

NATURE AND NURTURE: A SOCIAL-COGNITIVE APPROACH TO MORAL EMOTIONS IN THE QUMRAN SECTARIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract: *The emerging methodology of cognitive psychology in Qumran studies is yet underemployed for exploring sectarian moral psychology. This paper extends the author’s work on moral emotions in the Qumran sectarian literature by arguing for the methodological advantage of combining cognitive psychology with social constructivism in the study of ancient religious ethics. Ari Mermelstein’s 2013 article, “Love and Hate at Qumran: The Social Construction of Sectarian Emotion,” is one of the few studies done on the role of emotions in the sectarian movement, particularly from a social-constructionist perspective of examining the connection between emotions, values, and norms. However, Mermelstein’s study does not use a cognitive-psychological approach in analyzing the sectarian literature. Since emotions have both cultural and biological bases, introducing cognitive psychology into this line of enquiry is a desideratum. Towards that end, Thomas Kazen’s 2011 monograph, *Emotions in Biblical Laws: A Cognitive Science Approach*, provides an illuminating counterpoint. While giving due consideration to the role of culture in morality, Kazen strongly leans towards cognitive science and its underlying biology. However, his focus is limited to the role of four moral emotions in the Pentateuchal laws, and rarely deals with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Using the juxtaposition of Mermelstein and Kazen’s work as a point of departure, this paper argues that both social and cognitive approaches are needed for a more complete account of the role of moral emotions. Examining the connections between emotions and morality in some Qumran sectarian texts using a “social-cognitive” approach, this paper demonstrates how such a hybrid approach might more effectively expose the universal aspects of sectarian moral emotions while suitably noting their cultural distinctiveness.¹*

¹ This paper is an updated version of an earlier paper presented at the SBL Meetings in Boston, Massachusetts, Nov. 20, 2017. It is also an extension of Marcus K. M. Tso, “Moral Emotions in Qumran Sectarian Literature: A Cognitive Psychological Approach,” *NIMER* Fall (2023): 1–22. The author thanks Dr. Elsie Froment for the invitation to rework and publish this work in the current form.

Introduction

As this introduction is being written, campuses across North America, as well as in a growing number of cities around the world, are embroiled in protests and counter-protests concerning the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. This is an emotionally charged issue that has provoked passionate responses from all sides. Concepts such as justice, human rights, and compassion, combined with heart-breaking images and stories from far away, have stirred up intense moral emotions among protesters, their supporters, as well as their critics. Where do these moral emotions such as love, hate, anger, disgust, and compassion come from?² How are they formed and how do they affect thinking and behaviour?

Scholars of emotion typically approach this topic from one of two ways. The social-constructionist approach focuses on moral emotions as social constructs, and cognitive psychology emphasizes human embodiment. Both approaches have been adapted from their modern research contexts and applied to ancient texts such as biblical and related literature. Nevertheless, the emerging methodology of cognitive psychology in Qumran studies is underemployed for exploring sectarian moral psychology. This paper extends the author's work on moral emotions in the Qumran sectarian literature by arguing for the methodological advantage of combining cognitive psychology with social constructivism in the study of ancient religious ethics.

Ari Mermelstein did one of the earliest studies on the role of emotions in the sectarian movement from a social-constructionist perspective by examining the connection between emotions, values, and norms.² However, Mermelstein's study does not use a cognitive-psychological approach in analyzing the sectarian literature. Since emotions have both cultural and biological bases, introducing cognitive psychology into this line of enquiry is a desideratum.

Toward that end, Thomas Kazen's 2011 monograph provides an illuminating counterpoint.³ While giving due consideration to the role of culture in morality, Kazen strongly leans towards cognitive science and its underlying biology.⁴ However,

² Ari Mermelstein, "Love and Hate at Qumran: The Social Construction of Sectarian Emotion," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 20 (2013): 237–63. For the application of his social-constructivist methodology on ancient Judaism more broadly, see Ari Mermelstein, *Power and Emotion in Ancient Judaism: Community and Identity in Formation* (Cambridge University Press, 2021).

³ Thomas Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law: A Cognitive Science Approach* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011). See also his more recent collection of essays, Thomas Kazen, *Impurity and Purification in Early Judaism and the Jesus Tradition* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2021).

⁴ Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 10. For his discussion on the role of culture, see Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 20–31. For his exploration on how culture and embodied cognition intersect at cognitive linguistic, see the following essays. Thomas Kazen, "The Role of Disgust in Priestly Purity Law," in *Impurity and Purification in Early Judaism and the Jesus Tradition* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2021),

his focus there is limited to the role of moral emotions in the Pentateuchal laws. He rarely deals with emotions in the Scrolls.

Using the juxtaposition of Mermelstein and Kazen's work as a point of departure, this article argues that *both* social *and* cognitive approaches are needed for a more complete account of the role of moral emotions, recognizing that they are formed both through embodied moral psychology (nature) and cultural conditioning (nurture). Beginning with a comparison between the two approaches exemplified by Mermelstein and Kazen, this paper proposes one among several possible ways to integrate the two approaches. Using the moral emotion of disgust as a case study, the present work examines the connections between emotions and morality in key Qumran sectarian texts, using a "social-cognitive" approach.

