

Feel bad, live well! The value of negative emotions for well-being

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1. Summary of the research plan

What exactly is the role that emotions play in an individual's leading of a good life? Perhaps they contribute to her well-being through the way they feel, or perhaps they motivate action towards achieving other prudential value. But is it possible that emotions themselves, even negative ones, have final value of their own? In this project, we propose to investigate the understudied yet fundamental role of emotions in well-being. We defend the bold claim that emotions not only have instrumental value or value through the way they feel, they also have final prudential value because of their nature as world- and self-oriented intentional states. This is true, we claim, even of negative emotions.

We will deliver a thorough theoretical analysis of how understanding the complexity of emotion can impact conceptions of what makes a life go well for the person living it, exploiting the core intuitions governing different dominant approaches to happiness and well-being. To do so, we will draw on two insights from current – and, in particular, our – research on emotions as the basis of our investigation:

- 1) Emotions are, to varying degrees, *world*-oriented intentional states, and as such they can constitute forms of evaluative knowledge, evaluative understanding, and virtue.
- 2) Emotions are, to varying degrees, *self*-oriented intentional states, and as such they can constitute forms of self-knowledge, self-understanding, and virtuous agency.

Against the backdrop of the growing consensus that emotions are forms of evaluation, we will pursue a prevalent trend in the literature on well-being: reconciling the role of the subject's own perspective on the kind of life she wants to pursue with the thought that there are constraints to what is worthy of pursuit independently of this perspective. In order to inform our analysis, we will conduct case studies on two negative emotions, anger and guilt, chosen to illustrate how the world-oriented and self-oriented aspects of emotions, respectively, can impact well-being. Through these in-depth case studies, we hope to provide solid examples for the claim that negative emotions can indeed have final value for well-being.

Finally, drawing together the theoretical analysis and the case studies, we will put forward an informed conception of the role that emotions play in what is a good life for the individual living it. Our project thus addresses the real need for a revised theory of well-being that takes into account recent advances in emotion research, and in particular the claims that emotions have an intricate connection to knowledge, understanding, virtue, and virtuous agency.

2. Research plan

2.1. Current state of research in the field

What makes a life go well for the person living it? Maybe a life is going well if someone has many

positive emotions and only a few negative ones. Positive emotions, perhaps, are valuable because of the way they feel. Negative emotions, in contrast, may only be prudentially valuable in helping us to achieve other things, and otherwise have disvalue as unpleasant feeling states. These compelling intuitions drive much philosophical work on well-being. Recent research on emotions, however, has uncovered the complex structure of emotions as not just good or bad feelings, but as intentional states that provide information about both the world and ourselves (de Sousa, 2007). Even negative emotions like contempt (Bell, 2013), anxiety (Kurth 2015) and disgust (Clark & Fessler, 2014) have been argued to have their own final value. We have also contributed to drawing attention to what is good in bad emotions in *In Defense of Shame* (OUP, 2011), *Shadows of the Soul* (Routledge, forthcoming) as well as in a major international conference entitled *Negative Emotions: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* that will take place in May 2017. What implications do these new avenues of research have for conceptions of well-being? We believe that suitably complex understandings of emotion have not yet been sufficiently applied to their role in well-being. If emotions are intentional states, how do they really stand in relation to having a good life? Can even negative emotions have final prudential value? These are the questions driving our project.

In this section, we begin by presenting the state of philosophical research on well-being and emotion. We then introduce two important insights about emotion that motivate the case for some negative emotions' having final prudential value: 1) emotions are, to varying degrees, *world-oriented* intentional states, and as such they can constitute forms of evaluative knowledge, evaluative understanding and virtue; and 2) emotions are, to varying degrees, *self-oriented* intentional states, and as such they can constitute forms of self-knowledge, self-understanding, and virtuous agency.

2.1.1. State of philosophical research on well-being and emotion

In studying well-being, philosophers aim to elucidate the nature of what it is that makes a life go well for an individual (Parfit, 1984; Rodogno, 2016). They do so by identifying what is of final prudential value for the person whose life it is, where, loosely, something has final value if it is valuable not merely as an instrument to some other end. Well-being, on the philosophical use, is an attribute of entire lives rather than of individual moments of, say, happiness or contentment, and the philosophical study focuses on the well-being of individual persons, as opposed to social entities (Crisp, 2016).

In what follows, we will present the main theories of well-being and insist on some trends within these theories, trends that emphasize the depth and complexity that a satisfactory account of well-being must have. While doing so, we will draw attention to some important parallels between these theories and similar trends within contemporary theorizing about the emotions (we have shed light on these parallels in Deonna & Teroni, 2013). The goal won't be to arbitrate between the various dominant views of well-being, but to argue that these parallel trends militate in favour of an in-depth reconsideration of the potential roles played by emotions in well-being. The core idea behind the present project is that understanding correctly the nature of emotions is to realize that they have some claim to contribute to a life that goes well at the needed level of depth and complexity.

Pleasure-based accounts of well-being and emotion

Hedonism is famous for focusing exclusively on the role pleasures play in lives that go well. According to basic versions of the theory, what is good for a person is all (and only) positive feelings, whereas what is bad is all (and only) negative feelings (Plato, 1976; Bentham, 1789; Mill, 1863; Bramble, 2016). Yet, while there is indeed intuitive appeal to the idea that positive feelings are what is finally prudentially valuable, simple hedonism has been recurrently criticized for failing to account for the complexity and depth of well-being.

It has been variously said, for instance, that hedonism struggles to account for different kinds of pleasures (Mill, 1863), to provide a unified account of the nature of pleasure (Clark, 2005), to account for the well-being of some agents who despise pleasure (Feldman, 2004) and to assess whole-life pleasures, etc. (Gregory, 2016). Closer to our interests, it supposedly fails to explain away the famous Experience Machine objection (Nozick, 1974). According to this objection, we do not think that the experience of, say, achievement simulated in an Experience Machine is sufficient for well-being but require also that the achievement is genuine: what we value for well-being is more than how we feel.

