CHAPTER 8

PASSIONS FOR JUSTICE

E. J. Horberg
Dacher Keltner
University of California, Berkeley

Moral codes, notions of fairness, punitive and incentive systems are basic
elements of social groups, as well as the foundation of justice (e.g., de
Waal, 1996). Yet what does it mean to possess a sense of justice? What psy-
chological processes give rise to our sense that an allocation or punish-
ment is fair?

With noteworthy exceptions in the writings of certain scholars (e.g.,
Hume, 1777/1960, Smith, 1759/2002; Darwin, 1871/1952; Solomon,
1990), the study of morality and justice has prioritized cognition and con-
trolled thinking processes, with the implication that human passions, or
emotions, are subordinate. Previous psychological research, for example,
has been largely devoted to understanding the cognitive constituents of
moral and justice reasoning, such as attributions about responsibility,
intentionality and severity of crime (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932/
1965; Turiel, 1983; Weiner, 1995).

Yet the human sense of justice, recent studies would suggest, is a compi-
lcated combination of principled reasoning, emotion, and perspective tak-
ing (e.g., Damasio, 1994; Haidt, 2001; de Waal, 1996). Many of people's
stable moral convictions and political orientations are laden with emotion,
as illustrated in beliefs about personal rights, sexual preferences, and distri-
butions of wealth and power. Judgments of right versus wrong, or fair versus unfair, emerge early in development (e.g., Dunn, 1987), and evoke an immediacy and involuntariness that would seem to precede complex deliberative analysis. As well, the very fabric of certain punitive and allocation decisions—for example when we seek eye-for-an-eye retribution or assign easier workloads to people who have incurred our sympathy (Weiner, Graham, & Reyna, 1997; Batson, Klein, Highberger, & Shaw, 1995)—suggests that there is more to moral and justice judgments than reason alone. Emotions are prominently involved. Morality and justice, many would claim, are felt (Bies & Tripp, 2002; Charlesworth, 1991; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001; Haidt, 2003; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Solomon, 1989, 1990).

It is therefore crucial to understand the role of chronic and contextually-elicited emotions to gain a fuller understanding of how cultures consensually build codes of ethics, as well as how individuals implement punishments, rewards and judicial procedures in specific cases. To date, however, little is known about precisely how emotions influence morality and the various forms of justice such as procedural, distributive, retributive, and restorative justice. We will present a framework that conceptualizes emotions as discrete moral intuitions that contribute to judgments of morality and justice (Haidt, 2001; Keltner, Horberg, & Oveis, 2006). This framework maps the influence of specific emotions to specific moral concerns, and generates testable predictions regarding how certain decisions, such as reward and punishment, may be shaped by different emotional experiences.

To set the stage, we first consider definitions of morality and justice. Broadly speaking, morality refers to standards, judgments, or experiences of good, bad, right and wrong. Moral standards are treated as universal (applicable across time, cultures, and contexts), obligatory (people ought to follow them), and rightfully subject to sanctioning (Turiel, Killen, & Helwig, 1987; Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990).

We consider the related concept of justice to bear more specifically on what is perceived as fair or unfair, often with respect to distribution of resources and breaches of appropriate conduct (Tyler & Smith, 1998). Procedural justice refers to the way in which resource allocations and related processes are determined. Were allocations rendered in a way that conveyed impartiality, respect and trust (Tyler, 1994)? Distributive justice refers to concerns about the outcomes of divisions of goods and resources (Deutsch, 1985). Have they been divided up fairly? Are people satisfied with what they have received? Finally, when a misconduct has occurred, how do people handle the alleged offenders? How severely do they punish, and what is the goal of the sentence? These issues involve restorative and retributive justice (e.g., Darley & Pittman, 2003). Taken together, these concepts capture cru-
cial processes underlying a sense of justice, and offer a critical route for examining how emotions may figure in morality and justice.

**TOWARD THREE ETHICS OF MORALITY AND JUSTICE**

What types of issues concern morality and justice? To more precisely understand how emotions figure in justice and moral judgments, we first parse the content of people's ethical principles. Cross-cultural work by Richard Shweder and colleagues, followed up in kind by researchers such as Paul Rozin and Jonathan Haidt, suggests that there may be three broad themes that capture the majority of moral concerns in societies across the world (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997; Vasquez, Keltner, Ebenbach, & Banaszynski, 2001). These themes or “ethics” provide a schematic lens through which moral behavior and character are evaluated.

