

Demystifying Emotion: Introducing the Affect Theory of Silvan Tomkins to Objectivists

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Ayn Rand wrote considerably less about emotion than she did about reason. And, with few exceptions, she wrote about emotion from one perspective only—how it operates in human beings *qua* volitional, value-choosing-and-seeking adults. From this perspective, no innate emotions other than joy and suffering exist, and these emotions are triggered solely by how well one uses reason to choose and achieve one's values.

Objectivism views volitional, value-choosing-and-seeking adults as beings of “self-made soul” (Rand 1966, 3). They experience a profound sense of joy and efficacy that can result only from using conceptual capacities in the proper manner at all times. If the world prevents them from achieving their values, that is but a minor, temporary setback of minimal emotional consequence, easily shaken off.

Although this view has much to recommend it, it fails to make sense of the totality of our emotional lives. There are many times in a rational person's life when emotion does not harmonize with his or her perception of reality, and it can be very difficult to re-harmonize them. Indeed it may take patience and effort over a very long period of time.

The death of a loved one is an example of such an emotionally difficult situation.

A second example is the intrusion of some emotional vulnerability from childhood into rational functioning.

A third example is childhood. Children have neither fully

developed conceptual faculties, nor, generally, are they allowed to fully use their abilities to make choices that make the most sense to them. They depend on adults for their well-being and the way these adults treat them leaves lasting impressions for good or ill.¹

A fourth example that the theory fails to account for is the role of emotion in the development of personal values, character, and personality. Rand was not particularly interested in human developmental processes. To my knowledge, she wrote nothing about the internal struggles that occur as we grow up, trying to decide how to live our lives. Societal, peer, parental and other pressures all impinge on us as we strive to identify and achieve our own values. And we experience these pressures primarily as powerful emotions that are not well behaved.

Finally, the theory of emotion as response to self-chosen value cannot account for variations in sense of life. It cannot provide a detailed explanation of how sense of life forms, how it affects our choices of values, and how it motivates or fails to motivate us.

As Sciabarra (1995, 185) observes, “At times, Rand tended to evaluate reason and emotion somewhat monistically, *purely from the vantage point of reason*, paying less attention to the reciprocal effects of evaluation on cognition, feeling on thought, the subconscious on the conscious. It is as if the tension between these two spheres could be dissolved by viewing emotion as merely an unarticulated form of thought that is amenable to change.” And Enright (2002, 32) states that “it is abundantly clear . . . that Rand’s—and [Nathaniel] Branden’s—early thinking on the relation of reason and emotion, although rich with information and insight, is incomplete. . . . I think it would behoove us to look at . . . the biological function and nature of emotions.”

Scholars (e.g., Branden, Enright) have done important work indicating how to revise the Objectivist theory of emotion to make it more comprehensive. Although valuable, such efforts have not had the thoroughness of Objectivism’s theory of concept formation; they have not been *fundamental re-thinkings* of the entire field of emotion. To my knowledge, no one in the Objectivist scholarly community has undertaken such a task.²

A Thorough, Empirically Grounded Theory of Emotion with Enormous Explanatory Power

Silvan Tomkins *has* done a thorough re-thinking of the field of emotion from the ground up. He took as radical and rigorous an approach to understanding emotion as Rand did to understanding our conceptual faculty. He started “from scratch,” and the results of his efforts are as fundamentally sound, and as stunningly comprehensive to our understanding of our emotional nature, as Rand’s are to our understanding of our conceptual faculty.

Tomkins was an American psychologist who started out to be a playwright. He soon switched to philosophy and had a life-long interest in the theory of value. From philosophy he turned to psychology. Beginning in the 1940s, he worked intensively to understand what a human being is, taking no received wisdom as sacrosanct, vowing to re-think everything for himself, and always motivated to answer the question “What do human beings really want?” At the time he was working, behaviorism and (Freudian) psychoanalysis dominated American psychology. Behaviorism, in its mission to “scientifically” understand human behavior, assumed that since emotion was primarily an internal event and not publicly observable, it could safely be ignored. Psychoanalysis held that emotions only occurred when some defense against a drive weakened, and the function of those emotions was restricted to warning of such a breach in a defense. Tomkins disagreed profoundly with these perspectives.³

