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Social Psychology Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 1. (Mar., 1990), pp. 3-12.

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Reflexivity and Emotions*

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The burgeoning field of the sociology of the emotions is currently characterized by a variety of approaches, such as the positivist (Kemper 1981; Mazur 1985), the symbolic interactionist (Hochschild 1979, 1983; Shott 1979; Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988; Stryker and Statham 1985), and the social constructionist (Averill 1980a, 1985; Harre 1986). In this paper I attempt to set forth a reflexive theory of emotions. My argument is that the foundation of the emotions is basically organismic but that human reflexivity transforms the nature of the emotions radically. Reflexive processes, as I will attempt to show, pervade virtually every important aspect of human emotions.

REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity refers to the process of an entity acting back upon itself. Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902) showed clearly that reflexivity among human beings is rooted in the social process, particularly the process of taking the role of the other and of seeing the self from the other's perspective. As a result of this process, the organism develops an awareness of self. The individual comes to be both the knower and the object of knowledge.

Two types of reflexivity are of particular importance. The first refers to the self as the object of its own *cognition*. All cognitive processes of which the individual is capable (e.g., memory, perception, attention, evaluation, abstract reasoning, analysis, synthesis) can be brought to bear upon the self as an object. If people have memory, they can remember the self. If people are capable of logical thought, they can think logically about the self. Whatever intellectual powers the individual possesses can be brought to bear

upon the self as an object (Rosenberg 1986a). I call such processes "reflexive cognition."

The second reflexive process is that of *agency*. Agency refers to the experience of being an active or efficient cause in the production of some outcome. When the object acted upon is some feature of the self, I speak of "reflexive agency." Reflexive agency is the process whereby the organism acts back on itself for the purpose of producing intended effects on itself. The mind, for example, as I will show later, can take itself as the object of its own manipulation and regulation.

Reflexive processes can be directed either toward the self as a whole or toward its constituent parts. One way of classifying these parts is to distinguish those features of the self which are external and those which are internal (Rosenberg 1986b). The external features are those aspects of the self which are overt, public, and visible. These include such things as physical characteristics, social identity elements, possessions, behavioral dispositions, manifest abilities, and other readily visible aspects of the self. The internal features of the self include such components as cognitions, emotions, sensations, and wishes. Unlike the overt features of the self, this internal world represents a realm of privileged knowledge. By virtue of reflexivity and agency, people are able to observe, reflect on, regulate, and produce alterations in these internal processes.

The internal features that constitute the foundation of the emotions are physiological or bodily sensations. They are chiefly products of the autonomic nervous system and of the activities of certain portions of the brain. Reflexivity is exemplified by taking these experiences as objects of one's own reflection or control.

The central message of this paper is that reflexivity works a fundamental change in the nature of human emotions. Once the internal state of arousal comes to be "worked over" by these reflexive processes, they acquire a totally different character. The emotion comes

* Revised version of a paper presented on the occasion of the presentation of the Cooley-Mead Award, Section on Social Psychology, American Sociological Association, San Francisco, August 10, 1989. The preparation of this paper was facilitated by the award of a Guggenheim Fellowship.

to be mixed with elements that are separate from the physiological experience.

The importance of the emotions both for the individual and for the society can scarcely be overestimated. For the individual, emotions are both ends in themselves and means for the attainment of other ends. For society, emotions are involved critically in social control, role performance, and interpersonal interaction. Emotions are matters of profound concern to everyone.

Reflexive processes come to bear on emotions in at least three ways. First, they are involved centrally in *emotional identification*. Indeed, among human beings, reflexive elements are an integral part of the emotion. Reflexivity is expressed here in interpretive processes. Second, reflexivity plays a key role in *emotional display*. Emotional display involves the self-regulation of emotional exhibition for the purpose of producing intended effects on others' minds. In emotional display, reflexivity is expressed in behavior. Third, reflexive processes are involved in bringing forth intended *emotional experiences*. Reflexivity manifests itself in the creation of internal states of arousal.

