# Windows to the Heart

Emotions

1. "Emotional expression is natural. Our bodies and nervous systems were designed to respond to stimuli with anger, fear, sadness, and so on. But culture and child-rearing practices modify the emotional responses. If emotion is natural, emotional behavior is culturally learned." (White, Changing on the Inside, p. 124). White makes some observations about emotions:

   a. Emotion is essentially a healthy mechanism, designed to protect us.

   b. Healthy emotion reflects true reality-- often more quickly than our intellects do. There are times when an intellectual grasp of the situation is not enough--we need the emotional response to stir us to action.

   c. Insanity can mess up the mechanisms governing emotional response. Since none of us has a truly clear picture of reality, all of us are at least a little "insane" and our emotional mechanisms are correspondingly messed up.
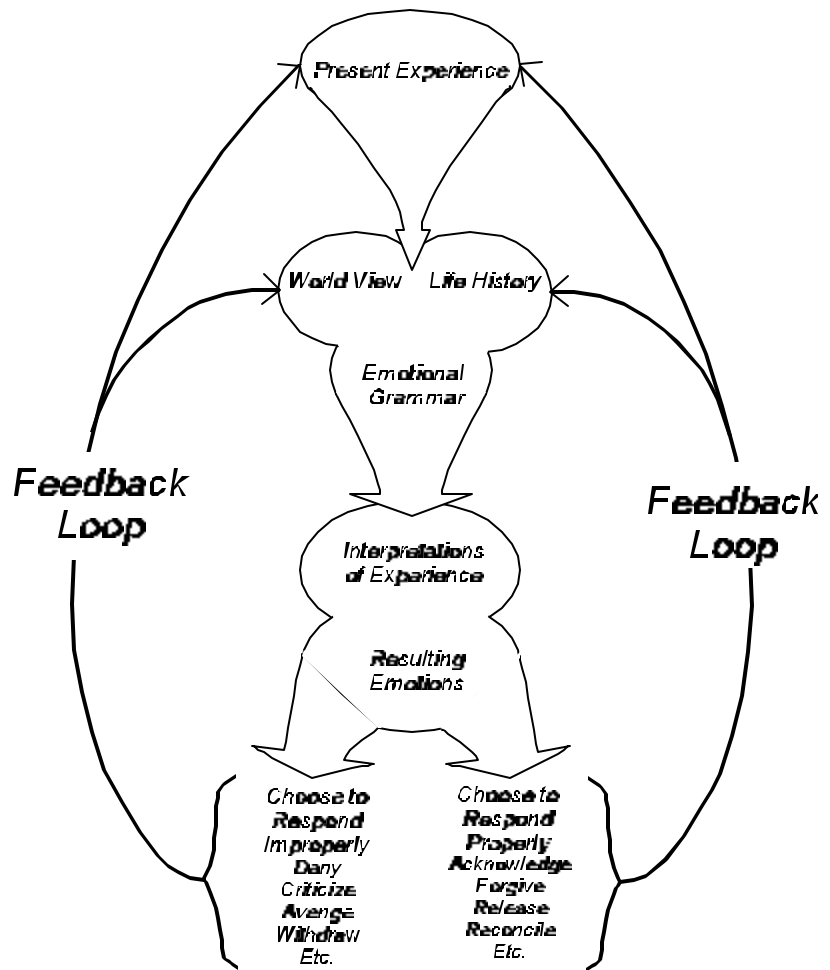
2. How do emotions arise? A cognitive approach posits that they result from our personal system of judgments or interpretations of the event(s) that we experience (see Solomon, "Emotions and Anthropology: The Logic of Emotional World Views" Inquiry 21:181-9). How do we make those judgments? The following working model may be noted:

Present Experience

World View   Life History

Emotional Grammar

Feedback Loop

Feedback Loop

Interpretations of Experience

Resulting Emotions

Choose to Respond Improperly
Deny
Criticize
Avenge
Withdraw
Etc.

Choose to Respond Properly
Acknowledge
Forgive
Release
Reconcile
Etc.

