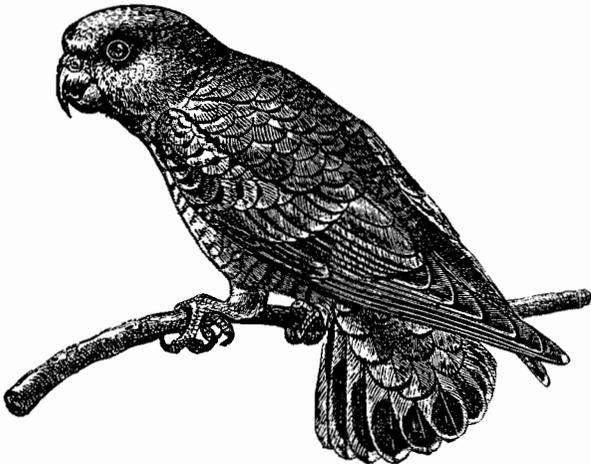


keep to my diet. It would be wrong to say in retrospect that I didn't really care about having the cheesecake in the first place. Rather, we should say I no longer care about having *more* cheesecake because, having committed dietary sin, I *now* care more about returning to my diet. In short, I do not see how Russow's distinction between "caring about" and "thinking we care about" does more work than the distinction between "taking an interest in" and "successfully promoting one's self-interest." To say that smokers take an interest in smoking, but smoking is not really in their self-interest, strikes me as more in accord with our ordinary concepts than saying that smokers *think* they care about smoking, but do not *really* care, since smoking does not contribute to their long-term happiness. Similarly, to say that my cat Bryseis takes an interest in roaming free outside, but roaming free outside is not really in her self-interest, makes more sense to me than to say that Bryseis *thinks* she cares about roaming free outside, but she does not *really* care, since it probably endangers her long-term happiness.

Russow has made a decent attempt to advance the discussion of how best to talk about animals' interests, desires, and happiness. However, her proposed definition of "caring about" fails to mark the qualitative difference between caring about an object and caring about a subject and does not, in fact, accord well with our ordinary concept of caring about generally. Moreover, since Russow's discussion is deficient at the theoretical level on these points, its application to questions about specific animals—for example, whether housecats care about being allowed to stray outside, being spayed or neutered, etc.—is not promising.



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## Reply

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I could respond by answering Professor Stephens' specific questions about his cats: either offering a judgment about what they do and don't care about, or explaining what one would do to determine that. But that would fill up all the remaining time, and miss his deeper concerns. Instead, I'll say just a few words about two more general concerns that he raises, either explicitly or implicitly:

- (1) how we can determine the *object* of intentional states, including caring, and
- (2) why "caring about" is an improvement over talk about interests.

I take it that the philosophical issue underlying Stephens' questions about what his cats care about in specific incidents is the concern that there may be no legitimate way of answering these questions. The full answer to his concern would be too complicated to lay out in detail—not because he's asking about cats, but because specifying the object of any mental state is a complicated business. Nonetheless, I'll try to indicate some of the factors that should be involved.

First, sometimes *de re* specifications of mental states are the most appropriate ones. That is to say, we can say that Chryseis believes of *Stephens* that he is a source of food, without claiming or being committed to anything about how he is "represented." The same is true of other propositional attitudes, especially caring about. Thus, it is certainly reasonable, and perhaps even necessary, at times to read "Chryseis cares about Stephens" as a *de re* attitude.

Even if there is good reason to demand a *de dicto* account of a mental state, there still may be good



## DISCUSSION

reason to suspect that we may not be able to specify the content of the state in English. First, the concepts of an individual who does not use or know English may well be different in important ways from those easily expressible in English. Indeed, given the anti-Fregean moves in contemporary philosophy of language, the so-called "narrow content" of a state may not be properly expressible in any public language. Second, when we are concerned specifically with caring about, rather than just any mental state, we are apt to conflate questions about how to specify the object of the state with the more practical issue: what would count as an adequate substitute for what is cared about, what would make the subject happy in the same sort of way. Thus, when we ask whether a cat really cares about her dead companion, we may really be trying to figure out whether introducing a new kitten would "make things right again."

As I said, these remarks only touch the surface of questions about fixing and describing the objects of care, but I hope they are in keeping with my original suggestion: current developments in philosophy of mind can help us develop a more sophisticated and more accurate way of thinking about the objects of mental states.

The second issue I want to address is the proper understanding of "care." I have proposed to analyze "caring about" in terms of two factors: desire and happiness. Thus, we can say about cats who want go outside: they might desire to roam, but would be happier staying inside, even though they don't realize that. The question of how we should interpret a cat's behavior in order "to judge what would make her happiest" is misleading: the cat's current behavior is often not the sole or even most important data about what *will* make her happy. Since the second condition in our definition of "caring about" refers to the future, it is possible for x to be such that it will make one happy, and thus it is possible for someone to care about x, but not know that x will make her happy, and hence not know that she cares about x. This state of affairs is even more likely to occur with nonhuman animals than with normal, adult, language using humans. It is also relevant to cases such as Stephens' cheesecake example: if eating the cheesecake did not, in fact, contribute to his happiness (i.e., he eats the cheesecake and is no happier afterwards—perhaps even feels disappointed), I would argue that, even though he wanted or desired the cheesecake, he was simply mistaken in thinking

that he cared about it. If we tell the story slightly differently (eating one small slice of cake made him happy, given that he was able to return to his diet), then we should conclude that he cares about eating cheesecake in moderation.

Proper attention to the details of my proposal is also relevant to Stephens' suggestion that my proposed analysis of caring fails to do justice to caring for other subjects. I explicit denied the claim that we care about things *because* they contribute to our happiness. If we avoid that mistake, I fail to see how caring for other subjects falls outside my account.

I can only briefly mention two other points Stephens brings up. First, does the fact that S cares about x engender a *prima facie* duty to ensure that S obtains x? The short answer is that my account was not intended to give a complete answer, although I will point out that we do hold people morally culpable for neglecting animals for whom they are responsible. Second, he objects to my claim that computers might have desires on the grounds that they don't have nervous systems. This seems to me to beg the question against artificial intelligence in particular, and functionalist accounts of mind in general.

