

Categories of emotion: everyday psychology and HUMAINE

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Human emotions: Three questions for HUMAINE

1. Cause and object
 - HUMAINE is concerned essentially with the cause of an emotion
 - Everyday psychology is concerned essentially with the object of an emotion
 - Is HUMAINE 'changing the subject' here? If so, does it matter?

2. 'Labelling' of emotion
 - What is the role of introspection here?
 - Do we look inwards to report on our emotion, or outwards to the world?

3. Personality and emotion
 - How do personality and emotional experience interact?
 - What is the role of personality in self-reflection, identification, self-monitoring and self-control

A general question lurking behind all these: Is the fact that humans are creatures with thought, language, and the capacity for self-reflective thought merely incidental to the HUMAINE project

(1) HUMAINE and the cause of the emotion

Members of HUMAINE differ in what they take the cause of the emotion to be:

- Whatever the event is, objectively described, in the nearby environment that immediately ‘elicits’ the emotion. The ‘stimulus event’ (D3c p. 10)
- The agent’s ‘subjective appraisal’ of the cause
- A lower-level specification of the stimulus as it impinges on our sense modalities

But in all cases (I think):

- HUMAINE members are united in dealing in the cause of the emotion, not the object
- And causality is assumed to be a relation between *events*—‘the stimulus’—and not, for example, facts

Reasons why HUMAINE might choose to deal in causes of emotion

- Allows smooth evolutionary continuity with other creatures which don't have thought and language (Klaus yesterday)
- Allows smooth developmental continuity with babies, who don't have thought and language
- Allows modelling emotion in robots, avatars, ECA's etc, which don't have thought and language
 - What is being modelled: emotion, or 'emotion'?
 - 'We only truly understand a system when we can simulate it'
- Causes, unlike what's in the mind, are objectively 'measurable'
- There are deep epistemological problems with the mind:
 - Self-deception, dissembling, forgetting
 - Confabulation (Nisbett and Ross)
 - The unconscious (Freud)
 - What goes on below the level of conscious awareness (Zajonc, LeDoux)

Everyday psychology and the object of emotion

- The object of the emotion is what the emotion is *about* (thus 'intentionality').
- The object of the emotion might not exist (hell-fire and damnation)
- The object (if it exists) might be distant in space or time, so the 'stimulus event' and the object are distinct (the burning of the library in Alexandria)
- The object might not be an event; it could be a state of affairs (the mess in Iraq), or a thing or a person (George W. Bush)
- There are justifying relations (epistemic and ethical) between the evaluated properties of the object and the emotion

The cause of the emotion—the 'stimulus'—cannot meet any of these criteria

Everyday psychology: 'What caused your anger?' and 'What are you angry about?' are distinct questions

I am angry about George W Bush's policy towards Iraq

- The object of my anger is Bush's policy towards Iraq

The cause of my anger (the 'eliciting event') might be:

- my reading about his policy in the newspapers
- my seeing him describe his policy on TV
- your telling me about his policy
- my remembering his policy or my being reminded of it by you
- my imagining myself discussing his policy with him

Klaus (yesterday) says the last two of these cause emotions which are 'different animals'. But the object of the emotion is the same whatever the cause

The same object-cause distinction holds for my embarrassment at having asked a silly question, for my fear of falling house-prices and so on...

Object and cause: irreconcilable differences?

- How can what the emotion is about (its object) be related to the eliciting 'stimulus event' in the immediate environment (its cause)?
- How can what is in the mind - the representation of the object of the emotion - be related to what is in the brain?
- How can HUMAINE and scientific psychology reveal epistemic and ethical justifying relations if it is only concerned with causes?
- Or can HUMAINE safely ignore all these questions (except where the wider public, the law and ethics are concerned)?

(2) 'Labelling' of our emotions

- What is the role of introspection here?
- Compare the role of introspection with belief and with desire:
 - Do you believe that Geneva is in Switzerland?
 - Do you want there to be peace in the Middle East?
 - Are you angry at/afraid of/happy about Bush's policy towards Iraq
- But (you say), emotion is different because it involves feelings, which we can and do 'introspect'. Are you in pain? Have you got indigestion?
- Yes (Goldie replies), but you can't separate out the feeling from the representation of the object of the emotion as being a certain way:
 - The justifying relations between the feeling and the object
 - Our emotional feelings, unlike pain and indigestion, are essentially evaluative
 - What are labelled as 'mixed emotions' may be vicissitudes of emotion and of how the object is represented (the luggage carousel; sour grapes).

So: Should HUMAINE be more concerned with discovering people's thoughts and feelings towards the objects of their emotion rather than getting them to label their emotions by introspecting how they feel?

(3): Personality and emotion: How do personality and emotional experience interact?

- Emotional dispositions are part of (but not all of) personality
- They are descriptive, evaluative and comparative (irascible, compassionate)
- Character traits involve emotional dispositions
 - being just involves a disposition to get angry at injustices
- They are *relatively* enduring (compared to emotions), but not necessarily fixed and stable ('for life')
- An analogy: Emotional dispositions and emotional experience interact like the riverbed and the river

Personality, self-reflection, identification and self-control

- Some emotional dispositions are non-reflective
 - Modesty and self-aggrandisement
- Some are socially sustained
 - Kindness
- Some we are aware of, and can identify with (or not)
 - Identification involves your considering a disposition to be part of your personality *and* your approving of that disposition
- Whether or not you identify with a disposition will affect your reflective self-monitoring and self-control
 - If you don't identify with your irascibility, then you will try to control it
 - If you do identify with your compassionateness, then you will try to 'encourage' it

Summary

1. Does it matter than HUMAINE is concerned with the causes of emotion and not with the objects of emotion?
2. Does HUMAINE's notion of emotion 'labelling' demand too much introspection of feeling without regard to how one feels about the way the world is (and the vicissitudes of these feelings)?
3. In considering the 'control mechanisms' for emotion, should HUMAINE be concerned with the role of personality in reflective self-monitoring and self-control?