Virtuous feelings? Three grades of emotional rationality

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Abstract: Respected traditions oppose emotionality to reason. In recent decades there has been growing awareness of, and attention to, the rational side of feelings. In particular, emotions have been taken to embody value judgements. I argue instead that every type of emotion owes its specific character to a (quasi-)inferential pattern that connects the *import* of a token emotion's occasion, or object, with the *meaning* of its manifestation in a response. Man's ability and tendency to connect occasions with responses in this way constitutes a first degree of emotional rationality. A second degree is attained where the subject's emotionality accords with their settled normative views on what to feel. And where these views are right, namely in a virtuous life, the subject is emotionally rational to a third degree.

Keywords: emotion; rationality; morality; motivation; virtue ethics.

1. *The place of emotionality in ethics*

Morality is the domain of practical reason, or one of its domains. Practical reason tells us how to act, it seems, not, what to feel. So, why should practical philosophy, and in particular ethics, concern itself with the emotions?

I hope to answer this question by comparing emotional reactions with (intended) actions, and arguing that emotions are responsive to *reasons* in ways constitutive of their types. In other words: what any given type of emotion *is* is determined by its *rational core*, viz. a (quasi-)inferential pattern that leads from a type of reason-giving *occasion* to a type of emotional *response*. After clarifying relevant details of this conception (2-3) I shall discuss ways in which the rational character of emotions subjects them to moral norms (4). In a concluding and summarizing section (5) I'll distinguish three grades of emotional rationality. First, emotions inevitably actualize the subject's ability to treat circumstances as *reasons to respond* in characteristic ways. Second, the subject's actual responses may or may not stand up to his/her own (or some established) *normative conception of suitable patterns* of responding emotionally to given

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occasions. And a final grade of rationality is reached where that conception *actually* specifies what are *good or acceptable emotions to have* because it, in turn, agrees with an *objective* standard of *virtuous* emotionality.

I'll not try to define *emotion*. All I want to say about the concept at this point is three things: First, it is a bit vague. Second, I am assuming a relatively restricted understanding of the term: I am not going to be concerned with objectless moods (such as cheerfulness or gloom), with passionless attitudes (such as interest or impartiality), with reasonless sensory inclinations (such as hunger or fatigue), or with the feelings of animals. And third, I expect my account of emotionality thus understood, of its rationality, and of its moral significance, to be borne out at least by indubitable instantiations of the concept.

1.1. Emotions – enemies of reason?

There is a long tradition, not perhaps particularly philosophical, that treats the emotions as enemies of reason.[1] Less indiscriminately, Stoics and Buddhists tend to be at least skeptical of feelings. These traditions are not without foundation. Let me articulate five ideas that seem to supply us with reasons to oppose emotionality to rationality, and briefly anticipate what I hold against them.

1) Reason is theoretical or practical. Hence it controls theoretical thinking, and acting,[2] but not feeling, which is neither.

Well, emotions are themselves feelings or dispositions that make one, among other things, tend to act on characteristic reasons. Here at least it must be admitted that reason is at work. And the present essay will give support to Aristotle's conception, which assign to practical reason a task that includes the formation of virtuous emotionality.

2) To follow reason is to act in accordance with reasons. But guidance by reasons presupposes voluntariness, and emotions are *not voluntary*.

This is a simplification. For first, as we are going to see, there are in fact non-voluntary (and yet genuine) responses to reasons. And, second, though not in general subject to choice, emotional responses can to a large extent be trained and shaped at will.

[1] In the words of Martha C. Nussbaum (who fights it!): "Emotions are always dangerous: look what trouble they have caused in this case and in that. We can do without them as we pursue our good values" (2005: 213).

[2] Why *acting* rather than *action*? Acting, or conduct, is, for the purposes of this essay, what *acting well* and *acting badly* share: being led, or not, in one's behaviour, by (ethically) good / bad motives. Hence acting can consist in inaction and other things besides actions (cf. Müller 2004).

3) How it is reasonable to behave quite often *conflicts* with what we actually do if we follow our emotions, or would do if we did.

This is true and one good reason to ask *in what sense* an emotion can be contrary to reason if it embodies the operation of reason.

4) Emotions tend to distort the perception of reality and its practical significance, particularly the perception of practical possibilities, necessities, and moral requirements.

This, too, is true and a good reason to educate our feelings.

5) Small children and even animals show emotions, but they lack reason. So rationality and emotionality do not share a common ground.

There are indeed passions, or feelings, that do not involve reason. (Given the usage I am following, they are not called emotions; but this is not the issue.) They include not only sensory inclinations such as hunger and fatigue, but also what might be called animal anger, animal fear, etc. – sensory cousins of the kind of anger, fear, etc. whose occasions supply one with *reasons to* respond angrily, fearfully, etc. (cf. 2.4). Animals and small children have no share in the latter, let alone in emotions such as *awe*, *enthusiasm*, or *remorse*![3]

Emotions can indeed by criticized as unreasonable, irrational, immoral. But this is not because they are enemies of reason, but because reason can do a bad job of informing them – though frequently, it has to be admitted, under the influence of non-rational tendencies, and by absence rather than presence of reason.

1.2. Why ethics should care about the emotions

What brings the emotions within the scope of morality and of moral philosophy is not a mere combination of need and feasibility. This would be the way in which, for instance, our physical condition is of moral concern: we *need* good health and strength, and we are *able* to do something about them. The combination of these two facts brings moral responsibility.

Emotions, by contrast, are of *immediate* moral significance. Unlike health and strength, well-formed emotionality itself forms *part* of a good character. For, like actions, emotions themselves embody the operation of practical (quasi-)inference. This is what I hope to show in the remaining sections of the paper.

The thought is likely to be unfamiliar – not just on account of the general prejudice I have already mentioned (1.1), but for two more specific reasons. First,

[3] Adults, on the other hand, do have a fair share in "sensory emotions". And in their lives no sharp line can be drawn between sensory and reasoned ones. The two seem to stand to each other in the same sort of relation as aliefs (Gendler 2008) and beliefs.

we tacitly tend to identify (non-theoretical) rationality with *instrumental* rationality and, possibly, goodness of *ends*; but ultimate reasons are backward-looking – for emotions as much as for actions, and even more obviously. Second, we associate (non-theoretical) rationality with intentional agency; emotions, however, and their manifestation are largely involuntary.

Emotions thus combine the element of rationality, which characterizes us as humans, with the element of spontaneity, which reveals the deepest level of any individual's identity. This puts the ethical significance of the emotions beyond question.

2. *Functions of reason in the service of emotionality*

Unsurprisingly, reason is involved in our emotionality in the three functions tradition ascribes to it anyway: provision of concepts; their use in judging (and acting); and the drawing of conclusions from (ostensible) data (2.1-3). But what is the specific way in which these functions of reason are relevant to the emotions (2.4)? And how are they at work not only in emotional experience but also in dispositional emotions and in emotional dispositions?

2.1. Conceiving of occasion, object and intended response

In its first function, reason serves whatever it serves, by delivering concepts. Now, any token emotion relates to a concrete *occasion* that gives rise to it by giving the emotion its *object*. Since we are not talking about merely sensory passions such as thirst, or animal fear, for something to play the roles of occasion or object, the subject must be aware of it *conceptually* and, in particular, have available ideas of *significance*. Likewise, *concepts* of acting are required where an emotional response consists in intended behaviour.

Suppose, e.g., you are angry because your brother has used your car without your permission. You are then making use of concepts by applying such notions as *car*, *unauthorized*, and *use*. Your brother's having used your car without your permission is the occasion of your anger. I call this, as well as your brother himself, the object of your anger.[4] Here the word *brother* only designates the "material" as opposed to an "intentional" object of your emotion. For it is not

[4] The notions of occasion and object give rise to questions that I'll not pursue here. Strictly speaking, we must, for instance, distinguish *X's having given you Y*, which identifies an occasion of gratitude, from both *X* and *Y*, or again from *the giving of Y*, as object conceptions. When you feel grateful *to X*, it is misleading (viz. insufficient) to say that the object of your gratitude is *X's having given you Y*. For your gratitude for this *state of affairs* need not be gratitude *towards X*. But in the present context I need not pay much attention to these matters.

under that conception, not *qua* brother, that he attracts your anger. You cannot be *angry* with him without applying to him also further conceptions, such as *having used my car without my permission*, *against my will*, and *having offended me*. Furthermore, if in your anger you throw an egg at him, the intention of doing so employs the notion of *egg-throwing*; and the intention with which you thus respond employs the notion of *retribution* or *punishment* or some such.

