The Passions: Philosophy and the Intelligence of Emotions
Part I
Professor Robert C. Solomon
Robert C. Solomon is best known for his courses on Existentialism at the University Texas at Austin and for his teaching there in the Plan II Honors Program. He is the most recent president of the International Society for Research on Emotions. His previous work for The Teaching Company includes several video and audio courses—No Excuses (on Existentialism), The Will to Power (on Friedrich Nietzsche, with Kathleen M. Higgins)—and several lectures in the Great Minds series.

The author or editor of more than 45 books, Dr. Solomon’s titles include The Passions, In the Spirit of Hegel, About Love, A Passion for Justice, Up the University, and (with Jon Solomon) A Short History of Philosophy, Ethics and Excellence. Other books include ones on Nietzsche (Living with Nietzsche and What Nietzsche Really Said, with Kathleen M. Higgins), A Passion for Wisdom, The Joy of Philosophy, Spirituality for the Skeptic, and Volumes I and II (Not Passion’s Slave and In Defense of Sentimentality) in a three-volume series, The Passionate Life.

Professor Solomon has also written about business in terms of philosophy (A Better Way to Think About Business) and designs instructional programs for corporations and organizations around the world.
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**Part I**

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The Passions: Philosophy and the Intelligence of Emotions

Scope:

We are not only “rational” creatures, as Aristotle famously defined us, but we also have emotions. We live our lives through our emotions, and it is our emotions that give our lives meaning. What interests or fascinates us, who we love, what angers us, what moves us, what bores us—those are the things that define us, that give us our character, that constitute our “selves.” But this obvious truth runs afoul of an old prejudice, namely, that our emotions are irrational, even that they are incomprehensible. Our emotions present a danger and interrupt or disturb our lives, because we are passive with regard to them; they “happen” to us.

By contrast, this course is an attempt to understand our emotions—how they provide insight and meaning—and the extent to which we are not passive but active regarding them. Our emotions, according to a recent theory, are imbued with intelligence. And a person’s emotional repertoire is not a matter of fate but a matter of emotional integrity.

Emotions are now a legitimate and booming research enterprise in science and philosophy. This course of 24 lectures is about the emotions as they are now understood. But interest in the emotions has a much older history in our concern with ethics, dating back to Plato and Aristotle in Western philosophy and to the Upanishads, the Buddhists, Confucius, and the Taoists in Asia. It was clear to Aristotle, for example, that emotions (or what he called pathē, “passions”) had an essential role in the good life and were the key to the virtues. It was equally clear to the Stoics, who followed Aristotle, that the passions were dangerous. They distorted our reason and made us unhappy. In the Middle Ages, Saint Thomas Aquinas discussed the emotions at length, both in the context of the “seven deadly sins” (for example, anger, envy, pride) and in his discussions of the virtues (love and faith, for instance). In the 18th century, “moral sentiment” theorists (David Hume, Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau) dominated ethics. Only at the turn of the 20th century did the study of emotions become primarily scientific, with the work of William James and Sigmund Freud, in particular.

Throughout this course, I will talk mainly about emotions in the context of ethics and practical concerns, that is, their role in the good life. To my mind, these practical questions are primary, and scientific evidence and theories inform them, not the other way around. I will not say much about psychopathology, the many ways in which emotions can go seriously wrong. I will be concerned with the more “normal” vicissitudes and problems we have with emotions, how and why they can make us unhappy, how and why they are sometimes irrational. My ethical perspective also dictates another principle of selection. In current science, with its fascinating emphasis on neurology and the structure and processes in the brain, an emotion is primarily defined as a very short-term episode. Given the measures of emotion now in vogue, from a focus on momentary facial expressions to the very expensive use of fMRI and PET scan machines, this makes a lot of sense. But emotions are also durable in ways that are hard to measure by such techniques. They can last a long time. Love, for example, can be lifelong, as can anger and hatred. This longevity sometimes is explained by saying that emotions are dispositions, not mere episodes. But I will insist that emotions are processes that may go on for a long time and transform themselves in all sorts of ways, including into other emotions. For example, love readily gives way to jealousy and grief, and the process of grieving typically includes denial and anger, as well as the depressed feeling that we identify as grief.

What is an emotion? For reasons that will become clear in the lectures, the attempt to address this question itself engenders controversy. The discipline of the person who attempts the definition, his or her research tools and subjects, and his or her motivation—clinical, professional, interpersonal, romantic, pharmaceutical—will make a big difference in the answers that arise out of such an inquiry. A great deal also depends on whether an emotion is thought of as a quick, involuntary reaction or as a process that progresses through time, perhaps for hours, weeks, or years. For now, let me finesse the question, as Aristotle did in his introduction to the subject, and just say that we all know more or less what we mean when we talk about emotions, namely, anger, fear, sadness, love, “getting upset,” joy, and the like. I promise that I will spend a good deal of time laying out the options and explaining why I prefer some to others.

Given that the “good life” is the context in which I like to discuss emotion, one might well expect me to define my terms and say something about what such a life is. But this definition, too, is a matter of great controversy in the history of ethics. Again retreating to Aristotle, he notes that some would say that such a life is pleasure and the
absence of pain; others would say that it is success; and still others, that it is composed of self-reliance and activities that do not depend on other people—living simply, spending one’s time doing creative arts and projects (whatever those might be), and what he called the “life of contemplation,” whether philosophical or spiritual. Such a life, then, is something to be worked out in the course of the lectures and not dogmatically asserted from the outset.

Although I am a philosopher, I have a long-time interest in empirical psychology, sociology, and the new neurology. I want to bring these social sciences and clinical perspectives to bear on these lectures. In addition, I bring my humanistic and philosophical predilections. The first of these inclinations is, as I mentioned, a primary interest in ethics and the way that emotions fit into—or fail to fit into—the good life, a life lived well and happily. The second interest, which I will try to control, is in thinking and talking about emotions in general, as well as about particular emotions in their most general forms. For instance, I am interested in the general concept of human nature and how emotions help to define this nature. My third predilection is a bias toward history. Not only do I think the history of thinking about emotions is fascinating and revealing, but I believe that the emotions themselves are historical. This means, first of all, that they are processes, not discrete forms of momentary experience. But it also means that emotions change over time, that the emotional experiences of one generation or one epoch or one culture are not necessarily the same as those of another. Thus, a history of anger and shame in America reveals a great deal about our social mores and our changing conceptions of ourselves. A history of love in Europe reveals a great deal about changing notions of sex, couples, marriage, the status of women, the nature of the individual, and the place of the passions in our lives.

Three historical periods of thought have especially influenced me. The first is the wisdom of the ancients, both in ancient Greece and Rome and in Asia. The second is the philosophy and psychology of the 18th century, from the moral sentiment theorists to the accusations of “sentimentality” that came to define much of the 19th century. The third is modern European philosophy, especially existentialism and the movement called phenomenology, which produced such outstanding existential phenomenologists as Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. I will also have something to say about the latest discoveries in brain research and social psychology, but they will not be a primary focus of these lectures. My primary focus will be on the roles of the emotions in our lives, the ways they make us happy and unhappy, the ways in which they give our lives meaning, and the ways in which they contribute to virtue and vice and make us good or not-so-good people.

The lectures are divided into three, somewhat unequal, sections:

Section 1—Passions, Love, and Violence: The Drama of the Emotions (Lectures Two–Nine), a discussion of anger, fear, love, pride, shame, vengeance, and grief.

Section 2—Out of Touch with Our Feelings: Misunderstanding the Emotions (Lectures Ten–Seventeen), the ways in which we misconceive and, consequently, fail to take responsibility for our emotions.

Section 3—Back in Touch with Our Feelings: How Our Passions Enrich Our Lives (Lectures Eighteen–Twenty-Four), a positive look at the value and importance of our emotions.
Lecture One
Emotions as Engagements with the World

Scope: Why talk about emotional intelligence? The term itself, which was introduced to the American public by Daniel Goleman in a popular book some years ago, is important primarily for its shock value—emotional intelligence sounds like a contradiction in terms. Traditionally, we have viewed emotions, or what used to be called “passions,” as one distinct side of human nature. Reason, rationality, and intelligence, meanwhile, stand distinct and apart on the other side. Yet those of us who have studied emotions as part of the human experience long ago recognized the intelligence of emotions. The purpose of this course, then, is to eliminate that false dichotomy and to show the interdependence of philosophy and psychology. Philosophers talk about ethics and the good life, whereas psychologists do rock-bottom science. Yet philosophy has always needed to appeal to empirical psychology, just as empirical psychology has always needed to refer to philosophy. One without the other is incomplete. Thus, we will consider the thinking of many great philosophers—Aristotle, Nietzsche, William James, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre—even as we learn about the movement in philosophy called phenomenology, the study of experience, and about recent research in psychology. A battle continues over the nature of emotion—whether it is primarily a physical feeling or some kind of intelligent engagement with the world. In this course, I will make the existentialist case that our emotions are not dumb feelings or physiological reactions but sometimes intelligent, if often short-sighted, strategies for coping with the world.

Outline

I. The history of philosophy is often characterized as the story of rationality and reason, but that is not the whole story. Philosophers from Plato onward have talked about emotions.
   A. The ancients tended to think that we would be better off with what the Greeks called apatheia, or “apathy”—freedom from the emotions—to obtain ataraxia, “peace of mind.”
   B. By contrast, some philosophers, including Albert Camus, have stressed the importance of passion as among the redeeming qualities that make a person human. Søren Kierkegaard insisted that the good life is based on “passionate inwardness.” Friedrich Nietzsche, too, argued that passions characterize the good life.

II. What does it mean to say that emotions are intelligent? It is to say that emotions are ways of dealing with the world, often very efficient and effective ways.
   A. Evolution explains some of this emotional development.
   B. Culture is defined by emotions and, in turn, determines which emotions are socially acceptable.
   C. Personal experience further shapes our emotional intelligence and how we engage in the world.

III. “What is an emotion?” William James asked at the beginning of the 20th century. The supposition is that an emotion can be defined in terms of components, such as physiology, feeling, and behavior.
   A. Philosophers have looked at the apparatus of knowledge and the nature of experience to try to figure out exactly how we know the world.
   B. Scientists have looked at the physiology of knowledge and at larger questions that involve measurements, observations, and technology to try to explain the details of our knowledge of the world.
   C. “Why is the world? Why do we know anything?” are alternative questions to the one posed by William James. They have a spiritual, quasi-theological, as well as a philosophical, bent.
   D. In this course, the question “What is an emotion?” is approached not just as a scientific one but as part of an ethical, philosophical, religious, or spiritual quest.
   E. What is involved in having emotions? It is a question of appreciating who we are and how we function in the world.
   F. Recent advances in brain science make the question particularly appealing scientifically. Some sophisticated findings concern the nature of the brain and various brain pathways, and we have machines that show pictures of the brain in its processing.

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1. Yet new technology and specialization also tend to distort a certain kind of basic knowledge.
2. If we talk about emotions only in terms of brain mechanisms, we ignore the ageless questions about the best way to live and how emotions fit into our lives. We lose, too, the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of such questions.

IV. Today, psychologists and neurologists speak of basic emotions, by which they mean a neat neurological package.

A. By way of evolution and by virtue of contemporary neurology, certain kinds of emotions are packages of neurology, hormonal reactions, and musculature.
B. One psychologist defines basic emotions in terms of characteristic facial expressions. The idea is that certain emotions—anger and fear are the two most frequent examples—trigger a neurological response. Consciousness, experience, and feeling are icing on the cake.
C. By contrast, this course argues that such emotions are constitutive of our lives: They give life meaning. To reduce them to neurological syndromes is drastically incomplete.

V. A subject always has a history, and it never occurs in a vacuum. Thus, this course surveys three historical periods to review the philosophy and psychology of emotional intelligence.

A. We begin in the ancient world, over the course of about 600 years. Our subjects include:
   1. Plato and Aristotle—especially Aristotle and the odd collection that followed him.
   2. The Stoics in Greece, who said a good deal about emotions before Plato and Aristotle.
   3. The Stoics in Asia, who made no distinction between mind and heart.
   4. The Indian concepts of bhava and rasa, which distinguish between a crude and an aesthetically refined emotion, fundamental to an understanding of emotional intelligence.
B. We then move to 18th-century Europe to cover the following topics:
   1. A renaissance of emotional thinking evidenced in the work of David Hume, Adam Smith, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who emphasized the “moral sentiments.”
   2. A consideration of the “good life” in terms of certain kinds of feelings once discussed by the ancient philosophers.
C. Our third period covers modern European philosophy, particularly phenomenology and existentialism.
   1. Phenomenology is a method to explore the nature of emotional experience, which is not merely physiological but also includes appraisals and valuations of the world, as well as a way in which to engage with what the world is.
   2. Existentialists from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to Heidegger, Camus, and Sartre have noted the dimension of emotional responsibility.
   3. In ancient times, the emotions were thought to happen to us—to be what we suffered. Aristotle coined the term passion essentially to mean suffering.
   4. The existentialists, in particular Sartre, asserted that emotions are strategies, not just evolutionarily derived but part of our experience. They are learned through trial and error over our lives.

VI. This course considers great philosophers of the past and fascinating research in the present, but it also encourages us to look at ourselves.

A. Emotional intelligence involves not just the intelligence in the emotions themselves but intelligence about emotions. To understand an emotion is to understand ourselves.
B. Self-understanding is the first step to personal control. It is the first step to refining and “aestheticizing” emotion and making it significant.

VII. These lectures are divided into three sections.

A. The first section focuses on emotion theory, or the general question “What is an emotion?”
   1. Thus far, we do not understand enough about emotions to derive a theory that conveys their significance and complexity.
2. Talking about emotions, however, gives us insight into the roles they play in our lives.

B. The second section of the course corrects certain misunderstandings about emotion, for example, the rather innocent-sounding claim that emotions are feelings. On a more sophisticated level, emotions are in the mind; to understand them, we must look inside.
   1. One of our most common misperceptions is that emotions are irrational, a distorted way of dealing with reality.
   2. On the contrary, emotions are intelligent, the upshot of this second section of the course.

C. The third section of the course considers what it is about emotions that make life worth living in the contexts of music and laughter. We will also consider the role that emotions have in different kinds of cultures.

D. Emotions are profound and the key to the meaning of life.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence.*
Paul E. Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are.*

Questions to Consider:
1. Why do we think that most emotions are a form of suffering?
2. What makes an emotion “meaningful”?
3. In your experience, how are emotions different in different cultures?
Lecture Two
The Wrath of Achilles

Scope: The plot of Homer’s great *Iliad* is driven by a single emotion, rage. The story starts with the wrath of Achilles, furious because he has been humiliated by Agamemnon. The repeating motif of the Trojan War, which the epic partially traces, is the serial avenging of one wrong after another. Hatred and anger drive much of modern history, as well, and most of us know anger all too well. Anger has a well-deserved reputation as the most explosive and most dangerous emotion. It is an obvious example of a “negative” emotion, and it is one of the emotions that seem most obviously beyond our control. But anger is also a strategy. In this lecture, we consider why it is so often appealing, not always irrational, and sometimes right and even obligatory.

Outline

I. Anger is a favorite emotion to talk about because it is dangerous. It seems to be out of control.
   A. Think about the phrases we use: One “loses one’s temper” or “flies off the handle” or “goes ballistic.” Very telling.
   B. Such images explain why people tend to distrust and even dislike being emotional.

II. Anger is the theme of Homer’s *Iliad*. It is the emotion that, in many ways, both caused and perpetuated the Trojan War, of which the *Iliad* chronicles one segment. The focus of this classic work is the anger of Achilles.
   A. The Greek word for rage is *menis*, and *menis* is distinctive because it is appropriate primarily for the gods. It is mainly Zeus who feels rage; consequently, rage is a kind of cosmic force. It is not just an emotion.
   B. In the *Iliad*, Achilles expresses rage and slaughters Hector. Afterward, he drags Hector’s body behind his chariot seven times around the city of Troy.
      1. This action seems to us an example of barbarism.
      2. Yet we should remember that this was a warrior culture, and the event occurred during a war. We must also understand the nature of Achilles’s society, in which honor is everything.
      3. In such a context, was Achilles really acting irrationally? Was he losing control—or was he taking control?
      4. I would say that Achilles acted irrationally, not when he killed Hector in a rage, but when he offended the gods and committed the unthinkable sin of dragging Hector’s body around the city. In the context of Achilles’s society, it is not clear that the emotion of rage was necessarily explosive or irrational.

III. Let us fast-forward to draw a contrast with the act of road rage.
   A. What is road rage? It is losing control. It is becoming very dangerous, in a 3,000–6,000-pound vehicle that can go very fast. It is clearly hostile. And what’s more, it is straightforwardly irrational. It is not as if getting angry will get you ahead any faster.
   B. Again, however, let us look at the cultural context.
      1. As philosopher John Searle has pointed out, when you deprive a person of all means of civilized communication and reduce all exchange to something as simple and crude as leaning on the horn, the result is to act with barbarity.
      2. Add to that isolation the fact that we are all in a hurry. We become stressed and impatient when gridlock prevents us from being where we expect to be.
      3. Television ads, meanwhile, bewitch us with scenes of fancy, high-powered cars moving along beautiful, empty roads. Such images create an expectation that this fantasy is the way it is supposed to be. In this sense, our culture creates road rage.

IV. Daniel Goleman’s book *Emotional Intelligence* presents instances of anger that are lethal, often resulting in murders. Anger is described as an emotion that is brief, negative, irrational, and typically violent. I argue that this picture is wrong, or at least unfair. There is a lot more to anger than this standard psychological portrait...
allows.

A. Contemporary psychology emphasizes that anger is a kind of physiological reaction—that it consists of certain kinds of feelings. Aristotle, who wrote at some length about anger, however, barely mentions physiology, nor does he talk much about feelings. Rather, he discusses the occasion that sparks anger. Thus, anger is a response to an insult or a slight, which propels us to seek vengeance.
   1. According to Aristotle, anger is not always wrong. Quite the contrary, anger is sometimes exactly the right response.
   2. The assumption is that anger is the right response to the right occasion to the right degree and directed at the right person. In such cases, he says, one would be a fool not to get angry.

B. In the 1970s, when the feminist movement was gaining momentum in the United States, many feminists said that women had to learn to recognize and express their anger. In fact, righteous anger helped propel the movement. Anger was the right response to a kind of oppression.

C. We may assume that anger tends to lead to violence, or at least to aggressive behavior. In fact, more than three-quarters of angry expressions are not aggressive.
   1. Anger in the feminist movement, for example, resulted in good conversations between couples about duties, rights, obligations, positions, and employment.
   2. Anger can lead to positive encounters. It is not just about violence.

D. When we talk about anger as an irrational explosion leading to violence, we assume that the consequences are out of the picture, because anger tends to be absolutist; it sees only itself.
   1. Yet every action has a kind of reaction. Thus, anger actually spurs anticipation of the consequences.
   2. Though you might say, “I am so mad I want to kill him,” you do not. Instead, you immediately anticipate what the consequences of killing your boss or a fellow in the bar might be, and your expression becomes just a metaphor.

V. In contemporary psychology, anger is generally viewed as a basic emotion, that is, one that is physiologically “hard-wired.” Fear is another basic emotion. Such an emotion stems from a certain neurological, hormonal, and muscular syndrome that is triggered by a certain kind of event. What follows is more or less automatic.

A. When you get angry, something triggers your anger. You exhibit a syndrome of symptoms and displays that are characteristic of anger.

B. Psychologists who talk about basic emotions have focused on the face in particular. The idea is that when you get angry, among other things, you show a characteristic facial expression that can be recognized by anyone else as the expression of anger.

C. Paul Ekman has more or less established the idea that anger is a universal, basic emotion: Everyone shows the same symptoms, and everyone recognizes them.

VI. As opposed to this picture of anger as a brief explosive emotion that involves a kind of neurological syndrome, we can also talk, as Aristotle or Freud did, of long-term anger.

A. By long-term, we mean a kind of process that is not always readily recognizable. A person might be angry at his parents for his whole lifetime, for example, or angry with his spouse for weeks on end. In such cases, we often refuse to recognize our anger, perhaps for years, as Freud documented.

B. The notion of anger as a pre-set psychological syndrome that happens spontaneously and quickly ignores the most straightforward feature of emotion, which Aristotle got exactly right.
   1. Not merely a neurological syndrome, anger is, first and foremost, an engagement with the world. It is about something that happens.
   2. Further, we can specify with some detail, as Aristotle did, what that kind of thing is. It is an offense, a slight, an instance of being wronged.

C. In this view, anger is not just physiology, nor is it just a reaction, but anger brings with it a host of information about the world and what counts as a slight. As we have seen, cultural context makes all the difference, because we are talking about sophisticated and sometimes intricate and subtle relationships among people.
D. In sum, anger is not just an explosive reaction, but often a process over time that involves much information and an active engagement with the world.

VII. The great existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre thought about anger in a very different way from Aristotle.

A. He described anger as something that we engage in as a strategy. Our anger has a purpose. It is not just something that happens, not something that is merely hard-wired, and not something that evolution pre-sets for us.

B. Let me give you an example. I had a colleague who was able to intimidate others with impressive displays of anger. Almost always, anyone who disagreed with him would back down, not because of fear of physical violation or even insult, but because anger itself can be frightening.

1. Is this merely a trick rather than an emotion? Could the same effect be accomplished merely by pretending to be angry?

2. Paul Ekman has shown clearly that when people feign an emotion, even trained actors and actresses, they almost always get it wrong.

3. The best way to pretend that you are angry is to really make yourself angry, something that my colleague had learned to do. In fact, I would argue that he was temperamentally an angry person, which made his strategy relatively easy. How did he get this way?

4. One hypothesis suggests that at a very early age, he learned that anger would get him what he wanted. Rather than already established, the temperament is something that is cultivated over the years with an eye to getting what one wants.

C. In what sense does this work? We change ourselves through anger. Think about situations when anger occurs. Typically, we are frustrated because we cannot do something. Maybe we have been incompetent, or maybe someone has insulted us. What good does anger do? A lot.

D. When we get angry, we elevate ourselves into a judgmental position, sort of like a magistrate in court. At first, we felt humiliated, but now we pass judgment on the person who insulted us. Anger helps us save face.

E. Better and worse ways exist of saving face, however. *Crude anger* is what psychologists mean by a brief, irrational explosion. It is usually counterproductive.

1. Herman Melville provides a favorite literary example in *Billy Budd*. Billy is an exemplary human being, yet he is driven to distraction by an evil ship officer, who finally confronts Billy. Uneducated and inarticulate, Billy cannot express his anger verbally. He explodes and kills the officer. That is crude anger. [Correction: in lecture, Prof. Solomon mistakenly refers to the ship officer in the story as the ship’s “captain.”]

2. By contrast, consider Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*. This painting is the artist’s expression of outrage at the bombing by the Fascists of a town in northern Spain. It is also an example of refined anger.

F. Anger is a strategy. It is a strategy for changing the world and a strategy for changing one’s self. Does it follow that it is always the best strategy? Clearly not. Buddhism and Christianity recognize that anger is often a self-defeating strategy. Both religions assert that forgiveness brings peace of mind.

VIII. The traditional ideas of anger—that it is always a negative emotion, always irrational, and always leads to violence—seem simplistic. As we have seen, anger is a perfectly appropriate emotion on some occasions. So, too, are most of the emotions that we will discuss, at least sometimes.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**
Robert Thurman, *Anger.*
Questions to Consider:
1. Why do we think of anger as a “negative” emotion? Is it really?
2. Can you think of legitimate cases of righteous anger?
3. How do you control your anger? List your “strategies.”
Lecture Three
It’s Good to Be Afraid

Scope: Fear is perhaps the most important emotion. Without fear, we would allow ourselves to be vulnerable to all sorts of dangers and lethal situations. We may think that we would like to be fearless, but that is a fantasy that will not survive scrutiny. Fear, like anger, is a basic emotion, one that is universal in virtually all creatures that have emotions at all—and for good reason. To be alive is to be vulnerable. Fear, like anger, is an engagement with the world, not just a self-contained “feeling.” It is about something that endangers us. Of course, fears can be mistaken, exaggerated, and sometimes just plain foolish. But most of our fears are reasonable and necessary for survival. They provide us with important information about the world, namely, that it is dangerous. Such information is not something we figure out but is built into our brains, in pure neurological reactions. Yet some fears may last a long time and be cultivated through sophisticated learning and experience. Irrational fears may result from a disconnection between two levels of appraisal, where the depth and profundity of one level of appraisal overcomes the superficial and not-fully-believed appraisal of the other level. It is not a matter of intelligence versus emotion but, rather, of a convoluted and complex set of inner conflicts. Variations on fear include panic, anxiety, and horror. Although fear is often considered a negative emotion, many people go out of their way to experience it, at least in the form of entertainment. This attraction raises a paradox that has intrigued philosophers since Aristotle.

Outline

I. Fear is perhaps our most important emotion. Without fear, we would subject ourselves to dangers and fatal situations.
   A. Fear is also one of the basic emotions, which, as we discussed in the last lecture, means that it is universal and found not only in all human beings but also in a great many animals.
   B. Fear as a basic emotion is also a neurological syndrome. It involves certain virtually automatic reactions. Once fear is triggered, a number of characteristic behaviors and symptoms follow.
   C. Fear is probably the most studied emotion in the lab. It is easy to induce.
      1. With a couple of repetitions of a shock, fear can be induced in an animal.
      2. Likewise, it is easy to induce fear in an undergraduate. Simply threaten her with humiliation in front of her peers, or threaten her grades.
   D. Fear can be readily substantiated. It is one of the most studied emotions because our knowledge of what goes on in the brain is more thorough for this particular emotion than for virtually any other.
   E. Fear entails a basic neurological structure about which we do not want to generalize too quickly. We tend to extrapolate from something we find out about one emotion and apply it to something we know about emotions in general. Often, the generalization does not work.