This essay demonstrates how a hybrid approach might more effectively expose the universal aspects of sectarian moral emotions (nature) while suitably noting their cultural distinctiveness (nurture).

Theoretical Starting Points

Mermelstein's social-constructivist approach to sectarian moral emotions

Relying on social-constructivist theorists of emotion such as Martha Nussbaum, Claire Armon-Jones, and Catherine A. Lutz, Mermelstein adopts a theory of emotion that allows him to focus on emotions as reality-forming discourse, to examine how, when embedded in texts, the language of emotions can both reflect the norms, values, and worldview that give rise to them, as well as propagate and reinforce these culturally determined beliefs.⁵ According to Mermelstein's approach, emotions are defined as "expressions of [culturally conditioned] belief about objects, people, or behavior," or responses based on culturally internalized views.⁶ He then is able to extend the work on sectarian emotion, from Qumran scholars such as Angela Kim Harkins and Carol Newsom, by demonstrating from selected sectarian texts from Qumran how the emotions of love and hate were conditioned by the sectarian understanding about God's election, and then in turn were deployed through such devices as the law of reproof to reinforce the sectarian system of norms and values.⁷

105–35. Thomas Kazen, "Disgust in Body, Mind, and Language," in *Impurity and Purification in Early Judaism and the Jesus Tradition* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2021), 136–53.

⁵ Mermelstein, "Love and Hate at Qumran," 242–45.

⁶ Mermelstein, "Love and Hate at Qumran," 240. For how contested the definition of emotion is among theorists of emotion, and an alternative definition of emotion adopted from Klaus Scherer and informed by cognitive psychology, see Tso, "Moral Emotions," 2–6.

⁷ Mermelstein, "Love and Hate at Qumran," 241. For his implementation of a cognitive scientific approach in his research on sectarian emotions, see Ari Mermelstein, "A Cognitive Science Approach to Emotional Change in Textual Communities: Textualism at Qumran as Test Case" (paper presented at

Kazen's cognitive psychological approach to moral emotions in the Hebrew Bible

Kazen's cognitive psychological approach to moral emotions, in contrast, puts a spotlight on the biological bases of emotions, since emotions are embodied experiences rooted in human physiology. Kazen's approach sees human emotional responses as primarily hardwired in biological evolutionary history; thus they are more transcultural and enduring than social constructivists would grant. Working with basic emotions of disgust, empathy, fear, and a sense of justice, Kazen traces their evolutionary and biological bases and applies his insights on the Pentateuchal material. These basic biologically rooted emotions lie behind more advanced moral categories. Disgust gives rise to the distinction between pure and impure. Empathy generates love and other-regard. Fear safeguards boundaries and norms. A sense of justice supports the idea of retribution and restitution.⁸

While Kazen acknowledges the influence of culture on emotion and moral behaviour, his work clearly highlights the impact of evolutionary biology on moral emotions.⁹ Citing cognitive scientific research around the new millennium, particularly by Damasio and Peterson,¹⁰ Kazen argues against the dichotomy between rationality and emotion in the context of morality. Underlying reasoning and moral judgment is an evolved emotional component.¹¹ The social and cultural forces that shape moral reasoning and emotions act upon a person during periods of neuroplasticity from childhood to youth.¹² Thus, moral emotions, whether innate or acquired, come to operate in a person via the body.

Using the taxonomy of Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park on the "big three" domains of morality (autonomy, community, and divinity)¹³ and Haidt's

Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, November 20, San Antonio, Texas, 2016). Nevertheless, it is still very much social constructivist in orientation. The author gratefully acknowledges Dr. Mermelstein's generously sharing of this and other works of his on moral emotions.

⁸ Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 1–6.

⁹ This is in the context of his assertion based on the evidence from both neurobiology and developmental psychology: "we must conclude that human morality is both a rational and an emotional development, innate as well as acquired, and intimately linked to bodily experience." Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 16.

¹⁰ Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1994). Gregory R. Peterson, *Minding God: Theology and the Cognitive Sciences* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

¹¹ Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, ch. 2.

¹² This would seem to predict the unlikelihood or even impossibility of adult moral changes, which seems counter-intuitive.

¹³ Richard A. Shweder, Nancy C. Much, Manamohan Mahapatra, and Lawrence Park, "The "Big Three" of Morality (Autonomy, Community, Divinity) and the "Big Three" Explanations of Suffering," in *Morality and Health* (eds. Allan M. Brandt and Paul Rozin; New York: Routledge, 1997), 119–69.

suggestion that culture modifies human moral capacities,¹⁴ Kazen perceptively observes that specific cultures emphasize the three domains differently, and that cultures assert forces most influentially in the domains of community and divinity. But even in these latter two domains, moral socialization of children is achieved not via transmission of cognitive ideas, but the acquisition of moral intuition by conforming to social structures.¹⁵