2.2. Judging significance, import and meaning

The idea of applying concepts and, more particularly, the distinction between material and intentional object conceptions, already point to the presence of *judgement* in our emotions. It is not naked concepts, but judgements, mostly more or less implicit, in virtue of which things can be objects of emotions on the one hand and emotional responses on the other.

In my example, to be *angry* with your brother, you have to *judge* that he has used your car without your permission; and that this was to act against your will. And in finding this, more specifically, *annoying* you are (implicitly) making a judgement of *significance*, as I'll call it. For O to be an occasion for emotion E, O must appear to the subject to have a specific significance in virtue of which something *can be a proper object* of E.

There are also *judgements of emotional response*. By this expression I mean to cover both thoughts about means and ways, such as "Throwing eggs will be a nice form of punishing him", and corresponding practical judgements such as "I should punish him" as well as "I should throw an egg at him". In the first case we might also speak of a judgement of *meaning*: that thought assigns to your egg-throwing the meaning that it has *qua* angry response, viz. the function of retribution or punishment.

Note, however, that, while judgements of significance are essential to any emotion, this is not true of judgements of response. For the response need not be a matter of intended behaviour, and an unintended emotional response does not involve a judgement of meaning.

I may have given the impression that an object's *significance* simply *determines* an emotional response. But this cannot be quite right – as is shown *inter alia* by the obvious possibility that an occasion is of *ambivalent significance*. NN's having been selected for a desirable job, for instance, may be perceived as *remarkable success*, on the part of NN, by friend and foe alike. However, while friendly *admiration* treats NN's success as a reason to congratulate NN on it, begrudging *envy* responds by saying "It's really me who should have got the job". This presupposes that one person perceives NN's success *as being to NN's credit and deserving of esteem* – only then can it be an object of his/her admiration – while the other person, for whom it is an object of envy, perceives it *as undeserved advantage.*

Does this show that, in some sense of "significance", the *same* significance may qualify an occasion for supplying objects to *different* emotion types, while in another sense *diverging significance* goes with *diverging responses*?

Perhaps a better way to describe the conceptual situation is something like this: In principle, any emotional significance that X attributes to a given occasion, O, leaves room for diversification, or further specification, up to the point where X attributes to O a significance that does determine for X, and perhaps entails, the kind of response that goes with X's actual emotion.

I'll call this distinctive and final significance O's *import* for X. It is matched by the *meaning* of X's emotional response. In our example, the very broad significance *remarkable success* leaves room for a great diversity of *intelligible* emotional responses. By contrast, to identify the occasion's import for X, a significance-attribution must be specific enough to determine whether X's response will be one of respect, admiration, gladness, envy, or whatever. And perhaps even more specific. If it is known to be, say, an envious response, we still cannot know the import for X of NN's having got that job without knowing whether X's envy is such as to incline X to emulate NN, to spoil NN's achievement, to denigrate or harm NN, etc. We have reached the occasion's import for X only with a significance so specific as to determine the narrow range of responses suited, in the circumstances, to represent what X in fact feels.[5]

2.3. Responding to reasons

By connecting occasion and response, significance and meaning in this way, the idea of import already points to a third way for reason to be involved in our emotionality. Among the three functions traditionally assigned to reason, the third is inference. Now, it does not seem that feelings have much to do with inference.[6] But I hope to show that in fact it is patterns of inferential and quasi-inferential connexions that give emotion types their respective character.

Inference is a passage in thought: a rational operation by which one passes from a *reason* to what it is, or seems to be, a reason for. Just as any judgement is meant by the subject to be true and well-founded, so any inference is meant by the subject to be valid and, moreover, sound. It is valid if it conforms to an inferential pattern that secures the correctness of that passage, and sound if, in addition, only true premises determine its starting point, so that the conclusion

[5] By correlating import in this way with emotional response, I acknowledge the possibility of a divergence between considered and practical ascription of significance. The import you assign to the presence of spiders by responding with fear, has to count as a significance implicitly and "practically" ascribed that does not, in this case, coincide with the significance ascribed in your unemotional assessment of the occasion. (Cf. fn. 3.)

[6] This important point has scarcely left any traces in the literature on the emotions.

is based on the right reasons, and therefore correct. – How, then, is inference supposed to be involved in an emotion? Is feeling a species of reasoning? Also, what is here supposed to be a reason for what? And by what inferential pattern?

Peter Hacker explicitly connects the concept of emotion to that of the subject's reasons for doing something (Bennett *et al.* 2003: 207):

> Emotions are linked to reasonableness and irrationality inasmuch as there can be reasons for an emotion, and the emotions commonly involve reasons for action for the agent.

The suggestion that there are these two ways for reasons to be involved in our emotional lives seems to be confirmed by an example we have already considered: Your brother's use of your car is your reason for being *angry* with him, and your anger is your reason for throwing eggs at him. Another example: Because you don't know French, you are *ashamed*, and because you are ashamed of your ignorance, you try to conceal it.

So it looks as if the sort of rationality that is characteristic of a type of emotion could be represented by an *inferential chain that links three items*: the (ostensible) awareness of an occasion *qua* supplying, in virtue of some (ostensible) significance, a suitable object, prompts an emotion – which in turn prompts a characteristic response, in the examples: a piece of intentional behaviour. A typical emotion seems to be something both based on a reason and then itself acting as a reason for something further. Some occasion supplies one with a *reason to feel* a certain way, and the feeling constitutes a *reason to act* in a certain way.

On closer inspection, however, we may question this appearance, or at any rate find the picture of a three-linked chain misleading. As I have argued at greater length elsewhere, the passage that appears to take the subject from occasion *via* emotion to response is better viewed as consisting in a single step. And this step is the constitutive cognitive core of that emotion (Müller 2012).

In lieu of an argument, I'll try to show how this understanding of emotional rationality is borne out by our examples. Your anger with your brother instantiates the emotion type *anger*. Anger is characterized as such by, roughly, a tendency to take a certain kind of occasion, *qua* exemplifying an *affront by X* (the "formal object" of anger), as constituting a reason to *punish X* (the "formal response" of anger, we might say) by somehow hurting X. You exemplify this pattern by taking your brother's illicit use of your car as an occasion that constitutes an affront and, *qua* affront, a reason to punish him in response by throwing eggs at him. Likewise, when you take your ignorance of French as a reason to avoid situations that reveal it, you exemplify a pattern of inference characteristic of shame: something's appearing disgraceful is your reason not to let it on.

2.4. (Quasi-)inferential patterns

Now, in these examples the emotional response consists in (intended) acting – the concealing of ignorance and the throwing of eggs. So, the emotional inferences I have been describing are nothing other than what is known as *practical* inferences. But responses of anger, shame etc. may consist in doings other than acting. From this perspective, my account of an emotion's form has so far been provisional.

What I need to show, therefore, is that the *third contribution of reason* to human emotionality (which is still our topic) relates to responses other than (intentional) acting as well as to acting. When one is ashamed, or angry, or grateful, or excited, reason is indeed inevitably involved by supplying one with reasons for *doing* something. But the "doing" need not be intended behaviour. It may consist in reminiscences, imaginations, fantasies and expectations; in wonderings and judgements; in deliberations, plannings, and intentions; in wishes, moods and conscious inclinations; in facial expressions, gestures, and other bodily reactions.

Some of these doings, such as deliberations, are necessarily intended. Others *can* be intended – think of imagining, or frowning. When the latter are unintended, they are still half-voluntary: the subject can stop them at will. Others again are completely non-voluntary: one cannot stop weeping at will; yet tears can be a response to sad news.