II. Joseph LeDoux has identified one part of the lower brain that seems to have an important place in the fear reaction. The amygdala seems to be a conduit for information from the world to induce a certain kind of reaction, what we call the fear reaction.
   A. A cell assembly is triggered by certain sorts of themes from the environment. This activity is very primitive. It is something that precedes any kind of real consciousness of information.
      1. A person reacts, for example, if a dark shadow crosses his or her path. Animals, too, are clearly hard-wired to react if a dark shadow goes overhead. It might be a hawk or other predator.
      2. The reaction does not involve conscious thought but, rather, occurs as sort of an immediate flow from the shadow. The inflow through the amygdala leads to a certain kind of reaction.
   B. That we are built to respond to certain general themes is extremely important and obviously beneficial in terms of evolution. The idea of reacting before we even know what we are reacting to is clearly important.
      1. A part of the brain has evolved to allow for fast escape behavior, fast freezing behavior, or, perhaps, fast aggressive behavior. The behavior occurs so quickly that there is no time to accommodate much knowledge about what is going on.
2. In terms of evolutionary psychology, it is much better that we should react before we know what is going on than that we should have to process, think about, and understand the situation, then react. Clearly, a creature or person who took those steps would have been wiped out long ago. Reaction takes place independently of knowledge.

C. Fear is recognizing that the environment is dangerous, but that recognition is not about something that is going on in your brain. It is a recognition about something going on in the world.
   1. LeDoux would disagree. He would say that fear is not necessarily conscious. Fear does not necessarily even involve a feeling.
   2. You might think of the feeling of fear as similar to the gas gauge on your car. The gauge doesn’t have anything to do with putting gas in the car. It just lets you know that there is, or is not, gas in the tank.
   3. LeDoux suggests that the full force of fear can take place without any necessary feeling, without any necessary consciousness, and certainly without any real recognition about what is going on.
   4. In other words, you can be afraid, but you do not have to necessarily know what you are afraid of. In fact, you do not even have to necessarily know that you are afraid. Nor do you have to feel anything in particular, although even LeDoux would probably admit that would be a rare occurrence.

D. William James talks about the feeling as similar to epiphenomenon. That is to say that consciousness is not essential to the emotion itself but is a kind of add-on. To put it in the terms that LeDoux himself uses, consciousness or feeling is the “icing on the cake,” but it is not the cake itself.

E. Obviously, this notion differs from my viewpoint, because I believe that all emotions are engagements with the world, and fear is no exception.
   1. One might have precisely the physiological responses that LeDoux describes in detail, yet I would say they do not constitute fear.
   2. Fear is not just a matter of the feeling; it is a matter of the engagement.

III. As with anger, fear is often viewed as a brief physiological response. Yet, as we all know, fear can last a long time.

A. Fear of an Internal Revenue Service audit, or of strangers, or of your father can last for years, decades, or a lifetime. It is highly implausible that brief brain reactions are going on all that time. Thus, as with anger, we want to understand not just these impulses of fear but also what long-term fear is like.

B. Although it is possible to be afraid of a dark shadow without any information at all, it is impossible to be afraid of an IRS audit without a lot of information. Contrary to the LeDoux analysis, some fears do require a good deal of knowledge about what is going on in the world.

C. Fear is not just the physiological reaction but the overall engagement, which involves physiology and feeling, as well as a certain recognition about the nature of the world, namely, that it is dangerous. The IRS, with regard to your personal interest, is dangerous.
   1. Of course, you could be mistaken. The rabbit could be mistaken about the shadow overhead. It might not be a hawk at all but an airplane. It is better to make that mistake than the other one—that is, thinking there is no danger when, in fact, there is.
   2. In the case of the IRS audit, we can also make a mistake. The odds of your being audited may be very low.
   3. Alternatively, you can make a mistake in terms of imagination. You can imagine that the IRS is auditing you even though you are not being audited.
   4. You can also exaggerate your fears. You can think that the odds of being audited are high when, in fact, they are low.
   5. And of course, there are foolish fears. I can worry about being audited by the IRS even though I have not made any money, have never filed a return, and am not recognized by the system.
   6. Fear is not necessarily truth-involving. Our engagement with the world includes imagining that the world is like something or other, which might be wrong for any number of reasons.
IV. The distinction between rational and irrational typically is made with regard to fear, just as it is made with regard to anger. Yet most of our fears are rational. The world is, in fact, dangerous.

A. A discussion of irrational fears can lead quickly to the conclusion that fear is itself irrational or that fear has nothing to do with rationality, that it is simply a matter of certain neurological processes.

B. Irrational fears are the exception. The most fascinating cases involve someone who is obsessed with the idea of something being dangerous when, in fact—and the person knows this—it is not dangerous at all.
1. People who have arachnophobia are not just worried about tarantulas, which look ferocious, and brown recluse spiders, which are dangerous; they are afraid of any spider.
2. It might be that these people generalize from the idea that some spiders are dangerous to the idea that all spiders are dangerous.
3. Interestingly, many arachnophobics do not make such a mistake. They simply experience fear, the reaction that LeDoux describes so vividly, having to do with the amygdala.
4. Such a person may say, “Intellectually, I know that the spider is not dangerous at all, but emotionally, I am terrified.”
5. A great many people fear flying, which even in this age of terrorism, is the safest way to travel. People who fear flying know this. Nevertheless, they are terrified about getting on a plane.
6. They might tell you, “Intellectually, I know flying is safe. I know it is much more dangerous to drive to the airport, but emotionally, I just cannot get on the plane. I panic and freeze up.”

C. Two levels of activity appear to be taking place here. They do not, however, form a dichotomy between the emotional and the intellectual, nor between knowledge of the world and a kind of dumb physiological reaction.
1. What LeDoux calls the “low road” of fear triggers a response that remains disconnected from all the sophisticated information gathered to counteract the fear.
2. Perhaps the multiple levels of activity are both intelligent and emotional. To put it in language that a great many psychologists would use these days, they are two different forms of appraisal.
3. On the one hand, there is a basic level of appraisal, such as that which occurs when a shadow passes over an animal: “Something around here is dangerous.”
4. On the other hand, there is a well-informed level of appraisal that involves evidence and research and facts about spiders or about flying. Two different kinds of information are being processed.

D. In most cases, all the different sources of information ultimately align or agree. The case in which a person cannot control a phobic reaction has to do with the depth and profundity of one level of appraisal, as opposed to the superficial and not-fully-believed other level of appraisal. Irrational fear is not a matter of intelligence versus emotion but of a convoluted and complex set of inner conflicts.

V. Fear has a great many relatives. One of them is panic.

A. Fear involves an assessment of real information about the world. Even if it is a basic fear, it stems from a conclusion that the world is dangerous. In contrast, panic is, in an important sense, mindless.
1. The distinction here is between a full emotion that engages with the world and another that is almost purely physiological, like the emotions that LeDoux and others have studied.
2. Panic is, for the most part, purely physiological, as is rage.
3. A neurologist can stimulate a rage reaction in a cat, for example, just by stimulating a certain part of its brain. Of course, the cat is not engaging with the world at all; it is not angry about anything. Such a rage reaction is not anger.
4. In the same way, certain kinds of stimulations of the brain can cause panic, but that is not the same thing as fear. Ironically, a squirrel runs in front of a car, exactly the wrong direction, because it has minimal information. Something sort of flashes and says, “Run!” Panic, as opposed to fear, is like rage, as opposed to anger.

B. We can come close to the pure neurological syndrome, yet that is rare. Rage is something that people rarely feel. When they do, they need the help of a neuropsychiatrist. Panic is also something that people rarely feel. When they do, they probably need a psychiatrist, too.
C. Anxiety is a variety of fear that does not involve a straightforward engagement with the world. When you feel anxious or have an anxiety attack, Dr. Freud would say, “That is because the anxiety, the feeling of fear, has been de-coupled from all the information and the engagement that is involved in the fear itself.”

D. Horror is a variation on fear, too. In fear, part of the reaction is the need to act—to run or even to fight back—whereas in a state of horror, there is nothing to do.

1. At the same time, horror is obviously an enticing emotion. People who drive by an accident on the highway almost inevitably slow down to observe, which again makes horror an emotion quite different from fear.

2. There is a paradox of fear and a paradox of horror, something that Aristotle pointed out more than 2,000 years ago. Aristotle asked the question, “Why do people go to see tragedies?”

3. His answer was that such experiences provide a catharsis, which empties us of fears.

4. Freud, of course, played with that hypothesis 2,000 years later, yet the paradox remains: If we go out of our way to experience horror, maybe it is not purely negative after all.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**

Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror.*

Gavin de Becker, *The Gift of Fear.*


**Questions to Consider:**
1. What would it be like to be literally “fearless”?

2. How would you talk to someone who is irrationally afraid of flying? Spiders? Taking tests? Attending parties?

3. Do you enjoy horror movies? Thrillers? Why?
Lecture Four
Lessons of Love—Plato’s Symposium

Scope: Love is our favorite and most “positive” emotion. Yet most of us know about its nasty and painful aspects. The emotion is actually complex, even political. The ancient Greeks distinguished among different forms of love—erōs, philia, and agapē. Plato, too, has much to tell us. Written 2,500 years ago, his Symposium is a classic Western text for good reason. Let us consider what three of his speeches tell us about love—Aristophanes’s story, Socrates’s lesson, and Alcibiades’s scene.

Outline

I. If anger and fear are not all negative, neither is love all positive.
   A. Love leads to jealousy, to anger, and even to rage.
   B. Love is thoroughly political.
      1. By political, I mean that the description of the emotion plays an important part in our lives.
      2. American use of the word love is promiscuous. We apply it to almost everything indiscriminately. People love their cars, pizza, and beer, as well as their parents, their country, and their sweeties. Even if we restrict our definition to romantic love, its meaning has blurred.

II. Love, an emotion, is often misunderstood to be a feeling.
   A. Is there a feeling of love?
   B. I argue no. Like fear and anger, love is an engagement with the world, if through one particular person.

III. The ancient Greeks distinguished different kinds of love.
   A. Eros is erotic love.
   B. Philia, typically translated as “friendship,” actually extends to parents, children, and other people in the community.
   C. Agapē, or in Latin, caritas, refers to the love of humanity. The feeling became so idealized that only God was thought capable of this kind of love.

IV. One reason that love is not just a feeling is because love takes time. It does not make sense to talk about being in love for 10 minutes.

V. Love involves process and a story. The story we tell is important to the nature of love itself.
   A. Within the realm of erotic love, different kinds of love exist. To fall in love is described in terms of excitement, novelty, danger, and uncertainty. This kind of love involves a sense of passion.
   B. An elderly couple married, say, for 50 years may behave in ways that signify a deep romantic bond but not as described above.

VI. Different stories dictate different meanings of the word love. The ones that end with a boy and a girl who get together and live happily ever after are not the culmination of love but, rather, its start.
   A. Romeo and Juliet, as told by Shakespeare, suggests some revealing attributes about our attitudes toward love. The standard love narrative tells us that love is for the very young. In the case of this play, romantic love is also forbidden love.
   B. Some philosophers, C. S. Lewis among them, have suggested that romantic love is, by its very nature, illicit. He claims that such love is a sort of death wish, because in romantic love, there is no possible happy ending. Many such romances in Western art and literature end in death, such as the story of Tristan and Isolde.
   C. Love relationships require work and adjustment, a fact that is often left out of our standard love stories.
   D. If love is a narrative, many of the wrong stories are told. What kind of stories are the right ones? For an answer, let us consider one of the classic writings in the Western tradition.
VII. The dialogue by Plato called the *Symposium* consists of speeches by some fairly drunk old Greeks who have just been to dinner. As the dialogue opens, we learn that, to slow down their drinking, they decide to talk about love.

A. The playwright Aristophanes tells one story.
   1. In ancient times, long before the Greeks, human beings were very different. They were twice as big. They had two sets of arms, two sets of legs, and two heads, and they were perfectly spherical.
   2. Because they had two heads, they were twice as smart. Because they were twice as smart, they were twice as arrogant. Because they were twice as arrogant, they had twice the amount of *hubris*, that is, arrogance toward the gods.
   3. The main god, Zeus, was deeply offended by this hubris. He threw thunderbolts and split these ancestors of ours in two, which is why we now have one head, two arms, and two legs.
   4. More important, we are no longer complete beings. Thus, the origin of love is our desire to reconnect with our other half.

B. Socrates’s speech is an attempt to improve the attitude toward *eros*, which in those days was not exalted. The great poetess Sappho, for example, wrote about *eros* as a kind of misfortune or illness.
   1. Socrates says that *eros* can be understood in different ways. For a very young person, it is a desperate physical craving for another being. When one relationship does not work out, the lover moves on to another.
   2. With age, however, the lover sees that each beloved has something in common, namely, beauty, and that is what we really love.
   3. For Plato, who believed in ideal forms, beauty exists not only in things or people but also independently; it stands apart and on its own. True love, Socrates concludes, lies with the ideal form itself.
   4. The idea of seeing through the other person to this ideal was picked up later by medieval Christians, whose concept of *agape* led to the view of the beloved as a medium. What you really loved in the other person was God.

C. Next in the *Symposium* comes Alcibiades, who crashes the party. A student of Socrates and a traitor against Athens twice, he throws himself down next to Socrates and insults him.
   1. In introducing Alcibiades into the *Symposium*, Plato demonstrated love as obsession, which involves hostility.
   2. Though not the kind of a love story that we like, Alcibiades’s ridicule is part of the love narrative.

D. Aristophanes’s speech suggests that love is a desire to reunify with our other half.
   1. Literally, of course, the story is nonsense. Yet we still use such phrases as “We were made for each other.” The idea is that fitting together is what makes love, though it takes work and adjustment.
   2. None of us is just an individual, though our American ideology often tries to convince us otherwise.
   3. Aristophanes and the Greeks realized that a person is necessarily dependent. You depend on the one you love for your very identity, a devastating insight.
   4. Why do you love other people—because of their differences from you, or because they are the same as you? Research these days seems to point to both as an answer.

VIII. Thus far in these lectures, we have been speaking about an emotion as an engagement with the world—with the facts of the world.

A. Love is not just a matter of discovering qualities that are lovable. Rather, we “bestow” virtues, to use a nice word introduced by Irving Singer, and thus, make the beloved person valuable to us.

B. This subjective element is all important. There is an enormous amount of choice in emotion. With love in particular, there is far more choice than we usually allow. Where does the choice come in?
   1. “Love at first sight” does not just become “happily ever after.” In the initial moment of mutual attraction, you hope. Then, you make a choice. In fact, you make a whole series of choices.
   2. You choose to meet the person. You choose to go out with the person. You choose to get serious. You even choose, for example, to say “I love you,” which, the first time you say it, is a bombshell of a choice.
   3. To say “I love you” is actually a way of changing the situation, changing the world. It is a choice that goes on and leads to a series of choices, a whole process.
4. At various points along the way, we have more choices to make—moments at which we can walk away or we can decide “Let’s get more serious.” To return to the word in its political sense, we use love when we want to proclaim that a long-developing relationship works.

Essential Reading:
Plato, Symposium.
Robert C. Solomon, About Love.

Supplementary Reading:
Irving Singer, The Nature of Love.

Questions to Consider:
1. What is love, and why do we value it so highly?
2. Do you think love today is essentially the same emotion as described in the Bible? In Plato’s Symposium? In the Middle Ages? In modern times?
Lecture Five
We Are Not Alone—Compassion and Empathy

Scope: In the 18th century, the reigning theory of human nature in many quarters was this: People are essentially selfish. Yet a number of illustrious philosophers, including David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the great economist Adam Smith, championed what they called sympathy as a natural “moral sentiment.” In their view, sympathy is essentially the same as what we call compassion and provides, they argue, the basis of ethics. Their thesis is that we are not just selfish creatures, but we are also compassionate and sympathetic with others. But sympathy is ambiguous, ranging from feeling sorry for another person to sharing his or her feelings. Whether sympathy and empathy are innate or learned behavior remains open to question, but they are essential elements in capitalism. Contrary to common misperception, Adam Smith was hardly an apostle of selfishness. As he observed, the market pays attention to the needs and preferences of its customers as a matter of necessity.

Outline

I. In the last lecture, I mentioned a kind of love called agapē in Greek, or caritas in Latin. In much Christian thought, agapē is a love of humanity ultimately available only to God. In a more secular sense, this notion of agapē became prevalent in the 18th century as a foundation of ethics and morality. The concept evolved into sympathy, or what we call compassion.
   A. In the 19th century, the German philosopher Schopenhauer agreed with this assertion, but many did not, including Friedrich Nietzsche. He thought, as do many conservatives today, that “do-gooders” were people overwhelmed by pity, who did a lot of damage both to themselves and to the world.
   B. In the 17th century, human nature was viewed as selfish. Thomas Hobbes argued that human life was nasty, brutish, and short.

II. In the 18th century, the great philosophers David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Adam Smith countered with a thesis that was novel at the time. They argued that people are not selfish. They asserted that sympathy or compassion lies at the very heart of morality.
   A. These philosophers identified the idea of sympathy, together with several other emotions, to champion what they called “moral sentiment” at the very heart of human nature.
   B. To understand how and why people behave as they do, these philosophers said, you must understand that they are sometimes selfish but also that they can be moved by sympathy for other people.

III. When Smith and Hume used the word sympathy, it was an ambiguous term.
   A. Sympathy can mean “feeling sorry for someone else.” In some sense, we claim to suffer, too. But do we really? It is not plausible to say that we can feel the same pain as the person who has been fired or broken a leg.
   B. What was clearly at stake was to identify a different meaning of sympathy, what we now call empathy.
      1. This kind of compassion has to do with sharing an emotion with another person, whether a sorrow or a joy.
      2. Further, empathy is a transfer of emotion, and of course, that is where it gets rather mysterious.
      3. As I said, you break your leg. I sympathize with you, but I do not have the feeling of a broken leg.
      4. You have lost your job. I sympathize with you, but I do not have the feeling of having lost my job.
      What does this mean?

IV. Nietzsche, in his early writings, addresses self-interest versus altruism. The philosopher Ian Wren, much more recently, has compared selfishness with altruism and clearly favors selfishness.
   A. Yet the distinction may not be so clear-cut. If you ask people what they really want, appealing to their self-interest, they will often mention something to do with personal acquisition. Eventually, it becomes clear that their real reason for wanting a certain thing is “Because people will think that I am cool.”
B. Leaving aside envy, what we want for ourselves is not just selfish but satisfies other people’s interests as well. We want to be respected and, at least in some cases, to be loved. That desire breaks down the distinction between self-interest on one hand and pleasing people on the other.

V. What does one feel when one sympathizes or empathizes with another person?
A. We can have *Verstehen* for another person’s pain, for creatures that are totally different from us, and even for creatures to which we might hesitate to ascribe emotions at all.

B. How? One accusation is that we anthropomorphize and treat other creatures as if they were human. I think that is unfair. Different levels exist at which you can empathize or sympathize with another creature or another person.

C. The lowest level is what psychologists now call *emotional contagion*, which is primitive, unthinking, and perhaps hard-wired. Neurologists talk about *mirror neurons*, which essentially mirror another creature or another person’s activities. When an infant, for example, sees its mother upset, it may become upset, too.

D. *Receptivity* is the next level. Nel Noddings has written quite wisely that when a mother feels uncomfortable because her baby is screaming, it is not as if she asks herself, “How would I feel if I were a baby sitting around in a urine-soaked diaper?” The mother simply sees the baby and is immediately receptive to the baby’s discomfort.

E. *Imagination* often is essential to empathy, especially when we are considering people who are very different from us, say, Joan of Arc. “What would it be like to have this happen to me?” The answer takes imagination. It also takes work of an intellectual sort.
   1. Here, we return to the “do-gooder,” because you can sympathize or empathize with a person suffering and not really understand. For example, when you see someone who is in poverty, just giving him or her money may not be what the person really needs or wants. One has to understand the other person to truly help.
   2. It is easy to read our own feelings and emotions into a situation, to insert how we would feel in similar circumstances. Of course, this attempt often fails to lead us to empathy.
   3. The hardest case is how to empathize with enemies, say, Israelis with Palestinians and the other way around.

VI. If the 18th-century philosophers presumed that sympathy is part of human nature, some people have suggested, in contemporary terms, that empathy and sympathy are basic emotions that are somehow hard-wired into us.

VII. On the other hand, there is much evidence that sympathy and empathy are cultivated. Quite a few experiments have shown that infants raised without a mother or a support group appear to have no capacity to empathize with other people.
   A. To what extent are empathy and sympathy learned?
   B. We can take hope if they can be cultivated, as opposed to their simply existing in someone or not.

VIII. In a capitalist market, you try to find customers by looking at other people and asking what they want. How do they really feel? Thus, Adam Smith did not praise selfishness, despite assertions to the contrary. Certainly at its best, he argued, capitalism is based on sympathy and empathy.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**
Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality.*
Jodi Halpern, *From Detached Concern to Empathy.*
Nel Noddings, *Caring.*
Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought.*
Adam Smith, *A Theory of the Moral Sentiments.*
Questions to Consider:
1. What do you think is missing in someone who lacks compassion?
2. What do you actually feel when you feel sympathy for a friend who has just lost his job?
3. What do you actually feel when you feel sympathy for a friend who has just been seriously hurt in an auto accident?
Lecture Six

Noble? Or Deadly Sin? Pride and Shame

Scope: Pride in ancient Greece, according to Aristotle, was one of the most central virtues, the core of the *megalopsychos* of “great-souled man.” By the Middle Ages, pride had become one of the seven deadly sins, indeed, according to Pope Gregory the Great, the worst of the sins. By the 20th century, pride had once again earned a positive place in social thinking, including black pride and gay pride, not to mention “the pride of the Yankees.” Typically, pride involves self-praise. Pride—like its opposite, shame—is an emotion of social self-evaluation, and its place in society shifts with morals, religion, and politics. This lecture is about a family of such emotions, pride and shame to begin with, but also guilt, embarrassment, regret, and remorse. Unlike what neurologists deem basic emotions, each member of this family necessitates a relatively sophisticated self-consciousness, a robust sense of the self. Each is also governed by society and culture. In many societies, shame is central, but guilt is relatively rare. In others, like our own, guilt is prevalent (and the subject of much psychoanalytic study), whereas shame is endangered. All the emotions discussed are essential to our moral psychology.

Outline

I. Through history, pride goes from being a key virtue to the worst of the sins and back to being something of a virtue. How do we explain this? One way is to consider the opposite emotion in each case.
   A. For the ancient Greeks, pride was opposed to shame.
   B. In the Middle Ages, pride was opposed to humility.

II. False pride can be based on false suppositions of the facts. It can also be based on things that one simply should not be proud of, such as belonging to the Ku Klux Klan. Such falseness reminds us that pride is a very complicated set of moral, ethical, and evaluative judgments.

III. Pride is self-referential.
   A. It involves a positive evaluation of oneself and, for that reason, pride is often referred to as a positive emotion.
   B. More particularly, pride is a positive evaluation of something that one has done. You have done something good. You have done something praiseworthy.

IV. Pride involves a kind of moral or ethical dimension. It is not just that one has won the race but that one is a better person for having done so.

V. Pride is also a social emotion. There are things that one could be proud of in the Middle Ages that one would not be proud of in the 19th century. Context matters.

VI. The social dimension, the self-reference, and the moral or ethical appraisal all suggest that pride is not one of the basic emotions.
   A. Rather, pride and its kindred emotions are higher cognitive functions, which require from us much more awareness of what is going on around us, of our society, our culture, and our status.
   B. With regard to pride in particular, one has to be aware of what is approved of and disapproved of and what is praised and not praised in one’s society.

VII. Pride is a member of a family of emotions that includes shame, embarrassment, guilt, remorse, and regret. All these emotions are about the self.
   A. What do we mean by the *self*? That, of course, is cultural, too. We might examine the Greek concept of the self, the medieval concept of the self, or the contemporary American concept of the self, all very different.
   B. You can be proud of someone who has no relationship to you at all. A sense of identity is critical to pride, but it does not depend on individual selfhood, narrowly construed.
   C. To what extent can the self be extended?
1. Obviously, I can be ashamed of what my great grandparents did, even though I did not do it. I can be embarrassed by what one of my classmates does, even though I am not him.

2. Pride can encompass a city, when for example, its football team wins the championship. The self is not just an isolated individual self but is, by definition, a social self.

VIII. When you feel shame, you take responsibility for something you have done. When you are embarrassed, you do not particularly blame yourself.

A. If you show up at a black-tie affair wearing your shorts and sneakers, you are embarrassed. That is, you find yourself in an awkward, unexpected situation from which you want to escape.

B. If, on the other hand, the host told you explicitly and on several occasions that you were expected to come dressed to the nines, then you will not be just embarrassed. You will be ashamed. You will be ashamed because you did not listen, because you forgot, or because you decided to go against the flow.

C. Shame itself seems ambiguous. It varies in its meaning across culture.

1. In English, we use one word. In French, there are two distinctive terms—honte, which refers to being caught up in a scandal or doing something that is against your position or breaking the rules, and pudeur, which is more like our embarrassment. Pudeur is being caught naked.

2. Consider the story from Genesis in which Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden and find themselves naked. Were they naked and ashamed or were they naked and embarrassed? The answer is both. They were ashamed because they broke God’s commandment, and they were embarrassed because they were naked.

D. There are also different kinds of guilt: legal, causal, and moral.

1. Moral guilt is to be distinguished both from legal guilt under the law and from causal guilt, in which you may have broken a dish but entirely by accident. What distinguishes moral guilt in particular is a feeling of guilt.

2. In the novel The Stranger by Camus, the character is causally guilty of committing a crime. He pulled the trigger and is found legally guilty in a court of law. But he has no feeling of guilt because he does not have much feeling about anything.

E. By contrast, Freud talked in great detail about neurotic guilt. It seems that we can feel guilty, despite the fact that we know full well that we have done nothing wrong.

1. Our family can impose on us a sense of guilt, just because of who we are. Another kind of anomaly is survivor guilt.

2. Still, guilt generally involves having done something wrong, except for these interesting exceptions.

F. Shame, by contrast, has to do with being a certain kind of person. According to anthropologists, there are shame societies and guilt societies.

1. Guilt and shame turn on having done something wrong, whether violating the law or local custom. What is the difference?

2. The difference may lie in the kind of culture. There are tribal cultures, such as that of Japan, in which shame involves not just having a flawed character but letting others down.

3. Guilt societies tend to be individualistic, often within a culture of Christianity and its context of sin and affiliated concepts, such as redemption, grace, and forgiveness.

4. Guilt is something you feel as an individual or, in Christian culture, as an individual before God. God judges you, not the rest of society. Whether you have let your fellows down may or may not be the case.

