# Basic Emotions: Classification and construction in the late nineteenth century

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**Abstract**

This is an historical study looking at the notion of basic emotions and emotions classifications as they were formulated throughout the late nineteenth century. Emotions have been, and are, classified into those viewed as basic and complex by philosophers and Psychologists, but this way of organising emotions has been criticised as not being useful to the understanding of emotion. As a result, it has been argued by Solomon(2002) that a historical examination of the concept of basic emotions is required in order to contextualise the way in which it is now defined. This study shows how the concept of basic emotions, and the classifications which were based on it, altered during the late nineteenth century from those which had a moral basis to those which were defined by evolutionary and physiological notions of emotion. Further, it shows that it was framed differently by theorists depending on how they viewed the mind and the methodology they advocated. It argues that the basic emotions concept and the classifications which are based on it are constructed in particular ways at particular times and are subject to both academic and social assumptions about human behaviour.

**Introduction**

> I would argue that the notion of "basic emotions" is neither meaningless nor so straightforward as its critics and defenders respectively argue, but it is historical and culturally situated and serves very different purposes in different contexts, including different research contexts…It is a subject with a rich history, and it is not one that can be readily understood within the confines of a technical debate in the *Psychological Review*."
>
> (Solomon, 2002, p. 124)

The idea that emotions can and should be classified has pervaded philosophical conceptions of feeling for centuries (Solomon, 2002). Descartes, for example, considered the six primitive passions to be wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness and many other taxonomies of emotions were produced throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g. Browne, Hamilton and Spencer cited in Bain, 1865; McCosh, 1880; Ladd, 1893). This notion of classification has also been embraced by many emotions theorists in Psychology as a way of imposing some structure on a psychological phenomenon which might otherwise prove theoretically unmanageable (e.g. McDougall, 1910; Izard, 1977; Panskepp, 1982; Ekman *et al*., 1982; Frijda, 1986). Classifications of emotions then provide frameworks in which the breadth of human emotional experience can be fitted, and explanations as to how emotions may be related to each other. Definitions of the basic emotion concept are often the basis for classifications; a way of separating out those which are primary and those which are secondary in terms of particular attributes (Ortony and Turner, 1990; Solomon, 2002; Prinz, 2004). The primary emotions vary but are generally seen as simple and psychologically or biologically indivisible and in various combinations together make up the secondary emotions; for example, 'anger' and 'fear' together making 'jealousy'.

Ortony and Turner (1990) list the basic emotions produced by various psychologists over the twentieth century for comparison. These include some such as 'anger' and 'fear' upon which most theorists appear to agree. However, the lists also display as much variation as they do commonality. For example, 'wonder' appears only in the lists of McDougall and Frijda; 'expectancy' in Panskepp's; and 'contempt' only in those of Izard and Tomkins. The differences between these lists, it may be argued, simply reflect differences in theoretical and methodological approaches and are nothing more than the "…healthy dialectic of a discipline trying to reconcile differing points of view" (Solomon, 2002, p.123). This may well be the case. Nevertheless, current theories and methodologies are influenced by wider concerns, both by present assumptions about how the mind and emotions should be studied and understood and also by past conceptualisations of basic emotions which are taken up by researchers and used in particular ways at different times. The variability in the lists then reflects more than a process of refinement and progress through debate; it also reflects the effect of context, both cultural and historical.

Current theories of basic emotions are dominated by the view of psychological primitiveness as being tied to biological primitiveness (Ortony and Turner, 1990 [1] ; Griffiths, 2003; Prinz, 2004; Izard, 2007). This view is based on two tenets. First, that basic emotions are those which can be shown to be innate, hard-wired and universal and for which neuro-biological and cross-cultural studies can provide evidence (Ekman, 1992). Ekman's work, although criticised as being methodologically flawed by Solomon( 2002), shows that there may be universal facial expressions associated with particular emotions, for instance, smiling with happiness and frowning with anger. Secondly, the connected argument is that basic emotions are those which are adaptive in evolutionary terms, are required for the survival of the species, and often correspond to those present in other vertebrates (Ekman, 1992; Griffiths, 2003;

[1] Ortony and Turner(1990) set out three definitions of basic emotions but state that these are not mutually exclusive: that concerning basic-level emotions words according to Rosch's theory, psychological primitiveness and biological primitiveness.

Panskepp, 2004; Prinz, 2004). Fear, for example, is seen as response to danger which prepares us to fight or run and ensures that we respond to a threat. It is therefore an adapted physiological response which promotes survival (Prinz, 2004).

Despite the acceptance by most theorists of the above view, the continuing lack of consensus in lists of basic emotions has led certain psychologists and philosophers to question the usefulness of this concept and to call either for its abandonment (Ortony and Turner, 1990; Sander *et al.*, 2007) or for the redefinition of what is essentially a materialistic view to incorporate cultural influences (e.g. Solomon, 2002; Prinz, 2004). However, the biological-evolutionary conceptualisation appears to become ever more entrenched as the discipline of affective neuroscience is currently viewed by many theorists as providing the most likely methodological paradigm in Psychology from which the evidence for basic emotions will emerge (e.g. Panskepp, 1992; Davidson, 2003; Izard, 2007). This paradigm continues then to inform lists of classifications of emotions and basic emotions as it is taken up and used by successive theorists using different methodological approaches as they seek to move towards greater refinement (Tomkins, 1984; Panskepp, 1992; Izard, 2007). But as science makes progress as much away from past theories as it does towards final solutions (Kuhn cited in Hacking, 2001) so also do the definitions of its concepts emerge from previous definitions. As Solomon's statement at the beginning of the chapter shows, there is a need for an examination of the history of the basic emotions concept in order that a deeper understanding of its current meaning is reached and through which current research can be better understood and contextualised.

This need is for two particular reasons. First, because past contexts within which meanings of the concept were established and evolved are relevant to how it is now used. Foucault (2010)[2] states in *Archaeology of Knowledge,* "The history of a concept is

[2] *Archaeology of Knowledge* was first published in 1969

not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient...but successive rules of use and the theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured." (p.5). Historical evidence can provide what Foucault calls the "genealogy" of a concept (Foucault, 1980, p.140), from which the contemporary use of a term has emerged. It can do so by showing past usages and debates over use which are a part of current conceptualisations but knowledge of which has been forgotten over time. As Danziger (1982) says, "scientific development cannot take off from a theoretical vacuum but must make use of the conceptual equipment bequeathed to it" (p.142). An understanding of past usages are relevant to an understanding of the present use. A second reason why there is a need for an examination of the history of basic emotions is because, psychological knowledge is constructed by taking particular forms at particular times, as the concepts it uses are shaped by the thoughts and actions of theorists (Lamont, 2010). An examination of the history of the classification of emotions and of the definition of basic emotions, can reveal how these classifications and definitions have changed over time; that they are not independent of the ontological position of the researcher or their methodological approach, and that further, they are not independent of the historical context in which they are conceived. Therefore, although claims are made by some contemporary theorists that basic emotions are 'natural kinds' (Izard, 2007), their history can reveal that often a particular theorist's assumptions, sometimes tied to the social norms of time and place, has a profound effect on the way in which they are studied and understood.

