



THE NATURE OF EMOTION





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The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions, Second Edition

Andrew S. Fox, Regina C. Lapate, Alexander J.
Shackman, and Richard J. Davidson





SECOND EDITION

THE NATURE OF EMOTION

Fundamental Questions

EDITED BY

ANDREW S. FOX

REGINA C. LAPATE

ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN

and

RICHARD J. DAVIDSON

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For Paul Ekman, who pioneered our understanding of the nature of emotion, and for Jerry Kagan, who reminded us to question what we thought we understood.







CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	xiii	1.7 Active inference and emotion	28
Editor Contributions	xv	KARL J. FRISTON, MATEUS JOFFILY, LISA FELDMAN BARRETT, AND ANIL K. SETH	
Contributors	xvii		
Introduction	xxiii	1.8 Emotions are constructed with interoception and concepts within a predicting brain	33
ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN, ANDREW S. FOX, REGINA C. LAPATE, AND RICHARD J. DAVIDSON		LISA FELDMAN BARRETT	
Preface to Paul Ekman's Essay	xxv	1.9 Afterword	38
RICHARD J. DAVIDSON		REGINA C. LAPATE AND ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN	
How emotions might work	xxvii		
PAUL EKMAN			
		QUESTION 2: <i>How are emotions, mood, and temperament related?</i>	45
QUESTION 1: <i>What is an emotion?</i>	1	2.1 Distinguishing affective constructs: Structure, trait- vs. state-ness, and responses to affect	45
1.1 Emotions and feelings: William James then and now	1	KRISTIN NARAGON-GAINEY	
ANTONIO DAMASIO AND HANNA DAMASIO		2.2 Inhibited temperament and intrinsic versus extrinsic influences on fear circuits	49
1.2 Emotions are functional states that cause feelings and behavior	6	JENNIFER URBANO BLACKFORD AND DAVID H. ZALD	
RALPH ADOLPHS		2.3 Feelings, moods and temperaments	51
1.3 What is emotion? A natural science perspective	11	JEROME KAGAN	
PETER J. LANG AND MARGARET M. BRADLEY		2.4 Distinctions between temperament and emotion: Examining reactivity, regulation, and social understanding	54
1.4 Affect is essential to emotion	14	LINDSAY C. BOWMAN AND NATHAN A. FOX	
KENT C. BERRIDGE		2.5 Afterword	58
1.5 Emotions: Causes and consequences	15	ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN, REGINA C. LAPATE, AND ANDREW S. FOX	
GERALD L. CLORE			
1.6 What are emotional states, and what are their functions?	19		
EDMUND T. ROLLS			



viii CONTENTS

QUESTION 3: *What are the dimensions and bases for lasting individual differences in emotion?*

- 3.1 Personality as lasting individual differences in emotions 61
REBECCA L. SHINER
- 3.2 The bases for preservation of emotional biases 64
JEROME KAGAN
- 3.3 The psychological and neurobiological bases of dispositional negativity 67
ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN,
MELISSA D. STOCKBRIDGE,
EDWARD P. LEMAY, JR., AND
ANDREW S. FOX
- 3.4 Reactivity, recovery, regulation: The three R's of emotional responding 71
RICHARD J. DAVIDSON
- 3.5 Afterword 73
ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN AND
ANDREW S. FOX

QUESTION 4: *What is the added value of studying the brain for understanding emotion?*

- 4.1 Studying the brain is necessary for understanding emotion 77
TOM JOHNSTONE
- 4.2 Brain and emotion research: Contributions of patient and activation studies 80
ROBERT W. LEVENSON
- 4.3 Understanding emotion by unraveling complex structure–function mappings 84
LUIZ PESSOA
- 4.4 Brain studies can advance psychological understanding 88
KENT C. BERRIDGE
- 4.5 Afterword 91
ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN AND
REGINA C. LAPATE

QUESTION 5: *How are emotions organized in the brain?* 93

- 5.1 Discrete and dimensional contributions to emotion arise from multiple brain circuits 93
RALPH ADOLPHS
- 5.2 Brain limbic systems as flexible generators of emotion 96
KENT C. BERRIDGE
- 5.3 At primal levels, vast subcortical brain networks mediate instinctual emotional reactions that help program higher-order emotional-cognitive abilities in higher regions of the brain and mind 99
JAAK PANKSEPP
- 5.4 Brain architecture and principles of the organization of emotion in the brain 104
LUIZ PESSOA
- 5.5 Variation and degeneracy in the brain basis of emotion 108
LISA FELDMAN BARRETT
- 5.6 How are emotions organized in the brain? 112
TOR D. WAGER, ANJALI KRISHNAN, AND
EMMA HITCHCOCK
- 5.7 The brain is organized to emote 118
ANDREW S. FOX
- 5.8 Neural circuit mechanisms for switching emotional tracks: From positive to negative and back again 122
KAY M. TYE
- 5.9 Afterword 125
ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN AND
ANDREW S. FOX

