Article

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Is the Appropriateness of Emotions Culture-Dependent? The Relevance of Social Meaning

Abstract: This paper contributes to the question to what extent the socio-cultural context is relevant for the appropriateness of emotions, while appropriateness of an emotion means that the emotion entails a correct, or adequate, evaluation of its object. In a first step, two adequacy conditions for theories of emotions are developed: the first condition ensures that the socio-cultural context is not neglected: theories must allow for the fact that appropriateness often depends on the social meaning of the emotion's particular object. The second condition rules out implausible forms of cultural determinism. In a second step, an account that meets both conditions is presented: the Acceptance within Social Context account.

Keywords: Emotions and values; Emotions and culture; Collective acceptance; Anger; Infidelity.

1 Introduction

Emotions are typically directed at a particular intentional object. We represent this object in a specific evaluative light when having an emotion directed at it. This fact yields an appropriateness condition for emotions: the emotion is appropriate if and only if the object possesses the evaluative property in question. So far this is common ground within the philosophy of emotions. While there has been quite a bit of work on the question of how emotions represent these evaluative properties, the role of socio-cultural factors for the appropriateness of emotions has received little systematic treatment and is not well understood. Appropriateness is apparently culture-dependent in quite a lot of ordinary situations: think of

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embarrassment over a breach of table etiquette and anger over a case of infidelity. When we want to understand the culture-dependence of emotions, we need to understand the culture-dependence of evaluative properties like "embarrassing" or "offensive" – properties human beings represent whenever they undergo an emotion of a certain type. This paper takes some steps in untangling the culture-dependence of such properties.

I pursue two goals in this paper. The first one is to develop two adequacy conditions for theories of emotions: the first condition ensures that the socio-cultural context is not neglected when it comes to the question which objects possess the properties represented by emotions. The second condition ensures that the evaluative properties represented by emotions are not determined by cultural factors to such a strong degree that it would render an account implausible. These conditions for theories of emotions are derived from two adequacy conditions for social theory in general; namely to account for both individuals' embeddedness in social structures and their individual agency. Spelling out the conditions already leads to a significant insight: we can do justice to many forms of culture-dependence not so much by investigating in the things a group of people regards as embarrassing but by investigating in the things a group of people regards as rude, for instance. If a person accidentally behaves in a rude way, she has good reasons for embarrassment. The second goal of this paper is to propose one account of culture-dependence of the appropriateness of emotions that meets both conditions. I call it the Acceptance within Social Context (ASC) account. It assigns a crucial role to the collective acceptance of properties like rudeness or infidelity and analyzes how they influence the appropriateness of emotions. To develop this account, I use some tools from social ontology, especially Frank Hindriks's (2009, 2013) analysis of social institutions.

First, I explain what it means that an emotion's appropriateness sometimes depends on the social meaning of its object. This allows us to develop the first adequacy condition (Section 2). I introduce the second adequacy condition in Section 3. In Section 4, I develop my ASC account by discussing anger as an appropriate response to romantic infidelity. In Section 5, I show that the ASC account applies to many, but not all, of those emotions to which the two adequacy conditions apply. The paper concludes with a wrap-up of its results.

2 The First Adequacy Condition: Appropriateness and Social Meaning

In order to clarify in which sense the appropriateness of emotions depends on a socio-cultural context, we first have to clarify what "appropriateness of emotions"

means. Afterwards, I develop the first adequacy condition which makes sure that the role of the socio-cultural realm for appropriateness is not neglected. Then I consider which requirements this adequacy condition imposes on attempts to spell out the relation between emotions and values.

In the philosophy of emotions, the notion of appropriateness results from the widely accepted claim that emotions involve an evaluative stance: an emotion is (at least typically and perhaps by definition) directed at a *particular object* [Kenny (1963) calls it the "material object"]. The particular object does not have to be a physical thing; it may also be an event, an action, or something else. When a person feels an emotion directed at an object, she views that object as having certain evaluative properties. When I am sad about my friend moving to another town, I view her relocation as sad. This is a necessary connection; viewing an emotion's object in a particular evaluative light is part of what it is to be sad. My sadness over my friend's relocation is an *emotional episode* of the *emotion type* sadness. Other emotion types are for instance fear, happiness or jealousy. Each emotion type entails a specific evaluative stance [Kenny (1963) calls the property that expresses the evaluative stance of an emotion type, the "formal object" of that emotion type]. The formal object of sadness can be described as loss or as the sad.[1]

This structure yields an appropriateness condition for emotions. Let Φ be the evaluative property that expresses the evaluative stance of an emotion type E. This is, whenever a person undergoes E, she represents the particular object of E as having Φ. An emotional episode of type E directed at a particular object X is appropriate if and only if X has the property Φ. Emotions can be appropriate or inappropriate in size as well as shape (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000): whenever a person undergoes an episode of sadness, she represents the object of her sadness as a sad thing/a loss. Hence, her sadness is appropriate only if the object really constitutes a loss (or is indeed sad) and not, say, offensive or fearsome. This is meant by "shape". Emotions also come in different sizes or intensities: a person who is very sad about something represents it as very sad, a person who is slightly sad about something as somewhat sad. Existing theories within the philosophy of emotions proceed from this set-up and provide different accounts

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1 Whether the formal object is better to be described as a loss or as the sad depends on the underlying understanding of the formal object: on a fitting attitude account like the one by D'Arms and Jacobson, the formal object of sadness would be the sad, i.e. that property which merits sadness. D'Arms and Jacobson (2003) argue that it cannot be reduced to a non-response-dependent property like a loss. If, on the other hand, we describe the formal objects of emotions as core relational themes which are relational but not response-dependent (Lazarus 1991, Prinz 2004), the property that merits sadness is more aptly described as a loss. The point I am going to make in this section is compatible with both of these approaches.

of the metaphysical and epistemic relations between emotions and the evaluative properties we ascribe to the objects of our emotions.[2]

If appropriateness is understood this way, it is something akin to correctness. As a consequence, the question of what is virtuous or prudent to feel in a certain situation is different from the question of whether an emotion is appropriate (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000). In the context of this paper, it is important to note that an emotion can be an appropriate response to a particular object even though one's social group considers it objectionable to feel this emotion. The latter is quite trivially culture-dependent, but it is not the subject matter of this paper. I am concerned with the culture-dependence of the *appropriateness* (as a standard akin to correctness) of emotions.

This paper explores a specific connection between the socio-cultural context and emotions: it is sometimes decisive for an emotion's appropriateness which meaning a social group bestows on the emotion's particular object. In this section, I will defend and clarify this claim, which will bring us to the first adequacy condition. Let us consider two examples:

(table etiquette)
> Amy is invited to the Millers for dinner. At the table, she accidentally utters an audible burp. She is embarrassed about this. She grew up in a community where burping at the table is considered very impolite. However, the Millers belong to a community where burping is perfectly in line with table etiquette. In this context, her embarrassment is inappropriate.

