



Affect Imagery Consciousness: Volume I: The Positive Affects

By Silvan S. Tomkins PhD

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...brilliant..."--**Malcolm Gladwell**, Author of *Blink*

The writings for which this essay is offered as a Prologue consumed him from the mid-1950s through the end of his life in 1991. Knowing it was his "lifework," Tomkins conflated "life" and "work," reifying the superstition that its completion would equal death and refusing to release for publication long-completed material. He knew the risks associated with this obsessive, neurotic behavior, and the results were as bad as predicted. The first two volumes of Affect Imagery Consciousness (AIC) were released in 1962 and 1963, Volume III in 1991 shortly before he succumbed to a particularly virulent strain of small cell lymphoma, and Volume IV a year after his death. This last book contains Tomkins's understanding of neocortical cognition, ideas that are even now exciting, but until this current publication of his work as a single supervolume, almost nobody has read it. The bulk of his audience had died along with the enthusiasm generated by his ideas. Big science is now more a matter of big machines and unifocal discoveries as the basis for pars pro toto reasoning than big ideas based on the assembly and analysis of all that is known. Tomkins ignored nothing from any science past or present that might lead him toward a more certain understanding of the mind. Every idea, every theory deserved attention if only because significant observations can loiter in blind alleys."--
From the Prologue by **Donald L. Nathanson, MD**

Volume 1 of Springer's magisterial new two-volume edition of Tomkins's magnum opus comprises *The Positive Affects* and *The Negative Affects*."

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Editorial Review

Review

"Silvan Tomkins may have been the best face reader there ever was. Tomkins was from Philadelphia, the son of a dentist from Russia. He was short, and slightly thick around the middle, with a wild mane of white hair and huge black plastic-rimmed glasses. He taught psychology at Princeton and Rutgers and was the author of *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, a four-volume work so dense that its readers were evenly divided between those who understood it and thought it was brilliant and those who did not understand it and thought it was brilliant."

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"This volume, reopening as it does issues which have long remained in disrepute in American Psychology...is another refreshing sign of an impending reorientation in our approach to understanding the human being....Tomkins has read widely and quoted aptly from contemporary work in neurophysiology and emotion, and he has integrated it well with the classical material....This is certainly no book for Occam's razor; it would be dulled within the first few pages...even the most critical reviewer could not deny that the book is full of illuminating insights and stimulating conceptions....Few psychologists could write this book, and of those that *could* still fewer *would*, but many of them *could* read it with profit."

--*Science*

"Silvan Tomkins...was a keen observer and creative thinker against the Zeitgeist....In his highly influential work...Tomkins was the first in the Anglo-American post-Darwinian field to describe the facial responses so carefully and, in doing so, to inspire some very influential measurement techniques by his followers....The reception of Tomkins' work is very interesting....Most of what Tomkins said was so contradictory of the academic psychology and psychoanalytic metapsychology of his time that he was not taken seriously....Despite the fact that the general outline of the theory has been well received in the meantime, some essentials of Tomkins' reasoning are held to be highly controversial....All of Tomkins' work is very stimulating....It is, however, not easy to digest and verify the validity of some of his claims....His thinking is very strong."

--*Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*

From the Publisher

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Regina Laporte:

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Wendy Ray:

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Sunny Weaver:

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