In view of his understanding of the place of culture in morality, Kazen deconstructs the boundaries between morality, social conventions, and rituals in the study of ancient texts. Applying his theoretical framework on the three distinct legal codes in the Pentateuch, Kazen argues that the four moral emotions mentioned above are more determinative of the formation of norms and laws than theoretical ideas, and ultimately have biological roots.¹⁶

Respective strengths and weaknesses

The social-constructivist approach has some obvious strengths. First, the impact of the cultural environment on the cultivation and activation of human emotions is generally acknowledged among scholars of emotion. Second, even more obvious than the social construction of emotions is the social construction of texts. Therefore, the social-constructivist approach is well-suited for the study of moral emotions reflected in ancient texts on two counts. To the extent that emotions are socially conditioned, and that conditioning can be done through texts, or is reflected in texts, this approach is well suited to expose how that might have taken place in ancient religious communities, such as those associated with the Qumran sectarian literature.¹⁷

However, a purely social-constructivist account of moral emotions in ancient texts may be too ideologically focused and disembodied. It also may overemphasize cultural particularities and neglect the more universal aspects of emotions, the physiological bases that largely transcend time and space. Here is where the cognitive psychological approach can illuminate a potential blind spot. Through insights from cognitive scientists, this approach is helpful for identifying the transcultural and biologically grounded ways emotions can explain the origin, justification, or promotion of moral norms. Such insights are crucial for comparative studies of literature from vastly different cultural contexts and time periods. They facilitate, for example, the comparison of moral discourses in Second Temple Jewish texts and in

¹⁴ See pages 827–28 in Jonathan Haidt, “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment,” *Psychological Review* 108 (2001): 814–34.

¹⁵ Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 20–21.

¹⁶ Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, ch. 10.

¹⁷ As illustrated in the unpublished conference paper cited above, Mermelstein, “Cognitive Science.”

classical Greek philosophical texts on the one hand, and in contemporary moral discourse in the postmodern West on the other. Such research permits increased understanding and clarity on how moral emotions operated among certain ancient people, and there is potential to carry that clearer understanding and apply it to various social groups today, enhancing the contemporary relevance of such studies.

As potentially useful as the cognitive psychological approach may be, at this stage of its development it is best suited to dealing with the more basic emotions. The more complex the affective phenomenon, the more difficult for cognitive psychology to give an adequate account, and the more necessary it is to examine the social aspects of the phenomenon. Further, without the social lens, cognitive science may neglect how cultural conditioning impacts individual moral emotions.¹⁸ This suggests a need to somehow combine the two approaches.

The prospect of a synthesis

Combining the methodological tools of social constructivism and cognitive psychology is a complex and challenging task. Careless conflation of the two perspectives will likely yield confusing results. Meanwhile, the field still is emerging, and a definitive synthesis has not appeared. Nevertheless, possibilities may be considered.

One possible avenue that some scholars have fruitfully employed to combine the social and cognitive approaches is to attend to cognitive linguistics, as exemplified by Fred Tappenden's monograph.¹⁹ Tappenden's integrative approach attends to how metaphors rooted in embodied experiences can serve as effective vehicles for transmission of culturally specific ideas.²⁰ Central to this approach is the view "that human thought is primarily image-based and derived from patterns of sensory motor experience."²¹ With respect to moral emotions, using the cognitive linguistics approach may involve examining how metaphorical language is used in moral discourse, and how embodied images are culturally shaped and employed in relation to moral norms.

Related to the cognitive linguistic approach, but more general, is a two-tier (or multi-level) approach to analyzing texts. Edward Slingerland, as one of Tappenden's theoretical sources, opens the door to this approach. Slingerland cogently observes

¹⁸ As perceptively noted by Deborah W. Rooke, review of Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, *JSOT* 38/5 (2014): 139, "What it lacks, however, is an awareness of the ideological aspects of the process: precisely whose disgust, fear, empathy or sense of justice is responsible for determining the laws?"

¹⁹ Frederick S. Tappenden, *Resurrection in Paul: Cognition, Metaphor, and Transformation* (19; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016). While Tappenden is not dealing with emotions or moral emotions in his work, his integration of cognition and culture, following Slingerland, is highly suggestive. See *ibid.* 7, n. 14.

²⁰ Cf. two of the essays cited above in Kazen, *Impurity and Purification*.

²¹ Tappenden, *Resurrection in Paul*, 34, citing Edward Slingerland, see below.

that social and cognitive sciences operate at different levels of explanation.²² Thus, while the cognitive scientific approach is powerful at the more general and fundamental level of human thought, the social scientific approach yields complementary insights about matters more culturally specific and advanced. In this approach, the two levels of analysis mutually inform each other. Although Tappenden's means of this "vertical integration" is the cognitive linguistic approach introduced above, it need not necessarily be. One can conceivably apply this approach without relying on cognitive linguistics, or at least not primarily.

Yet another way to integrate the two approaches is to apply them differentially on the two terms of the construct "moral emotion." In other words, researchers can perform a social-constructivist analysis of *morality* coupled with a cognitive psychological analysis of *emotions*. As the author has argued previously, while cognitive psychologists have studied moral emotions for decades now, the very definition of moral emotion remains contested and problematic. Granting that minimally, moral emotions are emotions that are relevant for the moral domains, there are still live debates on what both emotions and the moral domains are.²³ One way to treat the uncertainty is to harness the strengths of cognitive science to elucidate the origins, nature, and mechanics of human emotions, and apply the insights of social constructivism on how individuals form and relate to moral norms in the contexts of their social experiences.