3. Hofstede values and emotions: The following charts summarize the interrelationship among the Hofstede values and emotional grammars (compiled from Matsumoto, Wallbott, and Scherer, "Emotions in Intercultural Communication"; Bond, *et al.* "How Are Responses ...?"; and Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, "Culture and Affective Communication"

    a. In the first chart, the dynamics of single dimensions of the Hofstede values are shown:

High PD	Less likely to dread fear More likely that traffic results in fear
Low PD	Injustice leads to Anger Birth/death leads to sadness More likely that novel situations lead to fear
Individualism	More likely to directly communicate emotions More likely to emphasize nonvocal and verbal expression
Collectivism	Communication more indirect Ingroup insults carry more weight Prefer to experience interest Temporary meetings more likely to lead to joy
Feminine	Less likely to see gender related variations in emotions
Masculine	More likely to see gender related variations in emotions More likely to experience distress More likely that novel situations lead to fear
High UA	Less likely to dread fear More likely that relationships lead to joy More likely that novel situations lead to fear More likely to display strong emotions
Low UA	Less likely to display strong emotions

    b. It is important to note that rarely are the single dimensions all that accounts for emotional responses. We must see how combinations affect such responses as well. The following two charts illustrate this:

	High Power Distance	Low Power Distance
Individualism		Conflict resolution approach is truth oriented Expression of negative emotions in public more acceptable

Collectivism	Those higher in PD are allowed greater freedom in insulting ingroup members but have greater obligation to prevent outbursts from others Conflict approach is process oriented with the goal of maintaining harmony Expression of negative emotions in public less acceptable	

	High Uncertainty Avoidance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance
Individualism	Allows greatest display of the full range of emotions	Display more emotions than collective Low UA cultures.
Collectivism	Display more emotions than low UA cultures, but those expressions are limited to positive expressions	Display emotions the least; positive emotions most accepted.

4. Questions for further reflection:

   a. What are the range of emotions experienced by all humans? Recent research indicates anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise (and possibly contempt) are universally *recognizable* human emotions (Matsumoto, Wallbott, and Scherer, "Emotions in Intercultural Communication", 284-5). Certainly this implies that they are universally experienced.

   b. In what way are the fruit of the Spirit (especially love, joy, and peace) to be seen as emotions (affective) and in what way are they to be seen as commitments (volition)?

   c. Are there universal links between emotion and motivation? How can these be explored?

Myth

1. Myths are are large, controlling images which give philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life.

> A mythology is more or less articulated body of such images, a pantheon. . . . Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations, upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend.
>
> Murray, *Myth and Mythmaking*, 355-6

They provide not only the lenses through which a culture brings reality into focus but also the particular blinders that keep that culture from seeing itself as others see it. (Summerhill, "Holy War within the Mythic Horizon", p. 85).

> Mythologies may convey the political and moral values of a culture and provide systems of interpreting individual experience within a universal perspective, ... Myths may be enacted or reflected in rituals, ceremonies, and dramas, and they may provide materials for secondary elaboration, the constituent myth themes having become merely images or reference points for a subsequent story, such as a folktale, historical legend, novella, or prophecy.
>
> Doty, *Mythography*, p. 11