The “ethic of Autonomy” conceptualizes the individual as a bounded, self-determined entity. Given this definition of the person, concerns over individual rights and freedoms become central to morality and justice, such as the right to live free of harm and to pursue personal goals. Behaviors are evaluated with an eye towards ensuring that personal freedom, rights and autonomy are upheld. Fairness and justice depend on the consequences of distributions and policies for individuals’ well-being, goals and desires. This ethic may relate to, or manifest, the fundamental “need for autonomy,” defined in self-determination theory as the need to feel agentic in one’s actions and identity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus in some cases, perceptions of justice are driven by a self-construal and motivation for autonomy.

The “ethic of Community” depicts individuals as interdependent units or “office-holders” in a larger social network. Given this construal of the person as embedded in a web of duties and obligations, concerns pertaining to the fulfillment of role-related duties become central to justice and morality, as do matters of hierarchy, roles, and promoting the good of the group. Interpretations of what is fair and just within this ethic derive from how actions satisfy duties and obligations. The ethic of Community may involve a second fundamental need outlined in self-determination theory, known as the “need for relatedness.” It is proposed that humans strive for belongingness, social support and security (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and research has begun to connect relatedness strivings with the consequences of procedural fairness. De Cremer and Blader found (2006), for example, that links between the opportunity for voice (an index of procedural fairness) and outcomes, such as affect and self-evaluations, were stronger for individuals high in the need to belong. Fur-
thermore, these individuals more systematically processed information relevant to procedural justice. Thus the goal to affirm relationships and protect one’s place in a social network at times may define one’s sense of justice.

Finally, the “ethic of Divinity” frames individuals as spiritual entities seeking to be sacred and free of animal-like traits and impulses. Of consequence in this ethic is purity of the body and soul, avoidance of physical and spiritual pollutants, following the “natural order”, and achieving sanctity. Fairness and justice within this ethic pertain to actions that uphold or violate standards of purity. In terms of core motivations, the ethic of divinity could relate to a need for self-esteem, as one endeavors to elevate the self and emulate deity. Self-esteem and positive self-evaluations are known to pertain to matters of justice, such as variations in procedural fairness (e.g., De Cremer & Blader, 2006; Koper, van Knippenberg, Bouhuijs, Vermont, & Wilke, 1993).

The implications of this work for the study of justice are clear: concerns over distributions, rewards, punishment and procedures will vary according to these three broad ethics. These ethics may help explain, first of all, the dramatic cultural variation in what is considered right and fair. For example, cultures such as Western European and North American cultures tend to prioritize the ethic of Autonomy, whereas cultures in India or the Philippines tend to place greater value on the ethics of Community and Divinity. In related research, Vasquez and colleagues (2001) showed that participants in the U.S. emphasized the justice domain when generating and evaluating moral acts and rules. On the other hand, participants in the Philippines sampled from each of the three moral rhetorics.

Critical to the present analysis, research inspired by this framework begins to portray how specific moral emotions are associated with violations in these three ethics. Rozin and colleagues (1999b) posit an emotion-ethic “CAD triad” in which three “other condemning” moral emotions—contempt, anger, and disgust—are triggered as a function of violations committed within the ethic of Community, Autonomy, and Divinity, respectively. The basis for this argument is that these three emotions contain appraisals, that is, consistent, functional interpretations of the self and environment (Lazarus, 1991; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) that are central to the concerns of the three ethics. Specifically, anger is linked to appraisals about rights, infringements on personal freedom, and harm or insult to the individual. The appraisals of contempt involve perceptions of whether status, duties, obligations, and roles are being respected or ignored. Finally disgust is associated with appraisals of purity, contamination, the natural order, sanctity and sin. To test the CAD triad hypothesis, researchers gave Japanese and U.S. college students brief descriptions of activities that violated rules in the ethic of Community (e.g., “A person is hearing an 8-year-
old student speak to his/her teacher in the same way that he/she talks to her friends”), Autonomy (e.g., “A person is seeing someone steal a purse from a blind person”) and Divinity (e.g., “A person is eating a piece of rotten meat”). After reading the description, participants indicated their emotional reaction by pointing to an expressive face, an emotion term or creating a facial expression. Across these three response modalities and in both cultures, participants were more likely to indicate contempt in response to Community violations, anger in response to Autonomy violations and disgust in response to Divinity violations.

