

What is an Emotion? Classic and Contemporary Readings, 2nd edition.

Robert C. Solomon (Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press (www.oup.com). 2003, 305 pp., \$31.95 (softcover).

While there is currently a great deal of interest in affective neuroscience the relation between disturbances in emotional experience and expression and the development and maintenance of psychopathological processes, scientists and philosophers have long been engaged in debates about more fundamental questions regarding the nature of human emotion. *What is an Emotion? Classic and Contemporary Readings, 2nd edition* represents a collection of readings that would be critical for anyone interested in this topic. As the title indicates, this collection of readings includes both classic and contemporary essays written by eminent scholars. What makes this collection of readings most interesting is the diversity of disciplines from which these scholars and opinions emanate. This book constitutes an update from the first edition, published in 1984, and provides more material on the biological and philosophical perspectives of emotion.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section covers classic essays from philosophers such as Descartes, Aristotle, and Hume. In reading these essays, one is reminded of the difficulty of simply defining what an emotion is and how long we have struggled with this question. Each of these philosophers acknowledged the role of emotion in their theories of human nature, though emotion was not considered central to any of their theories. What is notable in each of these early essays is the relatively small emphasis given to emotion in determining human behavior. This stands in contrast to contemporary theories that give emotion a more important role in determining behavior. Importantly, though, there is some apparent overlap between contemporary views of emotion and Aristotle's view. That is, Aristotle believed that cognition (or beliefs) and physiology were critical elements of emotion that could not be disentangled from emotion responses. Aristotle also recognized the importance of distinguishing between discrete emotions, such as anger and love.

The second part of this book presents classic and contemporary readings from scholars such as William James, John Dewey, Sigmund Freud, Paul Ekman, Richard Lazarus, Nico Frijda, and Antonio Damasio. In this section, Solomon successfully ties together the philosophical and psychological views of emotion. Of course this section would not be complete without including Schachter and Singer's classic paper on the two-component theory of emotion, in which they suggest that emotion is comprised of both physiological and cognitive responses. By including cognition in emotional responding, Schachter and Singer modified the long-standing James-Lange theory in which physiology was thought to be the central aspect in emotional responding. The importance of cognition in emotion is highlighted in many of the essays presented in this section. This section of the book concludes with a paper by Antonio Damasio. Through his work with brain-damaged patients who displayed emotion deficits, Damasio has developed a theory of emotion that contrasts with classic philosophical theories. For example, in contrast to the Cartesian theory that emotion and reason function separately, Damasio states that deficits in emotional may be associated with deficits in reasoning. Damasio persuasively argues that emotions arise from neurological processes. In other words, he argues that feelings are nothing more than a collection of neural patterns.

The third part of the book presents several essays written over the past century by European philosophers. Included in this short section are essays by Franz Brentano, Martin Heidegger, and Max Scheler. These philosophers were strongly influenced by the writings of Immanuel Kant, who mainly considered emotion in relation to ethically relevant emotions such as love and hate. These philosophers also appear to be heavily influenced by the work of Husserl who was primarily concerned with knowledge and consciousness. This section concludes with an essay by Jean-Paul

Sartre, one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth-century. Sartre argues against the James-Lange theory of emotion, as well as psychoanalytic theories of emotion and suggests that we are responsible for everything we do and everything we are, including emotions (an idea that is reiterated in *Being and Nothingness*).

The last section of the book includes essays by American and British analytic philosophers that consider emotion concepts and the language used to describe emotions. One primary question considered here is whether emotion words refer to any particular phenomenon. For instance, Gilbert Ryle considers whether emotion words describe the body or the mind. An essay by Errol Bedford addresses more detailed questions regarding whether emotions are essentially feelings. Reminiscent of discussions by classic philosophers regarding the relation between emotion and reasoning, Robert Solomon (the editor of this collection of readings) argues that emotions are rational, in that they are similar to actions and defined by judgment. In another essay, Michael Stocker argues against cognitive theories of emotion, as these theories diminish the importance of affectivity.

Each section of the book is prefaced by an introduction that ties together the diverse collection of readings. Likewise, each paper is prefaced by an introduction. These introductions by Solomon help the reader to identify the central theme of each section of the book, how these themes relate to other sections of the book, as well as identify the critical contribution of each of the essays. Consistent with the fact that philosophy was the first discipline to recognize the importance of emotion, there is a strong emphasis on philosophical theories of emotion in this collection of readings.

Given the general topic of this collection of readings, this book would be ideal for individuals who are interested in learning about fundamental questions regarding the nature of human emotion. This book would not, however, be of interest to individuals who wish to become familiar with current empirical work in the area of emotion and psychopathology.

By the end of the book, the reader may not have come to understand the nature of emotion. However, one is certainly left with a greater understanding of the complexity involved in attempting to understand emotion and the rich history of scholars who have offered theories on how to define this elusive construct. It seems clear that despite the contributions of many scholars and recent advances in research sophistication, our struggle to agree on how best to define emotion will continue into the unforeseeable future.

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