

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PASSION AND EMOTION – IN SEARCH OF CASE STUDIES

DATE: Friday 17 JUNE 2016, 2-5pm

LOCATION: Philippa Maddern Seminar Room (Arts 1.33), The University of Western Australia



Meanings of the words 'passions' and 'emotions' changed significantly during the period 1500–1800, as medical paradigms and institutions evolved, societies became less theocentric and more secular, and body, mind and soul were seen in different analytical realms. The meanings have changed even more since the Romantic period in the early nineteenth century. Professor Charland is pioneering new ways of retrieving earlier models of thought in relation to the concepts behind these words, and applying them in twenty-first-century psychiatry, cognitive science and clinical situations. In this workshop he will present his overall theory, especially in terms of the changing distinctions between 'passions' and 'emotions', and together we will explore possible case studies from different periods and different disciplines.

FRIDAY 17 JUNE 2016

14.00–14.45	Louis C. Charland: 'The Distinction Between Passion and Emotion'
14.45–15.15	Danijela Kambaskovic-Schwartz: 'Passion vs Emotion: "A Discourse Divine, Morall and Physical"'
15.15 – 15.30	TEA BREAK
15.30–16.00	Kirk A. Essary: "'Passio" and "Affectus" in the Sixteenth Century'
16.00–16.30	Sally Holloway: 'Love in Letters: "no Mortal ever felt so strong, so soft a Passion"'
16.30–17.00	Bob White: 'Where Were Emotions Before We Had the Word?'

ABSTRACTS

LOUIS C. CHARLAND

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PASSION AND EMOTION

While there are convincing case studies that show that there has been a transition from 'passion' to 'emotion' in the history of Western thought, other case studies show that there are also important exceptions to this trend. Two famous examples should suffice to illustrate the distinction with which we are concerned here.

In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1785), the philosopher Immanuel Kant explicitly distinguishes between relatively simple short-term affective states, namely emotions (Gr. Affekte), and more complex and enduring long term affective states, namely passions (Gr. Leidenschaften). He also famously argues that the passions are ultimately all morbid and unhealthy – topics for psychopathology.

Much later, in his (1907) *Essay on the Passions*, the French philosopher Theodule Ribot proposes a very similar analysis of affective states where he also distinguishes

'passions' and 'emotions'. Ribot cites Kant as a noteworthy precedent in this regard. However, while Ribot agrees with Kant that the passions can sometimes veer dangerously into psychopathology and mental disorder, he sharply disagrees that they are always morbid and pathological. According to Ribot, passions are also essential and healthy ingredients of our mental life and the source of many healthy hobbies, life projects and pursuits.

Therefore, both Kant and Ribot distinguish between 'passions', which are complex long-term affective states and processes, and 'emotions', which are simpler affective states of shorter duration. They treat 'passions' and 'emotions' as affective posits that are categorically different and mutually irreducible to one another. Both agree that duration is an important criterion for distinguishing the two.

The purpose of this workshop is to inquire into whether there might be other similar case studies in the 'history of emotions' where the distinction between 'passion' and 'emotion' can be found, either explicitly or implicitly, or, in contradistinction, cases where it might be challenged or denied. The topic is interesting because the term 'passion' is no longer in vogue today. Yet, if we are to believe Kant and Ribot, a full

theory of the affective life requires that we make and respect something like this distinction between 'passion' and 'emotion'. Additional case studies might provide further evidence in defence of this hypothesis.

Our research question for this workshop then is this: Are there interesting historical case studies where the distinction between 'passion' and 'emotion' is explicit or implicit that might provide evidence for or against the hypothesis that we need to make and re-enact that distinction in contemporary philosophy and psychology and literary or historical studies?

Louis Charland is based at Western University in Ontario, Canada. He is a jointly appointed professor in the departments of Philosophy and Psychiatry, and also in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Professor Charland was previously a member of the Biomedical Ethics Unit and the Clinical Trials Research Group in the Faculty of Medicine at McGill University, Montreal. He is the author of a number of recent journal articles on madness and the passions, including 'Anorexia Nervosa as a Passion' in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* (2013) and 'The Distinction between "Passion" and "Emotion" – Vincenzo Chiarugi, A Case Study' in *History of Psychiatry* (2014).