A "social-cognitive" methodology

This article proposes using the label of "social-cognitive" to refer to any one of the three methodologies sketched above, which all aim to combine social constructivism and cognitive science in the study of moral emotions in ancient texts. This use of the label must be distinguished from "social cognitive theory," which is

²² Tappenden, *Resurrection in Paul*, 6–7. Edward Slingerland, *What Science Offers the Humanities: Integrating Body and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9–11.

²³ See the author's adaptation of Klaus Scherer's definition of emotion and Jonathan Haidt's definition of moral domains in Marcus K. M. Tso, "Feelings, Nothing More than Feelings? The Place of Emotions in Moral Judgment from a Cognitive Psychological Perspective, the Case of Mencius and Qumran" (paper presented at International Meetings of the SBL, July 5, Seoul, Korea, 2016), 6–14. For a more succinct account, see Tso, "Moral Emotions," 2–6. See also the following sources: Klaus R. Scherer, "What Are Emotions? And How Can They Be Measured?," *Social Science Information* 44 (2005): 695–729. Jonathan Haidt, "The Moral Emotions," in *Handbook of Affective Sciences* (eds. Richard J. Davidson, Klaus R. Scherer, and H. Hill Goldsmith; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 852–70. Also note the summary on p. 203 of Jonathan Haidt and Fredrik Bjorklund, "Social Intuitionists Answer Six Questions about Moral Psychology," in *Moral Psychology: Volume 2: The Cognitive Science of Morality: Intuition and Diversity* (ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 181–217.

the view that humans acquire knowledge by observing in social contexts.²⁴ Social cognitive theory asserts that cognition, especially moral cognition, is obtained socially. Thus, social cognitive theory is a theory about social cognition. In contrast, by “social-cognitive methodology,” this paper means a research approach that seeks to integrate the insights of social constructivism and cognitive science.

Specifically, this essay will explore the heuristic usefulness of the third approach above. The social-cognitive methodology that it employs below relies on cognitive science more heavily when analyzing emotions in the texts, and more on social-constructivist considerations when clarifying how emotions become relevant for morality. Social constructivism plays a greater role in the analysis of moral norms, and cognitive science features more prominently in explaining how embodied emotions motivate the compliance of socially constructed norms.

This division of duty may seem arbitrary. Scholars from both approaches recognize that emotions can be affected socially, and norms can have evolutionary bases. Care must be exercised to allow room for noting where and how these happen. Nevertheless, following Slingerland’s insight mentioned earlier, the pursuit of a “vertical integration” follows the awareness that there are different levels of explanation.

Disgust as a Moral Emotion in Key Sectarian Texts from Qumran

From purity concerns to disgust

Earlier studies on the sectarian texts found around Qumran revealed the sectarian concern with issues of purity.²⁵ Social-constructivist analyses correctly trace this concern to the sect’s priestly self-identity and concerns for boundary setting and maintenance.²⁶ Less examined in Qumran research is how the embodied emotion of disgust is instrumental in sectarian notions related to purity. As Kazen demonstrated in his cognitive psychological study on the Pentateuchal law codes, “all three phenomena for which impurity language is used in Leviticus—dietary laws, contagious impurity and certain types of immorality—clearly relate to recognized

²⁴ For an example of the application of social cognitive theory on the assignment of blame on group agents, see Bertram F. Malle, “The Social and Moral Cognition of Group Agents,” *Journal of Law & Policy* 19 (2010): 95–136. For yet another different use of the label “social cognitive,” see Kevin N. Ochsner and Daniel L. Schacter, “Remembering Emotional Events: a Social Cognitive Neuroscience Approach,” in *Handbook of Affective Sciences* (eds. Richard J. Davidson, Klaus R. Scherer, and H. Hill Goldsmith; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 643–60.

²⁵ From among the vast literature, see e.g., Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Marcus K. M. Tso, *Ethics in the Qumran Community: An Interdisciplinary Investigation* (WUNT 2/292; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 27, 62, 68–70, 116–17.

disgust triggers.”²⁷ Shifting to a cognitive-psychological lens to look at disgust language in the sectarian texts yields new insights into sectarian thought.

Scanning through the sectarian corpus for the use of language related to disgust, whether referring to triggers or reactions such as the cognates of געל (abhor/loathe) and תעב (abhor),²⁸ one can notice their concentration in several compositions. Not surprisingly, disgust language is featured prominently in the *Temple Scroll* and the purification rule/ritual texts. More significant for examining the particularly sectarian uses of such language are the central rule texts of D (*Damascus Document*) and S (*Rule of the Community*) and S, and prayer texts such as the *Hodayot*.²⁹

Beyond noticing the preoccupation with purity, whether seen from an etic perspective as ritual or moral or as a matter of priestly identity, turning the lens to disgust brings into focus how all such concerns typically involve disgust as a powerful embodied emotion that prompts rejection, avoidance, and separation. Insights from cognitive psychology can clarify some of the mechanisms by which disgust works as an emotion, while a social-constructivist perspective can help explain how the sectarian movement deployed disgust to keep its members from associating with fellow Jews who had no reason to trigger disgust, if not for the sectarian ideology.

