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Response to Jeremy D. Popkin's review of William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*.

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Reading Jeremy Popkin's thoughtful review of *The Navigation of Feeling* has inspired in me gratitude tinged with dismay. Gratitude for the careful, largely accurate summary of the successive stages of the book's argument; dismay at finding myself likened to Martha Nussbaum, Reinhart Koselleck, and Carl Schmitt. Gratitude for the warm praise of my effort to rethink the French Revolution; dismay that Jeremy Popkin found my treatment teleological, that he inferred I approved of early nineteenth-century liberalism, and that he located me firmly within the "liberal tradition." In what follows I focus on the dismay, but that should not obscure that, in fact, gratitude is the stronger of my sentiments for such an intelligent evaluation.

Cultural relativists, Popkin warns, will counter my argument with the objection that "there may be groups, even whole cultures, for whom emotional suffering is not the greatest evil." But this is a problem of definition, not of substance. It is a widely recognized difficulty of cultural relativism that it can identify no evil whatsoever. I define "emotional suffering" as something unwanted. I would therefore exclude from this category suffering that is embraced by the sufferer, such as that of the athlete or that imposed by long-established rites of passage—if, and only insofar as, they are indeed embraced. (I do not at all propose to give such practices carte blanche.) I fully support current efforts to explore suffering, to recognize its cultural variability;^[1] but I insist that, in the end, we can and must identify kinds of suffering that are unwarranted and unjust. Practices both traditional and new may involve "torture," for example—that is, the pitting of a person's highest goals against each other. Torture does not require physical pain. There are numerous instances in which torturers have forced victims to witness pain inflicted on others; the suffering that results derives from the conflict between the goal of preserving and caring for the other (whose pain is witnessed) and the goal of preserving the causes, principles, or groups that one's torturers wish to destroy.^[2] Two unconditional goods come into conflict—inherently, such a conflict is unwanted, and the result is a prominent type of emotional suffering. Minimizing the ravages of this type of suffering is a worthy, universally valid political goal. Painless torture may not work; it entails a guess about what matters to the victim that may be wrong. Like the torturers, we, too, must guess about what really matters to people, and outlaw the torturers' crimes. Emotional navigation (accomplished through the self-exploring and self-altering effects of emotional expression), difficult and painful as it often is, rests upon our astonishing capacity to reconceptualize ourselves and our worlds—a capacity that outstrips, necessarily, our more limited capacity for "reason," that is, for attentive, skeptical evaluation of ideas and behaviors. It is because of this capacity that cultural variation and cultural history arise. On this capacity also rests individual variation and individual change. A cultural formation, therefore, is more just and brings less suffering when it allows individual navigation greater free play. The fact that it is not always easy to say what suffering is embraced—not easy to say, therefore, which cultural orders are more or less oppressive—is surely unfortunate. But such an approach still puts us in a much better position than cultural relativism. One might, this way, have a criterion on which to judge, for example, a sweat shop in southeast Asia as unjust, a criterion other than the ethnocentric Marxist notion of "exploitation" (or its liberal variants), a

criterion other than a vapid (and ill-defined) notion that the sweat shop is not in accord with local culture.

One cannot inflict such suffering, by the way, in the name of minimizing it. I see no possibility for the end justifying the means. Like Christine Walley or Veena Das, I believe political reform is most effectively advanced by a form of activism that is free of denigration.[3] But I differ from, say, Richard Rorty, in that I believe that politics matter in theory as well as practice. To justify political action merely on the grounds that we happen to have a "culture of rights," as Rorty seems to do, is not enough.[4] The current crisis of the subject has undermined both liberal and Marxist pieties. I am hardly alone in finding that poststructuralism, for all its merits as a tool of demolition, fails to provide the final word on oppression and liberty. If that makes me a liberal, so be it.

An additional concern in devising the theory of emotional navigation, besides the problem of redefining liberty and re-grounding political judgment, was the issue of historical explanation.[5] New cultural history, despite its persistent focus on matters of great political importance, has been unable to weave a coherent narrative of modern history. There is a tendency for the field to produce accounts of what I am tempted to call "just one damn discourse after another." [6] But if the theory of emotions I proposed is correct, there are clear consequences for historical explanation.

Emotional regimes may vary across a great range, but the possible variation is not infinite. Some constraints derive from the theory itself. The theory predicts that expressing an emotion often leads to activation of confirming thought material and that practicing prescribed emotional expressions often leads to the development of effective habits. Such habits ensure individuals do "find" that they feel what they say the feel. (The success of such emotional "management" was the discovery of pioneering studies by Hochschild and Wikan.[7]) The weight of habit can make a confirming response to an emotional expression seem involuntary, even "natural," even though it has been habituated by frequent repetition. The theory also implies that sincerity is a misleading concept. This is not to say that individuals may not lie about what they feel. However, because we shape what we feel by expressing emotions—often by expressing emotions that are prescribed and whose absence is penalized—it is wrong to suppose that emotional expression is a form of "mere report" which can be either true or false.

In the historical segment of the book, I argue that the eighteenth-century emotional style called "sentimentalism" was very effective in taking advantage of the power of emotives to shape feelings. Its ability to do so helps to account for its remarkable success, as well as for the effusive, lachrymose excesses it gave rise to by the 1770s and 1780s. But the doctrine underlying this style taught that feelings of benevolence or pity evoked by prescribed emotives were "natural" as well as virtuous. Because expression of natural feeling was the key to virtue, affectation, hypocrisy, what Fried calls "theatricality" became the most salient signs of vice.[8] Under the Terror, sincerity became a lawfully imposed standard (for example, when citizens sought *certificats de civisme* or members of the Convention attempted to turn aside accusations of conspiracy). The theory of emotional navigation suggests that when sincerity is imposed by law, backed by the death penalty, its pursuit is likely to cause many to feel ill at ease. All emotional expression is tainted by uncertainty about how it will turn out. As a result, under the Terror, all citizens might begin to feel secretly suspicious of their own sincerity. And such suspicion might feed on itself, sapping their capacity to carry off effective expressions of patriotic fervor, expressions very similar to those which, before 1789, they carried off routinely.

