

Sociology 3308: Sociology of Emotions

Prof. J. Scott Kenney

Lectures 2-3: The Philosophy of Emotions II:

The issue of what constitutes an emotion has been debated since the early days of philosophy. Some, like Aristotle, consider it to be a more or less intelligent way of conceiving a certain situation; while others, like William James, largely focus in on our physiological reactions or “feeling.” Between these extremes, much of the modern debate about emotion continues.

In response, most of the more modern theories involve what some have called a “two components” view of emotion (i.e. one physiological, another cognitive - as in the work of Schachter and Singer). Of course, philosophers have paid much more attention to the cognitive side, such as in the connection between emotions and certain beliefs (e.g. if a person is embarrassed, they must believe the situation is awkward). But is the emotion just the belief, or do there need to be certain identifiable physical reactions?

As well, although we often speak of emotions being “inside” us, it is clear that a philosophical analysis of emotion cannot be restricted to the “inner” aspects of physiology and cognition. Rather, emotions have an “outward,” expressive aspect manifest in behavior. Therefore, we must pay attention to the social circumstances underlying emotions (e.g. cultures, situations), and the expression of emotion in social behavior.

In what follows, I will provide an outline of the various philosophical approaches to emotion. First, I will consider the five general models of emotion that have emerged in philosophy. Following that, I will review some of the problems inherent in these approaches.

Five Models of Emotion:

In approaching theories of emotion, we might begin by surveying those problems that have bothered both philosophers and psychologists. One of the most basic of these involves distinguishing emotions and other mental phenomena: How do emotions differ from sensory perceptions, purely physical states of agitation, and from purely cognitive activities of judging and believing? Some would argue that emotions are akin to one or another of these (Hume to sensory perceptions; Sartre to judgements), while others would consider emotions distinct from any of these.

Secondly, there is the problem of classifying emotions into generic types. Is it appropriate to group together emotions that bear some resemblance to each other (e.g. sympathy, pity and compassion)? Would it be better to group together emotions that appear to have an object (e.g. fear and anger), vs. those that are less concrete in this regard (e.g. euphoria and anxiety)? Of course, any classification depends on how an emotion is analyzed. If focusing on

the intensity of feeling, one might group together emotions that are turbulent (like rage and anger) vs. those that are mild and calm.

A third problem area - the physiological basis of emotion - remains controversial. Physiological changes (e.g. drugs) may alter our emotions, and many emotions are accompanied by physiological changes (e.g. the flush of embarrassment). A significant group of emotion theories make such disturbances (or the perception of them) central to their account of emotion; others question that such physiological reactions are necessary or even important.

Fourth, there is concern about the role emotions play - or should play - in our moral or practical lives (e.g. Aristotle's concept of moral virtue includes the idea that our emotions should be appropriate to the situation, and philosophers since have continued his interest in the link between emotions and moral motivation).

In the end, the basic issue comes down to the analysis of emotion into its components or aspects. While the following may be a bit of an oversimplification, it constitutes a classification based on the *primary emphases* of different theories of emotion. Let's look at five important approaches to the analysis of emotion:

1. Sensation theories;
2. Physiological theories;
3. Behavioral theories;
4. Evaluative theories;
5. Cognitive theories,

(1) + (2) *Sensation and physiological theories* tend to stress the actual "feel" of an emotion, although they disagree over whether it is primarily a psychological feeling (e.g. of being overwhelmed) or a feeling of actual physiological changes (e.g. one's stomach churning in disgust). Causal explanations figure prominently in the analysis of both theories.

In tune with popular conceptions of emotion, such theories suggest that prior to any theoretical reflection, emotions are something that we *feel* inside us which subsequently find expression in action. Emotions may overcome us, be uninvited, troublesome intruders that distract us from carrying out our best intentions, thwart an "objective" view of things, and compel us to behave in regrettable or irrational ways.

Both theories begin from the observation that mental and physical agitation, excitement and arousal frequently accompany emotional experiences. Thus, emotion is considered primarily a feeling - a discernible sensation which occurs to us, over time, and which may have a definite location in the body (e.g. the pounding heart). There is really little substance for analysis, on this view, and the theorist must content him or herself with detailing the causal origins of different emotions and their impact on thought and behavior.

