

*Where do they look to 'find' emotions, how do they study them, what do they say about emotions, what did they achieve? How can we relate these texts, make them talk to each other? What critical points can we raise?*

**Evans, D., 2001. The Universal Language.**

Evans describes an emotional state he once experienced and only later found an appropriate name for it; it was a Japanese word *amae* which, he believes, describes the best what he felt. This example illustrates Evan's thesis that core emotions are universal. This proposition is in stark contrast with what he called 'the cultural theory of emotion' assigned mostly to many anthropologists. They promoted a perspective on emotions as "learned behaviors, transmitted culturally, much like languages. [...] On this theory, people living in different cultures should experience different emotions." [see what the representatives of the anthropological accounts have to say about it] To argue for the universal nature of what he called 'basic emotions', Evans says: "The differences [...] are literally just skin-deep. Our internal organs, including our brains, are basically the same the world over. Since basic emotions are largely determined by the structure of our brains, it really should come as no surprise that they too are fundamentally the same in all cultures." However, he acknowledges that there are some emotions which may be described as culturally specific (such as 'being a wild pig'); they are hard to translate because, as Evans proposes, "the function of [these] emotions [is to] help people to cope with the particular demands of their culture." Unlike basic emotions which "help us meet the fundamental challenges faced by humans everywhere." If basic emotions and culturally specific emotions are seen as the extremities of a continuum, 'higher cognitive emotions' fall in between: although they are universal, they may vary significantly. For example, a Jamesian instinctual reaction or a reflex-like reaction [seeing a bucket of blood] would count as a basic emotion, while a more complex moral judgment would be seen as a higher cognitive emotion. Evans takes into consideration accounts from other disciplines and perspectives than anthropology – such as theories of evolution and neurology – to prove that emotions are not as variable and context specific as some anthropologists would want us to believe.

**Dixon, T., 2003. Introduction: From passions and affections to emotions.**

Dixon problematizes the use of the word emotions. We tend to think unproblematically that we know what we refer to when we speak about emotions. He quotes Baldwin (1905) saying that "the use of the word emotion in English psychology is comparatively modern" (p. 1). He proposes that the term itself has a history and that it changed in time depending on the discipline that governed the discourse on emotions – by discourse I mean that he looked at the way people talked and thought about emotions in the public domain and who was seen as an expert in a legitimate position to talk about the subject and gather the knowledge. On the basis of textual probes, he noticed that between 1800 and 1850, "a wholesale change in established vocabulary occurred" (p.4) meaning that the authors no longer referred to the 'passions', 'affections', the 'sentiments'. These concepts "belonged to a network of words such as 'of the soul', 'conscience', 'fall', 'sin', 'grace', 'Spirit', 'Satan', 'will', 'lower appetite', 'self-love' and so on [all these terms connote Christian vocabulary]" (p.5). The new word 'emotions' was affiliated to a different register of terms "such as 'psychology', 'law', 'observation', 'evolution', 'organism', 'brain', 'nerves', 'expression', 'behaviour' and 'viscera'" (p.5). As a result, we may understand that the way we speak and think about the category of emotions depends on a broader set of ideas, a map of concepts and this changes in time. So it is not just the

cultural context that matters but also a historical context and what we might call with Foucault 'a paradigm', a worldview. According to this worldview, we tend to believe that emotions are a domain of research mainly by psychologists and perhaps also neurologists or anthropologists but less Christian philosophers.