IX. What is fascinating about this whole family of related emotions is that they involve self-appraisal, often of a highly charged ethical or moral sort. Culture and society are often involved in a variety of ways, as is the notion of responsibility.

A. Regret can run deep but tends to be personal, not particularly moral.

B. Remorse, by contrast, involves deep concern about having done something wrong and is an important element in the concept of character, of justice. We talk about people being evil. What makes them evil is the fact that they do not show remorse.

C. We are quite right to judge people much more harshly when they commit a crime and do not show remorse than if they do.
D. Pride and this whole family of emotions have to do with ethics and place in society. To think of them as just feelings is not to understand what emotions are all about.

**Essential Reading:**
Jerome Neu, “Pride,” in *A Tear Is an Intellectual Thing*.

**Supplementary Reading:**
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.
Janet Landsman, *Regret*.
Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*.

**Questions to Consider:**
1. What makes pride “false”?
2. What kind of shame did Adam and Eve experience (when expelled from Eden)?
3. Why would one feel guilty when one knows that one has done nothing wrong?
Lecture Seven
Nasty—Iago’s Envy, Othello’s Jealousy

Scope: Envy and jealousy are double-edged emotions in that they tend to be remarkably self-destructive even as they aim to bring down other people. One of the seven deadly sins, envy is also a spectacularly bad emotional strategy. Like most nasty emotions, however, it is coupled with an uncanny ability to rationalize. Thus, envy turns into resentment and deludes itself into jealousy. Whereas envy involves the full recognition that one has no right or claim to the object coveted, jealousy does claim such a right. A more desperate transformation of envy and jealousy is spite. The philosophy of spite is: “If I can’t have it, no one will.” In Othello, Iago begins with envy, turns to resentment, and when that fails, devours himself and everyone else in spite. Othello, by contrast, is destroyed by his own jealousy, which also turns to spite. But why did he kill Desdemona?

Outline

I. Envy can be considered the opposite of love.
   A. Love is inclusive and, as Aristophanes suggested, attempts to reconcile our former, but now broken, wholeness through union with another.
   B. Envy separates us. When you envy someone, you push them away. You stand at a distance. On stage, Iago is often off in the wings away from the rest of the action, looking at Othello from a distance.

II. Envy is not directed at another person per se.
   A. What I envy is what they have rather than who they are—their wealth, their power, their looks, their age, their health, and so on.
   B. Yet envy has a personal nature. It is not just “I want wealth, and he has it,” but “I want his wealth, and my attitude toward him is defined that way.”

III. In sum, envy is corrosive because it is antithetical to love, friendship, and any other close relationship. It separates people. It is very personal and hostile, and it is illegitimate, because you do not deserve what you envy. You have no right to it.

IV. During the heyday of 20th-century capitalism, people defended not just capitalism but also some rather dubious psychological properties, such as selfishness. Envy was highly praised, too.
   A. In the 1950s, when advertising was much cruder than it is now, one housewife would envy the other housewife’s Spic-N-Span floor. Or she would envy the other housewife’s ability to put together a chocolate cake in a half an hour. Such advertisements raised the status of envy from that of a straightforward vice to an engine of capitalism. Invidious comparisons drove consumerism forward.
   B. The German philosopher Helmut Schoeck argued that, far from a vice, envy is something that we should encourage for the sake of capitalism. Envy makes us unhappy with what we have, and it is often said that capitalism depends on dissatisfaction and the desire for more.
   C. Greed and envy go hand-in-hand. The Talmud gets it right—the rich man is the one who is satisfied with what he has—exactly what envy goes against.

V. The philosopher Jerome Neu distinguishes two different forms of envy. The first is wanting something that the other person wants, perhaps in the spirit of competition; the second is malicious envy.
   A. Healthy competition can become malicious envy when, for example, in a race, a runner is not as concerned with improving her running time as she is with slowing down another runner, which leads to behavior antithetical to good sportsmanship.
   B. Malicious envy sets us up to destroy the very context in which we live.

VI. A natural successor to envy is spite. Envy wants what it does not deserve. Typically, the emotion is not acted upon. Spite, by contrast, is active, as captured in the phrase “cutting off your nose to spite your face,” a truly horrible image.
A. You are so resentful that another person has what you want that you would rather destroy the thing itself and, possibly, both yourself and your adversary than endure the status quo.

B. In spite, we hit bottom, where envy as a vice becomes most explicit.

VII. In jealousy, there is a sense that one has a right to what one wants—and a sense in which one already has it. Jealousy has often been interpreted as the fear of loss, for example, by Jerome Neu, as well as by Freud and some of his associates.

A. In Shakespeare’s play, Othello is already married to Desdemona. In the relevant sense, he already has her. What is more, he has her love. His jealousy does not come from wanting something that he does not deserve. Quite the contrary, what he wants to do is to keep something that he fears he is losing.

1. Neu tells the following story: Two children play together, ignoring the toy lying nearby. Later, the child who does not own the toy picks it up. Suddenly, there is a ruckus. Jealousy is stimulated by a sense of ownership that is being violated.

2. Similarly, the logician and game theorist John Elster talks of “love by pique,” one of the corruptions of love, which derives from some of the French moralists of the 18th century. There is no interest in, say, the fair damsel who is on the sidelines until one of two male protagonists shows an interest. Suddenly, so does the other. It is not that either of them loves her. It is, rather, that they are motivated by competition.

B. Jealousy is, in many ways, not a matter of love, affection, desire, or want but, rather, a sense of competition and, thus, clearly a social emotion that binds one with a rival. In terms of sexual rivalry, the cuckold does not just lose his love or spouse but experiences embarrassment and humiliation in the larger society.

VIII. Is jealousy natural or not?

A. When David Hume, Adam Smith, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau talked about the moral sentiments of empathy and sympathy, they made it quite clear that they thought these were natural sentiments. Their notion of natural was not, however, as rigorous as Aristotle’s when he talked about the natural virtues.

B. By the 20th century, the idea of something being natural had become much more sophisticated. Is an emotion such as jealousy inherited? Is it genetic? Is it a product of evolution, or is it something that is learned? Is it gender-specific?

C. Sociobiology and its advocate, the biologist E. O. Wilson, explained circa 1970 that different psychological features of human beings evolved, akin to the evolution of similar features in the “lower animals.” Such traits as being selfish or caring for one’s kin or offspring are advantageous, not just to the individual but to the species as a whole.

D. Sociobiology is ancient history by contemporary standards. It has been replaced by an equally controversial but equally plausible idea. Evolutionary psychology, in a nutshell, suggests that some psychological traits of human beings are not just a byproduct or happenstance but part of the evolutionary story.

1. David Buss has risen to considerable prominence on the thesis that jealousy is a product of evolution—not just as a human feature but as one with particular differences between males and females.

2. Can a particular emotion, such as jealousy, be selected for? In the wake of Darwin, we assume that a psychological feature that appears to be universal must have some explanation. Evolution is obviously one of the candidates.

3. Nevertheless, jealousy may be a byproduct of some other general feature or an application of something that may or may not be the product of evolution. Whether it is inherited and determined by our genes or, in some sense, determined by our culture and the way we are raised is a debate that goes back to the 1960s.

E. My own view is that the whole idea of genetic determination is wrong. In fact, any feature of any organism has to do with the relationship between the organism and its environment. Genes by themselves do not determine anything, but genes have great power in the context of an environment, and part of that environment, of course, is society.
Essential Reading:
Jerome Neu, “Jealous Thoughts,” in *A Tear Is an Intellectual Thing*.

Supplementary Reading:
Peter Goldie, “Jealousy,” in *The Emotions*.

Questions to Consider:
1. Could there be a society without jealousy? What else would it have to be?
2. Why is envy rightly said to be a negative emotion? In how many ways is it harmful?
Lecture Eight
Nastier—Resentment and Vengeance

Scope: Resentment and vengeance (like envy and jealousy) are double-edged emotions. They, too, tend to be self-destructive even as they aim at bringing down other people. As the Chinese say, “If you seek revenge, dig two graves.” Friedrich Nietzsche diagnosed resentment as inexpressible vengeance. It “simmers.” He also claims that it is the motive for the whole of Judeo-Christian morality. Resentment rationalizes its position, but it remains stuck there. Vengeance, accordingly, can be seen as the natural extension of resentment. More often, it is an offshoot of anger, its most cold-blooded and protracted expression. Vengeance is one aspect of justice, and it can indeed be satisfying. It is also a very dangerous emotion and not to be recommended.

Outline

I. Resentment is an emotion of impotence, the feeling that there is not much we can do about our frustrations in the world.
   A. Thus, resentment gives way to schadenfreude—taking joy in other people’s suffering.
   B. It is a pathetic emotion. We enjoy what happens to others but cannot bring about the downfall ourselves.

II. Nietzsche’s analysis of resentment is quasi-historical. His underlying supposition is that human behavior is selfish and not obedient. Why do we believe in a set of commandments that was handed down to us by someone who is not even human?
   A. The answer is that we are incapable of handling the world on our own. We want to have a rationalization. What better rationalization than a set of commandments from on high?
   B. Judeo-Christian values of humility, of enforced poverty, reveal a kind of doublethink.
      1. On the one hand, people want wealth and power, but most people have neither. They turn the values upside down, what Nietzsche rather fancifully calls, “the transvaluation of values.”
      2. Suddenly, those good things, such as wealth and power, become bad things. The old values become anti-values, and their absence becomes virtue.
   C. This transvaluation is a powerful device for reasserting one’s own status.
      1. As with anger, in which we take the position that we have been offended, insulted, and humiliated, we put ourselves in a superior position; we compensate.
      2. Through resentment, we make it sound as if we are lucky not to have those things that we want but don’t have. We feel self-righteous precisely because we are not rich.
   D. Thus, resentment is one of the cleverest emotions. Nietzsche views this transvaluative maneuver as “brilliance,” albeit by way of retribution and of revenge.

III. What’s wrong with resentment if it puts us in a superior position?
   A. Nietzsche suggests that being resentful is self-deceptive and hypocritical. I do not think that is quite right, because people can be resentful and fully aware of the fact.
   B. Resentment is an expression of weakness. For Nietzsche, this weakness presents a problem, given his devotion to the morality of strength.

IV. Although not a basic emotion, resentment is quite natural in that it stems from the fact that we live in a world with other people.
   A. Our world is not equal. Other people are more powerful than we are. Other people have things that we want, and others are also unfair to us.
   B. One of the virtues of resentment is that it is a recognition, not just of impotence or inferiority, but sometimes, of oppression.
      1. Resentment can lead us to recognize that we have been put into an inferior position, as the feminist movement did, for example.
      2. Under certain circumstances, resentment can be extremely valuable.
V. Speaking of oppression leads naturally to vengeance.
   A. Vengeance has a bad reputation. It is considered the most violent and dangerous of emotions, as well as the one that escalates the fastest.
   B. Yet vengeance plays an important role in our lives. In *Wild Justice*, Susan Jacoby has written that to deny our sense of vengeance will have consequences as negative as the repression of sexuality had for the Victorians.
   C. Vengeance is quite satisfying, something that most of us would rather not admit to ourselves. As Arthur Lillie wrote years ago, “There is no denying the aesthetic satisfaction, the sense of poetic justice that pleases us when evildoers get the comeuppance they deserve.”

VI. The logic of vengeance is to try to right a wrong. Measure for measure, vengeance, properly applied, gives back exactly what it got.
   A. People often read the Old Testament line “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” as barbaric. Actually, it is a civilizing point. The Old Testament prescription is to seek just that amount of justice that is equivalent to the loss you have suffered.
   B. Vengeance and justice go hand-in-hand. In Homer’s *Iliad*, the word *justice* clearly means “retribution.” It is putting the world back in balance. When Agamemnon talks about justice with reference to certain captured Spartans, however, he talks about destroying them. The Old Testament prescription here is a big improvement.
   C. Measured vengeance is difficult to achieve.
      1. One person acts to get even, but what he or she does is seen as upping the ante. That perception inspires counter-behavior, which makes the situation even worse and leads to vendettas or blood feuds.
      2. It seems to me that this is not the nature of vengeance so much as it is its distortion.

VII. Justice, or more properly, retributive justice, is a matter of reason, whereas vengeance is an emotion.
   A. This distinction is one that philosophers have made from Kant to such contemporary thinkers as Robert Nozick.
   B. Yet the distinction between vengeance and justice often seems to me bogus. Vengeance has an in-built logic, and justice begins with the heart, with certain attitudes toward other people, and a sense of fairness of distribution, as well as fairness in punishment.
   C. Justice is often viewed as violent by its very nature, yet vengeance applies to all walks of life.
      1. For example, you are not invited to Sally’s party, and, in retaliation, you do not invite Sally to your party.
      2. Such vengeance does not necessarily escalate and, it seems to me, is so much a part of human life that we would find it almost unimaginable if it did not exist.

VIII. In our most pacifist moods, we yearn for people to just get along and for punishment and vengeance not to exist.
   A. In his book *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Robert Axelrod made the point that evolution has endowed us with the inclination to cooperate and obey the law and to react with an immediate impulse to punish those who violate the rules.
      1. The idea that vengeance and punishment evolved along with the human species as a matter of survival is plausible.
      2. We can be benign creatures, but we also grow up as punitive and vengeful. Without punishment, there would be no stopping people who broke our laws.
   B. Vengeance is not just punishment, however. Punishment can be legalized or formalized in all sorts of ways.
      1. In our own legal system, the emphasis on victim’s rights points to the fact that legal remedies by way of established law are not enough. We feel the need for something else, too.
      2. In the extreme, when the law breaks down, the result is vigilante justice, reflecting a powerful impulse.
   C. I want to tie justice and retribution to vengeance. Not really contrasting notions, they fit together in a very intricate way.
1. Justice, if it is doing its job, expresses our sense of vengeance.
2. Vengeance—if it is really rational, which I think it can be—is also constitutive of justice.

IX. Vengeance, though natural, is rarely the best policy.
   A. The notions of mercy and forgiveness are responses to the need for vengeance.
   B. If we had no desire for vengeance, no desire to get even, there would be nothing to forgive.
   C. If we did not have some legal apparatus that insisted on punishment, then mercy would make no sense.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Peter A. French, *The Virtues of Vengeance*.
Dalai Lama [XIV], *On Living Well*.
Jeffrie G. Murphy, *Getting Even*.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you agree with Nietzsche that at least some moral rules are expressions of resentment? Why or why not?
2. Could there be a society without revenge? How would it have to be organized?
Lecture Nine
A Death in the Family—The Logic of Grief

Scope: Grief is an excellent if unpleasant example of an emotion that is grossly misunderstood. It raises profound questions about the value of even the most painful emotions in human life. Grief has largely been ignored by philosophers. It is easy to see why philosophers (and most people) would rather ignore grief. Philosophy already tends to gloom. What I want to argue here, however, is that grief is misunderstood as both the most private and most negative of "negative" emotions. It should, rather, be viewed, I will argue, as a continuation of love. And the withdrawal that is so familiar in grief should not be understood as a breakdown of rational behavior but as a period of reflection and the reconstitution of the self. I will also discuss the idea that grief is commemorative and keeps the love alive.

Outline

I. Grief is a negative emotion for an obvious reason: It involves a grievous loss.
   A. We will discuss the loss of a loved one, although there are other kinds of grief, as well. For example, a person could grieve for the children that he or she never had.
   B. Grief is not just sadness. It is not, in other words, a basic emotion.
   C. Nevertheless, grief is clearly universal. All people die, and all of us lose people who are close to us.
   D. Unlike sadness, grief has a very particular object. Grief often leads to depression. In fact, grief can often be conflated with depression.

II. Grief is not just a painful emotion. It is something that we ought to feel, at least under the right circumstances.
   A. Although a person who is grieving resembles a depressed person, even Sigmund Freud distinguished between depression and grief.
   B. A person in grief does not need to see a physician. What sets grief apart from many emotions is that it is not only appropriate but, sometimes, obligatory.

III. The psychologist Niko Freida has argued that an emotion involves what he calls an action tendency. In grief, however, it seems that people do nothing; they tend to withdraw.

IV. Like love, grief is a process.
   A. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross has argued that grief is a process that involves other emotions. Denial and anger are part of that process.
   B. To say that an emotion is a process is to say that it is something that changes with time. It develops.
      1. Grief is not something that happens all at once, and it is not something you can get rid of just by taking a pill.
      2. The process of working through grief is grief.

V. Emotions generally have to do with desires. Thus, in anger, you want to punish someone; in love, you want to caress someone; in shame, you want to hide. In grief at the loss of a loved one, it would seem that what you want is utterly impossible—the return of the person who has died.

VI. Grief triggers thoughts of the loved one but also reminds us of our own mortality, which is a kind of narcissism. As soon as we are reminded of our own death, we have lost that connection with the other person and focus on our fear of our own death.
   A. Some 2,000 years ago, the Greek philosopher Epicurus said, “Death is nothing.” You are alive. You are having experiences and feeling pleasure, then, suddenly, you are just not there anymore. No more experiences. No more pleasure.
   B. To put this in context, Epicurus lived during the early Christian era, a time of apocalyptic sensibilities. People were terrified about the end of everything. Epicurus’s great therapeutic contribution was to point out that all this fear was completely unnecessary.
C. We find a similar idea in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Again, you have your life. What you do with it is important, but once you are dead, you are gone. That is the end of it.

D. Many people, however, believe in some form of an afterlife. Death is a gateway to some other existence. My suggestion is that most people are not afraid of the aftermath, because most people who believe in an afterlife seem to be of the opinion that they are going to heaven.

E. We are not worried about death but dying. We are afraid of getting sick, being in pain, and degenerating.

F. Fear of death can also involve our last moments. One’s last moment can mean more than one’s whole life, as it did for Faust, for example, when he recanted in Goethe’s great play.

VII. Typically ignored in Western conceptions of death is that it is social. When I worry about death, I think about my family. I think about the people I will leave behind.

VIII. The social dimension of grief is mourning. Once you introduce the social dimension, the notion of grief—as a form of isolation and a breakdown in emotions that leaves a person devoid of action tendencies and focused on an impossible desire—starts to resolve itself.

A. Instead of a breakdown of one’s normal emotional life, one can think of grief as a kind of culmination, although a sad culmination to be sure.

B. Withdrawing can be seen as a powerful action tendency to rethink, to recapture, and to reformulate the very nature of one’s life.

1. What happens when you lose someone who is close to you? Your life is shattered. When you love someone, you learn to identify yourself with and through the other person, and that is part of your identity.
2. In grief, that identity has been shattered. Then, the action is to withdraw and try to figure out, “Now, who am I?”

IX. As for this impossible desire to regain the lost life, it seems to me that it has a very real and practical manifestation, which has to do with the mourning ritual.

A. Mourning rituals, in our society, are incredibly impoverished. We do not really give much attention to death or grief or their meaning.

B. In other societies, grief continues for a long time, which seems much more realistic. In fact, in some societies, grief goes on for a lifetime. The person who experiences grief never gets over it and is never expected to get over it.

C. We do not think of someone who is lost as just plain lost. We loved this person, and we still love this person. In fact, I would suggest that grief is the continuation of love.

1. We love people when they are here, and we love them when they are gone. This commemorative impulse is a profound action tendency in itself; we want to do something to keep our loved ones alive.
2. If grief is not something that affects just an individual but a whole society; in this case, this complex of action tendencies and the commemorative impulse is all the more impressive.

X. Death is an essential part of our lives. Very few of us are willing to make the sacrifices that the ancient Stoics and ancient Buddhists made, cutting attachments as much as possible. Even they, of course, did not really do so. The truth is, we realize that love and grief are just two sides of the same coin.

A. Grief, in some cultures, carries with it a certain amount of laughter and joy. An Irish wake is perhaps an excellent example, but it is, first of all, a commemoration, a celebration of the person who has been lost. Perhaps more important, it is also a celebration of being alive.

B. Grief and gratitude can be seen as kindred emotions.

1. An important aspect of grief is appreciating what it is to be alive and what it is to have been together.
2. In a sense, we can say that grief reflects not so much a loss as a continuing gain.

Essential Reading:
Thomas Attig, How We Grieve.
Supplementary Reading:
Jodi Halpern, From Detached Concern to Empathy.
Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, On Death and Dying.
Martha Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought, chapter 1.

Questions to Consider:
1. Why do we look so suspiciously at someone who does not seem to grieve at the loss of a loved one? Shouldn’t we be glad that he or she is free from a particularly intense form of suffering?
2. What is the best way of showing sympathy for a friend who has recently lost a loved one?
Lecture Ten
James and the Bear—Emotions and Feelings

Scope: Here is a story: The great psychologist William James is walking in the New England woods (at the end of the 19th century) and out from behind a tree steps a large black bear. James “freezes.” His legs feel wobbly. He feels shivers up and down his spine. He feels the sweat pouring down his forehead. In short, he feels fear. Later, safely sitting down at his desk, James analyzes what happened to him. He saw the bear, and the sight prompted powerful physiological disturbances in his body (activating his autonomic nervous system), which in turn caused in him powerful feelings. Thus, an emotion (fear) is essentially a set of feelings or sensations caused by physiological upset. This theory dominated psychology for many years, and it is once again influential, now with the added sophistication of contemporary neurological research. Yet this theory leads us to dramatically underestimate both the “intelligence” of our passions and the extent to which we are responsible for them.

Outline

I. One dispute to reconcile is between “folk psychology” and the scientific image of emotions. Folk psychology is dominated by “ethical considerations”; science measures the facts.
   A. Scientific psychology used to focus on bodily reactions we experienced when we became emotional that could be carefully measured.
   B. Today, neurology has led to a new understanding of emotions. MRI machines and PET scans can tell us what parts of the brain experience increased blood flow in what kinds of emotional states. All these data are still factual and depend, almost obsessively, on measurement.

II. The idea that emotions are feelings can be contrasted with the idea that emotions are engagements with the world. It is these engagements that involve what we call emotional intelligence.
   A. Aristotle used the word pathē for “suffering.” We talk about the passion of Christ, meaning his suffering, and we talk about passions sweeping us away.
   B. If emotions are sufferings, people are not responsible. From another point of view, emotions can be strategies. They can be cultivated.
      1. If emotions are things that we do, then there is room for responsibility and, sometimes, for blame. When we talk about emotions, we evaluate them. These evaluations show our way of viewing other people and judging character.
      2. Built into such judgments is a statement about responsibility: If he is foolish to fall in love with her, then he should not have fallen in love with her.

III. Such evaluations are intrinsic to what we call folk psychology. Science, on the other hand, likes to think of itself as value free. The question is whether the scientific picture can give us the whole picture.
   A. The great philosopher-psychologist William James gives us his reaction to suddenly seeing a large bear.
      1. First, he sees the bear. The perception causes a distinct physiological response. He feels a bit drained, a bit frozen, and a strong impulse to run. Those physiological responses, in turn, cause a set of sensations. Hairs on his head stand up. He feels weak in the knees.
      2. James concludes that emotion depends on a physiological process triggered by a disturbing perception. The process itself is the core focus. The emotion is not just the physiological process. The emotion is the end result, which is the feeling or the set of sensations.
      3. What determined the future course of psychology was James’s attention to the physiological responses. Feelings themselves are not of great significance.
      4. James remained captive to the psychology of John Locke, the early empiricist, who also saw feelings as sensations. Caused by the body, they are nonetheless detached and independent. Thus, we are to understand everything by appealing to experience and largely through these sensations.
   B. In contemporary neurology, the neurophysiologist Tony Damasio says that the feeling involved in an emotion is the feeling of what is happening in the brain, whereas James spoke primarily about what we call the autonomic nervous system and referred to the viscera, for example, the stomach tightening. What if
there were no feelings—just neurological or physiological responses? Joseph LeDoux suggests that such is the case. The emotion is the physiological response, he says.

C. William James’s theory was quickly challenged by Walter B. Cannon, a famous physiologist-biologist, who observed that the number of physiological responses in the autonomic nervous system was quite limited. Consequently, they could not begin to account for the number of emotions we have. Modern neurology, however, has shown that the brain offers plenty of possibilities to account for the number and variability of our feelings.

D. The disturbing sensations that James described upon seeing the bear are similar to the feelings one has when one catches the flu. What distinguishes the feelings of the flu from the feelings of fear?

   1. There is nothing in the physiology, in the sensations, that clues us in to what particular emotion we are feeling.
   2. The disturbing perception of seeing the bear only acts as a trigger; it is as if someone pushed a button and the physiological response takes place and the sensations follow. But what is the nature of the button?

IV. Emotions, whatever else they may be, are an engagement with the world.

A. That is not to deny physiology, the brain’s mental activity, nor to deny that there are feelings. An emotion is about the world. It engages with the world, which means it has what philosophers call intentionality.

B. James has set us off on the wrong path. To understand the nature of an emotion is not to understand its physiology but, rather, to understand the nature of our engagement.

V. The very idea of a feeling raises all sorts of intriguing problems.

A. How do you measure feelings? How do you measure consciousness? You cannot. I cannot have anybody else’s experience, and no one else can have mine. I can tell you what I feel, but I could be lying or mistaken. Early in the 20th century, psychologists turned from the study of the psyche to the study of behavior.

B. Feeling is a broad word. On one hand, I have a feeling when you drip cold water down the middle of my back. I have a feeling when you step on my toe. But I also have a feeling in a geometry class when I say that a proof just does not feel right or when I say something feels out of place. Feelings embrace intuitions. Intuitions, as opposed to mere sensations, can be informed and insightful.

C. Feeling is almost the entire realm of consciousness, whereas emotions are a very specific subset of those feelings.

D. Emotions tend to be processes. They are flux. James himself caught this very nicely using the metaphor of the stream of consciousness. Yet the feeling theory, tied to a particular set of physiological responses, makes it sound as if an emotion is only a brief experience of a particular kind. Whereas grief and love, for example, suggest something much more complicated.

E. Words in other languages refer to emotions virtually unknown to us. We also might have words for emotions that do not refer to experiences other people have.

F. On top of this lies the old romantic idea that everyone’s emotions are unique. This uniqueness makes it impossible to understand how to talk about emotions.

VI. Emotions may encompass feelings, but they are much more.

A. Emotions can be evaluated, but they are also engagements.

B. The distinctions between an emotion and the actions through which it is expressed are negligible.

   1. It is often said that talking about an emotion somehow diminishes it. To use Aristotle’s term, such talk leads to a catharsis. Yet if I talk about my anger, it may remind me of how righteous I am, how correct I am. The more you talk about why you love a person, the stronger the emotion gets.
   2. We can cultivate emotions, which is the upshot of this set of lectures. By understanding our emotions, by reflecting on them, we can actually change our emotional outlook on life.