At least when they take an affective form, life satisfaction accounts are perhaps more promising pleasure-based accounts. These accounts maintain that happiness consists in holding an overall cognitive and affective positive appraisal or endorsement of one's life (Tatarkiewicz, 1966; Sumner, 1996). Still, while such theories do offer more depth than simple hedonist accounts, it might not be the depth we want. Some have complained that the theory unduly excludes those people who live unthinking and unreflective lives (Feldman, 2006), others that life satisfactionism might not account for the fact that the factors by which we ought to appraise our lives are not arbitrary or purely subjective.

Taking this thought further and finding fault with life satisfactionism, Haybron has proposed an emotional state theory of happiness (Haybron, 2005; Haybron, 2008). According to it, 'happiness is most profitably understood as a matter of a person's overall emotional condition' (Haybron, 2005: 286), which consists in a balance of positive emotions, moods and mood propensities. On the emotional state theory, only some pleasures contribute to well-being but the relevant ones are not (or not only) those directed at conditions of our lives. They are rather those that resonate sufficiently within the subject's overall psychology. The central idea is that the levels of depth and complexity characteristic of well-being is a matter of psychological reverberation of the relevant pleasures.

Sumner's and Haybron's accounts appear to be improvement over simple hedonism – they for instance appear to anchor well-being in the perspective of the agent in a more convincing way. Yet, they may still be too shallow. Surely, some pleasures are better for the agent than others, an issue they do not address. This may or may not be a problem depending on whether or not we agree with them that happiness and well-being, being different concepts, deserve distinct treatments. For both authors, well-being is 'true' happiness, i.e. happiness grounded in cares, concerns and values endorsed by an autonomous and informed agent (Sumner, 1996) or those promoting the agent's self-fulfilment (Haybron, 2005). Is the idea of authentic emotional engagement with one's life and the world, or that of

a self-fulfilled agent, enough to account for the hierarchy among pleasures, however?

One philosopher who has answered negatively is Fred Feldman. His attitudinal hedonism, according to which ‘the intrinsic value of an attitudinal pleasure is determined not simply by the intensity and duration and truthfulness of that pleasure, but by these in combination with the appropriateness of the object of that pleasure’, introduces an objective measure that is explicitly lacking in the accounts reviewed so far (Feldman, 2002: 619; Feldman, 2004).

Beyond the merits and shortcomings of these variants, one trend within pleasure-based accounts emerges: defenders of these accounts insist on the value we put in being engaged in authentic or self-fulfilling lives as well as on the qualitative differences we make between different pleasures.

Now, in keeping with our interest in evaluating the role of emotions in well-being, we have to stress the remarkable fact that what we may call ‘simple feeling theories of emotions’ have been subject to the very same criticisms we have just seen raised against simple forms of hedonism (Deonna & Teroni, 2013). According to these theories, negative and positive emotions just are feelings of pain or pleasure, respectively (Bentham, 1789; Locke, 1695; Mill, 1863; Goldstein, 2003; Kriegel, 2014; Whiting, 2011). In the same way that hedonism struggles to address the importance of authentic, truthful or appropriate engagement with the world, feeling theories struggle to address the way emotions relate us to the world and may do so in ways that are more or less authentic, truthful or appropriate (Deonna & Teroni 2012; Pugmire 2005). As we shall see, theories of emotions have been subject to refinements reminiscent of those enjoyed by theories of well-being. Being attentive to these refinements will prove key to understanding the potential of emotions to contribute to well-being.

Desire-based accounts of well-being and emotions

Accounts of well-being that appear to address the importance of our engagement with the world are desire-fulfilment theories. What is finally good for people ‘is getting what they want’, or the fulfilment of their desires, and what is finally bad for them is their not getting what they want, or the frustration of their desires (Brandt, 1966; Heathwood, 2006, 2016; Rawls, 1971; Railton, 1986). The theory acknowledges our engagement with the world because it takes into account what the subject wants to achieve in that world. On the face of it, like the refined pleasure-based accounts we reviewed, it does this in a way that puts the subjective perspective of the agent at centre stage.

Appearances may be deceptive, however. The simple forms of the theory seem to allow that events the subject knows nothing about could enhance her well-being if it is true that she desired them (Parfit, 1984). This is why the most plausible versions of desire-based accounts insist that only those desires that the subject knows to be satisfied are of prudential value. Another reason for thinking that the theory is not as deeply anchored in the subject’s perspective as it first appears comes from the fact that most prominent versions of the theory do not focus on the subject’s *actual* desires, but on her *hypothetical* or *ideal* desires were she, say, rational and properly informed. Here again, it seems that states that make potentially no difference to the psychology of a subject are claimed to be of prudential value for her. So,

why frame the theory in terms of hypothetical or ideal desires? Because the simple forms of the theory struggle to rule out ill-informed, malicious or pointless desires, such as a desire to count blades of grass for no purpose (Rawls, 1971). While it is easy to understand the need of restricting the relevant set of desires to those that are somehow meaningful or valuable, we have reasons to doubt that modified desire-fulfilment theory is the way to go. The scope of the restriction that is managed by the modified theory can be achieved by simpler variants just as well (Murphy, 1999). And the latter have the advantage of anchoring the agent's well-being in her actual desires, desires whose satisfaction or frustration resonate in her psychology – do we really care for the satisfaction of the desires of our 'rational selves', which may be quite distant from us?

Be that as it may, we may doubt that the satisfaction of desires, however sophisticated they are, is all there is to well-being. The very simple thoughts that the fulfilment of some of our desires does not increase our well-being and that some things that happen to us do increase our well-being without being desired continue to resonate with many philosophers, and with us in particular.

