing paragraphs exemplify that there is a certain *poetry* and particular poetic approaches in expressing, communicating, and theorizing about emotions. By *poetry*, I mean a creative, variable, and imprecise approach to their expression. The philosophical potential of this poetic aspect will be addressed in the third part of this paper. In the second step, I will point out that also scientific theories and general categorizations of emotions are interlaced in a poetic framework.

## 2. The meta-poetry of emotions

Not only are we able to address particular emotions but also to create general categories for them on a meta-level, e.g. the term ‘emotion’ itself, so-called ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ emotions or other designations like ‘feeling’ or ‘sentiment’. Consequently, there is a rich discourse about the differences and similarities between such terms. How do the phenomena ‘emotion’, ‘affection’, ‘feeling’, ‘mood’, ‘sentiment’, ‘drive’ and the like differ in English? What are their similarities? Deonna, Tappolet and Teroni summarize different perspectives of such taxonomic approaches. They either focus on the duration or the quality of an impression, the nature of its object, or the method of how we deal with it cognitively (2015, pp. 194 ff.).

Moreover, the problem again is intensifying if we look beyond one single language. Jean-Pierre Cléro highlights the partially very different frameworks by which different languages address so called 'emotions' (2004, p. 339). The question arises, for example, whether the English language can simply reproduce the German '*Empfindung*' or the Greek '*synaisthema*'. Can such general categories express what they are supposed to express on the field of emotions? Nicolae Sfetcu (2020) recently gave a concise and comprehensive overview of such meta-level categories in the English language. As many others, he highlights that also the term 'emotion' itself is a relatively young term that originated in the 1830s. How shall we deal with the historicity of such terms when expressing our experience through them?

Thus, meta-level terms like 'emotion', 'feeling' or 'sentiment' raise the same problem as terms for specific emotions. Do they even touch the designated phenomena? Are there more or different meta-level categories or do we have too many? By whose authority and with what right are they used at all? What to do with possible disagreements about their mutual delimitation and their individual meaning? What do 'emotion', 'feeling', 'sentiment' and similar terms actually mean by themselves?

Most of the approaches in scientific research on such issues stem from neuro-cognitive, sociological, psychological, biological, historical, linguistic, and even economic approaches. What then can *philosophy* contribute to the scientific discourse? For emotions have always been an issue of philosophy. Andrzej Dąbrowski gave a summary of the central emotion-related questions in the European philosophical tradition from Ancient Greek philosophy to our days. Above all, he rightly emphasizes that at least modern philosophy continuously draws from the rich results

of other sciences (2016, 13 ff.). Thus, the question arises as to what the genuine and distinct contribution of philosophy to the many questions about our emotions could be.

Now, I argue that a philosophy of emotions always has to be a *poetology*. For as poetology, philosophy avoids a certain dogmatic axiom which is common in other disciplines. This axiom is: *emotions are given facts to us*. Their facticity may be grasped in different ways, e.g. as 'mental states' or 'behavioral responses' or 'effects of bodily changes' or 'interpersonal and intercultural relations' and so on. But it is taken for granted that they are a given fact within these different theoretical paradigms and that we are able to speak about them and conduct research on them in the given framework. In contrast, philosophy poses the question of whether, to what extent and in what way these different paradigms and frameworks make speaking and knowledge of emotions possible in the first place. Philosophy does not start from accepted axiomatic presuppositions just because they have grown scientifically, historically, culturally, or linguistically. It does not view emotions as given facts in an already given scientific framework. From a philosophical perspective, emotions are not a predetermined object of theoretical observation, description, study, or analysis. Philosophy rather investigates the grounding conditions and the ontological emergence of the different paradigms and frameworks that we use in speaking about emotions, be it scientifically or non-scientifically. Thus, in respect to the particular phenomenon of human emotions, it becomes what I call a *poetology*.

