

Social Emotions¹

Even the thought, ...that others think that we have made an unkind or stupid remark, is amply sufficient to cause a blush, although we know all the time that we have been completely misunderstood.
(Darwin, 1872: 332)

In what sense are emotions social? Hayek (1988) suggested banishing the term *social* from the vocabulary of social sciences. He felt that usage has given this word so many different meanings that it no longer constituted a useful tool for communication.² The term certainly has multiple meanings but the range is far less broad than Hayek feared. Essentially, the various meanings of the term *social* are in a way like planets. They are not simply wandering stars; on the contrary, they gravitate in an orderly manner around a sun. That sun is the basic meaning of the term *social* and this meaning is, I believe, related to the specific forms of existence of emotions.

Emotions are social in that they are not the means but the **state** of humans living together. The fact that we have an affective life is not a cause of but **is** the fact that, as beings, we are not completely independent of each other. Emotions have a relationship with our sociability that is not one of causality, but of identity,

¹ Translated from the French by Mary E. Baker.

² Hayek listed 160 different uses of the word *social* in order to convince us of its terrible plurivocality. He also suggested that each time *social* is associated with a noun, such as *justice*, *action* or *geography*, a new concept of *social* is created. Yet *social* is, as Hayek himself noted, an adjective and if we were to believe that adjectives acquire new meanings each time they are associated with nouns, then we would probably have to give up using them. I think that just as *a blue door* and *a blue house* are different phrases that nonetheless use the same concept of blue, *social justice* and *social action* are two ideas that use the same concept of *social*. This does not mean that the word *social* has only one meaning but that its plurivocality is much smaller than Hayek feared.

just as in philosophy of mind, for example, it is said that there is identity between a mental state and a physical state of the brain. This is why the way in which emotions are social is primary. It is not derived. Our affective life makes us social animals. It constitutes the social for us. Thus I will look to emotions to define the meaning of the term *social*. The adjective *social* does not take on a special meaning when it is applied to emotions; on the contrary, all the other senses of the word are, or should be, based on that meaning. To say that emotions are social is to say what *the social* is. This is why the social emotions thesis is not relativistic. It does not claim that emotions are constructed socially but that affective life constitutes what is social for us. It targets what is universal in the social: the fact of social organization or the social bond.

This is to say that the social emotions thesis is also an ontological thesis, ontological in a sense that is closer to the way analytical philosophy uses this term than to the way it is understood in the tradition inspired by Hegel or Heidegger, for example. The history of Being, its presence or absence are not in question here. The assertion that emotions are social has to do with the form of existence of emotions, with what they are, with the way that they exist and with what affective life reveals about the kind of beings that we are. A stone, or grass in a field, in other words, any material object, exists differently than an event, such as the assassination of Caesar or the sudden arrival of my friend Lukas, and these also exist differently from a physical disposition, such as fragility, or a psychological attribute, such as suggestibility. Affective life is made up of salient points in a process of co-ordination between people and these points include things that resemble actions and the results of actions. What we commonly call emotions encompasses both of these things.³ These salient points exist in a manner that is different again from all the entities mentioned above. In particular, as I have said, emotions, seen as salient points in affective life, do not exist as intrinsic individual characteristics, such as height or eye colour. Rather, they resemble being *Grandfather* or *Henri's second cousin*. They are relational properties, i.e., properties that an individual considered in isolation cannot possess and that it makes no sense to predicate of an individual taken alone out of context. For example, a biological characteristic, such as an adaptation, is a relational property.⁴ The fact that an organism has an adaptation does not depend on its

³ Thus the term *emotion* cannot be considered to refer to a set of homogenous objects because it covers, for example, both actions and some of the results of those actions.

⁴ It is important not to confuse *having an adaptation* with *being an adaptation*. *Being an adaptation* is also a relational property, but it is a historical property that does not depend on inter-relations that take place in the present; it depends on the way a characteristic has become established in a population. *Grosso modo*, a characteristic is an adaptation if it has become established in a population because of the advantage it gave to the individuals who shared that

intrinsic properties alone, e.g., on its physical properties, but also on the relation that it has (or that some of its characteristics have) with its environment (more specifically, with certain aspects of its environment). Nonetheless, and this is fundamental, *having an adaptation* is not a property of the organism and of its environment, but of the organism alone, just as *being taller than someone* is not a property of the taller individual and the shorter individual, but a property of the taller person only, even though it is a comparative property and relational. *Having an adaptation* is a property of an organism in an environment, just as *being taller than* is a property of an object in relation to others. The same applies to emotions. Being angry is not an intrinsic physical or psychological property of a subject, but the property of an individual in a certain context, i.e., a relational property. The social emotions thesis says that this context is essentially that of the relations agents have with each other.⁵ Feeling an emotion is however a property of an individual alone. The fact that emotions are relational characteristics does not entail that my emotions are not my own and the fact that they are social does not entail that they are the properties of a group.

