

**Emotions and behavior.  
The influence of cognition**

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# Outline

1. Elster: emotions and rationality
2. Weber's account of social action
3. Impact of emotions on decisions in economics
4. Emotions in psychology
5. Impact of cognition on emotion: two examples
6. Adam Smith and moral sentiments

# 1. Elster: emotions and rationality

Elster (1999) characterizes emotion in terms of seven features, finds six in Aristotle

- bodily arousal: passion, gentleness, fear, pity, courage, joy, loving, hating
- physiological expressions: redden from shame, pale in fright
- cognitive antecedents: outrage for personal insult as cause of *anger* is different from *hate* of thief or psychopant
- intentional object (persons may sometimes play other role, as disapproval of others in *shame*)
- valence (pleasure-pain)

- action tendencies: *shame* and urge to hide or disappear
- [unique qualitative feel]

## **Specific emotions**

- anger
- hatred
- fear, pity, envy, indignation, gloating, malice: about good/bad things
- shame
- contempt

## **2. Weber and social action**

- Sociology: interpretation of meaning of social action
- Social action: behavior with subjective meaning that takes into account behavior of others
- Rationally purposeful action: person tries to achieve certain ends by choosing appropriate means on basis of facts of situation
- But may be oriented to ultimate ends or values, religious, charitable, rationalist
- Or susceptible to emotional reactions as anxiety, anger, ambition, envy, love, enthusiasm, and irrational conduct which grows out of them (can

empathize with them and treat as deviation from pure type of rational action)

- Direct observational understanding of irrational emotional reactions: e.g., anger through facial expressions, or shooting for revenge: despite affectual character, can explain based on intended meaning
- Explanatory understanding of motivation, placing act in context of meaning: e.g., cutting wood or following orders to fire gun
- Have to verify hypothesis with concrete course of events

## **Types of social action**

- Instrumentally rational: determined by expectations of behavior of environment and other human beings, used as conditions or means for attainment of actor's rationally pursued and calculated ends
- Value-rational: value ethical, esthetic, or religious behavior independently of prospects of success, e.g., duty, honor, religious call, loyalty, important cause
- Affectual: determined by actor's specific affects and feeling states, e.g., satisfies need for revenge, sensual gratification, devotion, contemplative bliss
- Traditional: determined by habit, great bulk of everyday action

### 3. Impact of emotions on decisions in economics

#### On preferences

- Becker (1993): racial, religious and gender discrimination incorporating prejudice, *hostility* and *hatred*. Taste for discrimination
- Akerlof and Kranton (2000): internalization of rules for behavior (superego), *anxiety* when person violates them. Identity, or ego, or self, must be defended against anxiety by refraining from activity, also applies to other people, violation arouses emotions (can respond to loss of identity)
- Utility  $U_j(\mathbf{a}_j, \mathbf{a}_{-j}, I_j)$  and identity  $I_j(\mathbf{a}_j, \mathbf{a}_{-j}; c_j, \varepsilon_j, \mathbf{P})$

## Conditioning decisions

- Lowenstein (2000): impact of immediate emotions and, more broadly, visceral factors affect behavior
- Negative emotions: anger, fear
- Drive states: hunger, thirst, sexual drive
- Feeling states: pain
- Visceral factors grab people's attention and motivate them to engage in specific behaviors [effect of positive emotions are more subtle and complex]
  - Visceral factors can drive people to behave in ways that they often view as contrary to their own self-interest, e.g., road rage
  - Utility  $u(\mathbf{c}_t, \mathbf{s}_t)$  can be underappreciated

## **4. Emotions in psychology**

Barrett (2007)

- Common sense view: emotions triggered automatically. Knowledge and beliefs have little impact on emotions but can regulate response
- Consensual scientific view: incorporates view that emotions are automatic syndromes of behavior and bodily reactions
- Emotions seen as categories with firm boundaries that can be seen in brain and body and therefore recognized by human mind (e.g., anger)
- But empirical evidence does not warrant that

- Basic emotion approach (Tomkins): certain biologically privileged kinds of emotions that are hardwired into human brain
- Appraisal approach: either person's interpretation of situation (Arnold) or of state of arousal in body (Schachter and Singer) necessary for emotional response; but Arnold similar to basic emotion approach in that anger, sadness, fear, and so on are different bodily sensations
- But empirical evidence has failed to produce clear and consistent evidence for biobehavioral distinctiveness of events called "anger", "sadness", "fear"

- Instrumental behavior: no one-to-one correspondence between behavior and specific emotion, e.g., fear situation (presence of threat) associated with range of different behaviors depending on the functional demands of the situation (vigilance, freezing, flight, attack)
- neural circuitry: no consistent and specific brain circuitry distinguishes anger, sadness, fear, disgust and happiness (similar to psychophysiological data)
- affect, rather than emotion, seems to meet criteria for biologically verifiable state: has two psychological properties, hedonic valence (pleasure/displeasure) and arousal (activation/sleepiness)

- core affect is neurophysiologic barometer of individual relationship to environment: changes with affective reaction to object of stimulus, available to consciousness as pleasant or not (valence) and to lesser extent as activated or not (arousal).
- core affect influences what people see, forming core of conscious experience: constant evaluation relevance and value situations outside conscious control
- conceptual act model of emotion: categorizing core affect into discrete experience of emotion corresponds to colloquial idea of “having an emotion”, this is cultural mechanism; better response if better knowledge of situation