However, sensation and physiological theories differ on one central point: sensation

theories are only interested in the psychology of emotion (i.e. with how people *experience* their emotions), while physiological theorists pursue more fully the issue of what we feel physically - and the physiological changes and disturbances accompanying our emotions.

Examples of such theories include David Hume's emphasis on sensation. Zeroing in on how emotions feel (and how they often differ from localizable pains in parts of the body), Hume is more easily able to distinguish between calm emotions (e.g. aesthetic enjoyment, with no physiological disturbance) and rage (with much physiological impact). In contrast, in pure physiological theories, mild emotions are often not classified as emotions at all in order to avoid this problem, or mild, almost indiscernible physical disturbances postulated to save the theory.

The most notable physiological theory is William James' model. He argues that the feel of an emotion is, in fact, nothing but the perception of physiological disturbances in the body. He asks us to imagine what an emotion would be like if we were to remove from it all feelings of agitation, clamminess, trembling, flushing, etc. We would be left, he says, with only an intellectual perception (e.g. the perception of danger without the feeling of fear).

Nevertheless, we should be wary of James' argument - and those like it - for two reasons. First, it shows, at most, that physiological disturbances are *necessary* to emotion, not that the emotion is nothing but the perception of bodily change (e.g. absent any perception of danger, the above physical reactions might be interpreted otherwise, such as evidence of illness). Secondly, even if flushes, chills, etc. are necessary features of emotion, they may be so only for what are termed "occurrent" emotions (e.g. emotional experiences that occur at specific times and have limited durations: "I was so mad I saw red"). These may be distinguished from "dispositional" emotions (e.g. "I've loved her for years"). In these long-term emotions, we can hardly say that at each moment we've been feeling a detectable physiological sensation.

In both sensation and physiological theories there is an extensive use of causal analysis. This is because, as basically simple, unanalyzable "feels," emotions cannot be made up of desires, behaviors, the awareness of objects and so on. Anger, for example, is simply the feeling of reddening, trembling, etc. Shouting, desiring revenge, and being aware of an insulting person are not additional components of anger. They are the causes and effects of anger, but not anger itself (e.g. in Descartes' analysis of fear: a frightening beat approaches, the eyes and nerve fibers carry an image to the brain setting in motion the "animal spirits" which flow back and dispose the legs to flight - all without the intervention of consciousness or voluntary action). The problem with such causal analyses is that emotions have only a contingent tie with their associated features (e.g. it is possible for one to be embarrassed about being late while doubting that one is).

(3) *Behavioral Theories*: Such theories concentrate their attention on emotion as observable behavior, not private experience. Emotions are analyzed either as the cause of behaviors, or as actually consisting solely or primarily of patterns of behavior. Indeed, some deny outright that subjective "feel" plays any part in the analysis of emotion.

For example, some consider our feelings of emotion to be behaviors in their own right. We sometimes discover our own feelings by observing our actions (e.g. we may find ourselves talking constantly about someone and then realize we have fallen in love). We also observe emotions in others (e.g. guilt written all over someone's face; the glare of hostility or the flush of another's excitement). Moreover, focusing on objective behaviors instead of internal feelings keeps us away from the dangerous conclusion that we can never be mistaken about our own emotions, nor can ever obtain reliable knowledge of the emotions of others.

“Emotional behavior” is actually an umbrella term covering not only deliberate and voluntary actions, but also innate or reflexive behaviors (e.g. starting at a sudden noise), as well as (for some) unspoken thoughts and obvious physiological changes. Some emotional behaviors may be learned and culture dependent (e.g. kneeling in reverence), while others may be innate (e.g. blushing). Some may be voluntary, others involuntary. Indeed, some emotional behaviors may be the result of dispositions to exhibit them (e.g. anger reflects a tendency to shout, redden and engage in verbal abuse).

Charles Darwin made the first extensive study of emotional behavior and attempted to explain its origin by its utility for continued survival. He argued (1) that some emotional behaviors originated in deliberate attempts to relieve sensations or gratify desires, eventually becoming habitual and innate; (2) Other emotional behaviors apparently serve no useful purpose, but arise as the antithesis of useful behaviors associated with their opposite (e.g. tail wagging in dogs = the opposite of the erect tail displayed in anger); and (3) Some physiological changes may prepare one for action (e.g. breathing heavily), while others (such as blushing) serve no useful purpose and are merely the result of one's excited bodily state. While not strictly a theory of emotion, and Darwin would likely agree with sensation and physiological theorists about its nature, his work does suggest that emotional behavior expresses or is a sign of emotion. This revealed the need for an adequate account of the connection between emotion and behavior.