I will try to do two things in the rest of this chapter: first, to show that the only area in which emotions could appear as an adaptation is that of strategic intraspecific relations and, second, to show that, as a process of strategic intraspecific co-ordination, emotions have the characteristic of constituting the agents that they co-ordinate. The first assertion can be seen as an evolutionary hypothesis, the second as a developmental hypothesis. In the conclusion, I will distinguish the social emotions thesis from classical theories of moral sentiments that, in their own way, also make emotions the foundation of the social bond, as well as from recent sociological theories of the social construction of emotions.

Quite frequently we are treated to the following anecdote about the lives of certain animals in captivity. It is said that if lions and tigers are put in the same cage, the lions progressively eliminate all the tigers even though individual tigers are much stronger and more powerful than individual lions. The reason for this is that when a lion and a tiger come into conflict, all the lions in the cage come to the aid of their fellow, whereas the other tigers yawn and scratch themselves as the fight goes on. A tiger reacts only when directly threatened. Lions, on the contrary,

characteristic. However, since environments change, it could very well be that an animal's adaptation is no longer adapted to its present situation.

⁵ A more precise way of stating this would be *the relations that they undertake with each other*, in other words, emotions do not depend on all the relations among agents but very precisely on those to which they commit themselves, in contrast with the many abstract relations that they can have, such as spatial relations.

act as if all the lions in the cage were targeted by what affects any one of them.⁶ Lions help each other and show solidarity, which is, one might say, what makes them superior. This is true, but mutual assistance and solidarity can be misleading when we try to understand what makes lions special in this case. This can be shown simply by asking whether the consequences of a conflict between two lions would be different from those of a conflict between two tigers. The former always threatens to spread throughout the whole community of lions and if that happens adieu mutual assistance; the conflict can split the group and destroy solidarity. The latter remains local; it is stopped by the supreme indifference of the other tigers. There is no community through which it could spread. The reason that lions help each other is also the reason that they sometimes kill each other. This is what Kant called “unsociable sociableness” (1784). Lions are social animals whereas the tiger is solitary.

It should not be concluded from this that tigers lack *certain* emotions with which lions are amply provided. On the contrary, I think that we should simply say that tigers lack emotions. Why? Is it not true that tigers roar with rage, fear fire and, if we are to believe Kipling, hate man? Should we believe that they experience no physiological change when tracking and capturing their prey or when fleeing hunters? I am sure that all these situations result in changes in the physical states of tigers and, since tigers have the anatomy of a higher mammal, these changes must resemble what sets off fight or flight in us: a discharge of adrenaline, accelerated heartbeat and increased blood pressure. The problem is not whether these physical states in tigers are followed by or correlated with certain mental states. The reason tigers lack emotions is not that they have an impoverished interior life. I believe the difficulty comes from the fact that, in this case, the physical states that often accompany certain points in emotional life do not occur in an environment that authorizes us to call them emotions. It is not those physical states or events that define an emotion, for only the context determines whether or not they are part of a process of affective coordination. The case resembles that of an animal’s ecological fitness when placed in a new environment. The extremely heavy fur of polar bears is certainly well adapted to their natural environment. However, in the Vancouver Zoo it condemns the poor animals to almost complete immobility, which would probably be fatal to them if their essential needs were not taken care of by a human institution. Asserting that the fur of polar bears is just as adapted to the climate of Vancouver and as it is to that of the North Pole because it remains just as long and warm in both places would demonstrate complete failure to understand the concept of fitness. The confusion in this case is between an adaptation, i. e. the polar bear’s coat, which is

⁶ It does not matter whether this anecdote is true or false. What is interesting is that it highlights two different types of behaviour.

a historical concept, and an animal's ecological fitness, which is a relational concept relative to the animal's present environment. I think that those who base the existence of emotions on the presence of certain physical changes or on certain mental states are making exactly the same sort of category mistake. Just as the ecological fitness of an organism changes in relation to the environment in which it is found, despite no change in the organism's physical characteristics, certain forms of behaviour are or are not points in affective life, depending on the context in which they take place. My thesis is that intraspecific co-ordination is the fundamental context in which what we call *the expression of emotions* can be considered an adaptation and serves a function that defines it as an emotion. This is the only context in which these physical occurrences can be considered events in affective life.