### 3. The poetology of emotions

In summary, we can state that a certain *dogmatic rationalism* lies within the multidimensional dealings with emotions. Many debates assume that emotions are merely accessible facts to our knowledge or objects of factual speech in a specific framework. They are frequently taken as given phenomena that can be subjected to a methodologically prefabricated intellectual analysis, categorization, description, and research. Aleksej Kišjuhas carefully points out to what extent especially Western philosophy, with few exceptions, has always tended to view emotions in such a predetermined relation to our intellect, especially since Stoicism (2018, pp. 257 ff., for a detailed analysis of the perspective of Stoicism, see Cooper 2005). This rationalism continues, with some notable exceptions, throughout the establishment of modern science. Robert Solomon (2008) points this out in his introductory overview on the history of the science of emotion. Consequently, in facing this historical imbalance, Ronald DeSouza's influential work initiated a research paradigm of a philosophical intermediation of *ratio* and *emotio* (1987, p. xvi). Since then, their mediation has been the focus of much research.

Poetology comes into play, where we become aware that emotions do not remain emotions if they are always already rationalized as objects of our intellect within a specific conceptual framework. From a poetological point of view their balance must rather be incorporated *as emotions* into the research methods and our modes of expressing them. Without this incorporation, any research continues to reproduce the gap between rationality (science, knowledge, facticity) and emotionality (expression, subjectivity, experience). Robert Roberts emphasizes the problem of



simply accepting certain frameworks when talking about emotions. As such he mentions biology, psychology, brain sciences, psychoanalysis or other clinical approaches, but also cultural anthropology and history. These approaches always assume a 'definite background' as their basis, which therefore already 'shapes its results' (Roberts 2003, p. 4). We agree with this methodological criticism. Philosophy does not ask about what is given by an accepted scientific framework. Philosophy investigates the logic of the givenness of the seemingly given. This can also be done with emotions and is the poetological approach. Poetology includes the *indirect* and therefore always *creative and poetic* manner in which we address our emotions. It does so by scrutinizing the seemingly given frameworks that underly any reference on emotional events.

Hence, the pivotal poetological question is how we become able to express and conduct research on emotions without already turning them into conceptual objects of rationality. How can we address emotions *as* emotions and thus refer to them *in an emotional way*? – Our answer is: by involving our own modes of expression right in the experience of emotions, thus transforming it from mere *description* to *poetry*. Poetology views emotions as contributors to the genesis of the very concepts that refer to them. Such a philosophical poetology can be an important and instructive partner for scientific discussions. It is in some measure related to Roberts' approach of a *Conceptual Analysis* (id. 2003), which examines the language pragmatics of experienced emotions. Poetology also examines the genetic logic that is inherent in our expression and addressing of emotions. It is a phenomenology of emotional speech. The emergence of emotional concepts is woven into the experienced emotionality itself and therefore their rationalization also

becomes *experiential* – for example in synaesthetic, imaginative, interpersonal and intercultural forms. Poetology teaches to view any seemingly factual and direct conceptualization of emotions as *pseudo-concepts*. Any concept that seems to be directly able to express or address emotions is regarded as a mere *pseudo-concept* to highlight and mark the constantly *indirect* relation between emotions and their expressions and references. This *indirectness* forms the first step to perceive emotions in a poetic way. It acknowledges that emotions cannot be conceptualized or rationalized directly and stay what they are.

Regarding any reference to our emotions as initially *indirect* grounds the experiential character of referring to them. They shall be *experienced in an expressive way* instead of just being *talked about*. The poetology of emotions provokes the experience of a multifaceted *inability* to directly express or refer to emotions *as* emotions. For this reason, the first and second part of this paper focused on intercultural, linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical challenges when trying to address emotions. Their poetry stems from a specific *unableness* that is experienced in all attempts of expressing or referring to them. This indirectness is not a flaw of language or method, but a sign and basis of entering the poetry within our emotions by making them occur *as emotions*.