For example, John Dewey argued that Darwin's notion of expression failed to explain why certain behaviors characterize certain emotions (e.g. why do trembling and rapid breathing typically accompany fear?) We must look to the situation rather than the supposed pre-existing emotion to understand this. The behavior is determined by the situation, and can be explained by referring to movements that were originally - or still - useful in meeting that situation (e.g. trembling and rapid breathing are preparatory to flight from a dangerous stimuli).

Dewey also criticized Darwin's concept of expression, arguing that this only appears to constitute emotions to the observer. For the person experiencing the emotion, visible behavior is only part of the story. For Dewey, then, emotions have three components: (1) An intellectual component, or the idea of the object in emotion; (2) a “feel”; and (3) a disposition to behave, or a way of behaving. Nevertheless, for Dewey “the mode of behavior is the primary thing.” In other words, the object of an emotion and its particular feel are both products of emotional behavior. For example, in suddenly coming upon a bear one instinctively prepares for flight. There is a moment of tension where the body prepares itself for action. In response, the bear is first perceived as “a bear to be run away from”; and the feeling of fear is the feeling of these

physiological changes.

In addition to Dewey's critique of the implicit physiological premises in Darwin's work, there are additional, more serious problems with the view that behavior expresses some inner, private emotional phenomenon. If emotions are private, inner experiences or "feels," each person necessarily has privileged access to and knowledge of his or her own emotions, can never be mistaken about what they feel, and there would be no way of detecting our mistakes. This is questionable, given the Freudian tradition that a person can make mistakes about, or even be unaware of what s/he feels, and the psychoanalyst may be in a better position to understand the implications of feelings than the individual having them. Not only that, we do make mistakes about our emotions (apparent hostility masking hidden affection) while others recognize what's going on. Hence, the argument by behavioral theorists that we defer to behavior, not to the "feel" of an emotion, in correcting ourselves and in recognizing others' emotions.

As well, while we can know other people's subjective emotions only inferentially (from what they say and do), their meaning is often confirmed as the situation unfolds. We do not have to get direct access to another's experience to realize, for example, that our boss is mad at us. The emotion, and not merely its expression, is often a public phenomena (e.g. openly or non-verbally).

In view of such considerations, both psychological behaviorists such as B.F. Skinner, and philosophers like Gilbert Ryle avoid the idea that behavior merely expresses or signals some private, inner emotional phenomena. They argue, instead that behavior and the disposition to behave actually constitute the emotion itself. Ryle, for example, argues that all mental terms (e.g. "feels angry") can be defined solely in terms of behavior, and that all ascriptions of mental states or events to ourselves and others can be fully justified by appeal to a person's behavior or disposition to behave in characteristic ways. This means that all emotions are behaviors in one way or another.

(4) *Evaluative Theories*: This approach to emotions argues that what we feel about other people, events, and things in our lives generally indicates how we value them. What we love, admire, envy and feel proud of we also value; what we hate, fear, find shameful or revolting we think ill of. Many contemporary philosophers argue that there is, then, a logical connection between emotions and evaluative beliefs. Others go further, and argue that emotions in fact *are* evaluations. These are what we refer to as evaluative theories of emotion.

For some such theorists (Sartre and Solomon) emotions are or resemble unspoken value judgements or beliefs (e.g. gloom is a belief that nothing is worthwhile). Other evaluative theorists (Scheler and Hutcheson) assert that emotions are perceptions of value analogous to sensory perceptions of colours and sounds. Still others (Hume and Brentano) maintain that emotions are simply pleasant or unpleasant sensations or pro- or con- attitudes on which we formulate our value beliefs. Because we admire a person's character, we deem it good.

Many evaluative theorists develop complex analyses of emotion. Brentano, Scheler,

Sartre and Solomon all stress that emotions are “intentionally” directed towards objects in the world. They are not just brute “feels” but ways of being conscious or aware of the world. They also, in various ways, isolate and comment on other components of emotion, such as feeling or physical agitation in relation to evaluation and intentionality.

Regardless of their subtle differences, all evaluative theories paint a uniquely rational picture of emotion. Rather than simply being blind, irrational reactions that inevitably lead us astray, emotions are epistemologically important phenomena that often act as a complement to reason’s insight.