He viewed humans as composed of a number of different systems, *each one active at all times*. He was therefore true to the complexity of the human organism, rather than forcing his understanding into some Procrustean bed. He saw the history of psychology as one of “function imperialism”—that is, each school of psychology took one of the systems and proclaimed that each type of psychological phenomenon had no essence of its own, but was just some form of the one it declared important. For example, cognitivists maintain that the only important element directing our lives is cognitive processes; behaviorists assign that role to behavior; psychoanalysts assign it to drives and how we handle them; etc.⁴

Tomkins was determined not to fall into this trap. While emotion was his primary interest as a psychologist, he gave due credit to the

contributions of cognitive functions (thinking, perception, imagination, memory), drives, and actions in understanding who the human being is psychologically. He held that *all* these systems are tools of survival, with particular functions to perform in furthering human life. His mission was to bring the study of emotion into the science of psychology as a crucially important component of human life. There it could be integrated with cognition as a fundamental part of our inner lives. He started from easily observable phenomena and tenaciously worked to account for all relevant facts. When a new fact appeared that he hadn't previously accounted for, it could not be ignored or explained away—the theory had to be changed. His efforts over a period of more than forty years yielded a genuinely new and powerful approach to understanding emotion.

Ostensive Definitions

One of the strengths of Objectivist epistemology is its recognition that all valid conceptual knowledge is ultimately grounded in perceptual experience. No matter how abstract the concept, it can be traced to actual existents. One can point to the referents from which it is abstracted.

One of the long-standing problems in the study of emotion has been the difficulty of making such ostensive definitions. For example, what do we actually mean when we say someone “loves” something or is “happy”? Philosophers and psychologists have debated such questions for centuries without agreeing because emotions are inner states, directly knowable only to the person experiencing them. How do we know that any two people experience essentially the same inner state when we do not have access to the raw data?

To my knowledge, Tomkins was the first person to solve this problem. He did it by pointing to instances of emotion where it appears in a particularly pure form—in *infants*.

This seminal insight came to him in 1955 when his son was born. At home on sabbatical, he had the opportunity to closely observe his infant son for hours at a time. Having spent many years trying to identify the essence of emotion, he naturally focused on his son's emotional expressions. A well-read psychologist and philosopher, he attempted to fit his observations to the many theories of human nature he knew. *He found that none of them could accommodate the emotional*

phenomena he observed in his young son. Ultimately he was led to conclude that theories of human emotion and motivation needed to be completely re-thought and that the basics of emotion and motivation were observable in an infant.⁵ Here's some of what Tomkins (1995, 32–33) had to say about observing his son emoting, and the need to completely re-think the areas of emotion and motivation:

I was struck with the massiveness of the crying response. It included not only very loud vocalization and facial muscular responses, but also large changes in blood flow to the face and engagement of all the striate musculature of the body. It was a *massive, total, bodily response*, which, however, seemed *to center on the face* [emphasis added]. Freud had suggested that the birth cry was the prototype of anxiety, but my son didn't seem anxious. What, then, was this facial response? I labeled it *distress*.

Next, I was to observe intense *excitement* when he labored after the first few months of his life to shape his mouth to try to imitate the speech he heard. He would struggle for minutes on end, and then give up, apparently exhausted and discouraged.

I noted the intensity of the smiling response to his mother and to me, and again I became aware that nothing in psychoanalytic theory (or in any other personality theory at that time) paid any attention to the specificity of *enjoyment* as compared to *excitement*.

Included with this issue of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* is a CD-ROM that shows infants displaying these affects. Please view it now. As you watch, make an effort to empathize with the infants. If you “tune in” you will experience feelings similar to the ones displayed by the infants. These feelings are the ostensive definitions of the felt quality of the affects.

As you can tell from the CD-ROM, an infant's cry is overwhelmingly powerful, involves the whole organism, and is impossible to ignore. It causes the infant's facial muscles to contract in specific

ways, with the inner parts of the eyebrows arched up, and often, the corners of lips pulled down in a frown. There are continuous loud vocalization and breathing, arm movements and kicking. This “distress” reaction communicates an unmistakable message. It sets up, via “affect contagion” (the basis for empathy), a similar feeling in anyone who sees and hears it. Intensely attention-getting and motivating—it forces one to do something to stop the reaction; it is too intensely painful not to.