Once again, it is interesting to consider the fate of accounts of emotion in light of accounts of well-being. There is indeed a close parallel between the fate of desire-based theories of well-being and that of desire-based accounts of the emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Wollheim, 2000; Roberts, 2003; Schroeder, 2004; Reisenzein, 2009). On such accounts, positive emotions represent a desire as being satisfied, negative emotions represent a desire as being frustrated. In a way parallel to desire-fulfilment accounts of well-being, desire-based accounts of emotion must specify which desires are necessary for an emotion, and why. Two traditional worries attend desire-based accounts of emotions. First, there are emotional discoveries: sometimes, experiencing an emotion seems to reveal that something is of import. In such cases, it is farfetched to posit desires to account for these emotions and much more convincing to acknowledge that emotions can generate new desires. Second, desire-based accounts fail to reflect the first person experience of an emotion. When we experience an emotion, we do not experience a desire as being satisfied or frustrated (Deonna & Teroni, 2013), nor do we attend to how our desires are being affected. Rather, we focus on how things are faring around us – in what is of value or of disvalue (Tappolet, 2011). This directly feeds into the third group of approaches we shall introduce.

Value-based theories of well-being and emotion

As regards well-being, this last group of approaches is constituted by objective list theories, which build their account of well-being directly in terms of value and meaning.

Objective list theories are a motley crew. The key common feature is the claim that what is prudentially good for a person is fixed independently of her attitude towards it, and typically a plurality of goods is listed (Arneson, 1999). For instance, perhaps having activities and projects worthy of pursuit is of prudential value (Parfit, 1984). Perhaps having friendship, pleasure, knowledge, autonomy, achievement, self-respect, or some combination thereof, is good for us (Griffin, 1987; Moore, 2000; Fletcher, 2013; Rice, 2013; Hooker, 2015). Maybe well-being consists in exercising and developing essential human capacities (Hurka, 1996); or maybe it consists in developing 'central human

capabilities' focusing on aspects such as life, health, dignity, or practical reason (Nussbaum, 2011). In any case, it is in the light of some such values that the other accounts of well-being discussed above can be assessed as lacking depth or complexity: a happy life is a deep life, one that is structured around the pursuit of these values. Authenticity and self-fulfilment are not sufficient.

Objective list theories raise their own worries. One recurrent worry is that emphasis on objective values risks creating an account of what is good for an agent that fails to relate to her own perspective (Sumner, 1996). For instance, someone may rank highly in well-being by having plenty of knowledge, but be disinterested in and unmotivated by it. In Railton's words, 'It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any way to engage him' (Railton, 1986: 47). Moreover, there is the threat of arbitrariness: why these values and not others? Without an answer, the list may be of arbitrary and explanatorily impotent values (Kitcher, 1999; Bradley, 2009).

There is again a parallel between value-based theories of well-being and some accounts of emotions, both of which have historic roots dating back at least to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The key idea in these evaluative accounts is that an emotion is not just an affective state, but also involves an evaluation of an object or event in the subject's environment. For instance, being afraid of the dog involves an evaluation of the dog, the particular object of the emotion, as dangerous. All instances of fear involve an evaluation of the particular object as dangerous, and a value, like danger for fear, is said to be the formal object that all instances of an emotion type share (Kenny, 1963; Teroni, 2007). Further, an emotion is correct if the particular object really does instantiate the formal object.

Evaluative accounts of the emotions come in many varieties. Judgmentalists about emotions, for instance, argue that emotions are nothing other than judgements about value - my fear is a judgement that the dog is dangerous (Solomon, 1976; Nussbaum, 2001). These accounts are widely rejected because judgements are neither necessary nor sufficient for emotion (Robinson, 2004; Stocker, 1992; Deigh, 2010). Weaker versions have thus been developed according to which emotions are evaluative thoughts involving feelings of comfort or discomfort (Greenspan, 1988), evaluative construals (Roberts, 2003), perceptions of evaluative properties (Tappolet, 2012; Döring, 2007), a feeling towards an evaluative content (Goldie, 2000; Helm, 2001), or our own proposal, that emotions are evaluative attitudes (Deonna & Teroni, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017). While they face important challenges, there is a broad consensus in the contemporary discussion that adopting an evaluative account of the emotions is the right way to go. And although there has been an affective turn in the literature on well-being, it has not yet been sufficiently informed by this consensus.

Conclusion

What are the central features of well-being that we can identify from the trends characteristic of the main theories of well-being? What has emerged is the importance not only of pleasant experiences or the fulfilment of desires. While certainly important, they do not get at the heart of the depth and complexity we expect from an adequate account of well-being, be it in terms of authenticity, self-fulfilment and flourishing in what is worthy of pursuit. We have also seen that, while some value-based

accounts of the emotions emphasize the importance of objective values, we risk championing alienating conceptions of well-being. Where does this leave the role of emotion in well-being?

2.1.2. Instrumental value of negative emotions

One uncontroversial role for emotion in well-being is an instrumental one, a role that even negative emotions can play. Consider the advantageous way in which emotions efficiently pick up saliences in the environment and enable quick and effective action with little or no conscious deliberation (de Sousa 1987; Griffiths 1997; Greenspan 2006; Elgin, 2008; Tanesini, 2008). Or consider the communicative role that emotions can play. Disgust, for example, signals disapproval and thereby enforces norms (Clark & Fessler, 2015), a role which other negative emotions like anger or fear play to the same extent (Kelly, 2011; Tybur, et al., 2013). Emotions could even be instrumentally core to our capacity to make judgements and decisions. As has been widely studied, persons with impaired capacities to feel emotions tend also to have impaired capacities for decision (Damasio, 1994). Even while playing these instrumental roles, however, we think a more ambitious claim can be made: emotions, positive *and* negative, can also have final value for well-being.