### **Seligman, M.E.P., 2007[2004]. Can happiness be taught?**

Seligman initiated what became to be known as 'positive psychology'. He claims that so far, psychology was interested in studying and healing 'negative' psychological states rather than focusing on examining the 'positive' states. The idea of 'happiness studies' as illustrated by the videos from the Greater Good Center was inspired by his work. Just like in Seligman's project, the task of 'happiness studies' is not merely to examine and map happiness but also to find ways to reproduce 'good practice'. Therefore, it is not only descriptive – providing studies of 'happy people', 'happy lives' and 'happy nations' – but it aims to provide instructions. In this respect, 'happiness studies' come close to motivational literature, coaching and mentoring as well as popular psychology and religion [it makes reference to Eastern religions as well as to 'common sense' ideas about moral behavior such as 'people are happier when in company of friends', 'marriage is good', 'good health is stimulated by optimism' etc.]. The main belief behind this view on psychology is that 'yes, happiness can be taught'. This belief also relegates legitimacy on the experts of 'happiness studies' to deliver its clients scientifically approved roads to happiness. The notion of happiness itself is not questioned thoroughly, it is rather assumed that people know what it means, they know when they feel it and they know how 'happy life' should look like, they only need encouragement and some clarifications. Looking at the program proposed to the students of Seligman's course, we may infer that activities that are proposed to schedule happiness are meant to “lead to success in life” (p.80). Furthermore on the basis of the videos we watched, it is evident that on the personal level happiness is unproblematically conflated with success, with economic prosperity, leadership skills and traditional family life. On the macroscopic level, 'happy nations' are those where the framework of successful, accomplished trajectory is made possible; in this way, 'happiness studies' should be seen as promoting particular ideological discourses shaping the individual, society and supporting the geo-political status quo [the present situation] by its concept of 'happy nations' which are the 'developed Western democracies'.

### **Ahmed, S., 2010. The promise of happiness.**

She investigates the current discourse on happiness (the literature, lectures, research) as a particular ideology. What are the unacknowledged beliefs underlying the program of 'happiness studies'? She reverses the equation to look at the symbols of failure, the losers of the system of happiness. What do their life prospects tell us about the consensual ideal of 'happy life' project? Instead of being inclusive, this project acts as a powerful tool of exclusion and punishment for difference and insubordination.

### **Solomon, R.C., 2007[1984]. Getting angry: The Jamesian theory of emotion in anthropology.**

Solomon shows how the culture into which we were socialized deeply impacts our capacity to understand other cultures. He suggests that even the metaphors through which we came to understand our emotions act like theories – these metaphors shape how we feel as well as how we understand other people's ways of feeling. He further suggests that we should move beyond the expectation that emotions are universal. Solomon lists two examples which, according to him,

prove that other cultures may have a very different way of speaking about emotions. If it is true that our speech influences how we feel, then also Utkas' and Tahitians' emotionality is shaped by their speech. Therefore, it is plausible they have a radically different register of emotions than us.

**Rosaldo, M.Z., 2007[1983]. The shame of headhunters and the autonomy of self.**

Rosaldo maps how the notion of shame can be unpacked and reveal the point of access to the complex system of power hierarchies in the studied society. This emotion characterizes those who are powerless in the society – children, young men, women (just like the concept of modesty in Abu-Lughod's text). The experience of headhunting initiates young men into the collective of adult men who are in the position of equality with each other. Aggression born of the feelings of inadequacy is directed outwards on the enemies while the feelings of mature respect is introduced and fostered among men; it holds the society together and prevents the situations of conflict. When the situation of harmonious equality confirmed again and again by the ritual of headhunting is threatened by the return of the feelings of inadequacy on the side of a headhunter struck by shame, this disturbance is quickly corrected by the act of hair-cutting – it is meant to return the player who dropped out into the game and encourage his belonging.

**Abu-Lughod, L., 2007[1990]. Shifting politics in Bedouin love poetry.**

Abu-Lughod takes a tape of love poetry as a significant object through which she can study the striking changes going on in the Bedouin society; it is also an object that helps her collect stories and to narrate them back to her readers enriched with her analysis. She is offered a tape that relates directly to the story of forbidden love which supposedly ended tragically. The story tells far more than just the actual story of an unfulfilled relation of two cousins. It reveals complex relations of power and gives an insight into the changing social hierarchy – there are mainly elderly men who are in control of the possessions and who exert this control through the means of the politics of marital bonds. Therefore, love as the act of random selection of partner is discouraged and those who transgress the rules lose the protection of the family.

Nevertheless due to the broader socio-economic changes, this system is being eroded. The state tries to exert its power over the Bedouin communities and so it puts pressure on the traditional ties (as well as popular culture promoting 'romantic love' may act as a force disturbing these traditional ties). Moreover, as the modes of living change, gender relations are modified as well. Women are no longer surrounded by their kins [members of the extended family] primarily so they are prevented from going out on their own; they lost part of their liberty of movement (not to get in contact with non-kin men; this has little to do with religion and much more with the traditional social order and power hierarchy). Young men are struggling to attain economic independence as well as symbolic power manifested through the relations motivated by 'romantic love'. However, the idea of 'true romance' is strongly attached to the notion of transgression.