The nature of disgust from a cognitive psychological perspective

Recently, cognitive scientific research on the emotion of disgust has been a fast-growing field.³⁰ While researchers are limited in diversity, being predominately North American and English-speaking subjects, their collective findings appear to have cross-cultural and even diachronic validity, even in the case of sectarian literature.³¹

Scientific research on disgust as an emotion began as early as Darwin, who observed that disgust is an emotional reaction to “something revolting, primarily in relation to the sense of taste, as actually perceived or vividly imagined; and secondarily to anything which causes a similar feeling, through the sense of smell, touch and even of eyesight.”³² This reaction is often expressed by a characteristic

²⁷ Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 94.

²⁸ Other words include גאל (defile), טמא (unclean), נדה (impurity), שקץ (detest), חלל (profane), and their cognates.

²⁹ They also show up frequently in 4QMMT, exegetical texts, and reworked Pentateuchal texts.

³⁰ Paul Rozin, Jonathan Haidt, and Clark R. McCauley, “Disgust,” in *Handbook of Emotions* (3rd ed.; eds. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa Feldman Barrett; New York: Guilford, 2008), 757–76.

³¹ Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley, “Disgust,” 766.

³² Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872), 254.

facial expression that is universally recognizable, and is even observed in some animals.³³

Current scientific consensus on disgust understands its evolutionary origins as a “rejection response that protects the body from ‘bad’ foods.” This innate response capacity is activated in individuals from early childhood, and is culturally shaped and expanded to become “a rejection system that protects the soul from the full range of elicitors.”³⁴ Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley conclude that while the output components of disgust, from physiological symptoms (lower heart rate, nausea) to action tendencies (avoidance, distancing), facial expressions, and subjective feelings,³⁵ are relatively invariable throughout history, the input components of elicitors and meanings that are highly malleable by cultural forces and developed in highly complexed ways.³⁶

According to Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley, the development of this human emotion can be charted by distinguishing four types of disgust among modern test subjects, each type with an increased level of abstraction than the one before, and further removed from the basic animal instinct to reject distasteful food to avoid poison.³⁷ The first type is core disgust, which is elicited by a sense of potential oral incorporation of an offensive entity (typically animal or human waste products) or perceived contaminated objects. The second type is animal-nature disgust, elicited by anything that calls to mind one’s animal nature, especially sexuality, mortality, and poor hygiene. The third type is interpersonal disgust, elicited by potential contact with people who are regarded as strangers, sick, unfortunate, and immoral. People with these characteristics elicit disgust because they are viewed as both offensive and contaminating. Finally, the fourth type is moral disgust, which is elicited by egregious violations of moral norms, including those that do not involve the body.

There is convincing evidence that this final development of disgust is not merely a figurative use of disgust language. First, Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley cite the cross-cultural phenomenon of applying disgust language to moral offenses. Second, neuroscience research, using neuroimaging techniques, has demonstrated high activity in the anterior insula in response to both disgust and moral offenses. Finally, psychological experimentation shows that people reacting with moral disgust exhibit the same physiological response as core disgust—lower heart rates.³⁸

What seem to hold all types of disgust together in human psychology are the notions of offensiveness and contamination, prompting immediate and non-

³³ Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley, “Disgust,” 759.

³⁴ Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley, “Disgust,” 757.

³⁵ These components are adapted from Scherer, “What Are Emotions?,” 698.

³⁶ Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley, “Disgust,” 763.

³⁷ Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley, “Disgust,” 759–63.

³⁸ Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley, “Disgust,” 762–63.

reflective tendencies of avoidance and separation, to protect oneself or one's community.

Disgust in sectarian texts

The above overview on disgust from a cognitive psychological perspective provides at least a partial warrant for analysing the use of disgust language as reflecting a moral emotion in the sectarian scrolls.³⁹ As mentioned above, the sectarian texts are not only replete with disgust language, but also use it in distinctively sectarian ways for communal purposes.

For example, 1QS 5:1–23a contains rules for initiation into the *Yahad* that is dominated by language and concepts that elicit or express disgust towards those not conforming to its moral norms.

1QS 5⁴⁰

1. This is the rule for the men of the *Yahad* who volunteer to repent from all evil and to hold fast to all that He, by His good will, has commanded. They are to separate from the congregation of
- 2a. perverse men. ...
- ...
- 10b. ... Each one who thus enters the covenant by oath is to separate himself from all of the perverse men, they who walk
11. in the wicked way, for such are not reckoned a part of His covenant. They *'have not sought Him nor inquired of His statutes'* (Zeph 1:6) so as to discover the hidden laws in which they err
12. to their shame. Even the revealed laws they knowingly transgress, thus stirring God's judgemental wrath and full vengeance: the curses of the Mosaic covenant. He will bring against them
13. weighty judgements, eternal destruction with none spared. *vacat* None of the perverse men is to enter purifying waters used by the Men of Holiness and so contact their purity. Indeed, it is impossible to be purified

³⁹ For a cognitive psychological discussion of disgust in Second Temple Jewish and early Christian texts, see the two essays cited above: Kazen, "Role of Disgust." Kazen, "Disgust in Body, Mind, and Language."