Thus, the principle of the poetology of emotions lies in operating with what I call *unableness*. I do not call it *inability*, because I do not regard it as a certain incapable flaw but a positively experienced phenomenon. Poetology recognizes experienced *unableness* as the principle and stage for the addressability of emotions *as* emotions. Herein lies the indirectness in every conceptual reference to them. *Unableness* occurs to us – and we have to deal with it, i.e. we

have to poetize it. This will always be a subject of a certain *poetry* because the relation of expression and experience is indirect when it comes to emotions. Emotions are not given rationalized facts. As such, they are pseudo-concepts, which is just another way of saying that they are poems. Referring to emotions – also by using the term 'emotions' – shows itself as an experienced *unableness* on our part. Thus, we attempt to adapt our systems of reference and expression to this experience in a creative, fluid and vivid way, instead of wanting to weave emotions as pseudo-concepts into a dogmatic framework of presupposed facticity. Poetology acknowledges and investigates any reference to emotions as part of a diverse and manifold poetic process of dealing with what I call the principle of the *occurrence of unableness*.

#### 4. Poetology as a good theory of emotions

Charlie Kurth has recently presented seven requirements for an up-to-date theory of emotions in his insightful book *Emotion* (2022). Thus, also *poetology* must be measured against these requirements. Kurth formulates seven questions (*ibid.*, pp. 6–11), which he says every good theory of emotions must be able to answer:

- a. Phenomenology: What is it like to have emotions?
- b. Motivation: How do emotions motivate and move us?
- c. Intentionality: What is an emotion about?
- d. Individuation: How do we distinguish emotions?
- e. Cognition: How do emotions shape our cognitive states?
- f. Value: How do emotions let us appraise the world?
- g. Rationality: Are there justifiable or accurate emotions in given situations?

With our call for the poetic inclusion of experienced *unableness* into any kind of reference to emotions, we are already dealing with the first question. The other six questions will emerge from this.

#### 4.1 Phenomenology

As *poetic*, any reference to emotion is itself an *emotional reference*. It involves the experience of indirectness in the relation between emotion and reference. In contrast, where there is no such indirectness, we operate with emotions as *pseudo-concepts*.

As *poetological*, however, emotions are not only addressed indirectly, but the *occurrence of unableness* in them is actively acknowledged and sought out. For the poetological approach addresses emotions *as emotions* through the involvement of experienced unableness. This occurrence happens to us as a phenomenon, even if we refer to emotions by abstract concepts. They are then acknowledged as *poetic concepts*. Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer therefore rightly emphasize the 'irreducibility of emotions to other mental or cognitive but also to other bodily states' and 'the fundamental role of the first-person (singular or plural) perspective' (2020, p. 10). Emotions are addressed *as emotions* in sustaining their experiential dimension by indirect poetic reference. *Unableness* occurs to us. This raises the poetic question, if the term 'emotion' is sufficient to provoke the phenomenon of inclusive unableness. The ancient Greek term *pathos* may be a more suitable poetization. *Pathos* stems from the verb *pathein*, meaning 'something is suffered', 'something befalls us'. The Latin *passio* and modern derivatives like *passion* originate from it. Thus, in the term *pathos* an *occurring unableness* is addressed, which imposes itself on us and which has to be dealt with. This is the origin of

emotions as experienced phenomena. In referring to them, we address the *occurrence of unability*. We have *passions*. At the same time, this occurrence provides the possibility to interact with what is happening to us. Thus, an *ability* to refer to this experience emerges within its occurrence. This ability is expressed by the opposite Greek term *poiein* (= to make, create, bring about). From *poiein* our word poetry is derived. Poetry is a capable way of dealing with the occurrence of *unability* that is experienced as emotions. This poetry becomes *poetology* by including the occurring *pathos* in its own expressive referential frameworks, e.g. scientific theories, artistic endeavors or ordinary interactions, and therefore engaging in a poetic way of dealing with experienced unability.

The concept of *passion* therefore acknowledges that we are able to create a phenomenology of emotions. For *passions* involve the experiential character of an event that we suffer. We experience *unability* at all times, even in trying to rationalize what it even *is* to be unable. The manifold reference to *unability* generates the poetic aspects in any given facticity, i.e. its emotional dimension. From this perspective, another classical concept about this phenomenon comes to mind. The Latin term *affectio* also expresses that the addressed phenomenon is not a matter of direct access to given facts. Rather, *unability* does not relate to *facts*, but to an *ad-fectum*, i.e. a phenomenon towards which our dealings (*facere*) are directed (*ad-*). An affect is a ‘not yet done’, it is not *fact*. Rather, it is an alignment towards the fact (*ad-fectum*). Passions are not dealings with facts, but alignments towards something that imposes unability on us. They are *affects*. Finally, the term *emotion* is also related to this. For a *movement* (*motio*) is instigated in us by our affective passions.