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Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Paul E. Griffiths, What Emotions Really Are.
Jenefer Robinson, Deeper than Reason.

Questions to Consider:
1. Why should we worry about what emotions are? What do we gain when we understand the nature of emotions?
2. Can you describe your feelings? Try to describe, for example, how it feels to be embarrassed (or ashamed) when you show up for work two hours late or what it feels like to be angry (at your boss, at your child, at a misleading ad on TV).
Lecture Eleven

Freud's Catharsis—The Hydraulic Model

Scope: The hydraulic metaphor is one that many, including Sigmund Freud, have used to describe emotions. Freud’s idea that psychic energy moves through the brain seeking release, sometimes redirected and sometimes blocked, continues to have considerable appeal, even in contemporary neuroscience. *Heat*, *pressure*, and *explosion* are words we associate with anger and lend the hydraulic metaphor plausibility, but its application to many other emotions is not so obvious. More problematic is that this metaphor is mechanical. Emotions are not mere mechanisms, as Jean-Paul Sartre reminded us, in his criticisms of both James and Freud.

Outline

I. To speak about emotions, we often have appealed to metaphors. One with an enormous influence on our understanding of emotions has been the **hydraulic metaphor**, drawn from Freud and a great many other thinkers.
   
A. Hydraulics is the science of pressure and fluids. We talk of people exploding or bursting and, to the contrary, bottling up their emotions.
   
B. The hydraulic metaphor is not broadly applicable. People often end up talking just about anger.

II. The hydraulic metaphor has a history. It comes into its own roughly in the 17th and 18th centuries, with the science of physics, but can be traced back at least to the Stoics 2,000 years ago.
   
A. The Stoics talked about the first movements of emotion or passions, which had to do with physiological changes. They talked about being enervated and emptied. These experiences were not themselves the passions. The passions were the judgments that one made regarding these movements afterward.
   
B. Because the hydraulic theory depends on modern physics, it did not hit its full stride until Freud, who believed in “psychic energy.” The metaphor is interesting because energy at the beginning of the 20th century was construed as a kind of fluid that can circulate, be directed, increase and decrease, and relates to heat.

III. Freud’s theory of psychic energy was a theory about the brain. Essentially, the psychic apparatus was isomorphic, the same form as the physiology of the brain. Psychic energy could be directed in various ways. Some key terms of Freudian psychoanalysis became *catharsis*, which essentially is a kind of emptying; *cathexis*, a kind of filling; and *sublimation*, which essentially means a kind of channeling.
   
A. Freud presents an image of the psychic apparatus. It looks much like an old boiler system. The picture suggests that our psychic energy can be directed in one way or another. Alternatively, it can be clamped down and controlled altogether, which would be dangerous because the whole system might explode. The idea is basically that emotions in general have to do with this image of heat and pressure.
   
B. The ancient Chinese had a concept they called *ch'i*—also written *qi*—which is roughly the equivalent of psychic energy, although not so much psychic as opposed to physical. Freud was trying to bring the two concepts together to assert that the hydraulic metaphor was literally true.

IV. As advances in neuroscience progressed over the course of the 20th century, the new neurology made use of the hydraulic theory in a fairly convincing way.
   
A. We have a literal equivalent of what you might call the “pipes” of the system. Our neurons, the nerve cells, really do look like miniature pipes. These are connected to each other by synapses.
   
B. One can, without much difficulty, translate Freud’s talk of the flow of psychic energy into the processes by which the neurons affect one another. The hydraulic metaphor now seems to be cashed out.

V. At the end of the 20th century, the idea of artificial intelligence led to the intriguing question of whether we could build a computer that would have emotions.
   
A. The idea of a computer as a model for emotions is very tempting. Computer language has to do with inputs and outputs and programs and databases. In many ways, these terms sound quite applicable to the mind.
B. Whether or not computers can have emotions, artificial intelligence can have something important to say about how emotions work.

VI. Nevertheless, there is a problem. Computers, like neurology, like Freud’s hydraulic model, and like the Stoics’ movements, are all basically mechanisms.
   A. Mechanisms have certain sorts of properties and not others. Mechanisms can be explained in causal terms. What mechanisms do not have is a sense of purpose.
   B. Completely agreeing that emotions have underlying mechanisms is not adequate to understanding them. To think about emotions as mechanisms is to talk about something happening in us.
      1. What happens in us is a set of processes over which we have little control and of which it makes sense to say that these things are happening to us.
      2. This, in turn, leads to talk about emotions as excuses and waives responsibility for them.

VII. Jean-Paul Sartre argued that William James and Sigmund Freud give accounts of emotions that are too mechanical. Most important, their accounts divorced the concept of emotion from the concept of the self.

VIII. What alternatives are there to this hydraulic metaphor? Let me suggest three.
   A. First, every emotion involves desire. The desire can vary, but it is not merely a mechanism. Desires are, by their very nature, purposive.
      1. An emotion is not just a matter of pressure but of acting out the desires that are components of the emotion.
      2. Why are emotions sometimes so intractable? Why do emotions impel us to do things? Very often, it is a matter of the expression of the desire that is part of their nature.
   B. Second, the compulsion to express an emotion is much like the intelligent process of desiring to say something.
      1. This explanation clearly moves the emotions into the realm of intelligence.
      2. It does not talk about mere mechanisms, but in terms of what, as a person, you feel compelled to do.
   C. Finally, there is the pressure of narrative. The notion of a story to be pursued is important in understanding where this sense of pressure comes from in emotions.
      1. Our emotions have a narrative. The narrative requires that they be carried out and expressed in certain kinds of ways.
      2. When I get angry, that feeling of pressure, which is described in the hydraulic metaphor as something physical, in fact, is something very different. I get angry, and that means that I am already part of a situation with logic.
      3. All emotions, even the most short-lived, tend to involve stories. Those stories, to a large extent, define what the emotion is.
      4. What we try to capture with the hydraulic metaphor is the idea that emotions pressure us to do things. Alternatively, an emphasis on desire, a focus on what it is like to have something to say, and this idea of narrative will take us a long way beyond the hydraulic metaphor.

IX. At least in the case of anger, the hydraulic metaphor describes something that we really experience. We think of ourselves as filling up with something and possibly even exploding. Do we experience these metaphors because they are accurate descriptions of our feelings? Or, rather, do we think and describe our feelings because we have these metaphors?
   A. The way we talk about our emotions has a lot to do with the emotional experience itself. The experience we have of our emotions is often dictated by the language we speak.
   B. To talk about, say, shame versus embarrassment already imposes a kind of structure on our experience. If you were to remove the language, would your experiences remain the same? Because we are linguistic creatures, this question is impossible to answer.

X. The hydraulic metaphor and other metaphors in which we talk about emotions already color the kinds of experiences we have. The very nature of the emotions we have, more than anything else, depends on the language in which we describe them.
**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**
Peter Goldie, *The Emotions*.
Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions*.
Michael Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*.

**Questions to Consider:**
1. What is wrong with the hydraulic theory of the mind, in your view? Do you think this metaphor accurately describes some of your feelings, for example, in anger?
2. What kinds of feelings are not emotions? Pains? Boredom? Curiosity?
Lecture Twelve
Are Emotions “in” the Mind?

Scope: One of the biggest problems with thinking about emotions as feelings is the idea that feelings are “in” the mind. It is not an idea that Aristotle, for instance, ever entertained. He had a conception of the soul as nothing but the “form” of an animal. He didn’t doubt that we got angry, felt afraid, felt pity for others, and so on, but he would have been perplexed if you had asked him whether these were “in” the mind. It was not just a vocabulary problem. The Greeks did not carve up the world that way, inner mind versus outer world. The concept of mind (as soul) developed along with Christianity. All of this congealed in the philosophy of René Descartes. Recently, the psychological movement of behaviorism was an effort to get rid of this “ghost in the machine.” A more effective way is through phenomenology, according to which the mind is an activity and its objects are essentially objects in the world. I want to introduce phenomenology and its advocates, Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre, and begin to develop a phenomenology of the emotions.

Outline

I. In the whole discussion of emotions, the most problematic metaphor is that emotions are “in” the mind. Two philosophers epitomize two contrasting positions—René Descartes and Martin Heidegger.
   A. Descartes drew a contrast between mind and body, and Cartesian dualism is a phrase often used to refer to this split. Philosophers have worried ever since about how the mind is related to the body.
   B. Heidegger, by contrast, argued for a unified picture, something like the Chinese notion of heart-mind, where body and mind are simply one phenomenon.

II. How did the idea of “in” the mind develop? As any profound idea, it emerged slowly over time.
   A. By the 4th century, Saint Augustine spoke about the soul as a Christian concept, literally separate from the body.
   B. Nevertheless, like Aristotle, Augustine did not have a distinct notion of experience.

III. Much intellectual work took place before humans described their experience, as opposed to their being, in the world.
   A. Heidegger returned to the idea of all collapsed into one. Being in the world could not be separated into a mind experiencing a world outside of it, which is Cartesian dualism.
   B. Descartes thought we knew the mind better than anything else, because we are minds. Then there is this world, and it is a world we experience, but we do not experience it immediately. It is mediated by our senses, by our thoughts, ideas, and understanding. To know the world involves inference from our own ideas, impressions, and sensations. The existence of a world is, in some sense, like this perception.
   C. This line of thought leads quickly to skepticism. Is it possible that we just have ideas, and there is no world? Descartes certainly was wrong that we know our minds immediately and indubitably. We can be wrong about what goes on in our minds, and, with regard to the emotions, we can be wrong about what we feel.
   D. As Freud pointed out, when it comes to understanding our own emotions, we are not necessarily in a privileged position. He suggested that we misunderstand the nature of emotion itself.
   E. Immanuel Kant dedicated a good part of his career to showing that the world as we experience it is phenomenal, a term he borrowed from the Greeks to mean “as it appears.” The world as we experience it is not the world in itself.
   F. By the time we get to Hegel, it does not make sense to talk about things in themselves or something independent of experience. Kant and Hegel say that trying to separate the two is a mistake.
   G. The 20th-century Czech-German philosopher Edmund Husserl invented a discipline called phenomenology, borrowing the term from Hegel and, ultimately, from Kant and from the Greeks. The claim is that all of our experience, everything mental, has an object outside of us, independent of us in the world.
1. It does not make sense to talk simply about “the mind” and the contents of the mind, because the mind always refers beyond itself to the world. That is intentionality.

2. My particular claim is that all emotions are intentional. They are ways of engaging with the world.

H. The movement from Kant to Hegel to Husserl has to do with replacing the language of “in” the mind with talk about our engagement in the world.

IV. Heidegger provides a unified sense of experience as a sense of being in the world. He gave a very special place to “moods.”

A. Whereas emotions tend to be intentional in a fairly straightforward way, moods take as their objects the whole world.

B. For Heidegger, moods are our way of being tuned into the world. The idea that moods give us profound insight into the world is one of Heidegger’s most important contributions.

C. That idea is combined with the thought that we should not talk about moods as something inside of us, as something personal and private, but rather, as part of an intricate relationship between ourselves and the world.

D. It does not make sense to break that intricate relationship into pieces. It does not make sense to talk about moods or emotions in the mind.

V. Sartre picked up from Husserl and Heidegger and gave their ideas a unique twist.

A. Emotions, he said, are acts of consciousness in which we engage with the world, whether with the particular objects of our emotions or with the general objects of our moods.

B. As James and Freud pointed out, the body has an important place in emotions. Sartre agreed by saying that emotions are acts of a certain sort, acts in which we try to escape from a difficult situation.

1. Sartre mentions resentment, which he says is an act by which we escape responsibility for a world that we find too difficult.

2. Where does the body enter in? There is a kind of physiology of resentment.

3. William James argued that we have the physiological response, which gives rise to the sensations that are the emotion, which in turn, perhaps give rise to behavior that characterizes the emotion.

4. By contrast, Sartre argued that it is the other way around. We start with a recognition of the difficulty of the situation, and we act to change not only our behavior but our physiology. Sartre would say that it is not the physiology that characterizes and causes the emotion but, rather, the emotion that creates the physiology.

5. Infants express their emotions and obviously do not deliberate or plan their expressions. As we grow up, we learn to control our expression and, with the expression, the emotion. Of course, culture helps a great deal here.

6. Nevertheless, the idea of emotions in the mind gives way to the concept of emotion, which is as an engagement with the world.

VI. This line of thought leads to an interesting alternative account.

A. It is not just that you get angry and express it. Rather, the anger itself is out there in social space.

1. Maybe you have not displayed it enough that another person knows that it is there.

2. Nevertheless, the emotional expression is not just the outward manifestation of something happening inward, but the emotion itself is something in social space. It is between people.

B. I would even argue that there is politics of emotion, that emotions are not individual, personal, or private. Almost all emotions, with some exceptions, have to do with our relationships with other people.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought.*
Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions.*

**Questions to Consider:**
1. What is wrong or misleading about thinking of emotions as being “in” the mind? (Where else could they be?)
2. Which emotions are essentially social? Anger? Love? Shame? Embarrassment? Pride? How is it that these emotions can sometimes seem “private”? 
Timeline


3rd c. B.C.E. ................................... Philosophical school of Stoicism organized in Athens by Zeno of Citium and Chrysippus; one of its tenets was detachment from emotions.

354–430 ...................................... Life of St. Augustine, Neoplatonic Christian thinker.

1225–1274 .................................... Life of St. Thomas Aquinas, Christian thinker in the Scholastic tradition.

1588–1679 .................................... Life of British political philosopher Thomas Hobbes.

1632–1704 .................................... Life of British empiricist philosopher John Locke.

1739 ............................................. David Hume, Treatise of Human Nature.

1751 ............................................. David Hume, An Inquiry into Principles of Morals.

1755 ............................................. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, On the Origins of Inequality.

1759 ............................................. Adam Smith, A Theory of the Moral Sentiments.


1776 ............................................. Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations.

1781 ............................................. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason.

1788 ............................................. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason.

1788–1860 .................................... Life of the pessimistic German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer.

1789 ............................................. Jeremy Bentham outlines the ethical theory of utilitarianism in An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation.

1790 ............................................. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment.

1807 ............................................. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit.

1843 ............................................. John Stuart Mill, System of Logic.

1859 ............................................. Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species.

1861 ............................................. John Stuart Mill’s statement of utilitarian ethical theory, Utilitarianism.

1871–1945 .................................... Life of experimental physiologist Walter B. Cannon, known for his concept of the “wisdom of the body.”

1890 ............................................. William James, Principles of Psychology.

1900 ............................................. Sigmund Freud, Interpretation of Dreams.

1901 ............................................. Edmund Husserl develops the theory of phenomenology in Logical Investigations.

1902 ............................................. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience.

1905 ............................................. Edmund Husserl, Ideas.

1913–1914 .................................... American psychologist John Watson writes the founding text of behaviorism, Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist.

1915 ............................................. Sigmund Freud, Meta-Psychological Essays.


1920s–1930s ................................. The Vienna Circle, proponents of Logical Positivism.
1928................................................ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*.
1937–1944...................................... Theory of emotivism articulated by the American philosopher Charles Leslie Stevenson.
1938................................................ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions*.
1946................................................ Theory of existentialism popularized by Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Existentialism Is a Humanism*.
1953................................................ Errol Bedford, “Emotions.”
1970................................................ Sylvan Tomkins, “Affect as Primary Motivational System.”
1980................................................ Robert Zajonc, “Thinking and Feeling” makes an important attempt to refute the “cognitivist” analysis of emotion.
1983................................................ Howard Gardner proposes a theory of “multiple intelligences.”
1986................................................ Nico Frijda, *The Emotions*, one of the most far-ranging and innovative psychological accounts of emotions as “action tendencies.”
1987................................................ Nel Noddings’s feminist book *Caring*.
1988................................................ Catherine Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions*, a powerful anthropological account of the social construction of emotions.
1989................................................ Patricia Churchland, *Neurophilosophy*, one of the first philosophers to take neuroscience really seriously.
1990................................. Paul MacLean, *The Triune Brain*, an early account of the various levels of brain processing.

1990................................. William Lyons, *The Emotions*, a good attempt to link together the cognitive and physiological aspects of emotion.

1990................................. Peter Salovey (and John Mayer), “Emotional Intelligence,” coins the term and offers the original research from which much of Goleman’s 1995 book of the same name derived.

1994................................. Anthony Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*, a very important work that brings together neurology, psychiatry, and philosophy.

1995................................. Author and journalist Daniel Goleman’s bestseller *Emotional Intelligence* introduces that term to much of the American public, also expanding the term to include general social competence.


2001................................. Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*.

2004................................. Jesse Prinz, *Gut Reactions*, an important attempt to resurrect and redefine the Jamesian position on emotions.
Glossary

**action tendencies:** Propensities for directed behavior, built into the nervous system and musculature, preparing the body for fight or flight or whatever else it may have to do, such as fleeing or freezing in fear, attacking in anger, or caressing in love. Also referred to as *action readiness* or *action preparedness*.

**affect program:** A pre-wired syndrome of neuromuscular and hormonal responses.

**agapē:** Greek word meaning love of humanity. *Caritas* in Latin.

**amae:** Japanese name for an emotion of dependency.

**amygdala:** A locus in the subcortical brain that seems to be the center for several “basic” emotions, especially fear.

**apatheia:** Greek term for apathy, freedom from emotions and passions.

**ataraxia:** Greek term meaning peace of mind.

**basic emotion:** An emotion that is (1) universal and (2) inherited through evolution and, therefore, physiologically “hard-wired.”

**bhava:** Indian word for a crude emotion, such as outrage and loss of temper. Contrast with *rasa*.

**caritas:** Latin word meaning love of humanity. Agapē in Greek.

**Cartesian dualism:** The idea that mind and body (brain) are different “substances,” different kinds of things.

**catharsis:** The key terms of Freudian psychoanalysis ultimately became *catharsis*, which essentially is a kind of emptying; *cathectic*, a kind of filling; and *sublimation*, a kind of channeling.

**cerebral cortex:** The “higher” part of the brain.

**cerebral hemispheres:** The “highest” part of the brain.

**ch'i** (also *qì*): The vital force believed in Taoism and other Chinese thought to be inherent in all things.

**cognition** or **cognitive:** Involving knowledge or perception of the world.

**display rules:** Cultural customs and expectations about which emotions should be expressed and how.

**emotion:** Any of a number of mental processes, such as fear, anger, love, and shame, that are neither simple sensations (e.g., feeling pain) nor pure intellect (e.g., thinking about mathematics).

**emotion type:** Anger, for example, as opposed to a specific instance of anger.

**emotional contagion:** Non-cognitive extension of an emotion from one person to another, sometimes just by mere proximity.

**emotional integrity:** The harmony of emotions in a well-ordered personality.

**emotional intelligence:** The idea that emotions provide a distinctive measure of one’s ability to deal with the world and other people.

**emotional regulation:** Term used by psychologists to describe the sense in which emotions do not just happen, but we control them.

**emotivism:** A theory of ethics, proposed by several leading logical positivists, especially English philosopher A. J. Ayer and American philosopher Charles Leslie Stevenson (1908–1979), suggesting that ethics and ethical statements were nothing but expressions of emotion.

**epiphenomenon:** A secondary phenomenon that results from and accompanies another.

**eros:** Greek word meaning erotic love.

**eudaimonia:** Term used by Aristotle to denote living well, flourishing.
**evolution**: The process of natural selection in which some traits and creatures become extinct because they no longer “fit” in their environment.

**evolutionary psychology**: The idea that evolutionary processes explain the specifics of our emotional repertoire.

**Existentialism**: A philosophy that places great emphasis on the particular situations, choices, and feelings of individuals.

**fago**: Ifaluk (a Pacific island) name for an emotion of sad but affectionate compassion.

**feelings**: Any of a wide range of experiences from simple sensations to sophisticated intuitions, often used as a synonym for emotions.

**folk psychology**: Broadly defined as the information lay people have about the mind.

**frame experience**: An aspect of experience that includes a strong emotional sense without any particular emotional object, such as feeling uncomfortable. Déjà vu is one example.

**honte**: French term that refers to being caught up in a scandal, doing something that is against your position, or breaking the rules. Compare with pudeur.

**hubris**: Greek term meaning arrogance against the gods.

**human condition**: Features of the environment, our biology, and our condition that are universal but not necessarily biological.

**hydraulic model**: A popular metaphor in thinking about emotions in impersonal terms of heat and pressure.

**hypercognize**: To give to an emotion a central role, either by extensively analyzing it or encouraging its experience and display.

**Intuitionism**: A meta-ethical theory holding that moral properties are known instinctively.

**judgment**: A cognitive activity that engages the world.

**kinesthetic**: Sensations related to movement.

**Logical Positivism**: Twentieth-century philosophical movement that imposes the same rigor on philosophy as science.

**megalopsychos**: Greek term used by Aristotle; literally, the “great-souled man.” In context, someone who is full of himself, prideful, which the ancient Greeks deemed a virtue.

**menis**: Greek word for rage, considered appropriate primarily for the gods.

**meta-ethics**: Branch of philosophical ethics concerned with the grounds for justifying moral judgments.

**mood**: A state of mind or emotion.

**moral sentiments**: Relatively “calm” passions or emotions that provide the basis for fellow feeling and ethics, notably sympathy or compassion.

**neurosciences**: The new studies of brain anatomy, physiology, and function.

**passions**: The old word for emotions (Greek, pathē), which became bound up in ethics and theology.

**pathē**: Original Greek word for emotions; literally, “suffering.” Plural of pathos.

**phenomenology**: A philosophical method that proceeds by investigating the essential structures of human experience.

**philia**: Greek word for love between friends.

**philosophy**: Investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values, based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods.

**phronēsis**: Term used by Aristotle to refer to the “good judgment” that goes into anger.
psychology: The science that deals with mental processes and behavior. Sometimes used with specific reference to scientific psychology, in contrast with folk psychology.

pudeur: French term meaning embarrassment. Compare with honte.

rasa: Indian term for an aesthetically refined emotion. Contrast with bhava.

Schadenfreude: German term (imported into English as schadenfreude) that means taking delight in another’s misfortune.

Social Constructionism: Argues that (1) cultures, with language, actually create emotions in some sense, and (2) emotions are not natural phenomena; they aren’t basic emotions or affect programs.

Stoicism: An ancient philosophy that treats the universe as benign and intelligent but considers most human emotions irrational.

strategies (of emotion): The idea that (some) emotions have purposes and that the emotion itself is instrumental to that purpose (e.g., intimidation through anger).

subcortical: The more “primitive” parts of the brain, including the hypothalamus, the limbic system, and the amygdala.

teleology: The idea that a process is goal-oriented or purposive.

temperament: The manner of thinking, behaving, or reacting characteristic of a specific person.

universal emotion: See basic emotion.

Utilitarianism: Movement in philosophy and ethics that argues that consequences are the deciding factor in identifying whether an action is good or bad, in particular, whether it adds to the pleasure and happiness of people or gives them pain or causes harm.

valence: Term borrowed from chemistry used to describe emotions in terms of positive versus negative.

Verstehen: German word meaning, literally, understanding. In some contexts, the term refers to empathy.
Biographical Notes

6th Century B.C.E.

Buddha (Gautama Siddhartha; c. 563–c. 483 B.C.E.). Indian philosopher and the founder of Buddhism. Taught the impermanence of all things, the unreality of the self, and how the passions and craving cause suffering.

Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.). Chinese philosopher and the founder of Confucianism. The author (or, in any case, the voice behind) the Analects and other works. Taught the importance of living virtuously and mastering the passions.

Sappho (610–570 B.C.E.). Greek poetess.

4th Century B.C.E.

Aristophanes (c. 448–380 B.C.E.). Greek comedy writer and (without his permission) a character in Plato’s Symposium.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.). Greek philosopher. Author of The Nicomachean Ethics, On the Soul, and many other works. (The dates of the works are disputed.) He defended an ethics based on the virtues, in which the passions played an integral role.


Plato (428–348 B.C.E.). Greek philosopher. Author of The Republic, The Symposium, and many other works. (The dates of the works are disputed.) Wrote of his teacher, Socrates, who taught that reason must govern the passions, though Plato also wrote of the great importance of love (eros).

Socrates (469–399 B.C.E.). Greek philosopher who profoundly influenced Western philosophy through his education of Plato.

3rd Century B.C.E.

Chryssipus (280–206 B.C.E.). Greek Stoic philosopher. Prolific author, although none of his work has survived. He made famous the Stoic conception of the passions as erroneous judgments about one’s place in the world.

1st Century C.E.

Lucius Anneaus Seneca (1–65 C.E.). Roman Stoic philosopher and senator. Author of On Anger (52 C.E.) and other works. He wrote of the horrors and misfortunes of anger and counseled people on how to avoid and control it.

17th Century

René Descartes (1596–1650). French philosopher and, according to many contemporary philosophers, the founder of “modern philosophy.” Author of Meditations (1641), The Passions of the Soul (1649), and other works. He defended a conception of the passions as both physical “animal spirits” and psychological (mental) phenomena.

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). English philosopher who famously argued that people are naturally selfish.

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677). Dutch philosopher and Jewish theologian. Author of The Ethics (1677). He argued, after the Stoics, that emotions were “thoughts,” most of which embodied mistaken conceptions of the world and one’s place in it.

18th Century

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). Philosopher of the German idealism school who argued that experience is phenomenological. That is, the experience itself is of the world as we experience it, not an objective occurrence separate from ourselves.

David Hume (1711–1776). Scottish philosopher and historian. Author of the Treatise of Human Nature (1739), An Inquiry into Principles of Morals (1751), and other works. He engaged in detailed analyses of the passions,
especially pride and love. He argued that reason should be guided by the passions, counter to traditional Platonic thinking.

**Immanuel Kant** (1724–1804). German philosopher and, according to many contemporary philosophers, the greatest modern philosopher. Author of three *Critiques*—of Pure Reason (1781), of Practical Reason (1788), and of Judgment (1790)—among other works. Kant was an avid defender of the primacy of reason in morality and was skeptical of the moral worth of what he called the “inclinations,” including the passions and emotions.