The best known evaluative theories are probably the moral sense and moral sentiment theories developed in the 18th century by Lord Shaftesbury, Frances Hutcheson, and, in part, David Hume. However, these only apply to the evaluation of certain intellectual pleasures and pains (aesthetic enjoyment and moral approval), while the ordinary gamut of emotions are still dismissed as irrational. Indeed, many evaluative theories are limited in this way as they must take into account the fact that our emotions frequently seem to be out of step with the real values of things (e.g. falling in love with a scoundrel or disliking a virtuous person). This suggests that emotions are not wholly evaluative, or at least not reliably so. It may be possible to avoid this by classifying some emotions as evaluative and others as blind, but this rules out any theory of emotion in general and casts doubt on whether the few evaluative emotions are emotions at all.

While Lord Shaftesbury introduced the idea of special moral feelings, Frances Hutcheson formulated the first detailed evaluative theory of emotion. He postulated the existence of “inner senses” (e.g. a moral sense and a sense of beauty) analogous to the 5 external senses that enable us to “perceive” moral and aesthetic values. While others, such as Hume, questioned the existence of such senses, abandoning the analogy between emotion and perception, the argument persisted that we may appeal to feelings of moral approval or aesthetic enjoyment in making value judgements. This is because a “value” is simply the power of a person or thing to evoke these sentiments.

After the 18th century, moral sense and sentiment theories declined, but continental moralists in the 19th and 20th centuries continued an interest in evaluative theories of emotion. For example, Franz Brentano sketched a general evaluative theory of emotion, arguing that all emotions contain an evaluative pro- or con- attitude. Resentment, hope, joy and despair function equally to assess our situation. However, these assessments may be wrong or mistaken. In handling such situations, Brentano points out that many of the apparently rational judgements we make may be wrong as well, arising from instinct, habit or prejudice (he calls these “blind” judgements). In contrast, other judgements are manifestly correct in relation to empirical or rational evidence. Brentano feels that emotions may be similarly “blind” in some instances, but “evident” in others. In likening “correct” emotions to evident judgements, Brentano solved the problem of what guarantees that what we admire, enjoy or love is in fact good. For him, it is the experience of correctness.

Following Brentano, Max Scheler distinguishes between evaluative emotions (“feeling

functions”) and non-evaluative emotions (“feeling states”). Evaluative emotions are intentional mental acts - ways of being aware of the world and becoming aware of values (e.g. in enjoying a painting we “see” what is beautiful). In contrast, non-evaluative emotions are emotional reactions to what we have already deemed good or bad.

From the early moral sentiment theorists through Scheler, evaluative theories emerged, not so much from a desire to understand emotion as from an effort to come to grips with the source of value-knowledge. In contrast, Jean-Paul Sartre tackled emotion head-on, developing a very different sort of evaluative theory wherein emotions color or fill the world with value. For Sartre, emotion is always brought forth by some problematic situation, and “magically transforms” the situation by re-evaluating it and projecting a new value-structure. For example, in the gloom that besets us after a loss, we emotionally re-evaluate the world, attempting to minimize our sense of loss by denying that anything is worthwhile. Our behavior reinforces this by avoiding bright and busy places, sitting quietly alone, etc. - all at the prereflective level. We do not deliberately alter the world’s value structure, nor are we aware of having done so. In emotion, we find ourselves in a reality that we have inadvertently projected: “If emotion is a joke, it is a joke we believe in.” Thus, the state of physical agitation and disturbance characteristic of many emotions represents the seriousness with which we believe in this world-view. In his theory, the rationality of emotion derives not from its reflecting the true values of things, but in its subjectively transforming problematic and undesirable situations.

(5) *Cognitive Theories*: The last category of theories tend to focus in on connections between emotions, our perceptions and beliefs about the world, ourselves and others. Unlike the physiological theories of Descartes and James, for example, where consciousness plays virtually no part in generating or maintaining emotion, cognitive theories go to the opposite extreme. They argue that emotions are either wholly or partly cognitions - logically dependent on beliefs or interpretations of things or states of affairs.

Many of the authors discussed above exhibit a cognitive component to their work. For Hume, certain beliefs are causally required to give meaning to sensations. Almost all of the evaluative theories are similarly cognitive. Indeed, Schachter and Singer’s psychological theory also emphasizes the role of cognition. On the basis of their experimental study they argued that a state of physiological arousal *and* an awareness and interpretation of one’s situation are both crucial to emotion.