2.1.3. Insights and final value

Given the parallels between accounts of well-being and of emotion, there is great potential for uncovering fruitful relations between these areas of research. Again, nothing we will say in this project will allow us to adjudicate between the various views about well-being available in the literature. The aim is rather to see how the widespread evaluative accounts of emotions help accommodate both the idea that a subject's well-being must be something that she can embrace and the idea that there are prudential constraints on what is worthy of pursuit. This is an idea already present in Aristotle, and which is a central theme in so-called hybrid theories of well-being (Adams, 1999; Kagan, 2009; Kraut, 2007). The prospects of these theories, we believe, are substantially enhanced if they help themselves to the grip on the evaluative domain made possible by our emotions. In this subsection, we present what we perceive are promising avenues of research in the light of two fundamental insights. At the source of these insights is the idea that emotions are not merely feelings, but are intentional and evaluative states directed at the way things are in the world.

(1) *Emotions are, to varying degrees, world-oriented intentional states, and as such they can constitute forms of evaluative knowledge, evaluative understanding, and virtue.*

Emotions, we have seen, are connected to values and involve evaluations or appraisals of how things are in the world. This kind of world-orientation gives rise to our first insight, which focuses on the way emotions may constitute forms of evaluative knowledge, evaluative understanding, and virtue.

Some have taken the widely accepted relation of emotion to values as a premise to claim that emotions are perceptions of values (Tappolet, 2012; Döring, 2007). If I encounter a dangerous bear while hiking in the mountains, the thought goes, my fear is a perception of danger. This is much like the idea that a visual experience may constitute an instance of knowledge (Williamson, 2000). If we take this analogy

between perceptual and emotional experiences seriously, then why not claim that emotional experience sometimes constitute forms of *evaluative knowledge*?

What would this imply for an individual's well-being? If both positive and *negative* emotions constitute forms of evaluative knowledge, then they could be fundamental to our well-being in revealing to us what sorts of meaningful relations we stand in with the world. Let us see what this may mean in the light of recent trends within well-being theories introduced above.

As we saw, we are looking to reconcile the role of the subject's own perspective on the kind of life she wants to pursue with the thought that there are constraints to what is worthy of pursuit independently of this perspective. Emotions conceived as instances of evaluative knowledge may be of the right pedigree to play this reconciling role. After all, an emotion is a state that plays pivotal roles in the subject's psychology – it is the product of an emotional sensitivity that regulates the subject's interactions with what is significant to her in the environment (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; de Sousa, 1987; Faucher & Tappolet, 2002). If some emotions constitute instances of evaluative knowledge, the emotions may be at the interface between an idiosyncratic sensitivity and objective factors weighing on what can elicit emotions (D'Arms and Jacobson, XXXX). Not all emotions need be instances of the right kind of knowledge for well-being, but at least some could be (pace Rossi & Tappolet, 2014).

Emotions so conceived can be recruited as constituents of well-being within the various approaches we introduced. Consider some representative examples. Within a pleasure-based account such as Feldman's (2002, 2005), in which well-adjusted pleasures contribute more to well-being than ill-adjusted ones, those emotions constituting evaluative knowledge are constituents of well-being with the required depth. And within a life-satisfaction approach such as Sumner's (1996), the emotions that target one's life and constitute evaluative knowledge about it may help distinguish shallow from substantial forms of engagement with one's own life. As regards desire-fulfilment accounts, the evaluative knowledge provided by emotions can be regarded as the filter apt to identify those desires the satisfaction of which is of final prudential value, akin to the role that Rafael Rodogno (2014) argues happiness plays in indicating to us the contribution that activities, pursuits or situations make to our well-being. Finally, a value-based theorist of well-being can recruit the emotions so conceived as constituents of well-being: if knowledge in general is a final good, then evaluative knowledge regarding what is good for us is very likely to be a final prudential good (Deonna & Teroni, 2013).

Of course, developing these various ideas is conditional on the claim that (some) emotions constitute evaluative knowledge. We have argued, along with others, that this claim is untenable (Brady, 2013; Deonna & Teroni, 2012; Dokic & Lemaire, 2015).¹ This being said, it would be a mistake to deny that emotions have epistemic roles to play in connection with value (Brun, Doguoglu & Kuenzle, 2008): emotions may not constitute value knowledge, but they still may constitute forms of *evaluative understanding* (Brady, 2013; Deonna & Teroni, 2012; Elgin, 2008; Wood & Roberts 2007). What is this

¹ That emotions are factive states, nevertheless, is and the implications of this on knowledge is explored in Teroni's concurrent project, *Knowledge, Action, and Factive Mental States*.

alternative way of accounting for the relation between emotions and values?

The idea, which is at the centre of so-called Fitting-Attitude (or FA-) analyses of value concepts, is that there is a class of concepts that we can only grasp if we have the relevant emotional responses (D'Arms & Jacobson, 2000, 2005; McDowell, 1985; Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen, 2004). Consider a parallel claim about colour concepts. We may think that understanding the concept of redness requires having had visual experiences of redness, because seeing red is required in order to understand what redness is (Peacocke, 1998). Applied to the value domain, the claim is that a creature who is incapable of being amused, for instance, cannot understand what funniness is or, at least, her understanding would be very different to ours. With this in mind, we might think that certain value concepts, like the amusing, the disgusting, the offensive, the shameful or the fearsome require that we experience amusement, disgust, anger, shame or fear, respectively, if we are to grasp them.

