

# Emotions, language and the (un-)making of the social world

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## **1. Introduction**

The main thesis I will defend in this paper is that emotions through their effects on thoughts and language are major tools for explaining social life. Indeed, emotions are critical for the social explanation of social subjects' thinking and speaking, because emotions *motivate* and *structure* normative thinking and speeches and can contribute to the *foundation* of institutional facts. Emotions will be described as being intimately related to values and norms: emotions are the motivational grounds that motivate social subjects to articulate their reasoning and speech acts with respect to the values and norms they face and/or share in their social collective. It will be shown that each type of emotion (contempt, indignation, etc.), generates its own constitutive judgements and structures normative thinking and speech acts according to its own logic. Emotions allow us to explain how social subjects reason and argue through norms and values,

and how social subjects constitute, maintain or destroy their social institutions through language<sup>1</sup>.

Various social scientists, motivated by the methodological questions “how can we observe emotions in texts?”, have already emphasized the relation between emotions and language but by focusing mainly on narrative analysis and emotions<sup>2</sup> or on speech acts and emotions<sup>3</sup>. The links between emotions, normative judgements and argumentation do not seem to have been centrally addressed in this literature. This diagnosis is more general and concerns the dominant currents of sociological theory which tend to neglect, as sociologist Boudon (2004) explains, the importance of emotions, normative judgements and argumentation for sociological explanation. Yet, their importance can be noticed in the realm of politics where emotions and rhetoric tend to go hand in hand (Aristote, 2007; Durnova et al., 2016; Micheli, 2010; Plantin, 2011): here emotions can ground argumentation that aims at convincing an audience or at reinforcing its ideology. My paper will then be a contribution to this neglected research field in sociology.

Since argumentation is a social activity which requires speech acts, my paper will also investigate certain major relationships between emotions and speech acts, and especially the way emotions ground speech acts that have the potential power to introduce changes in social reality. An understanding of how emotions impact language and social life can be found in the influential work of Ahmed (2014) who has shown that emotions can lead to the utterance of speech acts and thus to changes in social reality. Nonetheless, the mechanisms through which these changes occur are not outlined by Ahmed. My paper will on the contrary offer such an explanation: emotions’ action tendencies can translate into speech acts that serve to linguistically realize the emotional goal of the considered emotion, and these speech acts being declarations have the power to (un-)make social reality. To do so, I will rely on an author that Ahmed does not discuss at all: John Searle. I will use his theory on how declarations contribute to the constitution, the maintenance and the destruction of institutional facts (Searle, 1998, 2010), and will partly reconsider his speech acts taxonomy through the lens of emotions (Searle, 1976).

Let me add, that different emotions will be discussed in this paper, but the examples of indignation and contempt will be used extensively over the course of the argumentation. The

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<sup>1</sup> To defend these claims the paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach by mobilizing sociological, philosophical, psychological and linguistic researches on emotions belonging to cognitivist traditions.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance Kleres (2011) and the edited volume by Flam and Kleres (2015).

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Ahmed (2014) and Reddy (2001).

reasons are twofold. First it is didactic: it appears to me that it is easier to focus on two types of emotions to make my claims while complementing some ideas with the help of other types of emotions (envy, disgust, fear, forgiveness). Second, in my discussion of how emotions can contribute through speech acts to the (un-)making of institutional facts I will present findings of sociological studies that show that in the political collective Occupy Geneva the indignation and contempt of the members of this small-scale society led them to promulgate new “legal rules” through declarations (Minner, 2015, 2018). So, it seemed convenient to me to use these two emotions throughout the paper in order to prepare the reader for this section<sup>4</sup>.

These remarks lead me to the presentation of the structure of the paper. The first section addresses the question of how emotions generate cognitive activities related to the making of evaluative and deontic<sup>5</sup> judgements, the mastering of normative concepts, and the building of normative arguments. The second section elaborates the view that emotions can ground speech acts and contribute to the (un-)making of the social world. The third section consists of the conclusion and synthesizes the arguments that I have put forth.

## 2. How emotions generate and structure normative judgements and argumentation?

Emotions are motive states that motivate individuals in different ways, affecting not only their actions, but also their thoughts. Because emotions “affect the whole organism” (Frijda, 2007)—both the body and the mind—we can say that, in addition to “action tendencies<sup>6</sup>”, emotions also possess “cognitive tendencies<sup>7</sup>”: they make people act and think in certain ways that are determined by the very nature of the emotion felt. This accounts, for example, for the fact that the thoughts of contemptuous individuals differ from those of indignant ones. In this section, I will explore the cognitive tendencies of emotions and pay particular attention to the manner in which they generate and structure normative judgements and the related argumentations.

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<sup>4</sup> In different places before this section, I will already refer to these empirical studies to backup theoretical arguments.

