

Putting Emotions in Their Place

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Toward the end of the twentieth century, a number of sociologists took up the struggle to bring emotions into serious consideration within our discipline. Some came from the symbolic interactionist community which, despite a certain cognitivism suggested by the very label "symbolic," has always been more attentive to emotions than most of sociology. Others drew on other traditions in social psychology—field theory, for example, and studies of frustration and aggression in intergroup relations. Still others tried to find an importable psychology, often in psychoanalysis (even while it was losing something of its foothold in psychology departments), also in other traditions including newer lines of work in physiological psychology and neurology. Still others turned to efforts to grasp emotions in cultural studies, in feminism, and in various branches of aesthetic analysis. All of these potentially inform the revitalization of sociology by attention to emotions.

Some sociologists have managed not only to borrow effectively but to advance interdisciplinary inquiry into the emotions, maintaining a foothold on each side of the border between psychology and sociology.¹ Nonetheless, wide-reaching though efforts in the sociology of emotions have been, they have not yet deeply transformed sociological theory in a general way, nor have they reshaped many subfields of the discipline. Instead, the sociology of emotions has gained a certain recognition as a

field of its own. Whatever advantages this has for the networks of specialists, it is a compartmentalization that may limit the impact of the field within sociology more generally.

At the same time, in order to understand why studies of emotions have not become more central in sociology, we have to ask not just about the character of the studies themselves, but about the nature of and reasons for the inattention in the rest of the discipline. We need to understand what kinds of resistances inquiries into emotions meet, and what features of existing theories and approaches make connections hard to establish. I do not mean the word "resistances" lightly. I think that the understanding of "serious science" with which many sociologists labor actually inhibits taking emotions seriously. The idea that inquiry into emotions may be frivolous is reinforced, perhaps, by the frivolity with which many in cultural studies play with ideas of emotion, evoking more than explaining. But a somewhat deeper reason for the resistance lies in the implicit behaviorism absorbed by many sociologists, the notion that emotions are by their nature vague references to unobservable inner states. Just as Robert Wuthnow proposed that mainstream sociology would accept only a sociology of culture that moved "beyond the problem of meaning," so many sociologists fear any approach to emotions that depends on interpretation.² Never mind that all knowledge depends on interpretation; it is less disguised in most serious work on culture and emotions than in other lines of sociological inquiry. Emotions seem less firmly observable than, say, incomes or voting (though it is not clear that they are less observable than class or power). Opening the theoretical door to emotions suggests sociological analysis in which anything goes, with explanations being offered on the basis of appeals to an introspective or interpretative black box labeled emotions. The fear is overdetermined, for the challenge is not just to epistemic practice, but to the sense of self-as-serious which undergirds the self-esteem of many sociologists. Last (at least for this list, though I have no doubt a longer one could be instructive) and certainly not least, studies of emotions raise the specter of psychologism for many sociologists. Schooled in a somewhat one-sided reading of Durkheim, these fear (note: fear is an emotion) explanation of sociological phenomena by psychological factors. And what if epistemic reductionism led to reductions in power and resources, as psychology faculties grew at the expense of sociology?

Faced with these resistances, it seems to me important to affirm some commitments with regard to sociological inquiry into emotions. First, I think the importance of the sociological study of emotions lies