2. Myth is intimately interrelated to the cycle of faith, world view, and life actions (see diagram). It informs and is informed by each. It also serves a mediatorial function in issues which cross boundaries among the three. As any of them changes, myth is either changed or reinterpreted, which has a corresponding impact on the other two.
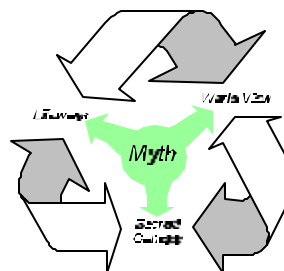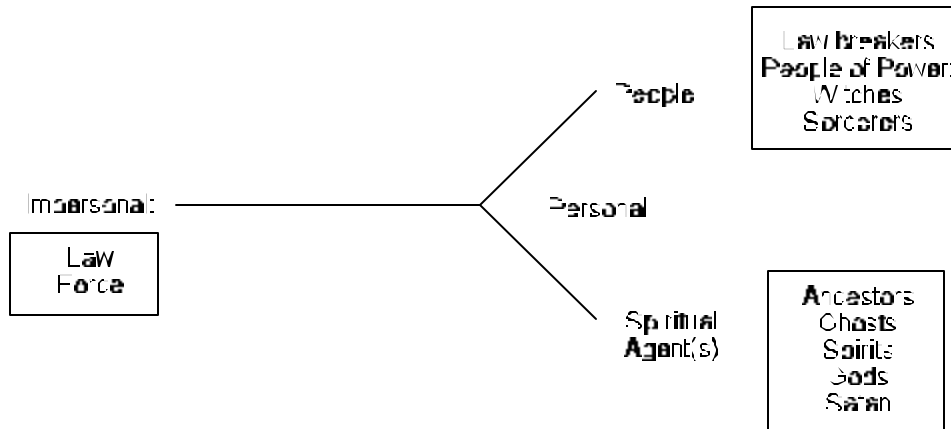
3. While myth is well-known in the area of religious communication, its multidimensional nature results in an impact on culture which is far broader than just the religious arena. Other dimensions include (Honko, "The Problem of Defining Myth", 46-8; see also Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms*, 20-23):

    a. A source of cognitive categories, especially for things we are unable to explain otherwise.

    b. Legitimization for both personal values and behavior and social institutional structures and operation.

    c. Symbolic communication of the deep-seated aspirations, needs, and fears of a culture. It can provides a source for oppression on one hand and hope, motivation, inspiration on the other (e.g., the "myth" surrounding poverty)

4. Exploring myth in other cultures: some beginning suggestions

    a. Become familiar with the tales and stories--read widely and think through themes that continuously present themselves. In myth we can uncover the emic perspectives on people, the powers, fears, motivational factors, etc.

    b. Seek to know and use local proverbs, which encapsulate cultural wisdom.

    c. Examine television productions and/or movies (the more popular, the more likely it is appropriately tying into the mythic ethos of the culture).
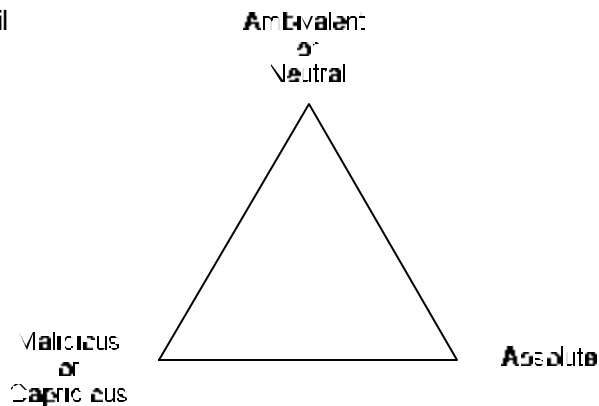
d.   Examine the patterns of behavior to see how they correlate to epics, stories, etc. in the culture.

e.   Utilize appropriate stories in teaching/sermon preparation.   A good story that drives home the point will be remembered for years!

Evil

1.   Objectifying and personifying evil: the spectrum of cultural views
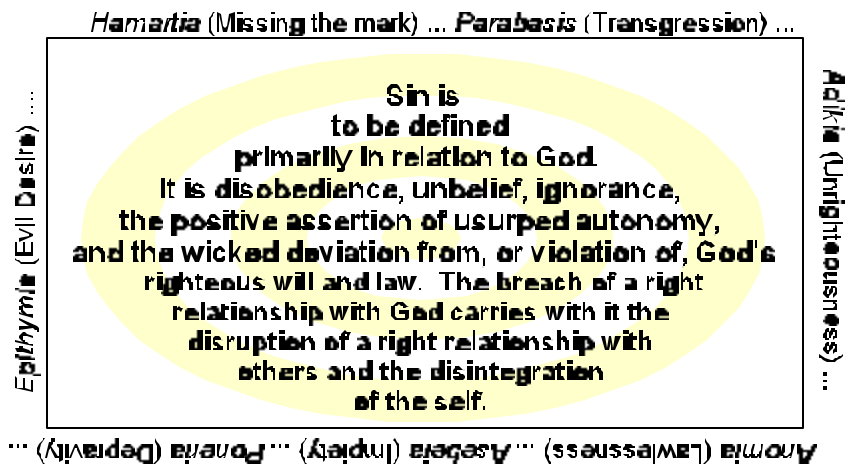
Impersonal ———————— Personal