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau** (1712–1778). Swiss philosopher and historian. Author of *On the Origins of Inequality* (1755), *The Social Contract* (1762), and other works. He believed in the innate “goodness” of natural man and defended the moral sentiments as more important than the calculations of reason.

**Adam Smith** (1723–1790). Scottish philosopher and economist. Author of *A Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). The first book defends (as the work of Smith’s friend David Hume did) the importance of the natural moral sentiments, such as sympathy. The second book, his great economic treatise, is often misinterpreted as a defense of pure self-interest, which would contradict the lessons of the earlier book.

**19th Century**

**Charles Robert Darwin** (1809–1882). English naturalist who is credited with the formulation (together with Alfred Russell Wallace) of the theory of evolution in his *Origin of Species* (1859). In 1872, he published *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*.

**William James** (1842–1910). American philosopher and psychologist, pragmatist. Author of *Principles of Psychology* (1890), *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), and many other works. He formulated the physiology-based model of emotion that set the stage for much of the debate in the 20th century in both philosophy and psychology.

**Søren Kierkegaard** (1813–1855). Danish philosopher and, by many accounts, the first existentialist. Author of *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), and many other works. He defended the passionate life, or what he called “passionate inwardness,” and proposed a conception of Christianity based on a passionate “leap of faith.”

**John Stuart Mill** (1806–1873). English philosopher and political economist who was an influential classical liberal thinker and advocate of utilitarianism. Author of *System of Logic* (1843), *On Liberty* (1859), *Utilitarianism* (1963), and many other works.

**Friedrich Nietzsche** (1844–1900). Iconoclastic German philosopher. Author of *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1892), and many other works. He also defended the passionate life, especially a life that recognized the importance of what he called “the will to power.”

**Arthur Schopenhauer** (1788-1860). German philosopher and pessimist who argued for the ultimate meaninglessness of human life.

**20th Century**

**A. J. Ayer** (1910–1989). Oxford philosopher and an advocate of logical positivism. Author of *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936) and other works. He argued that ethics was no more than an expression of emotion.

**Albert Camus** (1913–1960). Algerian-French philosopher, novelist, and essayist, often considered an important existentialist. Author of *The Stranger* (1942), *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), and *The Fall* (1956). His character Meursault in *The Stranger* is curiously devoid of emotions, while his character Clamence in *The Fall* seems to have all the wrong ones.

**Paul Ekman** (1934– ). American psychologist and famed explorer of the expression of emotions in the face.

**Sigmund Freud** (1856–1939). The founder of psychoanalysis and the grand architect of models of the mind throughout most of the 20th century. He emphasized the role of emotions—especially unconscious emotions—as powerful motivational factors and as the meanings of virtually all human activities and feelings. His *Metapsychological Essays* was published in 1915.
Howard Earl Gardner (1943– ). American psychologist and educator and proponent of the important idea of “multiple intelligences.”

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). German philosopher, metaphysician, phenomenologist, and existentialist. Author of *Being and Time* (1927) and many other works. He used phenomenology to investigate the nature of moods as our ways of being “attuned” to the world.

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). German-Czech philosopher and the founder of phenomenology, the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not of anything independent of human consciousness. Author of *Ideas* (1905), *Cartesian Meditations* (1928), and many other works. Phenomenology proved to be a valuable tool for the investigation of emotional experience.


Salovey, Peter (1958– ). Yale psychology professor well known for his work on emotional intelligence, a term he introduced in research papers co-authored with John D. Mayer in 1990.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980). French philosopher, playwright, novelist, phenomenologist, and existentialist. Author of *The Emotions* (1938), *Being and Nothingness* (1943), and many other works. He also used phenomenology to investigate the nature of emotions as “magical transformations of the world.”
Robert C. Solomon, Ph.D.
Quincy Lee Centennial Professor of Business and Philosophy and
Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University Texas at Austin

Robert C. Solomon is best known for his courses on Existentialism at the University Texas at Austin and for his teaching there in the Plan II Honors Program. He is the most recent president of the International Society for Research on Emotions. His previous work for The Teaching Company includes several video and audio courses—No Excuses (on Existentialism), The Will to Power (on Friedrich Nietzsche, with Kathleen M. Higgins)—and several lectures in the Great Minds series.

The author or editor of more than 45 books, Dr. Solomon’s titles include The Passions, In the Spirit of Hegel, About Love, A Passion for Justice, Up the University, and (with Jon Solomon) A Short History of Philosophy, Ethics and Excellence. Other books include ones on Nietzsche (Living with Nietzsche and What Nietzsche Really Said, with Kathleen M. Higgins), A Passion for Wisdom, The Joy of Philosophy, Spirituality for the Skeptic, and Volumes I and II (Not Passion’s Slave and In Defense of Sentimentality) in a three-volume series, The Passionate Life.

Professor Solomon has also written about business in terms of philosophy (A Better Way to Think About Business) and designs instructional programs for corporations and organizations around the world.
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The Passions: Philosophy and the Intelligence of Emotions

Scope:

We are not only “rational” creatures, as Aristotle famously defined us, but we also have emotions. We live our lives through our emotions, and it is our emotions that give our lives meaning. What interests or fascinates us, who we love, what angers us, what moves us, what bores us—those are the things that define us, that give us our character, that constitute our “selves.” But this obvious truth runs afoul of an old prejudice, namely, that our emotions are irrational, even that they are incomprehensible. Our emotions present a danger and interrupt or disturb our lives, because we are passive with regard to them; they “happen” to us.

By contrast, this course is an attempt to understand our emotions—how they provide insight and meaning—and the extent to which we are not passive but active regarding them. Our emotions, according to a recent theory, are imbued with intelligence. And a person’s emotional repertoire is not a matter of fate but a matter of emotional integrity.

Emotions are now a legitimate and booming research enterprise in science and philosophy. This course of 24 lectures is about the emotions as they are now understood. But interest in the emotions has a much older history in our concern with ethics, dating back to Plato and Aristotle in Western philosophy and to the Upanishads, the Buddhists, Confucius, and the Taoists in Asia. It was clear to Aristotle, for example, that emotions (or what he called pathē, “passions”) had an essential role in the good life and were the key to the virtues. It was equally clear to the Stoics, who followed Aristotle, that the passions were dangerous. They distorted our reason and made us unhappy. In the Middle Ages, Saint Thomas Aquinas discussed the emotions at length, both in the context of the “seven deadly sins” (for example, anger, envy, pride) and in his discussions of the virtues (love and faith, for instance). In the 18th century, “moral sentiment” theorists (David Hume, Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau) dominated ethics. Only at the turn of the 20th century did the study of emotions become primarily scientific, with the work of William James and Sigmund Freud, in particular.

Throughout this course, I will talk mainly about emotions in the context of ethics and practical concerns, that is, their role in the good life. To my mind, these practical questions are primary, and scientific evidence and theories inform them, not the other way around. I will not say much about psychopathology, the many ways in which emotions can go seriously wrong. I will be concerned with the more “normal” vicissitudes and problems we have with emotions, how and why they can make us unhappy, how and why they are sometimes irrational. My ethical perspective also dictates another principle of selection. In current science, with its fascinating emphasis on neurology and the structure and processes in the brain, an emotion is primarily defined as a very short-term episode. Given the measures of emotion now in vogue, from a focus on momentary facial expressions to the very expensive use of fMRI and PET scan machines, this makes a lot of sense. But emotions are also durable in ways that are hard to measure by such techniques. They can last a long time. Love, for example, can be lifelong, as can anger and hatred. This longevity sometimes is explained by saying that emotions are dispositions, not mere episodes. But I will insist that emotions are processes that may go on for a long time and transform themselves in all sorts of ways, including into other emotions. For example, love readily gives way to jealousy and grief, and the process of grieving typically includes denial and anger, as well as the depressed feeling that we identify as grief.

What is an emotion? For reasons that will become clear in the lectures, the attempt to address this question itself engenders controversy. The discipline of the person who attempts the definition, his or her research tools and subjects, and his or her motivation—clinical, professional, interpersonal, romantic, pharmaceutical—will make a big difference in the answers that arise out of such an inquiry. A great deal also depends on whether an emotion is thought of as a quick, involuntary reaction or as a process that progresses through time, perhaps for hours, weeks, or years. For now, let me finesse the question, as Aristotle did in his introduction to the subject, and just say that we all know more or less what we mean when we talk about emotions, namely, anger, fear, sadness, love, “getting upset,” joy, and the like. I promise that I will spend a good deal of time laying out the options and explaining why I prefer some to others.

Given that the “good life” is the context in which I like to discuss emotion, one might well expect me to define my terms and say something about what such a life is. But this definition, too, is a matter of great controversy in the history of ethics. Again retreating to Aristotle, he notes that some would say that such a life is pleasure and the
absence of pain; others would say that it is success; and still others, that it is composed of self-reliance and activities that do not depend on other people—living simply, spending one’s time doing creative arts and projects (whatever those might be), and what he called the “life of contemplation,” whether philosophical or spiritual. Such a life, then, is something to be worked out in the course of the lectures and not dogmatically asserted from the outset.

Although I am a philosopher, I have a long-time interest in empirical psychology, sociology, and the new neurology. I want to bring these social sciences and clinical perspectives to bear on these lectures. In addition, I bring my humanistic and philosophical predilections. The first of these inclinations is, as I mentioned, a primary interest in ethics and the way that emotions fit into—or fail to fit into—the good life, a life lived well and happily. The second interest, which I will try to control, is in thinking and talking about emotions in general, as well as about particular emotions in their most general forms. For instance, I am interested in the general concept of human nature and how emotions help to define this nature. My third predilection is a bias toward history. Not only do I think the history of thinking about emotions is fascinating and revealing, but I believe that the emotions themselves are historical. This means, first of all, that they are processes, not discrete forms of momentary experience. But it also means that emotions change over time, that the emotional experiences of one generation or one epoch or one culture are not necessarily the same as those of another. Thus, a history of anger and shame in America reveals a great deal about our social mores and our changing conceptions of ourselves. A history of love in Europe reveals a great deal about changing notions of sex, couples, marriage, the status of women, the nature of the individual, and the place of the passions in our lives.

Three historical periods of thought have especially influenced me. The first is the wisdom of the ancients, both in ancient Greece and Rome and in Asia. The second is the philosophy and psychology of the 18th century, from the moral sentiment theorists to the accusations of “sentimentality” that came to define much of the 19th century. The third is modern European philosophy, especially existentialism and the movement called phenomenology, which produced such outstanding existential phenomenologists as Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. I will also have something to say about the latest discoveries in brain research and social psychology, but they will not be a primary focus of these lectures. My primary focus will be on the roles of the emotions in our lives, the ways they make us happy and unhappy, the ways in which they give our lives meaning, and the ways in which they contribute to virtue and vice and make us good or not-so-good people.

The lectures are divided into three, somewhat unequal, sections:

**Section 1—Passions, Love, and Violence: The Drama of the Emotions** (Lectures Two–Nine), a discussion of anger, fear, love, pride, shame, vengeance, and grief.

**Section 2—Out of Touch with Our Feelings: Misunderstanding the Emotions** (Lectures Ten–Seventeen), the ways in which we misconceive and, consequently, fail to take responsibility for our emotions.

**Section 3—Back in Touch with Our Feelings: How Our Passions Enrich Our Lives** (Lectures Eighteen–Twenty-Four), a positive look at the value and importance of our emotions.
Lecture Thirteen
How Emotions Are Intelligent

Scope: Our emotions are entangled in our efforts to get along with other people and cope with various situations. They give us insight and have intelligence about the world. In other words, they have what philosophers call intentionality and what is now called intelligence. Feelings, especially the bodily feelings that James talked about, do not have intentionality or intelligence. They are mere physiological reactions. But emotions involve conceptually grasping and evaluating the world. To say that emotions have intelligence, in short, is to insist that they involve concepts and conceptualization, values and evaluation. Thus, they involve judgments, cognition. Emotions also have the power to constitute reality in a certain way, to bestow value as well as appraise it—it is our emotions that make us human. This is not in contrast to our much-touted intelligence but in intimate conjunction with it. Because the emotions involve the abilities to conceptualize and evaluate, they can best be understood as evaluative judgments. This is a position put forward 2,000 years ago by those odd philosophers called the Stoics. They thought that all emotions were mistaken judgments. My own position is that emotions are often correct and insightful judgments, and without them, human life would be greatly impoverished.

Outline

I. Emotions are not just feelings, they are not hydraulic mechanisms, and they are not in the mind. What are they? It is time to come face-to-face with the main thesis of the course: Emotions have intelligence.
   A. In the last lecture, I said a little something about moods, largely with reference to Heidegger, but our impression of moods is often rather flighty and transient. We think of a mood as passing.
   B. Heidegger does not mean the term that way, and neither do I. Moods are not just passing and transient but profound. It might be that some moods last only a short time, but there is a more profound sense in which moods last a lifetime in a person’s temperament.
   C. Heidegger also says that moods give us deep insight into the nature of the world. This thesis is echoed, in a way, by the contemporary neurologist Tony Damasio. He has argued that without emotions, there is no such thing as rational decision-making. Emotions and moods give us the meaning of the world; they provide salience to our decisions.
   D. Thus, the idea of emotional intelligence is, foremost, that emotions are engagements with the world that give us insight, but that is not to say that emotions cannot be wrong.
   E. The idea that emotions can be wrong involves concepts and understanding, insight and working engagement. This, in turn, implies the notion of purposiveness, or what Aristotle called teleology, which goes beyond the concept of mechanism.
      1. Mechanism is not opposed to teleology, nor is talking about emotions as mechanisms antithetical to talking about emotions as purposeful, as engagements. Mechanism and teleology can be two different ways of talking about the same system.
      2. Some people have difficulty understanding the idea that the mechanism of emotion is the brain. However, when we talk about human behavior and human experience, we are not talking about mechanism as such—nor are we denying mechanism, because these two ideas go together.
      3. As an example, we might offer a mechanical or causal explanation of how the heart works, or we might describe the function or purpose of the heart. The teleological explanation does not undermine or challenge the mechanical explanation but supplements it.

II. Emotions are also related to intentionality. Many years ago, a young analytic philosopher at Oxford named Anthony Kenny grappled with this question of intentionality with regard to emotions.
   A. The theory that Kenny developed tries to make the distinction between what emotions are and what feelings are, especially feelings of the sort discussed by William James, the sensations that result from physiological changes in the body.
B. Kenny asserts that there are certain kinds of feelings and sensations that do not have intentionality, but there are also certain kinds of feelings, namely, the emotions, that necessarily do have intentionality. Kenny’s idea of intentionality is a central concept for my argument.

C. Kenny says that every type of emotion has its own particular formal object, a term that characterizes the necessary conditions for an emotion to be of a certain kind. This allows us to distinguish one emotion from another quite clearly. The distinction has to do, not with the mechanism, not with the neurology, not with the physiology, but with the nature of the engagement that the emotion involves.

D. One method philosophers use for understanding emotions is conceptual analysis. That is, the idea of formal objects is translated into the concepts that a particular emotion applies to the world.
   1. For example, when you are angry, you find something offensive. When you are in love, you find someone lovable.
   2. By analyzing these concepts, you come to understand what the formal objects are, and when you understand what the formal objects are, you understand the nature of emotions.

III. One of the problems we face in talking about emotions is in describing them as feelings. There is really no sense in which a feeling can be right or wrong, warranted or unwarranted, yet one of the most obvious aspects of emotions is that we talk about them in these evaluative terms all the time.
A. I may get angry at John for taking my car without permission, but if you point out to me that my car is sitting in the driveway untouched, then that’s the end of my anger. It turns out that my anger was wrong.
B. The idea of anger being wrong implies that it could also be right, and to say that it could be either right or wrong is already to give it a kind of intelligence, a kind of evaluative nature that mere feelings do not have.
C. There is also the question of an emotion’s being warranted or unwarranted. For example, I would have no good reason to get angry at John if he accidentally pocketed my pen.
D. As Aristotle says, quite rightly, wisdom is getting angry at the right person in the right situation in the right way to the right degree, and it would be foolish, in some cases, not to get angry. An emotion is intelligent in the sense that it can interpret the world rightly or wrongly, though an emotion can interpret the world correctly yet also so narrowly that it ignores the larger picture. Moods can take in the larger picture.
E. We may also have emotions about things that do not exist at all. For example, I may see a movie or read a book and be moved by the situation of the protagonist. Does the fact that I’m caught up emotionally in a work of fiction make the emotion any less real? The simple answer is no. The anger, fear, or love I feel is real.

IV. To recap what I have said so far, emotional intelligence relates to the fact that emotions involve concepts and evaluations, or appraisals. They are not just feelings, nor are they reactions to the world or to events in the world, but they are acts of consciousness in which we take things in, understand things, appraise things, and evaluate things in a certain way.
A. This appraisal can take place on many different levels, from a highly cognitive, complex, deliberative level, down to a very basic, almost purely bodily level. Nevertheless, the appraisal is a way of engaging the world. This is one of the profound meanings of the term intelligence with regard to emotion.
B. One of the interesting things about our emotional lives is that we do not just evaluate things and we do not just perceive properties of things, but we actually constitute the world as it is. This is part of what I mean by engagement and part of what Heidegger means when he talks about moods tuning us into the world. It is a matter of actually shaping our experience in certain ways.
C. Albert Camus and other philosophers talk with some distance about what we might call the “scientific” concept of the world, in which everything is seen objectively, only in terms of facts. This view, however, deprives our experience of most of its valuable components.
   1. Our reading of the world is not just about information. Our reading of the world is about concerns and interests and caring. We constitute the world according to our interests, and we constitute the world as having properties.
   2. A famous example is caught up in the phrase “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” We can imagine two lovers who are particularly homely, but the one lover thinks of the other as the most beautiful person in the world. This lover sees the other, constitutes the other, and bestows the other with beauty.
3. In other words, one bestows properties on the object of one’s emotion. Only a cynic would say that this is a distortion of reality. Reality is defined by our interest and by the emotions we use to constitute it.

4. All of this involves intelligence, which again, means not deliberating, not necessarily thinking, but using concepts to understand the world.

V. We are deeply indebted to Daniel Goleman and his book *Emotional Intelligence* for making public and popular the point that we are all defined by both our intellectual intelligence and our emotional intelligence.

A. Goleman, however, speaks primarily about intelligence in terms of control, such as the ability to delay gratification or to control impulses. Although this is important, it does not get to the heart of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence, as I understand it, is intelligence *in* the emotions, not just regarding the emotions.

B. Psychologists Peter Salovey and J. D. Mayer point out that emotions are not just brute feelings or physiological reactions: they involve engagements with the world. In particular, these researchers distinguish four different ways in which emotions are intelligent, or in which we are intelligent with regard to our emotions.

1. The first idea is that emotional intelligence has to do with the perception and recognition of one’s own emotions.

2. The second dimension of emotional intelligence can be found in how we use our emotions, in particular, how we use our emotions in rationality, decision-making, planning, and so on.

3. The third aspect of emotional intelligence relates to understanding one’s emotions.

4. Finally, there is the idea that Goleman talks about: managing and controlling one’s emotions.

C. Intelligence in emotions, according to Salovey, Mayer, Goleman, and others, has to do with these four dimensions. But should all of these be called emotional intelligence, and do they all refer to the same thing?

D. Many years ago, Howard Gardner did important work on the nature of intelligence. He pointed out that there are many kinds of intelligence, including mechanical, social, and diplomatic intelligence, and so on.

E. To this list, we now add emotional intelligence, but then, we must ask the same kind of question: Are all these different dimensions—perceiving, using, understanding, and managing our emotions—the same thing? I believe that they are not. Just as Gardner argued that there are many different kinds of intelligence, I would argue that there are many different kinds of emotional intelligence.

F. At the same time, there is a core intelligence, which I call intelligence *in* the emotions. Again, this idea relates to the fact that the emotions involve using concepts, engaging in the world in a more or less intelligent way. The basic idea is that emotions are intelligent because they are ways of perceiving, evaluating, appraising, and understanding the world. That alone is enough to make them important to us.

**Essential Reading:**
Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*.
Jon Elster, *Alchemy of the Mind*, chapter IV.

**Supplementary Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. What is emotional intelligence? In what sense is the intelligence *in* the emotion? Why do we think of the emotions as stupid?

2. Are there different *kinds* of emotional intelligence? Can someone be talented at love but bad at anger, for example? Why do you think this is?
Lecture Fourteen
Emotions as Judgments

Scope: I have been building up to a “theory” of emotions, that is, a way of thinking about them that not only makes sense of our experience but also explains what has been called emotional intelligence and accounts for the deep insights often found through our emotions. In the last lecture, I said that the emotions can best be understood as judgments. In this lecture, I would like to explain in some detail just what this means. An understanding of emotions involves an understanding of the judgments that structure them. I will go through several of the emotions we have discussed, including anger, shame, embarrassment, hatred, envy, and resentment, to show how this is the case.

Outline

I. In this lecture, we will learn what it means for an emotion to involve concepts and judgments, evaluations and appraisals.
   A. The last few lectures should have dispelled the notion that an emotion is a peculiar feeling of one kind or another. Rather, an emotion is characterized by a way of seeing and engaging with the world.
   B. You know what you feel by seeing what the world is like, at least what the world is like to you. You know you are angry because suddenly another person looks offensive to you. You know you are in love because another person looks lovely to you. Emotions are constituted by judgments. The shorthand slogan is: “Emotions are judgments.”
   C. This idea is similar to the theory that was argued by the ancient Stoics. Emotions are not just feelings, or what the Stoics called first movements, but they are the judgments we make about those first movements, the evaluative judgments we make about the world.
      1. What kind of judgments are these? Judgment is often construed as something deliberative and reflective, but we also make moral or personal judgments that are more or less instantaneous.
      2. People sometimes criticize the idea that emotions are judgments or that emotions are cognitive by saying that we do not think about emotions. Yet judgment is a way of evaluating and appraising the world, and it can happen in a very basic, bodily way. It does not have to be, in any sense, fully conscious or deliberate.
   D. To say that emotions are constituted by judgments and that is how we know what we feel is to understand how we distinguish among different kinds of emotions.
      1. In 1962, two Columbia psychologists, Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer, conducted an experiment, in which they stimulated a state of arousal by giving undergraduates “vitamin shots” that were actually shots of adrenalin.
      2. The researchers then put the students in different situations and found, not surprisingly, that they described their emotions on the basis of the situation, not on the basis of the feelings they had. The feelings were the same across the board, but of course, the situation made the feeling into one emotion rather than another.
      3. Schachter and Singer characterized this as the labeling of emotion; however, they really showed that an emotion is not about “the feeling” but is recognized in terms of the way one perceives the world.

II. Let’s turn to the question of how we discriminate among our emotions.
   A. Consider one prominent emotion family that we have talked about several times, the anger family. We will look at three members of this family: anger, irritation, and indignation.
      1. What is the difference in these emotions? Some people have tried to define the difference in terms of intensity: Irritation is like an itch, anger is like a pain, and indignation is agony. However, this categorization is not accurate. The level of intensity, or arousal, does not relate to the type of anger you experience.
      2. When we try to categorize these different members of the anger family, we find that there is some principle at stake. When you are irritated, you see a situation as bothersome, but you do not find it offensive. In anger, you see a situation that is personally offensive, but it does not have any moral weight. In indignation, you perceive a situation that is morally infuriating.
B. This kind of distinction goes all the way through the emotional world. Again, let’s recall the differences between embarrassment and shame, between shame and guilt, and between remorse and regret. It would be hard to distinguish exactly the differences in feelings of these emotions, but if we are talking about a way of engaging with the world, we can readily differentiate them.

1. As noted earlier, you experience embarrassment when you are caught in an awkward situation; you become self-conscious, but you do not blame yourself for anything. In contrast, when you are ashamed, you experience self-blame. You realize that you have let others down or you have violated an important custom.

2. The differences between shame and guilt are more subtle still, having to do with the nature of the violation and whether you see yourself primarily in terms of some group or whether you see yourself as an individual.

3. In remorse, you judge yourself as having done something seriously wrong, but in regret, the situation is fairly routine—you have done something that you wish you hadn’t.

4. The judgments in these emotions involve responsibility, and if we think about emotions as just feelings, that does not seem to fit at all. If, however, we understand emotions as sophisticated and cultivated ways of grappling with the world, then the idea that responsibility is an essential component is not surprising.

C. Let’s look at members of another emotion family: hatred, contempt, and resentment. In a sense, we might say that these are similar. They all have to do with negative or hostile attitudes toward another person.

1. Think about the conceptual differences among the three. If you have contempt for someone, you tend to look down on him or her; you see yourself as superior to the other person.

2. The image of resentment is just the opposite; you are, in a sense, looking up to someone. You resent someone who is superior, because he or she is more powerful, luckier, or has more status.

3. Hatred is an emotion of equality. It is mythologized in battles of good versus evil, but the two opposing sides have an equal status.

4. Just as we see that responsibility is a sophisticated judgment that enters into different emotions, so, too, does the idea of status.

D. We can also identify emotional judgments of distance. In love, for example, one holds the other close; love is an intimate emotion. In contrast, we want the object of our contempt as far away as possible.

E. Further, we might point to the activity or passivity built in to an emotion. The best example of an active emotion is anger. When you are angry, it takes willpower not to do something. In sadness or grief, however, you do not have any impulse to take action.

F. At the same time, we must understand that an emotion is constituted not by a single judgment or a single dimension of judgment, but it is a complex of judgments.

III. The fact that an emotion involves multidimensional, converging judgments leads me back to a concept that I introduced at the beginning of this lecture series, namely, the idea of a basic emotion.

A. A basic emotion, according to a many psychologists and neurologists, is one that is part of an essential set. It is hard-wired, in some sense; it involves neurology, the musculature, and perhaps, the hormones; and it is the same in all human beings.

B. Throughout our discussions, we have debated whether that is actually true, and we have noted that there may be many more cultural variables than people who talk about basic emotions would allow.

C. If I am right that different dimensions of judgment constitute an emotion, then we could imagine constructing a multidimensional matrix of these judgments. We would have a point on the matrix where, for example, certain judgments of status, responsibility, distance, activity versus passivity, good versus bad, and so on constitute a certain emotion. A different configuration of judgments would constitute a different emotion.