Many of the concepts that wear their emotional credentials on their sleeves are central to the way we engage with the world and reflect on how our lives fare, suggesting that accounts of well-being will benefit from attending to the role of emotions in evaluative understanding. A hedonist who is seeking to develop a convincing account of the good life in terms of the accumulation of pleasures, for instance, will want not only that the relevant pleasures be well-adjusted to their objects, but also that their pursuit reflects the subject's understanding of their adjustment. It is indeed by emphasizing this last point that one may start thinking of hedonism as a monistic objective list account of well-being (e.g. Fletcher, 2013). More generally, the idea that emotions are constitutive of our value understanding might add to the range of states that can be recruited by pleasure-based accounts. Emotions so conceived might add to the depth Haybron (2005, 2008) is after when talking about the importance of moods and mood propensities for the happy life. Similarly, a desire-based theorist will see a way of anchoring desires in the subject's perspective: pursuing an end that one thinks will contribute to well-being must be traceable to one's conception of the good. From the perspective of the FA-analysis, such a conception builds upon our affective engagement with the world. But it is perhaps in relation to value-based accounts of well-being that the benefits of a conception of the emotions emphasizing their role in value understanding is clearest. In addition to value understanding being a final prudential value, emotions help address one of the key ambitions of the present project: reconciling the role of the subject's own perspective on the kind of life she wants to pursue with the thought that there are constraints on what is worthy of being pursued. In relation to value-based approaches, the idea is that items can feature on an objective list only if they make sense from the perspective of an agent pursuing her well-being, which in turn requires that she should understand the nature of these items and see what point there would be in pursuing them. Värynen?

Besides their roles in value knowledge and value understanding, valued-based conceptions of emotions are in a position to highlight their close relation to the virtues. Consider in particular moral virtues and remember that emotions can play an instrumental role in our decision-making. Now, if emotions are so central to apt decision-making, especially moral decision-making, should we rest content with the idea

that they are instrumentally good? Or should we rather insist on the fact that they can constitute forms of moral deliberation? If the latter, there is again a prospect for negative emotions to be recruited as ingredients of well-being. We may argue for instance that we ought to cultivate moral anxiety because of its centrality to moral decision-making and agency as a response to a problematic uncertainty about the correctness of a moral decision one is contemplating or has made, a response which prompts us to engage in epistemic behaviours, like deliberation and information gathering, aimed at resolving the underlying uncertainty (Kurth, 2015). Part of being a moral agent requires that we possess and exercise precisely these metacognitive capacities. Thus, if having moral virtues is in part thinking in an apt manner, then an emotion like moral anxiety could be a central manifestation of virtuous agency.

How do such virtues relate to well-being, however? The interactions with accounts of the good life are again potentially fruitful, especially as regards value-based accounts. One traditional way to go is to place certain virtues on the objective list straight out. A more nuanced option is to argue that specific virtues constitute good moral or rational thinking, an essential feature of our human nature, and that exercising such capacities is constitutive of well-being (Hurka, 1996). Or, if well-being requires capacities such as practical reasoning (Nussbaum, 2011), and an important forum for practical reasoning is the moral realm, then virtues are part of those capacities. And observe that negative emotions – think of shame (Deonna, Rodogno & Teroni, 2013), guilt (Taylor, 1985), indignation and even contempt (Bell, 2013) – can manifest virtues in exactly the same way as positive emotions, suggesting that both can have final prudential value. This goes beyond the role for emotions in virtue and in well-being considered by Rossi and Tappolet (2016), as constituting fitting happiness.

No doubt, some will object that while virtues certainly may have final prudential value, emotions are at best symptoms of these virtues and not constitutive of them. This means that we have to explore the following line of thought: what is a virtue, if it does not consist in an agent manifesting the right kind of behaviour in situations where the virtue is applicable? A virtuous person may just *be* someone who responds appropriately, virtuously, in a given situation (McDowell, 1979). Moral anger is for example widely taken to be a response to injustice, and plausibly constitutes an evaluative understanding of there being an injustice. If justice is a virtue, then it is in part manifested in appropriate responses to injustice, responses such as anger. If so, emotions are a way of responding and a virtuous person is one who responds with appropriate emotions (Wiggins, 1987).

In order to develop the centrality of emotion in virtue, we need to focus more closely on what it means to be a virtuous agent, as manifesting a virtue is something that a virtuous agent does. In order to do so, we first need to introduce our second insight that focuses more closely on the emotional agent and her own self-knowledge and self-understanding.

(2) *Emotions are, in varying degrees, self-oriented intentional states, and as such they can constitute forms of self-knowledge, self-understanding, and virtuous agency.*

Many emotions are self-oriented intentional states and involve engagements with ourselves: what we respond to emotionally is not just evaluative features of the world, but things that have import and

meaning for us, for who we take ourselves to be, and what values and goals we have (Helm, 2001; Roberts, 2003; Solomon, 1976). Revisiting the themes we just discussed from a first-person perspective, we may then ask: can emotions constitute forms of self-knowledge, self-understanding, and virtuous agency? And where does that leave the relation of emotions to well-being?

What does it mean to say that emotions constitute forms of self-knowledge? Although emotions such as fear, anger and sadness have close links to *our* cares and concerns, it would be a stretch too far to say that they constitute forms of self-knowledge. But other emotions very plausibly do. Take, for instance, the class of reflexive emotions, which includes emotions like shame, guilt, pride and embarrassment. The distinction between reflexive emotions and non-reflexive emotions traces at least back to Hume (1975), who identifies reflexive emotions as being intentionally directed towards the subject who undergoes them. In other words, a reflexive emotion takes the subject who undergoes it as its particular object, and therefore it is appropriate if the subject himself exemplifies the formal object of the emotion (Teroni, 2016). My pride, say, is about one of my actions as a positive achievement, and it is appropriate if my action really was an achievement. Reflexive emotions, then, contrast with emotions like fear and anger in that they include the self as an object. As such, when experiencing guilt, say, rather than anger, I might be said to have knowledge that relates to the self as having done something wrong. Could this piece of self-knowledge have prudential final value?

