

FEAR AND HOPE

Individual, group and society
Jose Fonseca / São Paulo - Brazil

Abstract

This text studies the origin of feelings on different levels: neurological, psychological, groupal and social. It also addresses the comprehension of feelings, specifically those of fear and hope in Moreno's matrix of identity. Moreover this paper discusses the perspective of these sentiments in a group context as well as their role in ethical-political suffering and public happiness.

Fear and hope are part of the wide spectrum of human emotions. Feelings are the communication channels in human relations. Not only do they conduct their psychological content, but they also carry the symbolic code of the sociocultural values of the relational network where they are placed. Feelings contain, therefore, the primary human link. For Espinosa (1973), feelings (passions) are our human way of living. According to Heller (1987), to feel means to be implicated in something, be it another human being, a concept, you yourself, a process, a problem, a situation, another feeling. To feel means to be in some kind of relationship. Feeling is to be implicated, consciously or unconsciously, with someone or something – it is part of being in the world.

I suggest reviewing the human course of development in order to better situate the study of feelings. First I will focus on the neurological aspect of development, then the psychosocial component in the matrix of identity, followed by a view of feelings in the evolution of groups and lastly considerations on affectivity in the socio-political realm.

The Three Brains¹

The adult human functions with three vital, interrelated regulating nuclei²: the *instinctive-motor nucleus*, the *emotional-affective nucleus* and the *mental or intellectual nucleus*. As these denominations themselves suggest, the emotional-affective nucleus regulates emotions and feelings. The intellectual nucleus coordinates thinking. The instinctive-motor nucleus is responsible for the autonomous functioning of the internal organs, the coordination of movements generated by the smooth and striated muscles, and for sexuality. From an evolutionary point of view, the *instinctive-motor nucleus*, or “primary brain”, also known as the reptilian brain, is the oldest. Anatomically, it corresponds to the hypothalamus, the upper portion of the cerebral trunk and the ganglions at the base. It commands the visceral and glandular functions, procreation, the wake-sleep cycle, predatory behavior, the territorial instinct and aggregative life or the *relational instinct*. When speaking of instincts, we are talking, therefore, about this primary, instinctive-motor nucleus. The “second human brain”, corresponding to the neurological functioning of lower mammals, is composed of the limbic system (LS) and constitutes the *emotional-affective nucleus*. It is responsible for self preservation, for the preservation of the species and for the caretaking of offspring. It represents the possibility for a certain degree of learning and problem solving based on experience. At this point there is still no verbalization, responsible actions or complex emotions (feelings or affects) – that is, the human being has not yet reached his symbolic capacity. The “third brain”, the privilege of higher mammals, corresponds to the maturing of the neocortex. It is the so-called *intelligent brain*, responsible for thoughts, logical operations, verbal language and capacity for symbolism. It makes up the *intellectual nucleus*. As a rule, with the development of this third nucleus, a transformation of the second nucleus also occurs, which before was only emotional in affect-emotion, becoming the coordinator not only of the emotions, but also of the sentiments. That is, feelings or affects appear from this point on. The emotions, which before were primary, become elaborated and elegant through the filter of the intellectual nucleus, giving rise to feelings or affects. These

¹ I am inspired by Nicoll (1979) and neurophysiology.

² The vital regulatory nuclei express more a functional than an anatomical dimension.

are permeated with sociocultural influence, the origin of taboos, aesthetic refinement, censure, fashion, in short, all the subtleties of human sentiments. Emotions are primitive; sentiments pass through the intellectual filter. Primary emotions such as attachment and anger may become love, hatred, guilt, shame. To wrap up this topic, I would like the members of the audience to visualize these nuclei as three concentric circles. In this way, in adult life, an instinct is expressed through emotion, feeling and thinking (words). We could say that they cover and interpenetrate each other in a systematic way, as in the figure shown.