<sup>5</sup> Deontic judgements are judgements stating norms; that is permissions, interdictions, or obligations. These judgements are typically expressed by words like should (should not), or ought (ought not).

<sup>6</sup> Action tendencies are impulses to accomplish types of action (Frijda, 1986, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Action tendencies extend on cognitive processes (Frijda, 2007) ; that is why we can speak of the cognitive tendencies of emotions.

## 2.1. *Emotions and normative judgements*

Emotions are *thought-dependent* (de Sousa, 1987) in the sense that their occurrence depends on cognitive states (Frijda, 2007) such as belief, knowledge, memory and perception, which constitute their cognitive bases (Deonna and Teroni, 2012). These cognitive bases operate as the “cognitive antecedents” (Elster, 1999) that trigger occurrent emotions. Emotions are, however, also *thought-directing*, for they direct various kinds of cognitive states, including attention, belief, perceptual sensitivity (Frijda, 2007) and—especially important for our discussion—normative judgements (Solomon, 2003).

Emotions are thought-directing because they motivate cognition and give rise to thoughts and inferences whose nature depends on the nature of the considered emotion, and the moment that the emotion is felt. In this way, the thoughts generated during an emotional episode are “parts of the emotions” (Frijda and Mesquita, 2000: 51), or in other words, these thoughts are “constitutive” of the emotions (Nussbaum, 2001; Solomon, 2003) and are formed during the emotional episode: intrinsic cognitions are thus generated, and “sustained” (Solomon, 2003). The fact that emotions generate various kinds of thoughts and inferences contrasts with the role of their cognitive bases, which function as the emotions’ “cognitive antecedents”.

When emotionally aroused, an individual starts to think in specific ways that are anchored in the motivational tendencies of the felt emotion. The kinds of thoughts involved are dependent upon the type of emotion felt, which means that there exists a relationship of *ontological dependency* where the identity of the thought depends on the identity of the emotion. Indeed, each emotion type possesses motivational tendencies that exert effects on judgement, perceptual sensitivity, choice and decision by engendering “goal-directed processes” until “the emotion-eliciting problem is resolved” (Lerner and Keltner, 2000: 488). That is why we can speak of the *cognitive tendencies* of emotions complementing the idea that emotions have *action tendencies*. Thus, for each emotion-type, these *cognitive tendencies* imply different kinds of judgements, evaluations and perceptual sensitivities<sup>8</sup> that are related to the values (a loss, an unjustified wrong, a danger) and valuations (concern for a loved one, justice, one’s life) associated with the emotion-type (sadness, indignation, fear). A central issue in this paper’s argument is how emotions engender *normative judgements*.

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<sup>8</sup> For a psychological understanding of the relationships between emotions and cognitions or judgements of causal attribution, predictions, and perceptual sensitivities, see Lerner et al.(2015). For the different kinds of appraisal checks related to emotions see for instance Sander, Grandjean, & Scherer (2005). In this paper, I do not address the important issue of how emotions can bias our judgements.

For example, judging that something is wrong and ought to cease, and that someone is responsible for the wrong and ought to be punished are normative judgements that seem to be proper to indignation<sup>9</sup>; whereas judging that a wrongdoer is a bad person who is unworthy of belonging to one's social group, and who ought to be excluded from the group seems to be proper to contempt<sup>10</sup>. These examples allow us to say that emotions play different roles with respect to *normative judgements*: emotions seem to *explain, justify* (Deonna and Teroni, 2012) and *structure* (Solomon, 2003) normative judgements and, as a result, play a fundamental role in *argumentation* by articulating these judgements in arguments.

Different researchers have already stressed that emotions motivate value judgements (Deonna and Teroni, 2012; Haidt, 2001; Nussbaum, 2001; Prinz, 2006; Solomon, 2003). Indeed, it appears that our value judgements often *originate* and *result* from the emotions that we experience. Emotions generate, while they are being experienced, different value judgements that can be said to be *constitutive* or *intrinsic cognitions* to the felt emotions (Nussbaum, 2001; Solomon, 2003): the occurrence and the identity of these judgements are dependent upon the occurrence and the identity of the related emotion. Moreover, these judgements can be detached from the emotion since they can still subsist after the emotional episode is over. As such, these judgements can be “cognitive subsequents” of the emotion. “Cognitive subsequents” are the judgements, beliefs, suppositions, memories, etc. that *result* from the emotions. For instance, an individual can still hold the judgement that something is wrong even when she is no longer experiencing the occurrent indignation from which the judgement stemmed. Or in the case of laws motivated by emotions, the written laws can be said to be the subsequent of the relevant emotions. In this way, emotions provide both an *ontological* and a *causal explanation* for the value judgements that the individual makes.