precisely in studying emotions sociologically, that is, not as an autonomously psychological or “internal” phenomenon which can be adduced as such to explain social phenomena. Emotions are both produced and shaped by social interaction and cultural understanding. But we have to be cautious here. We will lose something of the specific idea of emotions if we lose touch with their bodily dimension. Second, what we need is not just a sociology of emotions, but an integration of emotions into sociological understanding, explanation, observation, and theory more generally. Such an integration would not only avoid compartmentalization; it would avoid the tendency to bring emotions into explanation as a supplement or corrective to an explanation conceived initially in terms of a largely emotion-free sociological theory. Third, we need to approach emotions within a critical theoretical perspective. I do not mean that we should privilege a particular school of thought, claiming say that Horkheimer and Adorno did a better job with emotions than anyone else. Rather, I mean that we need to approach emotions not in a spirit of simple positivity—not simply affirming “Hey! Emotions exist! Emotions are important! Emotions have this or that effect” but inquiring critically into the difficulties of observing and thinking about emotions, the implications of the history of thought that lies behind some of the habitual ways in which we do so, and the ways in which ordinary language is fraught with biases. To cite only one glaring example, among the attractive contributions of sociological study of emotions could be a challenge to or reconsideration of the ubiquitous tacit assumption of a mind/body dualism. This will only take place, however, if we pay critical attention to that assumption, its history, and the way it is embedded in our theories, language, and perceptions. Indeed, the power of that assumption may be one of the reasons why it is so hard to get emotions onto the analytic center stage: they simply cannot be grasped well in terms of that dichotomy.

More generally, a number of issues—and constitutive oppositions—shape the intellectual heritage and habits with which we must grapple in pursuing a better integration of emotions into movement studies. Opening the New York University conference on which this book is based, Jim Jasper described the event not just in terms of advancing an intersection between two subfields, movements and emotions, but in terms of setting out “in search of new visions, images, and language” for the study of social movements. This quest is important not simply because the field has gotten a bit stale (which it has) but because the founding definition of the field is directly hostile to grasping emotions well.

I

There seems little doubt about the importance of emotions to movement participation and to the shaping of collective action and specific events. Alas, there is equally little doubt about the minimal place accorded emotions in the leading theories within the field. Emotions were banished from the study of social movements, to a very large extent, in reaction against a tradition of collective behavior analysis that ran from Le Bon through Turner and Killian and Neil Smelser.³ This older tradition approached collective behavior mainly from the outside, as something that irrational others engaged in. When attention turned to movements (not merely episodes) and to struggles with which analysts had sympathy (and in which they might engage themselves), the perspective changed. The argument that we should think in terms of collective action (not just behavior) marked that shift of perspective, opening up an internal analysis of something that “people like us” might do. It was seen as rational in the sense of reasonable, self-aware product of choice as well as (more narrowly) strategic, interest-based, calculated in terms of efficient means to an end. The new framing of the problem also suggested a redefinition of the range of appropriate objects of study. Under the label “collective action,” social scientists grouped protests together with trade struggles, the insurgencies of labor together with the attempts of capitalists to control prices.⁴ Even more, the study of social movements—enduring, concerted action, often carefully planned and supported by substantial formal organization—encouraged an opposition to explanations of specific events of collective behavior as explicable by socio-psychological processes. With the bathwater of some very serious biases, the baby of emotions was commonly thrown out. It is hard to get emotions back into the field partly because they were not merely neutrally absent from it but expelled in an intellectual rebellion that helped to give the field its definition.

At the same time, I would like us to recall how old an issue in social science we are addressing. Certainly, as I suggested above, we cannot understand this issue (and the resistance to thinking it through, and certain of the odd formulations that have resulted) without seeing how it builds on problematic foundations, such as mind/body dualism. Already basic for Plato, this dualism takes a distinctively influential form in Epictetus’s teachings that we must treat our bodies as external in much the same way we treat other people, farm animals, and volcanoes. What is internal is clearly mind. Augustine opened up the space of this interior to the self, but continued the emphasis on control over body—and emo-

tions. On top of this come distinctions like rational/irrational, motive/action, individual/social. The point is simply that we cannot start into the effort to think emotions better without grappling with the heritage that has produced the very idea of emotions—and the distinction of these from reason. The tradition of reasoning which we inherit, in other words, has been built in part by putting emotions in a specific and contained place. This has been resisted, by Romantics, Freudians, mystics, and post-modernists. But it has not been escaped. It thus structures how we approach our more specific problem of providing a place for emotions in the study of social movements.