Thus, the core set of appraisal conditions for each emotion in the CAD triad (interdependence and hierarchy; justice and freedom; purity and degradation) matched concerns within specific codes of ethics, and the aroused emotional reactions consistently lined up with specific ethical violations. An important feature of this work is the observed specificity between emotions and broad ethical themes. We believe this specificity arises from aligning emotional appraisals with the domain of moral or justice judgment, a notion that has inspired our framework of emotions as specific intuitions about morality and justice.

INTUITIONS OF MORALITY AND JUSTICE

Our framework of emotion and justice is rooted in the flourishing study of moral intuitions, which itself was partly inspired by studies of the moral ethics reviewed above. Moral intuitions refer to quickly appearing, seemingly involuntary judgments of right or wrong regarding the actions or character of an individual (Haidt, 2001).

A theory of moral intuitions may be juxtaposed with alternative methods of acquiring moral knowledge, such as deductive and inductive reasoning, debate, and natural observation (Shweder & Haidt, 1993). Recently, Haidt (2001) put forth a dual-process theory of moral judgment, based on the now fairly canonical view that mental operations can be classified into two types of cognition: a rapid, automatic and intuitive system, or a slower, deliberate and calculative system of thought. Gut moral responses to people or events are part of the first system. These moral intuitions are likely to be based on emotion-like processes, and represent the types of judgments considered in this chapter (see also Sunstein, 2003).

Where do moral intuitions come from? First, humans are thought to be innately equipped or “prepared” to develop intuitions within a small set of abstract, self-evident moral truths, such beneficence, reciprocity, fairness, purity, and hierarchy, several of which closely resemble the three moral ethics and emotional appraisals described above (Shweder & Haidt, 1993; Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Socialization and social learning, however, lead people to
quickly specialize in the moral domains promoted by their local cultures. Issues within those moral domains are moralized, that is, imbued with moral value, as opposed to being considered matters of personal preference or social convention. In the U.S., for instance, matters pertaining to equality are highly moralized and form the basis of many moral responses, as evidenced by civil movements to emancipate or enfranchise women and African-Americans. Personal hygiene, on the other hand, tends to be morally downplayed in the U.S. Many Americans would assert that a person who chooses to give up bathing has "the right to do so." In terms of the more specific domains of justice, we would expect support in the U.S. for policies that heavily penalize overt discrimination during resource distribution decisions (e.g., salaries, benefits) or in how people are treated by leaders and institutions. However, we would not expect support in the U.S. for policies designed to control personal grooming habits, unless others were put at risk for harm.

Finally, emotions play a formative role in moral intuitions. Emotions determine whether an issue represents a moral value, a matter of personal taste, or a product of convention (Kagan, 1984). In this chapter, we consider the role of specific emotions in moral and justice judgments, and how emotions can shift the emphasis and content of intuitions. We argue that distinct emotions may bring particular domains of moral truth, such as autonomy, divinity (purity), community, benevolence, or harm, to the psychological fore. To this end, we turn to a model of emotion and cognition that provides the foundation for this thesis: the appraisal tendency framework.

**The Appraisal Tendency Framework**

In recent years, numerous researchers have argued that discrete emotions influence cognition in specific ways (Keltner, Ellsworth, & Edwards, 1993; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; DeSteno, Petty, Wegener, & Rucker, 2000; Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994). To synthesize these studies, and offer a framework for interpreting emotion-specific effects upon diverse judgments, Lerner and Keltner proposed the appraisal tendency framework (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001).

Several basic assumptions underlie the appraisal tendency framework. As discussed earlier, emotions are partly defined by their constituent appraisals of the self, situation and other people (Lazarus, 1991; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Often, appraisals of different emotions, even emotions of the same valence, contrast one another. For example, anger is centrally related to the appraisal that others are responsible for unfair acts. Sadness, by contrast, is associated with an appraisal that situational factors, such as fate or present circumstances, drive the flow of actions and events. These
differences between emotions in core appraisals dictate the differential impact of emotions on cognition.

