

From primate faces to pragmatic *face*. The emergence of symbolic intersubjectivity

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Abstract In this article, I aim to analyze the conceptual relationship between facial expressions – an evolutionary adaptation crucial for communication in certain primate species – and the notion of *face* as central to pragmatic studies of politeness. Facial expressions, and emotional expressions more generally, can fulfill various communicative functions, including – but not limited to – the regulation of social relationships. These communicative functions not only appear analogous to those characteristic of human verbal communication, but also seem to depend on partially shared cognitive mechanisms (Bar-On 2013, 2024; Scarantino 2017, 2018, 2019; Scotto 2022)¹. Therefore, there appears to be a line of continuity between the role of facial (and nonverbal) emotional expressions in relationship regulation among nonhuman animals and *face* in human communication. From this perspective, I will discuss Terkourafi’s (2007) suggestive proposal, which reinterprets Grice’s cooperative principle in terms of the notion of *face*. Although this reformulation runs the risk of narrowing the scope of the cooperative principle by placing exclusive emphasis on social interaction regulation, it has the significant merit of highlighting the fundamental continuity between expressive and distinctively human communication. At the same time, acknowledging this continuity allows us to focus on a distinguishing feature of human communication: a specific form of intersubjectivity, coupled with a specific form of normativity, which finds a paradigmatic manifestation precisely in the pragmatic notion of *face*.

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0. Introduction

As Gómez (2005) observes, in the evolution of the primate lineage, faces became one of the most significant elements among the emotional expressions used to refer to states of

¹ The expression «human verbal communication» is used here as a convenient simplification: in reality, human communication is typically multimodal. However, for the purposes of this article, which focuses on the comparison between expressive and specifically human communication, we can set this qualification aside.

affairs in the world (in philosophical terms, this reference is called «aboutness» or «intentionality»²):

The evolutionary history of primates can be understood as a trend towards developing explicit displays of the aboutness of their behaviour. Primates are characterized, among other features, by having evolved the most complex faces in the animal kingdom [...]. Primate faces are the result of an extraordinary combination of features, including the frontal convergence of the eyes and a differentiation of facial musculature that allows them to produce a remarkable variety of emotional facial expressions (this is especially true of the ape lineage, to which humans belong [...]). This exceptional combination enables them to express a variety of emotions while simultaneously conveying the target of those emotions (Gómez 2005: 75).

As we can see, Gómez attributes to facial expressions a central role in simultaneously communicating both «a variety of emotions» and «the target of those emotions». Emotions – and the expressions conveying them – are always *about* something. The paradigmatic case of aboutness is what Tomasello (2008: 140) describes as «triadic joint attentional engagement»: communication directed by agents toward conspecifics concerning objects of shared interest, for purposes of joint attention/action. However, there is another important class of cases in which the emotional expression reveals the agent's attitude toward the recipient, functioning as a means of regulating their social relationship.

The aim of this article is to analyze the aspects of continuity and discontinuity between the stage of expressive communication referred to by Gómez – paradigmatically characterized by a voluntary and flexible use of facial expressions – and the pragmatic notion of *face*.

In Section 1, we examine phenomena of *expressive communication*, focusing on continuity between other primate species and humans. There is continuity, first, at a functional level, since – as argued by Scarantino (2017, 2018, 2019) – emotional expressions serve functions analogous to those performed by speech acts in verbal language. But there is also continuity – as argued by Bar-On (2013, 2024) – with regard to the psychological mechanisms involved, insofar as expressive communication in other primate species shares the intentional (i.e., voluntary) character of human communication: it constitutes a form of *psychologically mediated*, not purely reflexive, communication³.

In Section 2, we introduce the pragmatic notion of *face*, by discussing Terkourafi's (2007) proposal to reinterpret Grice's cooperative principle in terms of that notion. This proposal has the merit of raising the question of the mechanisms underlying the cooperative principle within a framework of behavioral continuity across species. However, I will suggest two possible revisions. First, the reformulation of the cooperative principle should include not only the relational regulatory phenomena that the notion of *face* seeks to capture, but also cases of cooperative reference to shared objects of interest – a component that is present in Terkourafi (2007), but not integrated into the principle itself. Second, with regard to the psychological mechanisms underlying *facework*, Terkourafi's reference to the «approach/withdrawal dimension» points in the right

² In what follows, it is important to keep this philosophical notion of «intentionality» as «aboutness» distinct from the characteristic of being «intentional» in the sense of being «voluntary».