Most contributors to this volume have tacitly situated their attempts to bring emotions back in as either a challenge or an amendment to the reigning conventional wisdoms of political process theory, resource mobilization, and rational choice. Of course, approaches are not identical, but what they share in common is a more or less instrumental approach to questions of collective action. Instrumental thinking is dominant in the field because of the specific post-1960s struggles that have defined it, but it exists and has the intellectual power it has because of a much longer history linking reason to control (including control over emotions).

Some presenters have simply wished to amend such an instrumental approach by suggesting that among the things movement organizers need to manage, among the tactics for mobilization they may employ, among the strategies they may use against their enemies, emotions and their manipulation ought to figure more prominently. Others have seen attention to emotions as more of a challenge to instrumental approaches. At least tacitly, they have suggested that emotions alert us to different ways in which movement participants are motivated, achieve solidarity with each other, and shape their actions.

Bedeiling this discussion is a tendency to see emotions as somehow “irrational,” either explicitly or simply implicitly because of the opposition to “rationalistic” analytic approaches. We would do well to remember that passions figured quite strongly alongside interests in the founding of modern utilitarianism and instrumental political analysis.⁵ Frank Dobbin (see chap. 4 of this volume) mentions Hirschman’s analysis of the rhetorical shift by which passions were for many analysts and whole disciplines such as economics transmuted into interests. But for Machiavelli, Hobbes, and even Bentham, passions remained directly and in their own right a focus of attention. They saw human action as shaped fundamentally by passions, they saw a need to tame and organize passions, they saw passions shaping the otherwise inexplicable source of differences in

what people found pleasurable and painful without which a utilitarian calculus could not be put in motion.

It is helpful also to remember Adam Smith's (1984 [1759]) devotion to a "theory of moral sentiments" and in general the extent to which the Scottish moralists were concerned with historical, cultural, and social structural variations in the ways in which emotional bonds and lines of conflict were institutionalized. Alongside their development of a notion of civil society they brought forward a notion of common sense, by which they meant not simply a lowest common denominator of reason but a capacity to achieve common understanding shaped by feeling as well as thinking.⁶

A key distinction between emotions and interests in this discourse concerns relations to morality. Arguments from interests have commonly suggested that morality is a matter of "mere ought," with no material force. One of the advantages to taking emotions seriously is to see better how moral norms and injunctions come to have force. This helps us thus to distinguish the compelling from the good—in either the sense of interests and their many goods, or of morality as only an abstract ideal. This is not to say that mere strength of emotions constitutes a basis for moral judgment. Rather, as Charles Taylor (1989) has suggested, we come to know the higher goods that define us as persons and bring order to our moral judgments by reflecting on our strongest responses.

II

With this in mind, we would do well to ask more clearly, "emotions in relation to what else"? The answer may not be interests. Attachment to money or power or the other sort of resources that some movement analysts treat as objective interests is as much a matter of emotion—as the classical utilitarians saw—as attachment to one's nation or one's children. The question for them in each case was the extent to which one pursued the ends thus given with means provided by reason.

An alternative but closely related distinction would contrast emotions to cognition. This has the advantage of removing the implication that thinking always results in some normatively understood achievement of "rationality." Here, however, I would raise two other concerns: (1) How fully can we separate cognition and emotion? (2) Don't we need a third category to complement them, that of perception?

It seems to me a good case could be made that much of what we are seeking to do is to bring the relationship among cognition, emotion,

and perception to the forefront of our attention. If this is right, we are also presumably challenging not one but two of sociology's long-standing resistances: to cultural and psychological analysis. Any serious sociology of emotions must be more than an ad hoc call to look at the additional variable of "emotionality." It requires frameworks for bringing intrapsychic and cultural dimensions of meaning and action into clear relationship with social organization.

