

HOW DO YOU FEEL

Lecture 3 The Expression of Emotions Across Mankind. Texts

In *Emotions*, Darwin addressed the issue of whether humans descended from one common progenitor or whether groups in different locations descended from different animal progenitors. In his time there was a racist view that Africans were inferior to Europeans and had therefore descended from different, less developed ancestors. Today the complete unfolding of the human genome has provided an unassailable answer. Every human in the world is descended from an African ancestor. Darwin did not know about the mechanism of genetics, even though the pioneering research by Gregor Mendel on pea plants was published in 1866, 7 years after *The Origin of Species*. Darwin's own copy of Mendel's paper was found in his library after his death with the pages still uncut. Not having this evidence, Darwin espoused Lamarck's mistaken contention that characteristics acquired during an individual's lifetime were inherited. To investigate the possibility of a common human ancestor Darwin chose to determine whether the expression of emotions by humans was unique or whether there was continuity with emotional expression by other species. Darwin wrote this book in a very short period of time. No more than four months. The 200th anniversary edition runs to over 300 pages. Of course his observations which the book records extended over many years, beginning with the birth of his first child, William,

Darwin made very careful observations of human emotional expressions. He noted that 'During sneezing and crying the muscles around the eyes contract shutting the eyes and compressing the tear glands, squeezing out tears. Exuberant laughter can produce the same effects.' Darwin quotes Henle who states that there is a general tendency for the bodily symptoms of an emotional state to begin near the head and spread downwards. In terror, sweat breaks out on the forehead first. In strong emotion the flood of tears is the first sign, followed by an increased flow of saliva. Henle then indulges in a flight of fancy 'If by bad luck the origin of the nerve which stimulates the salivary gland had been nearer to the brain than the nerve that produces tears, poets might have celebrated saliva instead of weeping.' From which I conclude that rather than saying 'I weep for you' we would profess our love by saying 'my mouth waters for you.'

Darwin utilized photographs taken by a French researcher Duchenne, who used electric currents (galvanism) to stimulate individual facial muscles, in order to recreate expressions. Darwin showed these photographs 'without a word of explanation, to above twenty educated persons of various ages and both sexes' and asked them to state what emotion was being expressed.

In 1867 he circulated a list of descriptions of 16 expressions formulated as questions. E.g. Is extreme fear expressed in the same general manner as with Europeans? When a man wishes to show that he cannot prevent something being done, or cannot himself do something, does he shrug his shoulders, turn inwards his elbows, extend outwards his hands and open his palms; with the eyebrows raised? He received 36 answers from different observers, several of them missionaries or protectors of the aborigines.

YES & NO

‘With infants the first act of denial consist in refusing food; and I repeatedly noticed with my own infants, that they did so by withdrawing their heads laterally from the breast, or from anything offered them in a spoon. In accepting food and taking into their mouths, they incline their heads forwards. In refusing food, especially if it be pressed on them, children frequently move their heads several times from side to side, as we do in shaking our heads in negation.’

SURPRISE

Darwin obtained from Duchenne a photograph of an old man with his eyebrows well elevated and arched by the galvanization of the frontal muscle, and with his mouth voluntarily opened. ‘This figure expresses surprise with much truth’.

‘I showed it to twenty-four persons without a word of explanation, and one alone did not at all understand what was intended.’

Ekman is a great admirer of Darwin and editor of the 200 anniversary edition of his book. With his colleagues Sorensen & Friesen, he published a paper in Science 1969.

They attempted to demonstrate that there are universally recognizable facial expressions of specific emotions. They selected a series of photographs of White people showing ‘the pure display of a single affect’. They showed the photographs to subjects in a variety of cultures: Brazil, Japan and New Guinea. The subjects were asked to select a word from a list of 6 emotions for each picture. In preparing this list Ekman and Co. encountered difficulties in translating some of the terms for emotions into the local languages.

For example there were no Neo-Melanesian Pidgin equivalents for ‘disgust-contempt’ or ‘surprise’. In these cases a phrase was substituted. Fanagalo: Zulu-based pidgin language. ‘It can be a challenge to communicate in pidgin since it is so simple. It usually consists of a blend of words and concepts from at least two and sometimes more cultures’.

WHO IPSS: No problems in translating depression, anxiety and irritability into the 6 languages belonging to the Indo-European group. But difficulties arose with Chinese and Yoruba.