DANIJELA KAMBASKOVIC-SCHWARTZ

PASSION VS EMOTION: 'A DISCOURSE DIVINE, MORALL AND PHYSICALL'

A more ancient concept than 'emotion', 'passion' is also characterised by a profound duality. In a meaning associated with Latin *passio* (and Christ's suffering), it denotes reaction to a landmark event which must be suffered or endured; but in another meaning, linked to Greek *pathos*, it denotes any strong feeling at the pinnacle of its power; and some of those would, today, classify as emotions. The tendency to see passion and emotion as separate stems from the axiological shift from the viewpoint according to which suffering and heightened emotional states are prerequisites for the pursuit of excellence, and one characterised by the imperative of avoiding difficult or unsettling feelings and discussion of them in favour of positivity and even-handedness. 'Emotion' caters to the relatively recent need to denote inner feelings without reference to heightened mental states. I will briefly discuss the longer history of this shift on the example of love madness.

Danijela Kambaskovic-Schwartz is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (Europe, 1100–1800) based at The University of Western Australia. She has published widely on Shakespeare's sonnets and other early modern topics.

KIRK A. ESSARY

'PASSIO' AND 'AFFECTUS' IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Despite the fact that the sixteenth century was a time of momentous linguistic change, both in Latin and vernacular languages, historians of emotion often gloss over it in general accounts about the development

of emotion terminology. Thomas Dixon, for example, has argued for a rigid distinction in the 'classical Christian tradition' between the passions and the affections, but jumps from the twelfth to the seventeenth century in his history of the move 'from passions to emotions'. Here I will consider several sixteenth-century dictionaries as well as a few religious texts to show how difficult it is to distinguish between 'affectus' and 'passio' in the sixteenth century.

Kirk A. Essary is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (Europe, 1100–1800), based at The University of Western Australia. His special expertise is in the works of Erasmus.

SALLY HOLLOWAY

LOVE IN LETTERS: 'NO MORTAL EVER FELT SO STRONG, SO SOFT A PASSION'

My contribution to the discussion will consider how courting couples in eighteenth-century England conceptualised love as a 'soft passion' in their letters. As a growing number of correspondents picked up their pens, individuals reflected at length upon the nature and intensity of their feelings, as they sought to classify and understand them. As the poet Judith Cowper wrote in an unsent letter to Captain Martin Madan in 1723,

I feel something so infinitely above
all y^e Low Ideas I have hitherto
conceiv'd of Love, that I Want a
new name, to Express y^e warmth,
y^e freindship [*sic*], y^e admiration, y^e shore
then Love with w^{ch} I am yours.

Sally Holloway is a Visiting Early Career Fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, from the Richmond American International University in London. Her current project is 'Romantic Love in Georgian England: Courtship, Emotions and Material Culture, 1714–1830'.

BOB WHITE

WHERE WERE EMOTIONS BEFORE WE HAD THE WORD?

It is generally agreed that the word 'emotions' in English was borrowed from French in the early seventeenth century but with a highly specific meaning ('moving away'), and that it did not come to have its modern range of meanings until the eighteenth century. But if so, this raises some large questions about how affective states in English were described before this, and how it came to be that 'emotions' rather than 'passions' was eventually accepted as the primary term. My exploration will posit that the simpler word 'motions' was used to describe certain feelings which might be fleeting and rapidly changeable, while 'passions' described more deep-seated and fixed states (reflecting the etymology in 'passive'), and that these two terms were throughout the early modern period used in conjunction as complementary, to describe the full range of feeling-states. I will suggest that over time 'the passions', which had a religious association originally, were subsumed under the term 'emotions', which came to serve as a general description, while 'passion' and 'affections' were secularised in the vocabulary of love relationships during the eighteenth century in the rise of the novel as a form. My offering is based on some conjectures and is not yet offered categorically as fully developed research, but it seems a suggestive model for discussion focused on changes in affective vocabulary from early modern to Romanticism. My 'case study' will be *Othello*.

Bob White is a Chief Investigator in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (Europe, 1100–1800) and Winthrop Professor of English at The University of Western Australia. He has published extensively on Shakespeare and on English Romantic writers.

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