Urgent, attention getting, motivating, contagious are four adjectives that apply to distress—and to emotion in general. Tomkins saw that this distress reaction was the *psychosomatic* ingredient, literally *the whole bodily reaction that colors consciousness*, in a wide array of adult emotional reactions. Examples include feeling tormented, blue, melancholy, miserable, hurt, and sad. Pure distress, as observed in a crying newborn, is the energizing, defining element of all of these adult emotions.

He identified eight other basic, innate, energizing elements of emotion, all of which are urgent, attention-getting, motivating and contagious. These are: interest, enjoyment, surprise, anger, fear, disgust (wanting to expel something one has taken in), dissmell (wanting to keep something away from oneself, as a bad odor signals us to stay away from its source), and “shame.” “Shame” is not used in the conventional way; “deflation” is a better word for this phenomenon.

The general term he used to denote each of these innate patterns of bodily reaction is “affect,” and taken together they are known as the “affect system.” Each of them is a full bodily reaction with a particular facial expression, vocalization, body posture and/or movements, and each colors our conscious experience with a particular feeling quality.⁶

Below is a list of the nine affects. Two are positive, one is neutral, and six are negative. For some of the affects there are two words: one for the affect at a lower intensity, the other for the affect at a higher intensity.

AFFECT	DESCRIPTION
<u>POSITIVE</u>	
1. INTEREST-EXCITEMENT	Gaze riveted, eyebrows arched up, mouth partly open, brow slightly furrowed.
2. ENJOYMENT-JOY	Lips open & widened, muscles relaxed, eyes bright and shining.
<u>NEUTRAL</u>	
3. SURPRISE-STARTLE	Eyebrows up, eyes wide open, mouth open, lips protruded.
<u>NEGATIVE</u>	
4. DISTRESS-ANGUISH	Inner parts of eyebrows arched up, (often) corners of lips pulled down, continuous vocalization and breathing, arm movement and kicking.
5. ANGER-RAGE	Eyes narrowed, deep and rapid breathing, loud sustained cry, mouth open, jaw clenched, reddening of face, arm movement and kicking more rapidly than in distress-anguish.
6. FEAR-TERROR	Raising and drawing together of eyebrows, fixed stare, eyes open wide, lips stretched back, frozen face.
7. SHAME (DEFLATION)	Eyes averted and downcast, neck and shoulders slumped.
8. DISGUST	Head forward, lower lip pushed down, tongue protruding.
9. DISSMELL	Upper lip raised, nose wrinkled, head drawn back..

Properties of the Affect System

1. Affects are the Basic Human Valuing System

As stated above, each affect has a particular, innate, “wired-in” feeling quality that is either rewarding or punishing (except for surprise-startle, which is neutral and acts as a “reset” mechanism). These “wired-in” enormously powerful feeling qualities take over the infant’s consciousness, and therefore cannot be ignored. When an infant feels excited, for example, he/she feels it intensely. There is no avoiding that excitement; it is too strong, as are feeling enjoyment, surprise, distress, anger, fear, disgust, dissmell, and shame. The CD-ROM clearly illustrates this power.

These powerful, innate, wired-in feeling qualities of the affect system have the characteristics of the biological system referred to by Rand (1964, 8) as the base of all evaluative experiences. They are the fundamental experiences of “for me” or “against me.” *That is, affects are the primary sources of pleasure and pain that we try to maximize or minimize.*⁷

2. Affects “Color” Activity and Consciousness

Affects are composed of specific facial expressions, patterns of breathing, muscle contractions, vocalizations, and movements that occur essentially simultaneously. One can think of them as “programmed events.” Once an affect is triggered, the whole program is run. These triggered programs *continually interact* with all other biological and psychological systems to energize or de-energize the functions of these systems. They also impart their quality of feeling to these activities. For example, we can move, think, perceive, or remember with excitement, with shame (deflation), with fear, with anger, or with any of the other affects or combinations of affects.

3. All Memories are “Affect-Wrapped”

Suppose a young child is sitting in a chair bouncing up and down for fun. He is using his skeletal muscles to create a rhythmic movement that triggers the affects of excitement and enjoyment—he is having a good time. Now suppose he overdoes it a little and he falls from the chair. The moment he starts to fall, surprise is triggered. As he falls, fear is triggered. Hitting the ground hard

triggers distress, and because all these affects interrupt his excitement and enjoyment, deflation is also triggered.