Solomon (2002) argues that the latter half of the nineteenth century was particularly important for the basic emotions concept, because there was an alteration during that period from a metaphysical understanding, of those emotions required for a complete life, towards the physicalist, one which more closely resembles the current definition. Dixon (2003) also suggests that the nineteenth century was a time of transformation in academic views of the role of affect in people's lives and that during that time the term 'emotion' came to be used almost exclusively to denote the

previously used religious terms 'affections', 'sentiments' and 'passions'. He further argues that, unburdened by theological meaning, the term 'emotion' was used to provide a scientific conceptualisation of feeling, and that the emotions theories which came to the fore at this time, were influenced particularly by biological and evolutionary views.

Physiological descriptions became valued for their ability to explain the workings of the body and mental phenomena and philosophers, such as Herbert Spencer and Alexander Bain, were beginning to understand emotions in those terms. Evolutionary explanations profoundly altered views of humanity and were eventually to pervade all aspects of psychological knowledge as theories about the mind became linked with ideas of adaptation to the environment, survival and relation to other species (Richards, 2002) and in terms of its place in nature (Danziger, 1982). Further, the methodological debates at the time concerned what could or should constitute the inchoate discipline of scientific Psychology; whether, for example, the observation of the physiological aspects of an emotion were all that was required to capture and describe an emotion scientifically or whether introspection should or could be used to empirically examine the contents of consciousness (Danziger, 1994).

By examining the theories prevalent during the late nineteenth century, this study attempts to expand on Solomon's(2002) description of the emergence of a reductionist view of basic emotions which, he says, is that which continues to be the basis for current psychological theorising. Dixon (2003) has shown that the debates throughout this time have much to reveal about the ways in which the understanding of emotions is affected by particular views of the mind and methods of study. This study will build on his work by looking at the effect of these on the basic emotions concept and on classifications. This study will examine the various ways in which these were formulated during this period and in so doing will address

three related issues : first, the extent to which the definition of the concept of basic emotions was influenced by particular theorists' ontological views of the mind; secondly, how the methodological approaches theorists advocated affected the way in which they classified emotions and thirdly, the extent to which classifications of emotions altered during this time in relation to the changing conceptualisations of basic emotions and methodologies.

**Sources**

This is an historical investigation using predominantly primary but also secondary sources. Starting from the application of evolutionary theories to emotion by Spencer in *The Principles of Psychology* in 1855 up to the definition of basic emotions as connected to evolutionary instincts by, the influential English psychologist, William McDougall in 1910 in *An Introduction to Social Psychology* [3], a systematic analysis of the emotions literature from Britain and the U.S.A. will be conducted. These texts have been chosen as the beginning and ending points of the study because, as has been stated, the late nineteenth century was a time of particular change in the understanding of emotions and these are both important contributions to emotions research by prominent theorists at that time. Spencer's work is particularly significant in that it is the first to address the issue of emotions in terms of evolutionary adaptation (Young, 1990). A large body of literature was produced on the subject of emotions during this period by philosophers, physiologists and psychologists in Britain and the U.S.A[4]. There are some theorists who were particularly celebrated at this time, and who are considered as being of the greatest

[3] *An Introduction to Social Psychology* was first published in 1908. For the purposes of this study the 3rd edition(1910) has been used but is not significantly different from the first. Twenty-three editions of *An Introduction to Social Psychology* were published in the U.S.A. between 1908 and 1936.

[4] At this time there was much work done also on emotions and classifications of emotions by theorists in France and Germany. Some of these are described in Bain, 1865.

influence on the emotions literature. The works of Spencer (1855), Bain (1859), Charles Darwin (1872), William James (1890) and McDougall (1910), for example, were widely read and highly persuasive. However, this study will also include the ideas of those who were not so prominent, such as James McCosh (1880), G.T. Ladd (1893) and Charles Mercier (1884a; 1884b;1885). These latter three, according to Dixon (2003), were instrumental in producing comprehensive theories and classifications of emotions but are rarely mentioned in histories of Psychology. This period was one during which several Psychology journals were founded, a reflection of the increasing importance of discussion about psychological matters at the time . The dates on which they were founded are shown in brackets: *Mind* (1876); the *American Journal of Psychology* (1887); the *Psychological Review* (1894); and the *Psychological Bulletin* (1904). The articles relating to emotion in these are examined and discussed if relevant.

## Chapter 1: The Basic Emotions of Alexander Bain and Herbert Spencer

> … two emotions, simple and near akin in their roots, may not only have grown unalike, but may also have grown involved in their natures though seeming homogenous to consciousness. And here, indeed, in the inability of existing science to answer these questions which underlie a true psychological classification, we see how purely provisional any system of classification is likely to be. (Spencer, 1868, p.250)

The mid-nineteenth century was a period of enormous change in the understanding of human behaviour because of the emergence of new ontological views of the mind and methodologies for its study (Dixon, 2003; Richards, 2002). Both had profound effects on how basic emotions were defined and classified. In his comparison of philosophical and psychological classifications of emotions, Solomon (2002) shows that prior to this time basic emotions had been understood as being those that had a moral role in the lives of people. They were those emotions closely connected with character, viewed to be of greater value than others if people were to live fulfilling lives. As science became increasingly used to explain human behaviour during this time, physical rather than metaphysical understandings of the body and mind were becoming increasingly important (Dixon, 2003). Further, from the early nineteenth century philosophers such as Thomas Browne and J.S. Mill had been framing the operation of the human mind using the metaphor of 'mental chemistry' and so, like other structures in nature, it too was beginning to be understood as a collection of simple elements which, when interacting together, would produce more compound and complex psychological phenomena (Dixon, 2003; Boakes, 1984). Methodologically, as well as physiological investigations of the body, the use of the natural history method; the systematic gathering of data about the natural world, was also attempting to define human beings in terms of their place in nature.