³ By this I do not mean that facial expressions can never be produced involuntarily. The important point, however, is that in these species there emerges the possibility of overt and, presumably, voluntary communicative behaviors. I also wish to emphasize the difference between the use of “intentional” to indicate these voluntary modes of communication and the notion of intentionality as *aboutness*. As I have said, intentional (voluntary) expressive communication can take (at least) the following two forms: that of shared attention toward objects (*aboutness*), and that of regulation of social relationships.

direction but is arguably too general: those categories also apply to purely individual reactions to environmental events, which do not involve social groups. I will argue that the search for relevant mechanisms should instead focus on specifically *social* emotions. In Section 3, finally, we analyze in greater detail an element of discontinuity between psychologically mediated and distinctively human communication. Already in the former, which we share with other primates, agents intentionally share their emotions for the purposes of behavioral and relationship regulation. However, the notion of *face* involves a fully-fledged form of intersubjectivity – one that engages a normative and symbolic dimension specific to human beings. I will therefore outline the general features of this form of intersubjectivity and the ways in which it reshapes social emotions.

1. Emotional expressions: between speech act analogs and psychologically mediated communication

We have highlighted two features of expressive communication in the primate lineage to which *Homo sapiens* belongs: the importance of facial expressions, and the ability to express a variety of emotions while simultaneously directing attention to their targets. The multifunctionality of emotional expressions is a key point in Andrea Scarantino's Theory of Affective Pragmatics (TAP).

Scarantino's starting point is the comparison between the *basic emotion view* and the *behavioral ecology view*. Paul Ekman's basic emotion view focused on a single aspect of the information conveyed by emotional expressions – «namely, information about the emotion the subject is undergoing» (Scarantino 2017: 168). Against this tradition, Adam Fridlund's behavioral ecology view argues that «facial movements could not have evolved to involuntarily inform recipients about the emotions of signalers» (169). Scarantino thus assumes that they are rather designed to influence recipients to adopt certain behaviors (*Ibidem*). Observational data suggest that «smiles are not involuntary expressions of happiness but rather voluntary displays of the intent to affiliate/celebrate», and more broadly, that «facial changes are strategic moves in the context of a social transaction» (*Ivi*: 170)⁴.

Scarantino's TAP systematizes this functional plurality by proposing that «emotional expressions are a means of *expressing* inner states, of *representing* what the world is like, of *directing* other people's behavior, and of *committing* to future courses of action» (2019: 49; emphasis in the original). More specifically, Scarantino (2017, 2018) proposes that emotional expressions function as analogs of speech acts, performing communicative moves corresponding to four of the five types of illocutionary acts described by Searle (1979): expressives (expressing our inner states), assertives (asserting what is the case), directives (trying to get hearers to do things), and commissives (committing ourselves to doing things). For example, by expressing anger, I can let you know I feel angry (expressive), represent your conduct as offensive (assertive), demand that you stop what you are doing (directive), and commit to act aggressively if you do not (commissive)⁵.

⁴ An anonymous referee drew my attention to Bress & Cascio (2024), who state that «facial expressions can be produced both voluntarily and involuntarily». I do not think Scarantino would commit himself to defending the opposite view. In general, evolution is conservative: new mechanisms often overlap with older ones, which remain occasionally active. Regardless of Scarantino's intentions, however, what matters for our purposes is the emergence of a new, intentional mode of communication – albeit alongside manifestations of the old one.

⁵ An anonymous referee has expressed some reservations about the idea that multiple communicative functions can coexist in this way. However, in pragmatics there is a growing resistance to the “monism” of speech acts – that is, to the view that each linguistic act involves a single illocutionary force (see, for instance, Lewiński 2021). With regard to emotions, the coexistence of emotional expression and reference to external events is considered quite standard in the literature (as we have seen in Gómez; see also Bar-On's account

Scarantino (2018, 2019) refrains from taking a position on Searle's fifth category, proclamatives – a point to which we shall return in Section 3⁶.