A second assumption of the appraisal tendency framework is derived from decades of research showing the effects of affective states upon judgment (e.g., Forgas, 1995; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Emotions are sometimes so powerful in their organization and direction of cognitive processes that their core appraisals persist beyond the circumstances that initially elicited the emotion (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Thus, core appraisal tendencies prepare the individual to judge a variety of actions or objects in an appraisal-consistent manner, even when the judgments are separate from the original cause of the emotion.

Finally, emotions guide judgment only in domains that are relevant to their appraisals. For example, the appraisal dimension of control and certainty should impact judgments about risk and probability, but not judgments about purity.

Jennifer Lerner and colleagues (2000, 2001) tested the propositions of this framework with respect to the emotions of fear and anger. Fear and anger have the same (negative) valence, but fear is associated with appraisals of low certainty and low controllability, whereas anger is associated with appraisals of high certainty and high controllability. Across several studies, participants dispositionally prone to experience fear, as well as those induced to temporarily experience fear, interpreted stimuli in a manner consistent with the sense of uncertainty and lack of control that characterizes fear. That is, they made more pessimistic judgments about the future, and preferred risk-averse strategies during decision-making. On the other hand, individuals dispositionally prone to experience anger, and those induced to feel anger in the moment, showed optimistic judgments about the future and preferred risk-seeking strategies during decision-making. This latter tendency is in line with the sense of high certainty and control characteristic of anger. Moreover, the researchers were able to determine that perceptions of controllability and certainty were responsible for the above perceptual tendencies.

The appraisal tendency framework is starting to impact the study of justice and morality. One study shows, for instance, that the opposing appraisals of certainty and uncertainty underlying disgust and fear, respectively, may direct differences in the experience of procedural justice. It was hypothesized that people should be more influenced by fluctuations in procedural fairness during a state of high uncertainty, such as that engendered by feelings of fear. Indeed, the self-esteem of fearful participants was impacted to a greater extent by opportunity for voice than the self-esteem of disgusted participants (De Cremer, 2007). This research is among the first to tie propositions of the appraisal tendency framework to the psychology of justice.
Yet further related work is required to expand our understanding of the passions of justice. As touched upon above, many appraisals of emotions are intimately connected with morality and justice. Some emotions may intrinsically include appraisals of ought, right and wrong (Weiner, 2006). Others have suggested that perceptions of justice, fairness, or compatibility with standards may represent basic appraisal dimensions antecedent to emotions like anger, disgust, and fear (Scherer, 2001; Mikula, Scherer & Athenstaedt, 1998). In the present analysis, we particularly focus on the observation that many emotions are brought on, accompanied, and followed up by construals relevant to morality and justice: control, responsibility, obligation, purity, harm, equality, reciprocity, and deservingsness. These can ultimately contribute to decisions about punishment, reward, distributions of goods and fair policies.

Prior work highlights links between emotions and moral appraisals. We have already reviewed links between anger and autonomy, contempt and community, and disgust and divinity. Guilt is due to the perception that one has inappropriately harmed another person, typically a significant other (Baumeister, Stillwell & Heather, 1994; Tangney, 1992). Compassion is most notably concerned with harm, weakness and vulnerability (Eisenberg et al., 1989, Batson & Shaw, 1991), while “other-praising” emotions such as awe, admiration, gratitude and elevation stem from perceptions of others’ moral virtues, benevolent actions and accomplishments (Haidt, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Weiner, 2006). While not an exhaustive catalogue, these emotions are some of the most common in moral typologies of emotion (Haidt, 2003), and their associated concerns and appraisals are key to the social regulation of the self, others and the community. With these links in mind, we now detail some of the intuitions expected to underlie particular emotions, as well as how they relate to judgments and behaviors of morality and justice.