These new ways of looking at the mind were altering how emotions were defined and studied, as physiological views were challenging metaphysical and religious concepts(Dixon, 2003). Two of the main proponents of these scientific approaches were Alexander Bain, a Scottish philosopher and physiologist, and Herbert Spencer, a philosopher and biologist. Both were, what Richards(1996) calls, "pioneer psychologists" (p. 16) . This chapter will look at the debate between these two theorists to show how their approaches produced different constructions of basic emotions and of classifications. First, it will describe how they differed in terms of how they understood the mind and in so doing produced different understandings, and descriptions, of basic emotions. Further, it will examine the methods they advocated in producing classifications and at how these were tied to the academic and social assumptions of the time Finally, it will compare Spencer's and Bain's classifications to show how these were shaped by their understandings of basic emotions and the methods they advocated.

Alexander Bain was a Scottish philosopher and physiologist whose approach was to classify and describe psychological phenomena(Richards, 2002) by producing a systematic exposition of the physiology of the nervous system and the mind allied with the ideas of associationist philosophy [5](Dixon, 2003). In *The Emotions and the Will*, Bain (1859) [6] describes the emotions using a mixture of physiological, psychological and philosophical thought, and, despite his basic, or special emotions, being described in terms of physiological reactions, the list of emotions he bases on those, he views as having "…a certain unity and distinctness as respects their origin in the human constitution" (Bain, 1865, p.39). They are those therefore which can be clearly demarcated in terms of their effect on the body and the circumstances in which they arise. Bain's(1859) basic, or special, emotions then are the law of

[5] Associationist philosophy is the view that the mind was composed of elements, or ideas organised by various associations

[6] Three further editions of *The Emotions and the Will* were published in 1865, 1875 and 1899 and will also be referred to throughout this chapter.

harmony and conflict; the law of relativity, e.g. wonder and curiosity; terror; tender affections; emotions of self; power; the irascible emotion or anger; emotions of action; the exercise of the intellect. These are the classes of emotions, which he, having reflected upon the range and variety of human affect, observes in himself and others as being most distinct and which best describe the most significant modes of feeling.

The descriptions of individual emotions are distinctly physiological. Thus, 'terror' is described as "…the cerebral force that was circulating at an ordinary pace through the usual channels...suddenly stimulated to an unusual discharge, withdrawn from these usual paths and vented at once upon the features, the gestures, the utterance and on the spasmodic utterance of volition"(p.76). The related physical and expressional accompaniments to this 'diffusion' are also detailed; for example, "derangement of secretions", and "trembling of the lips and the muscles on the sides of the cheek"(p.77), However, the psychological character too is described as "…a massive and virulent state of misery"(p.78). These conceptions are in line with much scientific study at the time which had the purpose of providing systematic and detailed descriptions of natural phenomena (Bain, 1859).

In contrast Spencer's 1855 *Principles of Psychology* takes a very different, and, at the time, radical view of the mind. In it he was the first to ally associationist ideas about the mind with the application of evolutionary principles of observation of the natural world and adaptation to the environment (Young, 1990). Emotions are described as being on a continuum from those that are primitive and simple to those that are complex and intellect based. The language he uses to describe the basic emotions then relate to emotions as experienced in animals or, what he terms, 'savages'. Fear is described as:

> …nothing else than an impulse, an emotion, a feeling, a desire. To have in a slight degree those psychical states accompanying the reception of wounds,

> those which express themselves in cries, those which are experienced during flight, is to be in a state of what we call fear. (Spencer, 1855, p.356)

He also connects basic emotions with ideas of innateness as biologically pre-programmed and present in human minds when they enter the world and as having a physiological response which is driven by instinct. Emotions are described in terms of their purpose. Generational entrenchment of emotional response, both psychological and physical, happens in relation to repeated exposure to the same environmental events. He gives the example related to hunting:

> If, along with the running down and laying hold of certain prey, there has always been experienced a certain scent; then, the presentation of that scent will render nascent the motor changes and impressions that accompany the running down and laying hold of the prey. (p.358)

The descriptions of fear, as shown above, then differ substantially between the two theorists based on the particular understandings of the mind and emotion they advocate. Indeed in the second edition of *The Emotions and the Will*, Bain (1865) states:

> On the subject of Fear, I mentioned a suggestion of Mr. Spencer's derived from the doctrine of evolution; far greater in my opinion, is the light flowing from the physical workings of that passion. Those great physical generalities stated…are full of suggestions as to the mental laws. (p. 603)

For his part, Spencer praises Bain's physiological and phenomenological descriptions of emotion but sees nothing in them to be used as a basis for classification. He has set out a new ontological foundation on which the knowledge about the basic emotions can be framed, referring to Bain's work as "transitional" (1868 [7], p. 244).

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[7] Spencer publishes an essay on *The Emotions and the Will* in *The Medico-Chirurgical Review* in January, 1860. It comes out in book form alongside essays on other topics in *Essays Scientific, Political and Speculative*(vol.1) in 1868.

His use of that word is telling as it points to the nature of scientific knowledge, at how it alters over time and is dependent on the context and time in which it is produced. In relation to the mind this is particularly salient, because of its complexity, its intangibility and of the many ways of understanding and framing it and, therefore, the choices that must be made about what are the most valuable ways of explaining mental phenomena. These choices also are subject to context and time. Bain's formulation of the basic emotions could be said to be transitional in that it is clear that there is still much to discover about the physiology of the body. Spencer, however, is going further in suggesting that Bain's understanding of emotions although useful has been overtaken by a new understanding, based on evolutionary ideas; that the concept of basic emotions would be more usefully constructed in a way which reflects these ideas. The definition of the concept then is in transition during the debates between these theorists, each formulating it according to their own views. This is further highlighted by Bain's and Spencer's advocacy of alternative methods of study.

As well as combining various views of emotions in his descriptions, Bain also combine's two methods in the production of his classification. First, he states that he is using the natural history method that has been used in the hard sciences of botany and zoology and gives examples of its usefulness in cataloguing and dividing animals and plants into genera and species. In using this method to classify emotions there is an assumption by Bain that non-physical objects like emotions are characteristically distinct, and that these characteristics can be scrutinised and used to categorise them in some way, despite the fact that they cannot be observed like the physical elements of the natural world. Further, this method provides a way of framing emotions in a way which allows them, like elements in the periodic table, to be discovered and classified systematically in relation to other emotions. This has two consequences. First, discovery rather than understanding of emotions becomes the focus, and secondly, their complexity is lost as they are viewed with regard to particular criteria in order to fit the classification.