Emotions also serve as a *justification* for these judgements (Deonna and Teroni, 2012). To illustrate this thesis, I will use an example taken from a sociological study that I conducted in the political collective Occupy Geneva. where I observed that indignation towards unjustified violence and contempt towards their perpetrators lead to the kinds of judgements reported in this section (Minner, 2018). Among the various aspects of the behaviours of the perpetrators, the most salient were: lack of respect towards other members through insults or personal attacks

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<sup>9</sup> Indignation is a reaction to unjustified wrongs (Descartes, 1996 [1649]) that were intentionally done by a wrongdoer (Strawson, 2008), and it calls for punishing the wrongdoer (Elster, 2007) in order to restore the “right” state of affairs (Minner, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Contempt is a reaction to the “unworthiness” of a person (Roberts, 2003) and it motivates so as to exclude her from one's social group (Fisher and Roseman, 2007) in order to reestablish “virtue” (Minner, 2018).

and violent attempts<sup>11</sup> to seize power, motivated by the desire to dominate and to enjoy higher prestige, rather than by a concern for the common good. These different infractions against the rules and values of the collective were appraised by the other members as types of unjustified violence and triggered much indignation. But they also triggered contempt toward the wrongdoers who, perpetrating these wrongs knowingly, were perceived from then on as “incorrigible” and as manifesting “vices.” So, in these situations of unjustified violence the judgement “This is wrong” was deemed to be justified because the indignation from which it stems was deemed to correctly fit its object (e.g. violent attempts to seize power “genuinely” exemplify a kind of wrong): the judgement was justified by indignation that was itself justified. In the same vein, the judgement “The violent individual is a bad person” was deemed to be justified because the contempt from which it resulted was deemed to correctly fit its object (e.g. a violent individual is “genuinely” unworthy in the eyes of the contemptuous): the judgement was justified by contempt that was itself justified. This means that a value judgement can be justified by an emotion that is itself justified (Deonna and Teroni, 2012).

However, emotions do more than just motivate value judgements. Emotions also present their objects in both an evaluative *and* a deontic fashion. Deontic judgements—in addition to value judgements—seem to result from the action tendencies of emotions. For example, the deontic judgements “This wrong ought to cease!” and “The culprit ought to be punished!” seem to be anchored in the action tendencies of indignation which motivates the “nullification of the wrong” (Minner, 2015) and the “punishment of the culprit” (Elster, 2007) and, while the deontic judgements “The wrongdoer ought to be excluded from our group” and “We ought to restore probity” seem to be anchored in the action tendencies of contempt which motivates the “exclusion of the wrongdoer” (Fisher and Roseman, 2007) and the “re-establishment of virtue” (Minner, 2018). This means that the deontic judgements that originate from the action tendencies of emotions can be explained and justified by the relevant emotion, just as value judgements are explained and justified by the relevant emotion.

But how can we understand the *structuring role of emotions* on normative judgements, or in other words: How do emotions articulate the “system of judgements” (Solomon, 2003) of value judgements and deontic judgements? How do they represent the motivational ground that holds these judgements together? To answer these questions, one has to turn to the intrinsic normative structure of emotions and the various ways by which to assess whether an emotion fits its objects.

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<sup>11</sup> These violent attempts consisted mainly in intimidation, psychological pressure, and threats of physical aggression.