In this early version of TAP, Scarantino (2017, 2018) conceives emotional expressions as «speech act analogs», with the distinction between *natural* and *non-natural meaning* (Grice 1957) marking the boundary. Natural meaning is something an observer can extract «on the basis of statistical correlations» (Scarantino 2017: 169), whereas non-natural meaning is the kind typically «associated with linguistic utterances», which speakers use with the overt intention of conveying the associated meanings (Scarantino 2017: 164). Scarantino explicitly excludes utterances from the category of emotional expressions to avoid a problematic theoretical heterogeneity whereby «some emotional expressions would end up expressing emotions through natural meaning and others through non-natural meaning» (Scarantino 2017: 176).

In a later revision, Scarantino (2019) acknowledges that verbal behaviors can also express emotions. As a result, the four «communicative moves» (expressing, asserting, directing, committing) can be performed both by *natural emotional expressions* (e.g., an involuntary frown), thus qualifying as speech act analogs, and by *overt emotional expressions* (whether linguistic or conventionalized nonverbal displays, e.g., a posed «anger face», [Ivi: 67]). In sum, it is *natural* emotional expressions – rather than emotional expressions in general – that now qualify as speech act analogs.

While the notion of natural emotional expressions as speech act analogs captures *functional* continuity, Scarantino's (2019) more nuanced framework also capture an important psychological continuity: both verbal and nonverbal displays can constitute overt, intentional emotional expressions. Dorit Bar-On (2013, 2024) has emphasized a similar point. She highlights that expressive communication in primates involves not only the expression of emotions but also the direction of attention toward their objects: «Acts of expressive communication often involve an overt gaze direction, guiding the receiver's attention not only to the expressive agent's affective state but also to the object of that state – to the source or target of the relevant state» (Bar-On 2013: 356). The quotation also emphasizes the role of *overt gaze* direction in guiding the receiver's attention. Along the same lines, Bar-On (2024) highlights the use of gestures and vocal calls as «attention-getters» by chimpanzees and other primates: they use them *overtly* (and therefore, in a sense, intentionally) to draw recipients' attention to their behavioral display. In short, they «engage in *overt acts* of showing their states of mind to suitable others» (Bar-On 2013: 362, my emphasis).

In sum, like Scarantino, Bar-On sees some emotional expressions as overt, intentional communication: a «psychologically mediated communication», contrasted both with «code-like communication», which relies on innate repertoires of relatively fixed, inflexible signals, and with «Gricean communication», conceived as dependent on sophisticated mind-reading abilities. Since such abilities are absent in infants, early human communication appears to be a form of *psychologically mediated communication*, with sophisticated mind-reading emerging later as an additional strategy.

2. Face as a principle of human communication

In Section 1, I introduced Scarantino's theoretical framework, highlighting some of its key elements. First, the multifunctionality of emotional expressions – their capacity to

below). Moreover, the *directive* and *commissive* components are generally assumed, especially in theories that aim to provide an evolutionary account of emotions. Of course, in the case of intentional communication, this does not mean that the communicator *explicitly intends* to perform each of the four functions.

⁶ More precisely, Searle's fifth category would be that of *declarations*. Scarantino, however, prefers the label *proclamatives*.

simultaneously perform the functions of Searlean *expressives*, *assertives*, *commissives*, and *directives*. Second, the idea that this makes expressive communication an analog of distinctively human communication – and specifically, of illocutionary acts. Moreover, we have seen that Scarantino at one point endorses the idea that the boundary between speech act analogs and genuine speech acts – drawn along the Gricean distinction between natural and non-natural meaning – does not coincide with the distinction between emotional expressions and non-emotional, verbal communication. While speech act analogs are indeed cases of natural emotional expressions, genuine speech acts also include overt emotional expressions.

The framework thus outlined not only establishes a functional analogy between nonhuman and distinctively human communicative behavior, but also suggests the existence of shared cognitive processes: it seems that forms of non-natural, intentional communication can also be found within the domain of nonverbal behaviors that we share with other species. This does not exclude the possibility that distinctively human communication involves something more than its intentional nature.