QUESTION 6: *When and in what ways are emotions adaptive and maladaptive?* 129

- 6.1 The ambiguous issue of adaptive emotions 129
JEROME KAGAN

CONTENTS ix

6.2	Maladaptive emotions are inseparable from inaccurate appraisals	130	7.7	Fighting fire with fire: Endogenous emotion generation as a means of emotion regulation	172
	PHOEBE C. ELLSWORTH			HAAKON G. ENGEN AND TANIA SINGER	
6.3	Emotions aren't maladaptive	132	7.8	Afterword	177
	AARON S. HELLER			ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN AND REGINA C. LAPATE	
6.4	Cultural neuroscience of emotion	136			
	JOAN Y. CHIAO				
6.5	Positive emotions broaden and build: Consideration for how and when pleasant subjective experiences are adaptive and maladaptive	140		QUESTION 8: <i>How do emotion and cognition interact?</i>	181
	BARBARA L. FREDRICKSON		8.1	The interplay of emotion and cognition	181
6.6	The social nature of emotions: Context matters	143		HADAS OKON-SINGER, DANIEL M. STOUT, MELISSA D. STOCKBRIDGE, MATTHIAS GAMER, ANDREW S. FOX, AND ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN	
	AMY LEHRNER AND RACHEL YEHUDA		8.2	The impact of affect depends on its object	186
6.7	Afterword	147		GERALD L. CLORE	
	ANDREW S. FOX AND REGINA C. LAPATE		8.3	Thoughts on cognition–emotion interactions and their role in the diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology	189
				KEREN MAOZ AND YAIR BAR-HAIM	
	QUESTION 7: <i>How are emotions regulated by context and cognition?</i>	151	8.4	Beyond cognition and emotion: Dispensing with a cherished psychological narrative	192
7.1	Emotion as an evolutionary adaptive pattern: The roles of context and cognition	151		ALEXANDRA TOUROUTOGLOU AND LISA FELDMAN BARRETT	
	D. CAROLINE BLANCHARD AND BRANDON L. PEARSON		8.5	Can we advance our understanding of emotional behavior by reconceptualizing it as involving valuation?	196
7.2	Individual differences in fear conditioning and extinction paradigms: Insights for emotion regulation	154		ROSHAN COOLS, HANNEKE DEN OUDEN, VERENA LY, AND QUENTIN HUYS	
	MARIE-FRANCE MARIN AND MOHAMMED R. MILAD		8.6	Beyond the threat bias: Reciprocal links between emotion and cognition	199
7.3	The role of context and cognition in the placebo effect	158		NICK BERGGREN AND NAZANIN DERAQSHAN	
	LAUREN Y. ATLAS		8.7	The cognitive-emotional brain	202
7.4	Emotional intensity: It's the thought that counts	162		LUIZ PESSOA	
	GERALD L. CLORE AND DAVID A. REINHARD		8.8	Emotional vs. rational systems, and decisions between them	206
7.5	Emotion regulation as a change of goals and priorities	165		EDMUND T. ROLLS	
	CARIEN M. VAN REEKUM AND TOM JOHNSTONE		8.9	Afterword	209
7.6	Searching for implicit emotion regulation	169		ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN AND REGINA C. LAPATE	
	MATTHEW D. LIEBERMAN				