## 2.2. *The intrinsic normativity of emotions*

One could say in a Smithian spirit (Smith, 2002: 79) that whoever appears to be the “proper” object of indignation appears to “deserve” punishment, and whoever appears to be the “proper” object of contempt appears to “deserve” to be excluded<sup>12</sup>. In that sense, normatively, indignation is *correct* if a wrong was actually committed by an ill-willed agent, and this person is the *correct* target of the tendency to punish if she really was the ill-willed agent responsible for this wrong. The same can be said for contempt. Normatively, contempt is *correct* if a wrongdoer by his or her deeds has shown that he or she is an unworthy person, and the wrongdoer is the *correct* target of the tendency to exclude if he or she is genuinely a bad person. Note that the notion of *correctness* used in this passage simply means that an emotion fits its object if it correctly represents the object as having the relevant (dis-)value (D’Arms and Jacobson, 2000; Deonna and Teroni, 2012). “Correctness” should then be distinguished from the “moral appropriateness” of emotions. In order to differentiate these two concepts, one can distinguish between two kinds of norms related to emotions: *extrinsic* norms and *intrinsic* norms (Minner, 2015). To demonstrate the contrast between the *extrinsic* and the *intrinsic* interpretations of norms, let us consider the example of envy. Consider the expression “what ought to be felt” and Victor’s envy toward Edis, a successful leader. In the *extrinsic* sense, if envy is considered a “vice” in Victor’s society, his envy will be assessed as inappropriate for moral reasons: he ought not to be envious. In the *intrinsic* sense, however, Victor’s envy can be assessed as appropriate because Edis, his rival, was a preeminent leader, and that position was a good that Victor envied. In this case, envy is “appropriate” because it *correctly* represents (or fits) its object as being enviable (D’Arms and Jacobson, 2000). This example shows that even if envy can be *socially inappropriate* for moral reasons, it can be *correct* if its object is accurately presented as being enviable (D’Arms and Jacobson, 2000). As such, envy “ought to be felt” because of the emotion’s *intrinsic norms*, but “ought not to be felt” because of *social norms* technically called “*emotion norms*” (Hochschild, 2003; Thoits, 2004)<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Smith takes the example of gratitude and resentment to analyze the different ways emotions correctly fit their objects. I substitute them with indignation and contempt because, as I have explained in the introduction, I rely on my empirical studies of Occupy Geneva that have shown that the members of this social collective collectively assessed their indignation and contempt towards wrongdoers as correct and justified and these emotions led them to create new rules for their charters of good conduct (Minner, 2015, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Note that an emotion can be both correct and socially appropriate. In the context of a given society, (just like in the collective Occupy Geneva), indignation towards unjustified violence can be deemed correct because unjustified violence is seen as exemplifying an unjustified wrong, and indignation can also be deemed socially appropriate because of the ethical values of the collective (Minner, 2015).

Returning to the examples of indignation and contempt, they show that emotions do not only have one intentional object, as is often said<sup>14</sup>, but rather have many objects that are set by the very nature of the emotion under consideration (de Sousa, 1987; Solomon, 1993). Indeed, indignation and contempt are about emotional situations that are seen as exemplifying kinds of (dis-)values (a wrong, a vice, etc.), but they also involve the person targeted by the emotions (the wrongdoer, the “vicious”), the person who feels them, (respectively, the outraged person and the contemptuous one), and the person who is seen as the “proper” target of their respective action tendencies (to punish, to exclude). In addition to these various evaluative categorizations, the emotions also involve, as noted above, different *intrinsic* norms or “affective oughts”. This means that each emotion-type presents its objects in *both an evaluative manner and a deontic one*. Indignation, for example, presents the action as harm and the agent as a wrongdoer on an evaluative basis; on a deontic basis, it presents the wrong as “requiring” indignation and the agent as having to be punished. On an evaluative basis, contempt presents the deviant as an unworthy or bad person, on a deontic one, it presents this person as “requiring” contempt and as having to be excluded. In short, indignation and contempt *ought* to be felt if their objects were, respectively, *wrong* or *unworthy*, and the wrongdoer and the despised individual *ought* to be, respectively, *punished* or *excluded*. This observation is very important: it shows that the norms apply because the related values obtain (Deonna and Teroni, 2012). There are relations of derivation, explanation and justification between the *intrinsic norms* of emotions and the *values* to which they react and that they target: the norms apply and are explained and justified because of the relevant values. This accounts for the fact that *emotions seem to bind together norms and values* and even more *to bind certain kinds of norms with certain kinds of values*. For instance, indignation brings together a valuing of the right and the good, the disvalues of an unjustified wrong and badness, and norms for punishing the wrongdoer and preventing the unjust situation from occurring again; contempt brings together a valuing of virtue, the disvalues of unworthiness and badness, and norms for excluding the contemptible and restoring virtue.

Emotions are, then, the cognitive and conative grounds that hold together the normative domain. They allow us make the “transition” between values, norms and the respective value and deontic judgements: value judgements represent the world as it is (or seems to be) by identifying certain values that (seem to) obtain, whereas deontic judgements represent the world as it should be by presenting certain norms that should be realized in the world and that can

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<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Deonna & Teroni (2012) or Elster (1999).



"carry motivational force that we experience as being under [an] obligation" (Prinz, 2006: 36) to change the world so as to adjust it both to the contents of the deontic judgements and to the concern or state of valuing<sup>15</sup> from which the emotion stems (the right, virtue, etc.)<sup>16</sup>. Emotions are thus concerned not only with "the way the world is" but also with "the way the world *ought* to be" (Solomon, 1993: 153). In that sense, emotions through norms also contribute to *promote* the values that the world ought to exemplify.

These various propositions have direct implications for the explanation of social life: emotions provide both an explanation for the presence and the validity of certain values and norms in social collectives by demonstrating how social subjects connect values and norms in their reasoning and translate them into actions. Since normative judgements and *reasoning* are concerned, we can substantiate the explanatory role of emotions by shifting our attention to language and argumentation.

