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A FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH TO EMOTIONS

by

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There are at least two ways in which emotions can be conceptualized. The first, and most widespread, one is the cognitive approach which implies the presence of internal processes or psychological mechanisms. The cognitive approach says that emotions are the result of evolutionary processes. The second approach is behaviorological. It states that emotions are learned and are nothing more than behaviorological and physiological events. Both approaches, even if different, have an extremely important effect on our world because they may help make societal decisions and therefore manage our environment in a better way. As we will see, though, authorities do not always look at the research before making critical judgements.

My goal in this paper is twofold: First it is to review several lines of research on how certain emotions -namely guilt and shame- "evolved":. Second, it is to show that, unfortunately, the general public and city officials often make decisive judgements without referring to the research that has been done on the subject. After introducing the main theories of emotions and describing the behaviorological perspective, I will comment on the hasty and unwise decisions that are being make nationwide to reduce the rate of recidivism of criminals. But before I present the applied part, and in order for the reader to understand better the different theories of emotions, let me introduce you to some lines of research.

First, according to Izard (1977) guilt, like other fundamental emotions emerged through evolutionary-biological processes, with the adaptive functions of preventing waste and exploitation. In this view, feelings of responsibility and desire to make amends for wrongdoing have survival value for individuals and relationships and, in the long term for societies and civilization. Izard quotes the Anthropologist LaBarre (1959) who states that:

As they evolved, animals became competitive (for food) and had to develop ways and means of getting along with each other, or chaos would result and the species would not survive.

In a book by Tuttmann, Izard also quotes psychologist Helen Lewis (Tuttman et al 1981) who states that:

Everywhere anthropologists have looked, they have found human beings organized with a society ruled by cultural laws governing the interactions of its members. These cultural laws clearly invade every moment of an individual's experience from birth to burial ceremonies.

Second, Leo Madow (1988) explains that sociologists and anthropologists have suggested that systems of moral law have evolved culturally as a necessary means of adapting to the vicissitudes of our environment.

Madow continues saying that where cultural laws have evolved for the purpose of survival of the species, there must also develop a sense of right and wrong behavior, which then would establish a

feeling of guilt if we do wrong. We also developed typed of behavior that would allow us to live in peace with our neighbors. We do not steal another's food or mate. If we do, it could lead to mortal combat and eventually threaten species survival.

It is considered by many that we all have a conscience that is fundamental and without that conscience, society could not have survived. By Darwin's laws of evolution, this conscience became heritable. Racial traits are genetically inherited whereas cultural traits are socially inherited, that is biology governs physical and cultural rules social activity.

Humans had to develop a definition of right and wrong in culture so as to better survive. From this beginning, they developed some reaction within themselves if they did something wrong, which could well have been the primordial beginnings of a "sense" of guilt.

Madow explains that cultural anthropologists suggest that there are at least three purposes for the heritable development of a sense of guilt.

The first is to control aggressive competitive drives so that the human animal does to annihilate itself.

The second is to control unbridled sexual behavior so that the family unit is preserved, again permitting survival of the species.

The third purpose for a sense of guilt arises because of the prolonged infantilization of the child, who must please his or her parents (that is, be "aware" of what is "right" behavior and what is "wrong" behavior and develop a sense of guilt regarding what is wrong behavior) in order to survive.

In an evolutionary sense, then, guilt, beginning with guilty fear, was essential at first for the survival of Homo sapiens and then for survival of various societies into which humans organized.

Third, Barrett and Campos (1987) (whose research I summarized in Tables 1 and 2 at the end of the paper) treat emotions as the "bidirectional process of establishing, maintaining and/or disrupting significant relationships between and organism and the [...] environment". They discuss three important relationships between event and organism. The first one is genetic and need not be learned. The second source of significance for Barrett and Campos is social communication. Even though we have built-in abilities, interaction gives an exponential perspective to event-organism relationships. The third source of significance is what they call "the organism's goals and strivings". They explain that these, unlike genetically biological processes, can be learned and that the organism constantly strives for the fulfillment of these goals.

Barrett and Campos believe that there are different "member of emotion families" that emerge from 1) prewired significance, 2) ability of the organism to cope with the environment, 3) the average environment in which the organism is evolving, and 4) the expression of facial, vocalic and physiological patterns depending on the environment.

