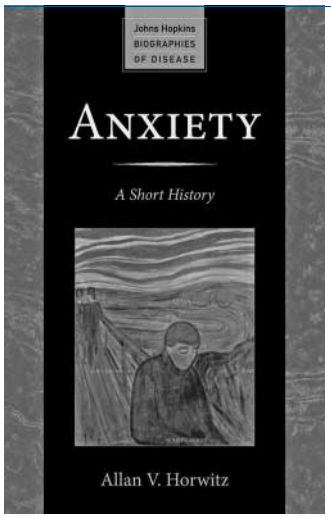
BJPsych | The British Journal of Psychiatry (2014) 205, 250–252

Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyebode and Rosalind Ramsay



Anxiety: A Short History

By Allan V. Horwitz.
Johns Hopkins University Press. 2013.
£24.95 (pb). 208 pp.
ISBN: 9781421410807

This interesting book charts the development of the concept of anxiety from Classical Greece to the era of DSM-5. Throughout history, one observes a perpetual oscillation between physical and psychological explanations for anxiety. An example of the former is George Beard's neurasthenia which perfectly captured the zeitgeist of the 19th century and the various stresses associated with progress and civilisation. He situated it clearly in the realm of physical conditions, 'employing drugs, injections, electricity and the like and did not use psychological therapies [which] helps account for the immense popularity the diagnosis enjoyed: it removed a stigma from people who suffered from what they and their physicians could believe was a genuine physical disease' (p. 67).

Brain and mind continue to shift in and out of fashion. Citing a historical perspective, Horwitz resists the recent swing back towards biological explanations and maintains that '[c]urrent views of anxiety and its disorders . . . are infused with cultural templates, social influences, and material interests' (pp. 3–4). His concerns remind me of the preface to Hunter & Macalpine's *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry 1535–1860* (Oxford University Press, 1963), encouraging the re-integration of psychiatry with medicine, 'so long as it does not mean putting the clock back and once again summarily equating mind disease with brain disease and so denying the heterogeneous group of illnesses and conditions which make up psychiatry their distinctive features and the special skills and methods they demand – the hard learned lesson of the past' (p. ix).

The normality or abnormality of anxiety is a complex issue and perhaps this book raises more questions than anything else, not least, exactly what it is the author is criticising – is it DSM, brain-based explanations, or current delineations of 'normal' *v.* 'pathological' anxiety? In any case, these questions are central to the practice of psychiatry and I suspect we would all benefit from this reminder of the complexity of people and the problems which occasionally lead them into contact with a psychiatrist.

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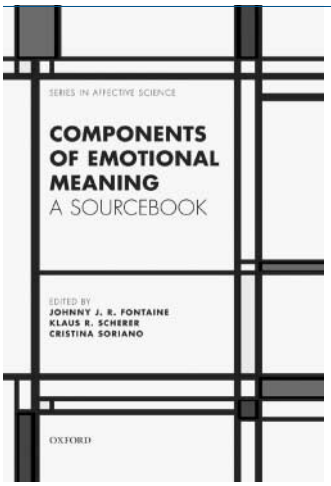
doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.114.144659



Components of Emotional Meaning: A Sourcebook

Edited by Johnny J. R. Fontaine, Klaus R. Scherer & Cristina Soriano.
Oxford University Press. 2013.
£60.00 (hb). 672 pp.
ISBN: 9780199592746

Emotions have gradually replaced instincts in human evolution, allowing flexible and varied responses in a more complex environment. However we understand the exact nature of an emotion (and there is relatively little common agreement on this), it is apparent that we can examine the local meaning of an emotion term in different languages and contexts. The large international project reported on here is driven by psychology but informed also by philosophy, anthropology and linguistics. Forty-five papers (none from Britain) evaluate the development and findings of a Swiss-driven cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary project which presumes that emotion is an episode during which different subsystems (components of an emotion) are coordinated to adapt to environmental contingencies, and that emotion labels vary cross-culturally depending on what subsystem they emphasise. Some, for instance, emphasise the factors that give rise to an emotion (e.g. being jostled leading to anger), whereas others emphasise physiological aspects or interpersonal consequences (e.g. blushing when shamed leading to avoidance of others).

There are interesting general discussions here on the role emotion terms have in 'anchoring' a particular emotion, and on the translation of emotion terms from one language into another, but the book concentrates on the development of an instrument (the GRID) intended to empirically assess the meaning of emotion words in different languages through 142 emotion features. These features are grouped as the appraisal of the situation causing the emotion, the bodily symptoms, facial and bodily expression, resultant actions, subjective feelings and the degree of experienced control. Twenty-four emotion terms in English, along with their usual translations in 24 languages (largely Indo-European) are sampled in 27 countries.

Multiple cross-correlations help to answer certain basic questions as to the relative weight of linguistic and cultural influences. Thus *despair* (in English) and *etsipera* (Basque) have more in common with each other than either do with *desesperación* (Spanish), the former being instances of a more general sadness category. Is *toska* (Russian) closer to English *sadness* than to *anxiety* or *fear*? Yes. Pride in Northern Italy (*orgoglia*) seems more personal and ego-related than in the South. In general, guilt cognates appear more concerned with other people than the traditional guilt/shame dichotomy of American anthropology would argue. And happiness in the USA seems more associated with personal achievement than in Japan, where it goes along with the fulfilment of others' expectations. So, some predictions verified, some not.

The GRID instrument seems well adapted for work in different Indo-European languages. In practice, it appears less successful for comparing others, presumably because a common