It is important to distinguish such intentional emotional events from inadvertent or unintentional events. When people experience internal states of arousal without the intervention of interpretive processes, I consider these states to be nonreflexive experiences. We often experience such states without making an effort to identify their nature. Since the appearance of Schachter and Singer's (1962) seminal study, it has become customary to reserve the term "emotion" for states of arousal that are subjected to interpretive processes.¹

Reflexive and nonreflexive processes also must be distinguished in considering emotional display. There is a fundamental difference between intentional efforts to convince others that we are experiencing certain emotions—a reflexive process—and the inadvertent emotional impact that we may have on another person—a nonreflexive process. The

intentional exhibition of emotions will be called "emotional display" and their unintentional manifestation, "emotional expression." For example, when I flash a friendly smile at a man in order to convince him that my feelings are benign, that is emotional display. When the look in my eyes unwittingly reveals my underlying hostility, however, that is emotional expression.

Finally, emotional experience also may be reflexive or nonreflexive. When people decide which emotions they do or do not wish to experience and proceed to produce these emotional effects on themselves, these are products of reflexive processes. When they experience internal states of physiological arousal spontaneously and without reference to intention, these experiences are products of nonreflexive processes.

My purpose is not to attempt to explain nonreflexive emotional processes but simply to stress the importance of keeping them distinct from reflexive processes. Reflexive processes, stemming from social interactional experiences, are of particular interest to the sociologist. My aim in this paper is to consider the effect of reflexive processes on emotional identification, display, and experience.

EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION

In our usual way of thinking, emotions are viewed as internal states of physiological arousal or visceral experience. According to Armon-Jones (1986, p. 40), "Philosophers originally defined the emotions as 'passions.' Passions were regarded as involuntary, non-cognitive phenomena which, like sensation and perception, are incorrigibly known simple impressions named by simple concepts." In this view, emotions are considered to be "non-cognitive phenomena, among the bodily perturbations," "involuntary and purely affective states" (Harre 1986, p. 2), or "biologically primitive, instinctive response patterns" (Averill 1980b, p. 57).

In 1962 Schachter and Singer set forth a radically different view that they called the "two-stage theory" of emotion. According to this theory, an emotion is a joint product of organismic and reflexive processes. The emotion represents the application of the individual's cognitive processes to his or her internal states of arousal.

That the cognitive element is an integral

¹ This view does not enjoy a conceptual monopoly. Thoits (1989, p. 318) proposed a four-factor theory of emotions that involves "(a) appraisals of a situational stimulus or context, (b) changes in physiological or bodily sensation, (c) the free or inhibited display of expressive gestures, and (d) a cultural label applied to specific constellations of one or more of the first three components."

feature of the emotion is suggested by the following: If an emotion were simply a state of physiological arousal, the presence of that internal state should suffice to constitute the emotion. Pennebaker (1980), however, has shown that this is not the case. He reports that when people are injected with epinephrine, they undergo physiological experiences that are similar to those associated with fear. Yet when asked how they feel, they rarely say they are afraid. The full-fledged feeling of fear comes into being only when such physiological responses are coupled with the cognitive interpretation of a situation as dangerous.

Ambiguity of Feeling

One reason why interpretive factors play such a prominent role in emotional identification is that the internal state of arousal is so often ambiguous. There are several reasons for such ambiguity.

For one thing, different emotions may have similar manifestations. According to Tavis (1982, p. 94), anger "shares the physiological symptoms of joy, excitement, fear, anxiety, jealousy, and the like." In exploring the internal state of physiological arousal, then, it may not be clear which of several possible emotions one may be experiencing.

Another reason for ambiguity is the fact that emotions may be mixed. When people attend horror movies, they expect to feel both fear and pleasurable excitement. Similarly, one may be sad at the loss of a loved one and simultaneously relieved that the painful ordeal is over. When different emotions are experienced simultaneously, it may be difficult to dissociate them and to identify their respective natures.

Third, ambiguity may exist because there is no touchstone by which an internal experience can be measured confidently. Although people may appear to be referring to the same experiences when they use emotional terms, ultimately such internal experiences are unique and incommunicable. Just as there is no way to know whether my experience of thirst or pain or color is the same as yours, so there is no way to know whether my experience of joy or loathing or interest is the same as yours. Each of us is encapsulated in his or her experiential world. Similarly, it is difficult to know whether one's internal experience

corresponds to some objective, abstract definition of an emotion.

Another reason why it may be difficult to label an emotion accurately is that the language may not provide an appropriate term for it. According to Leff (1977), some languages do not have separate terms to designate depression, irritability, and anxiety. Similarly, the emotion designated by the German term *Schadenfreude*, which refers to a kind of malicious glee, may be recognized less readily by an English-speaking actor (Gordon 1990).

