



Wednesday, June 25th, 14:00-14:30, room 101

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Emotions, Nature, and Culture

Keywords: multicomponent theory of emotions, nature, nurture, compatibilism

Charles Darwin claimed that emotions were biologically determined and universal in human culture. In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, he said the same state of mind is expressed throughout the world with remarkable uniformity (Darwin 1872). Paul Ekman focused on developing techniques for measuring nonverbal communication, especially facial expressions. He treated the universality of facial expressions as direct evidence of the universality of emotions: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise (Ekman later expanded this list of basic emotions). Linguistics can also contribute to the cross-disciplinary study of emotions by describing and analysing data from various languages. Some researchers claimed that many (if not all) emotions are recognized in all languages. Steven Pinker wrote, "I have never heard a foreign emotion word whose meaning was not instantly recognizable" (Pinker 1997, 367).

However, that may not always be the case. People categorize emotions differently in different speech communities. Some common emotions in the Western culture can be exotic in another culture. The Utku Eskimos have no word for anger and do not feel the emotion. Colin Turnbull claimed that the Ik people of Uganda lived without love (Turnbull 1972). Some emotions might appear in different cultures and be completely exotic to us. The Japanese have a few terms for emotions, such as *amae* and *sabishii*, which are untranslatable in English or Polish. *Amae* is characterized as a feeling of dependency akin to that which infants feel toward their mothers (Doi 1973; Morsbach Tyler, 1986). *Sabishi* is characterized as a certain kind of sadness – usually associated with a lack of something or emptiness.

Anna Wierzbicka wrote, "Generally speaking, the labels do not match across language boundaries. For example, speakers of English use categories such as sad, angry, disgusted, and happy, whereas the speakers of Ifaluk use different, nonmatching categories such as *fago*, *song*, *waires*, and *ker* (cf. Lutz 1988; Wierzbicka 1992a), whilst speakers of Malay use categories such as *sedih*, *marah*, *jijik* and *gembira*, which are different again", (Wierzbicka 1999, 24).

Therefore, one might conclude that all emotions are biological products:
(1) Nature makes a constitutive contribution to emotions.

Some might conclude that all emotions are the products of learning and culture:

(2) Nurture makes a constitutive contribution to emotions.

Statement (1) is the main thesis of biological reductionism, while statement (2) is the thesis of social constructivism. *Tertium non datur?* In my view emotions – generally – involve both nature and nurture:

(3) Nature and nurture generate emotions. (a) All emotions have a biological basis, (b) some emotions are socially constructed.



In my paper, first, I shall present and explain the multicomponent theory of emotion; then, I will defend compatibilism in the "nature – nurture debate."

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