it is well supported but that the question somehow cannot be asked. One part of his reason for saying this is that we do not believe that they are sensate; rather, we unhesitatingly react or respond, and without belief questions of justification cannot arise (p. 50). This is advanced as an application of Wittgenstein’s diagnosis of scepticism. There are, surely, two doubts that merit immediate expression. Even if there is no belief but merely a response, why cannot someone raise the question whether our responses are justified? Second, is there really any plausibility in the suggestion that we do not believe that animals are sensate? Evidence that we do includes people’s repeated assertions that they do think so and a fairly universal sense that it is legitimate and in no way absurd to ask for evidence and justification. Behind Gaita’s approach, of course, lies the conviction that no justification can be found. That is surely a pessimistic estimate.

Gaita next attempts to preserve the status of the conviction as in no need of defence or justification by remarking that the ‘formation of the concepts’ guarantees it (pp. 60-61), but we are not told what it is about the introduction of the concepts that grounds this status. He mentions that we form (some of) our psychological concepts in response to observation of animals. This is, in fact, not true of everyone, but in itself it no more guarantees that our concept applications are correct than the fact that those people who think in terms of witches formed their concept in response to the behaviour of certain women guarantees the correctness of their views. Gaita remarks that his approach is inconsistent with almost all ‘philosophical and scientific work about animals’ (p. 52). To which the response is that we should need a really weighty argument to end up there!

Gaita’s book is not for the professional philosopher engaged in serious thought about animals, nor is it a good introduction to philosophy. It is, though, very well written, charming, reflective and provocative. It is, therefore, for animal lovers on the look out for a book with such qualities.

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Anyone who has worked in the theory of emotions in the last fifteen years will know the fecundity and influence of Robert Roberts’s article, ‘What an Emotion Is: A Sketch’ (The Philosophical Review 97 [1988], pp. 183-209). And good things come to those who wait, for with his recent book, Roberts fully redeems the promise of that earlier work. He presents a comprehensive development and highly persuasive defence of his theory of emotion in beautifully clear prose.

The book is intended as the first volume of two, and focuses on the analysis of what an emotion is as preparatory ground to a theory of moral psychology to be presented in the second volume. The first chapter presents the most comprehensive defence to date of the coherence of the category ‘emotion’ and of the methodology of conceptual analysis against the very different attacks by Amélie Rorty and Paul Griffiths. Griffiths claims that only science, in particular evolutionary biology and
neuroscience, can tell us what emotions ‘really are’ (What Emotions Really Are [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997]). Roberts argues in reply that only conceptual analysis provides an understanding of emotion at the level of the person, and that this level is irreplaceable. It is scientific prejudice to think that an account of emotion based on brain processes or the evolutionary history of the emotion is somehow a ‘better’ or ‘truer’ account of the nature of emotions. In fact, Roberts argues, the work of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (Descartes’ Error [New York: Avon Books, 1994], esp. pp. 131-39) shows that, if anything, preference should be given to conceptual analysis if we are interested in the emotions of human beings. Damasio’s account supports the claim that it is impossible to understand the operation of human emotions independent of the meanings with which they work. An account that takes in meaning is one that works at the level of the person, and conceptual analysis must therefore form the core of an account of (human) emotion. A further defence of conceptual analysis is provided indirectly by the overall success of this methodology in accounting for a variety of emotional and related phenomena.

Chapter 2 is an extended defence of Roberts’s claim that emotions are concern-based construals. In the sense he intends it, a ‘construal’ is akin to perception: ‘Construals have an immediacy reminiscent of sense perception. They are impressions, ways things appear to the subject; they are experiences and not just judgements or thoughts or beliefs’ (p. 75). Although they are interpretations, the interpretation is built into the experience: ‘Experientially…a construal is not an interpretation laid over a neutrally perceived object, but a characterization of the object, a way the object presents itself’ (p. 80). Gestalt figures—such as the duck/rabbit—present simple examples of construals; one sees the figure as duck or rabbit, in neither case (unless one bends one’s will to it) does one see a neutral arrangement of lines. Construals ‘involve an “in terms of” relationship: one thing is perceived in terms of something else. Construals are “constructive”, “synthetic”, and “organic”, bringing together a variety of elements in some kind of integration’ (p. 76).

Emotions are distinguished from other construals by being based on concerns (desires, aversions, attachments, interests) the subject has. The construal brings together the concern and the object, so that the perception of the object is in terms of ‘some kind of importance of worthiness that is lent the object by the concern on which the emotion is based. In emotions, as in sense perception, qualities are attributed to “the world”, qualities that the world may or may not have’ (p. 147). For example, fear is the construal of its object as dangerous or threatening. And so ‘[a] concern-based construal the emotion makes two kinds of claims, first about what we might call the structure of the situation that the emotion is about [e.g. the possibility of harm], and second about its importance or bearing’ (p. 317). These two claims, which can often, but not always, be spelled out by propositions, are ‘inextricably intertwined’ (p. 111): ‘the concern enters into the perception so as to characterize the appearance of the object’ (p. 80).

Roberts defends his theory against its rivals, discussing with insight and subtlety the place in the analysis of emotion of judgments, propositions, causes, bodily states, and actions. He concludes that ‘[c]onstruals may seem to some to be cognitions, in some sense, even if they are not judgments, do not constitute knowledge, are not conscious states, and lack a propositional character… But the construals that I take to be paradigm cases of emotions are concern-based… So an emotion, in