Reflexive emotions so conceived can be recruited as constituents of well-being within the various approaches we introduced. Within some pleasure-based accounts, reflexive emotions will play a crucial role. Consider whole life-satisfaction accounts: here, shame, guilt and pride will be key to the way we relate to our lives and so (positive or negative) constituents of well-being. Within desire-fulfilment accounts, we can regard the evaluative self-knowledge provided by self-directed emotions as a key aspect of our capacity to single out those desires that have final prudential value. The shame some desires may occasion, for instance, signals to the agent that she is not 'really behind' them (Frankfurt, 1988; Watson 1975). They for that reason have to be reconsidered or abandoned. And, as we saw with our first insight, objective lists are especially likely to welcome the idea that emotions have final value. As a key aspect of one's agency, self-knowledge will surely count as finally good.

As already noted, emotions may not constitute forms of knowledge, however. Therefore, the epistemic role of reflexive emotions might be of a different sort. When feeling guilty, for instance, we do not simply rest content knowing that we have done something wrong. Rather, guilt involves a process, a characteristic mode of thinking that points towards a reviewing of oneself and one's actions (for an insistence on the process-like form of emotions, see Goldie, 2004 and Robinson, 2005). Again, it is a form of understanding – self-understanding – that seems to take centre stage.

In what sense can emotions constitute forms of self-understanding? Reflexive emotions like shame, guilt, pride and embarrassment include the self as an object of their evaluation. For instance, shame or guilt occur when one makes a comparison or evaluates one's behaviour *vis-à-vis* some standard, rule, or goal, when such an evaluation leads to the conclusion that one has failed (Tangney, 1999). A

precondition for an emotion like guilt is thus that I have norms and standards to which I adhere, and some concepts of success and failure with regard to these norms (Beer, 2007; Lagattuta & Thompson, 2007). Moreover, emotions such as shame and guilt give rise to a discrepancy within the self, between what he is and what he wants to be, or between what he did and the norms he respects (Higgins, 1987). Through feeling these emotions, it seems, the individual at once acknowledges, protects or maintains his self-conception. If the latter involves identifying with certain cares (Frankfurt, 1988), then an emotion like guilt signals an alienation from those cares. Perhaps guilt is here playing an instrumental role in self-understanding by triggering a reflection leading to the conclusion that this is a case of transgression. However, one might argue that guilt is *itself* a response to an action or thought that is not in line with one's self-conception. As such, it would constitute a form of self-understanding of one's action as exemplifying a case of violation of a personal norm.

If certain emotions are a form of self-understanding, then how does this relate to well-being? From a pleasure-based perspective, we could say that, on the one hand, the contentment associated with being in phase with who we are counts amongst the most pleasurable feelings. On the other hand, the kind of discrepancy we might feel between who we aspire to be and what we manage to achieve is made manifest in deeply painful emotions such as shame and guilt. With this in mind, complex forms of hedonism, such as life-satisfaction theories, seem especially relevant to uncover the key role of reflexive emotions in well-being. If pride is a positive evaluation of the self, in the sense that it is a response to an aspect of my present self as being in line with my expectations, then it itself constitutes a positive assessment of my life, or of some central aspect of it. Conversely, satisfaction with one's life is incompatible with chronic feelings of shame, which would rather constitute one's dissatisfaction with it. Turning to desire-fulfilment theories, satisfying one's first-order desires is often not conducive to well-being, since these actions do not fit with who we want to be. We thus need to filter the desires that support our identity, consistent with our self-respect and integrity. Through affective self-understanding, we can identify the meaningful desires that form the core of well-being.

Is this role of emotions more than merely instrumental? Feeling a self-reflexive emotion, one may insist, consists in understanding what your integrity (dignity, decency, etc.) requires of you, and in particular that it requires that you not act on some desires (Velleman, 2001). Perhaps, then, a case can be made for the claim that reflexive emotions can have final prudential value. Given the place it ascribes to self-respect and integrity, such a line of thought may be more at home within a value-based account. Let us then consider the role of self-understanding in virtuous agency.

We insisted above that negative emotions sometimes manifest virtues and so make it to the objective list. As we saw, having a virtue is to a great extent being disposed to respond to specific situations with specific emotions, which ties virtues closely with virtuous agency. As we shall now suggest, if emotions are forms of virtuous agency, and if being a virtuous agent should be an item on the objective list, then all emotions – positive and negative – can have final prudential value. We develop an example of how a reflexive emotion constitutes a form of virtuous agency in *In Defense of Shame: the Faces of an*

Emotion. We show that shame's deep, self-encompassing nature creates a ground upon which the individual is invited to reflect on core features of her character with regard to her values. By its nature, shame contributes to sustaining our moral agency: shame, we argue, signals and is justified by our failing to honour, even minimally, the demands consubstantial with the values to which we are attached, and it thus typically motivates self-reform. Given that shame is concerned with deep-seated features of our character, it promotes self-reflection on these features and can lead us to undertake self-reform relative to the values that are undermined. Why won't this be an instance of virtuous agency? In this project, we shall use guilt as a case study to pursue these ideas.

The need for further research

The consensus in emotion theory on the connection between emotions and value, we argued, should make us more ambitious regarding the relation between emotion and well-being. In particular, we believe that the two insights identified and discussed in the foregoing give *prima facie* support to our project of pursuing the ambitious claim that even negative emotions can have final prudential value. This is arguably the case, we have seen, because of their relations to evaluative (self-) knowledge, (self-) evaluative understanding, and virtue.

2.3. Detailed research plan

Drawing on our two insights about the world- and self-directedness of emotions that emerge out of the evaluative trend in emotion research, our ambition is to reconcile the role of the subject's perspective on the kind of life she wants to pursue with the thought that there are constraints to what is worthy of pursuit. Our research plan is divided into two parts. In the first, our aim is to provide a theoretical analysis of the impacts of our two insights on well-being. In the second, running concurrently with and informing the first, our aim is to engage in case studies of two negative emotions, anger and guilt.