Bain's other method is that of introspection, used for generations by philosophers to study the mind and emotional states. In *The Emotions and the Will* he describes the value of introspection to the understanding of emotion:

> Our own consciousness, formerly reckoned the only medium of knowledge to the mental philosopher must therefore be still referred to as the principal means of discriminating the varieties of human feeling. We have the power of noting agreement and difference among our conscious states, and on this can raise a structure of classification.
>
> (Bain, 1859, p. 57)

Spencer (1868) is critical of the process by which Bain observes the emotions in order to classify them. He says " …Mr Bain in confining himself to an account of the emotions as they exist in an adult civilised man has neglected those classes of facts out of which the science of the matter must chiefly be built."(p 257). Bain's introspective method is seen by Spencer as constructing a particular version of the emotions that is exclusive to the mind of people in one sphere of society. However, whilst Spencer criticises Bain for describing the emotions of a particular class of person, the method he advocates for their study is rooted in the assumed position of that very class. Evidence of the more primitive emotions, he says, will be found in studying the behaviour of 'savages'. He states that:

> …we may note the emotional differences between the lower and higher human races – may regard as earlier and simpler those feelings which are common to both, and as later and more compound those which are characteristics of the most civilized. (Spencer, 1868, p. 250)

That a hierarchy of intellectual and emotional states exist, running from the simple to the complex and represented by the social hierarchy running from animals, 'savages', the mentally ill, children, women, men, to civilized intellectual European men, is an assumption prevalent at the time (Richards, 2002). It is one which was

particularly stated in the work of Spencer and in Darwin's (1872) *Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals*, a work which has been greatly influential on the understanding of emotions as universal, cross-species and cross-cultural behavioural phenomena. This assumption, at the time, of different levels of species and human development fitted in very well with the evolutionary idea of the mind as an entity which gradually evolves in response to environmental influences and informed these theorists' suggestions that the emotions should be studied by comparing species and races. Indeed, Darwin (1872) conducted such observational work on the emotions of 'savages' by sending out questionnaires to missionaries in order that they might gather information for him on the people they worked with. He did so with the purpose of examining the universality of emotional expression in order to have a better understanding of the emotions of those he viewed as civilized.

The knowledge which was produced at this time about emotions then reflected these ideas of social superiority. Spencer (1868), for example, says:

> There are æsthetic emotions common among ourselves, that are scarcely in any degree experienced by some inferior races; as, for instance, those produced by music. (p. 131)

This is an example of the way in which psychological knowledge often unwittingly incorporates the social norms of the day. Assumptions like these may not be explicitly stated in current psychological research, however ideas about the mental lives of other races in relation to Western psychological theorising are still salient. Psychological work is always conducted from the thought process of a researcher who is situated in a particular place and time and who views those they are studying from a mind which contains experiences, assumptions and values that are shaped in particular ways (Richards, 2002). The understanding which is produced therefore, if these assumptions are not examined or expressed, is in danger of being, not simply influenced by them, but of containing and reiterating these social biases.

Spencer and Bain, therefore, approach the examination of emotions with different questions in mind. Spencer's method is looking to answer the questions, 'Which emotions serve in the survival of the species and what purpose do they serve?'. Bain, on the other hand is asking, 'How are individual emotions experienced and which ones are easily demarcated through the feeling they produce?'. The knowledge about the basic emotions that Bain and Spencer produce therefore is bound to differ. Unlike Bain, Spencer did not put his method into practice in producing a detailed classification. However he does propose one which he sees as "in harmony with the results of detailed analysis aided by development"(1868, p.142) He divides the feelings into presentative feelings, or sensations; presentative-representative feelings, or emotions which arise in response to an immediate event; representative feelings, which are brought about by thinking of an emotion; and re-representative feelings, or emotions which are produced by thinking about events. His classification represents the idea of increasing abstraction and complexity of the emotional state.

Bain's(1865) classification, as has been stated, is based on his own consciousness, and the phenomenological divisions he finds in his own emotional life. He, however, in responding to Spencer's criticisms, states that:

> It appears therefore, that I have given a classification as nearly agreeing with Mr Spencer's, as two independent minds can be expected to agree in so vast a subject; (1865, p.605)

The vagueness of Spencer's classification perhaps accounts for some of the ease of the agreement noted by Bain. The structures of these classifications and the way in which emotions are understood within these classifications, however, are very different. Indeed Bain largely resists entertaining the evolutionary hypothesis in subsequent editions of *The Emotions and the Will*(1865; 1875; 1899) and adheres to almost the same classification as he proposed in the first edition, whilst looking at the question of evolution in a separate chapter conceding:

> … I have fully discussed the bearing of the Evolution hypothesis on the Emotions. The only question here considered is – Do the facts, when viewed in the light of this hypothesis, gain in clearness? As regards, more especially, the great antagonistic couple Love and Anger – I think the effect is happy. (Bain, 1875, p. viii)

Bain does not fully embrace the evolutionary hypothesis with regard to his classification. It cannot easily be incorporated into an existing theory which has been constructed under very different assumptions regarding the study of the mind. It is clear, however, that if it is to be embraced by psychologists as *the* view of how emotion should be understood and studied it will always provide a particular, not necessarily the only, definition of basic emotions and basis for classification.

The debate between Bain and Spencer then illustrates the irreconcilability of the variations in the basic emotions concept and in the classifications of emotions. For Bain the basic emotions are to be demarcated using introspection and classified using the natural history method; for Spencer, the evolutionary hypothesis is used to separate out emotions in terms of their developmental aspects and comparative psychology used to study them. These theorists therefore construct the idea of the basic emotions and their classifications in relation to their own understandings and assumptions about the most salient aspects of human emotional states, and further, in relation to certain social and academic assumptions of the time.

## Chapter 2: Varieties of Classification at the End of the Nineteenth Century

> If then we should seek to break the emotions, thus enumerated, into groups according to their affinities, it is again plain that all sorts of groupings would be possible according as we chose one character or that as a basis, and that all the groupings would be equally real and true. The only question would be, does this grouping or that, suit our purpose best? (James, 1890, p. 485)

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the scientific study of the mind was no longer in its infancy, the variety of ways in which science could be applied to mental phenomena in the production of theories was becoming clear. The dependency of these theories on different ontological stances and methodological approaches, meant that for the inscrutable subject of human emotions, in contrast to bodily functions, scientific consensus was proving difficult (Dixon, 2003). The work of Spencer, Bain and Darwin, however, was not simply influencing current theory but was becoming more entrenched as their ideas were built on by, for example, William James (1884; 1890; 1892) and George Trumbull Ladd (1893), two of the most prominent U.S. psychologists at the time. However, they were also explicitly resisted by those such as James McCosh(1880), a philosopher of the Scottish Common Sense School and president of Princeton College (later University), New Jersey, who objected to purely physiological descriptions of the mind (Dixon, 2003). This time is one which is particularly revealing about the classification of emotions because of the variety of approaches taken. This chapter will illustrate this variety by, first, focusing on the challenge to materialistic accounts of emotion that was taking place, taking the work of James McCosh (1880) as an example and then by contrasting the emotions classifications of McCosh, and Charles Mercier, whose work was based on evolutionary ideas. Finally, and most importantly, it will show that at this time there was a realisation by theorists, such as James Sully (1892), Ladd (1893) and James (1890), of the subjective nature of classifications. The reasons for this realisation will be examined, as will its implication for the psychological study of emotions.