X CONTENTS

QUESTION 9: <i>How are emotions embodied in the social world?</i>	213	10.5 Movement and manipulation: The how and why of emotion communication	257
9.1 Connections between emotions and the social world: Numerous and complex	213	LASANA T. HARRIS	
NANCY EISENBERG AND MACIEL M. HERNÁNDEZ		10.6 Concepts are key to the “communication” of emotion	261
9.2 Effects of emotion on interpersonal behavior: A motivational perspective	217	MARIA GENDRON AND LISA FELDMAN BARRETT	
EDWARD P. LEMAY, JR.		10.7 The web of emotion understanding in human infants	264
9.3 Emotion in the social world	222	BETTY M. REPACHOLI AND ANDREW N. MELTZOFF	
CAROLYN PARKINSON		10.8 The dynamic-interactive model approach to the perception of facial emotion	268
9.4 The affective nature of social interactions	225	JONATHAN B. FREEMAN	
DOMINIC S. FARERI AND MAURICIO R. DELGADO		10.9 Afterword	274
9.5 On the significance of implicit emotional communication	230	REGINA C. LAPATE AND ANDREW S. FOX	
ANDREW S. FOX		QUESTION 11: <i>How are emotions physically embodied?</i>	277
9.6 Deconstructing social emotions: Empathy and compassion and their relationship to prosocial behavior	233	11.1 How and why emotions are embodied	277
HAAKON G. ENGEN AND TANIA SINGER		ADRIENNE WOOD, JARED MARTIN, AND PAULA NIEDENTHAL	
9.7 Afterword	237	11.2 Emotion in body and brain: Context-dependent action and reaction	280
ANDREW S. FOX AND ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN		MARGARET M. BRADLEY AND PETER J. LANG	
QUESTION 10: <i>How and why are emotions communicated?</i>	241	11.3 The importance of the mind for understanding how emotions are embodied	283
10.1 Form of facial expression communication originates in sensory function	241	NAOMI I. EISENBERGER	
DANIEL H. LEE AND ADAM K. ANDERSON		11.4 How are emotions physically embodied?	287
10.2 Expression of emotion: New principles for future inquiry	246	ROSALIND W. PICARD	
DACHER KELTNER, DANIEL T. CORDARO, JESSICA TRACY, AND DISA SAUTER		11.5 Pain as an embodied emotion	291
10.3 The (more or less accurate) communication of emotions serves social problem solving	250	TIM V. SALOMONS	
URSULA HESS		11.6 How are emotions organized and physically embodied?	299
10.4 Making sense of the senses in emotion communication	253	BRUCE S. MCEWEN	
WEN LI, LUCAS R. NOVAK, AND YUQI YOU		11.7 The complex tapestry of emotion: Immune and microbial contributions	302
		MELISSA A. ROSENKRANZ	

CONTENTS xi

11.8 Afterword	307	13.6 Emotions can bias decision-making processes by promoting specific behavioral tendencies	355
ANDREW S. FOX AND ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN		JAN B. ENGELMANN AND TODD A. HARE	
QUESTION 12: <i>What is the role of conscious awareness in emotion?</i>	311	13.7 Emotions are important for advantageous decision-making: A neuropsychological perspective	359
12.1 Emotions are more than their subjective feelings	311	JUSTIN REBER AND DANIEL TRANEL	
KENT C. BERRIDGE		13.8 From emotion to motion: Making choices based on current states and biological needs	365
12.2 Reactive emotional processing in the absence of conscious awareness	312	ELISABETH A. MURRAY	
JOSHUA M. CARLSON		13.9 Afterword	370
12.3 What is the role of unconscious emotions and of conscious awareness in emotion?	316	ANDREW S. FOX AND REGINA C. LAPATE	
BEATRICE DE GELDER AND MARCO TAMIETTO		QUESTION 14: <i>What develops in emotional development?</i>	373
12.4 Self-regulating our emotional states when we are conscious of them and when we are not	322	14.1 The recognition of emotion during the first years of life	373
LEANNE WILLIAMS		JULIA CATALDO AND CHARLES A. NELSON	
12.5 Regulatory benefits of conscious awareness: Insights from the emotion misattribution paradigm and a role for lateral prefrontal cortex	326	14.2 Everything develops during emotional development	376
REGINA C. LAPATE		HILL H. GOLDSMITH	
12.6 Afterword	330	14.3 Stability and change in emotion-relevant personality traits in childhood and adolescence	379
REGINA C. LAPATE AND ANDREW S. FOX		REBECCA L. SHINER	
QUESTION 13: <i>How are emotions integrated into choice?</i>	335	14.4 Normative trajectories and sources of psychopathology risk in adolescence	382
13.1 How can affect influence choice?	335	LEAH H. SOMERVILLE AND KATIE A. MCLAUGHLIN	
BRIAN KNUTSON AND MIRRE STALLEN		14.5 What happens in emotional development? Adolescent emotionality	386
13.2 Emotions through the lens of economic theory	338	EVELINE A. CRONE AND JENNIFER H. PFEIFER	
AGNIESZKA TYMULA AND PAUL GLIMCHER		14.6 Goals change with age and benefit emotional experience	392
13.3 Emotions as computational signals of goal error	343	CANDICE HOGAN, TAMARA SIMS, AND LAURA L. CARSTENSEN	
LUKE J. CHANG AND ESHIN JOLLY		14.7 Ideal ends in emotional development	396
13.4 Affect is the foundation of value	348	CAROL D. RYFF	
CATHERINE HARTLEY AND PETER SOKOL-HESSNER		14.8 Afterword	399
13.5 Emotion, value, and choice	352	REGINA C. LAPATE AND ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN	
JOLIE WORMWOOD AND LISA FELDMAN BARRETT			