## 4.2 Intentionality

From a poetological point of view, the terms *passion*, *affect*, and *emotion* play an essential expressive role in poetizing the experience of unableness. They are three arbitrary but suitable poems that can be related to the indicated phenomenon.

In experiencing this we become *able* to variably deal with the occurring unableness. This leads directly to the notion of its *intentionality*. Everything emotive is affective, i.e. directed towards imposed unableness. Its imposition may stem from an object, a mental state, an event, other people and so on. There are various kinds of unableness. Passions happen in particular modes of being directed (*affectus*) and moved (*emotio*) by occurring unableness. They are various ways of experiencing and having to deal with unableness. What we poetize as 'fear' is a different intentional focus on encountering unableness than 'anger', 'joy', 'love' or 'surprise', to name some examples. Moreover, 'fearing' or 'loving' different entities or phenomena further differentiates the poetic dealing with their particular imposition. Matthew Ratcliffe rightly emphasizes that the intentionality in emotions is always associated with the experience of a very specific and particular 'disturbance of the experiential world' (2022, p. 254). This disturbance is the differently imposed and aligned occurrence of unableness.

Poetology examines ways of actively addressing specific occurrences of *unableness*, their various impositions, and how they are intentionally dealt with by different emotional events. From a meta-poetic perspective, the differences made by English emotion poetry in referring to poems like 'moods', 'sentiments', 'desires', and similar phenomena also

belong in this context. Thus, poetology asks, what kinds of unableness do rise in particular passions and how does it affect us to deal with something (*poiesis*)?

Emotional intentionality is to become able to be unable in multiple ways. Intentionality is directed to different modes of an occurring unableness. We become able to be unable in a certain way and thus become affected in a specific mode. Dealing affectively with the occurring *pathos* is called *emotion*. ‘Anger’, ‘joy’, ‘astonishment’, ‘lust’ and whatever imposition we may poetize about, are always simultaneously *pathos*, *affectus*, and *emotio* in intentionalizing us.

### 4.3 Motivation

Emotions also directly include imperatives. For the demand to deal with unableness lies in the very logic of its *pathos*. Unableness involves an *affective ought*. It is experienced in particular deprivations of ableness. This experience motivates us. It initializes *emotio* from *pathos* by *affective enablement*. Depending on its quality, intensity, or duration, this initialization can be free play, an enriching experience, but also coercion or force. Affective imperatives emotionalize us. They drive us out of our current experience by a specific intentional ought or ought-not. They always contain a demand, even if this demand is not always rationally clear to or grasped by us. To name a few examples, it may be the demand to just notice something, or to name it, to deal with it, to overcome it or to engage in it. All this depends on the specific occurrence of unableness and its intentional impositions that provokes us to refer to it poetically, i.e. indirectly. There is a multifaceted debate on the complex relation between emotion and motivation in research, recently summarized by Kent Berridge (2018).

According to him, emotions are mostly assumed to be subjective facts that correspond to certain objective 'brain mechanisms' in which the motivating element is sought. However, the poetological question is what motivates our dealing with emotions to use references as 'brain mechanisms' or 'subjective' and 'objective', 'psychic' and 'material'. What emotional occurrence of unableness motivates us to want to poetize emotions in this way? What experience of *unableness* are we trying to express when we speak like this? What emotion drives us to this or that science of emotions? Is it displeasure with a certain *unable* concept? Is it curiosity that triggers it? Is it fear of something? Is it desire for something? Is it the experience of safeness that we are looking for in certain ways of poetizing emotions?

Moreover, what would be motivations to deal with unableness in a different poetic mode than through science? Rationalizing, intellectualizing, or conceptualizing emotions are just a few ways to acquire an *ability to be unable*. Humans do this in numerous other ways as well. If we ask about motivation, we ask about different *imperatives* that emotions impose on people. Exploring the imperatives in emotions would be a further endeavor of our poetology. They can take a variety of scientific, artistic, social, or other forms and their emotional side is what drives us to engage in these forms.