Although these authors argue that beliefs cause emotions, and many evaluative theorists argue that emotions are in fact beliefs, in another more contemporary set of cognitive theories, a logical connection between emotion and cognition is postulated. Deriving from linguistics, their main thesis is that if we wish to understand emotion, we should examine the way we talk about it, particularly the logical restrictions governing the use of terms referring to it. For example, under which conditions does it make sense (and not make sense) to say “I am angry?” Errol Bedford takes this approach, arguing that emotions logically presuppose both evaluative and factual beliefs, and that each type of emotion has a typical set of beliefs. It is thus a linguistic error, a logical misuse of language, to say “I am angry at my sister, but don’t believe she can be

criticized in any way.” Similarly, one can be joyous about an event that has happened or is likely to happen, but not about one that you sincerely doubt will happen. Neither can we hope for something that has already happened, nor be jealous of the love affair of two strangers (but perhaps be envious).

One advantage of any cognitive theory is that a clear analysis of the rationality of emotions is possible. While our emotions may be irrational or inappropriate to an actual situation, they are so only because we hold mistaken or unjustifiable beliefs about the situation. Nevertheless, there are still many questions as to precisely how cognition is related to emotion, whether it is causally or logically necessary, or whether emotion is really a cognition at all.

Now that we have reviewed the five general types of emotion theory discussed by philosophers, it is time to turn, again, to some of their problems.

Ten Problems in the Analysis of Emotion:

(1) What Counts as an Emotion: There has been much controversy over what specific feelings or states of mind can rightly be called emotions. Some are generally accepted, such as anger, fear, jealousy and intense love, but what about respect? What about the “conjugal” love of a long-married couple vs. the heart-pounding version of initial infatuation? Is there any justification for distinguishing sudden, explosive emotions from long-term, calmer states of mind?

Then again, are moods emotions? What if they persist over days or weeks, like states of gloom and anxiety? Does it matter that moods seem to be far less distinct about their objects - what they are about - than most emotions?

Some philosophers have sought to distinguish between emotions and moods - as well as short term violent emotions and longer term calm ones - by differentiating “episodes” and “dispositions.” The former represents an event, usually short-term and distinctly bound in time (e.g. getting angry over an event). A disposition is a tendency to be subject to certain kinds of episodes.

Such distinctions show us that we must be extremely careful in asking “what is an emotion?” as if they were some sort of homogeneous phenomena. Some emotions appear to be more physical than others; some wholly tied to a person’s beliefs. Some seem bound to a person’s immediate circumstances; others seem possible under almost all circumstances. Some are focused around pleasure and pain; others appear more selfless. Some can be changed through rational discussion and voluntary action, others are apparently outside our control. Thus, what counts as an emotion is really a very complicated issue.

(2) Which Emotions are Basic? From time immemorial, theorists have attempted to list the “basic” emotions found in virtually everyone, that may combine, like colours, to form the more specialized and sophisticated emotions. Yet few have agreed on these lists. Not only that, there

are questions as to whether certain basic emotions must be common to all humans, or whether there can be different basic emotions in different cultures. Must basic emotions be there from birth, or can they be learned? Must basic emotions be simple, or can they be complex aggregates of other feelings? Needless to say, trying to answer such questions can get very complex.

(3) What are Emotions About? This raises the issue of intentionality and the formal object of emotions. Generally, the idea is that emotions refer to something (e.g. a person in love loves someone). There are many philosophical ramifications to this simple idea, however. For example, the object of an emotion (or any mental act) need not exist in fact. One could, for example, fall in love with a fictional character, become angry over an event that didn't actually occur, etc. How are we to characterize the status of the object of the emotion in such cases. If the emotion depends on an object that is not there, what can we say about that as its cause? We can't properly say that the person is angry about "nothing," but neither can we literally say that they are angry about "something." Can we say that this represents "intentional inexistence?"

Current controversies further confuse the issue by linking the intentionality of emotion and the forms of language used to describe it (often called "intensionality" with an "s"). The former requires that particular emotions have particular sorts of objects; the latter that certain descriptions of an emotion entail certain descriptions of its object.

On top of all this, different emotions are "about" different aspects of an object, and some philosophers have thus distinguished between different levels of intentionality, and also between the intentional object and the intentional act of an emotion (e.g. you may love X's hair without loving her).