I suspect that few who have read this far are likely to question the virtue of paying serious attention to culture in the production of meaning and identity. Intrapsychic factors are another matter. It is interesting how many psychoanalytic concepts are imported into the sociology of emotions with how little attention to a psychoanalytic framework of analysis. I want to mention just one important instance from the conference on which this book is based. Someone asked from the floor the question "if emotions are being managed, what is doing the managing?" The question seemed to stop conversation, puzzle the presenter, and pose a challenge. One answer—that for example of Epictetus as I cited him above—might be self, in the sense in which self is sharply distinguished from body, and passions relegated to the latter. This is not an answer most moderns feel at ease with, however, having incorporated into our notion of self the idea that we are constituted partly by our feelings, and that we reveal ourselves by expressing an inner, significantly emotional, nature (Taylor 1989). Psychoanalysis suggests a different answer, based on the internal differentiation of psychic faculties (though the term faculties may be contested).

Psychoanalysis suggests a complex view of intrapsychic relations, in which the challenges of balancing and organizing relations among drives and emotions, inhibitions and repressions, indeed, pleasures and pains, are assigned to a distinct faculty of selfhood—the ego. I do not want to argue a case here for ego-analysis as opposed to other psychoanalytic schools (indeed, some others like object-relations may be better at other sociological tasks, like grasping cultural variations). Indeed, my point is not to argue for psychoanalysis as such, but for the idea that if we are to be serious about emotions, we should think about them with the aid of models of intrapsychic processes that do justice to their complexity. While we may have good reason analytically to distinguish emotions from cognition and perception, we also have good reason to see each influencing the other.

It is worth asking why emotions so automatically *seem* opposed to cognition and interests? I suggest the answer lies in one of Western cul-

ture's pervasive dualistic constructions. Think of the analogies among these paired oppositions:

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|-----|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. | thinking | feeling |
| 2. | mind | body |
| 3. | public | private |
| 4. | male | female |
| 5. | pride | shame |
| 6. | controlled | uncontrolled |
| 7. | conscious | unconscious |
| 8. | higher | lower |
| 9. | outer | inner |
| 10. | individuating | general (or shared) |

Predominant usage has placed the positive valence on the first in each pair, but of course this can be reversed—as it has been by Rousseau, Romantics, and many of us since the 1960s:

- | | | |
|----|-------------|------------|
| 1. | inauthentic | authentic |
| 2. | artificial | natural |
| 3. | repressive | expressive |

The short but difficult moral to this story is that in order to do a really good job studying the place of emotions in social movements (as of movements in social life), we need to try to transcend, not reproduce, the pervasive dualism. Indeed, it is partly because emotions appear usually on the embarrassing side of the dichotomy that they have been understudied by those who would take movements seriously rather than treat them only as instances of deviant collective behavior in which norms against emotional short-circuiting break down. At the same time, we need to understand how the dualism itself affects the ways in which people deploy notions of both reason and emotion. In seeking to transcend it in our own work, we should not fail to attend to its efficacy in structuring the movements we study.

III

So far, like many of the contributors to this volume, I have been speaking of emotions more or less as a group. This is a problem, however, since one of the first answers to the question I asked a few moments ago—“emotions in relation to what else?”—ought to be, “other emotions.” We

need to differentiate and specify emotions, and see that it is every bit as much of a challenge to relate them to each other as to cognition or perception.

I do not propose to try to list all the emotions from anger to fear, shame to hate, joy to love, thrill to pride. I do want to add a couple of suggestions: (1) These work differently from each other. (2) There are patterns and challenges in relating these to each other, and these may be very important for movement analyses. Some emotions may get in the way of others; some may specifically call forth others. Whether we choose psychoanalysis or Heise's affect control theory or Heider's earlier balance theory, we need to see the ways in which people not only have emotions but have many emotions with dynamic relations among them. It seems to me that movement activity is often shaped not just by a single pervasive emotional source but by participants' shifting emotional orientations—as they express hatred, for example, and feel needs to balance it with more solidaristic emotions.