Thus, the theory of emotives can offer at least a partial explanation of sentimentalism's rise and its fall. In the book, I caution that "This is not to say that sentimentalism was responsible for the Terror in all its detail" (p. 210) and proceed to list the principal features of the critical conjuncture of 1792-94. I should have underscored this point more carefully. In a fuller account, I could have made clear that I do not consider sentimentalism to be the only factor in the Terror's rise and fall. But I do believe that it was a very important factor in shaping the outcome of the Revolution and that it is time we—that is, we

who hope at least in part to explain history--stop ignoring it. In this respect, I think there is a yawning gap between my approach and that of Koselleck.

I have no particular preference for the type of regime that followed the Terror. In the book I only wished to show that the theory of emotional navigation can help to explain the relatively greater stability of the First Empire, the Second Restoration, and the July Monarchy, when compared to the First Republic. Sadly, the profound pessimism about human nature (and about the usefulness of emotions in guiding choice) of the early nineteenth-century liberals was, I believe, an important element in this stability. These oppressive regimes were more livable than the impossible Jacobin regime, with its impossible belief in the importance of sincerity in all public expression. Keeping up appearances was all the liberals insisted on. Some free play was thus available, if only in the shadows.

I disagree with Jeremy Popkin that the freedom promised in Article 4 of the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen included "the activities that Reddy has summed up as the navigation of emotions." Because of sentimentalism's peculiar doctrine about natural virtue, in the first place, the regimes of 1789-94 offered little freedom to navigate one's emotional life, certainly less than the old regime. Because of the glorification of reason and the systematic denigration of emotions (and of supposedly emotional persons such as women, children and non-white males) typical of early nineteenth-century liberalism, the more stable regimes that came after 1800, while less intrusive, remained highly oppressive in character. Popkin cites the divorce law of 1792, but he knows that its provisions lasted only until the reforms introduced by the Civil Code in 1804. A severely limited provision for separation by mutual consent was conserved until 1816--but only, as Napoleon saw it, as a way of protecting family honor (when the only recourse was public denunciation of a woman's infidelities). Genuine separation by mutual consent did not return until 1975. Until that date, women (the overwhelming majority of those who sought to exit marriages) had to provide elaborate proofs of public humiliation or physical violence to escape abusive husbands. This is just one example among hundreds one could cite (the inequities of the Le Chapelier and d'Allarde laws are another; press laws, theater censorship, violence in the schools, all the workings of the "civilizing mission" are still others) of systematic state policies aimed at inflicting severe suffering on individuals who deviated from the secularized stoicism of postrevolutionary liberal orthodoxy. A regime that truly sought to protect the navigation of feeling in all its manifestations would look very different from any regime of the liberal tradition.

I took careful note, in my discussion of the early nineteenth century, of the rise of utopian socialism. I suggested that the utopians, in a way, carried on the banner of sentimentalism (as did George Sand, Flora Tristan, and *some* republicans--Raspail, but not Carrel; Hugo, but not Marrast). I am in perfect agreement with Jeremy Popkin on this point. I would happily add Michelet to this list. But the differences between their thinking and the thinking and self-experience of prerevolutionary sentimentalists are nonetheless quite stark. The impact of Romanticism was inescapable, and the Romantic construal of emotions was very different from that of Diderot or Rousseau. Doubtless, the spring of 1848 saw the final defeat of even these vestiges of sentimental ideas about politics, as Jeremy Popkin suggests.

My aim, in the historical section, was, in short, to propose a method of historical explanation, not to provide an apology for this or that regime. My utopia would, in any case, look more like Judith Butler's than like Martha Nussbaum's. I welcome the opportunity afforded me by the H-France book review program to clarify this point. And I thank Jeremy Popkin, again, for this truly generous evaluation. I am now more acutely aware than before of the places where my exposition remains in need of correction and amplification.

NOTES

[1] See, for example, David Le Breton, *L'anthropologie de la douleur* (Paris: Éditions Métailié, 1996); Veena Das, "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain," in *Social Suffering*, ed. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 67-91; also Talal Asad's article in the same anthology, "On Torture, or Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment," pp. 285-308.

[2] Just two examples, Algeria and Argentina: Raphaëlle Branche, *La torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), esp. pp. 127-136; and Antonius Robben, "The Assault on Basic Trust: Disappearance, Protest, and Reburial in Argentina," in *Cultures under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma*, ed. Antonius C. G. M. Robben and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 70-101, esp. p. 79.

[3] Christine J. Walley, "Searching for 'Voices': Feminism, Anthropology, and the Global Debate over Female Genital Operations," *Cultural Anthropology* 12 (1997): 405-438; and Veena Das, "Wittgenstein and Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 (1998): 171-95.

[4] Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," in *On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993*, ed. Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 111-134.

[5] Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 1-34; see also Craig Calhoun, "Explanation in Historical Sociology: Narrative, General Theory, and Historically Specific Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 104 (1998): 846-871; Margaret R. Somers, "'We're No Angels': Realism, Rational Choice, and Relationality in Social Science," *American Journal of Sociology* 104 (1998): 722-784.

[6] There are exceptions, of course, such as Ann Laura Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995). Exceptional in taking Foucault's historical work seriously as history (not just theory), she proposes a powerful alternative in her notion of the "education of desire"—one that is very close to the notion of emotional navigation I have proposed.

[7] Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Unni Wikan, *Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[8] Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

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