Instincts, emotions and feelings

Emotion encompasses the physical, biological and bodily sensations that accompany human feelings. In general, emotion is an immediate bodily reaction and flash, limited to the instant of its occurrence. *Primary emotions* are those of a baby, when the full development of the neural system (especially the cerebral cortex) has not yet taken place, and therefore, when the psyche (the mind or the “I”) is found in a rudimentary state. *Secondary emotions* are those that accompany, as a bodily manifestation, the feelings elaborated by a psyche already sufficiently developed. Feeling implies psycho-familiar-social-historical-cultural “learning”, making up a more elaborate structure. For example, fear, the instinct that guides an animal to fight or flight, manifests as a universal primary emotion, becoming a feeling the moment in which it gains, with development, a particular historical condition permeated by the family and cultural elements of its social insertion. Passions (of love or hate) would be sharp feelings of high intensity. Instinct represents an innate, hereditary, unlearned impulse which makes an animal, in this case, the human animal, execute a series of actions essential to his survival and the survival of the species. The aggregative, nutritive and copulation instincts are all examples of such impulses.

As you can see, emotion has a lot to do with biology, with physiology in connection with psychology. Emotion corresponds to alterations in visceral and muscular-skeletal tone which can be subjectively and/or objectively observed, to the extent that they present visible alterations, such as an increase or reduction in heart

and breathing rates, myosis or mydriasis, redness or paleness, etc. Affectivity or feelings, meanwhile, signify an articulation of emotion with cognition, in connection with the socio-cultural context. However, it is within the body that both emotion and feeling are inserted and memories of which stored. Naffah says that

we can think about the body as a surface where historical events are written, forming a grouping of marks or signs, a type of corporal memory which codifies fluctuations, imprinting them with values, directions. Culture doesn't model an identity, doesn't create an I, doesn't impose its patterns of conduct without leaving its marks on the body (1989, p.96)

Feelings, as well as memories, reside in the body.

According to Vitale (1994) feelings (I propose that emotions and bodily sensations be included here) may be considered positive or negative, depending on the proximity or distance in the relationships, without there necessarily being a connotation of "good" or "bad", since both are part of the human patrimony, essential for the relationship. On the contrary, their absence is what would be odd. Thus, love, friendship, happiness and hope would be positive; hate, sadness, fear, shame, etc. would be negative.

Vitale (1994) goes on to warn that "a broad spectrum of ambivalences, contradictions and movements" may occur.

A feeling may be positive in one context and negative in another. Hate, for example, separates, but it can also unite, fear leads to flight, but may also lead to fighting. Such sentiments may, therefore, acquire either an active or a passive form. It is possible for one feeling to hide another; perhaps the hate is covering the pain of a rejection, and so forth. (Vitale, 1994, p.15)

Implicit, as well, in these considerations, is that the quality of the emotion or feeling must be taken into account, for, as Espinosa (1973) says, a drunkard's happiness is different from that of the philosopher. Another useful possibility to be

remembered is the conscious/unconscious gradation in “feeling” feelings. Fear, depending on its intensity, can be a caution, a reticence or a desperation. One can even reflect on the possibility of neutral feelings, such as the feeling of calmness or tranquility (absence of anxiety) of interior peace. Weil³ (1998) speaks of three dimensions of peace- peace with oneself (ecology and personal consciousness), peace with others (ecology and social consciousness) and peace with nature (ecology and planetary consciousness). Damasio (2000) refers to the consciousness of being alive, of existing as “profound feeling”. But in this concept we are faced with another crucial element, that of consciousness. I prefer to consider this as a means through which we attain knowledge (self-diagnosis) of feelings. Consciousness is not, therefore, a feeling, but rather a state in which we perceive feelings. “Self-consciousness” is reached when someone, beginning by deliberately focusing their attention on themselves, broadens their self-consciousness, “remembers” that they exist, perceives that they are someone beyond their name alone, a living being relating to people and nature (universe or cosmos), as Weil reminds us. It is obvious that this state also promotes a consciousness of the passage and finiteness of life. Consciousness lead us into contact with feelings formerly hidden or unconscious. In short, feeling is captured by consciousness even while not all of its processes are conscious.

The human being requires three types of nutrients for his physical and mental survival: food, which is digested by the digestive track, oxygen, which is processed by the respiratory system, and the impressions received and elaborated by the psychic apparatus. Any lack or excess or failure of this process puts the physiological balance at risk. Impressions received from outside, from the environment, from other people, from the other relational pole, go through a process of internal metabolization, becoming emotions, feelings, thoughts, and consequently, actions. The more fluent (spontaneous) this outside-inside-outside process is, the greater the resulting creativity will be. In any one of these processes, working with different types of energy comes into play; in the first there is the metabolization of solids and liquids (food and water), in the second of gaseous elements (air) while in the third, when impressions are transformed into emotions, thoughts and feelings, we would be speaking of a more subtle energetic substance.