This is one place where the idea of an "emotional habitus," which Anne Kane introduced with a lineage from Elias, Bourdieu, and de Sousa, may be helpful. People do not simply display characteristic emotions, but have characteristic ways of relating emotions to each other, and of relating emotions to cognition and perception. These involve a sense of how to act, how to play the game, that is never altogether conscious or purely reducible to rules—even when it seems strategic. Moreover, I think we should probably follow Bourdieu in seeing the habitus as a result of the individual's inscription into social relationships, not as something altogether portable and interior to the individual.

IV

One of the problems with the pervasive dualism in Western thinking about emotions is that it keeps locating emotions inside individuals. It leads us to look for their roots in biographical experience or perhaps in biochemical reactions in their brains. Sociology should remind us to look also at social relations. As the concept of habitus suggests, emotions are produced and organized—played out—in interpersonal relations. These are both immediate, and emotions are particularly important in directly interpersonal dynamics, but also indirect. We maintain emotional relationships to large-scale organizations and whole fields of relationships—from our kin to business worlds and social movements.

This is not just a matter of noting that organizations call on us to perform emotional labor, though this is true. It is also a matter of the

way in which we invest ourselves in and achieve our identities through emotional relationships to other people and complex organizations.

We are in danger of a sort of "sampling on the dependent variable" in studies of emotions. We see emotions as contrary to cognition, disruptions in organizational processes, challenges to stable institutions. I would suggest, however, that institutions, and organizations, and relationships all gain their relative stability in part from people's emotional investments in them.⁷ In other words, we have huge emotional investments in the everyday status quo. It may look like we are relatively unemotional as we go about our tasks, but disrupt the social structure in which we work, and our emotional investments in it will become evident. From different theoretical foundations, Scheff (1997) has offered a not altogether dissimilar analysis of shame as a response to threats to rupture the social bond.

What this means for us as students of social movements is that we need to be careful not to ascribe emotions to movements as though everyday maintenance of social structures were not equally a matter of emotions. In addition, this point focuses attention on a range of emotions—or at least patterns in emotions—which have to do with the nature of social relationships as such. A sociology of emotions ought to help us to understand commitment, trust, security, and investment as well as anger, shame, and joy. If we see emotions only in connection with disruptions to social life, we shall exaggerate the importance of certain emotional dynamics and miss others.

Relatedly, this should focus our attention on the link between a sociology of emotions and the politics of identity. The latter is not simply a matter of pointing to multicultural variations, but of seeing the centrality of problems of recognition.⁸ Any structure of social relations extends to those who live within it some degree of occasion for recognizing themselves through their social relationships. But this is variable; social movements arise with recognition as one of their goals precisely for this reason. But this is not because those who are not recognized become emotional, while those who are recognized remain reasonable. The emotions are bound up in the whole field and organization of relations from the beginning.

Here we should also consider a range of other problematic oppositions which we sometimes treat as ontologically given, and therefore as automatically useful in analysis rather than in need of continual critical examination: individual/collective, nation/individual, and structure/culture, among others.

Paying attention to emotional investments in everyday social struc-

tures should help us understand (among other things) why predictability reduces fear (e.g., why nonstate violence may be more threatening than state violence).

V

Having suggested that we should watch out for seeing emotions only in relation to social disruptions, I want to return in closing to some specific points about social movements.

Because they involve steps outside ordinary structural routines, social movements do indeed make emotions prominent. This is one of the points to Victor Turner's (1969) idea of liminality. It would be a mistake to view this as simply a matter of "breakdown" theories of collective action, however. In the first place, the claim is not that collective action arises because of a breakdown in normative order, but that nonroutine action removes some of the everyday social relationships in which emotions are invested stably and gives occasion for the workings of other emotions or other patterns in the appearance of emotions. Secondly, as Turner emphasizes, emotions may be organized through ritual. They do not simply arise and run amok when conventional repressions are lifted. What are expressed in ritualized occasions for liminality are often reversals of conventional norms. This may be emotionally cathartic, but that is precisely because emotions were already invested in the existing norms (and the usual patterns of repression).