Why is this so? Amy's embarrassment over her burp is appropriate if her burp is really embarrassing. Let us also stipulate that, if Amy's burp is embarrassing, it is for its accidental rudeness (this is, there are no other reasons why burping at the Millers might be an embarrassing thing to do). Whether the burp is rude depends on whether it is a breach of etiquette in the context in question. Etiquette consists

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2 The following accounts have been widely received: judgmentalist theories of emotions propose that we execute a judgment of the form "this particular object is Φ" whenever we have an emotion (e.g. Nussbaum 2004; Solomon 2004). However, acknowledging the representational structure of emotions sketched above does not commit one to the claim that emotions necessarily involve judgments with the content that X is Φ (D'Arms and Jacobson 2003; Scarantino 2010; Deonna and Teroni 2012). Perceptual accounts propose an alternative to judgmentalism: according to them, we perceive evaluative properties through emotions (e.g. Döring 2003; Tappolet 2003, 2011; Prinz 2004). Fitting attitude analyses of values provide another alternative. They hold that the fact that an object has the evaluative property of being fearsome *means* that fear is an appropriate response to that object, and so on for all other emotions (D'Arms and Jacobson 2003). Finally, according to Deonna and Teroni's attitudinal account, emotions are evaluative attitudes which constitute the evaluative stances we take towards their objects (Deonna and Teroni 2012, p. 79–80).

of a number of rules that hold just in case the relevant social group accepts them. At the Millers, etiquette does not require Amy not to burp, so her burp is not rude. Neither (we have stipulated) is burping in this context embarrassing for any other reason – it is just a normal thing to do. So it is not embarrassing to burp. So Amy's embarrassment over burping is not appropriate at this dinner table. (Yet, given Amy's upbringing, her embarrassment is perfectly understandable.)

Consider another example:

(cheating)
> Bobby and Jean are married and they live in a society whose members practice monogamy. Now Bobby sleeps with a third person, Robin. In doing so, she is unfaithful to Jean. When Jean finds out, she is angry (and appropriately so). Billy, Jona and Randy, in contrast, live in a promiscuous society where monogamy is unknown. Billy and Jona live together and sleep with each other. Now Billy sleeps with Randy and Jona is angry.

The appropriateness conditions for Jean's and Jona's anger differ. Jean's anger is appropriate: Bobby was unfaithful to her in sleeping with Robin. This is a very good reason for anger. Bobby's sexual encounter with Robin was a case of infidelity because of the nature of the relationship Bobby has with Jean: she is Jean's spouse within a monogamous marriage. For Jona, things look different. While we can imagine particular circumstances under which Billy's sleeping with Randy would be a good reason for Jona's anger, the mere fact that Billy has slept with someone besides Jona is no good reason for her anger.

In both stories, we find the same structure: a group of people bestows some events with further properties: an audible burp may be rude – or a way to show appreciation for food. Sleeping with another person can be a case of infidelity – or a loved one's way to form meaningful relationships with others. I use "social meaning" for such socially bestowed properties. These events (burping and intercourse) are the particular objects of an emotional episode. Whether the particular object has the evaluative property Φ which would make the emotion an appropriate response to the particular object, hinges on the social meaning of the particular object. Being a case of infidelity is sufficient for the action to be offensive[3] to the person who has been cheated on. It is not necessary since there are offensive actions that are not cases of infidelity.

However, infidelity is not just a criterion that happens to be sufficient for being offensive. The connection between these two properties is closer: "Bobby has been unfaithful" provides an informative answer to the question why Bobby's act was offensive to Jean; and the fact that Jean's anger is a response to her being

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3 Hereafter, I use "offensive" as a technical term for the property that makes anger an appropriate response to the object.

cheated on provides a justification for it. A social norm that prescribes anger as the right response to infidelity is not needed for anger to be justified. The same relations hold between embarrassment, accidental rudeness and burping: rudeness is not the formal object of embarrassment, but "burping is rude" provides an informative answer to the question why it is embarrassing to burp. Embarrassment can be appropriate for several reasons; accidental rudeness is one of them.[4]

Note that the relation between non-social properties (the sound of burps) and social meaning (rudeness) is conventional – for Amy, it is easy to understand that according to the manners at the Millers' dinner table, burping is not rude (interestingly it is harder to change her emotional reactions). In contrast, it is hard, if not impossible, to grasp the thought that, in some foreign culture, being accidentally rude is not embarrassing at all. If we would find this in a report of an anthropologist, we would assume a mistaken translation.[5] Social meaning is socially bestowed meaning. Which actions are rude is determined by

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[4] It is an open question whether embarrassment is appropriate as a response to relatively harmless norm violations or whether it is an appropriate response to unwanted attention. As an anonymous reviewer pointed out, the fact that excessive praise seems to merit embarrassment speaks for the latter. (However, the reaction to excessive praise could also merit embarrassment because one is portrayed as sticking out and hence not complying with conformist expectations.) Describing accidental rudeness as one reason for embarrassment would be correct no matter how we describe the formal object of embarrassment. Accidental rudeness generates a lot of unwanted attention. If burping at the Millers is perfectly normal, it does not generate any attention and Amy's embarrassment is inappropriate.

[5] Mikko Salmela (2006) also emphasizes that sufficient reasons for emotions are often culture-specific. Salmela proposes an account of emotional truth. A true emotion is, according to Salmela, superassertable, i.e. it is justified by reasons and this justification holds no matter how much else we learn about the reasons for the emotion. Salmela shows that emotional truth is to some extent relative to the society one lives in: fear of unemployment is true in societies where unemployment constitutes a danger (e.g. of being marginalized), and this is a result of socio-economic institutions. No matter how much we learn about these institutions, unemployment remains dangerous in the absence of substantial institutional reform (Salmela 2006, p. 399). Salmela's account has the resources to distinguish between socially expected emotions and true emotions: fear of a voodoo spell is not true because the reasons for it do not withhold critical scrutiny. While Salmela distinguishes his account of emotional truth from some accounts that analyze the correctness of emotions in terms of appropriateness, his notion of truth is largely the same as my understanding of an emotion's appropriateness. The emotions I deem appropriate meet Salmela's understanding of superassertability.

However, Salmela's account does not entail a distinction between two ways in which reasons for emotions can depend on social reality: sometimes, social factors play a *causal role* for the properties of a particular object that merit a specific emotional response. Take the object of my sadness, namely my friend's relocation. My friend's new home has the property of being difficult to get to from my home. That is why her relocation is a big loss for me. This property

the actions a social group *regards* as rude. We will discuss this relation in more detail in Section 4.