³ Pierre Weil, one of the pioneers of psychodrama in Brazil and founder of the University of Peace (UNIPAZ) in Brasilia received the International Peace Prize in 2000 from UNESCO.

Along these same lines, Bion (1966) proposes the concept of the “alpha function”, responsible for the transformation of the “beta elements” (received) into “alpha elements”, a movement necessary for a creative psychic life.

Psychosocial coining

Feelings arise from the period in which the human being is being “coined”, as was seen in the beginning of this text, when the neuropsychological development is recorded by the instinctive-motor, emotional-affective and intellectual nuclei. These nuclei are inserted within a broader context, which is the matrix of identity. For Moreno (1976), this represents the biopsychosociocultural relational network which sustains the new being from the time prior to birth, when he is still only a family expectation, to the moment in which he gains an identity, internalizing it as an existential reference. In other words, the matrix of identity is the relational cradle or uterus of the new being. Moreno (1976), according to his role theory, also teaches us that the development of the matrix of identity comes about by means of psychosomatic, psychological and social roles. Psychosomatic roles are directly related to biological functions which bridge the child with his environment and redress those psychosocial aspects inherent in this initial relationship. They are, for example, the roles of ingestor, defecator, urinator, breather, sleeper, etc. Psychological roles are responsible for the interior world of imagination or fantasy. Social roles are consolidated when the child is able to distinguish fantasy from reality. It is through them that relationships with others occur. Feelings are aroused in the realm of relationship, where role and counter-role are linked (parent-child, teacher-student, girlfriend-boyfriend, etc.)

Moreno (1974) summarizes the development of the matrix of identity in three steps: 1) the identity stage, of the I with the other (you), of the subject with the surrounding objects; 2) the recognition of I stage, of one’s singularity as a person; and 3) the recognition of you stage, the recognition of others. Detailed observation of this period of psychological development reveals important points for the study of human psychosociodynamics.

Relationship-Separation

I would like to consider the *three basic psychodynamic positions* that the child goes through between the initial total identity stage in relation to the surrounding environment and the recognition of I and of you stages. These psychodynamic positions structure the *learning* of relating and *separating*, which, in truth, are two poles of the same process: *relationship-separation*. These positions represent the foundation for the way in which the future adult will establish relationships (separations). The first psychodynamic position refers to the *learning* of *relationship-separation* in itself. The second, related in another way to *relationship-separation*, has to do with the formation of the self-valuing concept, that is, the conscious-unconscious capturing of the value that the person attributes to himself (self-esteem) and of the value he appears to enjoy in the social environment (esteem). The third basic psychodynamic position is relative to the qualitative transformation of a dual relationship into a triangular one and the separation that this third person promotes in the former unit. An examination of the first position will be enough for the study of *fear* and *hope*. It coordinates the “learning” of “being together” and of “being alone”. The pair of opposites (nature’s “law of twos”) relative to relationship-separation is always present in human life: spermatozoid and ovulum, separated and united (egg), pregnancy and birth, maternal caretaking (maternity) and the absence thereof, life-death, etc. In this phase, the basic relational structures of the experience of loving and being loved, of loving and being rejected, and of rejecting are internalized. Observation shows that the child initially attaches to the surrounding humans in a generic fashion, accepting care-taking indiscriminately. With neuropsychological maturation, the child starts to attach him/herself in a preferential order (primary sociometry), acquiring the capacity to choose people. In our culture, the mother is the child’s first choice, but not infrequently, the grandmother, nanny or father may be chosen first. In any case, observation of the child’s relational world reveals the existence of preferential choices and a gradation among them. Thus, according to variable criteria, adults also choose friends, sexual partners, spouses, etc. The child “hopes” that his favorite character, the number one, not only feeds him, but also holds, converses with,

smiles at⁴, and cuddles him. We can call the baby's optimistic expectation an *anxiety-hope*. In having this hoped-for contact fulfilled, the little being feels not only his hunger sated or the disappearance of discomfort; he also feels the pleasure of physical contact, of relationship. The pleasure derived from this experience leads the baby to experiencing the *happiness* of the shared moment, the seed of future feelings of happiness. These positive sensations go on being internalized, creating an optimistic perspective in the future adult. This cycle, reiterated along the course of neuropsychological development with the affective figures from the matrix of identity, develop a part of the process that is completed with the experience of separation.