**Anger and Responsibility**

Responsibility for one’s actions is integral to the sense of justice, and anger is the quintessential emotion of responsibility and accountability. Anger “accuses” another individual of behaving unjustly, causing harm or infringing on others’ due rights or freedoms. When angry, people attribute violations to stable, controllable, and internal causes (Averill, 1983; Quigley & Tedeschi, 1996; Weiner, 2006). Crucially, anger not only arises out appraisals of responsibility, it also seems to act as a moral intuition of responsibility. The mere presence of anger leads to ascribing blame for a person’s actions (Solomon, 1989). In a germane study, (Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998), participants read about hypothetical transgressions, such as selling someone a defective automobile. Participants who had been made to feel angry in a prior, unrelated context automatically attributed
more responsibility and intentionality to the transgressor, and recommended harsher punishment, compared to individuals not previously made to feel angry. Thus, judges used their anger to infer details about the crime and the appropriate remedial action. Other conditions in this illustrative study revealed that people are able to take a corrective step to overcome the powerful emotions that helped shape their sense of justice. Some participants were told they would have to explain their responses to an esteemed investigator, and were thus held accountable for their judgments and punitive recommendations. These participants showed less inclination to accuse and punish, compared to those not expecting to have to justify their decisions.

Guided by the view that anger is intimately tied to attributions of moral responsibility, other researchers have examined how anger and sympathy lead to contrasting punitive decisions for transgressions or crimes such as murder (Graham, Weiner, & Zucker, 1997). For example, in the week following the highly publicized arrest of O.J. Simpson for an alleged double murder, participants from the city of Los Angeles who believed that Simpson was guilty were asked to estimate how internal (vs. situational), stable, and controllable were the causes of his alleged actions. Participants were also asked about the type (retributive vs. utilitarian) and severity of punishment they thought he deserved. Participants who thought the causes of Simpson’s alleged actions were under his control were less sympathetic, more angry, viewed him as more blameworthy, and ultimately meted out harsher punishment sentences than individuals who attributed less controllability. Moreover, feelings of anger corresponded with preferring retributive, eye-for-an-eye type of punishment. That is, angrier participants were inclined to give the defendant “what [he] deserved” when rendering a sentence. Sympathy corresponded with selecting a utilitarian punishment geared towards preventing future suffering and crime. That is, sympathetic participants preferred punishment sentences with a goal to change the defendant’s future behavior and deter others from crime. Similar results were obtained in a follow-up study examining reactions toward a hypothetical murder case where intentionality, responsibility and controllability were purposefully made ambiguous. Moreover, in a fashion consistent with the appraisal tendency framework, this study also found that reported feelings of anger and sympathy, to some extent, directly predicted different punitive judgments.

Finally, equity theory (e.g., Tyler & Smith, 1996; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973) provides a perspective on the intuitions of anger for distributive justice in relationships. Equity theory presupposes that the balance of material, social, and psychological exchanges is central to the social dynamics of relationships, and that this balance is vital to a sense of justice. Emotions play a critical role in signaling inequities and in motivating restorative
actions. Perceiving that one has made greater contributions to a relationship or has received too little in return most commonly results in anger or resentment, and steps are taken to restore the balance. In this way, anger acts as an intuitive calculus of inequity, as well as a mechanism to motivate the reinstatement of equilibrium.

**Guilt and Responsibility**

On the flip side of anger is an emotion that ascribes responsibility for injustices and wrongdoing to the self: the emotion of guilt (e.g., Keltner & Buswell, 1996; Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996). Positive inequities—receiving more from a relationship partner than would be merited by one's own inputs—are a common source of guilt, particularly in close relationships. Guilt motivates reparative behaviors in relationships and is thus essential to fulfilling human's basic need for relatedness (Baumeister et al., 1994). A key appraisal of guilt is therefore a sense of responsibility, as it applies to other's suffering (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). As yet, no empirical studies have examined guilt from an appraisal tendency perspective of moral intuitions, but its link to responsibility and control warrants such investigation. We would expect, for example, that individuals made to feel guilty, even in a prior unrelated context, would automatically assume greater blame for injustices in their social environment, and that they would be more likely to initiate actions to restore just relations.

**Compassion, Vulnerability, and Self-Other Similarity**

Other fundamental elements of just relations involve the response to others’ suffering and the compelling urge to aid those in need (Hume, 1777/1960; Smith, 1759/2002; Solomon, 1990). Harm, in fact, may be a common, universal factor in moral and justice-related judgments (e.g., Turiel, 2002). The emotion of compassion is closely related to issues of harm, need and helping. Compassion has historically been hailed as the “foundation of the social instinct” originally evolved from caregiver-child attachments, and now extending to nonkin (e.g., Darwin 1874/1952). Feelings of compassion enable individuals to overcome selfish tendencies in order to help others (Batson & Shaw, 1991). The link between compassion and helping behaviors is well-established, with studies consistently showing that compassion and sympathy reliably predict increased helping, even when such behaviors incur costs to the self (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Eisenberg et al., 1989). Important to the present analysis, it is generally accepted that appraisals of harm, weakness, need and vulnerability provide the initial step in the compassion-helping sequence (Haidt, 2003).

