

Emotional Diversity Without Theoretical Collapse

Recent empirical work suggests a striking result: familiar emotions like anger, fear, and happiness lack consistent biological signatures across brains and bodies. For Lisa Feldman Barrett, this variability motivates a revolution: emotions are not triggered by dedicated mechanisms but constructed from domain-general systems shaped by experience and culture. This paper resists that inference. I argue that emotional diversity does not require abandoning structure, but rethinking it. Drawing on developmental approaches, I propose emotions are best understood as developmental systems that emerge through ontogeny, achieving functional specialisation without fixed or universal biological markers. On this view, variability reflects differences in developmental pathways rather than the absence of underlying organisation. Emotional diversity, then, is not evidence for a collapse in emotion theory, but a clue to how emotional systems are built.