To explore this issue of continuity and discontinuity across species, in this Section I introduce Marina Terkourafi's interpretation of the Gricean cooperative principle in terms of *face*. As we shall see, this proposal has the merit of capturing an important element of continuity: *facework* in human communication inherits the function of regulating social relations that was already fulfilled by emotional expressions.

Grice (1975: 45) famously formulated his cooperative principle as: «Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged». What exactly is this «accepted purpose [...] of the talk exchange» to which the speaker must adjust their conversational contribution? According to Terkourafi (2007), it is captured by the pragmatic notion of *face*, which she sees as an overarching purpose common to all human communicative interactions⁷. Terkourafi thus proposes to reformulate the principle as: «Co-operate as much as necessary to constitute your own face (which may involve constituting or threatening your interlocutor's face in the process)» (Terkourafi 2007: 317).

The basic intuition is that humans do not always act cooperatively; rather, they engage in relationship-building processes, with cooperation being one case along a continuum «from over-cooperation (altruistic behaviour) to outright conflict» (*Ivi*: 313). Face is thus seen as a process of constructing subjectivity through the construction of social relationships. Terkourafi presents it as a «uniquely human» (*Ibidem*) feature, and the cooperative principle is accordingly «re-interpreted as an inherently social principle» (*Ivi*: 317).

Specifically, Terkourafi analyzes *face* as comprising two elements: «its biological grounding in the dimension of approach/withdrawal and intentionality (as it is understood in the phenomenological tradition, i.e., a property of mental states)» (*Ivi*: 322).

The first element concerns «the evaluation of a stimulus as “friend” or “foe” [...]. Various referred to as positive vs. negative “valence” or “affect”, approach/withdrawal is widely accepted as the common substratum of all human emotions, and has been associated with the pre-cognitive reactive level» (*Ibidem*). In other words, the driving force

⁷ For a quick introduction to the pragmatic notion of *face*, see Haugh (2009). The concept is introduced into microsociology by Goffman (1955: 213), who defines face as «the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact». The establishment of the notion in studies on politeness within pragmatics is mainly due to Brown and Levinson (1987: 61), who define it as «the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself», and analyze it in two components: the want to be unimpeded (negative face) and the want to be appreciated and approved of (positive face).

of human communication is not rational motivations for cooperation, but emotions as immediate reactions to the environment, triggering subsequent behaviors (i.e., approach or withdrawal) depending on their positive or negative valence.

As for intentionality, it is defined as «the distinguishing property of mental (as opposed to physical) phenomena of being about something, i.e., directed at an object» (*Ibidem*). Regarding emotions and their behavioral displays, this refers to what we have already described with the help of Gómez (2005), Scarantino (2017, 2018, 2019), and Bar-On (2013, 2024): namely, emotions are always directed toward a target. In Terkourafi's words (Terkourafi 2007: 323):

Beliefs, hopes, judgments, intentions, love and hatred all exhibit intentionality, inasmuch as they presuppose that which is being believed, hoped, judged, intended, loved or hated. Face is similarly intentional inasmuch as it presupposes an Other. Awareness of the Other, in turn, presupposes a notion of Self.

In short, *face* is characterized by the fact that the target of emotional reactions is another subject; thus, *face* is «a characteristic of humans» and something «irreducibly relational [...]»: people do not “have face” and cannot “do face” in isolation» (*Ivi*: 324).

Terkourafi's proposal is insightful, as her dual emphasis on emotions and their intentionality connects human communication with *psychologically mediated communication* in other species. However, I would like to suggest two qualifications to her proposal.

Let us begin with intentionality. Restricting it to cases where the target is «the Other» seems to exclude the paradigmatic case described by Tomasello (2008: 140) in terms of «triadic joint attentional engagement»: that is, communication directed by an agent toward conspecifics concerning an object of shared interest, for purposes of joint attention/action. Importantly, this is the paradigmatic case of cooperation.