For the question of this paper it is important to note that social meaning is bestowed within a larger socio-cultural context. What does this mean? The norms of table etiquette which hold for dinner at the Millers are an integral part of a cultural system that is comprised of practices, widespread beliefs and artifacts concerning food and eating. There are numerous mostly stabilizing relations between these aspects of food culture as well as between food culture and the broader socio-economic context, from religion to the availability of certain foods and equipment. The case of Bobby and Jean illustrates that social institutions like monogamous marriage are important for the question under which conditions an emotion is appropriate. To be married is to stand in a relationship to another person which is characterized by numerous rights and obligations. Because Bobby does not act in line with her obligations, she is unfaithful to Jean. Billy is not unfaithful to Jona when he is sleeping with Randy because his behavior is set in a different institutional context without any exclusive romantic relationships. We can think of the socio-cultural realm, i.e. institutions, social norms and rules, cultural practices, artifacts and widespread beliefs, as a part of an individual's environment. Whether a person likes or dislikes certain aspects of this environment, whether she is aware of them or not, the environment will constrain her options but also enable her to do certain things (e.g. to get married).[6] On the other hand, this socio-cultural environment would not exist without the actions and attitudes of individuals. While it is a substantial question how exactly to construe the relation between the social environment, individuals' cognitive and evaluative attitudes and their behavior (Risjord 2012), it is safe to say that the social environment will change when a sufficiently large number of individuals change their behavior and attitudes.

These considerations taken together allow to formulate the first adequacy condition for theories of emotions:

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depends more on transport networks than on the total distance between our homes. Hence it has social causes. The cases (table etiquette) and (cheating) function differently. The burp's sound results from Amy's digestive processes. In contrast to the friend's relocation, these properties do not merit embarrassment as long as we do not also view loud burping as rude (or otherwise unusual). This relation between socially bestowed meaning and appropriateness is the topic of this paper. Salmela's example – unemployment – carries elements of both (socially caused economic hardship, but also stigmatization). I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing Salmela's paper to my attention.

6 This characterization of the socio-cultural realm might raise questions regarding the nature of social and cultural entities. Providing an answer to these questions means to engage in substantial social theory. This is not my task here. My characterization is just a rough exposition of the explananda of social theories.

(C 1)   Some (and not just a few) emotional episodes are appropriate because their particular object is bestowed with some meaning by a group of people (that is, social meaning). For these episodes, the social meaning of the object depends to some degree on the socio-cultural environment the emotion is set in. Any theory of the emotions and their relation to evaluative properties must allow for such cases.

The socio-cultural environment includes for instance social norms, institutions and cultural practices. This adequacy condition is an extremely plausible condition that should be acceptable to all scholars working on emotions (at least in its spirit). The argument for this adequacy condition does not rest on any substantial theoretical assumptions about the nature of the social world. Indeed, to my knowledge, nobody doubts that the socio-cultural context is relevant for people's reactions to a given stimulus. Even those who emphasize the evolutionary role of emotions (e.g. Griffiths 1997) explicitly recognize that only a few emotional responses are innate. Most of the time, an emotional reaction to a particular object is acquired by learning. Quite often, we learn which emotions are appropriate from the way other people respond to an object. Furthermore, we learn which evaluative properties things have and which emotions they merit *in conjunction with each other*. As Peter Goldie (2000) says, the recognition of evaluative properties and emotional responses are tied together. Ronald de Sousa (1990) offers a classic take on the issue: he argues that we cultivate our emotions by getting acquainted with *paradigm scenarios* for these emotions. A paradigm scenario is a scenario in which the emotion is typically experienced and viewed as an appropriate occasion for this emotion by the members of a particular society. Socialization is not restricted to the cases described in C1 (we learn to be cautious with a hot stove, but a hot stove is not dangerous because of its social meaning). But socialization is certainly crucial for learning social meaning. For Amy, learning to feel embarrassed, to regard her burp as embarrassing and learning the fact that burping is a breach of table etiquette happened as part of one and the same process.

Most philosophical theories of emotions are not primarily concerned with culture-dependence [among the few notable exceptions are the papers by Salmela (2006), discussed in Footnote 5, and by Helm (2015), to be discussed later]. They spell out the conceptual and epistemic relations between the non-evaluative properties of the particular object, its evaluative properties represented through emotions, and emotions themselves (see Footnote 2). Amy's burp, for instance, possesses the non-evaluative property of being loud and, in being embarrassed by it, Amy ascribes to it the evaluative property of being embarrassing. When philosophers ask if and how evaluative properties depend on our emotional responses, they tackle the *conceptual* relations between emotions, non-evaluative and evaluative properties. Philosophers investigate into the *epistemic* relations when they ask questions such as: do emotions provide access to evaluative

properties, and if so, how? Or: what does it take for an emotion to be justified? For both sets of questions, conceptual and epistemic, it is relevant what kind of mental states emotions are and in which causal and justificatory relation to other mental states they stand. Answers to these questions do not seem to entail specific claims about culture-dependence.

So why is C1 a relevant adequacy condition for these theories? The reason is: C1 spells out a particular relation between social meaning and evaluative properties of the sort that make emotions appropriate (i.e. formal objects). When this relation is overlooked, it is possible that the account cannot accommodate for C1. Socially bestowed properties of particular objects are evaluative properties. We ascribe them to objects with certain non-evaluative properties (e.g. rudeness to loud burping). On the other hand, socially bestowed properties are not to be confused with the emotions' formal objects. The formal object of embarrassment is the evaluative property which merits embarrassment. Instead, social meaning (in the case considered here) provides a good reason for emotions: having been accidentally rude is a good reason for being embarrassed (and finding the situation embarrassing). But embarrassment is not only an appropriate reaction to one's own accidental rude behavior. Something can be embarrassing for different reasons. Hence, social meaning seems to constitute a middle layer between non-evaluative properties (the sound of the burp) and those evaluative properties that figure in the appropriateness conditions of emotions (the burp's being embarrassing).[7] The relations described in C1 thus go beyond acknowledging the role of socialization for the emotions' appropriateness. They constrain how to spell out the conceptual and epistemic relations between the particular objects' non-evaluative properties, their evaluative properties and the respective emotions.