As Dixon (2003) shows there was much resistance towards the views of the mind that had an evolutionary or purely physiological basis at this time from theorists who objected to materialist accounts of psychological phenomena. This was for two particular reasons. First, because they were concerned that the concept of the mind, or soul, as entities separate from the body would be lost if human behaviour was to be explained purely in terms of the nervous system. Secondly, there was a fear that the idea of humans as possessing a will which allowed them to control their behaviour was being eroded by theories of emotions as inherited instincts to respond and act in relation to particular events. One of those who adhered to these views was James McCosh[8] who published *The Emotions* in 1880. In it he states:

> I wish to …treat chiefly of the mental, which is indeed the main, the essential element. The grand defect of the account given of the emotions in the present day by the physiological psychologist is that they dwell exclusively on the organic affections and leave upon us the impression that these constitute the feelings, and have over looked the more important characteristics of our nature. (p. 113)

McCosh's view of an emotion is one which, like Bain's, has physical, phenomenological and mental features, and is structured in a theory which includes four mains aspects: the appetence, or the tendency to avoid pain and be drawn to pleasure; the idea of something from which the emotion is formed; the conscious feeling; and finally, the organic affection in the brain and body. It is one in which emotions are to some extent under the control of the intellect and the will. In the conclusion to *The Emotions* he states that emotions "…are to be guided on the one had by our intelligence, which tells us what things are, and on the other hand by our conscience, which tells announces what things ought to be." (p. 251)

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[8] Ruckmick(1934) remarks on the value of McCosh's theory of emotions, and his surprise at its neglect by U.S. Psychologists of the time. Also, Davis(1936), in reviewing the history of U.S. Psychology of the nineteenth century remarks that, '*The Emotions* displays original treatment of a topic almost neglected by preceding American theorists.'(p.484).

In McCosh's(1880) account then emotions are not purely physiological reactions guided by evolutionary heredity but are subservient to the agency of a human being with a will that can override the actions that they may prompt. This is an attempt to explain the emotions based on a more complete, anti-reductionist, view of the emotional lives of people with more than the sorts of aspects that it seemed that science could tackle at the time. An understanding then of how the emotions operate, not simply according to science but in the lives of people, is reflected in McCosh's choice as the basis of his classification. He choose the classification of Scottish philosopher, Thomas Brown (cited in Bain, 1865), produced during the time previous to when physiological and evolutionary understandings of the mind were valued in academia.

McCosh(1880) divides emotions into time categories of retrospective, immediate and prospective. But within these those which represent the pain and pleasure of life are classified: self-satisfaction and its, opposite, regret; joy and sorrow; pride and self-humiliation, for example. For him emotions have a valence of positivity or negativity as they are felt and understood. His classification is an expression of the experience of people's emotions as they move through life, and reflect on events, whether of the present, past or future. The nature of emotional life in McCosh's theory then is neither a series of physiological responses nor of adaptations to the environment. It rather attempts to ground scientific definitions of emotion by connecting them to the ways in which people feel and handle their emotions. In doing so it contrasts significantly with the ideas of Charles Mercier, as described below.

At the end of nineteenth century a comprehensive and systematic scientific classification had still not been produced along the lines of the zoological and botanical taxonomies using the natural history method. Bain had dropped any mention of this method as informing his classification in later editions of *The*

*Emotions and the Will* (Bain 1875; Bain, 1899). However, in 1884 Charles Mercier, an English physician and writer, attempted such a comprehensive classification. Published in three parts in the journal *Mind*, it was produced in accordance with the principles of adaptation of emotions to the environment and their stimulation by various environmental events (Mercier, 1884a; Mercier, 1884b; Mercier, 1885). He states that, "These are the interactions which primarily affect the conservation of the organism, and those which primarily affect the perpetuation of the race." (p.336). As mentioned in the previous chapter, this view that emotions can be classified comprehensively is particularly related to the evolutionary paradigm because of the description it provides of simple psychological phenomena developing into more complex phenomena through an organism's, or species', interaction with the environment. For Mercier, however, emotions are not classified as basic or more complex but are all treated similarly in accordance with the principle of environmental stimulus.

Over the three articles in Mind, Mercier produces tables in which emotions are grouped according to their class, sub-class, order and genus. For example, feelings of repugnance are classified as follows:

**TABLE IV**
**CLASS I. Sub-class I. Order II. Genus 2: The Feelings of Repugnance**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The feeling corresponds with the relation to the organism of an agent which is passively noxious | to the taste | and moderately noxious | disgust |
| | | and intensely noxious | loathing |
| | in other ways generally | and not of superior power | dislike |
| | | and of superior power | abhorrence |
| | | and of overwhelming power | horror |

(Mercier, 1884, p. 510)

For Mercier then' joy' is of the genus 'joyous feelings' which corresponds to an agent which is cognized as beneficent; and 'awe' the genus 'feelings of admiration' as he continues in this vein to classify over one hundred emotions. Mercier's classification seems plausible to the extent that the feelings that he classifies do relate to separate emotional events which have particular words attached to them, and perhaps could be shown to be brought about through different environmental stimuli. However, in tying together particular events and intensities of event there is an assumption made about the universal correlation of these events to the feelings in the table.

Mercier's and McCosh's classifications show that due to the intangibility of human emotional states classification must be conducted, not based on physical properties, as those for plants and animals are, but indirectly through some other connected property, such as, in Mercier's case, environmental impact, or in McCosh's case, temporal aspects and the pain/pleasure valence. These bases define the emotion states in accordance with those properties producing classifications which provide a particular view. Further, rather than depicting the ways in which emotions operate in reality, the process of theorising and classification produces an understanding of emotion which is reduced to particular aspects. Carveth Read (1886), the English philosopher, states that in looking at Mercier's classification:

> …we might suppose that the forces of the environment only approach the organism in single file; that the organism deals with the environment by a series of uncoordinated movements; and that our feelings, just as distinct and structurally on a level, pair off with these interactions. But surely the conduct of life is not so easy, and we are not so simple-minded. (p. 78)

The optimism of Bain and Spencer that emotions could be classified according to the natural history method, as if they are plants and animals, was shown to be unfounded as Mercier's classification is met with admiration but also a realisation that it is an impossible task (e.g. Robertson, 1896).