### 2.3. *Emotions and argumentation*

In most social situations people verbally communicate<sup>17</sup> and, therefore, are engaged in linguistic interactions. Among them, one is particularly important: argumentation, which occurs in many social contexts and institutions. These contexts represent various communicative situations where speakers publicly develop and share arguments that, grounded in their emotions, support the normative views they hold and help convince other people of the rightness of these views (Micheli, 2010). Emotions then play a major role in argumentation and rhetoric as strategic means that are deployed in order to try to convince an audience (Aristotle, 2007; Plantin, 2011). Moreover, beyond their roles as strategic means or communicative strategies, emotions are also grounds that motivate and structure argumentation by providing the normative propositions that feature in arguments with their contents and their conceptual articulation.

As indicated in the previous section, various normative judgements result from felt emotions, and these judgements find their explanations and justifications in the (un-)justified emotions from which they stem. I would like to further nuance this observation hereby noting that these judgements are by definition "reason-responsive" in the sense that we can always ask "why-

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<sup>15</sup> Concerns can be understood as caring about something which is valuable to the individual (Roberts, 2003); that is as states of valuing (Deonna and Teroni, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> On the role of evaluations and concerns in the arousal of emotions see Frijda (2007).

<sup>17</sup> Of course communication is not only verbal, especially when it comes to emotion language. However, my focus in this paper is on speech. But see Scarantino (2017) for a pragmatic theory of emotional expressions.

questions”<sup>18</sup> about them that, in principle, have an answer: “- Why does unjustified violence cause outrage?” “- Because it is wrong!”, “- Why should it be forbidden? - Because no one should suffer from it!” Therefore, one can answer these questions by providing reasons for the judgements: “Unjustified violence is wrong because it consists of inflicting undeserved sufferings to victims and nobody ought to suffer undeservedly.” When one is engaged in the social activity of providing reasons to back up one’s judgements, one is by definition arguing. Given the emotional source of these judgements, one can say that the reasons provided are also reasons in favor of the emotion that generated the judgements. That is why, as linguist Plantin (2011) says, emotions are “arguable”: they are typically objects of justifications connected to verbal interactions between speakers who disagree or try to convince an audience. This is also true with respect to verbal interactions between speakers who try to reinforce a point of view they share with their supporters (Micheli, 2010) who are predisposed to want to feel the emotion that is argued (Hochschild, 2016). This “arguable” character is, according to Plantin, mainly related to the reason-responsiveness of the cognitive antecedents of emotions.

This, however, is only half of the story because, as noted earlier, each emotion-type possesses different intentional objects that are regimented by intrinsic norms dictated by the very nature of the emotion under scrutiny. Each of the “fittingness” relationships between an emotion and its various objects can therefore become an object of argumentation in public debate—a possibility that derives from the fact that emotions are both thought-dependent and thought-directing and can be assessed as rational based on the conditions of correctness that help assess if an occurrent emotion fits its various objects. This fittingness also provides the grounds for justifying the related evaluative and deontic judgements that feature in an argument. For instance, in order to back up his arguments, an indignant or contemptuous individual can invoke the idea that certain values are important (concerns about justice; concerns about virtue), that certain social facts obtain (unjustified violence; being a violent individual) and instantiate kinds of disvalue (an unjustified wrong; a vice), and that these facts require norms for realizing the intentional goal of the emotion (norms for punishing violent individuals; norms for excluding them) and for changing the current situations in the social world (to forbid unjustified violence; to restore virtue). Thus, this adjustment of emotions to their various objects can be assessed by a public (or by the agent herself) as being socially appropriate thanks to “emotion norms” (Hochschild, 2003). And it is true that in practice, speakers often make evaluative judgements

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<sup>18</sup> On “reason-responsiveness” and “why-questions”, see Deonna & Teroni (2012).

and argue about the appropriateness of the emotions that are manifested during verbal interactions (Micheli, 2010).

Thus, the study of the linguistic (Fontaine et al., 2013; Micheli, 2014), argumentative, and rhetorical manifestations of emotions (Micheli, 2010; Plantin, 2011; Walton, 1992) and therefore the way in which they affect social life through language (Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990) is of major importance for explaining social life. Indeed, through language the various components of emotions (evaluation, feeling, motivational tendencies, expression, neurophysiology, regulation, etc.) can be semiotized (Fontaine et al., 2013; Micheli, 2014): the different characteristics of emotions are manifested through verbal signs and are communicable, making the emotions observable in language (Micheli, 2014): speakers attribute emotions to themselves as well as to others and use the rhetoric specific to the emotion being talked about; and emotions are arguable (justifiable and explainable) by virtue of their rationality (Micheli, 2010; Plantin, 2011). Indeed, someone may argue her emotion (either experienced or faked) by invoking the reasons which provoked it (cognitive evaluation), but she may also argue the different normative judgements and reasons for acting (action tendencies) of the emotion in social contexts where social agents are required to argue.