It is useful to consider the triadic model proposed by Du Bois (2007) to analyze the phenomenon of «stance-taking in dialogic interaction». This model is a «stance triangle» whose vertices are occupied by a first subject, a second subject, and an object: taking a stance can be described as a relation among these three vertices, such that «the stancetaker (1) evaluates an object, (2) positions a subject (usually the self), and (3) aligns with other subjects» (Du Bois 2007: 163). Now, if we take seriously the idea that in the construction of *face* intentionality is directed toward the Other, then we must reinterpret Du Bois's model in one of two ways. Either we reduce the three vertices to two poles by merging the object with the second subject; or, as seems preferable, we maintain the three vertices, assuming that the object of evaluation can be a third subject, distinct from the second subject who may or may not align with the evaluation performed by the first subject. In any case, this situation is clearly distinct from forms of cooperation exemplified by cases like:

(1) «A vervet monkey's alarm call [...] indicates the presence of an aerial predator, [...] shows the caller's fear of the predator, thereby moving others to hide from the danger» (Bar-On 2013: 356).

Here, the alarm call is an emotional expression addressed to conspecifics, whose intentional object (in the sense of *aboutness*) is a danger external to the community. Compare (1) with (2):

(2) «a baboon's “reconciliation grunt” at the end of a fight signals a higher-ranking baboon's appeasing attitude toward a specific lower-ranking victim» (*Ibidem*).

In (2), the intentional object of the emotional expression is another subject, and the act of reconciliation is typically displayed in front of other community members. Thus, all three vertices of the stance triangle are occupied by conspecifics, and the emotional expression functions as a form of relationship regulation within the community – unlike (1), which involves community coordination in response to external threats.

The comparison between (1) and (2) suggests the following conclusion: while it makes sense to identify *face* with situations like (2), where the intentional object is the Other, if we want the cooperative principle to capture human communication as a whole, we must also include situations like (1). In short, the cooperative principle is broader than the notion of *face* alone⁸.

On the other hand, regarding the other feature identified by Terkourafi (the dimension of approach/withdrawal), it seems too broad when it comes to emotions relevant to *face*: the categories of approach and withdrawal also apply to purely individual reactions to environmental events, which do not involve social relationships or social groups. As a matter of fact, Terkourafi (2007) correctly notes that «approach» and «withdrawal» are generic valences forming «the common substratum of all human emotions» (Terkourafi 2007: 322); they are not specific emotions with distinct behavioral manifestations – such as fear or disgust.

Thus, if we want to identify the «biological grounding» of the notion of *face*, it is preferable to refer to actual emotions with specific manifestations, capable of fulfilling the communicative functions previously described: expressing inner states, representing the world, directing others' behavior, and committing to future courses of action. Moreover, among emotions, we must select those relevant to the construction and regulation of social relationships. As we have already noted, Scarantino (2017) mentions evidence that «facial changes are strategic moves in the context of a social transaction», and that, for example, «smiles are not involuntary expressions of happiness but rather voluntary displays of the intent to affiliate/celebrate» (Scarantino 2017: 170). More generally, among basic emotions, it is often argued that happiness serves the social function of communicating a lack of threat, while sadness signals appeasement and elicits sympathy (Shariff and Tracy 2011: 398).

In addition to basic emotions with social functions, researchers have identified a class of social «self-conscious» emotions, i.e., emotions that presuppose «self-awareness and self-representations» (Tracy and Robins 2004: 105). These emotions – paradigmatically pride and shame, but also guilt, embarrassment, and hubris – require subjects capable of becoming «aware that they have lived up to, or failed to live up to, some actual or ideal self-representation» (*Ibidem*). Another important feature of self-conscious emotions is that they promote «the attainment of social goals [...], which are more distally related to survival and reproduction» (*Ivi*: 106) than the goals of basic emotions. Furthermore, they provide «weaker evidence of universality» (*Ivi*: 104), although they have a clear «biological grounding». For instance,

the pride and shame expressions show clear morphological resemblances to dominance and submission displays of other primates [...]. Second, humans across disparate cultures (including the congenitally blind) have been found to spontaneously display these expressions in status-relevant situations (Shariff and Tracy 2011: 397).

⁸ The issue of the relationship between *face* and the *cooperative principle* is far too broad to be fully addressed here. I will confine myself to emphasizing the specific point discussed above: we cannot identify the «accepted purpose [...] of the talk exchange» simply with the regulation of social relations, while excluding phenomena of joint action involving external referents.