2.3.1. Theoretical analysis

As illustrated in the preceding discussion, while there has been an affective turn in the literature on well-being, it has not yet been sufficiently informed by the evaluative trend in emotion research. We believe that the way in which emotions are *world*-oriented and *self*-oriented intentional states has important implications for our conception of the role of emotion in well-being. These implications must be developed and assessed. Doing so forms the first part of our project, where our aim is to conduct a theoretical analysis and to put forward an informed conception of the role that emotions play in well-being. The research will be led by Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni.

To begin our theoretical analysis, we plan to analyse how our two insights about emotion impact on specific current conceptions of well-being, such as by developing the ideas introduced above. We will next expand our analysis by generalising from our work on specific conceptions of well-being, and identifying what is needed from a conception of well-being to reflect the complex nature of emotions and the role they play in our lives. This will require addressing questions such as: What role does value/self- understanding or value/self- knowledge play in our lives going well? What role does virtue

or virtuous agency play? If emotions are forms of (self-) knowledge, (self-) understanding, virtue or virtuous agency, then what roles are available for them in our well-being?

Drawing together this work, as well as insights from the case studies discussed below, we plan to put forward an informed conception of the role that emotions play in what is a good life for the individual living it, thereby addressing the real need for a revised theory of well-being that takes into account recent advances in emotion research.

2.3.2. Case studies

Because different emotions can play very distinct roles in our lives, it is important to provide detailed investigations of specific negative emotions in order to assess what role they can play in well-being and to provide solid examples for the claim that negative emotions can indeed have final prudential value. Two emotions that we view as potentially fruitful in this regard are anger and guilt. Anger provides a means to examine ways in which the first insight can play out, whereas guilt provides a means to examine ways in which the second insight can play out. The outcomes of our case studies will inform the theoretical analysis.

Anger and well-being

Anger certainly has instrumental value in motivating us to act. Recently, it has also been defended in moral and political philosophy as having other kinds of value because of the way it is a legitimate response to genuine injustice. Moral anger is thus a good case study for explicating what lessons can be drawn from our first insight for well-being, which focused on the world-oriented nature of emotion.

Anger as evaluative knowledge, evaluative understanding, and virtue

The idea that an emotion like moral anger could play an epistemic role in our lives forms the core of recent defences of the moral value of anger. For instance, we find arguments in support of the strong claim that anger can give the oppressed or marginalized privileged perspectives on the injustices they face, thereby contributing to the construction of knowledge (Narayan, 1988; Jaggar, 1989). If this is the case, then moral anger could plausibly constitute a special form of evaluative knowledge.

Weaker claims are also found, according to which anger can draw our attention to genuine injustices (Srinivasan, 2014; McKaiser, 2016), we can gain insight into others and our society (Lorde, 2007), or our attention is drawn to our own values in the face of unjust situations (Lorde, 2007). If so, then anger could have a role in our understanding of value, and even our self-understanding. This role, at first blush, may appear instrumental in aiding our understanding. As discussed above, however, we think that there is a case to be made for an emotion like anger itself constituting a form of evaluative understanding. Indeed, as the poet and activist Audre Lorde writes, 'When we turn from anger we turn from insight' (Lorde, 2007: 131), something that makes sense if anger is evaluative understanding.

What impact would an understanding of moral anger as evaluative knowledge or understanding have on theories of well-being? Could such an understanding help to reconcile the role of the subject's own

perspective on the kind of life she wants to pursue with the thought that there are constraints to what is worthy of pursuit? On pleasure-based and desire-satisfactionist accounts, such anger would most likely have instrumental value. For instance, on a pleasure-based account like Feldman's (2002, 2005), perhaps anger as a well-adjusted response to injustice could contribute to well-being by giving us appreciation of situations that are bad for us. Or, perhaps anger could help us to distinguish and understand shallow from substantial forms of engagement with our lives, in terms of the things that we care about and respond to, thereby playing a role within life-satisfaction approaches to well-being. With regards to a desire-fulfilment account, moral anger could help us to distinguish desires that have prudential value from those that do not, and understand why. On objective-list theories, if moral anger is a form of evaluative knowledge or understanding, objective values like knowledge, justice, self-respect or dignity no longer risk being alienating.

Moral anger could even constitute a virtue. Assume that moral anger is a response to persisting injustices (Lorde, 2007), or even a response to judgements about reasons, such as there being an injustice (Hieronymi 2001). If so, then moral anger is plausibly a manifestation of the virtue of justice or self-respect. If having a virtue is manifesting it when appropriate, then moral anger is a virtue.

Limitations to the current defences of anger

There is a number of ways in which one can object to anger having value, moral or prudential. For instance, anger may always be problematic (Taylor, 2006; Nussbaum, 2016). Indeed, Martha Nussbaum (2016) has recently argued that the angry person either engages in an irrational wish for payback, or enforces distorted, narrow and narcissistic values. Her rejection of the value of anger, however, is not successful. As Mary Carman, argues, Nussbaum draws on a problematic conception of emotions in general and misrepresents the arguments of the proponents of anger (Carman, 2016).

A deeper worry is that anger, even if a response to injustice, does not constitute a form of evaluative knowledge or understanding. If we attend to the psychological literature on the effects of anger on decision-making, for instance, we see that anger has pervasive effects on our thinking (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006; Lerner, et al., 2015). Anger biases what we attend to; it increases how predictable we see events, and how optimistic we are about our own capabilities in dealing with those events. It even increases our perception of events as being brought about by others, who are seen as blameworthy, and increases our likelihood to make risk-seeking choices. Angry people make use of automatic and heuristic processes, engaging in relatively shallow thinking. If anger affects our thinking in ways like these, can it really be the case that moral anger constitutes a form of evaluative knowledge or evaluative understanding? Does anger not in fact inhibit essential human capacities, such as reasoning? If so, then regardless of other value anger may have, it risks infringing on our well-being.

Conclusion

The current defences of anger do not take into account the complex nature of anger. If we are to truly explore whether anger can have prudential value, we need to rigorously weigh up its benefits and costs.