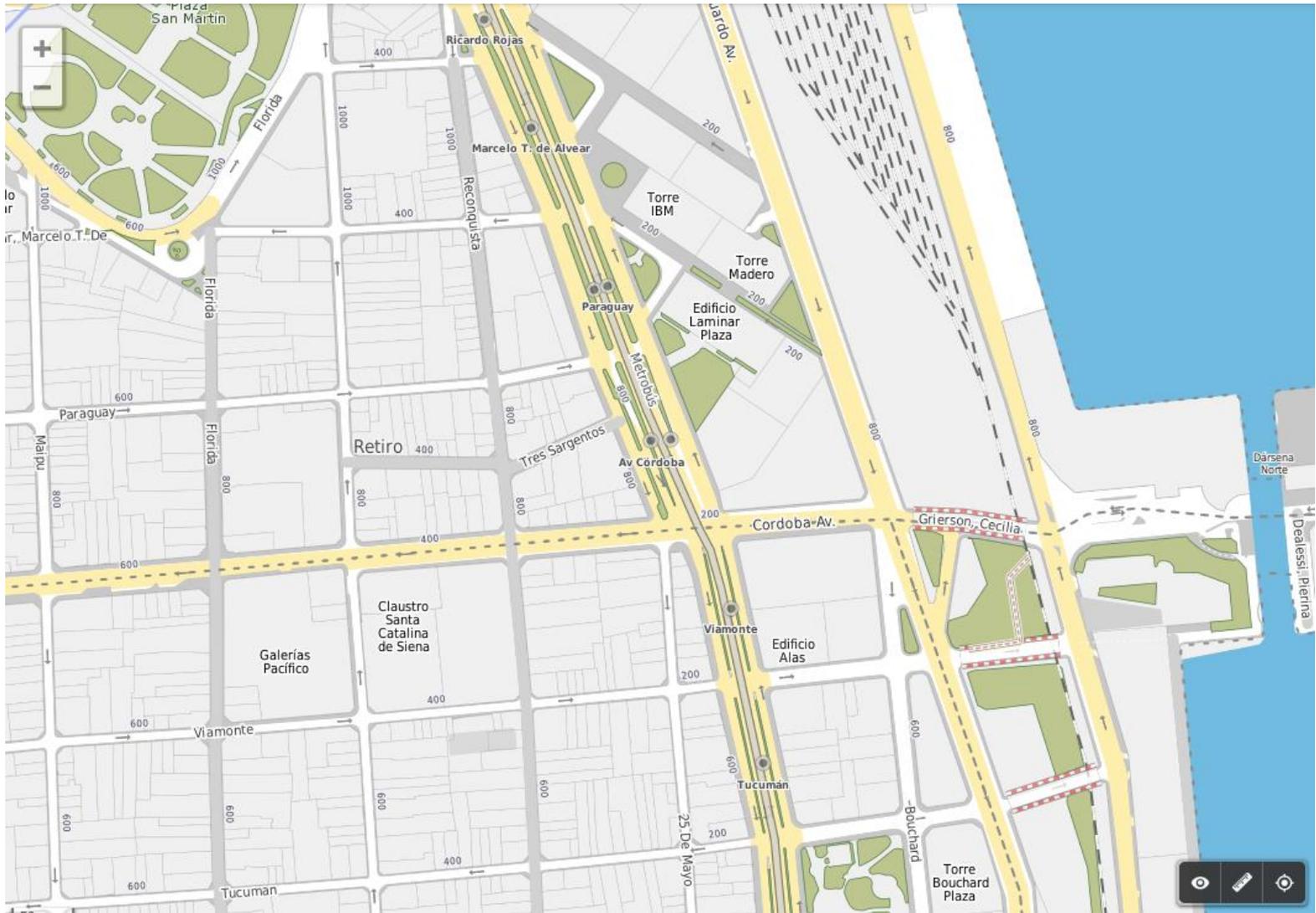
## 5. Impact of cognition on emotion: two examples

- Pedestrian trying to cross street: Córdoba and Alem.

Can wait for traffic lights or look to see if there is oncoming traffic when deciding whether to cross street

Can relate to alternative positive theories in Friedman (1953), what is prediction of model; and to framing effects in Tversky and Kahneman (1986), glass may be half empty or half full

- Political identity (Akerlof and Kranton 2000 on manipulation of social categories **C** and prescriptions **P** in advertising, education, politics): French Revolution changed *subjects* into *citizens*. Emmanuel Sieyès, What is the third estate?



QU'EST-CE QUE



LE TIERS-ETAT?

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Le plan de cet Ecrit est assez simple. Nous avons trois questions à nous faire.

1°. Qu'est ce que le Tiers-Etat? Tout.

2°. Qu'a-t-il été jusqu'à présent dans l'ordre politique? Rien.

3°. Que demande-t-il? A y devenir quelque chose.

On verra si les réponses sont justes. Nous examinerons ensuite les moyens que l'on a essayés, & ceux que l'on doit prendre, afin que le Tiers-Etat devienne, en effet, *quelque chose*. Ainsi nous dirons :

4°. Ce que les Ministres ont tenté, & ce que les Privilégiés eux-mêmes proposent en sa faveur.

5°. Ce qu'on auroit dû faire.

## **6. Adam Smith on moral sentiments**

- Theory of Moral Sentiments as work on ethics and psychology: normative positions tightly connected to way we feel (#MeToo and reaction to past actions)

- “When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and, on the contrary, when bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the causes which excite them.” (TSM, Part I, Section I, Chapter III)

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