There is an understandable tendency to illuminate these relations by using fairly simple model cases, such as fear of a wild animal [we find this tendency in Deonna and Teroni (2012) and in Prinz (2004) for instance]. Fear is appropriate if this animal is really dangerous (or fearsome): that is the case if, for instance, it is aggressive and has sharp teeth with the potential to hurt the fearful person. Here a number of physical properties justify the ascription of dangerousness (or fearsomeness) – however we will understand the nature of such evaluative properties. It is also sufficient that we recognize some of the dangerous properties in order to become afraid and to be justified in our fear (Deonna and Teroni 2012). However, if we develop a general account of the conceptual and epistemic relations between emotions, the non-evaluative properties and the evaluative properties of their objects by abstracting primarily from such cases, we run into a danger:

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7 This distinction is missing in Rebekka Hufendiek's (2016) account of the emotions' normative content who discusses their dependence on social norms.

we risk not allowing for cases where social meaning plays a crucial role. In other words, we must take care that we meet C1. Concerning the constitutive relations, a theory of emotions should be able to integrate what I called a "middle layer" without implausible consequences. Concerning epistemic relations, we need to clarify in what sense a person must understand the middle layer – social meaning – in order to adequately respond to particular objects that have social meaning. Again, if we only discuss emotions like fear of naturally dangerous objects when discussing the epistemic justification of emotions, we might end up with a theory that is not apt to deal with such cases.

In this section, I argued that for some emotional episodes, socially bestowed meaning of an emotion's particular object is decisive for the emotion's appropriateness. Not all emotions are like this: the appropriateness of some emotional episodes does not depend on social facts whatsoever (e.g. fear of natural dangers), and the appropriateness of some episodes has to do with the social environment but does not depend on social meaning ascribed to these properties (e.g. my friend's relocation). But cases like (table etiquette) or (cheating), where social meaning plays the decisive role, are fairly common. They are not isolated exceptions. The first adequacy condition C1 states that an adequate theory of emotions should allow for such cases. However, as I will argue in the next section, when we aim to meet C1, we must be careful not to overstate the dependence of the emotion's appropriateness on the socio-cultural context.

3 The Second Adequacy Condition: Evading Strong Cultural Determinism

While the first adequacy condition reserves a space for culture-dependence, the second condition ensures that we do not slip into an implausible form of cultural determinism – I call this form "Strong Cultural Determinism". One reason why Strong Cultural Determinism is not plausible lies in the fact that there are no monolithic cultures with a coherent set of normative and evaluative attitudes. Especially within larger social groups there are inconsistencies between ascriptions of social meanings, there is cultural change and there is conflict. In short, there are too many social meanings around for them to directly determine appropriateness conditions for emotions. Let us consider an example for the non-monolithic character of social meaning within one society:

(open marriage)
  Bobby and Jean live in a society in which monogamy is a well-established social institution. Bobby and Jean, however, live in an open marriage – they have allowed each other to sleep

with other people. Now Bobby sleeps with Robin and Jean is neither angry nor jealous – she is instead somewhat happy for Bobby.

There are two perspectives from which we can judge whether Jean's happiness is appropriate. These perspectives lead to different judgments. According to most people in Bobby and Jean's society, Bobby's sleeping with Robin is a case of infidelity. Anger would be appropriate; being happy for Bobby is not (it shows that Jean does not value herself as much as she should). A second perspective only considers the agreement between Jean and Bobby. From this perspective, the fact that Bobby has slept with someone else is not a sufficient reason for being angry. (As it was the case with Billy and Jona in the non-monogamous society, Jean might have other reasons for anger but maybe she does not have any.) Since it is appropriate for Jean to be happy for Bobby if good things happen to Bobby, Jean's happiness is appropriate from this perspective.

What, if anything, is the decisive factor for the question whether Jean's anger is appropriate? Social meaning – infidelity – is conceptually tied to social norms, in this case, concerning the question what romantic partners owe to each other. The question is which of the two sets of norms is binding. Bindingness is decisive for the following reasons: Bobby's behavior is offensive to Jean if Jean has been wrongfully treated. If you are wronged that is a good reason (albeit not the only good reason) for anger. I take this to be an uncontroversial observation about the representational structure of anger.[8] Wronging someone entails breaking a norm one is bound by. Some of this is also true for Amy's embarrassment over burping. In contrast to infidelity, an accidental break of table etiquette hardly qualifies as wronging one's hosts, and if it would qualify as wronging, Amy ought not to be embarrassed but ashamed. Still, Amy ought to try to comply with her hosts' table etiquette. This is how we understand the role of a guest. Amy's role may also exempt her from some rules of etiquette she has learned as a child and ought to obey in her parents' home.

(Open marriage) points to the following observation: the norms that are binding are not always congruent with those norms that effectively structure a larger social environment. A norm effectively structures a larger social environment if there are some formal or informal sanctions for violating the norm, and/or if the expectation that people act in accordance with it is reflected in social practices and material artifacts. For instance, monogamous norms effectively structure the environment of Bobby and Jean in (open marriage) because, for instance, the law makes a difference between spouses and roommates, it is unusual to invite

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8 One might worry that this overintellectualizes anger. Since my suggestion does not imply that anger is only appropriate as a reaction to wrongful deeds, the worry is not warranted.

one party of a romantic couple for dinner, but it is common to invite a person without inviting their best friend, and because there are social institutions that scaffold parenting for a heterosexual romantic couple and provide legal, material or informal obstacles for other people who raise a child together.

In addition to norms that effectively structure a larger environment, we also have to account for deviant smaller-scale norms and agreements. However we judge their normative force, they have to be included in an assessment of what norms are binding in a particular situation. For (open marriage), it is not straightforward which norms are binding. We could make the case for large-scale norms (i.e. present in the monogamous society) and for small scale norms (specific to Jean's and Bobby's relationship). This is sufficient to show that Strong Cultural Determinism is wrong: we cannot simply tell which emotions are appropriate by referring to large-scale norms. The second adequacy condition rules out Strong Cultural Determinism.

(C2)   Any theory which tackles the relation between emotions and evaluative properties of their objects must allow for the following fact: if, for a given emotional episode, we can provide an answer to the question whether the emotional episode is appropriate by applying social norms that exist within the larger social environment in which the episode takes place, this answer is not always correct.

C2 rules out a solution to C1 which seems obvious but is in fact too simple. This is the main reason why C2 poses a relevant constraint on theories of emotions. According to C1, sometimes, it is decisive for the question whether an emotion is appropriate that the object is bestowed with a specific social meaning. Furthermore, this social meaning depends on the larger socio-cultural environment. How do we explain this? The most straightforward way would be to say that what is rude is determined by what is taken to be rude in the larger socio-cultural environment in which the incident takes place. This larger environment is roughly equal to a society with its social institutions, laws, practices and culture. What is accepted among this group effectively structures a person's social environment (for instance, through legal or informal sanctions). An individual must take these structures into account whether she likes them or not. If it is generally accepted in Bobby and Jean's society that sleeping with a third person is infidelity, it is infidelity in that society. This conclusion, however, is an example of Strong Cultural Determinism. Hence, the most straightforward attempt to meet C1 entails Strong Cultural Determinism and does not meet C2.