D. Which emotions in this matrix, then, are basic? We can see, obviously, that there are no basic emotions; there are only emotions that are this configuration or that configuration. There may also be configurations of judgments for which we do not have names or configurations for which we do not have the experience of an emotion.
E. The overall point here is that an emotion is identified in terms of the judgments that make it up. What we need to know in terms of knowing what we feel is not a function of arousal or neurology but a function of how we see ourselves engaging in the world.

IV. I began this lecture by saying that an emotion is a lot like a kinesthetic judgment; it is a reaction to our world, but it is a reaction we have without thinking about it, without bringing it into consciousness. This does not mean that consciousness is not part of the picture. Quite the contrary, as we will see, reflection—understanding our emotions, being aware of our emotions—is one of the most important aspects of our emotional life.

Essential Reading:
Martha Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought.
Paul Griffiths, What Emotions Really Are, chapter 1.
Aaron Ben-Zeev, The Subtlety of Emotions.

Supplementary Reading:
Jerome Neu, A Tear Is an Intellectual Thing.
Seneca, On Anger.
Martha Nussbaum, The Therapy of Desire.

Questions to Consider:
1. What distinguishes resentment from contempt, shame from embarrassment? Do these distinctions depend on the context in which one has the emotion?
2. Try to give an analysis of jealousy in terms of its component judgments. How about envy? Admiration?
Lecture Fifteen
Beyond Boohoo and Hooray

Scope: One of the most obvious distinctions between different and “opposite” emotions is the simple judgment of valence. Some things are judged favorably; others are judged unfavorably. Obviously, this is not peculiar to emotions or to human beings. One-celled organisms approach and devour some substances while avoiding others. In everyday parlance, of course, we often employ the idea of positive and negative emotions, the most evident example being the polarity of love and hate, which are supposed “opposites.” In this lecture, I cast doubt on the distinction between positive and negative emotions. We will consider anger—one of the most notoriously negative emotions—as an example, but we will see that the definition of anger as a negative emotion is by no means clear. In my own research, I have delineated no fewer than a dozen or so different dimensions along which positive-negative judgments can be located. In our thinking about the emotions in general, we should be much more attentive and receptive to the richness of emotional intelligence and not reduce the subtlety of emotions to a simple “Hooray!” or “Boo!”

Outline

I. Among the many judgments embodied in an emotion is one of approval or disapproval. In our discussion of the various dimensions of judgment that go into an emotion, I skimmed over this one as obvious, but it becomes less so when we begin to consider both evaluations in an emotion and evaluations of an emotion.
   A. There is a longstanding tradition in studying emotions to describe them as positive or negative; contemporary philosophers and psychologists have borrowed a term from chemistry to identify emotions as having valence—plus or minus. This is sometimes reduced to the simple dichotomy of pleasure and pain, or pleasure and no pleasure.
   B. Here again, we see that something complicated about emotions is reduced to something that is very basic, crude, and unintelligent. In this lecture, I would like to characterize what I see as the complexity of valence or the complexity of the opposition of plus and minus.
   C. We often have the idea that an emotion is something for or against, but I argue that an emotion is rarely that simple. Pleasure, for example, is so complicated that it cannot be reduced to a single kind of experience or feeling, and pain is not just the other side of pleasure.

II. Let us start by discussing a few emotions that we have already explored.
   A. Love is often considered the most positive emotion, but the truth is, as we all know, that love involves pain, jealousy, and anger.
   B. Anger is often at the top of the list of negative emotions, but as I pointed out in talking about Aristotle, anger can also be righteous. It can be instrumental, for example, in fighting oppression.
   C. Fear is another negative emotion, but as we noted, fear may be the most valuable of all our emotions. Without it, we would perish. We also saw that we can enjoy fear, such as when we watch a horror movie.
   D. We sometimes evaluate emotions based on their healthiness. We are told that anger is bad for us and that love or compassion may make us live longer.
   E. All of these either/or evaluations seem somewhat simple-minded. I believe that the idea of valence, the positive and negative aspects of emotion, is not just a simple distinction between pleasure and pain but, rather, a complicated network of different kinds of evaluations or appraisals, some of which are actually in the emotion and some of which are about the emotion and its consequences.

III. We will start with an idea that has been central to this course, that is, that the psychology of emotions is related to ethics and the concept of the good life.
   A. The degree of approval that goes into our estimation of emotions may be based on the question of whether they are conducive or counter to good ethics. Yet right away, we encounter another ambiguity: There are different conceptions of ethics, some of which are distinct in different cultures and in our own culture.
1. For instance, the distinction between right and wrong involves the application of certain kinds of rules or principles. Philosophically, this idea was championed by the great philosopher Immanuel Kant, who said that there are certain rules of rationality that determine whether an action is right or wrong.

2. There is also a countermovement in philosophy and ethics called utilitarianism. Such figures as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill argued that what makes an action good or bad is its consequences, in particular, whether the action adds to the pleasure and happiness of people or causes harm.

B. Finally, there is another conception of ethics, called virtue ethics. It is intrinsic to Aristotle, and it is also at the heart of what is often misunderstood in Nietzsche’s ethics. Here, virtues and vices come into play, but we know that what counts as a virtue or a vice is embedded in a particular culture.

IV. The reason for this mini-lecture on ethics is that the judgment of whether an emotion is positive or negative depends in part on which of these conceptions of ethics is applied.

A. For example, obedience to certain rules may be positive in one sense, but the consequences of obedience, whether it causes harm or pleasure, might result in a different evaluation. An action may be virtuous but cause disastrous consequences, as we see in Dostoevsky’s novel The Idiot. In terms of emotions, what principles of ethics are used for positive or negative judgments?

B. This line of thinking depends on the simple-minded view that emotions are subject to a pro or con type of evaluation. So let us think again about anger, for example. As we said, anger involves a negative evaluation of the object of one’s anger, but we also find in anger a positive evaluation of oneself.

C. In love, obviously, one has a positive evaluation of the love object but also of oneself. More properly speaking, one has a positive evaluation of the relationship. In hatred, the emphasis is on the relationship, rather than the subject or object; the result is respect mixed with hostility.

D. Thus, the idea of plus or minus valence is of limited value, because that determination implies a single evaluation, when we are really dealing with multiple evaluations.

V. Spinoza, one of the great philosophers writing about emotions, lists pleasure and pain as emotions themselves, in fact, as the “basic” emotions. Nico Frijda, a great contemporary philosopher and psychologist, followed Spinoza in describing pleasure and pain as basic but disagreed with him that they are emotions themselves.

A. What do we mean by pleasure and pain? Are pleasure and pain opposites? Are they measured on the same scale, or are they even measurable?

B. Of course, on one level, we can say that pain and pleasure are measurable, especially if we are talking about things of the same sort, such as enjoying cocoa more than tea. When we start mixing genres, however, we encounter the problem of incommensurability.

C. Jeremy Bentham, an 18th-century utilitarian, had a rather intricate calculus for adding up and balancing pleasures and pain, but it was upended by one of his brilliant young disciples, John Stuart Mill. Bentham famously said, “Pushpin [a mindless game] is as good as poetry.” He did not take into account qualitative differences in pleasure or pain.

D. To make the question of measurement more complicated, I said at the beginning of this lecture that I really do not think there is such a thing as pleasure. Aristotle made the same point, concluding that the experience of pleasure did not exist. Instead, pleasure is the enjoyment of things, and the primary source of enjoyment is doing certain activities well.

1. Aristotle’s thesis is reinforced by contemporary psychological research: Enjoyment is at the foundation of pleasure, and enjoyment involves, among other things, mastery of the things you do.

2. However, pleasure is not an experience in itself. As Aristotle puts it, pleasure completes the activity; it is part of the activity.

E. By contrast, we know that pain is unquestionably real. Yet even pain can be puzzling in some ways. Think of something that is intrinsically painful, and ask yourself, “What makes it so?” The answer is, to some degree, context.

F. Pleasure and pain, then, are much more complicated than it originally seems. Pleasure is not an experience; it is not a feeling in itself. Pain, by contrast, seems like an experience in itself; it is not, however, just a simple set of sensations but an interpretation of the context in which we experience these sensations.
VI. Emotions are much more complicated, detailed, and perplexing than we expect them to be. When we reduce the complexity of emotion to something as simple as positive and negative or something as crude as pleasure and pain, we miss the importance that emotions have in our lives and the subtle distinctions that we find both within and about emotions.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Is anger always a “negative” emotion? In what way is it so, and in what way may it not be?
2. Is pleasure a feeling? A sensation? Is it an emotion? Must an emotion, such as love or joy, always be pleasurable? Do you ever find anger or hatred to be pleasurable? Why?
Dimensions of Evaluation

"positive"
that is good
that gives me pleasure
that makes me happy
that is right
this is a virtue
approach
approval
innervating
that is healthy
that makes me calm, comfortable
this is conducive to happiness
positive attitude to object
positive attitude to self
positive attitude to relationship
this object has high status
I have high (or higher) status
You have high (or higher) status
It is your responsibility (praise)
I take responsibility (and praise)

"negative"
that is bad
that gives me pain
that makes me sad
that is wrong
this is a vice
avoidance
disapproval
enervating
that is unhealthy
that makes me "upset"
this is conducive to unhappiness
negative attitude to object
negative attitude to self
negative attitude to relationship
this object has low status
I have low (or lower) status
You have low (or lower) status
It is your responsibility (blame)
I take responsibility (and blame)
Lecture Sixteen
Emotions Are Rational

Scope: If emotions have intelligence, then there is a strong justification for thinking that they are also rational, at least in the sense that they make enough of a commitment to the world to be right or wrong. Yet it is commonly supposed that all emotions are irrational, in other words, they have no intelligence. But if emotions can be wrong, they can also sometimes be right. So sometimes, to say that an emotion is rational is to say two things: first, that an emotion can be right or wrong; second, that an emotion is right or reasonable. Even if an emotion is wrong or unreasonable, therefore, it is still rational in the general sense. So some emotions are indeed irrational. Our anger is often counterproductive to getting what we want. Hatred between nations and ethnic groups causes wars and disasters. Love is as often foolish as it is wise. There are things to be afraid of, but there are many fears that are irrational. To say that an emotion is irrational is to say that it has, in some way, seriously missed its target. The ultimate aim of our emotions is to enhance our lives, to make them better, to help us get what we want out of life. Rationality is maximizing our well-being, and our emotions are rational insofar as they further our well-being, irrational insofar as they diminish or degrade it. In this lecture, I will also spend some time talking about the rationality of love.

Outline

I. A well-known joke at the expense of economists goes, “If you’re so smart, why aren’t you rich?” In describing emotions as intelligent, we might properly ask, “If emotions have intelligence, why are they so often so dumb?” Emotions can be self-destructive or completely beside the point. Emotions can be, to put it mildly, unintelligent.

A. The worst example of this is, of course, the emotion of hatred. The ethnic and religious strife that has torn the world apart for centuries is a testimony to human irrationality and the irrationality of emotions. We also know that anger and love can be foolish, and we can even have completely irrational fears of things that are not really dangerous. We might ask, then, which emotions are irrational, and under what circumstances?

B. Some people would say that all emotions are irrational, that the very fact that they are emotions means they are irrational. Others might say that emotions are not so much irrational as they are nonrational. These people might describe emotions as vestiges of our bestial past or as physiological responses.

C. We might also say that an emotion is rational if it is on target and irrational if it is somehow off target. If I am right when I say that emotions are structured by judgments, then judgments, unlike physiological responses, can be wise or foolish, warranted or unwarranted, appropriate or inappropriate, strategically wise or strategically foolish.

II. To decide whether an emotion is on target, we must ask which emotions we are talking about and what is at stake.

A. Let’s begin with anger. For anger to be on target, it must be directed at the right person—someone who has done something offensive. If, for example, you get angry at your boss, come home, and scream at your cat or your children, your anger is clearly irrational. Its cause may be warranted, but its object is unwarranted.

B. For anger to be on target, the emotion itself must also be warranted. Someone may do something mildly annoying or irritating to you, but to get angry about the offense would be irrational.

C. Keep in mind that rationality is not the equivalent of truth. We may get angry at someone who, in fact, has not done what we think he or she has done, even though all the evidence points that way. Our anger in this case might be understandable, but it is not rational. That is, we can explain it easily enough, but we cannot justify it.

D. The larger point here is that emotions are strategies; they are not just reactions or responses to situations. Thus, for an emotion to be rational, it must get the target right, it must get the warrant right, and it must serve a larger purpose.

E. Some people might say that anger is always detrimental, that it always subtracts from the quality of our lives. However, as we noted in an earlier lecture, the feminist movement thrived by recognizing the
legitimacy of certain kinds of anger that enhanced a great many people’s lives. We can say, then, that an emotion is rational insofar as it maximizes our well-being.

F. Aristotle makes the point that life is not about just survival but about living well, about flourishing, what he calls *eudaimonia*. Nietzsche also suggests that emotions maximize our lives; in particular, the creative emotions bring out parts of us that otherwise would lay fallow. The idea is that emotions are rational insofar as they make us better people.

III. In looking at the question of the rationality of emotions, we must also ask when emotions are irrational. Most emotions can enhance our lives and be perfectly warranted, at least some of the time, but some seem to be either rational or irrational across the board.

A. One candidate for an emotion that seems to be always irrational is envy, the central ingredient in which is dissatisfaction with what one has. American advertising sometimes plays on this to an embarrassing degree. Attempting to make people dissatisfied with their lives is itself detrimental to human happiness.

B. Another emotion, joy, seems as if it is always rational, but it, too, can be inappropriate. Obviously, if you seem joyful and optimistic at a funeral, you will probably garner some serious criticism.

1. One subset of joy, cheerfulness, seems to be an American specialty. Americans tend to think of cheerfulness as the proper outlook on the world.

2. Many Europeans, however, especially those who lived through World War II and the Holocaust, see life as a serious, even grim business. They view the American emphasis on cheerfulness as inappropriate at best and, at worst, obscene.

3. Again, we must say that joy is not a rational emotion on all occasions; its rationality is a matter of context.

C. Depression is another example of an emotion that seems irrational, but psychologists have found that people who are depressed tend to see the world more realistically than those who are either joyful or contented. If we are defining emotions as rational if they are on target, then it looks like depression is rational.

D. Finally, a great deal of research has shown that people who are religious are happier and more well adjusted, tend to live longer, have better immune systems, and so on than people who are not religious.

1. This raises a serious philosophical question: Is that a good reason for becoming religious? If you found out you could be healthier and happier by believing in Buddhism, Christianity, or Judaism, would that by itself be a good reason for believing?

2. We will leave that as a question. It might be—as the research about depression suggested—that religion is a distorted way of seeing the world, but at the same time, it might be perfectly rational in the sense of enhancing one’s life.

IV. Aristotle noted that anger, in particular, but all emotions to some degree, involves *phronēsis*, “good judgment.”

A. This judgment takes into account the situation, the people involved, and so on and comes to the right conclusion based on several different dimensions. In other words, we have talked about being angry at the right person, but we must also consider being angry for the right reason and in the right way and expressing that anger to the right degree.

B. Aristotle also says that if you have good reason to get angry and you don’t, it is not that you are a saint or a superior human being but a fool. Aristotle sees that anger is not just a way of expressing yourself, but it is sometimes obligatory.

C. If we consider love, we know that some romantics think that love is always rational because it is such a wonderful emotion. Such phrases as “Better to have loved and lost…” would suggest that love is never misdirected—that it is always appropriate and, therefore, rational.

D. Others might say that love is always irrational; we are “swept away” by love. Of course, this is not a negative statement about love, but it is part of its charm; it is something we should hope for—the idea of love sweeping us away and bringing us to another place.

E. The idea that love is *always* rational or irrational is mistaken. We all know that love can be irrational: You can fall in love with someone who is entirely inappropriate for you or someone who is impossible to attain. You can become obsessed in love and smother the object of your affections. However, it is also true that
one of love’s charms is that it is tenacious; it holds on, it has a way of seeing its way through obstacles and frustration.

F. The question of whether love or any emotion is appropriate, inappropriate; possible, impossible; rational, or not rational is a matter of the particular circumstance and the particular people. We cannot say that emotions in general are rational or irrational; instead, we must ask: Is this emotion on this occasion rational or irrational? Is it wise or foolish? Does it enhance or subtract from the quality of our lives?

Essential Reading:
Patricia Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons.*
Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind,* chapter IV.
Antonio Damasio, *Descartes’ Error.*

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. When does one have a right to be jealous? Does this always depend on “the facts”? When is jealousy unreasonable? Irrational? Insane?
2. How does love go wrong in your experience? (I’m not just asking about your own experience in love.)
Lecture Seventeen
Emotions and Responsibility

Scope: To say that emotions are strategies is to say that emotions are, to some extent, our “doing,” not just something that happens to us. Even in Aristotle’s word *pathē* (passions), the idea is that emotions are “sufferings”—things we suffer in life. Thus, we talk about passions using variants of the hydraulic model, images of exploding, erupting, being struck, being invaded, being felled, and “falling.” Yet as we give up the hydraulic metaphor and its variants in favor of a more rational and rich model of the emotions, we find ourselves less enamored of this “passivity” conception of the passions, as well. We might want to hold onto some conception of passion to cover those instances of emotion that do get out of hand and beyond control—obsession, compulsion, and neurosis—but with the understanding that these are deviant instances of emotion. Most of our emotions, most of the time, are not entirely beyond our control. They do not just happen to us, but we “do” them. We will see as examples getting angry and “falling” in love.

Outline

I. The idea that emotions are strategies raises some interesting questions, because the notion of strategy is opposed to the traditional idea of emotions as passions. In fact, when Aristotle gave a name to this whole group of phenomena, he called them *pathē* (plural for *pathos*), meaning “sufferings.”
   A. To think of emotions as a form of suffering means that they happen to you, but to say that an emotion is a strategy is to suggest that it has an end in view, a goal; consequently, it is something we “do.”
   B. This suggestion is often greeted with skepticism, partly because our language is filled with metaphors about emotions happening to us: We are struck by jealousy or paralyzed by fear. The hydraulic metaphor that we spoke about several lectures ago is key to this idea of passions happening to us.
   C. If, however, we view emotion as a form of self-control or a form of expression, if we look at the relationship between emotions and reason or emotions and reflection, the resulting image is not one of master and slave but something more like boss and employee.
   D. We still want to acknowledge the word *passion*, although perhaps not in its traditional meaning. We seem to have two different ways of understanding passion.
      1. We use the word *passion* when we talk about an emotion that gets out of hand, such as the idea of being swept away by love or of raging out of control.
      2. We also use *passion* to describe a person’s devotion to some activity. In this sense, passion is not something that happens to you, but it is a matter of continuously renewed commitment.

II. For the last 10 years or so, psychologists have put forth the idea of emotional regulation, which seems to imply that we control our emotions. Even this idea, however, can be problematic.
   A. In one sense, the control of emotions can be purely physiological: If I experience a strong emotion, such as anger, I may also experience a kind of counter-reaction that takes place on a neurological level. This is something like a thermostat that turns on the air conditioner when the house gets too hot. Again, I find this understanding of emotional control to be too mechanical.
   B. An alternative can be found in the idea of choosing one’s emotions, but we rarely deliberate about how we are going to feel as if we were selecting emotions from a menu.
   C. The idea of control is also ambiguous because what we generally mean by controlling one’s emotions is controlling the expression of emotions. I may be angry at my wife, but I may be able to control the expression of my anger because I want to maintain a good relationship with her.
   D. We might also think about constraining our emotions. I may be in love with a woman, but I know that saying to her, “I love you madly” is a bad strategy. Instead, I show constraint; nonetheless, my feelings remain. It is the expression of my feelings that I have constrained.
      1. Religious traditions often embody this concept, and interestingly enough, the religious interpretation is much like mine. The traditional Christian thinkers—Augustine, Aquinas, and so on—often talk about not just controlling the expression of emotion but controlling the emotion itself. There is a sense in
which you are responsible for your emotions, which is deeper than simply having control or constraint over their expression.

2. The same idea can be found in Buddhism, which emphasizes eliminating emotions even more than their expression. The thought, again, is that you are responsible for what you feel.

III. Think for a moment about what it means to have something in control or, to put it in a different way, to take responsibility. In this sense, emotions are often contrasted with thoughts: We are responsible for our thoughts but not for our emotions, because we don’t “do” our emotions.

A. We all have some thoughts that are, without question, ours, but we also have thoughts that just seem to pop into our heads.

1. Many of us have had the experience of working on a problem during the day, then suddenly waking up at night with the solution. You are usually perfectly happy to take ownership of that solution, even though it just seems to have appeared in your mind.

2. We have also had the experience of a violent or otherwise unwanted thought that we do not want to take responsibility for.

3. The idea here is that thoughts, which we normally take to be within our control, are, in fact, much more complicated.

4. Philosophers often view issues as if they fall on one of two sides that are radically opposed. On the one hand, there is intentional, deliberate, rational action; on the other hand, there are things that happen to you. I suggest, however, that there is vast space in between, where actions are not deliberate, not reflective, but at the same time, they are still actions, not simply passive sufferings.

B. One philosopher who has explored this area is Jean-Paul Sartre, who termed emotions “magical transformations of the world.”

1. In Sartre’s view, an emotion is something we do and a way of exercising certain kinds of strategies. We form a way of perceiving or constituting the world such that an experience that is frustrating, for example, turns into something else. The classic example is the fox and the grapes in Aesop’s fables.

2. Sartre also says, however, that emotions are “pre-reflective.” In other words, an emotion is not deliberate, not even articulate; it is something that, if asked at the time, you might well deny that you have or, if you admit that you have it, you would certainly deny its purpose. [In Lecture 19, I discuss my reasons for disagreeing with Sartre on this point.]

3. Sartre clearly puts emotions in the realm of activity, not passivity; nevertheless, he is trying to chart out the intermediary range between the passive and the active.

C. Another philosopher worth mentioning here is William James, who talks about emotions as if they are something we can change. As I mentioned in a previous lecture, James says, a bit cornily, “Smile and you will feel better.” And, of course, that’s true. Our behavior, or what we might call acting “as if…,” is often a way of changing our emotions.

IV. Again, we find our main point in talking about controlling or changing our emotions in Aristotle, this time, in his examination of cultivating character.

A. Think of the idea, for example, of cultivating emotional habits. Every time you drive, you may prepare yourself for a day of antagonism, or you may simply try to accept the frustrations of traffic, knowing that eventually, you’ll get where you are going. In choosing between these alternatives, you are cultivating your character.

B. But, of course, Aristotle is talking about something deeper. Think of the Dalai Lama, who practices such techniques as prayer, meditation, and so on; the habit of using these techniques has established in him a personality in which anger, resentment, hatred, and envy are nonexistent.

C. Habits are the key to this cultivation, because emotions, to a large extent, are habits. When we talk about controlling or choosing or “doing” our emotions, we are really asking: What kind of habits can I establish to make myself a different kind of person?

V. I said earlier that we do not choose or deliberate our way into an emotion, but now I want to contradict that statement and say that we sometimes do.

A. In anger, for example, I sometimes find that someone may say something slightly offensive or insulting to me, but the insult does not register in my mind at first. If I think back, however, I begin a process of
interpretation: “What did that person say? What did he mean by that?” In this way, I work myself into a state of anger. Anger does not just happen to me; instead, I choose it.

B. Love offers an even better example. After my initial attraction to a person, I begin to make decisions about how I will approach her, what I will say, and so on. As the relationship continues, I am continuously deciding whether to nurture the conditions of love or not; I am deciding, quite literally, to love.

C. Emotions are, in a sense, our doing. They are not just a product of regulation, but also a product of cultivation and, sometimes, as in these last examples, a product of practice and decision-making.

Essential Reading:
Jon Elster, *Alchemy of the Mind*, chapters I, IV.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think that it ever makes sense to say that we choose our emotions or that we are responsible for them?
2. Can you think of any recent cases where you have deliberated your way into an emotion? Did the fact that you deliberated make it rational?
Lecture Eighteen
Emotions in Ethics

Scope: If emotions give us insight and have intelligence, it is much easier to appreciate why they are essential to ethics. And if emotions essentially involve evaluative judgments, ethics may be already implicit in our emotions. Furthermore, emotions have the power to constitute reality, to bestow value, as well as appraise it. Just as love makes the beloved and the relationship of great value, other emotions have the power to make other people objects of lesser value, temporarily through anger or permanently through hatred or contempt. With this in mind, I would like to go back through the history of ethics, from Aristotle and the Stoics to emotivism in ethics in the middle of the 20th century. For Aristotle and Confucius, the passions were the heart of ethics. For the Stoics and many Buddhists, the passions were the main problem for ethics. David Hume boldly turned the tables by insisting, “Reason is, and ought to be, the slave of the passions.” Finally, emotivism tried to put an end to philosophical ethics but ended up underscoring the importance of emotions in ethics and the good life. In this lecture, we will use several key emotions, including guilt, disgust, and indignation, as examples of emotions that are structured by moral judgment.

Outline

I. Thus far in this course, we have covered the emotions themselves and ways of thinking about emotions. In this lecture, we introduce the third major topic of the course, how emotions enhance our lives.
   A. As we begin, we will revisit some of the territory that we have already covered to explore how emotions work their way into ethics. We will also discuss some important ethical philosophers whom we have already met, including Aristotle, the Stoics, Nietzsche, the Buddhists, Adam Smith, and others.
   B. We will take a more systematic look at these philosophers and the history of ethics, and we will see that in thinking about emotions as strategies, we must ask: What are the goals of emotions?
   C. As we end this lecture, I hope to clarify exactly what it means to say that emotions enhance our lives.