xii CONTENTS

<i>Epilogue: The nature of emotion</i>	403	Notes	419
A research agenda for the Twenty-First century	403	References	423
		Index	571
ANDREW S. FOX, REGINA C. LAPATE, RICHARD J. DAVIDSON, AND ALEXANDER J. SHACKMAN			



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INTRODUCTION

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Emotion is a defining feature of the human condition and, thus, it is hardly surprising that it plays a central role in contemporary scientific models of decision making, human development, interpersonal processes, personality, psychopathology, and well-being. Methods and theories developed by emotion researchers have profoundly influenced the development of the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health's strategic plan and Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) initiative, as well as emerging dimensional models of psychopathology (e.g., Kotov et al., 2017; Krueger et al., in press; Clark et al., 2017; Zald & Lahey, 2017). Emotion researchers now occupy leadership positions in a number of scientific societies, including several focused on affect,¹ and are well represented among the faculty at top research universities around the world. Numerous highly cited reviews, special issues, specialty journals,² and books—academic as well as popular—attest to the high level of interest in emotion (e.g., Adolphs & Anderson, 2018; Ashar, Chang, & Wager, 2017; Bach & Dayan, 2017; Barrett, 2017; Barrett, Lewis, & Haviland-Jones, 2016; Barsade & Knight, 2015; Davidson & Begley, 2012; Hu, 2016; LeDoux, 2015; Lerner, Li, Valdesolo, & Kassam, 2015; Niedenthal & Brauer, 2012; Okon-Singer, Hendlér, Pessoa, & Shackman, 2015; Sheppes, Suri, & Gross, 2015; Zald & Treadway, 2017).

Nearly 25 years ago, Paul Ekman and Richard Davidson spearheaded the first edition of *The Nature of Emotion* (1994), an edited volume focused on 12 questions about the nature and origins of

emotion. The book included 63 short essays, written by 23 prominent researchers and theorists, with integrative commentaries written by Ekman and Davidson. Kenrick and Funder argued that “science best progresses through multiple and mutually critical attempts to understand the same problem” (Kenrick & Funder, 1988, p. 32), and the side-by-side responses that made up *The Nature of Emotion* provided a valuable opportunity for sharpening constructs, identifying unspoken assumptions, and highlighting soft spots in the evidentiary record.

But a quarter-century is a long time. The first edition of *The Nature of Emotion* predated several methodological revolutions—in brain imaging, computing, genomics, network science, open science, optogenetics, and ‘wearable’ technologies, to name a few—that have profoundly influenced or promise to soon influence our understanding of emotion. So, while its bright red cover can still be seen on the bookshelf in many faculty offices, the first edition is rarely read or used for teaching anymore.

The second edition of *The Nature of Emotion* fills this gap and provide a definitive survey of the current state of the affective sciences. Like the first edition, the book is organized into short chapters focused on basic questions about the nature and origins of emotion. Many of the questions were inspired by the first edition. A few of the original questions have been definitively answered over the past 25 years (*Can we control our emotions?*) and were reframed for the new edition (*How are emotions regulated by context and cognition?*). Other questions are entirely new (*What is the added value of studying the brain for*



xxiv INTRODUCTION

understanding emotion?). Each of the 14 questions is addressed by a collection of experts chosen to represent a range of disciplines and methodological approaches. For many of the chapters, we invited a prominent researcher to address a question that fell outside of his or her core area of expertise, providing an important dose of outside perspective. Altogether, 118 scientists contributed 91 essays, a sizable increase over the first edition. By design, the composition of this group was more gender-diverse than the first edition and included a number of early-career “rising stars.” At the end of each chapter, the Editors have written

an Afterword, highlighting key points of consensus and disagreement.

A major goal of *The Nature of Emotion* is to take stock of what we have learned as students of emotion and inspire the next generation of research and conceptual work. We share Ekman and Davidson’s aspiration for the first edition: “It is our hope that this volume will serve as a guide for students and researchers and help to define the research agenda for affective science” in the coming years. In the Epilogue, we have provided our own updated vision of that research agenda.