#### 4.4 Values

The *occurrence of unableness* motivates us. Intentionality and ought are inherent in any emotion, sometimes well-hidden or encrypted. That does not mean that there are always secret goals or ends in them, for the ought can also just be to notice or experience something by dealing with imposed unableness. The ought in an occurring unableness can also



be a need to express joy or comfort. An intentionally motivating *pathos* is inherent in such phenomena too. For example, this can lead to the unablensness of a cognitive integration of an event into the current capabilities of a person. In this context, Matthew Pelowski (2015) has shown how human emotional crying contributes to the cognitive transformation, reschematization, and emotional integration of being capable to experience an event, be it by joy, sadness, anger, or other poems. Crying contains an emotional ought. According to him, this even has similarities to different aesthetic ways of experiencing the world (ibid., p. 3), which also corroborates the viewpoint of poetology.

Now, one of the most complex tasks in exploring emotions arises from their motivational aspect: how do they tally with *appraisal* and *evaluation* and thus with ought and ought-not? For in emotions *as* emotions, evaluation and appraisal do not appear directly as verbal or reflective statements or judgements. Their ontology is different. The way in which the occurrence of unablensness motivates us to evaluate and appraise is expressed phenomenologically in immediate subjective experiences. That they are immediate *is* their *unablensness*. That they are subjective *is* their ability. When we try to express this subjective immediacy, we can poetize it through primordial concepts that designate immediate subjectivity such as ‘feeling’ or ‘sentiment’. Such primordial concepts of subjectivity and immediacy as expression of unablensness are also sought out and examined by poetology. The English language uses terms like *feeling* or *sensation*, among others. Emotions are accompanied by an experience of *sense* that lets us *feel*. They provide a subjectively immediate experience of appraisal and evaluation that is *felt* or *sensed* (other modes could contain poems like ‘detect’ or ‘perceive’, to give two more examples). That's why we can neither

reproach nor praise emotions. They are immediate evaluations. Nobody can account for a specific *pathos*. This is their *unableness* in regard to values. They are felt appraisals and evaluations.

But from this unable immediacy arises also the ability to ascribe them or dismiss them. We can derive judgments from them and refer to them, because they are also subjective. That is their *ableness* as a feeling and sensation. Poetology teaches us to derive appraisal and evaluation from subjective immediacy, which in turn is dealt with *as emotions*. In his famous theory, Robert Solomon assumes that 'emotions are like judgments' (2003, p. 11). Poetologically, the greatest importance is to be placed on the word 'like'. The *affective* character of Solomon's own poeticization is reflected in it. Emotions are not factual judgements, but a *kind* of judgement. Once again, a poetologian could ask, what emotion motivated Solomon to explicitly choose the logical form of 'judgements' to express his *pathos* about emotions. However, he adds that they are even evaluative 'choices' (ibid., p. 17), in which we recognize the poetological *ableness* to deal with immediacy. They are not reflective choices, but poetic ones.

Values show up in the form of experienced appraisals as *feelings* or *sentiments*. Emotions are acts of evaluative sensing. Their poetry arises when we refer to such subjective feelings and try to link them to the immediate appraisals inherent in our experiences. Emotions are therefore not a subordinate category of feelings or sensations, but feelings and sensations are the evaluative element in our emotions. Unableness *feels* a certain way, and that *is* already the act of evaluating and *kind of* judging, which is at the same time affectively *motivating*.

## 4.5 Cognition

Emotions are felt, sensed and evaluative movements (*emotio*). They motivate us to poetize them in a variety of ways as subjective-intentional experiences of unablensess. The fact that feeling them is immediate is itself an occurrence of this unablensess and therefore an issue of poetology.