#### 2.4. *The semantics of emotions*

Because my interest is in how emotions direct and structure thoughts, I focus on the relationship of dependency between the use of certain *normative concepts* that can appear in judgements and types of emotion. As Frijda & Mesquita (2000: 49) say “emotions [...] generate the use of concepts that sustain certain beliefs [...]”: for instance, the use of the word “cockroach” by Hutus to describe Tutsis evokes disgust (cockroaches are repelling), or the use of the word “terrorist” by Israel to describe the Palestinian guerrillas suggests danger and therefore evokes fear. In fact, *to each emotion-type seems to correspond a specific lexicon consisting of specific words or concepts that are constitutive of the rhetoric of the considered emotion-type*. For instance, the semantic field of indignation includes concepts like wrong, punishment, culprit, fault, unjust, unfair, scandal and scandalous, outrage, disrespectful, dignity, justice, respect, fairness, victim, indignation, etc., and the semantic field of contempt includes concepts like bad person, contemptible, unworthy, integrity, immorality, despicable, scorn, probity, improbity, denigration, vice, vicious, virtue, virtuous, banishment, exclusion, etc. The fact that emotion-types “possess” their own lexicon and that felt emotions generate certain kinds of thoughts means that emotions, by directing thoughts, allow individuals to use the relevant notions from the lexicon of the kind of emotion that is felt. This means that when a person experiences an

emotional episode, she will be prone to use the family of concepts of the felt emotion: *the emotion provides access to this vocabulary by bringing it to mind, selecting it and articulating it in a discourse that can be an argumentation*<sup>19</sup>.

Interestingly, the concepts at the heart of emotions are *normative concepts*. The lists given above for indignation and contempt seem to make this quite clear. And the result should be the same for words like “terrorist” or “cockroach”, which do not name a value but which are nevertheless value-laden, being connected, respectively, with danger and contamination<sup>20</sup>. These intimate connections between *axiological concepts* and emotions account for the fact that *emotions help us use and master these concepts* (Deonna and Teroni, 2012). But as mentioned earlier, emotions involve not only values but also norms. As a result, under the sway of an emotion, an individual will also be prone to use *deontic concepts* like should, ought, have to, must, etc. However, the fact remains that these deontic notions have no empirical content *per se*. Their empirical content comes from the state of affairs or the objects to which they relate and that ought to exemplify a certain value: one ought to punish the culprit, one should exclude the bad person, etc.—that is, the type of action or state of affairs that should obtain is given by the action tendencies of emotions.

### 3. Emotions, speech acts and the (un-)making of society

#### 3.1. *Emotions and speech acts*

Argumentation is typically a social activity that involves language. When they argue in front of an audience, people verbalize and exteriorize their thoughts that become public, by virtue of which they can be considered “speech acts”; that is, linguistic acts “such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, [...] referring and predicating” (Searle, 1969: 16) “in which to *say* something is to *do* something; or in which *by* saying or *in* saying something we are doing something.” (Austin, 1975: 12). After the in-depth discussion of value and deontic judgements in the previous sections, it is time now to turn our attention to the pragmatics of language and the proposition that, when uttered in public, these judgements constitute speech acts<sup>21</sup> of two different sorts: evaluative and deontic speech acts. *Evaluative*

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<sup>19</sup> This thesis only claims that emotions determine the use of certain notions and facilitate access to this vocabulary; it says nothing about the degree of mastery that people have of their own language or their ability to build clear and convincing discourse.

<sup>20</sup> In fact, both terms could also be connected with contempt: many people would consider terrorists and “racial enemies” to be contemptible. See also Ahmed (2014) on terrorism/danger/fear and racism/contamination/disgust.

<sup>21</sup> This is not the place to engage in an extensive discussion of Searle’s theory of speech acts and his taxonomy of illocutionary acts (Searle, 1976), which includes “assertives”, “directives”, “commissives”, “expressives”, and

*speech acts* report that the world exemplifies certain (dis)-values and they have the “word-to-world” direction of fit: they are correct if they correctly represent the world as having the stated value; they belong to the speech acts category of “assertive” for they represent something as being the case<sup>22</sup>. *Deontic speech acts* posit that the world ought to exemplify certain norms; they have the “world-to-word” direction of fit: they are correct if they correctly represent the world as having to realize the stated norm, and they belong to the speech acts category of “directives” for they provide direction for the realization of the state of affairs that should obtain.