In view of this ambiguity, it is not surprising that reflexive actors are so often uncertain about what they are feeling. To be sure, if the internal state is clear and unambiguous—the phobic's feeling of terror, the sports fan's excitement at seeing the winning touchdown—then the physiological experience will play a more prominent role in the emotional identification, although even here reflexive elements will make a contribution. Yet if the nature of the internal experience is ambiguous, as is frequently the case, people will use other information to determine what they are feeling.

I would like to focus attention on the part played by such extrinsic information in emotional identification. My reason for doing so is to show more clearly that an emotion is more than a state of physiological arousal. It is also a process of bringing one's intellectual powers to bear on this internal state and basing one's emotional identification on these reflexive processes. In other words, we do not simply "feel" an emotion; we also "think" an emotion.

Cognition and Emotional Identification

Three cognitive factors that may affect emotional identification are causal assumptions, social consensus, and cultural scenarios. In addition, motivational factors may affect emotional labeling.

Causal assumptions. In the course of socialization, human beings come to view emotions within a causal framework. Emotions are seen both as effects and as causes. Hence if the internal state of arousal is ambiguous, people may infer its nature by attending to its alleged causes or effects.

Consider first the view of emotions as *effects*. In the course of socialization and maturation, people learn that certain stimulus

events are expected to produce certain emotions. For example, Schwartz (1982, pp. 15–18) asked subjects how they would feel if:

1. "Your dog dies" (sad and depressed).
2. "Your girlfriend/boyfriend leaves you for another" (sad, angry, anxious, depressed).
3. "You realize that your goals are impossible to reach" (sad, angry, fearful, anxious, depressed).
4. "You are accepted at Yale" (happy, anxious).
5. "You are loved" (happy).

Part of the process of social learning, then, is the development of expectations regarding the causal connection between stimulus events and emotional outcomes. For example, insult is expected to lead to anger; a compliment is expected to cause feelings of pleasure; threat is expected to arouse fear; uncertainty is expected to give rise to anxiety. People do not have to undergo these experiences themselves, or even to observe them in others, in order to learn the expected connection between the event and the emotion. These messages are transmitted clearly through movies, television, and other mass media as well as through interpersonal communication.

These expectations are part of a broader system of "emotional logic" that people develop in the course of socialization. This emotional logic is learned socially and shared widely. The emotions are not seen simply as usual or typical responses; they are viewed as *logically necessary* outcomes of events. It is logical for me to feel angry if I have been insulted, but not logical to feel jealous. It is logical to feel resentful toward someone who has attacked me unfairly, but not logical to feel warm and affectionate toward that person.

Society takes this emotional logic very seriously. Failure to adhere to it constitutes one of the defining features of mental disorder (American Psychiatric Association 1987). When a patient tells you with a big smile on his face that his best friend has just died, or informs you matter-of-factly that the world is coming to an end, or reacts angrily to the news that he has just won the lottery—such responses raise the suspicion of possible mental disorder (Rosenberg 1984; Thoits 1985). It is not only the bizarre cognition but also the inappropriateness of the emotion in the light of that cognition that is judged to be illogical. The various anxiety disorders,

which constitute such a significant proportion of the mental disorders in our society, refer to emotional experiences that appear to be excessive in light of the objective threat. What is wrong with this behavior is that it violates the generally held system of emotional logic.

Let me turn now to the emotional logic that views the emotions as *causes*. Confronted with ambiguous internal experiences, people may identify their emotions by observing the consequences of those experiences. The two major types of consequences are physical reactions and behavioral responses.

One kind of information that is used to determine the nature of one's emotions is the observation of one's physical responses. For example, if a man becomes aware that his heart is racing, his hands are trembling, and his palms are sweating, he may conclude that the internal experience he is undergoing is that of fear or nervousness. He draws conclusions about his feelings not solely on the basis of the internal state of arousal but also on the basis of his interpretation of the physical manifestations.

An example of this process appears in a study by Valins (1966), in which male subjects were shown slides of attractive seminude females. Simultaneously they listened over a loudspeaker to sounds that they were told were their own heartbeats but that were, in fact, controlled by the investigator. For some of the slides the heartbeat sounded faster than for others. When the subjects were asked which females they found most attractive, they selected the slides associated with the faster heartbeats.