One route we propose to explore is to examine the ways in which the negative effects of episodes of anger on reasoning can be mitigated (Lerner, et al., 2015). If the morally angry person is in fact engaging in mitigating techniques, could her anger then constitute a form of evaluative knowledge or understanding? Further, we need to ask questions such as: Anger undoubtedly has deleterious effects on our behaviour and interactions, but to what extent do these effects counteract the potential value anger does have? All-things-considered, can anger in fact be prudentially better than no anger? Or, even if anger is a burden for the angry person, can it nevertheless be a social virtue that other virtues depend upon, in a way like Lisa Tessman (2005) argues with regards to what she calls 'burdened virtues'. If anger really does play an important role due to its link to genuine injustices, then a thorough analysis of its value, focusing more extensively on the nature of anger for the well-being of the person experiencing it, is needed.

Guilt and well-being

While anger is related to my caring and being concerned for things like justice, guilt, as a reflexive emotion, directly includes the self as an object of its evaluation. Our second case study, focusing on this negative reflexive emotion, will give us the opportunity to clarify the way in which the self-directed aspect of emotion can relate to a person's well-being.

In terms of its instrumental value, it would seem that we would be worse off if we did not feel guilt. Like other moral emotions, guilt contributes to our good social functioning in preventing norm-infringement and even violence, and in driving restoration of good relationships with others by motivating reparative actions. Guilt, like shame and anxiety, has a function of inhibiting and redirecting the expression of our natural tendencies to act in violent and self-destructive ways (Breggin, 2015). Beyond the way in which it motivates behaviours that are ultimately beneficial, does guilt also have final value for our well-being?

Self-assessment and self-understanding

Guilt is an emotional response that signals that we have done something wrong. More precisely, if guilt is to be classified as a reflexive emotion, then it is an evaluation of the self as having failed to honour or respect specific personal norms. While in shame, deep-seated features inherent to the self are scrutinized, in guilt, the aspect of the self that is scrutinized is her moral or deontological ability.

Guilt manifests as a discrepancy between the image that one has of oneself as a 'good' person, and the experienced self as thinking 'bad' thoughts or performing 'bad' actions (Tangney, 1990). In highlighting a particular behaviour as standing in contrast with our self-expectations with regards to our moral abilities, guilt signals an alienation from our cares. Could this represent a valuable form of self-knowledge? Let us try to imagine a creature unable to feel guilt: to what extent would she be able to grasp what the concept of norm-infringement or violation means, without having the relevant (guilty) emotional response? Through guilt, I gain knowledge that I have done something wrong, which acts as a reminder of what (norms, values) usually drive me to act, and of my propensity to occasionally fail. Plausibly, feeling guilt thus consists in a form of understanding what one's integrity and dignity requires.

Within value-based accounts of emotion, this constitutes final value.

One conception of well-being which seems particularly relevant to the kind of awareness constitutive of guilt, is the view that an individual's well-being is tightly linked to his evaluation or appraisal of his life as good. This should sound familiar as a form of life satisfactionism. If holding on to significant norms and values relates closely to maintaining an overall positive appraisal of our life, and if in feeling guilt, we have the opportunity to understand what is of significance to us and what behaviours will be conducive to maintaining a positive appraisal of our life, then guilt could have a nuanced instrumental role in well-being.

Guilt even appears as a promising candidate for initiating a self-reflection on our abilities to honour the norms and values relevant for our well-being, and possibly motivating self-reform. Through the affective experience of guilt, the subject is put in a privileged position from which he is able to scrutinise himself, particularly his moral or deontological abilities and practices, thereby providing him with a precious occasion to understand the norms that are truly worth adhering to and honouring, with her personal well-being in view. Conceived thus, guilt plausibly has final prudential value by accommodating both a person's own perspective on the kind of life he wants to pursue, and the idea that certain norms and values are more worth adhering to and honouring than others.

Guilt, virtuous agency, and objective-list theories of well-being

Guilt is a normatively-loaded negative reaction whose object is ourself as the doer of a particular deed (Taylor, 1985). The unpleasant feeling of having violated something we hold dear operates as a signal of a threat to our moral integrity, a signal that we may have to put ourselves in a position where moral blame, resentment, distrust, or other kinds of punishment are to be expected (Velleman, 2003).

If guilt signals and is justified by our failing to respect the demands consubstantial with the norms to which we adhere, it could contribute to sustaining our virtuous agency. Indeed, if I am a virtuous agent who nevertheless acts in ways that go against my norms and values from time-to-time, then, as a virtuous agent I ought to respond in a way that reflects that I have so-acted. If, as we suggested above, being a virtuous agent is in part being sensitive to the need for manifestations of virtue in our responses and behaviour, and if feeling guilt is a form of attunement and sensitivity for situations in which we fail to live up to our values and norms, then feeling guilt is a form of virtuous agency.

This role in virtuous agency is further developed if we accept the idea that to have values is to be attuned to opportunities for acting in accordance with the standard constituents of these values, as well as to occasions in which one succeeds or fails to live up to them (Helm, 2001). In this regard, it is undeniable that guilt is a form of attunement to the occasions in which we transgress our norms, by making this very aspect of our current situation particularly salient to us and focusing our awareness on the need to address it. When we feel guilt, we react as persons who feel they ought to respect certain norms by behaving in certain ways: we have an occasion to exercise our virtuous agency. With this in mind, if virtuous agency or some feature of it should figure on an objective list theory of well-being,

then the ability to feel guilt would be a key requirement for well-being..

Conclusion

Because guilt is concerned with a threat to our moral integrity, it consists in a response that both reasserts virtuous agency in the subject and addresses a discrepancy between her self-conception and the reality of her acts. We thus anticipate that guilt can be relevant for a person's well-being in at least two aspects: as a form of self-understanding of what your integrity requires of you, and as a virtuous sensitivity for the situations in which you fail to honour the norms to which you adhere.

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