Recent investigations have informed our understanding of the compassion’s intuitions as well as the ways in which they juxtapose other processes
of moral judgment. Some have noted that distributional principles of fairness, such as equity and equality, can come into conflict with the principle of need the sense of compassion. In one set of studies (Batson et al., 1995) participants were asked to allocate tasks of differing appeal to two ostensibly workers. One of the workers was portrayed as suffering from a relationship breakup. Half of the participants were made to feel compassion for this worker through perspective-taking, while the other half were given instructions to make them feel detached. Compassionate participants preferentially allocated the distressed worker the more appealing task. Emotionally detached participants however, employed an impartial, need-blind procedure—they flipped a coin to determine task assignment. A second study showed that participants feeling compassion for a fictitious cancer patient were more likely to bump the patient up on a list to receive benefits from a charity (with the consequence that other children would be moved down on the list). Compassion, quite clearly in these studies, led to the preference of need over other criteria, such as equality or impartiality, in the allocation of resources.

A special quality of compassion that may shed light on these studies is the extension of caring and concern to individuals far removed from the self. Furthermore, the benevolence moved by compassion is not restrained by explicit expectations of reciprocity. We have recently argued that compassion may produce broad effects upon moral judgment due to its association with the moral intuition of perceived similarity between self and other, especially when harm or weakness is detected (Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2007). From an appraisal tendency perspective, compassion shifts cognition to represent the social world in line with appraisal themes of shared identity, common experiences, suffering, vulnerability and need. In three studies, participants were asked to make ratings of how similar they were to a variety of social groups or pictures of individuals. Participants' dispositional levels of compassion were ascertained, and in some studies, participants were induced through slideshows to feel either compassion or pride, a positive, self-focused comparison emotion. Overall, the findings supported an interpretation of compassion as an intuition of self-other similarity. First, at the state and trait level, compassion enhanced ratings of similarity between the self and other groups or other individuals. Secondly, these effects depended on the perceived vulnerability of the target. Compassion enhanced ratings of similarity to relatively weak and powerless targets (e.g., small children, elderly people) more so than relatively strong and powerful targets (e.g., corporate lawyers, professional athletes). Finally, vagal tone, a putative physiological marker of social connection (Porges, 1995, 1998), correlated positively with perceptions of increased similarity to others. These intuitions in turn are likely to support the helping, altruism and cooperation vital to group living.
These findings have clear implications for justice judgments and decisions. We have seen that sympathy leads to preferences for less severe and more reform-minded punishments. This may be due to the heightened perceptions of self-other similarity between judge and transgressor. Elevated levels of compassion, assessed at the state or trait level, may also guide judgments related to resource allocations. We would hypothesize a preference for allocating more resources to those who need it than to those earned it, consistent with earlier work on compassion directed towards a specific individual (Batson et al., 1995). Put differently, a sense of fairness and justice would be guided by a sense of caring.

**Disgust and Purity**

Human morality at times involves efforts to elevate the self from animal instincts, and to achieve a sense of divinity. An emotion closely related to this aim is disgust (Rozin, Haidt, & Mc Caulley, 1993; Rozin & Fallon, 1987). Disgust is thought to “guard the soul” by preventing individuals from behaving or coming into contact with objects believed to degrade or contaminate—be they spoiled foods, bodily products, sexual practices, bugs, or maligned individuals. Purity and cleanliness are moral virtues of disgust, while filth and pollution are moral desecrations.

Consistent with its classification as a “moral emotion” (Haidt, 2003), disgust is known to magnify moral responses to transgressions. In one study (Wheatley & Haidt, 2005), participants were hypnotized to feel revulsion when they encountered a neutral target word (“take” or “often”). These participants subsequently read and made moral judgments about the actions portrayed in hypothetical moral scenarios. Participants made harsher moral judgments when the disgust-eliciting target word was subtly embedded in the text of the scenario.