It is not clear how much we should include in this last group, the non-voluntary responses (nor does it matter much). Even half-voluntary manifestations of an emotion – such as unconscious fidgeting, perhaps a symptom of impatience with a boring lecture – need not count as *responses*. On the other hand, completely non-voluntary reactions seem to be *more or less* response-like. One can have "every reason to weep". (The death of a dear friend is such a reason; the vapour of onions is not.) One can have reason "to blush" (e.g. for shame); and perhaps "to turn pale" (from envy). *Google* even knows of "reason(s) to feel tense". But *reasons* to turn grey "over night" (from grief), or to flush (in anger)? – And now we definitely arrive at the zone of mere causation, where we clearly cannot speak of *reasons* (good or bad) *to* do something, but only of *reasons why* (to which the question *Good or bad?* does not apply). The exciting contest you are watching may be *the reason why* your heart is palpitating, but not *your reason to* accelerate your heart-beat. When you are dating someone for the first time, this may be the reason why you are trembling, or sweating, but it is not your reason for doing so.

I have here assumed that Φ-ing is a response, rather than *mere* reaction, to an emotion's occasion where "we would speak" of a *reason to* Φ. But ordinary usage of the word *reason* in this kind of context is varied, and of little help unless it proves indicative of a distinction whose rationale we can spell out.

For the purpose of understanding how the emotions exhibit rationality even in their non-voluntary manifestations, we do not need an account of the distinction in question. It will suffice to take note of the following facts.

First, rationality is not as such tied to intention. Quite apart from the involuntary manifestation of emotions, there are clearly things we do *for reasons*, good and bad, but not *at will* – especially: believing. Moreover, reasons for a belief can be articulated as premises of an explicit inference.

Second, *this* is also true of reasons for those emotional responses that are intended, as when you say to yourself: "He used my car without my permission; a clear affront; which deserves punishment; well, why not this way …?" – and you proceed to throw eggs. No such inference can, admittedly, represent emotional weeping, blushing, etc. For, such responses are not due to being conceived as such by the subject. But they are related *by analogous patterns* to the reasons to which they respond. So here I speak of quasi-inferential patterns.

Third, this assimilation of unintended to intended responses is further supported by attention to behaviour concepts that apply to non-voluntary *as well as* intended expression of an emotion. When you frown intentionally in response to a rude remark, the remark is undoubtedly *your reason for frowning*. But we use the same words when your frown of displeasure at the remark is unintended. And we can even criticize you for it in case it is imprudent, or the remark isn't really rude.[7]

Finally, even where we do not wish to speak of responses, non-voluntary emotional reactions "take part in" the rationality of the emotions they manifest. For their occurrence depends, not just on physical causes, or on merely sensory awareness of what prompts them, but on intellectual perception, understanding of significance, and ascription of import.

So much by way of justifying a conception that finds reason operating in intended and unintended emotional responses alike. To take account of *both*, I speak of "(quasi-)inferential patterns". Any such pattern, we might say on that account, represents the *form* of a kind of emotion.

When such a kind is identified by an established emotion word, the pattern will be relatively non-specific, connecting a broad kind of significance with a broad kind of response. As we have seen, however, a concrete occasion's import for a concrete subject tends to be quite specific and lead to a specific kind of response – in accordance with a correspondingly specific (quasi-)inferential pattern.

[7] Analogous observations apply to gestures and facial expressions such as smiling with delight, sighing in distress, raising hands in alarm, rolling eyes in exasperation, or turning away in disgust; and also to imaginings and reminiscences, which one may or may not intend.

Disappointment is an emotion type that strikingly illustrates this point. X receives a bad grade in a viva. *Qua* being below X's expectations, and frustrating X's wish for a better result, it is an *occasion / object* of disappointment. What about appropriate responses? In this regard, disappointment is a limiting case. It does not seem to be characterized by any well-defined type of response. But, first, there are things that are *not* eligible as *done from disappointment*: boasting about the result, looking forward to a similar experience in the future, saying *Thanks* to the examiner … And, second, there is a large and yet circumscribed set of response-types that X *can* be said to be prompted, by the disappointing grade, to exhibit. Only, the set is enormously diversified. Depending on her or his "mind-set" as well as circumstances, X may regret having taken the exam *or* not having studied enough *or* not having bribed the examiner …; X may decide to work harder next time *or* to give up and embark on a different career …; X may keep thinking "Had I only …" all the time *or* put the matter out of her mind immediately. And all of these in response to the disappointing bad exam result. The difference between the various possible responses obviously reflects a difference between kinds of specific significance that are liable to constitute the import, for different people, of one and the same disappointing type of occasion.

2.5. Occurrent and dispositional

(Quasi-)inferences of the kind I have discussed in the last two subsections actually take place when a person experiences feelings of joy, compassion, sadness, guilt, etc. But an emotion need not be an experience. It may instead be a disposition. Or, rather: most emotion words can stand for an "occurrent", or "episodic", as well as for a dispositional variant on the same (quasi-)inferential pattern.

The doctor tells you that your child's injury is not serious; you sigh with relief, the tormenting fantasies stop instantly, you ring your spouse and tell him/her, … – an occurrent instance of relief. Days later, a friend you meet asks about your child, and you say: "You cannot imagine how relieved I am (not: *was*!) that the injury is not serious" – a dispositional variant of the same emotion, actualized by the question of your friend. Wittgenstein speaks of *Gemütsbewegung* or *-regung* in the first case, of *Gemütseinstellung* in the second (1980 II: § 152).

In typical cases, such as relief, the dispositional emotion is a *disposition to perform (quasi-)inferences* from an occasion that has in fact occasioned a corresponding occurrent emotion.[8] When the thought of *that same occasion* – of the good news – is awakened and actualizes the disposition, it constitutes your reason to

[8] Love, often presented as a paradigmatic emotion, seems *not* to exist in an occurrent variant! (Cf. Wittgenstein 1980 I: § 115; § 959.)

respond in similar ways. Not in the same ways. (No urge to tell your spouse immediately; no sighs of relief after a week. Dispositional relief is *not* a disposition *to experience* feelings of occurrent relief!) But things such as imagining the child completely recovered, saying "I am relieved that …", passing on the good news, and other responses will be much the same.

Sameness of occasion and resemblance of response uphold the identity of the (quasi-)inferential pattern specific to both variants of relief. It is this agreement, and nothing else, that justifies and explains the systematic application of the same words to *Gemütsbewegungen* and *Gemütseinstellungen* – one more reason to locate the conceptual core of such words in the (quasi-)inferential structure that occurrent and dispositional emotions share.

I have here drawn attention to the dispositional variants of emotions for the sake of conceptual clarity. And also because they are no less constitutive of moral goodness and badness than their occurrent namesakes. In what follows, however, and especially in discussing the moral relevance of emotions, I am going to concentrate on occurrent emotions. To the problems they raise for ethical considerations let us now turn.

3. *Non-voluntary rationality and responsibility*

Given that we encounter problems of demarcation when trying to understand the rationality of unintended reactions – why bother about these so much? To the extent that emotions are moral matter at all, they are surely, like actions, of interest because of their helpful and harmful impact on what happens to people? So we should focus attention on emotional responses of the physical and observable sort. And among these, non-voluntary ones can be ignored, for moral responsibility presupposes choice. Hence emotions can be morally relevant at most through resulting *actions* – something that is the primary matter of morality anyway, and independently of any emotional trimmings!

This view is quite wrong, and in a number of respects. First, it should be obvious that involuntary and half-voluntary manifestations of an emotion – the warning frown, the telling blush, the reassuring smile, the gesture of contempt – are as liable as actions are to have an impact on people. Second, there are ways in which spontaneous responses, though unintended, are yet under one's control. I'll have to say more about this in a minute. And, third – a point especially pertinent to merely inward responses – the idea that the moral relevance of one's doings is exhausted by their helpful and harmful impact on what happens to people is a mistake in any case (cf. 4.5).