On the other hand, attempts to meet C2 must not forget about C1. The challenge to meet both conditions is a version of a well-known challenge in the social sciences: on the one hand we need to account for the ways in which an individual's attitudes and actions are shaped by social structures and culture. On the

other hand, we need to acknowledge individual agency.[9] For the case in question, this entails acknowledging that individuals negotiate what they owe to each other and manage expectations about each other's behavior. Typically, they have more opportunities to influence norms within smaller groups than those that structure whole societies – however, also the latter norms are interpreted, questioned and changed by collaborating individuals. This can be done by negotiating the social meaning of actions, since such social meaning has usually normative aspects. Given this connection to social meaning, providing a solution to this challenge thus is not only concerned with emotions and their appropriateness. It is concerned with the nature of social meaning more broadly. In the next section, I will develop one solution to this challenge, the Acceptance within Social Context account, based on the example of anger over infidelity.

4 Acceptance within Social Context

The Acceptance within Social Context (ASC) account is a suggestion how we can meet both C1 and C2. I will show that it provides a plausible way of dealing with cases like (open marriage) in which the application of different social norms provides us with different answers on an emotion's appropriateness. I will not defend the claim that this account is the best or only way to do so. In this section, I work out the ASC account for anger over infidelity. In the next section, I discuss in how far the account can be generalized to other objects of emotions and to other emotion types.

Let me point out the central ingredients of the account before spelling them out in detail. The account is premised on the observation made in Section 3: for the question whether anger is an appropriate reaction to a given action, it is often decisive whether that action constitutes wronging a person. The first main ingredient of the ASC account is this claim: the meaning that a small group of people ascribes to an action can determine its members' obligations to each other. Hence, this agreement can make unconventional emotional reactions to certain situations appropriate. In other words, I suggest that Jean in (open marriage) is right in being happy for Bobby because of their open marriage agreement. The second main ingredient of the ASC account ensures that the account does justice

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9 Sally Haslanger (2015, Fn. 3) calls the issue of how to account for interdependencies between social structure, cultural schemas and individual agency "arguably *the* theoretical issue [that has been] occupying social theory for the past three decades".

to C1: it sketches how the larger socio-cultural context of an agreement shapes the expectations that are a starting point for negotiating agreements.

According to the first ingredient, whether a group of people accepts some action as a form of infidelity tells us something about what these people owe to each other. Why this should be the case calls for an explanation. At this point, we can profit from earlier work in social ontology: the project of scholars like John Searle and Frank Hindriks is precisely to clarify how "collectively accepting something as something else can have normative implications" (Hindriks 2009, p. 256). I analyze the socially constructed character and the normative content of infidelity by making use of Hindriks's (2009, 2013) account of institutional entities. According to this account, an institutional entity Y constitutively depends on the collective acceptance of a *constitutive rule* of the form "in C, X is Y".[10] X can be a non-social object, action or event. C is a set of background conditions that provides the context in which X is set. We can express the dependence on collective acceptance by the following formula, while "CA" stands for collective acceptance and "G" for a social group:

In C, X is Y $\leftrightarrow$ CA_G (in C, X is Y)

Now, to apply the account to the topic of this paper, let us insert "infidelity" for Y. In our example, X is the act of sleeping with someone. So we get:

In C, sleeping with someone is infidelity.

In the social-cultural group of the author, the following condition for context C is widely accepted: the unfaithful person must have an at least potentially sexual partner with whom she has a somewhat committed relationship – let us call it a "romantic relationship". Of course, to be unfaithful, the person the unfaithful person sleeps with cannot be their romantic partner. So we get:

If you are in a romantic relationship with a person, sleeping with someone else is infidelity.

What infidelity is depends on collective acceptance:

If you are in a romantic relationship with a person, sleeping with someone else is infidelity if and only if in our social group we collectively accept that, if you are in a romantic relationship with a person, sleeping with someone else is infidelity.

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10 Hindriks's account is built on Searle's (1995), but Hindriks gets rid of the "counts as" in Searle's formula "X counts as Y". He argues that we can simply say "X is Y", while "is" expresses a constitutive relation (Hindriks 2009).

In Hindriks's account, institutional kinds are characterized by a *status rule* in addition to the constitutive rule. It has the form:

Y is Z.

The status rule is a partial semantic explication of the meaning of Y. Z refers to "the normative powers that are characteristic of a particular status" (Hindriks 2013, p. 468).

Here is my suggestion for a status rule for infidelity: it belongs to the meaning of the concept "infidelity" that infidelity entails a violation of a special obligation (i.e. an obligation a person has towards another person because of the nature of their relationship). This is, the unfaithful person violates a special obligation towards her partner and this entails wronging the partner. Hence, an adequate formulation of the status rule for infidelity is:

A case of infidelity is a case of wronging another person.

We can see now how accepting that sleeping with someone else is a case of infidelity has normative implications: Bobby and Jean live in group G1 where the above constitutive rule is accepted. Bobby sleeps with Robin. This is a case of sleeping with somebody (X) who is not one's romantic partner (C obtains). Thus, Bobby and Robin's intercourse is a case of infidelity (Y). Because the status rule also obtains, Bobby violates obligations she has towards Jean (Z) by sleeping with Robin. At this point, it is fairly straightforward to draw conclusions about the appropriateness of anger: infidelity is offensive because the person who has been cheated on has been wronged. As I said before, this is a good reason for anger. So Jean's anger over Bobby's sleeping with Robin is appropriate as long as it is collectively accepted in their social group that sleeping with non-partners is a case of infidelity. Not all social groups accept the same actions as instances of infidelity. Billy and Jona live in a social group, say G2, where sleeping with a non-partner does not constitute a case of infidelity. Thus, Jona's anger is not appropriate (unless there are other reasons why Billy's behavior was offensive to Jona).