Fourth, Barrett (1994) defines shame as involving the whole individual while guilt involves only definite actions. Shame involves hiding while guile involves making amends. Buss (1980) says that shame involves social anxiety while guilt involves self-

hatred. Barrett believes that shame helps the "self" develop during early development. She believes that a relationship between an organism and the environment is only important if it has some repercussions on the individual's "adaptive-functioning".

Finally, Malatesta and Wilson (1988) (summarized in Tables 1 and 2) propose a model which purports that emotions are adaptive or maladaptive acts. They propose that some individuals are predisposed to experience certain emotions more so than others and that, as a result, we all react differently to the world. They believe that each emotion serves to "facilitate commerce with the environment" and that some of them overtake personality in altering consciousness in biased ways. They believe that "people possess implicit internal representations of social interactions that guide interpersonal behavior". They think that a care giver's behavior is dependant on the "pre-existing" qualities that the infant has - which is what some call "temperament". This theory, and the former ones are in contrast with the behavioral perspective that I would like to introduce at this time.

As Barrett (1994) points out, most researchers disagree about what constitutes a basic emotion. They claim that there is no common definition of what it is they are observing. Some say that a basic emotion is one where a facial response is perceived (e.g., Izard and Malatesta, 1987), some consider that it is "the one with the clearest imagery" (e.g., Shaver et al. 1987) and others think it is some "fundamental units out of which more sophisticated emotions are built" (e.g. see Izard and Malatesta, 1987). But ask the behaviorologist when we talk of guilt or shame, what do we

really talk about?

We talk about emotional physiological reactions that are rearoused by conditions that have been present in the past when punishment has occurred. "feeling guilty" has become a conditioned response. When we feel guilty or ashamed we feel the conditioned response of smooth muscles and glands plus the change in the probability of and operant behavior. Stomach contractions, bile secretions, contractions or relaxation of small blood vessels, pounding heart, sweating are some of the stimuli to which we react by saying that we "feel an emotion". We usually respond to these stimuli in combination with other stimuli from the non-internal environment. So, one of the conditions necessary for guilt and shame appears coincident with the occurrence of a previously punished behavior, or even simply upon the external stimulus occasion for such a behavior. When Dr. Karen Pryor says "No" to her cat, it elicits an emotional state in the cat appropriate to past instances of punishment. Then, the behavior of the cat may be controlled simply by saying "No" because the verbal stimulus arouses an emotional condition that is incompatible with the behavior we are trying to control. So, humans, like all other organisms, experience "guilt" as a physiological and a behaviorological change.

Madow and Izard do a good job of describing the functions of emotions. Malatesta and Wilson along with Barrett and Campos have some interesting perspectives _ that I have combined in Tables 1 and 2- but all this is just behavior, would say the behaviorologist. For millennia, guilt and shame as ill defined

concepts have been used by humans to control others' behavior. By "shaming" someone into doing something we force their behavior. The person that is being "shamed" is escaping from a conditioned aversive verbal stimulus. To escape from the aversive condition the shamed person must change their behavior. We often say that guilt and shame are used in our society to control people's behavior. Our actions are too often based on aversive stimulation, i.e. by presenting aversive stimuli and then making their removal contingent upon the response that we are trying to strengthen. Government control is based on making illegal behavior generate aversive stimuli which, society hope, will make criminals "feel guilty". Behaving legally provokes positive reinforcement, and therefore the avoidance of guilt and shame feelings.

Shame, guilt and other emotions are learned according to the behavior scientist. It is because of a history of punishment that the child develops a "sense of guilt". Those guilty feelings have developed in most societies because the use of aversive conditioning is faster and easier than the use of positive reinforcement, even though the latter is the most effective to strengthen what society considers "appropriate behavior".

What I have tried to do in this first part is review both the cognitive and behaviorological approaches. It is obvious that the main advantage of the behaviorological approach is that it does not make assumptions and limits itself to observable events -whether they be internal or external. The cognitive approach, though, has some interesting ideas that seem to many to be more "complete". At

any rate it is while reviewing the various research, that I came to react to the decisions that were being made nationwide for the reduction of recidivism in criminals. Let me introduce you to those decisions and the reason why I disagree with them.