It is well known that Darwin (1872) published an important book on the expression of emotions in humans and animals. One of the surprises contained in this book is how little space the author gives to natural selection in his argumentation. At the beginning of the book, Darwin states three principles that he believes regulate and make comprehensible the expression of emotions. Only the first principle, that of habit, leaves a little space for natural selection. Darwin says that certain physical movements can be useful in the presence of certain mental states, for example, when a dog curls back its lips and flattens its ears in a fight. Showing its teeth enables it to bite more effectively and flattening its ears reduces the probability that they will be injured. The principle of habit says that the regular association of the mental state related to fighting and these voluntary physical movements will have the result that when the mental state occurs, "however feebly", the animal will have a spontaneous tendency to perform the bodily movements associated with that state, even if they are not at all useful in the case at hand. (1872:28)⁷ In other words, the slightest beginnings of aggressiveness in a dog will incite it to curl back its lips and flatten its ears, i.e., the animal will be led to express its emotion. This amounts to saying that while utility may have partially presided over the determination of the bodily movements that constitute the expression of emotions and while natural selection could have contributed to the choice of these movements, the expression of emotions itself has no utility and

⁷ The principle of habit says two other important things. First, it asserts that all the movements that form the expression of an emotion today were originally voluntary and that habit made them involuntary. (Concerning the theoretical approach that makes the voluntary the origin of the involuntary or reflex, see the remarkable little work by Gauchet (1992).) Second, the principle of habit asserts that all efforts to suppress the spontaneous habitual expression of an emotion result in movements that are sometimes extremely small but are always expressive themselves.

persists despite this absence of usefulness. This is why the role that the principle of habit gives to natural selection remains very limited.

The two other principles, i.e., the principle of antithesis and the principle of direct action of the nervous system, are based neither directly nor indirectly on the possible advantage to the animal of expressing emotions. The principle of antithesis asserts that when, in accordance with the principle of habit, some actions have been associated with a specific mental state, there will be a tendency for exactly the contrary mental state to cause actions in direct opposition to those associated with the initial mental state, even if those actions are of no utility for the animal.⁸ The third principle, that of direct action of the nervous system, simply says that the expression of emotions also includes movements that necessarily result from the way our bodies are made, independent of will or habit (1872: 28-29 and 347-348). If an emotion leads, for example, to an increase in the rate of respiration, which consequently causes the nostrils to dilate, this dilation should, according to Darwin, be considered part of the expression of the emotion.

The difficulty for Darwin is that of explaining the purpose of the **expression** of emotions. If the struggle for survival is fundamentally a fight between organisms rather than between groups,⁹ it is hard to see what could be the purpose of the expression of emotions in general. In other words, it is relatively easy to imagine the advantage that certain specific cases of the expression of emotions could procure, such as flattening back the ears in a fight so as to avoid serious injury or terrorising and immobilising prey by expressing anger. It is more difficult to think of what could be, in general, the utility of the expression of fear, sadness, embarrassment, shame, hatred or envy. Should you warn your adversary? Should you announce your weakness, distress and confusion? Is it advantageous to a predator to frighten its prey? Is it useful to the prey to broadcast its imminent flight? If the struggle for survival essentially opposes individuals, should we not instead expect that selection would have favoured those best able to hide their emotions?¹⁰

⁸ The major problem that this principle faces, and which renders it perfectly empty, is that there is no criteria independent of the expression of emotion that allows one to determine which action is *contrary* to another. Which action is contrary to pricking up one's ears? Bending them? Lowering them? Flattening them? Holding one straight up and the other on an angle? We have no independent criterion that we could use to answer these questions. Indeed, the question is meaningless. There is no contradiction between actions; at most there are obstacles. Given this it is likely that we call an action contrary when we believe it expresses the opposite emotion.

⁹ Gayon (1998) has shown remarkably well that in Darwin's work the principle of natural selection must be understood as based on competition between individual organisms and that the issue of group selection is where Darwin is furthest from Wallace. See especially chapter 2.

¹⁰ This argument is reinforced by the thesis about human cognitive capacities put forward by those who hold the theory of Machiavellian intelligence. According to this hypothesis, the development of cognitive abilities in humans and primates in general comes from the struggle between

In evolutionary biology and in sociobiology, this question has generally not been answered directly and, except in Darwin's work, the response has very often employed the concept of group selection or a related notion. The answer has not been direct because the solution to the problem of the expression of emotions is generally based on an explanation of what advantage there is in having a given emotion or behaviour rather than an explanation of the advantage gained through the fact of expressing the emotion. The explanation of the evolution of altruism using the concept of inclusive fitness is an excellent example of this. This explanation suggests how, when we take kinship relationships between organisms into account, an individual can increase its reproductive success by sacrificing itself for others.¹¹ However, once we have accepted such an explanation of altruism, it is clear that there is no longer any obstacle in principle to explaining the evolution of expressive behaviour that allows an individual to obtain help from others. Explanations of the evolution of the expression of emotions also often use the concept of group selection.¹² The reason for this is simple. If group selection takes precedence over selection among individual organisms, then it is no longer very difficult to see how some characteristics that are useless or even harmful to the individual, such as the expression of certain emotions, could evolve if they are advantageous to the group.¹³

In this case, I think that we have to begin with the problem of the expression of emotions rather than with the question of the utility of a given emotion or even of emotions in general. In fact, as we will see clearly below, I think that **the expression of emotions** is prior to *emotions*, both logically and chronologically. In other words, I think that we should not consider what we commonly call *the expression of emotions* as the contingent external disclosure of a prior internal state or a disposition to act, in relation to which the expression is secondary. On the contrary, *the expression of emotions* constitutes a system of communication and it is only in relation to this system of communication, I claim, that we can speak of *emotions* that we can or cannot express. Using *the expression*

individuals within social species. More specifically, this struggle generates the need for dissimulation, which gives rise to intelligence. (Byrne and Whitten, 1988)

¹¹ An example of this is an organism that obtains a reproductive advantage by sacrificing its life to save, say, three of its children or five of its nephews.