These examples of the constructed nature of classifications lead on to the main point of this chapter, that there was a realisation by emotions theorists at the time that the classification of emotions was at best approximate and at worst wholly subjective. This was for two main reasons. First, it was related to the acknowledged difficulty of separating them into discrete objects for study. As James Sully (1892) writes in *The Human Mind*:

> …emotions are an eminently complex and variable phenomena. Thus what we call a feeling of joy or grief will exhibit an infinite number of shades answering to particular modes of presentative consciousness and the particular currents of feeling to which these give rise. No precise systematic arrangement can therefore be tried. (p. 83 )

Secondly, it became understood that these classifications were being created as a tool for each theorist to make sense of their own work on emotions, rather than, as many of them hoped, a step on the road to a once-and–for all taxonomy, akin to the periodic table, from which the emotions already 'discovered' could be shown in some order or hierarchy and those that were to be discovered slotted in to their natural positions when found. The quotation by James (1890) in *The Principles of Psychology* at the beginning of this chapter expresses the state of emotions classification at the time. Emotions, he says, were being classified in all sorts of ways, "…natural or acquired, formal or material, sensuous or ideal, direct or reflective…" ( p.485). It was clear, given the variety, that although there may be valid arguments and disagreements with regard to producing a better classification based on a particular criterion such as Mercier's environmental stimulation, there was no self-evident criterion for the classification of emotions which was more correct than another.

For philosophers this was not a problem because their work was understood as the production of an individual mind and a particular viewpoint. For those following

the lines of scientific discovery with the hope of producing classifications which definitively represented the emotion states of human beings, this realisation highlighted the difficulty, if not impossibility, of their task. So for psychologists this realisation posed a dilemma: whether to continue to classify emotions, with a disclaimer regarding the difficulty, or whether to abandon attempts at classification altogether. Contrasting examples of these approaches are provided by two of the most prominent psychologists in the United States at the time, George Trumbull Ladd(1893) and William James(1890). The former, the founder of the Psychology laboratory at Yale University, states in relation to emotions, "…in the attempt to use these differences…for the purposes of classification, we are prevented in somewhat the same way as that in which we are prevented when attempting the classifications of sensations of smell." (Ladd, 1893, p.388). He, however, continues in the same chapter to produce a classification of his own which illustrates another aspect of construction. Divided into sensuous, aesthetic, intellectual and moral feelings, the emotions are organised by, he says, "…the natural organic variety in the activities of the mind." (p. 389). Ladd falls into the trap of considering the divisions common at the time, such as 'moral' and 'aesthetic', as being universal and intrinsic to human nature rather than historically and culturally situated.

The culture of classification then caused even some of those who were sceptical about the possibility of classification to attempt to produce one, however flawed. In contrast, however, James (1890) resists producing a classification. Indeed he is reluctant to study individual emotions at all, citing his frustration at reading the wealth of physiological descriptions of particular emotions:

> …the merely descriptive literature of the emotions is one of the most tedious parts of psychology. And not only is it tedious, but you feel that its subdivisions are to a great extent either fictitious or unimportant, and that its pretences to accuracy are a sham. (p.448)

What James sees as required, rather than all these classifications and descriptions of individual emotions, is a scientific theory which will hold for all emotions regardless of their place in a hierarchy or taxonomy. The theory which he produced relates to a particular understanding of emotion and will be discussed in the next chapter.

At the end of the nineteenth century there was a plethora of classifications produced by theorists who were coming from different ontological positions. Materialistic and evolutionary accounts were being challenged by those which wished to produce theories of emotions which included the mind, the will and the intellect. One of these was James McCosh (1880) whose classification was based on the premise that there was more to emotions than their physical components and who rejected evolutionary ideas as being applicable to the understanding of emotions. In contrast, Charles Mercier's (1884a; 1884b; 1885) classification embraced the idea of the development of emotions in relation to the environment but, despite its comprehensiveness, it still produces a picture which was unrepresentative of the way in which emotions are environmentally stimulated in reality. The defects of classifications at this time caused theorists to suspect that they were provisional and subjective and served only the purposes of the theorists who produced them. Some continued, despite this realisation, to produce classifications but James decided rather, to put his effort into producing a theory which would provide a comprehensive explanation for emotions.

**Chapter 3: Scientific Psychology and Basic Emotions as Instincts**

> In adapting to scientific use a word from popular culture, it is inevitable that some violence should be done to common usage; and, in adopting this rigid definition of emotion, we shall have to do such violence in refusing to admit joy, sorrow, and surprise (which are often regarded, even by writers on psychology as the very types of emotions) to our list whether of simple or primary emotions or of complex emotions.
>
> (William McDougall, 1910, p. 48)

At the end of the nineteenth century Psychology was establishing itself as a scientific discipline, particularly in Germany and in the United States (Richards, 2002; Danziger, 1994). Psychologists were defining, and starting to be defined by, the ways in which they approached the study of the mind. Physiological and evolutionary theories were elaborated on, and framed much of the psychological work which was conducted (Dixon, 2003). Observation of physiological responses provided much of the data on emotion but there was a recognition also that human behaviour was not simply about physical reactions, and introspection was being used to examine thoughts and mental processes (Richards, 2002). In the United States, Psychology departments and labs, the first at Johns Hopkins University in 1887, were being set up in universities, based on German examples (Danziger, 1994). The increasing standing that scientific Psychology[9] had as a discipline with the purpose of describing and explaining the mind and human behaviour during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries amplified the academic weight of the knowledge that it was producing. For classifications of emotions and the definition of basic emotions then, the approaches taken by psychologists, both theoretically and methodologically became increasingly salient as the knowledge about them became regarded as scientific knowledge, evidence and proof. The work of theorists such as Darwin and Spencer was built on as evolutionary theories had become established as one of the

[9] The term 'scientific Psychology' here is used to denote the emergence of the discipline through the setting up of Psychology laboratories and departments in universities.

main bases from which the mind should be viewed by psychologists (Dixon, 2003). In examining how the basic emotions were viewed at this time, this chapter will first discuss one of the overriding ontological themes of the time which became associated with emotion; that of the evolutionary concept of instinct. It will show how the conceptualisations of instinct and emotion altered over time as they were taken up by particular theorists (Boakes, 1984; Richards, 1996), and then will examine how the understanding of emotions became increasingly tied to concepts of instinct, as shown in the work of American psychologist, William James (e.g. 1890) and English psychologist, William McDougall (1910)[10]. The effect of their views of instincts on their conceptualisations of basic emotions will also be described. Finally, using McDougall's theory as an example, this chapter will go on to look at how intimately theory and methodology are linked in the construction process as each develop to complement the other in the production of knowledge about basic emotions.