II. In the 18th century, two philosophers who had never met, David Hume and Immanuel Kant, engaged in a raging debate about ethics and motivation.
   A. Hume famously argued, “Reason is, and ought to be, the slave of the passions, and to try to do nothing other than to be at their service.” His point is that rationality is not sufficient to motivate anything.
      1. You can determine what is right or wrong according to certain criteria. You can decide what is better for the whole society or what would harm society. However, unless you’ve got a passion or, to put it in more contemporary language, unless you care about something, rationality does not have anything to work with.
      2. Thus, Hume makes an outrageous statement that ethics depends wholly on emotion and not at all on reason. Reason can help you figure out what to do once the emotions are in place, but reason itself does not have the power to motivate.
   B. Immanuel Kant, by contrast, argued that reason must have the power to motivate, because Kant made a firm distinction, as did Hume, between reason and the emotions. Kant gives to reason all the powers it needs to operate autonomously. Reason does not depend on how you feel, and ethics is a matter of reason and reason alone, or what Kant calls “pure, practical reason.”
   C. The contemporary neurologist Tony Damasio has shown both Hume and Kant to be wrong. He argues that, even on the basic neurological level, emotions and reason (or, more properly, emotions and reasoning) are not antithetical.
      1. In working with patients who have had damage to parts of the brain that control emotions, Damasio has found that, even though their intellectual or cognitive capacities are intact, they have difficulty making decisions. Why? Simply put, because they do not care; they do not have a sense of the salience of different options.
      2. With this research, we see that the distinction between reason and the passions or reason and emotion is misplaced. Further, the philosophical question of whether emotion alone is motivating or whether reason has its own form of motivation is also misplaced.
D. In terms of what we have been talking about, we can present this dispute in a different way: If emotions have intelligence and consist, to a large extent, of evaluative judgments, then we can say that emotions and reason are cooperative or, perhaps, even indistinguishable. We can apply evaluations to the kinds of emotional judgments we make; we can also talk about these judgments in terms of being right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate—and that, of course, is the focus of ethics.

E. We have also seen that emotional judgments go beyond evaluating or appraising situations to bestowing value on things. When I hate someone, for example, I bestow him with offensiveness or evil. In this way, ethics is already deeply embedded in the concept of emotions.

III. Let’s go back to ancient times, starting with Aristotle and the Stoics, then move to the East, to Confucius and the Buddhists.

A. Aristotle gives us a view of ethics that differs from the view presupposed by both Hume and Kant.
   1. Hume thinks that ethics relates fundamentally to what he calls “utility,” namely, how things turn out, consequences.
   2. In Aristotle, however, the central focus is on motivation, as well as what he calls the “virtues” and, consequently, on emotions and the cultivation of emotions.
   3. Interestingly enough, we find the same kind of philosophy thousands of miles to the East, in the thinking of Confucius.
   4. For both Aristotle and Confucius, ethics does not focus on the consequences of action or the rationality of action but on the kind of person who would take such action.

B. In a nutshell, both Aristotle and Confucius find that the cultivation of character is at the core of ethics, and the cultivation of character includes the cultivation of the right kinds of emotional responses. The debate about whether emotion or reason rules ethics, then, loses its urgency, because we now see a merger between the forces of rationality and “right” feeling.

IV. The Stoics and the Buddhists have a contrasting notion. The Stoics follow Aristotle, to the extent that they acknowledge what we have been calling emotional intelligence, but for them, emotional intelligence typically misfires.

A. For the Stoics, emotions are, basically, mistaken judgments. For example, when you get angry, you think that what has happened to you is significant, but in the larger scheme of things, anything that happens to you is fairly insignificant.

B. Given that emotions are judgments and that most of them are mistaken, the ideal life is one in which you do not form attachments—you do not care too much. This conclusion is very different from Aristotle’s, but it also sees the connection between emotions and reason.

C. Buddhism also views emotions as, in a way, mistaken. It seeks to eliminate all those emotions that interfere with one’s sense of tranquility or peaceful existence. The idea in Buddhism, too, is that emotions are a form of intelligence, they are a way of seeing the world, but they are mistaken.

V. If we fast-forward to the Middle Ages, we find the continuation of this philosophy.

A. Thomas Aquinas follows Aristotle in many ways, including his emphasis on character and the virtues. Aquinas also talks about, as many of his predecessors had, the opposite of the virtues, namely, the vices, or what he called “sins.”

B. For Aristotle, the emphasis was on the virtues and, of course, the ways in which the virtues can misfire and become vices. However, for Aquinas and many of the Christian writers, central sins, especially the seven deadly sins, were a focus of great attention and concern.

C. The basic idea of the seven deadly sins extends the idea of character and the virtues, the merging of questions about emotions and about reason, but with a twist: For the medievals, enhancing your life and maximizing your well-being relates to pleasing God and showing proper faith.

VI. If we fast-forward again to the modern age, we can return to David Hume and a friend of his, Adam Smith.

A. Smith discusses sympathy, in the same way that Hume does, as the emotion that lies at the core of ethics, but Smith also has a long discourse on disgust. Indeed, Smith gave disgust, which is distinctly an emotion, a place of prominence in his examination of character and ethics.
B. Smith also saw, as Aristotle did, that justice starts with emotions. Justice, as Smith defines it, is our horror at seeing another human being ill-treated or harmed. Thus, we see, again, that emotions lie at the heart of ethics itself.

C. I suggest that the history of ethics is the history of emotions, attitudes toward emotions, and the cultivation of different kinds of emotions for appropriate periods.

VII. Around 1900, the debates about ethics reached a new level—meta-ethics—in which the basis of ethics itself was examined.

A. G. E. Moore, a well-known English philosopher, suggested that the basis of ethics was intuition; further, Moore said that intuition could not be defended or articulated because the intuition was of what he called an “unnatural property,” namely, goodness.

B. Following Moore’s intuitionism was another movement called emotivism, and not surprisingly, it almost exactly coincided with the movement called behaviorism in psychology. In behaviorism, psychologists stopped dealing with emotions altogether, because they were unconcerned with anything beyond behavior.

C. At about the same time, the emotivists in philosophy were arguing that ethics and ethical statements were nothing but expressions of emotion. In the context of the times, this argument made ethics unimportant. The emotivists were part of a movement called logical positivism, which held that philosophy should be akin to science—and science did not concern itself with ethics.

D. Looking back over 40 years of intense research on emotions, we now see that the emotivists had a significant insight—that emotions are essential to ethics.

VIII. Before we close, we must ask: How do reflection on, and articulation of, emotions relate to the making of ethical judgments?

A. We tend to think of reflection as something that is separated from emotion, but we also reflect while we are having emotions. Because the emotions themselves are value judgments, and the reflection on emotion is a value judgment, what we think of our emotion also affects what that emotion is.

B. If I find myself getting overly angry, then I realize what I am doing and become embarrassed. The anger and embarrassment do not exist on different levels; actually, they combine to form a curious amalgam of emotions. Reflection, in general, gives us the distance from which we can understand and, consequently, change the emotions we have.

C. There is a synthesis between emotions and reason in a very specific context: the context of ethics and the history of ethics.

1. In this context, I believe we should strive for emotional integrity, which is not just a single emotion, or a single goal, or a single mode of reasoning.
2. Rather, it involves seeking ways to enhance our own lives at the same time that we recognize that our lives consist, in part, of values that are larger than us and other people who are part of us.

Essential Reading:
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics.

Supplementary Reading:
Martha Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought.

———, Fragility of Goodness.


Michael Stocker, Valuing Emotions.

Questions to Consider:
1. When is it right to get angry? Why is anger listed as one of the seven deadly sins?
2. Why do you think it seems so hard to develop the virtues of compassion, generosity, and courage and so easy to fall into vice, as well as anxiety and despair?
Lecture Nineteen
Emotions and the Self

Scope: In his later writings, Freud introduced the conflict between the ego and the id, the “it.” It is a model of the emotions that can be traced back to ancient times, passions versus the self. However, I want to suggest that the self is both the focus and the concern, directly or indirectly, of almost every emotion. All emotions are self-involved. That is what makes them different from intellectual and other “cool” judgments. As strategies, they are concerned with the well-being of the self, but emotions are also motivated for the sake of others and for the sake of other, sometimes “higher,” goals. To understand the centrality of the self in the structure of our emotions, it is necessary for us to broach the huge topic of consciousness. There are several senses in which emotions can be conscious: They register on our sensibilities and give rise to feelings, and we can notice and articulate these feelings. In other words, we become self-conscious. Thus, many authors distinguish between first- and second-order consciousness, but I find this much too simplistic. Because the self is so complex, so is consciousness of our emotions.

Outline
I. We have alluded to an implicit ingredient in emotions throughout these lectures—the self—along with the idea that emotions are conscious.
   A. On the one hand, this is a perfectly straightforward bit of common sense: We know that we are aware of emotions and that they are, in some sense, present in our consciousness. However, according to Freud, at least some emotions are unconscious.
   B. In the last few lectures, we have also made use of the image of reflection, in the sense of thinking about oneself, one’s activities, and one’s feelings and in the sense of looking in a mirror. There is a clear and obvious relationship between the two: Thinking about yourself is much like catching an image of yourself in the mind’s eye.
   C. This image of reflection also points to two different ways of being conscious of your emotions. One is through the usual first-person route; as the person who has the emotion, you have privileged access to it. Sometimes, however, we come to know our emotions by way of others.
   D. In this lecture, we will talk about both the self and consciousness, and of course, underlying the entire lecture is the connection between the two.

II. We begin with the self, a concept that seems to be present in all living things; even the lowest creatures seem to have some sense of self.
   A. The neuropsychiatrist Tony Damasio, among others, has argued that all members of the animal kingdom have a core sense of self, or what might be called a proto-self. This idea makes the sense of self seem primitive, but we have something much deeper in mind.
   B. The human sense of self is pretty thoroughly self-conscious. Many have debated the question of whether self-consciousness presupposes language, but our concern is with forms of self-consciousness and consciousness that require a reflexive capability in the language—the ability to refer back to yourself.
   C. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his early phenomenological work, pointed to two different kinds of consciousness. One is what he calls pre-reflective consciousness, that is, consciousness before self-awareness.
      1. Sartre’s example is the experience of running for a bus. According to Sartre, what you are experiencing at the time is the bus to be overtaken. You see the bus receding in the background and you are trying hard to catch it, but all you are really aware of is the bus. That is pre-reflective consciousness.
      2. Interestingly enough, Sartre insists that all emotions are pre-reflective; they do not yet involve the self or self-consciousness.
      3. Reflective consciousness, by contrast, is where the concept of self enters. That is when I become aware of doing something, of having a certain emotion, and so on.
D. At the heart of this theory, then, are two levels of consciousness: consciousness plain and simple, and self-consciousness, which also is a reflection; it includes a concept of self. I believe this conception is too simple to capture all the complexities of the phenomenon.

III. The self enters into different emotions in different ways, and some emotions do not seem to involve the self at all.

A. If I am angry at someone, I might think that the emotion is all about the other person; it doesn’t have anything to do with me. As we have learned in previous lectures, however, anger is not just being angry at the other person; anger is being angry at the other person because he or she has offended me. Thus, anger is, in fact, about a relationship.

B. Other emotions are quite clearly about the self, such as those that involve direct self-evaluation. For example, if I am proud of myself for having accomplished something significant, obviously, it is my self that is the center of the emotion. We might say the same thing about shame, embarrassment, guilt, or remorse; they are all self-directed.

C. In these emotions, it looks as if the self is really the focus, but even in these examples, the self can sometimes be an agent. For example, the self can be a victim in embarrassment or a beneficiary in gratitude. In neither case does the self have an active role.

D. We might also look at emotions that involve being entangled with others, such as love, an emotion in which the boundaries of the self break down. These different senses of self raise an interesting question: Are all these selves the same?

IV. The concept of the soul has been around for thousands of years; one idea is that soul is what holds all these selves together.

A. Some might say that the soul is some kind of metaphysical nugget that has various properties, such as having different emotions and personality traits. But, of course, many people are dubious about the soul, or they view the soul in a much more isolated way. The soul is considered to be independent from emotions.

B. There are also philosophers (Nietzsche, for example) who would say that the very idea of the soul is more like a community. The experiences of anger, love, jealousy, embarrassment, pride, and so on all point to distinctive notions of self, and there is no reason to suppose that all these different selves are, in fact, the same.

C. We are left with a number of questions: Is the self unified or singular? Is the self the entity that has these different emotions, or is it the object of these emotions? Is the self something much more complicated and harder to pin down? Many recent postmodernist philosophers would clearly opt for the latter thesis. They would say that the self is, in fact, an illusion; it is our creation, but it does not refer to anything singular.

V. Let’s turn to consciousness, because the idea of consciousness often borrows from these various questions about the self or the soul and suggests, in a different way, that the self, by way of consciousness, is divided.

A. From Freud onward, many have accepted the idea that what we call consciousness has different components. To talk about conscious and unconscious is, in a physicalistic way, to talk about an idea or an emotion or a thought as being potentially in one of two different places.

B. As I said earlier, I think the distinction between unconscious and conscious is too neat. Freud himself saw this when he introduced yet a third level, something he calls the preconscious. An emotion, then, can be conscious, which means that I am fully aware of it; or it can be unconscious, which means that it is repressed; or it can be preconscious, which means that I don’t really notice it unless I turn my attention to it.

C. There are also a number of ways of being conscious of an emotion, from simply registering a sensation, to labeling the emotion, to understanding it, and understanding has different levels, too. We experience different levels of consciousness, and they perform different duties in our awareness of ourselves.

VI. The question is often raised whether being conscious of one’s emotion, being self-conscious, being reflective, takes away from the emotion.
A. It is a common belief that if you get angry, but you notice that you are getting angry, you will get less angry. Or if you are in love, and you notice that you are in love, and you try to analyze your love, this consciousness destroys the love.

B. From our explorations, I hope it is obvious that this is just not true. Reflection can either augment or subtract from the emotion itself, but there is no general rule that reflection and emotion are at odds.

C. Sartre tries to push on us the thesis that reflection and emotion are incompatible. Because emotion is a strategy, which must be covert, according to Sartre, reflection itself undermines emotion.

D. Freud agrees, in a sense, by asserting that an emotion is powerful only so long as it is unconscious. When you bring the emotion to consciousness and you realize what it is, the emotion is diffused. We have seen in many cases, however, that the opposite is true.

VII. I said at the end of the last lecture that emotional integrity is an important character virtue. It is something that very few people achieve, although it is an ideal, I think, for everyone.

A. Emotional integrity involves the coherence of your emotions with your values and your reflection. Thus, emotional integrity, that sense of wholeness that we strive for, also involves reflection.

B. None of us has the emotions we want to have all the time, and all of us are critical enough of ourselves to realize that we never quite fit with our own ideals. Emotional integrity, then, lies in learning to accept the complexity of our emotional lives.

Essential Reading:
Jesse Prinz, Gut Reactions, chapter 9, “Emotional Consciousness.”
Owen Flanagan, Self Expressions.

Supplementary Reading:
Howard Gardner, Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

Questions to Consider:
1. Can you be angry, proud, or ashamed and not know it at the time? Has this ever happened to you?
2. Is it possible to love selflessly? How, or why not?
Lecture Twenty
What Is Emotional Experience?

Scope: Even insofar as emotions are feelings, I have distinguished between emotions as feelings and those bodily phenomena that are the physiological symptoms of emotional excitement. How, then, are we to understand emotional experience? In this lecture, I try to make out the many interlocking components of emotional experience, from autonomic nervous system responses to much more subtle and sophisticated sensations and experiences. In addition to simple Jamesian sensations, we experience the feelings that accompany facial expressions and have to do with action readiness, by way of muscle tensions and bodily movements, our posture, breathing, gait, and rhythm. So, too, our perceptions of the world are an essential ingredient in emotional experience, not just as information but also as appraisals and evaluations, likes and dislikes, things that are beautiful and things that are horrible. Our emotional experience includes our experiences of the world, our sense of engagement, of activity or passivity, and all sorts of feelings about the self. Some of these are fully conscious, but others are not.

Outline
I. One of our first intuitions when talking about emotions is that emotions are feelings, but feelings is a funny term that takes in a vast amount of territory. Instead, in this lecture I would like to talk about emotional experience.
   A. Common sense would suggest that each emotion has its own distinctive experience. In fact, more than 100 years ago, William James attempted to pin down the feelings that are characteristic of particular emotions.
      1. James’s theory was that an emotion is a feeling that is consequent to a certain kind of bodily disturbance. The bodily disturbance is concrete and specifiable; thus, the sensations that make up the emotion can be specified, too.
      2. For example, if you are embarrassed, you might get flushed. In this way, feeling is no longer mysterious or ineffable; it can be described in terms of physiological occurrences.
      3. One of the problems with this theory is that the experience of feeling flushed may differ from one person to another. Another problem, as we have said, is that James seems to think that the feelings of an emotion are all basically consequent to certain kinds physiological responses.
      4. As I have suggested before, what James is talking about is really a variety of physiological responses and, thus, a variety of sensations—not just different sensations with different physiological responses but different kinds of sensations with different kinds of physiological responses.
   B. James often discusses the physiological responses of the autonomic nervous system, which are characteristic in certain ways.
      1. For example, these autonomic responses are non-voluntary. When you are afraid, your heart beats faster and your breathing speeds up; those responses are beyond your control. What’s more, the experience is of something happening to you, which of course, is where the sense of passivity in emotions comes from.
      2. In such responses, James also asserts that the muscles tighten in certain characteristic ways. For example, when you feel an emotion, you may grimace, smile, or frown. In addition to the autonomic responses, then, which have their own characteristic feelings, these muscular responses are also associated with feelings.
   C. Equally obvious is the fact that when you have most emotions, you prepare for action—a state that the Dutch psychologist Nico Frijda refers to as action readiness (or action preparedness).
      1. Action readiness is not necessarily goal-oriented, although goals will follow. If you get angry and you tense your fists, one can make the argument that you are preparing to punch someone.
      2. Most of us are pretty civilized and we do not punch people, but tensing your fists is a gesture of action readiness, and of course, we feel it. It is a set of distinctive sensations and yet another component of what I am calling emotional experience overall.
D. Another such component is emotional posture, embodied in the expression “Keep your chin up.” Lifting your chin or squaring your shoulders changes your stature in the world and your sense of self.

E. We might also think about kinesthetics as a component of emotional experience. To use an obvious example, someone who is sad might walk slowly and aimlessly. Someone who is angry will often walk quickly and with purpose.

F. In all these examples, we are not thinking about the behavior as much the idea that all behavior has its effects in our consciousness; all behavior is something we also experience.

G. Your facial movements, preparation for action, posture, gait, and so on are all part of a general experience that we might refer to as the experience of anger, sadness, love, or any other emotion.

II. Yet, of course, an emotion is not just a set of feelings, and that is why, for many years, I emphasized judgments, evaluations, or appraisals in emotion. We may think that judgments are not part of experience; they may form the background of experience or they may cause us to have certain experiences, but judgments themselves are not experiential.

A. As we have said, when you have an emotion, you judge or appraise the world—you are engaged with the world. Further, there is an intricate connection between what you experience in your own body—various muscular movements, autonomic responses, and so on—and what you experience in the world. Part of your emotional experience is related to how you perceive the world.

B. If I am angry, an important part of my experience is the fact that I see the other person as offensive. When I am in love, I see the other person, my beloved, as wonderful. Notice that we are dealing with an odd combination: my attitude, on the one hand, and the way the world is, on the other.

1. The question here is: Is this combination that makes up my emotional experience subjective or objective? From my phenomenological background, my answer is that the question does not mean anything; the connection between my perception, my engagement, and the facts I find in the world is not something that can be separated.

2. Rather, I see the beauty of my beloved as a clear fact about her—maybe not a fact that is shared by anybody else; nevertheless, it is an essential part of my emotional experience.

C. The point is that an emotional experience is complex in many ways. It encompasses all the different sensations and responses to various muscle movements, nervous system reactions, and so on, and it involves the way I engage with and perceive the world. These perceptions of the world and bodily responses fit together, in a sense, to provide what seems to be, at the time, a unified emotional experience.

III. We can see the connection between bodily experiences and engagements with the world if we look at the concept of action readiness.

A. One way to think about this is that action readiness is based on the way we perceive the world—the experience and the engagement with the world are not disconnected. If I am angry at someone, I might like to punch him and I feel myself tensing my fists; that action preparedness is directly connected with the way I see the world.

B. As I said earlier, emotions are processes that take place over time, and the emotional experience I have at any given time is not confined to that particular time but is always present as an emotional background. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of this idea can be found in a person suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome—where the emotional experience I have at a given time is not just confined to that particular time.

1. Thus, when I get angry, I am not just getting angry on one occasion at one person for doing one specific thing; instead, I carry with me my whole background of anger—other times I have gotten angry, the habits I’ve developed when I get angry, and so on.

2. In this way, we can see that every experience is both backed by and pregnant with temporal considerations.

C. We might make a similar analogy with love. According to Freud, when I’m in love, I’m not just in love with one woman right now but with a whole history that might include my mother and other people I’ve dated. Part of the emotional experience, then, has to do with memory, with anticipations and expectations, and with a whole background of other emotional experiences.
IV. One of the most fascinating aspects of this topic is how we can identify emotions that do not have particular objects.

A. Clearly, emotions exist without objects. Wilder Penfield, a neuropsychiatrist in the early days of brain surgery, found that stimulating certain areas of the brain could evoke feelings in the patient of great comfort or familiarity, as well as discomfort or fear to the point of paranoia, but not about anything in particular.

B. Another example can be found in the experience of déjà vu, which is the feeling of having visited some place before or having done some activity in the past, when clearly, one has not ever been in that place or performed that activity.

1. Déjà vu is what I call a frame experience, by which I mean that it is an experience without content. In this, it is a bit like a mood.

2. Frame experiences seem to be part of virtually all of our emotions; they never happen in isolation. As soon as you have a frame experience, as when you are in a certain mood, you look around for something to fill it in.

V. Finally, we return to the topic of thoughts and reflections.

A. As I said in the last lecture, thoughts and reflections are not something separate from emotion, but they are part of emotions themselves. I would say the same thing now about emotional experience.

B. We often think of thoughts as not particularly experiential, but of course, you do experience thoughts, and reflecting on your emotions is also part of the emotional experience.

C. We often talk about emotional intensity as if such an idea were a kind of physiological measure.

1. The thought is that if you are very angry, you get much more excited. I believe, however, that getting very angry is a different kind of emotional experience.

2. When you get very angry, it is because what you are angry about seems important to you. In other words, it is another phenomenon that depends on the emotional experience, not just the physiology.

3. To be sure, the physiology will probably go along with the experience and even become part of the experience, but intensity is not just a matter of more blood flow, more hormones, and so on.

4. The intensity is a product of the engagement with the world, which is what the emotional experience is ultimately all about.

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:
Nico Frijda, *The Emotions*.

Questions to Consider:
1. What other frame experiences (global emotional feelings not tied to any particular objects) can you think of?
2. Can you think of other behavior that is goal-directed but oblivious (or even unwilling) to reaching the goal?
Lecture Twenty-One
Emotions across Cultures—Universals

Scope: It is often said that people are “deep down all alike.” Contemporary psychologists make this claim on the basis of extensive cross-cultural comparisons of facial expressions of emotion and their recognition. Neurologists make such claims on the basis of the common structure and functions of the brain. Philosophers have long made similar claims about human nature. Yet emotions are not just biological events. To say that basic emotions are biologically based does not entail that they are universal, and they might well be universal without being biologically based because of the common conditions and circumstances of human life. But then there are culture and cultural differences. Emotions differ from society to society, in their causes, their expressions, in their language, and, consequently, in their experiences. Biology and culture are the yang and yin of our emotional inheritance, but in our enthusiasm for the yang, let’s not ignore or neglect the very rich yin we have to work with. In this lecture, we will look at the differences, as well as the similarities, across cultures.

Outline

I. It has been said that, deep down, all people are alike. The usual interpretation of this idea is that, in terms of basic emotions, we are all the same. Our languages, our cultures, and our religious beliefs might differ, but emotionally, we are all alike.
   A. This assertion has a certain plausibility when we look, for example, at videos from distant lands of children at play, shouting with joy, or when we see the aftermath of a tragedy, again, in some faraway place, and people are grieving for loved ones.
   B. In an extensive set of research experiments and observations, Paul Ekman, who studies faces and facial expressions, found that even people who were isolated from Western culture had the same facial expressions and recognized the same facial expresses that we do. Ekman concluded that facial expressions, at least for some emotions, are universal.
   C. From a different quarter, neurologists, who have begun to probe the brain in greater detail and with more knowledge, have concluded that there are certain centers of the brain that are basic to emotions. Given that all human brains are more or less alike, the presumption is that human emotion must be universal, as well.
   D. Philosophers, long before any of this research took place, developed the concept of human nature, which, again, rests on the notion that people are basically born with an essential repertoire of emotions and capacities.
      1. In philosophy, of course, the capacity that is celebrated the most is rationality. Over the course of history, as people became more sophisticated, they also saw that rationality is the product of another unique human capacity, the capacity for language.
      2. All human beings are the same in that we all have the capacity for language—the ability to speak a language and the readiness to learn language.
   E. Here, then, is an easy trap to fall into: identifying universality, the idea that all people are essentially the same, with biology. These two things do not necessarily go together.
      1. A characteristic might be biological without, in fact, being universal. We know, for example, that different races may have specific chemical sensitivities.
      2. At the same time, the fact that something is universal does not mean it is biological. Philosophers have captured this idea in speaking of the human condition, which encompasses features of the environment that are universal but not necessarily biological.
      3. We all face dangers, for example, and we all probably experience some degree of fear. We are all subject to illness, and we all know that we are going to die.
      4. These commonalities give rise to certain more or less universal situations that, in turn, generate more or less universal emotions, which might not be directly based on biology at all.

II. The key to much of this discussion about universality is what contemporary psychologists and neurologists refer to as an affect program. This is defined as a syndrome of neurological, muscular, and hormonal reactions
that are coordinated in such a way that they are triggered by certain kinds of events. Once the program is triggered, it is beyond voluntary control.

A. As we discussed, this is said to be true of the “basic” emotions, including anger and fear, as well as sadness, disgust, and surprise. The idea is that all these emotions are, essentially, neurological syndromes.

B. If such programs exist, they are, first of all, limited, encompassing only six to ten basic emotions.

C. Even in these few emotions, the affect programs are also shaped by culture.
   1. In his work with basic emotions, Ekman defines the concept of display rules as a kind of cultural overlay.
   2. He argues that, for the basic emotions, facial expressions are more or less automatic. They happen very quickly and involuntarily, yet people do learn to simulate facial expressions, as when a person is lying or trying to cover up an emotion.

D. We must ask, then, to what extent are even basic emotions, these affect programs, simply the product of biology, and to what extent are they the product of culture?
   1. Peter Goldie, an English philosopher who studies emotions, has proposed that the affect programs are both biological and cultural. His idea is that there is a hard core of neurological wiring, overlaid by cultural learning.
   2. This idea is attractive, but it is not accurate. The core—the brain—is, in fact, always growing and changing; new pathways are always being opened. Culture is not simply an embellishment and overlay, but it actually affects the growth of the brain itself.