European languages still contain a multitude of phrases that refer to the bodily experiences of emotions. I have compiled a selection of them in a passage written in the style of a particular genre.

My heart was in my mouth as I strode up the driveway. Although I hated his guts, my stomach turned over as I approached his house. I knocked on the door and my heart leapt as I heard his footsteps inside. Shivers ran down my back as he fumbled with the catch, then, as he flung open the door my skin crawled at the sight of him.

‘I speak from the heart when I say that I cant stomach you’, I spat out. He laughed sneeringly and I felt my gorge rise.

‘You’re a pain in the neck’, he growled. His retort stuck in my throat.

‘I am here because of the woman whose heart you have broken’ I asserted, and the thought of Amanda brought a lump to my throat. He turned his back on me so suddenly that I almost jumped out of my skin. His rudeness made my blood boil and I reached for my.....

We treat these phrases as metaphors, but they are a historical remnant of a time, not so long ago, when they were used as a literal communication of the body's response to emotional distress. They still have that literal force in many non-European languages.

Frijda test
Social situations effects on judgement of emotion

Cline's experiment
Smiling, Glum, Frowning

Smiling + Glum: Smiling seen as dominant, vicious and taunting; Glum seen as deflated or embarrassed and generally helpless.
Glum + Frowning: seen as aloof, independent and rather self-sufficient.
Smiling + Frowning: seen as peaceful and friendly, trying to appease Frowning

In their first study requiring subjects to identify emotions from photographs, Ekman and his colleagues found that preliterate peoples in New Guinea and Borneo achieved poor agreement with people from developed countries other than for Happiness. Ekman & Co decided that the problem lay with the translation of a single English word into a single word from one of the languages spoken by the preliterate peoples.

The story for Anger : 'He is angry; or he is angry about to fight'.
The story for Fear includes the word 'afraid' three times in the English translation. These preliterate peoples studied in the early 1970s had seen no films, neither spoke nor understood English, and had little or no contact with White people. Five out of the six stories included some description of the environmental or social context for the emotion.

Shame & Guilt

Guilt is felt over one's actions. Shame is felt over one's self-image. Shame is always linked to judgements about the self, and related to the sense of self and personal identity. Types of guilt and shame differ across cultures.

In the West the individual functions as an independent being. The individual is the autonomous unit of action within the social group. Personal goals are emphasized over group goals. An individualistic theory of human nature assumes that a person's best interests are best served by permitting maximum freedom and responsibility and the opportunities for choosing objectives and the means for obtaining them. Western society's assumption is that the development of the individual benefits society in the long run.

By contrast, Chinese philosophy posits that one's life is an inheritance from one's ancestors, just as one's children's lives flow from one's own. The family is conceived of as the 'the great self', and the boundaries of the self are flexible enough to include family members and significant others. Chinese identity is defined in terms of the system of relationships in which a person is involved. If status as a member of this system is lost,

loss of status as a person follows. Harmonious interaction of group members is highly valued instead of individuality as in Western cultures. No person ever has just cause to disrupt group harmony as disruption impacts on everyone's identity. This guiding principle is one of the causes of the punitive treatment of political dissidents in China, as exemplified by the recent Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo. During the Cultural Revolution dissidents were paraded through the streets wearing dunce caps. By contrast to public shaming, dissidents in Russia were wrongly diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia and locked away from public view in psychiatric hospitals.

Shame or guilt are dominant modes of social control in any culture, but are not mutually exclusive. Shame can also be very important in Western societies. The novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The Scarlet Letter' is about a woman who commits adultery in a small town and is then compelled to wear the red letter A on her clothing.

Hamaguchi writes 'Human beings try to use the feeling of 'shame' even if it is uncomfortable, as a means of elevating themselves, or as a means of guidance in life. Therefore shame can be said to be a consciousness acting as a type of morality. That's the reason human beings are said to be animals that know shame'.

Dependency relationships are highly regarded and encouraged in Japan.

Takeo Doi, a Japanese psychoanalyst, discusses the concept of *amae*, which refers to the need to be treated warmly and affectionately within the protected boundaries of important relationships. Dependency to this degree is generally frowned on in the West, with its iconic superheroes as the ultimate depiction of independence.

I will now summarise our understanding of the origins of emotions, based on Darwin's meticulous observations of animals and people, his international study of human emotional expression, the studies conducted in the following century on Western and non-western preliterate peoples, and finally a comparison of cultural attitudes towards the expression of emotions.