If a response is non-voluntary or half-voluntary, how can we be responsible for its occurrence? As Kant says, pathological love cannot be commanded! –

Right. But, like e.g. knowledge, it *can* in some sense be enjoined, or prescribed. What this presupposes is the ability to educate the emotions. We can do this in various ways: by trying to become conscious of them and, if necessary, control them where they arise; by reflecting and meditating; by exposing ourselves to, and emulating, impressively good examples; etc.[9]

It is true, and important to note, that the impetus to emotional responses comes from outside the subject. This distinguishes them for "impassive" actions – actions that do not manifest any emotion. These have their source outside oneself at most in the sense that one's reasons for acting are supplied by independent facts. The *significance* of these facts is as it were imposed on them by practical reason and, hence, by oneself. Where emotions are involved, by contrast, one also experiences the *significance* of such facts, including even their import, as *urged upon oneself*.[10]

This is admittedly relevant for a correct understanding of the peculiar place of the emotions in our moral life. It means that goodness and badness in one's emotional life are determined by *what one is affected by*. But the passivity here implied is not complete. Whether you feel as you should, or not, does not depend on things beyond your control. Even where you cannot now prevent yourself from responding in a certain unintended way, there has been room for you to shape your character in the past by habituation of thinking, imagining, acting … and thus shaping your cares, attachments and evaluational dispositions. Hence the moral appraisal of emotions does not have for its object *what affects you* but rather *what you allow to affect yourself*.

This is a point of utmost importance. It means that the education of one's emotions is superficial if it is directed only at the containment of unwelcome responses. To be radical, it has to *shape* one's emotionality – and not only one's various emotional propensities, but also the disposition to *perceive emotional significance* (cf. 4.4 (b)). Thus, to be virtuous, unformed or malformed compassion must learn to be aware of, and diagnose, pertinent occasions, and to respond differentially to different types of misery. Likewise, one does not fight unjustified anger by learning to yell instead of hitting, to blame instead of yelling, and eventually and ideally to grumble silently instead of blaming!

[9] Thanks go to my friend Ulf Hlobil, who points out to me, *inter alia*, that we are equally able to "influence our dispositions regarding digestion or heart beats etc., but that does not make us responsible for a particular act of digestion or a particular heart beat." In other words: what can be controlled is not ipso facto subject to moral requirement and evaluation. Later we'll consider why emotions and emotional responses are (4.3-4.5).

[10] This observation raises an interesting question that, once more, Ulf Hlobil brings to my attention: To what extent, if any, are concepts of significance and import, as implicitly ascribed to occasions in emotional experience, acquired independently of such experience?

What one needs to "acquire" is the loss of bad habits – of the habit to find insult where there is no insult, or to perceive much rudeness where there is little. More generally: the morality of emotionality is essentially a matter of an acquired disposition – negatively, not to see occasions for anger, admiration, compassion, or whatever, where there are none; and positively, spontaneously to perceive in things the emotional significance they actually have and to ascribe to them apposite practical import.

4. *Moral significance*

In what ways, and why, are emotions morally significant? – If, as I am assuming, a good life is a life of virtue, the answer to that question has to come in three stages. First we have to determine how emotions are related to virtue and vice;[11] and, in particular, to what extent an emotion owes ethical goodness to the rationality of its rational core. Second, we shall want to know *why* we evaluate, from a moral point of view, not only ways in which we affect our surroundings by acting, but also ways of *being affected* emotionally by them. And third, we need to understand *why* it is *virtue*, as realized in feelings as well as actings, that supplies the standard of ultimate goodness for a human life.

I'll have little to say about the third of these questions. In the first two subsections I hope to throw some light on the first (4.1-2). Then I'll investigate various aspects of the impact emotional responses have on the subject and other people (4.3-4). And finally we are going to see that this impact does not exhaustively account for the relevance of emotions to a virtuous life (4.5).

4.1. Evaluating types of tokens?

How are emotions related to virtue and vice? The question can be taken to allude to a number of problems that I'll not tackle here. For instance: does every (token) emotion display either virtue or lack of virtue? Can emotions be weak-willed, so that there are enkratic and akratic responses beside virtuous and vicious ones? These questions I want to leave open. There is another that I'll turn to later (cf. 4.4-4.5 and esp. 5): Is evaluation of an emotion in terms of virtue the same as its evaluation in terms of rationality? But we also want to know whether moral evaluation can be directed at types of emotion, or only at tokens. This is the topic of the present subsection.

Admittedly, there are types of emotion that we consider to be *bad* whatever

[11] I'll use this last term generously: for any moral badness. And "moral" is to have the wide sense of "ethical". Morality is then, roughly, whatever a good *character* requires in the way of thinking, feeling, acting, etc. (cf. 4.2).

their occasions and manifestations. Thirst for revenge, for instance, always manifests lack of virtue and, if deep-rooted, the vice of vindictiveness. Similarly, in their most common uses, the words *resentment, hatred, fury, jealousy, envy, self-pity* and *schadenfreude* name emotion types that do not belong to the repertoire of a virtuous person.[12]

There are then emotions that are bad *qua* type: vicious emotions. In many other cases, however, there is a *presumption* in favour of badness, as with anger or impatience. These types of emotion *tend* to be bad and might be called "precarious". Are they simply *less likely* to be appropriate than plainly neutral ones such as being excited, bored, disappointed? Or are they defeasibly (i.e. *ceteris paribus*) bad? I suspect the former. If the latter, I do not know *how* to account for their general badness in a way that nevertheless leaves room for circumstances that make them appropriate. In any case, we have to say: As a rule, it is bad to be *angry*, or *impatient*; nevertheless, there are insults to which one ought to respond with a certain kind and degree of anger, and impatience with another's slow or slovenly performance can, in critical situations, be a requirement of virtuous efficiency.

Just as there are "precarious" types of emotion, whose instances are usually bad, there are also "promising" ones, such as respect and gratitude, which it is *in general* good to have. But here it seems clear that exceptions are due to defeasibility: the (quasi-)inferential patterns can be said *as such* to "promise" goodness.

True, the criminal's feelings of respect for the senior mafia padrone do not realize the *virtue* of respect; and you do not practise the virtue of gratitude by thanking your friend for stealing a bicycle on your behalf. But in the first case the subject misses the intrinsic *telos* of the sort of respect here in question, viz., roughly: *acknowledgement deserved by excellence.* And in the second case, we have a *prima facie* conflict between the requirements of two virtues: a grateful response would *ceteris paribus* manifest the virtue of gratitude; but here justice – which requires the would-be beneficiary not to condone, or conspire with, theft – takes precedence.

The examples I have given also provide us with an answer to the question whether there are any emotions that are unqualifiedly good *qua* type. The

[12] Our understanding of these words is somewhat ambivalent. If the motivational pattern e.g. of envy is taken to connect its object, another's advantage, with a tendency to *emulate* them, but not to grudge them their advantage, then an incidence of such envy need not be vicious and might even be virtuous. In other cases, we can at least discern a similarity between the defining motivational pattern of a vicious emotion and another such pattern that can characterize a potentially virtuous emotion. Resentment, for instance, *like* indignation, responds antagonistically to ostensible wrongness; but *only* indignation can be just. Indeed, resentment might be: indignation spoiled by targeting something that only strikes one as *a wrong* or by finding inadequate expression.

answer must be No. For a token emotion to exhibit virtue it is never enough for it to be of a certain type. Even a promising emotion such as compassion, respect,[13] or gratitude, that shares its name with a corresponding virtue – a "virtue-mated" emotion – is not immune to bad instantiation. What the Aristotelian tradition teaches with respect to action types holds of types of emotion, too: For a particular X to be bad, but not for X to be good, it can be enough for X to be of a certain kind. In *this* respect, "virtuous", i.e. promising, emotions do not differ from neutral ones.[14]

4.2. Quality of pattern and quality of response

Even if it is token emotions rather than types that admit of moral evaluation, it is of course generic features that determine their quality. So what are these features?

a) My provisional answer is: emotions exhibit virtue and vice in the same way as acting does, and they are therefore evaluated on the same grounds. Indeed, just as *actions that manifest an emotion* are good or bad according as they realize good or bad inferential patterns, so other emotional responses are, analogously, good or bad according as they realize good or bad (quasi-)inferential patterns – although in the case of unintended, merely quasi-inferred responses we are not going to say that the subject is *guided*, and *motivated*, by the reason supplied by an occasion's (ostensible) significance. – I call my answer provisional because it needs both elucidation and modification.