Now let us turn to the question how the analysis I have provided so far meets the two adequacy conditions for thinking about the appropriateness of emotions. First to (C2): the story so far does not imply Strong Cultural Determinism because obligations are only generated by collective acceptance if specific conditions for collective acceptance are met. Here Hindriks supports Margaret Gilbert's (1996) view, who argues that joint acceptance can lead to a joint commitment: roughly, in order to be jointly committed to an intention, each individual must exhibit the "willingness to become jointly committed to a view", openly express

this willingness, and there must be common knowledge of each other's expressions (Hindriks 2013, p. 474). Expressing this willingness can happen in a nonverbal way. As I shall argue, these conditions are not always fulfilled when we acknowledge the existence of large-scale social institutions. Consider Bobby and Jean from the story (open marriage). They do not accept that sleeping with a third person is infidelity in the way that is required for generating obligations. By agreeing on an open marriage, they have expressed their agreement openly and under conditions of mutual knowledge. Thus, sleeping with a third person does not constitute a case of infidelity for this couple. This is why Jean's anger is not an appropriate reaction to Bobby's sleeping with Robin, contrary to what the large-scale social norms in their society say about sleeping with non-partners. In this case, the group G is comprised of only Bobby and Jean. However, Bobby's and Jean's departure from monogamy does not unsettle the social institution of monogamy in the society where they live. This is so because most other people still accept it. In a minimal sense, Bobby and Jean must accept that such an institution exists in their society in order to get along with the people around them. They must, for instance, acknowledge that they cannot marry Robin. Acceptance in this weak sense does not generate obligations towards each other because it does not come with the willingness to be jointly committed. When large-scale and small-scale norms conflict, it is possible that some people accept a small-scale norm, but not the conflicting large-scale norm in the obligation-generating way. This is how my account does justice to (C2).

This argument rests on a specific strategy to explain the source of the bindingness of the norm in question: ultimately, the will of the individuals to be committed is necessary for bindingness. Let us call these accounts "volitional accounts". This strategy is somewhat controversial. Bennett Helm (2015), for instance, is critical of it. Helm's project bears some resemblance to mine: he wants to clarify the relationship between informal social norms and the appropriateness of some emotions, namely the reactive attitudes. (The term "reactive attitudes" stems from Strawson (1962) and describes positive or negative emotions in response to the way people treat each other. They are indicative of our holding others responsible for their actions.) Helm's and my account are in agreement when he works out the conceptual relations between the bindingness of social norms and the appropriateness of reactive attitudes. According to Helm, reactive attitudes are appropriate if we have authority to hold each other accountable for norm transgressions; this is only the case for people to whom the norms are binding.

Helm further suggests, in opposition to volitional accounts like mine, that community membership, the disposition for reactive attitudes, and the bindingness of the community's social norms (and hence the appropriateness of said attitudes) are co-constitutive of each other. This is why membership in a community

comes with an obligation to stick with the community's norms. According to Helm, it is through the reactive attitudes that one cares for the community and that one cares for and respects its members. This is what it takes to be a member of a community. Helm calls the community the "*focus*" of reactive attitudes. This is "the background object that the subject cares about and that in the circumstances makes intelligible why the [emotion's] target has the formal object" (Helm 2015, p. 195). A focus comes with some subfocuses – these are things one ought to care about in virtue of having a certain focus. If a person is focused on a community, she is subfocused on both the social norms and the individual members of the community, according to Helm. Helm argues that, if my focus is on a particular community with particular social norms, I will and ought to resent others for violations of those norms and I will and ought to feel guilty if I did so myself. These emotions are part of care and respect for that community. To put it in the terms of this paper, Helm doubts that volitional accounts meet C1: their focus on an individual's volitional states does not provide an adequate explanation of the way membership in social groups affects the appropriateness conditions of emotions.

A thorough defense of the volitional strategy is a topic for another work.[11] Here I only provide some provisional arguments for this strategy without claiming that it is the best or only way to meet both C1 and C2. First, I will show that under some further very plausible premises my account meets C1. This is the second main ingredient of the Acceptance within Social Context account. After having clarified what is meant by "acceptance", I will now describe how I understand "within social context". Then, against Helm in particular, I will show that my account provides a systematic way to distinguish cases in which a community's norms do not provide us with the correct assessment of the emotion's appropriateness from those in which they do. Helm's account, as it stands, does not offer a systematic way to do so.

In order to explain why social meaning, as (C1) states, depends on a larger socio-cultural environment, let me amend the application of Hindriks's proposal. I will clarify which role this environment plays when people enter an agreement that generates obligations. My suggestion is this: the social and cultural environment, among it large-scale social norms and institutions, provides a *context* for the negotiation of obligations between individuals. In addition to this causal role of large-scale social norms, knowledge of the large-scale social norms in one's environment can also justify one's beliefs about which institutions other people

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11 Some reasons brought forth against volitional accounts are reasons against the assumption that *all* social entities constitutively depend on acceptance. Instead, there seem to be different dependence relations for different classes of social kinds (Epstein 2015). This critique does not apply to my account which concerns only the bindingness of informal social norms.

accept. Let me elaborate. Expectations about what we owe to each other are shaped by our knowledge of the social norms and institutions that are part of the cultural fabric in which we live. Without this, we would have to negotiate all rules anew with everyone we meet. Let us assume that Jean and Bobby meet, fall in love, and after a while, they meet regularly, they coordinate their daily schedules, and they call each other when they need social support. According to the understanding of romantic relationships in their social environment, they have become a couple. Now they expect that the other person would not move to another town without discussing that decision with their partner, and so on – whatever couples can expect from each other in that society. In a monogamous society, norms concerning sexual infidelity are common knowledge. Thus, knowing another's intention to form a couple is sufficient for knowing that the other also accepts that sleeping with a third person constitutes infidelity – unless one has reasons to believe that the other has an unconventional conception of infidelity. This is why Bobby and Jean owe exclusivity to each other as long as they have no reason to believe that the other holds unconventional views on sexual exclusivity. Contrast this with Billy and Jona, who live in a promiscuous society where the concept of monogamous marriage (and monogamous coupledom generally) is unknown. Just because Billy and Jona signal to each other that they want to form a long-term committed relationship that includes sex and romance, they cannot expect any sexual exclusivity. If they decide to go exclusive, they have to negotiate their agreement in the same way as Bobby and Jean have to negotiate their open marriage agreement.

Now to the advantage of my account over Helm's: Helm has two options for dealing with (open marriage): he could say that Jean and Bobby are not members of their wider monogamous community but form a community of two. Alternatively, he could say that they are bound by the norms of their community on monogamy as long as they respect their members. I think that the first option is not convincing. Let us assume that Jean and Bobby, despite their somewhat unconventional sex life, partake in the community and care for their members. They also respect their neighbors' monogamous commitments (they feel indignation towards unfaithful spouses, for instance). If we employ a non-technical, commonsensical understanding of the expression "caring for the community", Bobby and Jean clearly care for it. So saying that they form a community of their own is only possible if we employ a divergent, technical notion of "caring for the community". Then the commonsensical notions of "belonging to" and "caring for the community" cannot do the explanatory work Helm wants them to do. My account allows that a person can be a member of a community, care for it and respect it although not all its social norms are binding for him.