¹² They use either this concept or the notions of inclusive fitness or of kin fitness, which are, no matter what they say, related to the notion of group selection. While both inclusive and kin fitness, unlike group selection, make the individual rather than the group the one with the property of having an adaptation, all three must nevertheless be seen as means for separating the adaptive advantage from the individual. For an analysis of inclusive fitness models in terms of group selection, see Sober & Wilson (1998).

¹³ For an example of such an explanation, see Wynne-Edwards (1962), and for a criticism of group selection, see Williams (1966).

of emotions as a foundation, an explanation of the evolution of affective life can be formulated, and this explanation rests on the fact that what is in question is a process of co-ordination that is essentially and increasingly social.

We can think of what is called *the expression of emotions* in two diametrically opposed ways. The first is that of common sense, i.e., of folk psychology. From this point of view, some actions are the expression of an internal state (that we call anger or aggressiveness, for example). These actions (e.g., a change in the tone of voice, insults, narrowed eyes and changes in skin colour) should be considered warning signs preceding a form of behaviour (e.g., physical violence) or as safety valves that make it possible to avoid that behaviour.¹⁴ However, in both cases the expression is seen as the very beginning of a behaviour to which it adds nothing. The unity of the whole, the link between the behaviour and the warning signs (or safety valve) is provided by the internal state that causes them both and that we call the *emotion*. Seen in this way, the expression of the emotion is not essentially different from the behaviour that it causes. A physical attack differs from an expression of anger only in degree. They are not two different forms of behaviour but two positions on the graduated scale of the same reality. Flight is only a more extreme form of fear, which culminates in terror. From this perspective, in order to understand the existence of the expression of an emotion despite its apparent uselessness, we have only to show that the behaviour is useful in itself and its expression inevitable.¹⁵

The second way of conceiving of *the expression of emotions* is quite different. It does not view expressive movements as the tiny beginnings of a given form of behaviour, but as completely different actions that have their own purposes, which can be completely different from those of the behaviour they are deemed to foretell. For example, rather than seeing aggressiveness as the commencement of a fight and fear as the intimation of flight, I think they should be seen as a system of threats and offers of submission, in other words, as

¹⁴ These two sub-interpretations are not incompatible and it is easy to imagine that the same actions could be both warning signs and safety valves. It should also be noted that Darwin's three explanatory principles (1872) are perfectly consistent with this description.

¹⁵ In fact, seen in this way, these actions limit rather than add to the behaviour in question. As safety valves, they abort the behaviour itself, and as warning signs, they undermine it because they warn the adversary or the prey. This is why Darwin's (1872) third principle applies easily in this sort of framework. The idea of direct action of the nervous system, which considers that the expression of emotion consists essentially of those movements necessarily associated with carrying out a form of behaviour, shows why movements associated with useful behaviour will be maintained despite any disadvantages they may entail.

promises. This is why both are something like actions.¹⁶ This suggests that for both anger and fear, a certain skill is required. The skills required are different in both cases, and they are also different from the skills that are useful for fighting, for example. The unity of the forms of behaviour that go from anger to violence is not caused by the unity of the mental state underlying them or the continuity of the feeling that accompanies them. This is only a useful illusion. There is in fact no unity, but to be effective a promise must be credible.¹⁷ Consequently, the spontaneous opinion that anger is the beginning of a form of behaviour that culminates in violence, is exactly what we should expect if anger is fundamentally a threat. However, the fact that we share this belief, that for us this belief is a rule of inference and that this rule of inference is an adaptation if anger is a threat does not entail that this rule or belief is a scientifically or philosophically satisfactory description of this emotion.¹⁸

There is no society among wolves and lambs. The hunter devours its prey, period. The predator has no use for its prey except that which involves its prey's death. This is not true of wolves among themselves. When a conflict arises over a good of some kind, it can be to the advantage **of both adversaries** that the conflict is resolved before either suffers serious injury. The reason for this is that wolves are so similar in terms of strength and skill that there is very little probability that one could inflict serious injury on the other without being badly hurt itself. Under these conditions it is useful, as Hobbes (1651) more or less says, to be able to determine the issue of the conflict without undertaking the risky business of a fight.¹⁹ Thus, while the hunter has no particular interest in revealing its intentions

¹⁶ I say "something like an action" because affective actions require more than simply *expression of the emotion*.