Beyond motivating evaluative and deontic speech acts, emotions also motivate their own kinds of speech acts, which are related to their action tendencies<sup>23</sup>. These are sentences that are uttered and that count as the verbal realizations of the action tendencies<sup>24</sup>: “I punish you” (indignation), “I thank you” (gratitude), “I exclude you” (contempt), “I forgive you” (forgiveness), “I apologize” (guilt), etc. These action tendencies can be realized by different intentional utterances (which may be verbal or written) that are different linguistic vehicles for realizing the emotional goal. For instance, the speech act “I punish you” can be realized by a judge who says, “I sentence you to a fine of 5,000 dollars!”, or by a parent who says to her child, “Go right now in your bedroom, and think about what you did!”.

Searle would call this category of speech acts “expressive” because he says that they are related to our emotions. However, according to my argument, evaluative and deontic speech acts can also be grounded in emotions, and this kind of speech act is not simply “expressive” because it translates a genuine intention into an action that aims at realizing a certain state of affairs.

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“declarations”. Nevertheless, as I will show below, this taxonomy seems to overlap with categories used when considering emotions. For example, making an evaluative speech act that identifies a (dis-)value in the world belongs to “assertives”, making a deontic speech act that states that a norm ought to be realized belongs to “directives”, saying “ouch”, “berk” or “wow” belongs to “expressives”, and speech acts like “I punish you”, “I pardon you”, etc. belong to “declarations.” The idea of the “world-to-words” and “words-to-world” directions of fit are taken from Searle (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Ahmed (2014) argues that what I call evaluative speech acts like “this thing is disgusting” are performative and “stick” to the objects towards which the speech act is directed: to say that something is disgusting makes it disgusting. But she seems to confuse the direction of fits of evaluative speech acts. Indeed, contrast the speech acts “This rotten meat is disgusting” with “Homosexuals are disgusting”. Both speech acts are evaluative judgements but if it is meaningful to say that the first sentence is correct because rotting carcasses are correctly disgusting (a person risks to be contaminated by germs if she eats rotting meat), the second sentence is meaningless in the sense that to attribute to homosexuals the property of being disgusting is not correct. As Nussbaum (2004) argues, disgust in this last case implies magic thinking: homophobes believe wrongly that they could be morally “contaminated” by homosexuals. To distinguish properly between the direction of fits of speech acts seems then to be crucial if one wants to critic biased ideologies.

<sup>23</sup> Austin (1975) calls the performative speech acts related to emotions “behabitives”: emotions have effects on the world through language utterances. I do not use Austin’s terminology, because “behabitives” are according to my analysis “declarative” speech acts.

<sup>24</sup> Solomon (1993: 165) would talk of “verbal action” that demands “an action” dictated by “the logic and ideology of the emotion and the particular circumstances”.

Indeed, there is a difference between saying “Ouch!” or “Berk!”, which report an internal state, and saying “I apologize”, “I punish you”, etc. Thus, emotions imply “expressive” speech acts (“ouch”, “berk”), as well as intentional speech acts that can be “declarative”: when a judge sentences someone to jail (indignation), when a king pardons a criminal (forgiveness), or when someone apologizes (guilt) or congratulates a winner (admiration) in the proper social contexts, they make declarations that are *intentional* and aim at bringing about some state of affairs; they represent the world as realizing an intended fact, and have both directions of fit, for in declarations, speakers “make something the case by declaring it is the case” (Searle, 2010: 69). In fact, *intentional emotional speech acts* have an identity of their own, which is determined by the action tendencies of the given emotion. It is not simply that someone does something by saying something; it is that what is said *is* an instance of a type of emotional goal. Interestingly, these kinds of emotional speech acts are also accessible to argumentation because of the relationship of correctness that governs whether the emotions’ action tendencies are suitable for the objects that they target.

### 3.2. *Emotions and the (un-)making of society*

Interestingly, this influence of emotions on semantics, argumentation and speech acts has important implications for the organization of societies. Argumentation as a social interaction takes place in social contexts and through the use of normative language and the utterance of speech acts, emotions can contribute to the (un-)making of the social world. Indeed, language is not only descriptive, it is also constitutive of social reality (Searle, 1998): the creation, the maintenance and the destruction of institutional facts is the result of speech acts, and in particular of declarations (Searle, 1998, 2010). Since emotions can ground speech acts, among which declarations, one can say that emotions can play a fundamental role in the emergence, the iteration, and the disappearance of institutional facts. But these effects of emotions on the social world depend on various “felicity conditions” (Austin, 1975) which can be internal to the speaker (was the speaker sincere when he spoke, for instance) or external to him and dependent upon objective institutional backgrounds (who is authorized to speak, according to which collectively recognized procedures, in which relevant circumstances, etc.). But since speech acts grounded in emotions have correction conditions, these are also to be included among the felicity conditions of the uttered speech acts. For instance, the declaration “I forgive you” would be felicitous if it is uttered in the appropriate social context, by the authorized person, according to the right procedure, with sincerity, and because forgiveness is or has been

correctly felt by the speaker (i.e. the person, toward which forgiveness is felt and toward which the speech act is directed, genuinely made amends for his wrongdoings).