The cassette symbolizes these tensions and struggles over the meaning of true love and new shapes of relations. The 'ancient' emotions are being restructured due to the erosion of traditional settings and practices and 'new' emotions emerge.

P.S.: The notion of modesty reflects the power hierarchy as it is instilled in/lived by its subjects (see Rosaldo on shame).

**Svašek, M., 2007. Moving corpses: Emotions and the subject-object ambiguity.**

We might think that 'modern' man and 'modern' societies are distinctly different from for example Utka Eskimos [in Solomon] or Philippino Ilongots [in Rosaldo]. The binary distinction between the modern and the primitive may hold under the condition that we claim rational behavior guided by science rather than religion, while we project everything that falls out of this picture on the other side of the binary, onto the primitive as misguided by superstition, religious rituals and other seemingly irrational practices. However, as Svašek reminds us, we tend to invest emotions into immaterial objects – such as cursing a broken car or feeling attachment to a favorite T-shirt, perceiving graffiti as offensive etc. This becomes even more significant when it comes to human remains.

With the help of Svašek's chapter we can see that there are numerous rules, rituals and moral orders directing how we think about the contact with objects referencing death. We came to realize that our society sees the contact of some social groups with dead bodies as necessary (doctors, students of medicine) but other groups are denounced or at least discouraged to do manipulate dead bodies (artists, family members). These lines of what is possible/thinkable are negotiable – for example, the exhibition of plastinated bodies was accepted by some people as 'scientific' while it was denounced by others as toying with human bodies and denying their dignity. Note that exhibiting mummies, remnants of saints or tsantsas ['exotic human remains'] is accepted under various exceptions: as museum artifacts, as religious objects, as anthropological 'trophies'.

We may understand that there are various discourses – often even contradictory or competing – which direct what we consider as 'normal' or 'moral' and what falls beyond these categories. Emotions play an incredibly important role in directing us along the lines of moralities and normativities. They are very powerful guides because we tend to understand emotions as deeply personal [as if coming from our interior, independent from the received knowledge]. However, as Rosaldo and Abu-Lughod showed, emotions are tightly related to the social order and may be even understood the most pervasive force through which the social impacts on the individual and at the same time, it is how the individual is related to society and constitutes it.

### **Lindquist, G., 2007. Perilous passions: Romantic love and love magic in Russia.**

Reading anthropological accounts, we may learn a lot about the fantasies of the Other [how we imagine those people who are supposedly radically different from Us] as well as about the ways in which the anthropologist presents her 'people'. In this case, the Other are the Westerners and the 'Us' ('naši') are the Russians.

Lindquist imagines the Westerner as deeply permeated by rationality and individualism – he and she remain rational even when in love and thus also the romantic dyad does not dismantle the individual's integrity and fortifies the society as its building cell. In contrast, the 'Russian love' which is portrayed as asocial, devastating and antisocial, in opposition to both Soviet society and Orthodox church. It is a dark undercurrent which can neither be directed by the means of rationality, planning and order nor by the rule of church [or even by God's intentions]. Lindquist relates it to the notion of 'Russian soul' which is supposed to be enigmatic, deeply relational and timeless. Rather than decoded, the mysticism of the 'Russian soul' is fortified. However, we may try to put this concept in perspective by looking at the ways in which the magician executes a similar role as the proponents of the science of happiness.

Just like in 'happiness studies', Lindquist's magician relies on fate as the final instance of authority – the proponents of HS would argue that 40% of 'happiness factor' is inherited while the rest is a subject to circumstances (10%) and to individual effort. Similarly, the magician promises she can act on the energies and bend the circumstances but only to the extent it does not collide with the fate. To do this, she invokes natural forces as well as the Christian pantheon of saints, the forces of Evil and God himself. Interestingly enough, just like in Greek mythology, the fate stands above this

pantheon so the spell may even contradict the morality, God's wish or laws of nature but not the fate. In a sense, HS replaced the idea of fate by the order of genetics (the nature) which cannot be beaten but it may be balanced by individual's will and effort [intentionality] in combination with the right circumstances. The result is not that far from what the magician tells to her clients – that the trajectory of one's life can be partially bent to the desired direction but not entirely. The magician also gives a set of instructions which are meant to work on 'the energies' and instill hope on the client, an idea that s/he is in control of his/her life – it can be seen as a tactic of emotional management not dissimilar to that of Seligman's advice.