People → Law breakers
People of Power
Witches
Sorcerers

Law
Force

Spiritual
Agent(s) → Ancestors
Ghosts
Spirits
Gods
Satan

2. Triangular scale of evil

Ambivalent
or
Neutral

Malicious
or
Capricious

Absolute

3. Sin as evil

a. Many of the Hebrew and Greek words for sin in the Bible express in some fashion the idea that sin is a deviation or violation from the standards of holiness that God has established. The diagram illustrates the basic idea from the NT vocabulary:

Hamartia (Missing the mark) ... *Parabasis* (Transgression) ...

Epithymia (Evil Desire)* ...

Adikia (Unrighteousness) ...

Sin is
to be defined
primarily in relation to God.
It is disobedience, unbelief, ignorance,
the positive assertion of usurped autonomy,
and the wicked deviation from, or violation of, God's
righteous will and law. The breach of a right
relationship with God carries with it the
disruption of a right relationship with
others and the disintegration
of the self.

Anomia (Lawlessness) ... *Asebeia* (Impiety) ... *Poneria* (Depravity) ...

i. The root foundation is the violation of the commands to love God with all we are and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

ii. Cultural anthropology is loathe to declare any etic approach to sin (see the extended

discussion in Priest, "Cultural Anthropology, Sin, and the Missionary").

b. Types of sin and aspects of sacrifice in primal religions (adapted from Burnett, <u>Unearthly Powers</u>, pp. 85-91)

    i. Anti-social sins: offences against the kinship group, tribe, or any member of the tribe.

    ii. Theological sins: offences against god(s) or ancestor(s)

    iii. Extra-communal sins: offences against forces outside the normal life of the people

c. Researching sin in cultural perspective: some questions to consider (see Dye, "Toward a Cross-Cultural Definition of Sin")

    i. What is the moral/ethical system to which the people ideally adhere? Is it founded on an individualistic (more guilt oriented) or a collective (more shame oriented) conception?

    ii. What is the moral system seen in actual life events?

    iii. What offends people within the culture? What makes them feel that some action, attitude, or expression is unfair or illegitimate?

d. "Handling" sin

    i. Christians of all cultures experience the conviction of the Spirit. Note the areas where the Spirit is already convicting and seek to facilitate an indigenous sensitivity and response to those promptings.

    ii. However, as Chistians we "grow" into other areas. As we become more Christ-like, we are more sensitive to sin and have a greater desire to dissociate ourselves from it. For areas which are prohibited in Scripture but the local church has not yet seen, patience and careful thought are essential before introducing local discussion.

    iii. With that in mind, the illustrated set of axes may be helpful in thinking an issue through:
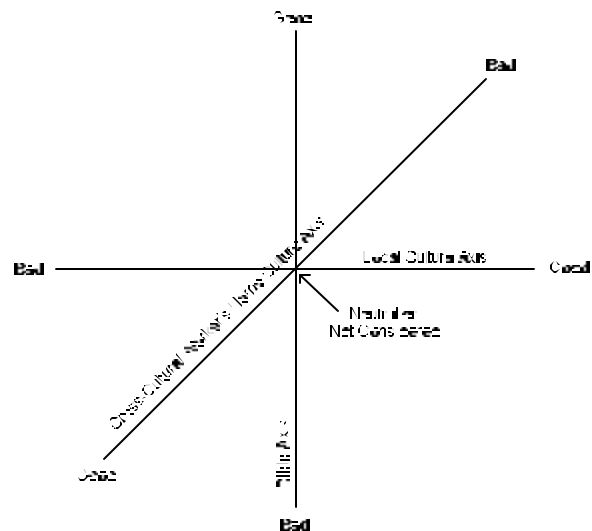
iv.   Developing a cross-cultural perspective on moral behavior (adapted in part from discussion in Fortosis, "A Model for Understanding Cross-Cultural Morality"):