Had he not fallen, the memory that would have been stored would have been “bounce on chair, feel good,” and when he saw the chair or remembered it, the positive affects of excitement and enjoyment would have been triggered. Now, because of his fall, what comes to consciousness when he sees the chair, or remembers it, will be quite different. He will experience distress and deflation as well as excitement and enjoyment. His evaluation given by his body through the affect system will be some blend of these affects.

This example illustrates the general principle: *The contents of consciousness at any given time, if they are stored in memory, will be stored along with the affects that were present with them in consciousness.* In this way, our life experiences, what we have learned in the past, are available to be used in the present, both the facts and the way we feel about those facts. In this sense, all memories are “affect-wrapped.” One’s sense of life comprises the affective components of these memories. In particular, the ratio of positive to negative affect stored with memories during these pre-conceptual years will greatly influence how benevolent one’s sense of life is.

4. The Affect System Inherently Encourages Four Basic Goals

Because of the rewards and punishments built into the affect system, we generally pursue three basic goals at all times: (1) To experience as much positive affect as possible; (2) To experience as little negative affect as possible; (3) To figure out how to achieve (1) and (2). Since affect is the “motivational fuel” that keeps us going, we also tend to pursue: (4) To experience affect as fully as possible, i.e., *not to inhibit* the experience of affect. Although this may sound contradictory, it occurs because inhibiting affect is inherently painful even for negative affects. Further, to inhibit affect is to destroy useful information. These four goals are the fundamental biologically wired-in, guiding values of the infant.

This is not to say that these four are the *only* goals the infant has. For example, getting fed is also a goal. Needing to be fed will trigger the affect of distress; the baby will cry, the caregiver (after figuring out why the baby is crying) will provide food, and the distress will be

replaced with interest and enjoyment. An infant has many goals—e.g., satisfaction of physiological needs, playing, learning. It is a hypothesis of affect theory that these goals are brought to awareness *only when they trigger one or more affects*. When they do, the caregiver and/or infant can use his volition and reason to achieve these goals.

The affects are the motivators for adults as well (although they have been significantly modified through acculturation and individual life-experience). Only when something triggers affect does it enter conscious awareness where the adult can work on identifying and evaluating what action, if any, to take on it.⁸

5. Relationship Between Affect and Emotion

Just as a chemical compound is a combination of elements of the periodic table, an emotion is a combination of one or more of the nine affects plus other components of experience (e.g., thoughts, memories, fantasies, actions). The nine affects are the “basic building blocks” of the energizing, valuing, motivational part of emotions.

For example:

Pride: The affect enjoyment/joy that follows successful actions that were motivated by the affect interest/excitement.

Guilt: Deflation resulting from doing something against one’s morals, plus fear of punishment for that transgression.

Shame (traditional usage, not the affect that Tomkins defined): Deflation plus public exposure of incompetence and/or immorality.

Loneliness: Deflation resulting from inability to share one’s life experience, especially interest/excitement and enjoyment/joy, with another person.

6. Affect Continuously Interacts With Reason to Guide Our Apprehension of Reality and Successful Action

As stated previously, humans are composed of many interacting systems. It is the function of the affect system to provide information via the felt qualities of the nine affects. The information provided by these feelings is an essential guide to action.

Enright (2002) illustrates this truth very well. She points out that emotions give us important information about when we do and do not know something. She lists “hunches” and “gnawing feelings” and

“relaxation following tension” as emotional signals that are critical in guiding us to an accurate grasp of a situation. They arise from rapid subconscious evaluations that tell us whether or not we’re on target to achieve the values we’re pursuing.

Hunches are excitement muted by deflation. That is, we think we see how something works, so we get excited. But since we haven’t verified it yet, we don’t know whether it really fits what we’re looking for, so there’s an automatic slowing down caused by deflation. But it is only a slowing down, not a complete elimination. We are sufficiently excited to continue trying to see what’s there.

Gnawing feelings are interest plus distress plus deflation. There is a desire to get something right but an ongoing sense that something is not right.

Relaxation after tension is enjoyment, the reward for having persevered with effort until all the pieces fit.