Emotions also are viewed as causes of behavior. In the face of an ambiguous internal experience, one may attempt to identify its nature by examining the behavior for which it is allegedly responsible. This appears to be the principle underlying Bem's self-perception theory. Bem (1967) raised the question: How do people learn about their inner states or experiences? They do so, he says, by observing their behavior and the associated circumstances under which it occurs. A woman may decide that she was bored at the concert because she fell asleep there. A man who observes himself at a football game standing on his feet, waving his arms, and shouting at the top of his lungs may conclude that he is excited. In these cases the

emotions are inferred from observation of their assumed behavioral consequences.

In sum, people develop systems of assumptions that connect emotions causally to other events. In the face of ambiguous internal sensations, they identify their emotions not simply by focusing on the internal experiences but also by attending to the associated causal events.

Social consensus. Other people's responses are another basis for inferring the nature of the internal state of arousal. If everyone around me is roaring with laughter, I may conclude that my internal feeling is one of amusement. (This is probably one reason for the effectiveness of canned laughter.) This observation has been shown to be true even when only one other person is involved. In the Schachter and Singer (1962) experiment, subjects were injected with epinephrine and then were asked to wait in another room while the drug took effect. In that room they found another subject (actually a confederate) who allegedly also was waiting for the drug to take effect. This other person was acting in a very excited and high-spirited way. Subjects who were not told about the actual physical effects of the drug were more likely than other subjects to report that they were experiencing pleasurable excitement. They interpreted the internal state of arousal produced by the epinephrine in themselves as indicative of the emotion that the confederate appeared to be experiencing. In fact, even subjects who received injections that contained *no* active ingredient tended to identify their internal states as matching those exhibited by the confederate.

Cultural scenarios. Finally, the identification of internal experiences may be made by matching them to certain emotional scenarios or paradigms that are learned in the society. A case in point is love. How do people decide whether they are in love? According to Averill (1985), society provides them with a set of criteria against which they can match their experiences. Among the criteria are 1) idealization of the loved one (e.g., "the most beautiful girl in the world"), 2) suddenness of onset (love at first sight), 3) the physiological arousal associated with sexual excitement, and 4) "commitment to, and willingness to make sacrifices for, the loved one" (p. 99). Discussing love as a cultural pattern, Turner (1970, pp. 228–30) identifies 11 features of an emotion that characterize it as love. The

point is that people's decisions about whether or not they are in love may be based not so much on their actual feelings as on matching their thoughts, feelings, and behavior with the emotional template provided by society.

In sum, people not only experience internal states of perturbation but also take these internal states reflexively as objects of their own cognitions. The active interpretive process that is an outgrowth of human reflexivity is as important as the internal state of perturbation itself in the identification of the emotion.

Motivational influences. In view of the importance of emotions in the lives of human beings, it is not surprising that motivational factors should play a role in their identification. People prefer to believe that they are experiencing certain emotions rather than others; if the internal experience is ambiguous, they will be guided by these preferences in their emotional identification.

The chief reason why people prefer to assign one emotional label to an internal state rather than another is that the logic of emotions assigns a role to emotions as causes of behavior. This logic exerts pressure on the individual to act in accordance with the dictates of the emotion. If I like someone, for example, I may ask that person for a date; if not, not. If I enjoy a certain field, I may decide to take it up as my life's work; if I don't, I search for another occupation.

Because of these action implications, people may be strongly motivated to avoid emotional interpretations that have threatening consequences. If I hate my job, a logical response is to quit. If I dislike my spouse, a logical solution is to leave. Yet these decisions pose threats of financial deprivation, feelings of failure, loneliness, and other frightening consequences that people are eager to avoid. If one can interpret the internal state as indicative of some other emotion (or as simply a momentary emotional aberration), these threats can be avoided. What we call an emotion, then, can make an important difference in our lives.

EMOTIONAL DISPLAY

Emotional identification, as we have seen, is largely a product of cognitive reflexivity. When we turn to emotional display and emotional experience, we enter the world of human self-regulation—the process that I

have called agentive reflexivity. Agency is involved in regulating what we do and in shaping what we are. This point is particularly evident when we consider emotional display.