Consider now the separation pole.⁵ Every time the favored person threatens to go away, or does go away, or doesn't arrive, the child goes through a series of emotional reactions. The first, in the face of imminent loss, is *anxiety-fear*. In solidifying the abandonment, the next emotion is *anger*, the basis for feelings of hatred. The third stage is represented by the sadness which follows the experience of loss. The fourth and final signifies the resolution of the process, that is, within some time the child goes back to being well, relating calmly with the caretaker of the moment. These phases are repeated innumerable times throughout the child's day, and why not say, throughout a person's entire life. In addition, there is an affective counter-part (response) from the adult caretakers in relation to the emotional manifestations of the child, generating a relational network, a *micro-social atom* of attractions, neutralities and rejections which make up the *primary sociometry* of the child in his matrix of identity.

Due to the pleasure in relating to loved ones and the suffering inherent in the separation from them, the child organizes psychological modes (techniques) in order to diminish or avoid pain and prolong pleasure. This organized structure is given the name *shock-absorber* process or *defense formation*. The *shock absorbers* or *defenses* are incorporated in the child's way of being, becoming part of the personality. In short, the marks from the different development phases - *relationship* (anxiety-separation, pleasure-happiness-joy) and *separation* (anxiety-fear, anger-

⁴ I believe that Spitz (1998) doesn't give due value to the importance of the child's smile as one of the first contacts of relational responsive disposition.

⁵ I am inspired by Bowlby (1982) who delineates four phases in the elaboration of fight: torpidity, longing, desperation and reorganization. In children between fifteen and thirty months of age, according to the same author, separation from the mother reveals: protest, desperation and detachment (negation).

hatred, sadness-depression) added to the marks from the *shock-absorbers* or *defenses*, delineate the grooves of the forming personality, which become the primary and secondary personality traits. This primary psychological structure serves as the basis for all the relationship-separation and loss processes of the future adult – that is, they delineate the limits of attachment and love.

RELATIONSHIP

anxiety-hope

pleasure (love)

joy-(happiness)

SEPARATION

anxiety-fear

anger (hate)

sadness (depression)

Resolution – internalization – shock-absorber or defense formation

Fear and hope in the group

We have seen how fear and hope develop in the individual environment. We will now take a look at it from the perspective of its appearance in groups. Bion (1970) utilizes the expression “group mentality” to designate the fact that a group functions as a unit, even when its members are unaware of this. A group, from a group dynamics point of view, is always more than the sum of its members. Bion calls some aspects of group mentality “basic suppositions”. Among them, the English psychoanalyst highlights three: dependency (baD: Basic assumption of dependence); fight-flight (baF: basic assumption of fight-flight) and pairing (basic assumption of pairing). In dependency, the group idealizes its leader, expecting unconditional support from him for its aspirations. The group invests the leader with omnipotent and mystical elements⁶. In the group fantasy of the second basic supposition, of fight-flight, the group has the tendency to attack or defend itself from an internal or external persecutor. The third basic supposition, of pairing, takes the group movement toward a concentration on a couple (mixed or same sex), creating an emotional climate of expectation and magical hope around them. It is as

⁶ Freud (1967) already said that the leader provokes an enamored or hypnotic effect among his followers similar to the admiration dedicated to the father.

if the product (child) of this pairing brought the certainty of future happiness. In this way, the result of the pairing would signify the coming of the group Messiah. According to Py (1986), in the unconscious group fantasy or in the regressive expectation of its members, the leader must be omnipotent (dependency), unbeatable (fight), never imprisoned (flight), a true Messiah (pairing). As a counterpoint to these regressive anxieties, in a mature group, the leader, in the basic supposition of dependency, would be merely trustworthy; in the fight-flight supposition, he would be merely courageous, and in pairing, simply creative. Bion (1970) recognizes that groups also present the possibility of evolution toward maturity. He calls “a work group” the group search for a harmonious solution to its needs and objectives.