The concept of instincts changed throughout the nineteenth century (Richards, 2002). First, evolutionary theories changed the concept of instinct from that meaning something which had been placed in an animal by God to a behaviour which had been inherited for survival (Richards, 2002). Spencer was the first to use the latter view in relation to the motivation behind emotional response and during the late nineteenth century this view continued to be refined as it was used by different psychologists for theoretical purposes (James, 1890; McDougall, 1910). Spencer's conceptualisation of instinct was one of compound reflex action, based on one of the predominant physiological concepts of the time, the reflex (Danziger, 1997). For James (1890), instinct was similarly defined. In the *Principles of Psychology* he states "*The actions we call instinctive all conform to the general reflex type* ; they are called forth by determinate sensory stimuli in contact with the animal's body, or at a distance in his environment" (p. 384). This purely physiological explanation encompasses both

[10] William McDougall moved from Oxford to Harvard University in 1920 and was professor of Psychology there until 1927.

activities such as sucking, crying and smiling but also the emotional reactions. McDougall (1910) in contrast describes instincts, not simply in terms of physiological responses but also involving a cognitive element.

> …but instincts are more than innate tendencies or dispositions to certain kinds of movement. There is every reason to believe that even the most purely instinctive action is the outcome of a distinctly mental process, one which is incapable of being described in purely mechanical terms, because it is a psycho-physical process, involving psychical as well as physical changes; that is to say, every instance of instinctive behaviour involves a knowing of some thing or object, a feeling in regard to it, and a striving towards or away from that object. (p.26)

This is a radically different view of the instinct concept of both Spencer and James, as the seat of the instinctual response moves from the body to the mind, and reflects changing views of what Psychology should be. James's formulation in 1884 came at a time when there had been decades of the production and publication of physiological descriptions of human behaviour (James, 1890) and so the fact that theories of emotion produced at that time reflect this emphasis is not surprising. By 1910 when the first edition of McDougall's *An Introduction to Social Psychology* was published, developments around the formulation of the subject matter of Psychology had taken place (Danziger, 1994). Stout (1903), in the *Groundwork of Psychology* describes the subject of Psychology as being psychical states and processes and the objects in the world which stimulate these. Cognition, more than physical response, then, is a more predominant element of McDougall's theorising. Therefore, as the subject matter of Psychology altered, so too did the concept of instincts towards definitions which reflected distinct ways of framing human behaviour. However, for both James and McDougall, because instincts were intimately tied to their theories of emotion, their conceptualisations of instinct were to inform, and to be formed similarly to, their ideas of basic emotions

This is shown in James's seminal emotions theory, first published in *Mind* in 1884, which very much reflects his physiological conceptualisation of instinct. For him "Instinctive reactions and emotional expressions…shade imperceptibly into each other. Every object that excites an instinct excites an emotion as well." (James, 1890, p. 442 ). Emotion is an automatic physical response to something in the environment. Like the instinctiveness of a baby crying when its needs are not being met, for James an emotion is simply the unconscious organic response to a stimulus. Rather than crying because we are unhappy, or running because we understand that we are afraid, he says that there is no 'mind-stuff' that constitutes the emotion. Instead we are unhappy because we cry or we are afraid because we run away; the physical act and the feeling *are* the emotion. For him the usefulness of physiological explanations of both instincts and emotions is that there is a possibility that a comprehensive theory to explain the behaviour associated with instinct and emotion can be provided; one which explains what happens within the body to cause both emotional and instinctual behaviour to occur.

James describes the basic emotions, or 'coarser emotions' (James, 1890, p. 449) as those with a "strong organic reverberation" (p. 449), having pronounced physical sensations in the organs of the body. Initially those of anger, fear, love and grief (James, 1890); he adds also joy, hate, shame and pride in a later book (James, 1892, p.468). He makes the assumption that the strength of reaction may be related to an innate, instinctual response which separates them from the 'subtler emotions' which he describes as "the moral, intellectual and æsthetic feelings…" and which "...borrow nothing from any reverberation surging up from parts below the brain" (James, 1890, p.468). These subtler emotions are different entirely in nature from the basic emotions, being cerebral rather than physical. So even though he resists producing a classification, his theory demands that he divides the emotions, because the theory cannot, after all, be universally applied to all emotional responses.

In McDougall's work the correlation between instinct and basic emotion becomes even more robust and the emotions are separated out according to a different rule (McDougall, 1910). He sees primary emotions as those related to the instincts in "higher animals"(p.49) which have an attached, strong accompanying emotional state. For him there are seven distinct emotions related to instincts; those of fear, disgust, wonder, anger, subjection, elation and tender emotion. Each is tied to a particular instinct: the instinct of flight with fear and the instinct of curiosity with the emotion of wonder, for example. An odd omission in McDougall's list of main instincts is the instinct of reproduction, which in evolutionary terms is clearly vital for survival and could be said to produce the emotions of desire or of love. This is perhaps more reflective of the time at which McDougall was writing when there was a reluctance by theorists regarding tackling the subject of sex in the context of explaining human behaviour (Foucault,1998). McDougall is clearly reluctant to go into details about this instinct stating that "It is unnecessary to dwell on this feature, since it has been dealt with exhaustively in many thousands of novels."(p. 82). Often, the internalisation of social and cultural values by psychologists affects what they omit, or include, in their work. These may include the way in which society views particular aspects of human behaviour and accepted ways of talking about such aspects. Social values operate to shape psychological knowledge in more subtle ways than the, more explicit, influences of theory and methodology.

Whilst their lists of basic emotions contain many of the same emotions, James (1890) and McDougall(1910), conceive the connection between instinct and emotion differently. 'Joy' for James is a basic emotion because for him, whilst being intimately bound up in instinctive behaviour, emotion is defined by the strength of feeling. For McDougall, on the other hand, 'joy' *cannot* be described by scientific Psychology as a basic emotion because it is not tied to a particular instinct, as evident in the behaviour of 'higher animals'. His primary emotions are those produced as part of instinctive acts which ensure the survival of human beings. This is a view of instinct which James does not find useful:

> A very common way of talking about these admirably definite tendencies to act is by naming abstractly the purpose they subserve, such as self-preservation, or defense, or care for eggs and young -- …But this represents the animal as obeying abstractions which not once in a million cases is it possible it can have framed. The strict physiological way of interpreting the facts leads to far clearer results. (p. 383)

Their alternative constructions of basic emotions then serve very different purposes, produce different kinds of understandings about the role that emotions play in the lives of people and provide different types of scientific knowledge about basic emotions. Further, their different constructions depend on different kinds of evidence to show that a particular theory is valid. The methodology they choose to provide evidence is then intimately bound up with their theories.