¹⁷ What I am saying here has nothing to do with consciousness or the feeling experienced. I am not arguing for a cynical theory of anger that would say, for example, that threats are generally nothing more than hot air intended to impress the adversary and are not accompanied by the firm intention to follow through. On the contrary, I think that threats are generally sincere, in other words, I believe that *anger* does dispose one to later carry out violent actions. However, if it is important to take the enemy by surprise and if fraud and deception are cardinal virtues in combat, then there should be selective pressure against the expression of emotions, at least if such expression is only an epiphenomenon inevitably linked to aggression. Thus the idea that the expression of an emotion, e.g., anger, is an act separate from the aggression to which it sometimes leads and not simply a *preparation for combat*.

¹⁸ This is an issue that is linked to the question of naturalization of mind and that merits independent investigation. The fact that an opinion or rule of inference is useful has, as is shown by the analysis of emotions, nothing to do with whether the rule or opinion is true. Attempts to naturalize the mind are mostly Darwinian or evolutionary and tend to confuse truth with advantage. As I have said elsewhere, I think that their proponents will, in consequence of this confusion, be gradually forced to abandon the notion of truth. (Dumouchel, 1993).

¹⁹ Given the Hobbsian adage of *homo lupi homini*, it seems legitimate to use what Hobbes says about men in order to understand wolves.

before it is too late (after all, hunters who are too noisy or who talk too much come back empty handed), antagonists have every interest in informing their adversary of their intentions. Biologically, they share the same goal: that of obtaining the object of the conflict without suffering serious injury. Whatever the biological cost of an injury in relation to the advantage obtained through victory, it is not zero. Therefore, organisms that manage to secure the object of rivalry without really fighting will have an advantage. Likewise, organisms that successfully increase the probability that they will obtain the good contested without getting hurt will be more fit even if in many cases they have to back off and leave empty handed.²⁰ Consequently, there will be selective pressure in favour of organisms that are disposed to establish a system of threats and offers of submission that can resolve conflicts while reducing the number of serious injuries. There will be selective pressure in favour of **the expression of certain emotions**.

The cases of anger and fear are not special, at least not if, as I suggested in Dumouchel (1999), these terms do not repeatedly isolate stable entities but indicate salient points in a process of co-ordination. This is why Gibbard (1990) was able to develop a hypothesis fairly similar to the one I have just sketched by using anger on one hand, and guilt and shame on the other. Faced with data from the cultural analysis of emotions, Gibbard thought that his explanation was culturally relative and he therefore abandoned it. It is true that there is an obvious problem in imagining that shame and guilt play a major role in the lives of wolves. However, the problem springs essentially from the fact that we believe that the terms *guilt* and *shame* identify either physical states, inner feelings or even dispositions to act that have characteristic features that can be used to group them into separate categories. If, on the contrary, we take these terms to designate salient points in a process of co-ordination, it immediately becomes clear that, in some circumstances, fear, guilt and shame, as well as perhaps other emotions, share the characteristic of being offers of submission.²¹ This is why the example that was just given should not be considered a hypothesis concerning the special cases of two emotions, such as anger and fear (or shame and guilt as Gibbard thought), but as an illustration of the importance of processes of co-ordination in

²⁰ Only this hypothesis about the establishment of a mechanism for increasing the **probability** of victory but not directly related to victory can explain the evolution of organisms that, as Hobbes says (1651: 226), are able to distinguish between insult and damage (“injury and damage”). While an insult causes no damage, it is a claim about the (low) probability that the one insulted will be victorious. Thus the importance of responding to insults. This shows that the establishment of such a mechanism in no way implies a reduction in the number of conflicts.

²¹ I am in complete agreement that we sometimes use the words *fear*, *guilt* and *shame* to designate things other than offers of submission. It is even fundamental for the thesis that I am defending that this be so. I think that it is because these terms designate very different things that a classification or theory of emotions cannot be built directly on them.

strategic intraspecific communication. It is also an illustration of the fact, that even though emotions are relational properties, they can be established on the basis of their advantage to an individual organism alone.

My thesis supposes that bodily movements, which are the natural signs of certain forms of behaviour, such as fighting or fleeing in the context of predation, become the means of a process of co-ordination in strategic intraspecific communication by enabling organisms to learn about each others' behavioural options.²² The context of strategic interspecific communication, contrary to that of predation, exerts selective pressure in favour of successful co-ordination and therefore in favour of a certain *expression* of emotions. Of course, strategic intraspecific co-ordination cannot be considered as the same as the social. All forms of bisexual reproduction are examples of strategic intraspecific communication, which, for obvious reasons, plays an important role even in non-social species. However, it could be that the more numerous the occasions for strategic intraspecific communication, the more elaborate the process of co-ordination. We could even imagine a snowball effect where individuals who are best at co-ordinating their activities give birth to individuals who co-ordinate their activities even better, until success in strategic intraspecific interaction becomes the major determinant of individual fitness. Once this threshold is reached, a species becomes truly social. A species is social when the fitness of its members is determined essentially by their strategic intraspecific interactions. It is in this specific sense that emotions are social. They are both the means of success in strategic intraspecific relations and the cause of the growing importance of strategic intraspecific relations in fitness.

