

Appraisal and Machiavellian Emotion

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Abstract

Emotional appraisal happens at more than one level. Low-level appraisals involve representations that are semantically coarse-grained, fuse the functional roles of belief and desire and have impoverished inferential roles, making it best to think of them as sub-conceptual. Multi-level theories of emotional appraisal are thus best conceived, not as theories of the actual conceptual content of emotional appraisals, but as ecological theories that identify the aspects of the environment that appraisal processes are tracking using diverse cognitive means. These aspects of the environment are what the environment 'affords' the organism. Some of these affordances are 'goal-affordances' - possibilities for future action. This perspective on emotional appraisal lends support to the idea that emotional appraisal is in part 'Machiavellian' or 'strategic'. Organisms take into account the payoffs resulting from an emotional response when determining whether the eliciting situation 'warrants' that emotion.

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