“Whoever Did Not See the Rejoicing of the House of Drawing, Never Saw Rejoicing in His Life”
(mSukkah 5:1): The Role of High-Arousal Memories in Post-Destruction Judaism

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Emotions in Rabbinic Literature: Methods and Approaches
Overview

1. What are emotion? (Antonio Damasio)
2. Emotions as a dimension for the analysis of rituals (CSR)
3. Emotions as a component of a complex system
4. How to use this perspective to read Jewish texts?
5. Joint discussion (in lieu of a summary)
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1. What are emotion?  
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1. “Feelings of pain or pleasure or some quality in between are the bedrock of our mind.” (p. 3)

2. “a feeling is the perception of a certain state of the body along with the perception of a certain mode of thinking and of thoughts with certain themes” (p. 86)

3. “because [the feelings’] essence consists of the thoughts that represent the body involved in a reactive process.” (p. 86)
1. “[a] feeling of emotion is an idea of the body when it is perturbed by the *emoting process*” (p. 88)

1. “the most advanced variety of the phenomenon... encompasses the following: the body states that are the essence of the feeling and give it a distinctive content; the altered mode of thinking that accompanies the perception of that essential body state; and the sort of thoughts that agree, in terms of theme, with the kind of emotion being felt” (p. 89)

2. “there is a rich interplay between the object of desire and a wealth of personal memories pertinent to the object – past occasions of desire, past aspirations, and past pleasures, real or imagined” (p. 95)

**EMOTING PROCESSES:**
- Perception
- Memory Retrieval
- Action Planning
- Linguistic Processing

- Narratives
- Autobiographical memories
- Skills
- Propositions
- Culturally postulated concepts

*Mode of thinking* → *Body state*

**EMOTING PROCESSES:**

- **PERCEPTION**
- **MEMORY RETRIEVAL**
- **ACTION PLANNING**
- **LINGUISTIC PROCESSING**

- **mode of thinking**
- **body state**
- **narratives**
- autobiographical memories
- skills
- propositions
- culturally postulated concepts

- **real, fictive, hypothetical, counterfactual, culturally postulated**

“Let us now turn to the delicate issue of “locating” the spiritual in the human organism. I do not believe that there is a brain center for spirituality in the good old phrenological tradition. But we can provide an account of how the process of arriving at a spiritual state may be carried out neurobiologically. Since the spiritual is a particular kind of feeling state, I see it as depending, neurally speaking, on the structures and operations (...) especially on the network of somatosensing brain regions. The spiritual is a particular state of the *organism*, a delicate combination of certain body configurations and certain mental configurations. Sustaining such states depends on a wealth of thoughts about the condition of the self and the condition of other selves, about past and future, about both concrete and abstract conceptions of our nature.” (p. 286)
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Recall and transmission

• Input representation (proposition, concept, narrative, rite,...)
• Saving to one’s brain: **learning**.
• Output representation (proposition, concept, narrative, rite,...)

• Do we reproduce it? Do we reproduce it faithfully, or alter it?
• Cultural epidemiology (Dan Sperber), memes (Richard Dawkins).
Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR): the “founding fathers” (relevant to our discussion) include

- E. Thomas Lawson *(right)*
- Robert N. McCauley *(left)*
  - L&McC 1990: Rethinking Religion
  - McC&L 2002: Bringing Ritual to Mind
- Harvey Whitehouse
  - HW 1995: Inside the Cult
  - HW 2004: Modes of Religiosity
Any or all three possibilities for insertion into rituals’ structural descriptions

Action representation system

McCauley és Lawson 2002 p. 27.
### Action role most directly connected with CPS-agent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of enabling rituals (structural depth)</th>
<th>Special agent rituals</th>
<th>Special patient and special instrument rituals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>Type 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Type 3</td>
<td>Type 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Type 5</td>
<td>Type 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Type 7</td>
<td>Type 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td>Further odd-numbered types</td>
<td>Further even-numbered types</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fieldwork by Dimitris Xygalatas on high arousal rituals

http://today.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Piercing1.jpg
http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/InstituteofCognitionCulture/Image5,285314,en.jpg
Harvey Whitehouse: Doctrinal and imagistic modes of religiosity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Doctrinal</th>
<th>Imagistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological Features</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Transmissive frequency</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level of arousal</td>
<td>Semantic schemas and implicit scripts</td>
<td>Episodic/flashbulb memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Principal memory system</td>
<td>Learned/acquired</td>
<td>Internally generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ritual meaning</td>
<td>Rhetoric, logical integration, narrative</td>
<td>Iconicity, multivocality, and multivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Techniques of revelation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociopolitical Features</strong></td>
<td>Diffuse</td>
<td>Intense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social cohesion</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>Passive/absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Leadership</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>Exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Inclusivity/exclusivity</td>
<td>Rapid, efficient</td>
<td>Slow, inefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Spread</td>
<td>Large scale</td>
<td>Small scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Scale</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Degree of uniformity</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>Noncentralized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Religion as a dynamic, complex system

3. Religion as a complex system:
   - Concepts, narratives, rituals, precepts and prohibitions, artefacts, sacred places and times, institutions, texts etc.…
   - interacting with each other, as well as with the immediate and distant social and physical environment,
   - result in a **dynamical system**: mental representations of…
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   - Result in a dynamical system:

   János Kertész

Embedding cultural, social, biological and physical environment

= Marie Curie Actions
Religion as a dynamic, complex system

Question:

how can Judaism be a stable system if it lacks special-agent rituals?
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The flute [was played sometimes on] five [days], and [sometimes on] six. This was the flute of the place of [water] drawing, which does overrides neither Shabbat nor holidays. They [the Sages] said: Anyone who has never seen the rejoicing at the place of [water] drawing, has never seen rejoicing in all his days.

(Sefaria.org)
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János Kertész ≠ mental representations of…
Sukkot and emotions

(Deut. 16:14-15)

1. arrests בָּּֽׂשַם בָּּֽׂשַם... והָּֽׂגִים כָּּֽׂה שָּּֽׂאָּ֖ם (15) (Lev. 23:42-43)

2. arrests בַּּֽׂשַם שֵּׁבַּּֽׂת בָּּֽׂשַם כָּּֽׂה הָּֽׂאָּ֖ם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵּל (Lev. 23:42-43)
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(Sefaria.org)
How to increase the emotional load of some ritual?

• Suggested working hypotheses:
  – The human mind requires a given amount of impulses / emotions.
  – Balanced ritual systems require a given amount of arousal.

• What can add emotions to a ritual (and so to the entire system)?
  – Special-agent rituals
  – Personal memories
  – Culturally learnt techniques
  – ... what else?
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