The example that we have just given could be misleading and be taken to imply that all of affective life is oriented toward conflict management and resolution. It should be noted that the advantage gained by the co-ordination *anger* or *fear* is not that of reducing the number of conflicts or even that of preventing more conflicts from developing into open violence than otherwise. The advantage that this form of co-ordination provides is that it sometimes enables some organisms to obtain the object of a conflict without suffering serious injury and other organisms to give up the object without being badly hurt. The fact that emotions can both lead to and be used to prevent violence is not an objection to what I am arguing. The thesis that I am proposing does not suppose that all emotions are related to conflict.²³ It asserts that emotions exist only in the framework of strategic intraspecific co-ordination and that outside of this

²² More specifically, they reveal preferences about available behavioural options.

²³ The cases of anger and fear are however interesting in that they suggest how conflict, like co-operation, rests on a process of co-ordination because they show that conflict, unlike predation, is a social relation.

framework the physiological signs and behavioural dispositions generally linked with emotions are not part of affective life because in that context those events serve no purpose in terms of co-ordination.

Friendship and loyalty are examples that can help to eliminate the false impression that all emotions are related to conflict. Friendship is an emotion that has, to use De Sousa's words (1987), a singular target in the sense in which Kant (1790) speaks of a singular judgment with respect to aesthetic judgment. In other words, friendship unites two specific individuals and in this relation each of them is irreplaceable, not necessarily in a metaphysical sense, but in the very simple sense in which the co-ordination made possible by friendship is possible only between those two people and would occur in a different manner if different people were involved. A friend is not a member of a class, unless that class is a singleton, and is not replaceable by anyone who fulfils an equivalent description. This means that friendship enables co-ordination between people rather than between specific actions. Friendship establishes between people dispositions that are extremely useful for dealing with the unexpected. It ensures unconditional reciprocal support in a wide range of situations. It is an alliance that promotes the pursuit of common goals and complicity that facilitates the success of activities requiring the simultaneous implementation of different skills. It is one of the means by which we determine our preferences. To begin with, we like what our friends like and we allow their choices to guide our own. Tell me who is your friend and I will tell you who you are, says the proverb. Our successes and our failures are not independent of our friendships. Friendship is part of a process of co-ordination that is indispensable to our lives.

Emotions are not the only possible form of intraspecific co-ordination. Some social species, such as ants, bees and termites, use completely different mechanisms of co-ordination.²⁴ What seems to be characteristic of affective life as a process of co-ordination is that it constitutes the very agents that it co-ordinates. The co-ordination produced by affective life does not consist in adjusting independent actions to each other but in linking independent agents. Yet, affective life is the means by which agents become independent. Emotions as a process of co-ordination are the means of reciprocal influence among people and this influence enables individuals to acquire a certain autonomy. In other words, emotions are the tie by which we separate ourselves from each other. There is no

²⁴ Mead (1934) saw this clearly when he noted that social organization among social insects is based primarily on phenotypic differentiation. The division of labour is cannot be separated from a division of the population into separate phenotypes, each responsible for a specific function, such as defence, work and reproduction.

independent subject or autonomous individual before the affective process that connects us. Emotions constitute us as subjects. They are the process that makes the relation to the other prior to autonomy. That, at least, is the thesis I now want to defend. The idea that the process of co-ordination pre-exists the agents that it co-ordinates is not as paradoxical as it seems at first sight. In its most abstract form, it means that the continuum is prior to the discrete.

I said above that the expression of emotions is a process that enables co-ordination among organisms because it is how they reciprocally inform each other of their behavioural preferences, e.g., that they prefer fleeing to fighting, fighting to mating or rejection to agreement. This formulation lends itself to confusion because it implies that there are well-defined preferences and set forms of behaviour of which organisms inform each other. Affective life must instead be seen as the process by which these preferences are established and these forms of behaviour determined. In this way, it is a mechanism that both co-ordinates and constitutes agents. While fear, anger and love can sometimes be considered points in affective life in which orders of preferences already exist and forms of behaviour are already determined, affective life itself is the process by which these preferences are established. Melancholy, happiness and anxiety are generally better seen as points at which preferences are not set and behaviour is undetermined. Being in love, as least in a certain sense, is a classical example of a relation in which the preferences of the lover vary in accordance with those of the beloved. In other words, it is a relationship in which at least one of the parties does not arrive with a set list of preferences or forms of behaviour, but leaves it up to the other party to establish that list. The emotion and proclamations of love can therefore be seen as the commitment and promise to abandon to the other the responsibility for setting our preferences. The beloved's indifference and the lover's lack of independence form major themes in literature and popular psychology. Specialists in interpersonal relations either take the lover's side and chastise the beloved because the lover is the only one in love or they reproach the lover for a lack of independence, indecisiveness or "weakness". In the former case the beloved is criticized for a lack of reciprocity, in other words, for an inability to allow his or her preferences to be determined by those of the other. In the latter case, the lover is criticized for a lack of initiative, in other words for an inability to determine the preferences of the other. However, in both cases, what is lacking is the reciprocal determination of preferences and behaviour. In contrast, in a less distorted relationship of love, the emotions of each party are not independent of a disposition to set one's preferences in accordance with the preferences of the other. This reciprocal disposition shows clearly that the preferences that form the basis for our actions are not the origin, but the result of the process of co-ordination.