b) Let me begin by observing that there are "negative" as well as "positive" virtues and vices – character traits such as courage or chastity, and ingratitude or callousness, respectively. They are negative in the sense of being characterized by negative (quasi-)inferential patterns. You display courage by *not* responding with fright and flight to threats of danger, and chastity by *not* treating the prospect of sexual indulgence as a reason to go for it. Ingratitude is characterized by failing to exhibit the positive pattern of gratitude, and callousness by not responding to suffering with compassionate feeling or acting. Negative virtues do not invite, promote or impose, characteristic responses to pertinent occasions, as positive virtues such as generosity or

[13] My example concerns the kind of respect that we owe to people on account of their merits, offices, or special connexions with ourselves. The virtue enacted by such respect differs from the more basic virtue enacted by the respect we owe to every human being as such. – Is not *this* type of respect invariably good? Yes, in a way it is. But since we are concerned with token emotions, we have to consider that even the respect for human beings as such can take inappropriate forms – as when it is made conditional on those beings' white colour, male sex, or mental capacity.

[14] It will nonetheless turn out to be important for our understanding of the moral quality of emotions to draw a line between neutral and promising ones (4.2 (e)).

loyalty do. They rather *exclude, demote*, or *tame* them.[15] Dispositions that are negative in the sense I have explained are not actualized in *disposition-specific* ways of acting or feeling. It is therefore misleading to speak of acts *of chastity* or acts *of callousness*. And an *act of courage* is not one that is motivated by an occasion characteristic of courage: it is motivated by a worthy purpose, perhaps proposed by some other virtue; and it deserves to be called courageous because the agent does *not* let him- or herself be motivated, in accordance with the positive motivational pattern of cowardice, viz. by danger or threat of discomfort, to desist from the pursuit of that purpose. This does not prevent a "negative virtue/vice" from being manifested in actions and feelings. In a given context, chastity may require you to say No, and callousness may come out in active cruelty. Moreover, even a virtue, positive or negative, whose (quasi-)inferential pattern excludes a certain type of emotion is by this very fact concerned with *emotionality*. In this way the negative virtue courage, for instance, shapes one's emotionality, not by promoting an emotion, but by limiting the application of the (quasi-)inferential pattern of fear. Hence there is a class of (negative) virtues that dispose one not to feel (or act), rather than to feel (and act), in specific ways. These, then, contribute to a good character by shaping *emotionality*, not indeed by rendering *certain emotions* virtuous in the way that, say, the virtuous pattern of compassion renders feelings of compassion virtuous, but by taming an emotional tendency, as courage does, or by overcoming it completely, as does the nameless virtue opposed to vindictiveness.

c) Not all virtues, positive or negative, are as such concerned with emotions, as we have just seen compassion and courage are – the one by a positive, the other by a negative (quasi-)inferential pattern. There are also "impassive" virtues – virtues directed at shaping and organizing, not one's emotional life, but only motivation and non-motivation in the realm of acting. Justice is a paradigm of such impassivity. The norm of justice determines, positively, how to respond to others' rights. But it is only about intention, intended acting, and omission of either – not about justice-specific emotion types.[16] Nor can therefore injustice consist in the absence of such responses. Another example: The

[15] Note that one may have to *act* on a *positive* motivational pattern not only by *action*, but also by *refraining* from action – as when, by the pattern of justice, another's possession of something is a reason not to take it from them without their permission. – For the idea that virtues as well as vices are characterized by positive or negative motivational patterns cf. Müller 2004.

[16] One may indeed respond, for instance, with *indignation* to attacks on others' rights. But also to attacks on one's own rights; and here the emotion does not manifest justice. Moreover, the basic motivational pattern of justice is: *treating another's right as a reason to acknowledge it in the way one acts*. And no emotion parallels this.

norm of tolerance tells you *not* to treat the unfamiliarity of people's foreign habits, looks, beliefs, etc. as a reason to hurt or disadvantage them in any way, i.e.: not to practise the (positive) pattern of intolerance. Since, therefore, the motivational pattern of tolerance is negative, it cannot but be an impassive virtue. (For that reason it could not be "emotional" even if the vice of intolerance were, on its part, realized in a characteristic type of emotion.) There just is no place for a virtue-specific emotion where the significance of an occasion determines not a kind of response but its absence![17] It appears then that impassive virtues, in addition to negative ones, cannot be sources of the moral quality of one's emotions. Their motivational patterns are not matched by the (quasi-) inferential patterns of any emotion types.

d) This, however, does not mean that impassive or negative virtues cannot place any requirements on our emotionality; or that a (token) emotion cannot be virtuous unless it is of a virtue-mated type – i.e. unless it represents a (quasi-)inference characteristic of some virtue.[18] Examples will help to clarify this point. Grief because of another's loss of a child can reflect the virtue of compassion. But to be *grieved* is not, as such, an emotion called forth by the type of occasion that prompts expressions and other responses of compassion and characterizes the virtue of compassion. Or consider indignation. It is a nicely ambivalent type of emotion. When you get indignant with someone because of X, this is *unjust* if X is in no way their fault – while it shows *loyalty* if X is a vile attack on your friend. So, when grief is virtuous, it is not virtuous *on account of* the grieving pattern in the way that compassionate feelings, when virtuous, are so on account of the pattern of compassion. And indignation is never good or bad on account of the pattern proper to it, but rather by the standard of a virtue or vice that renders it appropriate or inappropriate, respectively, to the occasion. (Similarly, when disgust is bad, it is not bad on account of the pattern of disgust – whereas a jealous response is always wrong on account (at least) of the pattern of jealousy.)

e) Under (a) I gave a provisional answer to the question in what way an emotion that it is good to have owes its goodness to the inferential and motivational pattern that characterizes the good-making virtue – viz.: It is the virtuous pat-

[17] It is not so clear whether the intolerant response itself must also count as impassive. On the one hand, responses indicative of certain vicious or precarious emotions such as hatred, contempt, or disgust belong to the standard intolerant responses to foreign life forms. On the other, there is no "emotion of intolerance". And, although e.g. disgust at the eating habits of immigrants will frequently betray the vice of intolerance (cf. section 3 on responsibility for shaping one's emotional dispositions), to be disgusted is not, as such, an emotion whose quasi-inferential pattern associates it with that vice, which consists in treating unfamiliarity and dissimilarity as reasons for rejection.

[18] Such a virtue must, as shown under (b) and (c), be neither negative nor impassive.

tern on account of which one realizes a given virtue in *acting* well that confers moral goodness also on *emotions* that are required or invited by that virtue. If this were the whole answer, only a circumscribed class of virtues – we may think of caution, concern, compassion, gratitude, respect, and confidence – could be practised in one's emotional life, and only a circumscribed range of corresponding emotions – virtue-mated ones – could be of moral value. Roughly speaking, the moral goodness of emotions would depend on, and reflect, coincidence between emotional and virtuous patterns of rationality.

From considerations adduced in (b-d) it is clear that an emotion can owe its goodness to a virtue without being, by its own (quasi-)inferential pattern, an implementation of *this* virtue. There are emotions of a type that is neutral rather than promising. In such a case – remember the example of indignation – a (token) emotion is good, if good, because it, or its *response*, is required or invited by some virtue whose motivational pattern is *not* matched by the emotion's pattern of (quasi-)inference.

The idea that emotions are of moral value, if they are, on account of their agreement with virtuous patterns of rationality may strike one as merely formal. For in the case of acting it seems plausible to hold that its instantiating virtuous patterns of inference and motivation is of benefit to human life. But is it equally true that human life benefits from an analogous agreement with virtue found in certain emotions?

The answer may be an easy Yes for the case of virtue-mated emotions: when you *feel* gratitude, or compassion, you will be particularly inclined to *act* in ways required by the virtues of gratitude and compassion respectively. But can we say something more general about ways in which emotionality as such is good for a good life? And something, in particular, that applies to unintended and purely inward responses?