In the poetization, emotions also move ontologically towards cognition, the term 'move' being itself an *unable* poem once again. The emergence of the ability to be unable can be gradually and differentially developed. Jesse Prinz uses the poetic term 'Psychosemantics' for this emergence (2003, p. 78). He points out that emotions develop and establish themselves in their own addressable cognitive properties. Poetology thus has several overlaps with these affectively operating Psychosemantics. Emotions are poetic developments from the *pathos of unablensess* to the gradually and multi-faceted *ability* to deal with unablensess. In such dealings we can convert them to unemotional pseudo-concepts or engage in them *as* emotions. It depends on whether we negate the *occurrence of unablensess* in the process. Cognition can be variously affected by *unablensess*. It is not a counterpart to emotion. It is the *active handling* of occurring unablensess and therefore the root of poetology. This handling can adopt different forms, such as *thought*, *consciousness*, *volition*, or *memory*, to name some of them. As they themselves contain certain forms of *unablensess* and therefore emotions, they are also issues of emotional poetry. Emotion always accompanies cognition and cognition always poetizes emotion. They are intertwined in any experience. This is why there is no real unemotional science about emotions, just their possible reduction to pseudo-

concepts. But even pseudo-concepts are subject to certain occurrences of unablens and have a poetic emotional side.

The more this dynamic interrelation experiences itself as a self-related *ableness* to be *unable*, the more it renders itself cognitively. It becomes the capability not only to experience but to refer to emotions as part of their experience. For cognition is in itself always an emotional *pathos*. It imposes itself on itself. Cognition happens to itself. Such an event could be poetized as the emotion of conscious freedom. Conversely, emotion is always cognition. Emotional *ability* doesn't happen at some point of their mutual development. It is always already able, even if we are not conscious of it. For to be conscious of possibly not being conscious of something is another occurrence of unablens, which is followed by certain emotions. Even being unaware of being unaware of something is accompanied by certain emotions. The relation between emotion and cognition can be explored by poetology in all its diversity. Different emotional modes correspond to different cognitive ways of handling unablens. These ways take on different ontological forms, which in turn can be poetized. Poetology investigates emotions regarding their multidimensional ontology, which manifests itself in different cognitive modes.

#### **4.6 Individuation**

Our last steps lead directly to the question of the individuation of emotions. Which and how many there are, how they are related to each other, if and how they can be distinguished in a typology, emerges from the experience of their cognitive ontological plurality. Juan Loaiza (2021) recently rigorously summarized the central issues on the individuation of emotions both in general categories and in

individual emotions. He speaks of a plural 'ontology of emotions' that must face the questions we have raised. We cannot distinguish phenomena such as joy, anger, fear, *ubuntu*, *toska* or *blümeranz* directly and factually. There isn't even one single form of such phenomena. For the *unableness* that occurs in all of them establishes itself cognitively in different ontological modes of experience. The development of new poems, the abandonment or resumption of others, the need to express subjective experience, which may even reach the point of idiosyncrasy – all this awaits at the peak of the cognitive confrontation with emotionality: individuation or concretion. Individuation is itself emotivated by a particular experience of unableness, namely to distinctively refer to its subjectively felt occurrences in intentionally dealing with it and cognitively handling it. This echoes in the manifold discourses on emotion expressions both intra- and interpersonally. Emotional individuation is a process of creativity. It is never just a description of facts, but a more or less cognitively established way of dealing with unableness. In other words, the process of the individuation of emotional experiences is identical to their poetization. Their individuation is brought about, not gathered from presupposed facts.

Poetology explores this process of individuation, which roots in the complex plurality of cognitive ontologies of emotions. Here poetology meets once again with other sciences. For the development of emotions in the sense of their individuation can assume a psychological or social, a historical, artistic, linguistic, or neuro-biological, and many other faces as well. One and the same person develops a rich variety of handling emotions. Their poetic individuation is the ongoing development of becoming able to refer to this variety in various modes.

## 4.7 Rationality

The presented ontological plurality of emotions raises the question of their rationalizability, which we began our poetological outline with. In respect to the sheer immensity of different poetic individuations, the issue and claim of a concluding and definitive poetry appears. Is there a criterion for conclusive accuracy when theorizing about emotions? Can they be adequately identified, justified, or lead to expected reactions? Are we able to ultimately describe or classify them? Can we group them in right and wrong emotions, influence, use, or correct them? Should we do all that? – Such approaches towards their rationalization stem from the initial question of whether there is an *accurate dealing with unableness*.