It should be noted that the co-ordination involved in affective life consists more in being *on the same wavelength* than in adjusting one's actions to those of another, for example, in order to row together. Indeed, most actions in everyday life require some degree of co-operation from the other in order to be successful. This is because most of the things we do in our lives as workers, lovers, members of a family, friends, consumers and providers of services involve others. It is rare that our decision to go to the movie theatre, park our car in an underground parking lot, go home right away, try on yet another piece of clothing before making a choice, put an important task off until tomorrow, cross on a red light or stop at the corner store before going home is independent of the influence of others. This is simply because our actions require something from the other in order to be successful. They require that the other perform an action in return, or at least show a degree of indifference that allows us to perform the action. That this is so simply means that we are social beings who constantly interact with others and who almost always act in their presence. Emotions are related to the skills required to carry out these many actions and interactions. They are salient points in the open process of co-ordination that enables us to interact reciprocally.²⁵

Moreover, the process of interaction is what makes it possible for us to act. Allow me to explain. In a context such as that of a family, the influence on others that is exerted by an individual's decision²⁶ is often very visible and immediate. The links of interdependency between family members are close enough for any individual action to potentially have major repercussions on the lives of the other family members. Routine is the most common solution to this problem. It consists in each member repeatedly performing certain actions at set times and in this being known so that these fixed points of action enable the other family members to co-ordinate their activities. Traditionally, this solution was reinforced by another answer to the problem, which was to assign to a single person, the father of the family, the power to make decisions that could affect the lives of the others. Neither the mother nor the children were supposed to make decisions with respect to actions that would take them away from the family routine. Indeed, except in extraordinary circumstances, they were not in situations in which they had the chance to do so. In such conditions of extremely tight inter-relations, outside of what is determined by routine or authority, my initiative to perform an action, even

²⁵ This process is open because it is not a question of co-ordinating two specific actions but rather of the establishment of dispositions in agents that lead them to co-operate or conflict.

²⁶ The term *decision* can be misleading here in so far as it suggests that the agent knows ahead of time, or has already formed an idea of, the action that he or she will carry out. I think that this situation is the exception rather than the rule. Yet, where emotions reign it is often more the decision itself, in other words, the fact of deciding, rather than the subject about which an individual decides or the action to which the decision leads, that influences others and is the occasion of their affective reactions.

if it concerns only myself, such as drink a glass of water, is always a potential object of agreement or disagreement. “Don’t drink so much”, they may say, “it will make you sick” or “it ruins your appetite”, or else, “drink, drink, it’s good for your health”. My initiatives, incoherent seeds of imprecise actions, become decisions in relation to others. It is in relation to agreement or disagreement with others that I progressively acquire the ability to decide, partly because I come to see that the distribution of agreement and disagreement is not purely random.

One might ask how this is a process of co-ordination. Agreement or disagreement, or a certain indifferent presence, are like promises in that they authorize expectations. More specifically, the expression of agreement or disagreement reveals a disposition to various forms of behaviour. It is not the indication of a specific form of behaviour but rather of something like what Hayek calls “negative rules”.²⁷ Disagreement does not signify any particular action; it does not mean attack, withdrawal, rejection, anger or flight. However, it excludes, or at least makes improbable, a certain set of forms of behaviour. This disposition can nevertheless immediately be seen as the manifestation of an order of preferences, in so far as agreement or indifference are options for an agent moved to disagreement. However, and this is important, the agent’s “expectation” upon perception of disagreement remains so undetermined that he or she is unable to anticipate clearly the future behaviour of the person with whom he or she is interacting. Saying that expressing agreement or disagreement is like making a promise able to produce an expectation, does not suppose anything more from the person exposed to the *expressed emotion* than his or her own emotional reaction. That person’s resistance, questioning, dissent, anger, fear or conciliation is his or her expectation and promise. Not taking action, helping or opposing form the *content* of that “expectation”. Generally, because our actions so often take place in an environment in which others play fundamental roles, no one can carry out an action successfully independently of the affective reactions of others that fulfil or contradict his or her original expectations. The responses of the other determine my strategies and, in return, my expressions of emotion allow the other to identify the framework in which these strategies can be evaluated. Co-ordination results from a relation between individuals that has precedence over their relation to things. Agents determine their behaviour in function of each other and determine their relationships to things in function of their reciprocal relationships. Their co-ordination is not the adjustment of two actions but the establishment of a framework relationship defined, for example, by a disposition to conflict, cooperate or be indifferent and, as I tried to show in Dumouchel (1999), it is only within such a framework relationship that it makes sense to choose between strategies. The choice between different strategies, in other words, between