⁴⁰ Unless otherwise noted, Qumran texts are excerpted from Emanuel Tov and Noel B. Reynolds, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library* (Rev. ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2006). The English translation of 1QS is based on Michael O. Wise, Martin G. Abegg, Jr., and Edward M. Cook, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (Rev. ed.; New York: HarperOne, 2005).

14. without first repenting of evil, inasmuch as impurity adheres to all who transgress His word. None is to be yoked with such a man in his work or wealth, lest *'he cause him to bear*
15. *guilt'* (Lev 22:16). On the contrary, one must keep far from him in every respect, for thus it is written: *'Keep far from every false thing'* (Exod 23:7). None belonging to the *Yahad* is to discuss
16. with such men matters of Law or legal judgement, nor to eat or drink what is theirs, nor yet to take anything from them
17. unless purchased, as it is written 'Turn away from mere mortals, in whose nostrils is only breath; for of what account are they?' (Isa 2:22). Accordingly,
18. all who are not reckoned as belonging to His covenant must be separated out, along with everything they possess; the Man of Holiness must not rely upon futile
19. actions, whereas all who do not know His covenant are futility itself. All those who despise His word, He shall destroy from upon the face of the earth. Their every deed is an abomination
- 20a. before Him, all that is theirs being infested with impurity.

Belonging to a halakhic section of 1QS, this passage begins by calling for radical separation from the "men of perversity" (אנשי העול).⁴¹ This demand for separation from non-sectarians is picked up again in line ten as the corollary of joining the sectarian community, in terms of "entering the covenant."⁴² To join the community requires separation from those who are not a part of it. To motivate this separation, this passage not only emphasizes the quality of the outsiders as transgressors of God's law and therefore eternally damnable (5:10b–13a), it also enlists the help of disgust language.

The dominant use of disgust language here is mainly through the adaptation of purity concepts from Leviticus. The contrast is strong between the uncleanness/impurity (טמא 5:14, 20) of the men of perversity, the outsiders, and the cleanness/purity (טהרה 5:13) of the men of holiness (אנשי הקודש 5:13), the *Yahad*.

⁴¹ The word עול is frequently attested in S and H, and rarely elsewhere in the sectarian corpus. It seems to be one of the dualistic ways the *Yahad* described its moral opposite (c.f. the earlier use of this word in the Two-Spirits Treatise: 1QS 3:19, 21; 4:23–24). Thus, the phrase אנשי העול is one of the sectarian code words for outsiders. For another text using purity language to demand separation from those who do not follow sectarian *halakhah* by using purity language, see CD 6:14b–18a. There the focus is a wider concern for enforcing the distinction between clean and unclean, holy and profane (CD 7:3–4).

⁴² From the sectarian perspective, to enter the covenant was synonymous with joining the sectarian community, as the community saw itself as the only true and legitimate expression of covenant loyalty to God in its time, the true Israel composed of Jews and gentile proselytes alike who were devoted to the Torah of Moses according to the sect's correct interpretation.

The opposing notions of cleanness and uncleanness are, of course, prominent in Leviticus, but the sectarian use of them go well beyond their areas of applicability in that book.

Here, transgression against God's law is abominable because it infects both the transgressor and all that he has with impurity (5:14, 20), and the only solution is through repentance and the water of purification (5:13b-14a).⁴³ The impurity of the unrepentant is portrayed as if it is contagious through contact (5:13b-15a). Therefore, complete separation is mandatory lest the community becomes contaminated (5:14b-18a).⁴⁴ While lines 1-2a and 10b enjoin the sectarians, corporately and individually, to separate from perverse men, suggesting withdrawal, lines 13b-14a seem to envision the threat of these perverse men entering the community insincerely, suggesting the need for expulsion. Whether as motivation for withdrawal from the outsiders or expulsion of the insiders, the psychology of disgust works powerfully and is apt either way.⁴⁵

Of the three scriptural citations used to support the law of separation, the one from Leviticus 22:16 is especially relevant in connecting this ruling with the notion of purity. The rationale for disassociation from any non-sectarian is that such a person would "cause [the sectarian] to bear guilt." In its original context, the citation from Leviticus 22:16 deals with the adverse consequence of someone from outside the priest's family eating the holy offering. Applied to the sectarian community, this citation likely implies both the sectarians' self-identity as priests serving in the sanctuary, and a concern for protecting their holy food from being profaned by outsiders.⁴⁶ However, there is a radical difference between the citation and its application. In Leviticus, non-priestly Israelites are not presented as necessarily evil, despite their potential for profaning the sacred offerings. In 1QS, non-sectarian Jews are categorically evil, and mere association with them is profaning and imparts guilt.