Emotional display, of course, refers both to the exhibition and to the concealment of emotions. Unlike emotional identification, in which physiological experiences play a part, emotional display is located squarely in the realm of dramaturgy or impression management (Goffman 1959). Emotional display is not an intrapersonal feeling; it is an interpersonal process. It focuses on producing intended effects on other people's phenomenal worlds. To be sure, people also may make inadvertent emotional impressions on others, but these are not products of human reflexivity and do not represent expressions of emotional display. As I use the term, emotional display is a purposive human activity.

Social psychologists have long recognized that the effort to understand the internal mental and emotional events of other human beings (usually called role-taking or empathy) is a pervasive feature of human interaction. What seems to me to be generally overlooked, however, is the fact that people also are engaged constantly in efforts to produce intended effects on the minds of other people. One of our chief life activities, I believe, is the constant effort to insert, implant, displace, or otherwise alter the contents of others' minds. The types of effects we wish to produce are extremely varied (Flavell et al. 1968). We may wish to console, to inform, to excite, to impress, to persuade, or to produce other effects on the person to whom we are speaking. We may do so for our own benefit, for the benefit of the listener, for the benefit of a third party, or even for the benefit of some abstract cause. Whatever the purpose, the aim is to alter the contents of others' minds. The specific effect that people seek to produce when they engage in emotional display is to convince others that they are undergoing certain emotional experiences. I would like to consider some of the purposes, tactics, and costs of this activity.

Purposes

People engage in emotional display for a variety of reasons. One reason is to persuade others that they are moral actors—that is,

people who conform to the emotional norms of society. As Coulter (1986, p. 127) notes, "A person may be found morally deficient not to be, e.g., upset by the death of his father, moved by an act of extreme courage, angry at a miscarriage of justice . . ." People who fail to display the prescribed emotion in response to certain events are judged to be morally reprehensible.

Such emotional display is demanded by society even in the absence of a corresponding emotional experience (Gordon 1990; Hochschild 1979, 1983; Thoits 1985). The feeling rules that obtain at a funeral demand that we look sad, not that we feel sad. Other mourners would be shocked and outraged if one laughed and cracked jokes at the funeral of a loved one, however sorrowful one felt underneath.

Both social situations and social roles impose emotional demands on people. Thus whatever one's actual feeling, the person who fails to act happy at a party, reverent at a religious service, or excited at a sports contest is apt to elicit scorn and condemnation both from others and from the self. The same is true of the emotional display demanded by social roles. The display associated with gender roles is a well-known example of such role-related emotional norms. Early in life males are taught that "big boys don't cry" (Thoits 1985), whereas such behavior is tolerated among girls. According to Thoits (1989, pp. 321–22), "due to differential socialization, women are thought to be more empathic, more loving, and less able to feel (or express) anger, while men are believed to feel (or express) fear and sadness less frequently compared to women." Such behavior is not simply seen as characteristic of men and women; it is also prescriptive.

In addition to enabling one to conform to the emotional norms, emotional display serves as an important means for the attainment of one's ends. A customer may feign anger in order to get better service in a restaurant. A person may display a sad expression in order to elicit sympathy from others. An individual may flash a friendly smile in order to obtain a loan.

Of central importance are emotions that affect interpersonal relations. Much of what we want out of life depends on the good will of others, and this good will is affected significantly by emotional display. This fact is especially evident when we look at

role-related interpersonal emotions. Other things being equal, a good-natured salesman, a kindly doctor, and a cheerful girl will sell more goods, see more patients, and receive more marriage proposals than their peers who display unattractive emotions. It is no wonder that the smile is the most common facial expression in humans (Ekman 1988).

Emotional concealment is as much a feature of emotional display as is emotional exhibition, and it plays an equally important part in enabling people to realize their objectives. People's ability to conceal their hostility toward their employers, their sexual attraction to a child, sibling, or parent, their hatred of a customer, or their boredom with a professor does much to enable them to function successfully in life. Such emotional self-regulation, as Shott (1979) has shown, also may serve important social functions (for example, contributing to social cohesion).

One school of thought, to be sure, holds that such emotional inhibition is damaging to the individual. Proponents of this view preach the doctrine of "emotional ventilation" (Tavris 1984). The idea that it is mentally healthy to express one's feelings is unquestioned in many psychotherapies. It is argued that the expression of one's anger fosters emotional closeness, improves bad situations, achieves justice, redresses grievances, reduces tension and anxiety (through emotional catharsis), and enhances power.