### 3.2.1. Legislative processes as rituals of institution

The role of emotions and speech acts in the making of social institutions can be empirically observed in the archetypal social situation of “rituals of institution”<sup>25</sup> of whom legislative processes are important specimens<sup>26</sup>. I take as an example of these my study of the emergence of the rules of the charters of good conduct in a small-scale society; the political collective Occupy Geneva (Minner, 2015, 2018). These rules consisted in the “internal legal norms” of this society, which was organized according to principles of deliberative and participatory democracy and contractualism, which constituted the institutional background of the collective<sup>27</sup>. By looking at how emotions motivated and structured the normative judgements, speech acts and arguments uttered by the members during the legislative processes (general assemblies or small working groups) which accompanied the emergence of these legal norms, the studies show that various collective emotions grounded the collective deliberations. Over the course of these deliberations the contents and the forms of the norms were discussed by the members, decided and collectively promulgated by declarations resulting from consensus. The speech acts that instituted these new institutional norms were felicitous because they were uttered by authorized persons (i.e. the members of the assembly) and according to the democratic procedural rules of the collective which stated that collective decisions ought to result from a consensus. The speech acts were also felicitous because they resulted from emotions that were collectively deemed to be socially appropriate and correctly felt. Thus, for example, from collective indignation, contempt, and forgiveness resulted respectively norms to punish deviant members, to exclude unworthy members, and to reintegrate those who, expelled from the group, had repented for their misdemeanours. These emotions then played a role in the creation of these legal norms.

Very interestingly, contempt, through dishonour and exclusion of the group, could contribute to the destruction of the social status of a member, while forgiveness, by motivating reconciliation and reintegration, contributed to honour recovery and to the recreation of the status of member. In addition, these norms were created in the context of a conscious effort to

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<sup>25</sup> On speech acts and rituals of institution see Bourdieu (2001).

<sup>26</sup> On the emotional sources of legal norms see for instance (Bandes and Blumenthal, 2012; Durkheim, 2007 [1893]; Nussbaum, 2001; Sajó, 2011, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> The members of this society followed the “fiction of the social pact”: each collective rule had to be debated, between equals, during the general assemblies, and be the object of a consensus before being adopted and recognized as legally valid within the collective.

maintain the existence of the collective over time, by its members. These empirical studies show that emotions, by grounding normative judgements, speech acts, and argumentation possess an instituting power which can contribute to the (un-)making of the institutions of a society by creating, maintaining and destroying its social institutions.

#### 4. Conclusion

Emotions by virtue of their cognitive tendencies have the potential of generating and directing thoughts: emotions motivate and structure reasoning. In that sense, each emotion type can be considered a *mode of thinking*: when indignant an individual starts to think and sustain thoughts specific to indignation; when contemptuous an individual starts to think and sustain thoughts specific to contempt. As *modes of thinking* emotions help individuals use their normative concepts, and help them use the lexicon of the given type. Emotion types bear also various normative relations to their objects and incorporate intrinsic “affective oughts” by virtue of which occurrent emotions can be assessed as (in-)correct if they (un-)fit their objects. These ideas led to distinguish between the intrinsic norms and the extrinsic norms of emotions: the first one belonging to the internal normative structure of emotion types; the second one being external emotion norms that state when emotions are socially appropriate. The notion of correctness was also associated to questions related to the explanation and justification of emotions, and of their constitutive normative judgements: emotions can be reasons for justifying and explaining their intrinsic value and deontic judgements, and emotions can be explained and justified if their cognitive bases represent correctly the world as having the value that is relevant to the emotion type under scrutiny. Because of these various explanation and justification relations emotions can be argued: individuals can build argumentations that are grounded in their felt emotions. Emotions in that sense, by virtue of being *modes of thinking*, can generate and structure arguments by providing them their contents and by articulating the norms and values associated with emotion types. Argumentation being typically a social practice by which speech acts are uttered in order to convince the public, emotions can motivate different kinds of speech acts—especially declarative ones that aim at realizing the intentional goals provided by the action tendencies of emotions: through the statement of norms, values are promoted. These account for the fact that emotions have the potential of leading to speech acts and to argumentation, and seem to play a fundamental and irreducible role in the creation, maintenance, and destruction of institutional facts. Indeed, emotions seem to be able to contribute to the (un-)making of social reality. These various theses show that emotions play a fundamental role in social explanation by providing explanation of how individuals reason with



respect to their values and norms and of how they argue in social situations thanks to their speech acts by which they can affect social life and organization. Emotions and their rhetorical manifestations are then major tools for social explanation.

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