As Kazen argues, notions of purity/impurity, mainly from Leviticus, have their psychological basis in the embodied emotion of disgust, and have great rhetorical power. Using cognitive psychological insights, we can see more clearly how this may work in the sectarian texts. First, through language relating to disgust triggers or responses, this passage in 1QS represents outsiders (and false insiders who do not fully meet the sectarian norms) as offensive and dangerous due to their incorrect

⁴³ For the connections between ritual ablution, emotions, and sectarian identity formation, see Ari Mermelstein, "Emotional Regimes, Ritual Practice, and the Shaping of Sectarian Identity," *Biblical Interpretation* 24 (2016): 492-513.

⁴⁴ Although the call for separation is mostly couched in terms of purity concerns, the practical motivation for separation seems to be the potential influence of outsiders on the sectarians' legal interpretation. (See 1QS 5:15b-16a, 18b-20a.)

⁴⁵ This awareness is a significant advance beyond the author's earlier analysis of this passage, in Tso, *Ethics in the Qumran Community*, 88-89.

⁴⁶ The phrase "their purity" in line 13b likely means their holy food.

practices. This focus on evil practices reflects moral disgust, which safeguards the communal social order by asserting the normativity of sectarian *halakhah*. Second, the tie between disgusting actions and those who practice them leads to interpersonal disgust, prompting social disassociation and contact avoidance, which protect the sectarians individually and corporately from contaminating influences. Third, since this passage views non-sectarians as impure and contaminating, making their contact with the sectarian pure food problematic, its insinuation of food contamination by outsiders is capable of evoking core disgust—the revulsion against potential oral incorporation of offensive food.

With three out of the four types of disgust cited by Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley accounted for, where then is animal-nature disgust? While this disgust also may be implicit in the passage, it is conspicuous in an earlier part of 1QS. The text in 1QS 3:2–3 describes anyone who refuses to join the *Yahad* as one who “plows in the muck of wickedness, so defiling stains would mar his repentance.” It is impossible for such a person to be cleaned by any washing (3:4b–5a), in contrast to the truly repentant sectarian, whose flesh can be made clean by “the purifying waters and be purged by the cleansing flow” (3:8–9). The idea is that transgression of God’s laws renders the physical body unclean. This uncleanness can only be dealt with through ritual washing combined with the humble commitment to obey God’s laws precisely, according to the sectarian *halakhah*. This use of filth and dirt imagery, along with physical cleansing by water, may be related to animal-nature disgust, with one of its elicitors being dirt.⁴⁷ Furthermore, returning to 1QS 5, in not using language related to purity/impurity, the citation of Isaiah 2:22 in line 17 points to the fragility of human life and the insignificance of the outsider as an earthly creature. They likewise may raise animal-nature disgust, also elicited by the reminder of both the mortality and the filthiness of humanity outside the sect. The use of this type of disgust protects the sect from compromising its possession of eternal salvation.⁴⁸

The sample texts above illustrate that the sectarian legal texts use disgust directed at other people as a means of promoting halakhic enforcement and boundary maintenance. Some sectarian hymnic texts, in contrast, reflect disgust directed at oneself in some sense. These uses of disgust also serve communal purposes, as the following examples show.

⁴⁷ See Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley regarding the link between this type of disgust and poor hygiene, cited above. For how another sectarian legal text describes the sectarian *halakhah* metaphorically as water, see CD 3:16–17. While it is not clear if the life-giving or cleansing power of water is emphasized there, that people who should benefit from it is portrayed as having “wallowed in the transgression of humanity and the ways of impurity” suggests that cleansing is at least part of the intended metaphorical meaning. For how physical filth negates the cleansing efficacy of purification water, see CD 10:10b–13.

⁴⁸ See Tso, *Ethics in the Qumran Community*, 158.

1QH^a 9:23-25a⁴⁹

23. These things I know through Your understanding, for You have opened my ears to wonderful mysteries even though I am a vessel of clay and kneaded with water,
24. a foundation of shame and a spring of filth, a melting pot of iniquity and a structure of sin, a spirit of error, perverted without
25a. understanding and terrified by righteous judgements.

1QH^a 19:13b-15

- 13b. ... For Your glory's sake You have cleansed man from transgression, so that he can purify himself
14. for You from all filthy abominations and the guilt of unfaithfulness, so as to be joined wi[th] the children of Your truth; in the lot with
15. Your saints. That bodies, covered with worms of the dead, might rise up from the dust to an et[ernal] council; from a perverse spirit to Your understanding.

In 1QH^a 9, the hymnist confesses his or her unworthiness before God to highlight God's undeserved favour. Parts of this self-description contain concepts related to triggers for animal-nature disgust. Metaphorical language linking one's own body to "a vessel of clay and kneaded with water" indicates the body's earthly nature, both lowly and fragile. Combined with the idea of uncleanness in this text, such imageries likely evoke a sense of self-loathing arising from one's negative appraisal of one's creaturely mortality and earthliness.