7. Affect and Sense of Life

As mentioned above, affects give an emotional coloration to consciousness. Every time one of them is triggered, it imprints its felt quality onto everything in consciousness, and the memory of that experience is added to our expectations of what our world is like. When that memory is accessed, it comes with a particular set of feelings, made up of one or more of the nine affects that were triggered when it was stored. In infancy and childhood, before we have the cognitive tools to figure out what’s going on, these *affect-wrapped memories* become part of what Rand termed our “preverbal sense of life.”

For example: A child who is criticized when he is interested in something (thereby triggering deflation and distress) and not helped to learn what he needs to know to surmount obstacles will tend to experience a defeatist sense of life. Why bother? What’s the use?

If some of his efforts are successful and therefore trigger enjoyment, to some extent there will also be a positive sense of life. Both the positive and the negative senses of life will appear in his consciousness when he tries to achieve something, causing inner conflict, which undercuts his motivation. How much should he persevere before giving up? Part of the answer to that is programmed in his sense of life.

Another example: Someone who is raised by parents who allow free exploration in a varied and safe environment will experience much interest/excitement and enjoyment/joy, along with some distress, fear, anger and deflation that is inevitable in being alive. If he is helped to learn what he needs to know to overcome obstacles, he will associate interest/excitement and enjoyment/joy with effort and success. Such an association will encourage him to choose and persevere in pursuing rational values of his own, thereby developing a benevolent sense of life.

I want to emphasize that these senses of life are *preverbal, not stated in words*. They are underlying, automatic, felt senses, *formed by the triggering of the various affects*. Which affects are triggered at which times influences our motivation enormously.

Nowhere in Objectivist writing have I seen these *non-volitional* forces discussed in any detail, yet they are central factors in shaping who we are. The powerful, attention-commanding states produced by the affect system are an *unchosen* context with which we *must* deal. The actions we take in our mental and physical environments in so doing have a strong influence on personality development. We take these actions, often at least somewhat in the dark—not fully knowing what we are doing. Sometimes we get valuable help from others in choosing life-affirming courses of action, sometimes we don't. Some of our choices turn out to be good for us, others don't. The result in many cases is that before we are able to judge that we ought to have a *particular* set of values, we already have one. They have been formed well before our adult conceptual abilities appear and can be developed. When they do appear, some alteration is possible. But some parts of our personalities will just be what they are.

A Dialog

It is highly probable that Rand did not know of Tomkins's work and that Tomkins, if he was aware of her existence, did not consider Rand an important thinker.

I believe that Rand could have learned much of value about emotion from Tomkins. They would have largely agreed on what they considered the limitations and errors in behaviorism and psychoanalysis. Tomkins also criticized cognitivism for its over-emphasis on rational logical processes while ignoring the nature of

emotion. Perhaps Rand would have criticized cognitivism, had she delved into it more.

Below, I present a hypothetical dialog between these two pioneering geniuses as a means of summarizing the main points I have tried to make in this article.

Tomkins: Miss Rand, I understand that you are a champion of the validity of our senses, reason, and free will. You believe that reality is what it is, independent of our knowing it, and that our minds, properly used, give us an accurate image of reality.

Rand: Yes, that is correct. And let me also emphasize that the basic material our reason works on is percepts, which are automatic integrations of material provided by the interaction of reality with our five senses.

Tomkins: I am in essential agreement with that position. I believe that you are predominantly concerned with how we gain valid knowledge of the external world and you believe if we do a good job at that our inner lives will be very happy.

Rand: Yes, that is correct.

Tomkins: In my work, I focus on the nature of our inner lives. I wonder why some things become conscious to us while others do not. I wonder how to maximize positive affect and generally lead a fulfilling life. I attempt to discover basic phenomena that make up our inner lives, much as chemists discovered elements that make up compounds. I am primarily interested in the essential nature of emotion.

Rand: We are both interested in how human beings can live high-quality lives. And we agree that emotions are an essential part of that. They are the means by which we enjoy life, and they provide important feedback about how we are doing in achieving our ends.