The claim to rationalize emotions is a result of the cognitive process of their individuation. The tendency to examine, express, analyze, order or interconnect them arises from their poetic distinction. Now, rationalization and its claim of a particular accuracy or adequateness is itself motivated by particular emotions that can also be examined by poetology. Rationality is motivated and subjectively accompanied by emotions and thus in itself a mode of affectivity. It deals with its own *pathos* of unableness. From the perspective of a poetologist, this aspect has always to be taken into account, when engaging in rational activities. Otherwise, as Deonna and Teroni emphasize, a sudden ‘gap’ could emerge between rationality and emotionality (2015, p. 95). Emotions then are viewed as factual pseudo-concepts, devoid of the possibility to refer to them *as* emotions. This, once again, is a mode of *occurring unableness*. But it may not *experience* its own unableness, for it consist in the very inhibition of experience towards a seemingly disconnected rationality that becomes a

pseudo-concept itself. Reuniting it with its own emotionality means poetizing it again and immerse it in emotional experience. Acts of thought, language, or conceptualization can themselves feel and affect us in certain evaluative ways. They are motivated and motivate us by intentionally dealing with particular occurrences of unableness that let us cognitively engage in handling *unableness* in different rational modes. Emotions can be made poetized phenomena of such modes and be examined in respect to their accuracy, justification, taxonomy, even correctness or appropriateness (Deonna, Teroni, 104) and other rational approaches. However, such approaches are vice versa always initialized emotionally and remain indirect poetic approaches.

In summary and retrospect, the modes of rationalizing emotions (7) are themselves conceived as an aspect of their individually manifold emergence (6) as cognitive ontologies (5). This emergence takes place as the experienced subjective immediacy (4) of a multi-evaluated *unableness*, which motivates (3) us intentionally (2) to deal with its occurrence as a poetic phenomenon (1). Emotions can poetically be referred to as given psychic, neuro-cognitive, physical, or socio-cultural facts. But they *aren't* such facts. In poetology they are dealings (*poiesis*) with the phenomenon of unableness that always demands interpersonal engagement, intrapersonal experience, and creative expression.

## 5. Why a poetology of emotions matters

Our results suggest that emotions should be viewed as acts of affective expression and reference. Affective means that they are an action that expresses itself by engaging in its own unableness without immediately negating, transforming, or conceptualizing it. References to emotionality thus become

themselves emotional. Emotions are diverse abilities to become or be unable.

Actively examining and engaging in this experience is their poetology. It teaches to acknowledge, examine, and express unablensness in all our states. Poetology therefore asks us to recognize, experience and deal with the emotionality in all our states and activities. Emotions are always present, even in seemingly formal or mechanical activities. To exclude the incessant *occurrence of unablensness* in its many faces means to negate a central aspect in our relation to ourselves and the world. This negation is, of course, always possible and itself a certain method of dealing with unablensness. Poetology thus demands a reintegration of emotions as an essential and expressive domain in any field of intra- and interpersonal interaction. If we take the sciences as an example, irritating questions arise, such as: should we laugh, cry, be amazed or be afraid together in science? Can we share science in being angry or desperate, fall in love or feel comfort in it? Can we allow the involvement or even discovery of particular emotions in conducting scientific research and even expressively weave them into our methodologies? Doesn't every act of rational cognition contain poetic aspects that allow us to feel and sense it? Can we present, exchange, study or refer to scientific research in an emotionally rich way and what would that look like? Isn't the domain of an experienced *unablensness* what makes us engage in research in the first place? Then why not express this factor? What do we *fear* when we exclude emotion from science – and then include it again through that very fear of emotions in a seemingly emotionless pseudo-conceptual rationality?