In summary, Terkourafi (2007) deserves credit for pointing toward a productive theoretical direction: by recognizing the role of emotions and their aboutness in human communication, she paves the way for appreciating the continuity with *psychologically mediated communication* in other species. *Facework* is the heir to phenomena of social regulation of emotions within the sphere of nonverbal behavior. However, I have suggested some qualifications to her proposal. The main point is that human communication includes not only cases primarily oriented toward *facework*, but also cases primarily oriented toward cooperation in response to external factors. This second type of case differs from the first in terms of both the emotions involved and the objects these emotions are about. Thus, while the notion of *face* shows significant continuity with the communicative use of facial expressions in our primate lineage, it nevertheless represents a specialization within that domain: facial and other nonverbal expressions have a broader scope, which also includes cases of coordination in response to external factors. Moreover, the continuity between expressive and specifically human communication should not lead us to overlook elements of discontinuity. In particular, we have introduced the idea that self-conscious emotions may presuppose «ideal» self-representations: the adjective «ideal» suggests a normative-symbolic component specific to our species. Let us now explore this idea in greater depth.

3. Intersubjectivity

In Section 1, we considered forms of *natural* expressive communication – facial or otherwise – capable of performing various functions of behavioral and social regulation. We also introduced the notion of *psychologically mediated communication*, a form of communication that we share with other primate species, in which agents *non-naturally* (intentionally) share their emotions for the purposes of behavior and relationship regulation.

In Section 2, we emphasized the distinction between communication about external referents, on the one hand, and relationship regulation, on the other. The pragmatic notion of *face* is the heir to this second domain of expressive behavior. Yet we also suggested that humans may display social emotions that depend on a species-specific capacity to form “ideal” self-representations.

In this section, we aim to describe this factor of discontinuity in greater detail. The point is to recognize that, although *psychologically mediated communication* already allows for a certain degree of sharing of mental life among agents (a form of proto-intersubjectivity), genuine intersubjectivity arises only with the emergence of distinctively human cognition – and, in particular, with its normative-symbolic dimension.

According to Hurford (2007: 332, my emphasis), «apes have rich mental lives, but keep their pictures of the world to themselves, like all other animals besides humans. *Only humans* tell each other in detail about events and scenes in the world». Yet, after quoting this passage, Bar-On (2013: 361, my emphasis) objects that «expressive behavior already manifests a natural tendency that *nonhuman animals* have openly to share states of mind with others». Who is right? Is the intersubjective sharing of mental states a prerogative of humans, as Hurford suggests? Or does it already characterize the expressive communication found in numerous species of nonhuman animals, as Bar-On claims? It is possible that both are right – provided we recognize a duality in the way intersubjectivity is conceived.

The question can usefully be formulated in terms of the different use of the notion of «motivation» by Tomasello and Bar-On. Michael Tomasello has defended the thesis of an evolutionary adaptation in humans «for participating in collaborative activities involving shared intentionality» (Tomasello et al. 2005: 690). This adaptation is more specifically

analyzed as the combined result of two factors: «(1) the general ape line of understanding others as animate, goal-directed, and intentional agents; and (2) a species-unique *motivation to share* emotions, experiences, and activities with other persons» (*Ivi*: 675; my emphasis). The first component described by Tomasello converges with the *psychologically mediated communication* discussed by Bar-On: in both cases, there is an assumption of the ability to perform and understand intentional actions in the service of overt communication purposes. On the other hand, Bar-On (2013: 352) rejects hypothesis (2), that is, the idea of a specific «cooperative motivation» to explain how human communicators «become motivated to share [...] thoughts with their fellows». According to Bar-On,

we should recognize that our nonhuman predecessors, being social, minded, and expressive creatures, were already proficient [...] communicators who overtly shared information about their current states of mind and impending behavior as well as about the world around them. This may relieve language evolution theorists of the need to offer specifically evolutionary explanations for why our immediate predecessors should have become *motivated to share information* with each other about various matters (*Ivi*: 362; my emphasis).

Bar-On's position has a couple of good reasons on its side. In overt expressive communication, emotions trigger specific intentional behaviors that enable precisely those emotions to be communicated – to be *shared* with recipients. Now, emotions are by definition considered *motivations* for intentional behaviors. Thus, there is a sense in which overt expressive communication enables agents to share emotions without requiring motivations distinct from the emotions themselves.