4.3. Desirable feelings

Not everything one "does" in response to an emotional occasion is intended acting. The response may be non-voluntary (perhaps a confident mien) or merely inward (a vindictive thought); it may consist in a tendency to act in characteristic ways, an inclination that fills the agent's consciousness without being actualized. Are these types of response less relevant morally than responses that involve intention and action?

Let us first consider the manifestation of emotions in non-voluntary and half-voluntary behaviour. It is obvious that e.g. spontaneous looks of affection, disapproving frowns, and cries of alarm affect one's surroundings much as intended actions do; they are potentially of consequence in comparably good- and bad-making ways. By showing excitement or admiration one may give en-

couragement or make friends. By angry shouting or a contemptuous look one may start a fight or cause others to change their plans.

If moral philosophers nonetheless neglect the unintended manifestation of virtue and vice, this may be because it is less immediately subject to the subject's will. But we have seen that even for one's non-voluntary emotional responses one is at least indirectly responsible (section 3).

Let us take it, then, that unintended emotional responses ought to be accorded moral relevance because their impact resembles that of emotionally prompted actions. This leaves us with the question: What is the moral import of merely inward emotional responses? Why should unexpressed wishes to slander or injure a colleague prove vice? And why should loving thoughts be called for by the virtue of marital love?

Inward responses share two important features with behavioural ones. They, too, are at least indirectly up to us, so we are responsible for them. And, even when themselves unexpressed, they often have indirect effects on our surroundings that make them morally relevant.

But I want to attend to a different point: Responses such as reminiscences, wonderings, fantasies, ruminations, moods etc. tend to make a difference to the subject's own mental well-being and general flourishing. They do this by their very presence, quite independently of any immediate outward manifestations. Envious and jealous thoughts are experienced as frustrating; admiring, grateful, loving and joyful ones as uplifting. Affection and gratitude bring agreeable reminiscences, resentment and hatred, disagreeable ones. One does not *like* to feel impatient, or to experience aversion rather than sympathy. And even the irascible person, though *prone* to spot annoying and irritating occasions, does not *look forward to* thoughts of retribution or angry feelings. Indeed, some precarious or vicious emotion types have been taken to be "deadly sins" in part because, as Gabriele Taylor shows in her admirable "Deadly Vices" (2006), they tend to be self-destructive.

We are here moving in the halo of the question: does virtue make one happy? But only in the halo. For, first, the contentment brought by virtuous emotions is presumably not all there is to the happiness that virtue is taken to constitute in the Aristotelian tradition. Second, the foregoing considerations neglect the delights apparently secured by nasty emotions such as schadenfreude, contemptuous pride or sweet feelings of revenge. And, third, they have nothing to say about the discomfort connected with feelings that are *not* vicious or even precarious, such as pity, grief, disappointment, fear, or bites of conscience.

From this point of view, the question what constitutes the moral value of virtuous emotions has not yet been answered satisfactorily. But a more satisfactory answer (4.5) will have to wait until after we have resumed the question

how emotionality contributes to the moral quality of intended behaviour. This is our next topic.

4.4. Motivation to act well

The most obvious aspect of the moral significance of our emotionality is of course its close connexion with conduct. Since actions can constitute emotional responses, a way of acting that is required or inspired by virtue may at the same time implement the (quasi-)inferential pattern of an emotion (2.3). It is then natural to ascribe to this (token) emotion the moral quality of that way of acting. There are however ways in which emotionality can, not only share in the goodness of good conduct, but contribute to it. It can help, in particular, a) by *supporting* good and *thwarting* bad motivation, and b) by making one *alert* to occasions that call for a virtuous response.

a) I have insisted throughout that the structure of one's emotional life – what might be called its formal cause – is *the work of reason*. Nevertheless, an emotion is a way, not of affecting the world, but of *being affected* by it. There is a paradox here. On the one hand, things *outside* yourself *incline* you to respond in a characteristic way. They *impose* their significance on you. The initiative to an *emotional* response seems to lie with them. On the other hand, those "things" would not be emotional occasions for you if you did not yourself impose this rather than that significance on them. It is *your reason* that brings conceptions of significance to the scene and, applying them, presents occasions as calling for responses in accordance with specific (quasi-)inferential patterns.

Yet this priority of reason is indirect. When an intended response is carried by emotion, and not just coolly designed by practical reason, you are *affected and directed by* the significance of things. You are indeed still free to act or not to act in accordance with the prompting. But it is not *now* up to you to *experience* an occasion as calling for a specific response – as you typically do when you feel compassion, or hatred, when you are fed up with So-and-so's company, or excited by the prospect of it, when you feel like hitting, or like hugging, your child. And to the extent that you are *voluntarily* affected and can be held responsible for the *emotional experience* (as opposed to an intended response), that voluntariness and that responsibility are indirect, rooted in your past ability to shape your own character (cf. 2.4; 3).

All this means that a sort of *passivity* characterizes the motivation on which one acts well when one has reason to do something that is also called for by an emotional occasion. Such passivity does not remove spontaneity. On the contrary, it makes for a kind of spontaneity that is absent where one acts in execution of a plan, or as a result of deliberation. – What is the moral relevance of this emotion-carried spontaneity? What do the emotions that involve it do

for a good life? The simple answer seems to be: Given that the unintended impulses *accord with* good intentions, the disposition to them secures *stability* to moral virtue.

Wherever an action constitutes an emotional response, the emotional embedding as it were elicits the action, it invigorates and reinforces its motivation – for better or worse. For better, in particular, if one has become disposed to promising emotions. One will then, as Aristotle saw, with a desirable sort of readiness, ease, and perhaps even cheerfulness, comply with the requirements of virtue that find support in such emotions.

This is obvious for the case of emotion-mated virtues. Compassionate feelings will help you to practise compassion. But for an emotion to reinforce a virtue, it need not concur in its patterns of rationality. When *concerned* about the health of your friend, you will gladly do for their recovery what you might do reluctantly from the sense of *loyalty* that requires your assistance; yet *concern* is characterized by responding caringly to trouble, while loyalty is habitual motivation by some special bond.

And now consider a case where no emotion seems to be in sight that might help: An irresistable craving for whisky tempts you to shoplift a bottle. To act at least enkratically, if not justly and temperately, you have to conform with the pattern of treating rights as a sufficient reason to respect them, and the pattern of not treating the prospect of pleasure as a sufficient reason to embrace it. The first of those motivational patterns is positive but impassive, the second negative. So no virtue-mated emotion can come to your aid (cf. 4.2 (c-d)). (As a last resort, of course, the warnings of conscience can help you not to stray from the path of virtue!)

Admittedly, the difference that emotionality makes to conduct in these ways, will also come out in the readiness and ease with which the coward, aided by excessive fear, gives up on a respectable project he would pursue in the absence of ostensible danger; or in the readiness and ease with which the adulterer, helped by lust to forget about his marriage vow, offends against justice, chastity and loyalty.

But this is no objection to the ethical appreciation of emotionality. On the contrary. It means that, evidently, character formation has to include the limiting and taming of precarious emotions and the overcoming of vicious ones. This is what one needs in order to practice virtues such as courage or temperance, whose motivational patterns, being negative, cannot be matched by the quasi-inferential patterns of allied emotions. Moreover, there are emotions – such as self-confidence in the case of courage, marital affection in the case of chastity, and shame in both cases – that support one in resisting precarious inferential and motivational patterns like those at work in cowardice or sexual licentiousness. Impassive virtues, too, enjoy such non-specific emotional support.