Moreover, it is plausible that disgust is particular effective at shifting moral judgments for matters related specifically to purity and impurity, as per the appraisal tendency framework. Sex is a core purity issue in many cultures, particularly sexual acts that seem to deviate from people’s conceptions of natural and appropriate sexuality (Rozin et al, 1999a; Vasquez et al., 2001). One study demonstrated that for both liberals and conservatives, spontaneously expressed discomfort and disgust towards various “deviant” sexual behaviors best predicted moral criticism of the behaviors (Haidt & Hersh, 2001). Similarly, participants in the U.S. and Brazil, especially those high in socioeconomic status, who expressed repugnance towards harm-free scenarios of sexual impurity and non-normative eating (e.g., sex with a chicken carcass that was subsequently consumed) also were more likely to condemn these activities (Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993).

In a direct test of the thesis that disgust specifically moralizes purity concerns, Horberg & Keltner (2007) explored whether disgust would enhance
moral reactions to purity more so than other domains of morality such as rights, harm or benevolence. Indeed, whether disgust was temporarily induced through video clips or measured as a trait emotion, high disgust participants punished impure behaviors, such as poor personal hygiene and sexual permissiveness, more severely than their low disgust counterparts. Likewise, they more richly rewarded purifying behaviors, such as maintaining a healthy body and meditation than low disgust participants. Importantly, these enhanced moral judgments seemed to be limited to purity matters. Disgust did not predict punishment or reward of behaviors more relevant to the ethic of Autonomy (e.g., voting, stealing) or harm and benevolence (ridiculing someone, helping someone in need). In light of these findings, we suggest that emotions and their appraisals can profoundly alter the intuitive moral lens through which social stimuli are evaluated, such as prioritizing matters of purity when disgusted.

CONCLUSION: PASSIONS FOR JUSTICE

People have passions for justice, which often take the form of specific, quickly emerging emotions such as compassion, anger, or disgust. These emotions contain appraisals that are intertwined with morality and justice, including harm, responsibility, purity and hierarchy. Emotions sway moral and justice-related judgments in domains related to these core appraisals, and lead to swift, resolute decision-making about whether to ostracize, punish or praise, and how to allocate resources and tasks.

The benefits of moral intuitions for social behavior are far-reaching. Some have noted that most moral decisions achieved through slower, principle-based reasoning processes (“it is wrong to purposefully harm others”; “helping others is good”) would mirror those instantaneously provided by intuitions (Kagan, 1984). In the long run, moreover, these rapid affective decisions may even lead to fewer errors than complex, deliberative analyses (Sunstein, 2003). Finally, intuitions are highly efficient, and thereby crucial for navigating the abundant, complicated information encountered in the social environment. In terms of achieving fair and just relationships, for example, it is difficult to precisely calculate levels of equity in material and psychological exchanges. An intuition that “things are unfair” would be critical. An emotional intuition, such as anger or guilt, that further motivates one to seek corrective action or engage in relationship-enhancing behaviors, may be ultra functional.

The appraisal tendency framework points to several areas of inquiry that call for further research. Clearly required are more specific studies mapping distinct emotions to specific justice judgments, such as whether need, equality, or equity should prevail in the allocation of resources, credit, and
work. One could also extend applications of the appraisal tendency framework to the interesting question of moralization. Under what conditions do matters of injustice become moralized in the individual's or collective's consciousness? Our framework would suggest that this happens when issues of justice are framed as specific ethics—such as autonomy, community, purity or need—that match a pre-existing emotional state. An angry, frustrated individual or body politic, for example, is likely to find unjust acts that violate matters of freedom and rights to be more unjust than violations of duties or purity. Just as interesting are instances when actions lose their moral evocativeness, and no longer trigger passions for justice. These actions then seem to be characterized as social conventions or preferences, as may be the case for recent historical shifts in evaluations of sexual orientations (Rozin, 1999). Again, we believe an appraisal tendency framework helps illuminate this interesting process. For instance, repeated exposure to certain behaviors or social groups previously viewed as disgusting and impure may decrease the negative moral emotions associated with them, and consequentially temper the impulse to condemn them. It is our hope that empirical studies of these kinds of issues will illuminate the mechanics of our passion for justice, and reveal that in fact, there are really many passions for many justices.

REFERENCES