These claims, according to Tavris (1984), rest on very shaky ground. First, the expression of anger is more likely to damage than to improve interpersonal relationships. Anger tends to beget anger, producing an escalating level of mutual hostility. The expression of anger thus may interfere with communication, heighten the difficulty of ironing out interpersonal problems, and increase the emotional distance between the parties. Furthermore, contrary to the catharsis assumption, which holds that the expression of anger dissipates the feeling, Tavris (1984) cites research showing that the ventilation of the emotion increases rather than decreases its intensity. When people express anger, they are apt to attempt to justify it by selectively calling up various memories, incidents, and reasons to support their cases. As a result they solidify and intensify their negative feelings toward the objects of their anger. Tavris concludes that in general, displaying anger amplifies the hostile attitude, drives out more

benign emotions, antagonizes the object of one's anger, and ultimately increases the negative feelings rather than decreasing them.

Tactics

Learning to be a successful emotional actor is no easy task. It calls for the use of a broad range of linguistic and paralinguistic devices that are assumed to produce effects on others' minds. Broadly speaking, there appear to be three major kinds of devices used to manage emotional display: verbal devices, facial expressions, and the use of physical objects.

The most obvious way of effecting emotional display is by means of words. Words may be chosen carefully to amplify or to mute emotions. Hyperbole, euphemism, metaphor, simile, poetic imagery, or other evocative expression may be used to convey emotional messages.

Another major device is the intentional regulation of one's facial expressions. Some facial expressions (e.g., happiness, anger, fear, disgust) are recognized universally as indicative of certain emotions (Ekman 1988). At the same time, Ekman notes, "There is not one expression for each emotion but dozens and, for some emotions, hundreds. . . . Every emotion has a family of expressions, all visibly different from one another" (p. 238).

The methods of facial self-manipulation vary widely. People may attempt to convey various emotions by raising or lowering the eyebrows, pulling together or separating the eyebrows, frowning or smoothing the forehead, and so on. In most cases the facial muscles that govern these expressions are under the control of the voluntary nervous system, particularly in the case of the smile. According to Ekman (1988, p. 243), "The zygomatic major muscle . . . reaches from the cheekbones down and across the face, attaching to the corners of the lips. When contracted, the zygomatic major pulls the lip corner at an angle toward the cheekbones. With a strong action this muscle also pulls the cheeks upward, bags the skin below the eyes, and produces crow's-foot wrinkles beyond the eye corners." In emotional display, people can manipulate these facial muscles intentionally for the purpose of conveying a certain emotional message.

Although facial expression is the most important physical means of conveying emotions, other physical expressions also exist.

Voice pitch tends to be higher when a person is upset (for example, in cases of anger or fear) and lower when expressing sadness or sorrow. Volume also varies among emotions; we tend to speak more loudly when angry. Speed is an emotional sign as well; sad emotions tend to be characterized by slower speech. Pitch, volume, and speed, like facial expressions, are largely subject to the control of the voluntary nervous system and can be manipulated for emotional display.

People also may make use of certain physical objects to help convey emotions. Props, costumes, makeup, or other theatrical devices may be employed for this purpose. Costume is especially important; in our society, for example, wearing black helps to convey sorrow. (This is not necessarily true in other societies.) Wearing bright colors or bold designs often expresses gaiety or high-spiritedness. In adopting such devices, the reflexive individual is using dress and adornment as a means of producing emotional impressions on the minds of the audience.

Costs

Although emotional display serves important needs both for society and for the individual, it is not without costs. One of these costs is the fact that display introduces an element of suspicion into social relationships. Does the other person really like us or is he or she just pretending to do so? Is the student really fascinated by our lecture or just currying favor? Is the suitor's profession of love genuine or simply a ploy to gain sexual satisfaction? Emotional display may cloud interpersonal relationships with doubt and suspicion.

It is probably for this reason that the emotional expressions of nonself-reflexive organisms hold such an inordinate appeal for human beings. When a dog barks joyously at our return or when a young child flings its arms affectionately around our necks, these expressions are doubly precious because we know them to be genuine. The dog or the child is not putting on an act or presenting an emotional facade. Knowing that animals and young children lack the capacity for reflexivity, we are aware that their emotional expressions represent their emotional experiences accurately.