The alternative that is open to Helm is not attractive, either. Let us grant that Jean and Bobby are bound by monogamous norms because they care for their

monogamous community. Then the account would still have to explain how it deals with C2. This is, the account would have to make sure that Bobby and Jean would not be bound by whatever the people in a group they care about deem appropriate. For instance, Helm does allow for membership in multiple, partially overlapping communities. But this strategy raises a number of questions: can a person be a member of a community with respect to norm A and not be a member with respect to norm B? What would that mean? If a person generally cares about the members of a community but does not share all of their reactive attitudes, how can we determine which of the community's norms are binding? Helm's account does not provide us with an answer to these questions.

Helm also discusses the integration of communal norms into individual lives: this is the degree to which the community allows individuals to integrate care for the community and the pursuit of personal projects. Communities that hardly accept any excuses for violating a norm allow for little integration. For Helm, it is desirable that the community allows for quite some integration. An extremely rigid stance is objectionable on universal ethical grounds. But within a certain ethically permissible window, the excusing conditions are made up by the community and there is no external standard to which they need to comply. Is this a way to explain why Jean and Bobby would not be bound by the monogamous norms of their community? Helm could argue that members of an integrative community would, under certain conditions, respect Bobby and Jean's open marriage agreement to the degree that they do not resent them for cheating. However, monogamous communities who integrate some deviating agreements certainly exist, but there are also communities whose members would insist that Bobby's behavior is cheating without being so rigid that their behavior is ethically objectionable. The neighbors of Bobby and Jean might resent Bobby for cheating without punishing her harshly (they just gossip). So the integration condition does not answer the question how Jean and Bobby can care for their neighbors without being automatically bound by all social norms in their neighborhood. In contrast to Helm's account, the ASC account already provides a systematic way to tell apart the communal norms a person is bound by from those she is not bound by – shared volitional states are decisive.[12]

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12 An anonymous reviewer asked me about another way to account for this situation which is compatible with Helm's account: Bobby and Jean form a community of care together with other people in polyamorous relationships. Their neighbors form another – monogamous – community. But in addition, Bobby and Jean as well as their neighbors form a bigger community of care – of those who are committed to liberalism. Part of liberalism, according to a Rawlsian theme, is to allow for everybody to pursue their own thick conception of the good, for instance with regard to romantic relationships. So their neighbors are committed to respect Bobby and Jean's choices – in so far as they do not interfere with their conduct even if they do not approve. Membership in

These considerations, however, do not rule out an objection to my volitional account of infidelity. According to this objection, my appeals to the plausibility of the volitional conception of infidelity rely on examples that abstract away from real world complexities, but once we account for those complexities, the volitional account enjoys less intuitive support and reactive attitudes turn out to be at least as important for bindingness.[13] It is fairly common that the emotions of people, who have entered an agreement which (seemingly) meets Gilbert's conditions for joint commitment, backfire. We might be inclined to say that they are still bound by the monogamous set of norms and not by the norms they agreed upon. But it helps to have a closer look at what is meant by backfiring emotions. They are usually different from the full-blown pattern of reactive attitudes Helm takes to be constitutive for binding norms. Say, Jean finds out that she is much less happy overall than she thought with the open relationship. This would give her (inconclusive) reasons to re-negotiate her agreement. But this does not affect the bindingness of Bobby and Jean's agreement (if Bobby was unhappy in a monogamous relationship, she would still be cheating when sleeping with Robin). The classic backfiring emotion is jealousy, but it is actually not clear whether jealousy entails a reactive attitude (Welpinghus 2017).

But what if Jean's backfiring emotions are indeed reactive attitudes that are more consistent with monogamous norms? Say, Jean is angry when Bobby sleeps with a third person, she feels guilty when she does so, etc. While some backfiring emotions are a common phenomenon, it seems psychologically unlikely that a person who has sincerely agreed on one set of norms experiences the *full-blown*

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a bigger liberal community ensures that Bobby and Jean can have an unconventional private life and civil relations with their neighbors. Through this, we ensure that one particularly unattractive aspect of Strong Cultural Determinism does not occur: that people may be bound by norms and be subject to formal or informal sanctions for violations that seriously hamper them in pursuing their own conception of the good (Helm's integration condition does the same). However, this by itself is not sufficient for doing justice to C2: for we can still think of a situation where Jean and Bobby form a community of care with their neighbors in the sense of caring for each other's well-being and sharing a much thicker conception of the good than just basic liberal values. Although their neighbors leave Bobby and Jean alone, they do in fact think that Bobby cheats on Jean when she sleeps with Robin. They disapprove of it (I think this situation is quite representative of the situation of many people who live in open relationships in present day liberal society – see for instance Jenkins 2017). Does this render Bobby's sleeping with Robin into cheating? With regard to *this* question I argue above that Helm's account, as it stands, does not provide a satisfactory answer (although it might be possible to develop one) while the ASC account does so.

13 Two anonymous reviewers have brought forth this point. I owe the following examples to them.

set of reactive attitudes that is appropriate for a conflicting set of norms. People who experience some backfiring emotions usually experience a pattern of reactive attitudes that is neither consistent with monogamous norms nor with non-exclusive norms (aptly described with terms like "double standards" and "mixed feelings" in folk psychology). This is because sincere agreements normally have some impact on our reactive attitudes. Hence, we cannot infer from these people's pattern of reactive attitudes which norms they are bound by. Sincere agreements are intuitively a crucial factor to consider when reactive attitudes do not give a verdict. If a person *does* experience the full-blown set of reactive attitudes consistent with sexual exclusivity, we should consider whether the parties have sincerely agreed to the open marriage agreement. This is not an ad hoc move if we accept the hypothesis that sincere agreements tend to have some impact on reactive attitudes. If this hypothesis is correct, the existence of backfiring emotions is consistent with the claim that sincere agreements are sufficient for bindingness. If it is not correct, we might have to add that reactive attitudes must go along with the agreement to some degree for it to be binding (this would not be a purely volitional account anymore).

Another complicating factor concerns real world power relations. What if Jean is more dependent on the relationship with Bobby (emotionally or otherwise) and therefore agrees on rules she does not like in order not to lose Bobby? Would she still be bound by the agreement? I do not think that Jean's situation automatically makes the agreement void. However, for the agreement to be binding there must be some conditions that ensure some degree of equality and freedom for the parties. This is the case for binding agreements in general. How exactly these conditions look like is beyond the scope of this paper. The question is certainly not trivial because agreements are hardly ever made between people who are equally powerful in all relevant respects. It does not follow that one cannot ever bind oneself through an agreement. However, we do have to keep power differences in mind when we make normative judgments on real life relationships.