In 1QH^a 19, the use of disgust language about oneself is even more clear, though it is not expressed in the first person. Here, the hymnist praises God for graciously incorporating the typical sectarian into the community. Using the word אנוש (man/humanity),⁵⁰ this text emphasizes the mortality and frailty of human existence apart from God's special favour. Again, human weakness is cited along with impurity or uncleanness to present how disgusting human nature is unless God makes people holy and brings them into the sectarian community of people likewise

⁴⁹ Column and line numbers for 1QH^a in this paper follow the system used and explained in the latest official edition, Hartmut Stegemann and Eileen M. Schuller, eds., *Qumran Cave 1.III: 1QHodayot^a: With Incorporation of 4QHodayot^{a-f} and 1QHodayot^b* (trans. Carol A. Newsom; DJD XL; Oxford: Clarendon, 2009). See there for the cross references to the earlier system by Eliezar Sukenik.

⁵⁰ For a discussion on the word's connotations of mortality and frailty in the book of Job and in the Psalms, see Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (3 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), vol.1, 31-34, esp. 33.

sanctified. Even more graphically, the text pictures this conversion into the community as a maggot-infested corpse being raised from the dust.

Although both excerpts from the *Hodayot* direct disgust toward the sectarian self, their rhetorical effects are subtly different. In the first instance, since the language can either describe a past condition or present reality (as implied by the English translation above), the communal performance of this content is likely to develop a sense of humility among the sectarians. The second case, in contrast, clearly distinguishes the former disgusting state of the sectarians from their current state as cleansed, sanctified, and transformed from their corrupt mortality. The recitation of this type of material should reinforce a positive sectarian identity and encourage the sectarians to value their current clean state, with the corresponding deterrence against returning to their former state.

Nevertheless, both these two texts harness disgust, with the strong aversion tendency that it brings, to shape sectarian temperaments and dispositions. Thus, when directed towards others, disgust can motivate the sectarians to keep out or expel those who do not conform to their norms. When directed towards oneself, disgust can heighten the sectarians' desire to remain.

Summarizing conclusions

The above analysis of disgust in a few sectarian texts combines the insights of cognitive psychology with those of social constructivism. As stated in the theoretical section, this essay is an experimental attempt to apply a so-called social-cognitive methodology on sectarian moral emotions in the Dead Sea Scrolls. As proposed, this paper has applied cognitive psychological findings to obtain a scientifically informed understanding of disgust as an embodied and evolved emotion. With this understanding, this paper further identifies the presence of disgust language in the sectarian texts. Cognitive scientists are already aware that some important aspects of disgust are culturally conditioned, especially the elicitors of disgust. Thus, they invite the sociological examination of how disgust elicitors, for example, are socially constructed.

Taking this cue and following up with the second aspect of this paper's proposal, it applies social-constructivist insights, especially to elucidate the moral aspects of disgust. This analysis reveals that sectarian disgust language is largely derived from the priestly tradition in Leviticus and is used variously for communal purposes such as enforcing *halakhah*, maintaining boundaries (both external and internal), and shaping proper sectarian temperaments and dispositions, all of which have high moral relevance. The ritual rehearsal of disgust response is one possible way of implementing the adoption of appropriate sectarian disgust triggers.

This methodological analysis demonstrates that the use of both cognitive psychology and social-construction perspectives can indeed be mutually illuminating. Cognitive psychology uncovers the mechanism of a universally human emotion and sharpens our understanding of how the use of disgust language might have affected sectarian thought and behaviour. Attending to social construction in the sectarian texts fills gaps left by cognitive scientists. Furthermore, the ability to correlate, even partially, sectarian uses of disgust language with the four types of disgust identified by Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley confirms to some degree the diachronic validity of their model of disgust, even though that model is based on studying contemporary disgust triggers.

Conclusion

This paper has shown the value of cognitive psychology for understanding one moral emotion in the sectarian texts, and the value of social constructivism for clarifying, in the light of the former, how this emotion might have been cultivated and shaped using texts. The prospect is favourable, therefore, for using this integrated methodology to examine other moral emotions in the sectarian texts. Of course, nothing prevents the use of this approach for studying other religious texts, ancient or modern. Such textual research may join the interdisciplinary conversation on affective sciences and contribute an additional source of data.

To conclude on a pastoral and pragmatic note, the subject matter this paper explores is relevant to those who are involved in the moral formation of people. First, they must acknowledge that moral emotions can be misguided. For example, the manipulation of socially-conditioned disgust can have devastating consequences, leading to unjust discrimination and harm against individuals or groups. Social media has amplified this risk. The alarming polarization of the past few years has led to deep divisions and heated conflicts over issues like COVID mandates, election results, drug decriminalization, and the Gaza crisis. This polarization calls for clear-headed and critical evaluation of moral emotions, the validity of their triggers, and the impacts they make.

Nevertheless, it is increasingly clear that morality is not purely rational but has a large emotional aspect. Effective moral development requires actively engaging with emotions, rather than attempting to suppress them in pursuit of a purely rational ethic. Moral emotions hold the key to motivating positive change. As Kazen aptly avers, “... it seems much more intelligence to work *with* human nature instead of against it, if one is interested in durable change—a challenge for politics, economics, religion, and every other field that deals with humanity as a social species.”⁵¹

⁵¹ Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 169, emphasis original.

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