²⁷ See Hayek (1967 and 1973).

specific actions leading to results that can be evaluated is only possible within an already predetermined framework that specifies the game or games we propose to play. Our affective life is made of the ups and downs of the process by which we co-ordinate ourselves with each other, and we call the salient points of this process *emotions*.

The fact that faced with your disagreement, I adopt a new approach in order to achieve my goal is often called *determination*, a term which is not, in this circumstance, without affective value. We also very often look to emotions to explain the fact that, when you disagree, I no longer want what brought us into conflict. As Hobbes noted, depending on a person's relationship with someone who has changed his or her mind, that person will call the change in preferences "fear", "friendship" and "loyalty" or "fawning". No matter what it is called, the affective relation indicates a means by which the actors co-ordinate their actions or, more precisely, co-ordinate with each other.

Now, it may be asked, what can be said in the context of an emotion such as mourning, the very special sadness that we feel when a loved one dies or is far away? Here the question is not with whom (the soul of the departed?) mourning allows me to co-ordinate but whether the disappearance of a person can constitute a salient point in a process of co-ordination. This seems to pose no particular difficulty. If the essential purpose of affective life is to enable co-ordination between agents, i.e., co-ordination in which the relationship between the agents has precedence over the agents' relationships with things and over the agents' specific actions, then the disappearance of someone dear certainly can be a salient point in the relationship of co-ordination.

The social emotions thesis does not claim that society is based on emotions, love or sympathy, in opposition to reason, for example. It is not a variation on the theories of moral sentiments. I do not claim that the social order depends on the presence of certain feelings, nationalism, compassion or the spirit of competition. I argue, first, that strategic intraspecific co-ordination is the area *par excellence*²⁸ where selective pressure can be exerted in favour of a process of co-ordination among agents and, second, that the expression of emotions can be understood in the framework of the evolution of such a process.²⁹ One might ask why this phenomenon should be called social rather than inter-individual or

²⁸ However, this is not the only framework in which emotions could appear because the domestication of animals is also able to establish a fairly similar, though less complicated, process.

²⁹ One of this thesis's major corollaries, which has already been mentioned and which I analyse in detail Chapter 4 of Dumouchel (1999), is that *the emotion* is secondary to *the expression of the emotion*.

communicational. The answer to this is that, on one hand, it is at the foundation of what we more commonly designate by the term *social* and, on the other hand, it is a very special form of the inter-individual or communicational. Let us begin with the latter point. As I discuss in detail in Chapter 6 of Dumouchel (1999), affective co-ordination is based on mechanisms of a special kind, which are quite different from those we assume are at work in most models of inter-individual interactions. If these very frequently postulated mechanisms exist, then affective co-ordination is a special phenomenon that deserves its own name. The word *social* seems to be just right because it suggests that the mechanism of intraspecific co-ordination is the source of the set of phenomena that we call social.

Emotions are social first of all because they constitute us as social beings, and this they do in two senses. They make us sensitive to each other; i. e., they bring us into relation with each other and allow us to co-ordinate with each other. This is the first sense. In and through these relations, they make us able to choose. This is because, without co-ordination with others, situations remain too undetermined for choice to be possible and because every affective choice includes the other. This is the second sense. We are agents whose individual ability to choose is social because it depends on emotion in two ways. Emotions are also social in that they provide the matter on which social rules and organizations are erected. These rules and organizations are meaningful only through the role that strategic intraspecific co-ordination plays among us. Affective life produces the interest that we have in each other. It is made up of our decisions to dominate, flee, submit, unite with the other, make reciprocal commitments, understand each other, fight, separate, be indifferent, ally ourselves, watch, fear, challenge and comply. Social organizations offer codes and rules concerning all these decisions. They tell us who to respect, flee or pursue, when to obey and when to be tender. These codes influence the tone of our affective life, but they are never identical with it. They mould our emotions but they do not construct them any more than they can be deduced from them. Our emotions are the matter that these codes regulate.

Finally, emotions are social because affective actions exist in a very special way that requires a relationship with the other. Affective actions are acts of co-ordination and, consequently, they are such that they cannot be carried out alone by the person who initiates them. Emotions are social because they always supervene over more than a single agent.

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