At the same time, it must be admitted that positions such as those of Hurford and Tomasello are justified, both quantitatively and qualitatively. On the quantitative side, the degree of detail and variety of mental states that we humans communicate to one another is incomparably greater than in other animals. But above all, the intersubjective sharing of mental states in our species displays an important peculiarity: its normative-symbolic character.

Tomasello has strongly emphasized this point, using the «motivation to share» as an explanation not only for human communication but also for the emergence of our specific morality. In his perspective, this motivation makes us «ultra-social» animals, through a two-stage evolutionary path: the first is «interdependent collaboration, as the more basic»; the second is «group-minded (perhaps cultural) identification built on that foundation» (Tomasello 2014: 188).

Let us quickly consider some evidence related to the first stage. Three-year-old children, when involved in activities that require the distribution of goods, show «a sense of distributive justice that is closely tied to collaborative activities» (*Ivi*: 189). Moreover, participation in joint actions has normative effects on 18-month-old children: «Once they have formed a joint goal, humans are committed to it» (*Ivi*: 189). Finally, studies on children confirm a daily observation, namely «humans have negative attitudes toward free riders who contribute nothing but who expect to share in the rewards of others' efforts» (*Ivi*: 190). None of these (and similar) manifestations is significantly attested among other primates.

As for the second stage, it is characterized by the emergence of phenomena of «active conformity»:

humans do not just learn from others, they actively conform to others, and from early in ontogeny, in ways that other primates do not. This might be based on a desire to fit in with the group and/or to avoid negative sanctions from group members who are expecting conformity (*Ivi*: 191).

In short, with the expression «motivation to share», Tomasello means much more than a sharing of emotional states triggered by objects present in the environment – as occurs in expressive communication. What he envisions is rather the human inclination to think of oneself within the dimension of the «we», in normative terms: that is, as internally binding for the individual. Thanks to this normative inclination to adhere to the «we» dimension, intersubjectivity takes on a new form, going well beyond the sharing of stimuli present in the here and now. Specifically, attention to both the other and the reciprocity with them (characteristic of the first stage described by Tomasello) multiplies the opportunities for sharing mental states; while cultural identification with the group (characteristic of the second stage) tends to crystallize these episodes of sharing into systems of ritualization that we call «culture» – beginning with the emergence of linguistic conventions. The mind of the individual is primarily a repository shared with others of evaluations, beliefs, and norms: a space where personal identity and cultural conventions take shape in an inseparable weave.

Two final remarks.

First, this second level of intersubjectivity explains why human language also enables a fifth type of illocutionary act (alongside expressives, assertives, directives, and commissives): proclamatives, which in Scarantino's words «have the illocutionary point of intentionally and overtly changing the world just by saying» (Scarantino 2017: 173). In other words, proclamatives are those linguistic acts through which we bring conventional or institutional facts into existence: acts based on conventional expressions that allow us to create husbands and wives («I now pronounce you husband and wife»), laws and legal norms, social and professional roles («I declare NN a doctor of...»), and so forth. Scarantino admits that proclamatives «are the hardest illocutionary acts to find analogs for among emotional expressions due to the lack of extra-linguistic institutions that allow for “doing by showing” the way they allow for “doing by saying”» (Scarantino 2019: 67, footnote 14). However, this lack should not be regarded as contingent. Only a species capable of creating social institutions can possess a language endowed with proclamatives. Of course, more generally speaking, only a species capable of creating social institutions can possess a *symbolic language*, period. Moreover, all speech acts, not only *proclamatives*, bring about «changes in the participants' normative properties (such as rights, obligations, or entitlements)»⁹. In other words, all speech acts involve a normative-symbolic dimension. But this is precisely why, in expressive communication, we can find only *analogs of* (rather than genuine) speech acts. Nonetheless, a crucial difference remains: speech acts that, among other things, directly regulate behavior and social relationships can, as such, have non-symbolic precursors. The same cannot be said for those whose function consists solely in constituting social institutions.