On February 17th 1995, the Morning Edition of National Public Radio (N.P.R.) broadcasted a talk titled "Cities Try to Shame Prostitutes and Johns out of Town". N.P.R.'s reporter Wendy Kaufman questioned some authorities in the city of Kent to expose the problem of whether or not public humiliation and shame acts as a deterrent to crime. Cities like Boston or Seattle are displaying the names and sometimes photographs of criminals or offenders particularly those involved in prostitution. Even though there is no data to support the notion that public embarrassment will deter crime, city officials are under so much pressure to decrease crime that they are decided to try anything to solve the problem. The cable broadcast runs several times a day in a city like Kent, Washington, spelling out the names of recently convicted offenders and what they were convicted of. In Boston, the city is showing videotaped pictures of those convicted. In Aurora, Colorado, the city is buying ads in newspapers to publish the photographs of the men arrested for soliciting.

But aren't shame and humiliation potentially destructive feeling-inducing techniques? Could it be that inducing such feelings is detrimental to the offenders and especially to their families? Is it not a harsh punishment for first time offenders? Such displays of identities may destroy families; people may find

themselves labeled. In large cities such as Boston, many people have the same name as a person who has been convicted. All these are relevant problems but the main question still remains will the broadcasts with their powerful emphasis on shame and ridicule actually and effectively deter crime?

According to Bradshaw, much criminal behavior is reenactment, i.e. a criminal offender criminalizes in the same manner that he was victimized in the past (Bradshaw, 1988, 3-23). While we cannot say that all criminals act out of their own shame, there is some data to show that it may often be the case. Criminals often feel rejected and have a relatively high level of shame.

Names do hurt, and they often lead to anger and retaliation. Scheff and Retzinger (1994) think that shame is a key mediator in the relationship between insult, anger and aggression. When it is repressed or disguised, shame leads to anger and aggression. When individuals are open about their shame, it leads to compromise negotiation and problem solving. Scheff and Retzinger believe that open communication of emotions is functional, whereas indirect communications and repression are dysfunctional. They also believe alienation and the repression of shame leads to interpersonal aggression. People -and ,we can suppose, especially criminals- often conceal shame because they perceive it as a weakness. Because of the repression of shame in modern society, the shamed persons become trapped. They are ashamed of being ashamed. Scheff and Retzinger also describe anger as "a protest against the loss of affectional bonds" and as a mean by which to protect vulnerability of the self. Escalation of feelings is likely when bonds are

threatened and when feelings are not commented upon. Historically, Hitler can be seen as an example of the negative effects of humiliation. The shame and humiliation of World War I motivated Hitler and his followers to seek revenge. According to Scheff and Retzinger, all human violence occurs when the parties to a conflict are alienated from each other and are in a state of shame, and when the alienation and shame are acknowledged.

Scheff and Retzinger study marital conflict in order to examine the relationship between shame and aggression. For example, they ask couples to discuss issues about which they have quarrelled in the past. The authors identify negative comments about the self and nonverbal cues (e.g. aversion of gaze, fidgeting, wrinkled foreheads) as displays of shame, and find that shame cues precede "disrespectful" behavior in these incidents. Thus, according to their data, shame produces that anger which results in aggressive behavior. Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher and Gramzow (Tangney et al. 1992), using the Self Conscious Affect and Attribution Inventory along with the Symptom Checklist 90 and the Spielberger Trait Anger Scale, found that shame-proneness was consistently positively correlated with anger arousal, irritability and indirect expressions of hostility. Such a shame-to-anger linkage is consistent with numerous clinical observations (e.g. Kinston, 1987; Lewis, 1971; Nathanson 1987; Retzinger, 1987; Scheff, 1987). Moreover, empirical studies suggest that anger is likely to be engendered by threats to one's self-esteem. As suggested by Lewis (1971) and Miller (1985), shamed individuals may be motivated to anger because such anger is likely to provide some

relief from the global self-condemning, and debilitating experience of shame.

Katz (1988) analyzed the descriptions of vandalism, robbery theft and murder and found that the perpetrator felt humiliated and had committed the crime as an act of revenge. Katz says "The would-be killer must undergo a particular emotional process. He must transform what he usually senses as an eternally humiliating situation into a blinding rage" (11). Rather than acknowledge his or her shame the offender masks it with anger. Lansky's research on family violence (1984, 1987, 1989) reports that underhanded disrespect gives rise to shame, which leads in turn to anger and violence. The relationship between collective violence and shame has been suggested in a recent analysis of the Attica riots (Scheff, Retzinger, and Ryan 1989). Violence of the guards toward the inmates began with a series of events that the guards perceived as humiliating. The assault of the guards on the prisoners followed Lewis' sequence: insult, unacknowledged shame, rage and aggression.

