

What is it good for, absolutely nothing?

Effects of moral emotions on social interactions

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Abstract

What functions do emotions serve? This simple question has a long tradition in various fields of science and provoked considerable division within the social sciences. In recent years emotion researchers have paid increased attention, in terms of both proximal effects and on the social environment. Whereas some emotions mainly challenge problems of physical survival (e.g. fear), other emotions mobilize the organism to deal quickly with important interpersonal encounters (e.g. shame). These latter emotions are called moral emotions and they always arise from actions of the self (actor emotions) or others (observer emotions). Lately, Rudolph et al. (in preparation) presented a classification of the moral emotions referring to Heiders (1958) naïve action analysis. This research project tries to testify these cognitive antecedents in realistic settings. Furthermore we want to gain a broader insight into the consequences of moral emotions in terms of ongoing interactions. We assume that moral emotions have a crucial function for solving problems important to social relationships, and therefore serve as simple heuristic cues.

Words: 166

Keywords: emotion theory, moral emotions, social interaction