Needless to say, the controversy continues.

(4) Explaining Emotions: Emotions can be explained in at least two ways. One refers to the cause of the emotion - the antecedent condition or event that triggered it. The other refers to its target or intentional object - who or what it is directed toward. The former focuses on the "but/for," the latter explains emotions in terms of the viewpoint of the subject - whether or not the object s/he describes can also play a part in a causal explanation. Causal explanations are "objective" and, at least partially independent of the subject's viewpoint; intentional explanations, in contrast, always depend on the viewpoint of the subject. Physiological explanations are one example of causal explanations; evaluative and cognitive explanations gravitate more to the viewpoint of the subject. These two types of explanations may play very different roles in an account of emotion (psychologists prefer the former; phenomenologists the latter). Philosophers are sometimes torn between the two, and have struggled to integrate their differing assumptions and methodologies consistently.

Moreover, there is third form of explanation: in terms of a person's motivation: what s/he will get out of a particular emotional outburst or incident (e.g. getting one's way when getting angry; falling in love in order to enjoy the psychological benefits of that emotion). In either case, one's motivation is more important an explanation than the cause or the object of emotion.

(5) The Rationality of Emotions: It is often suggested that emotions are simply irrational. However, if they involve beliefs, are in part cognitive and evaluative phenomena, then they presuppose rationality in the psychological sense - the ability to use concepts and have reasons for what one does or feels. Of course, whether these reasons are good reasons is another matter altogether. Sometimes emotions are mistaken, but in other instances exhibit greater insight than reason standing alone. Emotions as such are neither rational or irrational, but exhibit elements of each.

(6) Emotions and Ethics: Because they can be rational or irrational, intelligent or stupid, foolish or insightful, emotion's role in ethics becomes far more complex - and far more central - than many have suggested. While Hume and Kant clashed over whether rationality or emotion should be the foundation of ethics, philosophers at both extremes have tended to neglect those aspects of emotion that are themselves rational - and which have undermined the premise of their whole debate.

More recently, in the UK and America, a broad set of "non-cognitive" philosophers have argued that ethical judgements could not be known as true or false, and "emotivists" have argued that ethical claims are based on "nothing but" emotion.

Nevertheless, despite such claims, the connection between emotions and ethics has always been close. Aristotle insists that the "good man" should feel the right emotions at the right times, and not feel the wrong ones. The moral sentiment theorists insisted that moral motivation could only be understood in terms of certain crucial emotions such as sympathy and compassion. This suggests the *value* of emotion, and the comparative values of various emotions. But how do we value our emotions? Are some positive and some negative? How do our emotions determine our ethical evaluations? These questions are all related, and we cannot satisfactorily answer ethical questions without getting clear about the role of emotion as well.

(7) Emotions and Culture: While sometimes viewed as matters of "instinct," insofar as they involve concepts and beliefs, emotions may be learned in a particular culture, and somewhat differently in others. Anthropologists have noted, for example, that emotions may be different in different cultures. Certain Inuit tribes do not even have a word for anger, nor do many cultures share our obsession with romantic love. How much these are matters of emphasis or differences in expression, and how much they are matters of the circumstances in which people actually feel this or that emotion - should be investigated and debated. Such cross-cultural questions are becoming increasingly important.

(8) Emotions and Expression: While the expression of emotion in behavior has often been considered part of the essence of emotion, the more radical behaviorists have argued that an emotion is really nothing more than a pattern of behavior. This, however, leaves the exact connection between an emotion and its expression more than a little confused (more a matter of definition than cause and effect). However, it may be that people in different circumstances than they are usually accustomed to express their emotions very differently (e.g. on vacation/ or in another culture where people cry when happy and laugh when angry). If we can so easily

imagine emotions without their usual expression, then the logical link between emotion and expression seems weakened. While we could say that every emotion demands some expression, and that the disposition to vigorous action is an intrinsic part of every emotion, such a claim weakens the behavioral thesis - particularly with the calmer emotions.

While we might try to catalog the more typical expressions of emotion, this leaves unanswered the fundamental question of the nature of expression itself. In what sense does a gesture express an emotion? In some cases the connection could not be clearer (as in an attack following anger), but in cases where the natural expression is repressed (as in biting our tongue) why count such pointless gestures as expressions at all? Not all expression serves a purpose, but neither is the expression of emotion to be classified as non-purposive behavior. The understanding of emotional expression thus is complicated in much the same way as the understanding of emotion itself, and we should probably conclude that, to a certain extent, they are one and the same.

