



IN MEMORIAM

Richard S. Lazarus
Professor of Psychology, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1922 – 2002

Richard Lazarus, a distinguished scholar, researcher and professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, died on November 24, 2002, following a fall in his home.

Born March 3, 1922 in New York City, Professor Lazarus graduated from the City College of New York in 1942. After serving in the Army for three and a half years, he completed his doctorate in 1948 at the University of Pittsburgh, following which he served on the faculties of Johns Hopkins University (from 1948 to 1953) and Clark University (from 1953 to 1957), joining the faculty at Berkeley in 1957. He remained at Berkeley until he became professor emeritus in 1991.

When he began his research and writing at Johns Hopkins, there was little interest in stress or emotion, except on the part of the military. By the 1970s, after interest was stimulated by his influential 1966 monograph, *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process*, and the work of other academic pioneers, it became apparent that emotion and stress were important not only to the military, but for all of academia. The 1966 monograph was eventually considered a classic in behavioral science, and its influence was felt in sociology, anthropology, physiology, and medicine.

In his theoretical approach to stress and emotion, Professor Lazarus proposed that emotions, far from being intrapsychic feelings, reflected the fate of one's goals. He proposed the concept of appraisal to refer to the impact of events on a person's strivings, and that different patterns of appraisals accounted for the rich array of different emotional states.

Beginning in the late 1950s at Berkeley, Professor Lazarus began a rich and impactful series of investigations typically using motion picture films to arouse stress and emotion, and instructional sets designed to bring into play ego defense mechanisms to change the manner by which the film affected the viewer, both subjectively and psychophysiologicaly. By documenting how ego defenses such as denial and intellectualization changed the way that participants evaluated the meaning of film events, lowering or raising levels of stress, this celebrated line of work effectively demonstrated the power of appraisal to influence a person's emotions, as well as their means of coping with emotional stress.

Professor Lazarus's concept of appraisal, which had its roots in the work of Magda Arnold, and before that, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, eventually became a principal rationale for cognitive-behavior therapy, which became one of the major approaches to psychological treatment beginning in the 1970s.

Professor Lazarus also emphasized that the way people cope with stress is crucial in their physical, social, and psychological well-being. A basic premise of his was that stress and coping are reciprocals of each other. When coping is effective, stress is usually controlled; when coping is ineffective, stress mounts and can get out of control, leading to physiological disturbance, subjective distress, and impaired social functioning.

In 1984, in collaboration with Susan Folkman (who had obtained her doctorate as his student), Professor Lazarus published *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*, which became the most widely read and cited academic book in this field. He published a sequel to it in 1999, entitled *Stress and Emotion: A New Synthesis*. There, he made a case for stress as being part of the broader area of emotion, and made a case for the use of narratives or prototypical stories as an approach to the emotions. Professor Lazarus also stressed the importance of daily hassles as a source of stress, arguing that such hassles typically cause more human suffering than major life events. This view presented an important counterpoint to the then-prevalent views about the significance of major life stressors. He also made clear that daily hassles and major life stressors can be interrelated — major life stresses can become the source of hassles, and hassles can become life events. Throughout his writings on stress, whether of major life events or hassles, Professor Lazarus emphasized the importance of appraisal — the meaning and impact of an event for the individual.

After his retirement in 1990, Professor Lazarus published five additional innovative books, as well as numerous chapters and articles. His 1991 book *Emotion and Adaptation* is considered one of the most significant publications on emotion in recent history and significantly advanced understanding of the concept of appraisal, its relevance for understanding culture and emotion, emotional development, and psychopathology. In 1994, with his wife Bernice, he published a trade book, *Passion and Reason: Making Sense of our Emotions*. This was followed in 1997 by a compilation of his articles, entitled *Fifty Years of the Research and Theory of R. S. Lazarus: An Analysis of Historical and Perennial Issues*, which in addition to describing his own thinking, provided a history of the changes in psychology and in his own views during the second half of the twentieth century. His autobiography, *The Life and Work of an Eminent Psychologist*, was published soon after in 1998, and *Stress and Emotion: A New Synthesis*, noted earlier, appeared in 1999. In 2006, his last book on emotion in aging was published; it was written in conjunction with his wife, with editorial assistance from Professor Joseph Campos.

Professor Lazarus received numerous honors during his career. For example, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1969-1970. In 1984, the California Psychological Association gave him special recognition for his outstanding contributions, and in 1989, the American Psychological Association gave him one of its highest awards, for Distinguished Scientific Contribution. Professor Lazarus was very proud of having received two honorary doctorates, one in 1988 from the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, and a second in 1995 from the University of Haifa, in Israel.

Professor Lazarus was widely sought after abroad as a visiting professor, often together with his wife Bernice. Among his visiting appointments were a special fellowship at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan, in 1963-1964; a series of appearances at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, between 1965 and 1976; and visiting professorships at Heidelberg University in 1980, the University of Western Australia in Perth in 1984, and at Aarhus University in Denmark in both 1991 and 1997. He also was invited to present numerous lectures in Israel between 1975 and 1995.

Professor Lazarus is survived by his wife of 57 years, Bernice, and their two children, David and Nancy, along with four grandchildren. It is noteworthy that on the occasion of his receiving the honorary doctorate at the University of Haifa, he mentioned that his wife Bernice was equally responsible for his professional success and his good fortune. Professor Lazarus leaves a legacy of over 150 scholarly publications, and 20 books, read all over the world.

Joseph J. Campos