

# Emotion and Feeling in Mind/Body Problem

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## Emotions: windows on the body

The problem of *emotions* seems to be crucial in order to *embody* mind. I focus my attention on a particular feature of emotion, *feeling*; we *lack* at all a more *general theory of feeling*: emotion is only *one* of the many possible *felt* states and, maybe, neither the more interesting one.

*Feeling* puts in question above all cognitive approaches: as in Frijda & Swagerman (1987), cognitivism can't simply *ignore* the problems connected to the emotion-debate, above all *the role of the body*. So, by a neurobiological perspective, A. Damasio's «*background feelings*» are discussed here in order to rethink *feeling* not only as a *higher order* phenomenon and to show its intimate connection with the *body*.

## Feeling

In one of his last articles C. Castelfranchi (1998) proposes a *functional* analysis of *needs* (as *felt* states) without begging the question of *feeling* as Frijda (1987) did. He shows that in order to *feel* we can't lack *proprioception*, but, on account of the *intentional* structure of *needs* (need for..), we can't lack *mental states* too, representations. Each of them, *alone*, is not sufficient for *feeling*.

On the neurobiological side, Damasio's concept of «*background feeling*» (2003; 1999) goes back to the origin of the term «*feeling*», that is *touching*. By this perspective, *feelings*, above all *background* ones, are considered as part of the basic biological regulation of the organism.

## Under my skin (I've got you...)

In some experiments by A. Damasio (1994) and his staff, patients with prefrontal damages had to react to some emotional *stimuli*. The neuroscientist measured their reactivity by means of *skin conductance*, on account of skin is the main *tactile* organ and, at the same time, the main *viscus* of our body, involved in *interoception*.

As a result, experimental subjects didn't *feel* what they *had* to feel: they showed no connection with the *somatic* dimension of emotion. Nevertheless, amazingly, there were no differences in their *knowledge*: "simply" they didn't *feel* what they *knew* they *had* to feel in similar situations, thanks to the cortical track given from the so called «*somatic marker*».

## Knowing without feeling, feeling without knowing

Though Castelfranchi stresses the importance of the *body*, from a functional point of view, his analysis may be misleading, because it considers *feelings* as *intentional* states. In

Damasio's experiments on patients with prefrontal damages, it emerges a difference between the *somatic* level of *feeling* and the *cognitive* one of *knowledge*. There are some *feelings* in which these two dimensions are *not* necessarily connected, because they have not an *intentional* structure: it is the case of «background feelings».

So, reconsidering Castelfranchi's functional analysis, we should say that the *intentional* structure *pertains to need* (need for..), such as to every *cognitive* state, needing other cognitive structures (beliefs), *not to feeling itself*. As Damasio's *background* levels of feelings suggest, maybe *intentional stance doesn't pertain to feeling itself*, that is, rather, intimately connected with the lowest bodily states.

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