III. For several hundred years, philosophers have attempted to characterize emotions according to their formal objects. In this scheme, the formal object of anger, for example, is offense; the formal object of fear is danger.

A. The idea of the formal object is a way of getting at the notion of the human condition and what it would be for an emotion to be universal. We might say, even though the contents of emotion vary from culture to culture, as do the specificities, the expression, and the behavior that follows, all have in common the formal object.

B. We can see formal objects as a philosophical way of talking about the relationship between universality and particular emotion types, but this raises an interesting question: Does everyone have the same formal objects? In other words, does everyone feel offense? Does everyone recognize danger?

IV. There is a sense in which emotions are the same the world over; that is, all people experience emotions, and there are general classes of emotions that we can expect everyone will have. At the same time, we can outline some fascinating dimensions of difference.

A. One of the more interesting of these is a difference in emotional repertoire. If you travel frequently to big cities, you may have noticed a certain repertoire of emotions that includes pronounced impatience, a degree of anger, and a certain kind of driving ambition. In more rural parts of the country, the emotional repertoire tends to be less intense. We can also point to these types of differences between people from different cultures.

B. Another dimension of difference in emotions can be found in nuances in emotion families. We would categorize anger, rage, outrage, fury, indignation, and annoyance in the anger family, for example, and we find that different societies place different emphases on these emotions, even within the same family. Washington, D.C., for instance, seems to be a society that emphasizes indignation, as opposed to other societies that emphasize annoyance and irritation.

C. We can also look at differences in the causes of emotion. Carol Tavris, a psychologist who has written on cross-cultural senses of anger, points out, for example, the different circumstances in various cultures in which a husband might become angry at his wife and a visitor. These range from having coffee together to sleeping together, with or without the husband’s permission.

D. When we talked about display rules, we also touched on differences in expressions. Even if Ekman is right and there are certain initial expressions that are hard-wired and universal, it is also true that, in almost every culture, there are ways of expressing emotion that are not easily shared with other cultures.

E. Perhaps the most fascinating difference of all is language and the idea that language might shape emotion. This concept, called social constructionism, argues that with language, cultures actually create emotions;
emotions are not natural phenomena or “basic.” Further, even if emotions are physiological reactions, the reactions are the products, not the initial causes, of the emotional differences we see between societies. This will be the topic of our next lecture.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Which emotions do you think are the best candidates for universality? Which are the least plausible?
2. What do you mean when you say that an emotion is a “basic” emotion?
Lecture Twenty-Two
Emotions across Cultures—Differences

Scope: In the last lecture, we explored the sense in which emotions are, at least sometimes, universal; they are common to all people and many animals. Emotions are, to some extent, biological phenomena, and brains—nervous systems—are shared, in many ways, across cultures and even animal species. Of course, this is not the whole story. Only some emotions can be called “basic” emotions that are shared by both humans and animals. A great many other emotions seem to be distinctively cultural. In addition, even a basic emotion carries with it cultural display rules about when and in what circumstances its expression is appropriate. In this lecture, we will see that emotions vary in a profound way from culture to culture, and that identifying these differences is not just a question of naming the same emotions with different languages; rather, we will learn that every name is an interpretation and builds into a general scheme that characterizes the culture.

Outline

I. We spoke in the last lecture about basic emotions, with the idea that these are simply neurological syndromes and, therefore, universal. In this lecture, we will ask the question: What if a basic emotion is one that is central to a certain way of life? To answer this question, we will look at the differences in emotions, emotional repertoires, emotional expressions, and causes of emotion.

II. To make a general point, different cultures have different emotional repertoires. The emotions that are most prevalent vary from one society to another.
   A. Think, for example, about anger on any American highway—road rage. This is not something you find in cultures that do not experience the sense of isolation and urgency that we have in America.
   B. It may be that different societies share the capacity for certain kinds of emotions, but the roles of those emotions and the way they are treated in the society can also differ.
      1. In some societies, such as on an Israeli kibbutz, gratitude is considered the glue that holds the society together. It is important to be indebted to others, and debt is even manufactured to engender ties between people.
      2. In contrast, most American males find gratitude more humiliating even than fear.
      3. The emotion is the same, in some sense, but its meaning, its significance, and its place in the two societies are very different.
   C. Of course, we can also point out nuances in both the expression and the experience of emotions that differ in various societies or settings.
   D. Perhaps the most obvious differences relating to emotions among different societies are their causes. As I said in the last lecture, what causes someone to be angry, jealous, embarrassed, or ashamed depends quite heavily on the particular customs of a society.
   E. We might also note differences in expressions or, more properly, display rules. Even if some facial expressions are universal, as Ekman has said, these expressions are nonetheless modified by the display rules accepted in the culture.
   F. Emotions also have different meanings across cultures. For example, in Tahiti, anger is considered demonized; it leads people to go crazy. That is different, for example, from the feminist idea in the 1970s that anger is a perfectly righteous way of making your dissatisfactions with your situation apparent.
   G. Finally, verbal expressions offer some very interesting differences that go beyond having different words in different languages to refer to the same emotions. Rather, I believe that the different verbal expressions we have for naming emotions are, in fact, different ways of categorizing the emotional world. Further, I would argue that language actually shapes the way we feel.

III. Let’s look at an emotion that almost everyone would accept as a basic emotion, in this case, anger, to see that it is not evenly distributed across cultures. We can discuss two societies in which anger is virtually unknown.
A. The first of these is the Utkuhikalingmiut tribe of Inuit (Eskimos)—which we will call the Utku—in the Northwest Territories. They were studied by a woman named Jean Briggs some 25 years ago. Briggs’s book, *Never in Anger*, caused a stir in the anthropological community because Briggs found that the Utku did not get angry.

1. The Utku lived in the harshest environment that most of us could imagine, with brutal cold and blinding blizzards. The prevailing attitude among the Utku, living in these harsh conditions, was one of resignation. We can see, in that context, that it does not make sense to get angry at one’s environment or situation in life.

2. For the Utku, this attitude was generalized to their fellow citizens, because they saw no point in getting angry about things beyond their control.

3. Briggs also did some serious work in linguistic anthropology with the Utku. She studied the language and found that there were words in Utku for anger, but they did not mean what our words for anger mean. Rather, the closest translation for the Utku word would be childishness.

4. Briggs’s work raises the question of whether an emotion is subject to a network of philosophical and ideological considerations that can serve to minimize that emotion in a society.

B. The second of these societies is found on Tahiti and surrounding islands. Again, the Polynesians there seem not to get angry.

1. One explanation in this case might be that the Polynesians have at their disposal a lush environment, and there is not much that can get in the way of fulfilling the basic necessities of life.

2. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the Polynesians demonize anger. It is thought of as spontaneously going crazy, and it’s the worst thing that can happen to someone.

3. Anthropologists who have studied Polynesians in some detail say that they *hypercognize* anger—meaning that they talk about it a good deal, but they do not experience it often.

4. In the United States, we also hypercognize anger, but in this culture, that hypercognition serves as a spur to anger.

C. We see, then, that this “basic” emotion, which is supposed to consist of a hard-wired syndrome, is manifested in different cultures in quite different ways.

IV. The next set of examples is even more exotic and raises even deeper questions about the nature of emotion and the relationship between emotion and language. These examples are two emotions that have recently been prominent in the literature: the Japanese emotion called *amae* and an emotion called *fago* found in New Guinea.

A. *Amae* can be defined as indulgent interdependence.

1. The Japanese culture emphasizes interdependence. People recognize that they are linked to one another in essential ways. The American ideas of self-reliance, independence, and autonomy are quite foreign to the Japanese.

2. Within that context, one can also experience an emotional, nostalgic interdependence. One feels *amae*, for example, in thinking about one’s childhood relationships.

B. The other example was discovered and explored by Catherine Lutz, an anthropologist who studied the Ifaluk in New Guinea. This emotion, *fago*, is also what we would consider to be an odd mix.

1. On the one hand, *fago* involves a sense of the fragility of life. It puts a great deal of emphasis on the degree to which life consists of suffering. That combines, in turn, with tenderness toward others.

2. The overall sensibility of *fago* is a kind of sentimentality toward suffering and the rigors and difficulties of life.

C. Many researchers would say that these are not unique emotions at all but variations of emotions we are familiar with.

D. I would suggest, however, that the ways these emotions fit together are important pieces of the puzzle of what makes up an emotion.

1. As we saw earlier, an emotion rarely consists of one set of judgments or one way of looking at things; virtually every emotion consists of a combination of different perspectives.

2. This leads to a fascinating hypothesis: We have been talking for most of this course as if emotions are, in some sense, discrete entities, but suppose they are not discrete.

3. Rather, suppose we have an emotional life that involves a certain degree of flux, in which many different outlooks, perspectives, opinions, and so on work together.
E. This suggestion has been made by a number of philosophers in different ways. Many have suggested that we talk too much in terms of atomistic entities, when in fact our emotional lives are much more fluid. This thought leads to some further interesting ideas.

1. The language we use to describe our emotions is not just naming particular emotions, but it actually carves out a space in our emotional lives and highlights it, as if we were saying, “This is how you should understand me now.”

2. Further, as we have said before, language is not just a vehicle by which we name our emotions or talk about them, but it is a vehicle by which we shape our emotions, including both the language of the emotions themselves and the language of the physiology of emotions.

F. In this vast emotional complex, in some sense, we share—but we share in different ways. Further, to have an emotion is a much more dynamic process that is intricately related to our philosophies, our language, and our culture than most of us would ever expect.

Essential Reading:
Catherine Lutz, Unnatural Emotions.
Robert C. Solomon, Not Passion’s Slave, chapter 6, “Getting Angry: Emotions and Anthropology.”

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How would you describe the differences in “emotional temperament” between two cultures or societies of your acquaintance? (Subcultures within the United States are also interesting here.)

2. How would you go about trying to understand a kind of religious devotion, for example, that is initially totally foreign to you? What steps would you take not only to understand its beliefs but also to feel some of that devotion, at least empathetically, yourself?
Lecture Twenty-Three
Laughter and Music

Scope: In this lecture, we will explore two fascinating aspects of emotion: laughter and music. They are both exemplary of emotional intelligence, but neither is an emotion as such; they are expressions of emotion. Both music and laughter are also candidates for universality, and as we all know, they are best when shared. We will look at some surprising aspects of both laughter and music, including the idea that laughter can be an expression of aggression or hostility as well as humor. We will also see that music is one of the most troublesome counter-examples to the idea that emotions are composed of judgments and ways of engaging with the world. Music may inspire emotions, and emotions may be readily expressed in music, but music does not seem to be about the world at all. For Schopenhauer, music was a direct expression of the will and, thus, set the tone for our entire lives.

Outline

I. Let’s begin with laughter.
   A. Laughter is often expressed in joy and happiness, but it is also the expression of much else; it can even be an expression of embarrassment or aggression. Further, although laughter is universal, it also has local variance.
   B. A philosopher named John Morreall has categorized philosophical theories about what makes something funny.
      1. The first category for Morreall is superiority theory. Thomas Hobbes, among other philosophers, viewed laughter as the “roar of the victor,” in other words, as a putdown of others. Aristotle, too, seemed to think that humor was just this. If superiority theory is correct, however, then laughter is no longer positive.
      2. The relief theory is attributable primarily to Freud. According to this theory, laughter is a form of release from issues that have been repressed or suppressed. This theory tends to explain the frequency with which sex and aggression crop up as topics of humor. Surprisingly, a great deal of humor is hostile in the sense that it expresses the covert desire to do damage, which is released through humor.
      3. The incongruity theory is a grab bag that includes a number of different kinds of humor. Kant, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and others put forth the idea that humor is a combination of two or more incongruous things. This theory, although much more civilized than the other two, is too broad. Many things that are incongruous in life are not necessarily funny.
   C. The superiority theory and the relief theory do not seem to capture the virtue of humor, and the incongruity theory, as I said, seems much too vague. What, then, explains why something is funny?
   D. The answer to this question for me came at a seminar I attended, at which videos were shown of young mothers playing with their infants. I found that what makes something funny is not so much the content of the joke, but the fact that it bonds people together. This idea of laughter as a bonding mechanism explains the cultural variation in humor, along with vicious humor and the social connection of laughter in groups.

II. We now turn to music, which, like humor, is universal but also has local manifestations.
   A. We often think of music as just “background,” but we can imagine scenarios in which the musical accompaniment actually determines the nature of the social situation.
      1. Imagine a situation in which a young man and a young woman are looking askance at each other. 
      2. Now further imagine the different expectations of this scene established by four musical tracks: a romantic piece of music; an intense, heavy-percussion piece; a lighthearted piece; and a suspenseful piece.
      3. In this scenario, music does not just set the mood; it also determines the nature of the situation in our minds.
   B. The otherwise cranky philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer loved music and the arts, and he thought that music was a direct expression of the “will,” indicating that it set the tone for our entire lives. Nietzsche,
who read a lot of Schopenhauer, was also a great musical enthusiast; he said, “Without music, life would be a mistake.” Neither Nietzsche nor Schopenhauer, however, highlighted the social dimension of music.

C. For people across cultures and time, music has almost always been a social activity. Indeed, in most cultures, music is associated with dance, religious ritual, even work; it is a definitive part of life.

III. As I said at the beginning of this lecture, music, like laughter, is typically shared. It is a social activity that breeds solidarity. How does it do this?

A. Rhythm is perhaps the most immediately accessible of all musical elements.

B. Melody is much more interesting than rhythm in terms of cultural variability; different societies use, for example, different musical scales.

C. A piece of music also has structure, as you might notice in thinking about the difference between a simple song and a piece performed in counterpoint.

D. Further, music has texture, produced by, among other things, its instrumentation and composition.

E. The style of performance is also an element of music. The combination of these elements gives music its power.

IV. Why does music affect us so much? We can approach this question by asking another: What does music do?

A. There seems to be a direct connection between what we might call the physiology of music and our own physiology. Think, for example, of the high-pitched screeching noise in the movie Psycho or the rumbling undertones in Jaws. These sounds affect us quite directly and viscerally; they have emotional significance. Indeed, some theorists have said that music expresses emotion by imitating emotion.

B. In what other ways does music express emotion?

1. Imagine a piece of music that is sad. What is in the music that is sad? It is, after all, just a bunch of notes.

2. We might say that the music is sad if it arouses in the listener a feeling of sadness or if the composer was expressing sadness when he or she wrote the piece. A third suggestion is that the context of the music determines whether it is sad.

3. The problem for us in answering this question is that we have established a theory that emotions are ways of engaging with the world, yet pure music does not seem to do that.

C. The solution lies in the fact that even pure music carries with it any number of personal associations.

1. A great deal of interesting research has been done in recent years to determine why people seem so attached to the music they listened to as teenagers. It seems that there is a special age of life, somewhere in adolescence, when people are particularly receptive to music, and what people hear when they’re in their teens is something they carry with them for the rest of their lives.

2. Even pure music may carry memories of the first time it was heard or other associations, and I think we can say that music expresses a good deal about emotion precisely because it is so close and personal to us.

Essential Reading:
John Morreall, Taking Laughter Seriously.
Stephen Davies, Musical Meaning and Expression.

Supplementary Reading:
Ronald de Sousa, The Rationality of Emotion, chapter 7, “When Is It Wrong to Laugh?”

Questions to Consider:
1. Why do we laugh?
2. What’s so funny about slapstick (for example, watching a man trip over a dog)?
3. What kind of music moves you the most? What does this suggest to you about your emotional temperament?

4. How does the music that moves you do so? Is it the words, the rhythm, the “tune”?
Lecture Twenty-Four
Happiness and Spirituality

Scope: Emotions provide the meaning or, rather, the meanings, of life. However, since Socrates, philosophers have been suspicious of the emotions. They have variously urged ataraxia—peace of mind—and apatheia—freedom from the emotions. The history of philosophy is highly ambivalent about the emotions. Throughout these lectures, I have been so concerned to understand and appreciate the power of the emotions because I believe that the good life is the passionate life. A life without ample emotion is subhuman or inhuman. In this final lecture, I would like to return to a central issue, the way in which emotions and rationality form an inseparable team, not two opposing forces. I also want to return to the idea of the varieties and “levels” of consciousness by saying something about that “highest” form of emotional consciousness, what we call spirituality, or ataraxia, as bliss.

Outline

I. As we have said throughout this course, emotions give us insight, they are intelligent, and they are ways of engaging with the world. Yet what good is this new understanding of emotions if it does not help us lead better lives?
   A. Let me first address this question by going back to an idea we have already established: Emotions can be rational.
      1. As we have learned, emotions are necessary for rational decision-making, and as many philosophers have argued, to lead a good life is to lead a rational life.
      2. Rationality is not just the capacity to figure things out, but it also involves caring about the right things, although exactly what the right things are might be a matter of debate.
   B. This brings us to the question of what the passionate life entails, which has been a central focus throughout the history of philosophy.
      1. Many have said that what is ultimately desirable in life is peace of mind, or what the Greeks called ataraxia. A corollary goal might be freeing oneself from disturbing emotions, or a condition that the Greeks called apatheia (“apathy”).
      2. My view of the “good life” is quite different. I believe, along with Nietzsche and other philosophers, that what is important in life is being devoted, passionate, involved, and engaged.
      3. When Nietzsche talks about this subject, he uses the metaphor of the “Dionysian,” recalling the Greek god of wine and frivolity. The Dionysian is a life that’s wild, but it’s also one of intense devotion.

II. For Aristotle, happiness, or what he called eudaimonia (“flourishing”), was not a momentary state but the condition of living a good life as a whole. Happiness is not a feeling for Aristotle; rather, it encompasses the fulfillment of life’s dreams and expectations. Some of our contemporary notions of happiness may seem, by comparison, rather trivial.
   A. The first of these notions is, of course, that happiness is a feeling; further, it is a feeling that can be induced by various drugs or in certain settings. In this view, happiness is transient; it seems to have no substance or foundation, and it certainly does not relate to living well or accomplishing important things in life.
   B. Related to happiness is the concept of joy. Joy is a high, but it is not completely unrelated to the rest of your life. If you take joy in something, that fact ties the emotion into the world in a significant way.
   C. We also talked about, in an earlier lecture, the peculiarly American mentality that I called cheerfulness. Many people in the world—Europeans, Asians, Africans, and others—see this façade as idiotic, because they have a more serious view of life.
   D. It is also supposed that laughter is a good indication of happiness, and sometimes it is. But, as we saw in the last lecture, laughter can express many things besides happiness.
   E. The idea of flow, put forth about 20 years ago by a fellow named Csikszentmihalyi, describes a special kind of high that comes from intense activity. Long-distance runners are perhaps the best example of people who experience flow.
1. This feeling is directly attached to the activity that one is involved in. Indeed, when Aristotle talks about happiness, or *eudaimonia*, he most often emphasizes the notion that happiness is part of an activity.

2. For Aristotle, pleasure is not a feeling or a sensation, but it is something you find when you enjoy what you’re doing.

3. The overall idea is that pleasure is a bonus you get when you are doing good things, and happiness relates to living the kind of life that you want to live and that you ought to live, according to the best standards you can reach.

III. Emotional intelligence relates to happiness because it encompasses the sensitivity to care about and devote oneself to the right things. The problem with this concept of happiness as living a complete life devoted to significant issues or activities is that it does not always mesh with reality.

A. Doctors now believe that the great composer Beethoven suffered from lead poisoning all of his adult life, and from his late 20s onward, probably never had a pain-free, satisfying day. Yet in listening to his music, we get an impression of unmistakable joy and spirituality.

B. Was Beethoven happy? In one sense, the answer is, obviously not. However, the idea of a passionate life goes beyond enjoyment or even devotion; the passionate life is a matter of being obsessed with something you really believe in—something beautiful and creative.

C. To delve further into the question of what it means to be happy, I want to take a perverse turn to a novel by Jean-Paul Sartre called *Nausea*.

1. *Nausea* is the story of a truly miserable young man, Antoine Roquentin. He is cynical, cruel, and utterly in despair about his life.

2. We might contrast Roquentin with the character we talked about earlier in Camus’ novel *The Stranger*. Camus’ character goes through life on a superficial level; he is not very sensitive to the responses of people around him, and he has no clear moral sense.

3. The character in *Nausea*, in contrast, is continually reflective, which may be what makes him miserable. He thinks constantly about what he ought to be doing, about the people he meets, and so on, and it’s the reflection that makes him so unhappy.

4. In earlier lectures, I have made the point that reflection is not something over and above emotion. Quite the contrary, reflection and emotion are part of the same process.

D. This process of reflection ties into happiness because, outrageous as it may seem, I believe that thinking you are happy is a big part of actually being happy. This thesis comes straight out of Sartre: Happiness is not just a matter of what we devote ourselves to, what we engage in, but it is how we think about these engagements.

E. The connection between emotion and reflection also relates to the idea of emotional integrity.

1. Emotional integrity is not just consistency in one’s emotions; indeed, it often involves conflicting emotions. In our world, anyone with any awareness has conflicting emotions, because we experience so many conflicts in our society and our lives. Thus, managing conflicting emotions is one component of emotional integrity.

2. Another essential component is the idea of values. Emotional integrity, or what the existentialists would call *authenticity*, relates to having one’s life connected with deeper values, an idea that we might also think of as *emotional devotion*.

IV. Finally, let’s bring in the concept of spirituality, not in a religious sense but as a kind of attachment to humanity and the universe. Spirituality is, in essence, a matter of passion.

A. Philosophers have talked about this kind of spirituality in the past by introducing a sense of the sublime. We’ve all had an experience of the sublime—looking up at the stars at night, for example, and feeling one’s own insignificance in the universe. That’s what spirituality is.

B. Spirituality plays a curious role in contemporary thought, because it falls between the doctrines of religion, on the one hand, and what is often called the secular life, on the other. For many years, I’ve rebelled against this distinction between the secular and the sacred, but I wasn’t quite sure why. I found part of my answer in two of my favorite philosophers, Hegel and Nietzsche.
1. Hegel had a conception of the entire universe as a grand spirit. This idea was radical insofar as it did not take God to be something other than the universe. God infiltrates everything and everybody; thus, to make a distinction between God and humanity, or God and us personally, is to conceive of the universe inaccurately.

2. Nietzsche was well known for attacking religion, but he was a champion of spirituality. He often complained that religion—Christianity, in particular—had turned what is essentially human and natural and magnificent into something that was otherworldly, something that we could never directly grasp.

C. It seems to me that both these conceptions are right. There is something about the sublime—something about seeing the universe as much larger than oneself and, consequently, having a sense of humility in response to it—that is not debilitating but, rather, elevating. It is a culmination of the passionate life.

D. All too often, spirituality is taken to be opposed to science. Some highly regarded authors, including Thomas More, speak of science as a disenchantment of the world.

1. In contrast, I think that science increases our sense of spirituality as we discover more and more about the world and how it works.

2. Thomas Aquinas defended this idea in the 13th century, when he said that we should show devotion to God by spending time figuring out his creation.

E. Spinoza also believed in something like Hegel’s theory: God and the universe are essentially one, and once you accept and understand this proposition, you will arrive at a singular emotion, which he called bliss. This is akin to the Buddhist conception of nirvana, namely, that the universe and all of us are one.

F. In closing, we can say that emotions are not necessarily specific and petty. Human emotionality goes far beyond something as trivial as envy or resentment. One of the most glorious things we can say is that humans are capable of emotions that take in the entire universe.

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:
Sam Keen, *The Passionate Life*.

Questions to Consider:
1. What is spirituality? Do you think it is limited to those who are religious? Can religion actually get in the way of spirituality?

2. Why do we value enthusiasm? What must also be true of a person for his or her enthusiasm to be a virtue? What does it take for enthusiasm (literally, “filled with the gods”) to be spiritual?
For the sake of economy and conciseness, I have placed at the front of the bibliography a small number of anthologies and reference works that contain various readings from classic and contemporary sources. Quite a few of the essential and supplementary readings appearing later in this bibliography can be found, either in whole or in part, within one of these collections. The bibliography continues with a list of essential readings specific to the various lectures, a further list of supplemental readings, and a short list of internet resources.

My book *True to Our Feelings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), written during the preparation of this Teaching Company course, is a natural complement to these lectures.

**Essential Reading—Anthologies and Reference Works**


**Essential Reading—Other**


Nussbaum, Martha. *Upheavals of Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. This is the author’s own neo-Stoic theory of emotion, which includes a substantial study of compassion and analyses of emotion in great literary and musical works.


———. *Not Passion’s Slave: Emotions and Choice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. The first volume of a trilogy on the nature of emotions. This volume contains a series of research essays on the nature of emotion and the thesis that we are not passive with regard to our emotions.


———. *True to Our Feelings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. The book I did in conjunction with the lectures for this Teaching Company course—includes many (but not all) of the same general themes and topics.

**Supplementary Reading**


Belliotti, Raymond Angelo. *Happiness Is Overrated*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004. A challenging study that argues that happiness is not the most important thing in life.


Frank, Robert H. *Passion within Reason: The Strategic Role of the Emotions*. New York: Norton, 1988. One of the few books on emotion by an excellent economist, arguing that the emotions are an unappreciated dimension of economic studies.

French, Peter A. *The Virtues of Vengeance*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1983. The author not only defends vengeance and demonstrates its prevalence throughout our history and literature but also praises its virtues as essential for morality and justice.


Hochschild, Arlie. *The Managed Heart*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. A groundbreaking study in sociology of the pressures, tensions, and coping behavior of people (such as flight attendants) who have to carefully “manage” their emotions in their work.


James, William. *Principles of Psychology*. New York: Dover, 1890. One of the great works in American psychology and the textbook for generations of psychologists at the beginning of the last century. It includes an important chapter on emotion, which is a slightly revised version of the famous essay listed above (under Essential Readings—Other).

Keen, Sam. *The Passionate Life*. New York: Harper, 1976. The author was, in his words, “overeducated at Harvard and Princeton” and was a professor of philosophy and religion at “various legitimate institutions,” a contributing editor of *Psychology Today* for 20 years, then a freelance thinker, lecturer, seminar leader, and consultant.


Internet Resources


http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/Gallery/Young/emotion.htm. Provides links to emotional intelligence tests and books.

http://psychology.about.com/od/soist_emo/. Introduces a great many prominent psychologists interested in emotions and control.