McDougall, for example, bases his primary emotions on the theory that the instincts and connected primary emotions in humans are those displayed in the behaviour of animals. This then, naturally, leads him to suggest, like Spencer (1868), that comparative psychology is the most valuable method for the discovery of these emotions:

> …if a similar emotion and impulse are clearly displayed in the instinctive activities of the higher animals, that fact will afford a strong presumption that the emotion and impulse in question are primary and simple; on the other hand if no such instinctive activity occurs among higher animals we must suspect the affective state in question of being either a complex composite emotion or no true emotion. (p.48)

In relation to comparative psychology, Richards (2002) states that '…the use being made of animal behaviour evidence will determine the kind of theories being produced.' (p.141). I would suggest also, that in the case of McDougall's theory of instincts and emotions at least, the methodology is chosen to provide evidence for

the theory and that both support each other in his construction of his concept of basic emotions.

McDougall's advocacy of the study of animals is based on two assumptions inherent to comparative psychology which have been stated by Richards (2002): first, that animal and human behaviour are on a continuum and also that animal behaviour is simpler than human behaviour. As regards the understanding of emotions then, the assumption that those, such as fear and anger, observed in the behaviour of animals and which are experienced and given names by humans, are the same mental phenomena is inherent in the work of comparative psychologists. It may be, however, that because the emotions of animals are not mediated through language, their emotional experiences are phenomenologically and physically different from those of humans. Further, there may be emotions which animals have which humans do not and psychologists, with their human minds and experiences, are unable to recognise as such. In framing the basic emotions concept in terms of animal instincts, and their study through the use of comparative psychology, McDougall is constructing a view which carries these assumptions about the relationship between animals and people and the knowledge he produces may therefore be inherently flawed for the above reasons. His basic emotions list, also, is predicated both on the theory that is used to define these basic emotions and on the methodology that is used to discover them, both of which support each other in the construction of, and perpetuation of, this particular view.

This time in the history of scientific Psychology was one in which it was becoming established as a discipline in its own right, with distinct theoretical approaches and methodologies. One prominent theme in the study of basic emotions at the time was the way in which they were tied to instinct, a concept which was, however, defined by theorists in different ways. This was reflected in how the basic emotions concept was viewed by William James (1890) and William McDougall (1910). The differences

between them in how they viewed the relationship between instinct and emotion meant that they produced different constructions of basic emotions. James's list reflected those emotions which could be said to be instinctual because they showed the greatest strength of feeling. For McDougall, human basic emotions were to be viewed in terms of those displayed in the instinctual behaviour of animals. Although the views of these theorists are similar in the way in which they understand emotions as being tied to instinct, their emphasis on different aspects of these causes them to produce alternative constructions of the concept of basic emotions

**Conclusion**

During the period between 1855 and 1910 the definition of basic emotions went through various revisions, adjustments and modifications as it was taken up by consecutive theorists. From Bain and Spencer to James and McDougall, the concept changed from one which framed basic emotions as those important for living a fulfilling life(Solomon, 2002) and of a product of philosophic introspection, to one which was understood physiologically and in terms of the purpose of adaptation to the environment. The work of science in observing, scrutinising, and taking apart the mind to examine how it worked, in the process reduced the concept to one which described basic emotions which were fundamental in a biological sense, rather than a moral sense.

This change however, is in part a question of semantics; definitions of emotion words altering in the transition they make from being used in real life, to how they are described in philosophical and psychological theories, where constraints are artificially imposed on their meaning. McDougall's quote at the beginning of Chapter Three illustrates this nicely. In taking any psychological object and subjecting it to the scrutiny of academic study, the meaning that the object has must be shaped in particular ways and understood in accordance with whatever understanding of the mind or methodology is used in its study. The concept of basic emotions then has been constructed in particular ways by particular theorists in the pursuit of particular kinds of knowledge about people, their minds and their behaviour.

Further, methods and theories are tied to specific historical and academic contexts and eras, producing knowledge that is composed of both academic and social assumptions about the mind and emotions at particular times. The thoughts of those producing psychological knowledge affect how concepts are framed and studied. In

relation to the hidden and abstract world of feeling and emotion, the experiences of researchers was, and is, influential in how they themselves understand and construct the idea of basic emotions and classification. As this quote from William McDougall(1910), rather wittily, illustrates in relation to 'tender emotion':

> This primary emotion has been very generally ignored by the philosophers and psychologists; that is, perhaps, to be explained by the fact that this instinct and its emotion are in the main decidedly weaker in men than in women, and in some men, perhaps, altogether lacking. We may even surmise that the philosophers as a class are men among whom this defect of native endowment is relatively common. (p. 56)

For classifications of emotions the lists produced by theorists were constructed in particular ways for particular reasons. Dixon(2003) asserts that, although lists of emotions produced at the beginning and end of the nineteenth century might contain the same items, the understanding of the person on which they were based had altered. In comparing the emotions produced by Bain(1859) and those by McDougall(1910) it can be seen that despite their very different approaches they agree on six emotions; fear, wonder, the two emotions of self, anger and tender emotion. However, the emotion of 'disgust, 'in McDougall's is absent from Bain's list. Not because disgust did not exist in 1859 but because McDougall's classification was based on which emotions were particularly visible in animals and Bain's on which emotions could be distinctly observed within him and which had a connected clear bodily response. Bain's list contains several, however, that McDougall's formulation would not allow for; emotions of the intellect, for example.

It may be that alternative views of emotions will produce lists of basic emotions that remain roughly the same and perhaps this is in part to do with the social ubiquity of particular emotions which could certainly be predicated on an innate, predisposition or a strong physiological response. However, what an understanding of the

construction of the basic emotions concept, as revealed through historical examination, provides us with is a freedom from the constraint of thinking of it only in those terms and a freedom also to conclude that there may be other ways of defining the notion of what 'basic' might mean to people's emotional lives. As Solomon(2002) argues, basic emotions could alternatively and more usefully be understood as those basic to societies, those most fundamental to their functioning. This view could perhaps provide a richer and more useful construction.

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