The regressive dynamics of the basic suppositions transcend small groups, and can be witnessed as well in organizations, states and nations. A dictatorship accepted by the people reflects, on the one hand, a regressive desire to possess a redeeming and miraculous father, and on the other hand, the abuse perpetrated by the opportunistic politics of the dictator. There could not have been a Hitler without the German people who sustained him. The figure of internal or external persecutor is, at times, manipulated politically, as happened in Nazi Germany, where the internal persecutors were the Jews, the gypsies, the homosexuals, the mentally ill, that is – the “impure”. In the Argentine dictatorship of the 70s and 80s, the military “resuscitated” an external enemy (England, which had in the past really occupied a recognized Argentine territory) in the hopes of garnering public support for an agonizing political regime. The Argentine people paid their sacrificial tribute with the ill-fated Malvinas War. Still thinking of Argentina, what better example of coupling than that formed by Peron-Evita. The Argentine people experienced the perspective of the great father and great mother of the 40s and 50s and the optimistic hope of a grandiose future (the coming of the Messiah) which never came. Recently, Iraq and those countries in disagreement with American policies, or those making up part of the areas of economic interest to the United States, have been presented by President Bush as part of the “axis of evil” (external persecutor in the basic supposition of fight). In this same period, a union between Bush and Blair was established which could be considered as a basic supposition of coupling.

Another scholar of groups, Schultz (1973), describes three phases of group evolution: the inclusion phase, to have a group identity; in the second phase, the effort to obtain importance (including the fight for leadership) in the group, corresponding to an identity of value (how much am I worth); in the affective phase there is the fluency of group work. These statements show that the individual's first movement is to avoid exclusion. The second is to get recognition of his value. Only after these two types of identity, one group- existential and the other of value, does the individual reach productive fluency within the group. These groupal conditions are coherent, for example, with the great incidence of psychotic profiles among migrants from the North-east who have recently arrived in Sao Paulo. Once they have become included within the city, the breakdowns are no longer repeated.

Ethical-political suffering and public happiness

Having discussed affectivity in the individual and group spheres, I will now attempt to address it in the social-political realm. Toward this end, I make use of the texts by Professors Marilena Chaui (1987) and Bader Sawaya (1999). Both are inspired by the work of the Dutch philosopher Espinosa who discusses democracy and liberty on the basis of human sentiments. He proposes a system of ideas where the psychological, social and ethical-political appear intertwined. To Espinosa (1957, book II), the body, the thirst for feelings (or of passions, as he says), is biological, emotional and social material: "everything that increases or diminishes, favors or represses my body's potential for action, increases or diminishes, favors or represses my mind's potential for thought as well" (apud Sawaya, 1999, p.114). Espinosa counter poses servitude with freedom. To him, every individual has the right to be, to self-affirmation, to expansion, to the attainment of liberty. Implicit within this search is a movement, an action toward freedom. Activity leads to freedom, passivity to servitude. Moreno (1974) understands man as essentially spontaneous and, therefore, free to create. The concept of spontaneity cannot be comprehended without taking into account its attribute of liberty. Cultural conserves can represent, if preponderantly valued, the stagnation of this process. Therefore, spontaneity and conservation, in some way, may represent to Moreno, what liberty and servitude represent to Espinosa.

