

Moved

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About a year ago I wrote a column about emotions. I concluded with the promise to write a sequel soon. In our lives, emotions play an extremely important role; they are, as it were, the fuel for our motivation to act or let go. In psychological research, as in my column, the interest in emotions is far from being in accordance with their importance for our daily lives. Based on a biologically embedded alphabet of six basic emotions - fear, joy, horror, anger, surprise and sadness - we build a whole palette of higher order (complex) emotions through cultural and cognitive processes. Nostalgia, melancholy, insecurity, indecisiveness, feeling inspired, or isolated, and so on. In contrast to the basic emotions, complex emotions are both cultural and historical in nature. Because complex emotions are not innate, Aristotle and many after him considered them to be far more important as guidelines for our lives. Through these composite emotions we can become who we want to be, they form the fuel in the direction of our desired virtues. For example, almost no one is brave at birth, but can become so, both by the desire to be courageous and by a lot of practice (trial and error). Complex emotions are not innate according to Aristotelian thinking and are therefore so interesting to study.

The relationship between basic and complex emotions can be compared with basic categories and stories: a number of basic categories are universal, but the themes and contents of stories evolve with the history in which the storytellers are situated. Great storytellers and writers renew, tell and re-tell. In short, complex emotions, stories and language form a historically situated trinity. Through the stories that are culturally available at a given moment, new complex emotions arise, often expressed in new stories and new emotion words. In each and every time, different accents are laid with regard to what is seen as important virtues, which are worth pursuing, or even that everyone should have.

Goldberg

Last week I read the beautiful novel *Goldberg* by Bert Nasser, which I got from a student at his graduation. The novel deals with, among other things, the virtuoso pianist Goldberg, who played a composition of Bach that was later named the Goldberg variations for a Russian ambassador in Germany. Interested in the seventeenth century, I sought and found a finding of historian Tiffany Watt Smith that in the 17th century some manuals were written for people to learn to feel grief, just as there are now self-help books to feel happy and positive. According to the 17th century writers, these "grief courses" would make people more resistant to setbacks.

With that, I just snapped back in reality. as a singer-songwriter, my middle daughter - 17 years old - writes and produces beautiful music but my wife and I often find the songs sad. During dinner I present the findings of Tiffany Watt Smith to my children. My daughter says that Facebook preliminarily shows cheerful and successful actions, in which sadness may only incidentally exist: "self-pity is allowed on Facebook, but grief and sadness is out of the question". She adds "the same goes for contemporary pop; either hoity-toity guys with self pity or overly tough rapping machos, while in my class alone there are several students officially diagnosed with depression".

On the question she agrees that it may be true that she unconsciously increases her resilience and reduces her vulnerability with her ballads. Culture, visions and stories create our complex emotions, which help us reach our ideals and virtues (for example to become resilient), shaping and thereby forming ourselves. I always tell my students that it has helped me to approach challenges as much as possible positively instead of getting bored with things we do not yet understand. In the beginning you do not notice the difference, but in the long run it can become a snowball. It certainly brought me a lot. This is how I enjoy "accidentally" just now with other ears of the Goldberg variations!