Tomkins: I believe our essential psychological nature is best understood as a continual interaction among our cognitive, affective and behavioral systems. These three systems are the means by which we stay connected to reality and thereby achieve our goals. Each one causes changes in the others. Affect is always present. It may become salient before, during, or after thinking, or before, during, or after taking action. By the way, by “cognition” I mean perception,

memory, and imagination as well as thinking (which includes induction and deduction).

Rand: Yes, Professor Tomkins, I see what you mean. But I must say that I see far too many people who are overly concerned with their inner lives without giving enough emphasis to their interactions with the world. If they expended the required effort to accomplish goals that actually furthered their lives, they would have more pleasant inner lives.

Tomkins: I see your point, Miss Rand. But I also see the errors people make on the other end—paying too much attention to their external reality and not enough to the impact it has on the quality of their lives. I believe for maximal happiness both must be given sufficient attention. The proportion will be different for each individual, so one must determine it for oneself. And it will vary during one's lifetime according to the particular situations one encounters.

Rand: Yes, I agree.

Tomkins: Another thing we have in common is the not very popular belief that there really is a human nature. That just as there are facts of external reality that can be ignored only at one's peril, so there are facts about our psychological nature that can be ignored only at one's peril. The affects are an example of such facts. I believe my ostensive definitions of them are a major step forward in the study of emotion, as they accurately label states that we all experience.

Rand: If that is so, I applaud you. How do you know there are only nine affects, and that these are the nine?

Tomkins: There is empirical evidence and I have done extensive theorizing based on biological facts that I can refer you to (Tomkins 1962; 1963; 1991; 1992; 1995). The essential fact that differentiates life from non-life is that it depends on taking certain courses of action in order to continue. I understand that this is your position as well. This requirement holds for all organisms, from single-celled ones to humans. What gets inside the organism from the environment is not irrelevant. In humans, the affect *dissmell* has evolved to give us a signal about whether we should take in something (either physical or psychological). *Disgust* tells us to get out something (either physical or psychological) that we have incorporated into ourselves. *Interest* is triggered when we are taking in new information. It motivates us to

continue until we have the information we need or want. *Enjoyment* is the pleasure of relaxation, encouraging us to rest. *Deflation* occurs when we have been *interested* in or *enjoying* something but something else interrupts us. *Surprise* tells us to drop everything, because something unexpected is impinging on us and we need to find out what it is. *Fear* tells us that something is coming at us too fast for us to handle, so we need to run or hide. *Distress* is an affect that evolved along with our ability to plan and act long range. It can be tolerated for long periods of time and serves as a motivator to solve long range problems. *Anger* is our reaction when there is way too much for us to deal with and we feel a need to just get rid of some of it. All of these affects give us information about where to look and how to look at what is affecting us.

Rand: When I viewed your video of infants experiencing these affects, I could see why you say they are innate; all babies display them and it is highly unlikely that such universality could be a learned phenomenon. Are you also saying that each of these nine affects has a feeling quality that is also innate, that is not the result of a cognitive evaluation of a situation?

Tomkins: Yes. These feeling qualities are innate. We appear to disagree on this point. You hold that we are born *tabula rasa* for emotion as well as ideas. I believe that the fact that each innate affect has a feeling quality, present at birth or shortly thereafter, shows that emotions have a particular nature independent of their cognitive content. In fact, that they are present before we have significant cognitive ability demonstrates this point very clearly.

Rand: I must admit you present compelling evidence. My problem with your position is that if we let emotion influence our grasp of reality, we will believe to be true what *feels* right without checking it against observable facts to see if it *is* right. That is my main objection to religious belief and other anti-individualist philosophies. Do you believe it is possible to have emotion present and still be objective?

Tomkins: Yes, I do. I believe the dichotomy between reason and emotion is a false one. We can reason and experience emotion simultaneously. Emotion is always present. It is an ongoing process of evaluation. When we identify what we bring to the present from our pasts and see if it fits our present goals and circumstances,

emotion is a key indicator of the nature of the fit. It takes effort to be objective, to examine all the facts no matter how they make us feel, but obviously it is possible. I believe it is what you call “checking one’s premises” (and revising where necessary). I would describe it as comparing feedback from reality to our *images*. *Images* are what we bring to situations from the past. They comprise impressions, feelings, goals, beliefs, and knowledge that we have internalized and in which we therefore are invested (i.e., they are cognitive *and* affective). They are a significant part of the basic material with which we work to relate accurately to the world.