We can learn two things from these examples: first, it is sometimes difficult to determine what some people have sincerely accepted in the obligation-generating sense. Second, there are more ethically relevant aspects of people's behavior in close personal relationships than the question whether they have violated a collectively accepted obligation. Let us accept for the sake of the argument that Bobby, in sleeping with Robin, did not violate any obligation she had towards Jean. This does not tell us anything about the value of their agreement nor can we infer that Bobby is a virtuous partner to Jean. When we make such judgments, we rightly consider many more aspects of the relationship. The fact that real world relationships are complex, however, does not show the inadequacy of the volitional account of infidelity.

To sum up the account developed so far, the ASC account meets the two adequacy conditions C1 and C2 for anger over cheating. But the account would not be very interesting if it only applied to this case. So what about objects with a different social meaning, and what about emotions other than anger?

5 Applying the ASC Account to Other Emotions

Ideally, the ASC account would hold for all cases where the socially bestowed meaning of the emotion's particular object is crucial for explaining why the emotion is appropriate. As I will show in this section, the account provides an informative framework for a significant portion of these cases but not for all of them.

The account can be further generalized to all emotional episodes that are appropriate because they are a reaction to a violation of special obligations which have been generated by collectively accepting something as something. Special obligations are often created by collective acceptance. If someone violates a special obligation he is thereby wronging another person. As I argued *pace* Hindriks and Gilbert, for collective acceptance to generate obligations, acceptance must meet some criteria of sincerity and common knowledge. We do not accept all large-scale social institutions in the obligation-generating sense. For the appropriateness of anger, it is certainly often decisive whether a special obligation has been violated. So the ASC account can be applied to many cases of anger. The same holds for some other emotions, such as indignation and contempt (usually directed at someone else's misbehavior) as well as guilt and shame (if it is directed at one's own misbehavior). This is compatible with the claim that some episodes of contempt, indignation, anger, guilt and shame are appropriate for different reasons, for instance, because a person has violated a universal norm which does not depend on collective acceptance.

Now to the limits of the proposal: there are some emotional episodes for which (C1) and (C2) hold, but the ASC account, as it stands, does not provide an adequate account of why these conditions hold. In these cases, the emotion is a reaction to the violation of social norms but not to a breach of special obligations. Amy's embarrassment over burping is such a case. Consider a variation of the story (table etiquette): Burping is rude in the social group at the Millers' dinner table because this group takes it as a breach of table etiquette. Amy is embarrassed over her burp, which is appropriate. Furthermore, what the group accepts as a breach of table etiquette has to do with other aspects of their dining culture (C1 applies). Yet the behavior the Millers expect from their guests may deviate from those one would read in a guide on local manners in the Millers' country (C2 applies). On first view, the issue looks fairly symmetric to the (cheating) case.

As a guest, Amy is bound by the norms of etiquette. As I said earlier, this comes with our understanding of the social role of a guest that one ought to acknowledge one's hosts' understanding of etiquette. Agreeing to be spouses (or romantic partners) *is* sufficient for Bobby and Jean to be bound by monogamous norms in a monogamous society because this is how its members understand the role of a spouse – as long as no one indicates that their understanding differs from the mainstream understanding. Bobby and Jean in (open marriage) indicate that they do not share this dominant understanding. Analogously, if Amy accepts the Millers' invitation, she should behave in accordance with the shared understanding of what it means to be a guest – but she can indicate that she does not share it and then Amy and the Millers can work out some agreement (or not).[14] This was my solution to C1 within the ASC account.

However, it comes with a shared understanding of the role of a guest that you are bound by etiquette norms of your host, even if you do not know them. This is hard to square with a volitional account of the bindingness of social norms. (That you do not sleep with third parties as a romantic partner is a well-known norm in mostly monogamous societies. Hence you do not accept anything you do not know if you do not explicitly discuss going exclusive.) How can Amy be bound by norms she does not know? The reason, I suspect, lies in the fact that the fault involved in being accidentally rude is less serious than a breach of special obligations towards others. It would be misguided to say that Amy has wronged the Millers by burping. (If she had wronged them, she ought to feel guilty and not embarrassed.) Because the issue is less serious, joint commitment to all norms of etiquette is not necessary for getting bound by norms of etiquette. The intuitive idea here is that being bound by norms whose breach constitutes a serious normative failure requires stricter conditions. Thus, we cannot use the criteria for obligation-generating joint commitment to find out which norms of etiquette actually hold at the Millers' dinner table and we cannot use them to find out when embarrassment is appropriate. To account for these cases, the ASC account needs to be developed further or supplemented by another account.

Based on these considerations on the generalizability of the ASC account, we can distinguish emotional episodes with regard to their representation of social norm violations: (1) for some episodes, social norms are irrelevant to the question whether they are appropriate, as in basic anger while fighting physical constraints. (2) Some emotional episodes are an appropriate reaction to a violation of special obligations (or compliance with them), such as anger over infidelity. (3) Some other emotional episodes are an appropriate reaction to the violation of (or compliance

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14 I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to clarify this issue.

with) social norms that do *not* generate any special obligations, such as embarrassment over a breach of etiquette. Note that the distinction between (2) and (3) is not that in (2) moral norms are violated while in (3) social norms are violated. The norm that Bobby ought not to sleep with anyone besides her partner Jean is a social norm.

6 Conclusions

Understanding the relevance of socio-cultural factors for the appropriateness of emotions is relevant to the philosophical study of emotions. This task can and should profit from work in social ontology and social theory. A central contribution of this paper was to develop the two adequacy conditions C1 and C2. While the first adequacy condition ensures that a theory allows for socio-cultural factors to influence appropriateness, the second adequacy condition ensures that a theory does not give socio-cultural factors a stronger influence on appropriateness than they actually have. These conditions led to another significant result of this paper: when we ask why the appropriateness conditions for emotions vary across social groups, the reasons are often to be found in the *social meaning* certain actions possess (such as rudeness). Social meaning can be described as a middle layer between the non-evaluative properties of objects and the evaluative properties represented by emotion types. Once we understand variation in the middle layer, we can explain a great deal of cross-cultural variation in the appropriateness conditions. Social meaning can express the violation of or compliance with a social norm. However, we need to pay close attention to the issue which social norms are binding in a situation. I developed one strategy to do justice to C1 and C2, the Acceptance within Social Context account. It rests on an understanding of social norms that regards an individual's volitional states as a central source of their bindingness. This has certain advantages – it is fairly straightforward to see how the account meets C2 in cases the emotions are reactions to being wronged or to wronging a person. On the other hand, the account cannot easily account for emotions that are a reaction to a violation of (or compliance with) less serious norms. This shows us that the dependencies between the emotions' appropriateness and social factors deserve further philosophical attention, over and above this contribution.

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