In sum, intersubjectivity in Tomasello's normative sense enables the emergence of a symbolic dimension: that is, of a language, and along with it, of the other institutions that we can bring into being through language (via proclamatives). Only this kind of intersubjectivity, as Searle observed, makes it possible to construct societies where there are queens and slaves:

It is common [...] to read that certain ant colonies have slaves or that beehives have queens [...] but it is important to keep reminding ourselves that for a community literally to have slaves or literally to have a queen, the participants would have to have the apparatus necessary to represent something as a queen or as a slave. Just

⁹ The formulation is that of one of the anonymous referees, but both correctly pointed out this fact. This capacity of all speech acts to modify the normative properties of subjects has been extensively analyzed by Marina Sbisà (see, in particular, Sbisà 2023).

behaving in certain ways, where behavior is construed solely in terms of bodily movements, is not sufficient for a community to have a queen or to have slaves. In addition, there would have to be a certain set of attitudes, beliefs, etc., on the part of the members of the community, and this would seem to require a system of representation such as language. Language seems to be essential not only to represent these facts to ourselves: [...] the linguistic forms are partly constitutive of the facts (Searle 1995: 37).

Indeed, creating queens and slaves requires proclamatives: linguistic forms through which we constitute institutional realities.

The second consideration concerns the «self-conscious» emotions discussed in Section 2, that is, emotions – like pride and shame – that are widespread «across disparate cultures [...] in status-relevant situations» (Shariff and Tracy 2011: 397). As we saw, these emotions «presuppose self-awareness and self-representations»; specifically, they require subjects capable of becoming «aware that they have lived up to, or failed to live up to, some actual or ideal self-representation» (Tracy and Robins 2004: 105). The connection with the notion of intersubjectivity just described is evident, particularly with the idea that the individual mind is primarily a repository, shared with one's social group, of evaluations, beliefs, and norms.

The idea of the individual mind as intersubjectively shaped has a long history. One example is George Mead's (1934) notion of the «generalized other»: that is, the internalized representation of systems of norms and social relations that simultaneously constitutes the individual and ensures the functioning of social structures. A similar insight is found in Erving Goffman's notion of «frameworks of understanding in our society for making sense out of events» (Goffman 1974: 10). Harold Garfinkel spoke of a «moral order» in similar terms:

A society's members encounter and know the moral order as perceivedly normal courses of action – familiar scenes of everyday affairs, the world of daily life known in common with others and with others taken for granted. They refer to this world as the «natural facts of life» which, for members, are through and through moral facts of life (Garfinkel 1964: 225).

It is from this shared repository of norms, beliefs, and evaluations – whether called «generalized other», «framework of understanding», or «moral order» – that human beings assess whether «they have lived up to, or failed to live up to, some actual or ideal self-representation»¹⁰.

4. Conclusions

Facial and other nonverbal expressions underwent significant development within the primate lineage to which humans belong. Within the context of the ape's ability to understand «others as animate, goal-directed, and intentional agents» (Tomasello et al. 2005: 690), these expressive displays visibly gave rise to forms of overt – «psychologically mediated» – expressive communication.

More broadly, all cases of emotional expressions – whether overt or natural – exhibit a functional continuity with four of the illocutionary act types described by Searle (1979): expressives, assertives, directives, and commissives. Scarantino (2019) therefore proposes to consider natural emotional expressions as «speech act analogs».

¹⁰ A more in-depth analysis of these issues can be found in Mazzone (in press).

By contrast, there appear to be no analogs of the fifth type of illocutionary acts, the proclamatives, either among natural emotional expressions or within overt communication in nonhuman primates. This absence is not a contingent fact. Only a species capable of a normative-symbolic form of intersubjectivity can create social institutions.

The pragmatic notion of *face* appears inseparable from this kind of intersubjectivity. Undoubtedly, forms of intentional construction and regulation of social relationships also exist among nonhuman animals. Humans, however, seem to be unique in this respect: the processes of constructing and regulating social relationships are guided by normative inclinations – in the dual sense of a special attention to both the other and the reciprocity with them, and of cultural identification with the group.

Thus, the notion of *face* plays a crucial role in human communication. This centrality is captured by the reformulation of the cooperative principle proposed by Terkourafi (2007). At the same time, Terkourafi highlights the continuity between *face* and emotions: facial and other nonverbal expressions already perform functions of regulating social relationships. In this article, I have analyzed in greater detail both this continuity and the specificity of the pragmatic notion of *face*.

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