Social movements differ greatly, however, in the extent to which they involve steps outside established routines and normative organizations of emotions. We must make more of this. It is touched on under the rubric of "high-risk mobilizations," but this is only one issue. To a considerable extent in the modern world, social movements have become normal, everyday routines. We need more clearly to distinguish those that are not. One problem in this is the investment many movement analysts (especially those broadly sympathetic to the movements of the 1960s) made in seeing movement activity as rational and reasonable rather than deviant, as many collective behavior analysts had presented it.

Social movements also differ in the extent to which and manner in which they build new normative structures for emotions. Nancy Whittier pointed to aspects of this in her account of movement participants' learning how to manage emotional expression. It goes beyond this, however, to other variables.

Movements produce emotions; they do not simply reflect emotional orientations brought to them by members. This goes beyond evoking

emotions to attract members to recurrently reproducing them in order to secure commitment, maintain shared meanings, and indeed, offer the "high" of emotional release as a "selective incentive" to their participants. Recurrent occasions for "peak" emotional engagement may be more or less ritualized and more or less consciously managed by movement leaders. There may be a pattern of escalation in the kinds of emotional engagements required to keep movement participation exciting. Just as crowds may have to get bigger to keep attracting news media, emotional catharses may be escalated to keep attracting participation—and this is potentially dangerous, as it often propels movements towards climactic confrontations.⁹)

The issue is not just extent of emotional engagement, though, but the kind of balancing involved, as for example fear-inducing confrontations with police call for solidarity-affirming communal experiences. We should not forget the extent to which the emotional dynamics of movements are driven by fatigue as well as excitement.¹⁰ This may be easy for a reader to recognize, and a sign to an author to stop writing.

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Notes

1. For a prominent example, see Scheff 1997. Other noteworthy analysts also developed theory bridging sociology and psychology (in different ways). David Heise's affect control theory, of which the core text is *Understanding Events: Affect and the Construction of Social Action* (1979), is an original extension of Heider's balance theory, among other sources, and is among the foremost contemporary efforts to develop a formal theory of emotions that is clearly social as well as psychological. Several sociologists have sought to advance psychoanalytic psychology and sociology at the same time, notably Chodorow 1999, Smelser 1999, and Chancer 1992. The three represent different psychoanalytic as well as sociological traditions.

2. See Wuthnow 1989 and the discussion in Calhoun 1992.

3. And, as Gary Marx (1972) once suggested, deserved to be abandoned because it ran from these academic sources through to unsavory political responses to protest. He dubbed this account of crowd action as socio-psychological short-circuiting "the Gustave LeBon-Ronald Reagan 'mad dog' image" of collective behavior.

4. Mancur Olson's *Theory of Collective Action* (1965) played an important role in this reframing of the field of resemblances, as well in specific analyses.

5. See Albert Hirschman's (1977) famous recovery of this dimension of moral philosophy at the moment when it gave birth to political economy. See also Louis Dumont's (1982) account of how this process was tied to the distinctively Western construction of the individual.

6. Hutcheson (2000 [1728], 1919) is the crucial figure here.

7. On this, see the many contributions both of the Tavistock school of organiza-

tion and of group analysts who were influenced heavily by object relations psychoanalytic thought (e.g., Bion 1961; Miller and Rice 1967). Note also how this was related (albeit somewhat speculatively) to the formation of religious movements by Philip Slater (1967).

8. See Gutman 1994, especially the lead essay by Charles Taylor; also Calhoun 1993b.

9. I discussed one instance of this in my analysis of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in China (Calhoun 1995b).

10. See Hirschman's (1982) discussion, inspired by Scitovsky's *The Joyless Economy* (1976).