(9) Emotions and Responsibility: Here arises the issue of whether emotions are things that happen to us and render us passive victims or instruments with no responsibility (e.g. “crimes of passion”), or whether they are something we have at least some control over and are responsible for. On the one hand literature and criminal law are replete with examples of people who are “struck” by jealousy, “paralyzed” by guilt, etc. Indeed, many use emotions as excuses. On the other hand, there are any number of ways to control the expression or the triggering circumstances of our emotions (e.g. refusing to respond with certain actions, such as violence, or by avoiding enraging situations). Indeed, beyond control over expression, it may be possible to alter the emotion experienced itself (e.g. by working oneself up to something, or wilfully maintaining an infatuation).

Insofar as our emotions involve beliefs, and insofar as we are responsible in some sense for what we believe, we are responsible for our emotions. Nevertheless, being responsible for our emotions to some extent is not the same as being able to control them. Yet it appears that the two sets of considerations belong together, and that at least some degree of control is presumed in assigning responsibility. The extent to which the various emotions are voluntary and corrigible needs to be seriously investigated and analyzed, and emotion should not be dismissed as mere passivity providing so many convenient excuses.

(10) Emotions and Knowledge: Improved knowledge of ourselves and our emotions may be the first step to changing them, and gaining a new fact or two may be a sure way of getting rid of, or adding an emotion. For example, finding out that the belief on which one’s emotion is based is false immediately changes the emotion. If beliefs are essential components of emotion, then a change in the belief will typically (though not always) alter the emotion. Thus, knowledge must be seen as contributing to, not opposing, emotions. Of course, there are irrational emotions, based upon demonstrably false beliefs, but knowledge is nevertheless a critical determinant of emotion - and often the test of its rationality as well.

Yet the beliefs that are essential to our emotions are not always so readily apparent or

easily changed. Emotion and self-understanding are frequently more complexly related than described above - even more so in clinical psychology. Sometimes what one thinks is the object of an emotion is not always the real object - maybe one doesn't want to admit it to oneself. Moreover, sometimes the set of beliefs underlying the emotion is not recognized either. Whether it is the object of the emotion or the belief underlying it that is not recognized, we can say, with Freud, that the emotion is "unconscious." Thus we do not always recognize our emotions for what they are, and may not be willing to consider the beliefs that make them up in the detached and impersonal way that usually passes for "rationality."

All the same, self-knowledge makes changing our emotions possible, and the more we know about ourselves, the more we can control our emotions. This is naturally the most practical reason for studying emotions, whether on an individual or personal basis for our own purposes, or on a more academic and analytical level. So powerful is the ability of self-understanding that Freud, early in his career, came to believe in "the talking cure," in which simply coming to understand our emotions, "bringing them to consciousness," would be sufficient to defuse them and to give us control over them.

Of course, Freud's rationalist optimism was in error, and many emotions proved to be far too intractable to be easily susceptible to "the talking cure." Moreover, in his hurry to eliminate harmful, irrational emotions, Freud failed to pay as much attention to the emotions that are positive and rational (e.g. righteous anger for a moral cause; dwelling on a lover's virtues and intensifying one's love and devotion).

Finally, knowledge and self-understanding help to control or elicit our emotions, but we also gain knowledge and self-understanding through our emotions. We often perceive certain details and situations far more sharply and insightfully than we would otherwise. We can often learn far more about our values and morals by paying attention to our emotions than by listening to the more abstract deliberations of reason. In many respects, Hume was right when he claimed that we "know" what is right and wrong from our "sentiments" rather than from arguments. Without emotion, there would be no values, only rules and methods without inspiration. It is emotion, not reflection, that most endows the world with meaning.

Ultimately, emotion and knowledge are far more personal than the traditional emphasis on reason and understanding would suggest. Indeed, some emotions, such as scientific curiosity and love of the truth, are essential to the advancement of knowledge. For too long we have emphasized the impersonal demands of knowledge instead of the passion to know - and both knowledge and passion have suffered. Once we begin rethinking emotion in this light, instead as of an irrational hindrance, the fundamental importance of studying the emotions will become all the more apparent.