Rand: Well, Professor Tomkins, you make a strong and interesting case. As you may know, I am a proponent of noncontradiction. Applied to life this means: living things are integrated; their different parts work together, not against each other, to further their lives. In the case of man that doesn’t happen automatically and is not the reality of most peoples’ lives. Most people have some amount of internal contradiction, but I don’t believe that that is metaphysically the only possibility.

Tomkins: Yes, I am aware of your position. Although I’ve never actually seen this absence of internal contradiction, I believe it is possible. And I agree it is desirable. Affect provides the power and reward for our efforts, reason provides the knowledge to channel that power productively. Affect without cognition is blind, cognition without affect is weak.

Rand: I agree that affect without cognition is blind. I call it “whim worship.” I am not so sure that cognition without affect is weak. I will have to think more about that.

Tomkins: Fair enough. I would like to close by saying that there are many properties of affect and the ways it co-assembles with cognition and action that I have not had time to discuss in this introductory treatment. I hope you will have the time and interest for further study.

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Notes

1. Rand (1971) did acknowledge that emotions operate differently in children. In children they serve as pre-conceptual evaluations (Enright 2002), and they are shaped by children's interactions with the world, especially the social world, as much or more than they are shaped by the child.

2. Branden (e.g., 1983; 1994) has revised his earlier views that overemphasized the role of reason at the expense of emotion in developing high self-esteem. His position for some time has been that in a healthy consciousness, emotion and reason interact with each other in complex ways, both having important roles to play in the individual's contact with reality. But his focus has invariably been on techniques for increasing one's self-esteem. He has *not* focused on the nature of emotion itself.

3. Rand and Branden also rejected both psychoanalysis and behaviorism on the grounds that they deny the efficacy of volition. See Locke 1980 for a succinct statement of this position.

4. Cognitivism is the only one of these three that is widely accepted in academe today. Its position on the nature of emotion is that emotion is at times an independent variable, as when mood colors thought, and at times a dependent variable, as when thought triggers feeling. But it has nothing to say about the nature of emotion as such, as one of the important psychological phenomena that make us who we are (Bowman 2005).

5. Darwin ([1872] 1965) also observed emotional expression in his own infants. Tomkins (1991, 38) gives Darwin full credit for "making the classic statement of the evolutionary significance of the emotions." Darwin's interests in emotion were (1) to identify their survival value and (2) to show that at least some of them were present in animals lower than man. In so doing, he could provide further evidence for the validity of his theory of evolution. Darwin also used cross-cultural data to discern whether there were universals in human emotional expression. He found that there were. Tomkins went further in identifying the "basic stuff" of emotion—the affects. Emotion is one or more affects plus other constituents—thought, action, memory, etc. Tomkins also did much work over a thirty year period exploring how affect and emotion are experienced, how they shape consciousness and motivate us, and providing a general, comprehensive theory of their place in day-to-day human life.

6. Cross-cultural research has confirmed the universality of at least six of these affects. See Ekman 1993 for a summary of this work.

7. The affect system acts as an amplifier of "for me" or "against me." For example, when a lover of chocolate ice cream has some, his/her taste sensors react to give the taste of chocolate, a pleasure. This neural event is sensed by the affect system and because it is a pleasant taste, enjoyment is triggered. Thus the experience of eating chocolate becomes the awareness of the taste plus the experience of the positive affect enjoyment. If one does not like chocolate, the same neural message

from the taste sensors will trigger disgust and the experience of eating chocolate becomes the taste of chocolate plus disgust. Tomkins saw the affect system as the “bridge” between physiological events and conscious experience of them. That is, the evolved function of the affect system is to convert physiological data into conscious data. The conscious data (whether taste, sound, touch, etc.) he denoted by the term “image.” Thus the title of his four volume masterwork, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*.

8. Affect is modified in many ways as one grows to become an adult. For example, virtually no adults in their day-to-day lives cry like the babies in the CD. The innate distress response has been “toned down.” But the toned down version also behaves like the innate one—calling attention to material that needs to be processed through thought or action. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into the enormous amount of detail that such processes entail. Suffice it to say that affect and how it is “toned down,” along with what it brings to consciousness, has an enormous influence on the nature of one’s personality and how it evolves over the years.

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