Such questions arise in other areas of life too. Poetology teaches us to appreciate each other as emotional beings and



to experience reality as a multidimensional poetic expression of dealing with unablness. On top of that, it demands the development of a differentiated and *able* poetry of such expressions. The more proficient and creative we can poetize them, the more we invite each other into our mutual spaces of experience. A meaningful *education of emotions*, which is often demanded in research, has nothing to do with rationalized manners or certain stoic ideas about their civilized restraint, but with increasing the richness and ability of their expressive poetization. Poetology teaches ways of emotionally engaging in and developing our abilities to express unablness.

The poetic inclusion of emotionality *as* emotionality also introduces a common, synaesthetic possibility of mutual, intra-, and interpersonal experience. By experiencing each other as poets of our respective and very own *unablenesses*, we invite each other to a *sympathetic* path of engaging in one another. Emotions allow us not only to address, but to *experience* alterity. For they inherently present themselves to us as an *Other* through the occurrence of unablness. Thus, the poetology of emotions also has an ethical dimension. It examines how poetic acknowledgements lead to people coming into a more accurate mutualism in their respective modes of experiencing unablness. In poetology, subjects are acknowledged and viewed as *expressive poets*, i.e. as subjects who find themselves intentionally and motivationally instigated to constantly deal with specific occurrences of unablness. Poetology aims at making this as tangible as possible. It does not recede to seemingly unemotional rationalistic description, justification, or systematization. Rather, also rationality becomes a poetic-expressive form that commits itself to the ethics of syn-emotional experience.

Furthermore, poetology introduces meaningful aesthetic forms into our cognitive states. Their poetological rationalization is the affective search for *accurate expressions and modes of reference* instead of a *right or wrong justification of emotions*. Now, accuracy is an aesthetic demand, not to be confused with certain notions of good taste, connoisseurship and the like, but of passionately investigating, developing, and differentiating our own abilities to express our *unableness*. Even science becomes an aesthetic form in poetology, if ‘aesthetic’ means ‘emotionally expressive’.

From its expressive perspective, poetology is also related to the concerns of intrapersonal psychoanalysis, interpersonal social theory, and intercultural anthropology. For the *affective* expression of our unableness as *passions* that move us *emotionally* generates even therapeutic effects (cf. Nook, Satpute, Ochsner 2021). They also entail social and intercultural dimensions. Ursula Hess and Shlomo Hareli (2019) have collected a number of perspectives on these issues in their volume *The Social Nature of Emotion Expression*, supporting our poetological approach. Being confronted with the necessity to deal with one's own emotions or those of another person addresses us as *affected*. We are no longer *observers* of events but are *involved*. This changes everything in dealing with ourselves and the world. Rooted in the phenomenon of unableness, it provokes poetry. Engaging in our emotional potential makes each one of us a *poet*.

Poetology therefore not only examines the expressive ontology of emotions, but also contains a demand. It emotionalizes. It motivates us to participate in intentional experience. It invokes the differentiation of our individualized cognition and thereby reconcile aesthetic-creative expression with rational accuracy. That is why it is

poetologically crucial to enable people to experience and to express what they have experienced in an investigative and experiential poetry. Thus, poetry itself becomes an expressive research activity that takes part in all our other cognitive actions and enriches them with the dimension of emotional experience. As a result, emotions are experienced, exchanged and explored *as emotions* as much as possible.

## 6. Conclusion

I have shown what challenges a philosophy of emotions must meet if it does not want to be simply an appendix to empirical-dogmatic theories of other sciences. Philosophy provides us with a principle of referring to and expressing emotions experientially. I call this principle the *occurrence of unablness*, from which emotion is gained as constantly poetically shaped and poetologically examinable experience. It addresses emotion *as* emotion and highlights how it takes part in every human endeavor. Such endeavors always stem from or at least contain a certain experience of an *unablness* that has to be dealt with. From this point of view, they always contain *emotions*. To refer to or express this *unablness* in its ontological manifoldness is the poetry in our emotions. This poetry is actively examined by *poetology* both as a science and as a teaching. As I have shown, poetology fulfills the seven requirements for a good theory of emotions according to Charlie Kurth. It provides a creative method for addressing important issues of the intra- and interpersonal, interdisciplinary, intercultural and interlingual practice and exchange of human experience. This method, of course, must be examined in more detail in the future.

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