It may well be doubted that morality would have a grip on human living, even to the moderate extent to which it does, if practical reason were not assisted, supported, and sometimes almost replaced, in its task by a well-formed emotionality – where "well" means both *in accordance with virtue* or *right reason* and *to a sufficient extent*. The examples I have given seem to make this suggestion plausible. But perhaps the very fantasy of a totally "impassive morality" is totally idle: it implies a life form different from ours, which would presumably call for different norms of practical rationality. Nevertheless, humility and realism compel us to admit that virtuous orientation of conduct is as much a matter of being affected in the right way as it is of choosing in accordance with moral knowledge.

b) And now about a second respect in which emotionality can be of value to virtuous conduct. This is the influence it has on one's morally relevant *cognitive* capacities, tendencies, and habits. Remember that every type of emotion goes with a distinctive *perception of significance*, on which its tokens depend (2.1-2). Well-formed emotionality includes, or inclines us towards, well-formed alertness to significance – an alertness the life of virtue cannot do without.

Emotions do not just respond to judgements that we *may happen to form or not to form*. Rather, the way we are affected by emotions involves a twofold cognitive aspect: occasions impress both their *existence* and their (ostensible) *significances* on our attention and on our practical understanding. This is part of the natural teleology inherent in having emotions at all.

Since alertness to relevant occasions characterizes virtues (and vices!) as well as emotions, we have here a second way in which the practice of virtue – esp. of emotion-mated virtues such as compassion, gratitude, or caution – will benefit from emotionality. A well-formed emotionality makes one ready to *become aware* of those aspects of reality that feed into virtue-supporting patterns of (quasi-)inference and, hence, virtuous motivation. Being disposed to the right sort of emotion, one will also be disposed to notice its occasions and hence the reasons they supply for virtuous responses.

Note that this value of emotionality is quite different from the one considered under (a). There, the value of, say, friendly feelings towards X was their invigorating impact, the fact that they as it were coax you to behave justly, loyally, tolerantly etc. towards X. But any instance of this emotion type already rests on your perceiving X as a proper object for it. Alertness to occasions for the type is a *condition* of the occurrence of its tokens. It is thus a *cognitive* disposition – the propensity towards perception of occasion and significance – that has been our topic under (b) And it is of distinctive value to a life of virtue. The *propensity to* friendly feelings that lies behind the alertness to proper objects for them, has a value for the practice of virtue which as it were precedes the value, for that practice, of your *actual friendly feelings* on a given occasion.

4.5. Intrinsic value

a) The value I have so far ascribed to virtuous emotions and virtuous emotionality is, in a wide sense, instrumental and extrinsic. Virtuous feelings are more apt than vicious ones to make for mental well-being (4.3). They help good conduct by invigorating virtuous motivation and by exposing moral challenge and opportunity (4.4). It remains in conclusion of the present section to recognize in emotions a value that relates exclusively to their role as constituents and expressions of a good character in their own right. *Extrinsic* need not mean *extra-moral*. It would, implausibly, amount to this if the function of virtuous emotions were limited to their contribution to non-moral components of the subject's well-being. But we have seen that *virtuous conduct* benefits from virtuous emotionality. Nevertheless, this does not mean much if virtuous conduct itself is good by reason of non-moral utility. And this seems actually to be implied in some forms of neo-Aristotelian naturalism.

b) Why not adopt this position? Justice, for instance, is after all a virtue because respecting others' rights is a necessary condition of peaceful life in a large community. Courage and temperance are virtues because they keep us from doing things that would do non-moral harm to ourselves and others. And, to move closer to present concerns, to feel compassion where one should would not be virtuous if the disposition to do so were not a virtue; and it would not be a virtue if the flourishing of a human community did not call for its exercise. Are we not, in saying this, admitting that the rationality of the virtuous life feeds on its function of supporting human well-being? Do we not recognize in the extra-moral needfulness and teleology of virtue a *reason* why we should act as virtue wants us to act?

c) To see clearly here, we have first of all to distinguish two uses of "reason". A blow on the head may be the *reason why* you lost consciousness; but it can't have been, or given you, a *reason to* lose consciousness. And something's being a *reason why* it is good that you Φ does not entail its being a reason, or your *reason, to* Φ – where the latter kind of reason is, paradigmatically, something you are aware of as leading you to Φ on account of your *conceiving* of it as justifying or calling for Φ-ing. Even if the extra-moral usefulness of disposition V is a *reason why* V is a virtue, it does not follow that this usefulness gives anyone a *reason to* practise V – let alone, a reason to engage in V-type responses. (Reasons to engage in such responses are supplied by V-type occasions.) The rationality of morality consists in the fact that virtuous motivational patterns provide us with ultimate reasons to do things, not in there being (meta-)reasons to act on those ultimate reasons. And just as we do not act on reasons to act well (i.e.: to practise the virtues), there need not be any reasons to feel well (i.e.: to feel in accordance with virtue) (cf. Müller 2018).

d) Morality is autonomous in precisely this sense. True, it is part of the very notion of morality that, *generally speaking*, a character trait cannot be a virtue unless its realization somehow serves extra-moral components of human well-being. We can name *reasons why* compassion and courage are virtues, while greed and malice are not. The moral significance of a character trait may even *in this sense* be said to "depend on" its non-moral function, or value. But it does not follow that the value of morality is merely instrumental, exhausted by its function. The autonomy of moral value is reflected in, and confirmed by, our admiration for uncommonly good people and their virtuous doings and feelings. Such admiration is in no way contingent on characteristic effects of their virtue. In praising a person for Φ-ing where virtue suggests or requires Φ-ing, we view and value that Φ-ing as implementing and representing the person's reliable attachment to virtue. We do not treat the value of such Φ-ing as deriving from any benefits that it may be in the nature of Φ-ing to bring to the subject, to others, or to the community.

e) This is so – to return to our topic – whether Φ-ing is a piece of behaviour or some inward emotional response. Only, the fact that it makes sense to appreciate someone's Φ-ing as good or valuable in itself, and not in view of any function of Φ-ing: this fact is more easily *recognized* where Φ-ing is an inward emotional response – a response whose quality we are not, in general, tempted to assess in terms of consequences. If X wishes a painful illness on Y, whom X hates, we condemn that wish because it is vicious, full stop – not because the wish might come true! (Otherwise the degree of condemnation ought to depend on the power of X over Y.) Similarly, if X has injured Y, we hope that X will be sorry to have done so, not because this gives Y a prospect of compensation, but because it would speak in favour of X's character.

Thus, in the case of purely inward emotional responses, it seems especially evident that, in ascribing to them moral relevance and appraising them as good or bad, we are not basing our judgement on extra-moral considerations. We are not even referring their value or demerit to the moral quality of *actions* that tend to go with those inward responses (although they do serve good and bad conduct – cf. 4.4). We treat the agreement of an emotion with virtue as intrinsically good, independently of actual or hypothetical consequences of any kind.

5. *Grades of emotional rationality*

I hope to have shown that every type of emotion owes its specific character to a pattern of (quasi-)inference, and that the moral quality of every token emotion depends on the appropriateness, in itself and in the circumstances, of the

pattern it exemplifies. It remains to clarify in what sense the rationality thus exhibited by emotions comes in three grades, as announced in the title of this essay, and thereby to summarize the account I have given (5.1-3). The gradation I am going to articulate will prove to characterize all human rationality (5.4).

Standard uses of *acting well/badly* and *good/bad conduct* show that the notions of *acting* and *conduct* assign an intrinsic *telos* to their instantiations, viz. moral goodness (Müller 2004). This may be less obvious in the case of *emotionality*. But quality of character is a matter of emotionality at least as much as of conduct (4.5). I further assume, with the whole Aristotelian tradition, that to realize (i.e. to *acquire* and *enact*) a good character is an essential ingredient of the *good life* in which the formal *telos* of any human pursuit in fact materially consists – whatever material *tele* particular individuals may happen to pursue "under the guise of the good". If this is right, the intrinsic *telos* of our emotional life is (the emotional aspect of) a virtuous life. It follows that, like the ways one acts, and unlike e.g. the ways one exercises a skill, the ways one feels – i.e. how one lets oneself be affected emotionally – stand *as such* under moral norms and are answerable to these as an ultimate standard of evaluation.

Enactment of character, in unintended as well as intended emotional responses, is non-theoretical application of *reason* and, if the character is good, exhibits the *rationality* of wisdom. It is therefore rationality thus specified which, given the ultimacy of the moral standard, constitutes the highest grade of emotional rationality.[19]

In sum: agreement with the ethical virtues, which implies wisdom, is the perfection of emotional rationality. The lower grades of rationality that I'll discuss are such by falling short of that perfection, and have to be characterized by reference to it. So agreement with virtue constitutes that highest degree of emotional rationality that we have to consider first.