Thus the pain of shame, and its resulting (temporary) loss of self esteem, may give rise to unfocused anger and hostility. Such shame-based anger can then be easily directed toward others.

Tangney indicates that previous studies have show that there is a positive link between guilt and empathy (Tangney 1991). Thus in cases of interpersonal harm, the guilt-prone individual's response is likely to be modulated by empathy and concern, diffusing the potential for anger and hostility that is so prominent in the case of shame. In a number of respects, then,

guilt -not shame- appears to be the more "moral" emotion. Guilt-inducing techniques could probably be used more effectively than shame-inducing ones by city officials in their fight for the reduction of crime in our towns. Research on emotions and in particular guilt and shame seems to many like a long and useless process. Research, though, has enabled us to better understand ourselves, the way we act, react and why we feel what we feel. But is also has a societal impact by giving us the tools necessary for making judicious decisions and by improving our environment through prevention rather than postvention.

Tamara,

I reviewed my paper and followed the corrections that you emailed me from the Netherlands.

I really found your remarks and suggestions extremely useful. I made all the changes you proposed. As far as the distinction between the works of Malatesta & Wilson, Barrett and the behavioral perspective is concerned, I would like to say that even though the differences between perspectives may not appear obvious to the reader, they do exist. I strongly believe that a radical Cheneyrian -that is, a conservative behaviorist- would not differentiate guilt and shame and investigate those differences the way Malatesta & Wilson or Barrett have. That is why I thought interesting to make a distinction between those perspectives.

I strongly believe your point is valid though and that some would say that the distinction is not clear.

I am a little late to give this thesis to the Honors' program. I hope they will be fine with it though.

Thank you very much for your help and supervision, all your directions greatly improved and enhanced my work.

I hope we will have an opportunity to work together again.

We missed you at the wedding. Heidi came but seemed bored... There is nothing more boring than somebody else's wedding I guess.

Take Care.

Julien Guillaumot

	GUILT	SHAME	ANGER
**ELICITOR	Recognition that one has done wrong and the feeling to escape is not possible	The perception that the self is the focus of intense scrutiny	Frustration of goal
**FUNCTION W/IN THE SELF-SYSTEM	Promotes attempts at reparation	Produces behavior that protects the self against further violations of privacy	Effects removal barriers or sources of frustration towards goals
**FUNCTION W/IN THE INTERPERSONAL SYSTEM	Produces submissive postures that reduce likelihood of attack	Signals need for privacy	Warning of possible impending attack, aggression
† GOAL	Meeting one's own internalized standards	Maintenance of other's respect and affection; preservation of self-esteem	Any end state that the organism currently is invested in achieving
† APPRECIATION re: SELF	I have done something contrary to my standards	I am bad (self-esteem is perceived to be impaired)	There is an obstacle to my obtaining my goal

** From Malatesta and Wilson

† From Barrett and Campos

	GUILT	SHAME	ANGER
† APPRECIATION re: OTHERS	Someone has been injured by my act	Someone/everyone notices how bad I am	
† ACTION TENDENCY	Outward movement; inclination to make reparation, to inform others, and to punish oneself	Active or passive withdrawal; avoiding others; hiding of self	Active forward movement, especially to eliminate obstacles
† ADAPTIVE FUNCTIONS	Behave prosocially; learn/maintain moral and prosocial behavior; communicate contrition/good intentions	Behave appropriately; learn/maintain social standards; communicate submission to others and to others' standards	Attain difficult goals; learn to overcome obstacles and achieve goals; communicate power/dominance
**SURFEIT PATHOLOGY	Depression	Pathological shyness	Violent, aggressive behavior; antisocial personality
**ASSOCIATED COGNITIONS OR "COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK	Something bad will happen and there is no escape. I have done something for which I will (should) be punished	I am extremely fragile and others may easily hurt me; I am inferior to others	Others intend to obstruct or harm me and I can be effective against it

** From Malatesta and Wilson

† From Barrett and Campos

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