In studying the origin and nature of affects, the Dutch philosopher affirms that *hope* doesn't exist without *fear*, nor *fear* without *hope*. The difference between them would be the presence of happiness in hope and of sadness in fear. In this way, *hope* (spes) is defined as "an unstable happiness born from the idea of something from the future or past of which outcome we doubt to a certain extent" (apud Chaui, 1987, p.59). *Fear* (metus), this feeling that, according to Montaigne (apud Chaui, 1987), puts "wings on the feet" or "nails us to the ground", or gives us "the feeling of a coldness of the soul which paralyzes the body", is defined as "an insatiable sadness born from the idea of something future or past of which we doubt the outcome to some extent" (apud Chaui, 1987, p. 59). *Security* would be born from hope and *desperation* from fear, that is, when there is no longer any doubt about the occurrence of something: "security (securitas) is the happiness born from something past or future about which there is no longer any doubt" and "desperation (desperatio) is the sadness born from something past or future about which there is no longer any doubt" (apud Chaui, 1987, p. 59). The course desired for is that which goes from fear to hope, security, contentment and peace. Fear and hope refer, therefore, to the past and to the future, about which doubt weighs heavy; desperation and security, toward the past and future, when there is no doubt. The absence of doubt transforms, therefore, hope into security and fear into desperation. Thus, the present is a void (the event occurred or will occur) filled with feelings and these, connected to some duration, bring the notion of time as an essential element for their comprehension. What is pathetic about the *fear-hope system* is that there is nothing we can do except wait (fear) for what will come and cry or bless what has happened. This tension leads to a disorganized series of feelings (fear, joy, desperation, hope, remorse) which makes us sway like waves in a turbulent sea, denoted *fluctuation of spirit (fluctuatio animi)*, which, according to Espinosa (1973), leads us to the supreme servitude: *superstition*. Man succumbs to this fluctuation between hope and fear, inclining to credulous and becoming a prisoner to fortune tellers, quacks, false prophets and bad politicians, that is to say, paying the price of theoretical and political tyranny. Man, in times of prosperity, doesn't listen to any advice; but in times of adversity, he will listen to all. Superstition creates the mysteries of nature and of God when the secrets of power are born. Superstition promotes false knowledge, that is, ignorance dressed up as knowledge. Superstition lasts only as long as its cause: fear. "some, taking advantage of the anxiety held by

many, present themselves as intermediaries between man and the untouchable higher powers and between man and the unknown subterranean powers: priests and kings who, at first, act as mediators then later as representatives of these higher and lower powers” (apud Chaui, 1987, p. 62). In positioning himself in this way in relation to the powers of his time, it comes as no surprise that Espinosa was expelled from the Jewish and Christian communities of Amsterdam⁷.

For Espinosa, “fear is not crazy but drives the spirit to madness and misleads the soul.” (Chaui, 1987, p. 61). Superstition, yes, is crazy. Superstition seeks relief from fear, opening the flood-gates to servitude. Superstition permits the tyrant, but not the tyranny, to be broken. One tyrant, many times, follows another and they all also live under the shelter of fear: they fear being removed by those who come from above (a strong tyrant) and/or by what comes from below (the power of the people). Superstition offers, therefore, sustenance and legitimacy to the corrupt government.

Some science – call it philosophy, political science or economics – will guarantee beforehand the defeat of fear. The passionate fight here is to battle between two entirely contradictory passions: fear of death and desire for life. (Chaui, 1987, p. 75)

The fight is thus placed between the hope for life – relationship – and the fear of death – separation.

The social dimension confers a historical character to feeling. Each historical moment prioritizes a feeling. Sawaya (1999) comments that in the XIX century, the shame of another’s look, with the respective demand for public atonement, predominated. In the XX century, guilt substituted shame, changing the character of atonement from public to private, individual. The feeling gained, consequently, an ethical-political aspect as well. The same author comments that the *banzo*, a melancholic state that befell the African slaves in Brazil, which many times led to death, was legitimized by the international policy of economic exploitation and domination. Today we find a similar phenomenon among the cultured Brazilian indians. The suicide rate within these communities is considerably higher than that

⁷ Espinosa was excommunicated or new-Christian.

of the population at large. The depression of these indians cannot be interpreted only with genetic or neurochemical explanations. The act of suicide is a biological concretization of something which has already happened: they have lost their identity, died psychosocially. They prefer death to the continued suffering of social exclusion, being treated as inferior, subordinate, “useless appendixes to society” (Sawaya, 1999, p. 104). The origin of the suffering of those who are excluded in general – indians, street-dwellers, the unemployed – is found, above all else, in the hope to “be someone”, to be with other people. This feeling has, therefore, a collective dimension, like the fear of assault and robbery, not to mention of stray bullets, kidnappings and other horrible things, which terrifies the Brazilian middle class, causing them to turn their houses into true fortresses, where fences, pointed objects on the top of walls, security systems and guards proliferate.

Ethical-political suffering opposes public happiness, to the extent that both portray the daily experience of the dominant issues of each period. Public happiness happens when hope wins and fear turns to security. The hope of the Brazilian people for public security and happiness has beaten the fear: a former metal-worker, socialist and four-time candidate to the job has been elected as President of the Republic.

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