Emotional display, let me emphasize, is not necessarily false. It may be used even if the

emotion that one reveals is genuine. For example, if my feelings toward you are friendly but if for some reason you believe they are not, I may be compelled to use a number of different devices to convince you that I actually feel what I appear to feel. Popular singers appear to be at their wits' end trying to figure out "how can I prove I love you?" Emotional display is designed to convey an emotional message, whether or not that message truly represents the underlying state.

EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

One of the most obvious and most important differences between emotional display and emotional experience is that the latter appears to be outside the individual's direct control. I may be able to make myself *look* happy, but I cannot so easily make myself *feel* happy. I can avoid looking bored, but I cannot avoid feeling bored. In other words, it may be possible for me to decide which emotion to show and to proceed to show it, but can I decide which emotion to feel and then proceed to feel it?

The fact that emotional experiences appear to be inadvertent and involuntary rather than intentional and voluntary seems to me to represent the central dilemma in the emotional lives of human beings. Both the fulfillment of the individual's life objectives and the functioning of society depend on the self-regulation of such experiences (Rosenberg 1988). Yet emotional experiences appear to be autonomic responses, existing outside the control of the voluntary nervous system.

What, then, can people do in the face of this dilemma? It is my contention that people, unable to exercise direct control over their emotional experiences, adopt the strategy of attempting to control the *causes* of these experiences. Where are these causes to be found? The first place is in the mind; the second, in the body.

With respect to the mental causes of emotional experiences, human beings are aware that what they think has a major effect on how they feel. Hence one way to control our emotions is to control our thoughts. Although the idea that the human mind can decide to manipulate its own content may seem paradoxical, in fact few processes are more familiar. To take a simple example of mental self-manipulation in the service of

emotional objectives, if I am feeling blue, one way of overcoming this unpleasant feeling may be to displace the bleak thoughts that are responsible for it with pleasant thoughts that generate a preferable emotion. This process is neither strange nor difficult. I might initiate it, for example, by telephoning a delightful friend, reading an interesting novel, or tackling a challenging task. In engaging in this mental self-manipulation, I may be fully conscious of what I am doing. My mind is thus an active agent in bringing about the intended alteration of its own content. Furthermore, the action is entirely purposive—to manipulate my mind for the purpose of producing a desired alteration of my emotional state. This is a clear expression of reflexive agency.

Broadly speaking, there are two major ways to arouse the desired emotion-evoking cognitions. The first is to control the stimulus events that give rise to the cognitions. The chief way to do so is through *selective exposure*. If I am watching a movie that bores me, I can leave the theater; if I am talking to someone who angers me, I can cut short the conversation; if I am listening to news that depresses me, I can switch channels. Through selective exposure I am able to bring under my control the stimulus events that are responsible for the emotional experiences.

The second approach is to produce effects on one's thoughts directly. Here the mind takes itself as the object of its direct control or manipulation. Such devices are familiar; people may shift their thoughts intentionally from one topic to another or selectively may perceive, remember, attend to, and interpret events in ways that produce the intended emotional outcomes. (For a fuller discussion of these methods of mental self-manipulation, see Rosenberg forthcoming).

The other general way of affecting emotional experiences is to act on the body. Because the foundation of the emotion is a state of physiological arousal or bodily perturbation, it is understandable that bodily effects can have emotional consequences. A variety of physical methods (e.g., jogging, aerobics, controlled breathing, muscular relaxation) and biochemical devices (e.g., alcohol, tranquilizers, stimulants, hypnotics) are used by people for emotional self-regulation. Only reflexive organisms—organisms that can look upon their own bodies and decide intentionally what to do with them in order to produce

the emotions they want—are capable of such self-regulatory behavior.

CONCLUSION

In his discussion of the role of the emotions in animals, Charles Darwin (1872) described vividly the adaptive value of emotional expression for species survival. Although there are many similarities between the emotional lives of humans and of other species, one major characteristic sets us apart from them: we are reflexive creatures. As a result of social interaction and communication, the human being comes to take itself as the object of its own cognitive and agentive processes. The person becomes a detached observer of the many elements that constitute the self, both external and internal. Among the most important internal elements are those states of physiological arousal that form the foundation of the emotions. Human beings reflect on these states, try to determine their nature, attempt to regulate their display, and seek to control the experiences of these states by producing effects on their minds and on their bodies. Reflexivity is thus a central feature of emotional identification, emotional display, and emotional experience. If we are to do justice to the nature of emotion, I believe that it is essential to give careful consideration to these reflexive processes in human beings.

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