5.1. Grade 3: Agreement with virtue

Perfect emotional rationality comes in three forms (cf. (a-c) below). But they share a negative requirement, the *No Vice* condition, and a positive one, *No Reserve*.

No Vice seems to be exhausted by the following components. First, the emotion must not exemplify a pattern that is constitutive *by itself* of a vice such

[19] We seem to make use of other criteria, too, in assessing the rationality of emotions. Emotions may count as irrational when they are unintelligible or pathological or arational (in the sense considered by Hursthouse 1991), when they persist in spite of defeating evidence and come apart from considered judgement, when they manifest madness, etc. Here, however, we are concerned with ethical rationality, i.e. with the extent to which emotions and emotional responses are in line with the (quasi-) inferential patterns of virtue.

as envy or vindictiveness or arrogance. Second, it must not "apply" a promising or neutral or precarious pattern in a disproportionate way – as when one owes an uncommonly generous benefit to X and acknowledges it by a brief "Thanks", said over the telephone. And, third, to exhibit grade 3 rationality, an emotion must not breed a *response that is at variance with virtue* – as when, by inviting X for dinner, one shows proportionate gratitude to X, but at the same time puts an inappropriate burden on one's family.

No Reserve requires the subject to *conceive* of what it is actually good to feel as good to feel. If you feel, say, compassion while thinking you shouldn't, your emotional life is not perfect, whether or not compassion is actually called for in the situation (cf. 5.2). For virtue asks for whole-hearted commitment.[20]

So much for No Vice and No Reserve. And here are the three forms of grade 3 rationality.

a) Since I have not committed myself to the idea that every emotion that does not exhibit vice exhibits virtue, I have (at least provisionally) to acknowledge a separate form of goodness where an emotion *merely* satisfies the No Vice condition. Indignation, for instance, does not exemplify a vicious pattern. It is therefore good and rational in the pertinent sense as long as it complies with No Vice by avoiding two further faults: the response must be proportionate to the occasion; and it must not, considered in itself, be at variance with any moral requirement – as it would be if, e.g., by manifesting indignation in the situation one would be revealing a secret one had promised to keep.

b) A second form of grade 3 rationality is realized where an emotion is positively virtuous, but not of the promising variety. Unlike, e.g., compassion, such an emotion is not virtue-mated (not by its very nature "associated" with a virtue whose pattern of inference it would tend to enact). Rather, the response is required or invited by some virtue whose motivational pattern is *not* mirrored by the emotion's pattern of (quasi-)inference (cf. 4.2 (d)). Indignation will serve as an example here, too. But we have to add circumstances in which a non-associated virtue *calls for* it. Let us suppose, for instance, that you would be *disloyal* if you did not react indignantly to a wrong done to your friend. Indignation is *not* characteristic of loyalty in the way that, say, the emotion of gratitude is characteristic of the virtue of gratitude, or remorse is characteristic of the virtue of acknowledging guilt. The virtue that carries the moral value of your indignation is characterized by a motivational

[20] The need for No Reserve was brought home to me by Ulf Hlobil. He reminds us that Mark Twain's Huck Finn "feels the right emotion towards the run-away slave Jim, but thinks he feels the wrong emotion"; so he seems to attain grade 3 rationality without achieving grade 2 (viz. approval of what he feels) – unless we include No Reserve in the conditions of perfection. This inclusion seems to be justified by the requirement that virtue be unwavering and the virtuous person at one with him- or herself.

pattern, that of loyalty, which is quite distinct from the (quasi-)inferential emotional pattern of indignation. Yet *it* is what makes the token indignation we are considering virtuous.

c) The comparison of indignation with gratitude and remorse already takes us to a third form of perfect emotional rationality. What it adds to No Vice is precisely the association between emotion and virtue in respect of (quasi-)inferential patterns. Virtue-mated emotions like gratitude or remorse exhibit such association, or coincidence: they respond to a type of occasion in accordance with a pattern that it is *ceteris paribus* virtuous to enact. When you feel and / or spontaneously show compassion in response to another's misery, your emotion is virtuous because it implements a virtue that requires you (*ceteris paribus* and *inter alia*) to conform to precisely this pattern of response.

5.2. Grade 2: Agreement with a normative conception

For adult human beings, possession of reason means that they cannot but think and live by norms. The ways they judge and talk, propose, advise, acquiesce, regret, and so on show how they, at least implicitly, believe they *ought* to respond, and not to respond, to given occasions. When they respond emotionally, they do so under a conception which they relate to a conception of whether/how they ought to do so. Like one's acting, one's feeling is something one implicitly conceives of "under the guise of the good". So one inevitably has normative conceptions of one's emotional life. Agreement with such conceptions constitutes what I call grade 2 rationality.

The norm involved here is subjective. It will coincide in part with the objective norm of virtue, which defines grade 3 rationality. But human conceptions of virtue are not flawless. And the wicked have their own conceptions of how to live well anyway.

In spite of this subjectivity, the norms by which individuals orient their emotional lives deserve a place within my threefold gradation of rationality – for two reasons. First, the *No Reserve* condition (5.2) has already acknowledged the ethical relevance of subjects' evaluative attitudes towards their own feelings. And, second, subjective norms *aspire* to be valid norms. The norms by which one appraises one's emotions wrongly nevertheless exhibit a *teleology* without which we could not say that they *fail* to be of grade 3 by *falling short* of the perfection defined by virtue.

This comes out in our ability, and indeed tendency, to question, and (ostensibly) improve on, norms that we tacitly apply. The vindictive person may come to think it will be *better* not to harbour fantasies of revenge and not to return evil for evil. (But, equally, a conventional husband may suddenly find he should not be worried about falling in love with a new woman every 3 months.)

Attempts to remedy emotional failings by improving on one's *standards* in such ways can consist in attempts to abandon, exchange, adopt or – more likely – modify *emotional patterns* of (quasi-)inference. If you think, e.g., that it is unmanly to mourn the death of your mother for longer than three days, it is the quasi-inferential pattern of your way of mourning that you ought to modify: you are not (yet) assigning to a given sort of occasion the sort of import, and hence the sort of response, it deserves in accordance with a *well-proportioned* conception of mourning – a conception informed, *inter alia*, by the virtue of filial love. And if you come to adopt the view that you should acquire a disposition to respond with sympathy even to unrealistic requests, it is, again, a quasi-inferential emotional pattern that you are promoting to the status of norm.

Normally, however, when we see a need to remedy emotional failings, we are not unhappy about standards but about compliance. The problem is not so much a wrong idea of whom and what to feel concern for, or when to get impatient. It is rather a failure to feel and manifest concern when one thinks one should, and the temptation to get impatient when one knows one's reasons for doing so are no good reasons. In other words, when deficient, the reality of one's emotional life very often falls short of grade 2, not just grade 3, rationality.[21]

5.3. Grade 1: Rational constitution

What place is there left for grade 1? None, in a way. For the tendency to enact (quasi-)inferential patterns in one's feelings as well as in one's behaviour is part of human nature. To achieve the first grade of rationality, an experience need not be an emotion that satisfies this or that criterion of rightness: it just has to be an emotion rather than a merely sensory passion. An emotion's grade 1 rationality is simply its rational constitution, the fact that it embodies a (quasi-)inferential pattern.

Emotions inevitably actualize their subjects' ability to treat circumstances as *reasons to respond* in characteristic ways. Even where imperfect by the standards of grades 2 or 3, emotionality nevertheless embodies *rationality* in that reason is involved in it in the three functions considered in section 2. And *qua* based on reasons, every token emotion aspires to *right reason in matters of (quasi-)inference* – much as every judgement aspires to *right reason in matters of truth and*

[21] Your *conception* of how you should be affected emotionally is indeed subject to the norm of grade 3 rationality. At the same time, that conception constitutes, in turn, a norm by which the goodness and badness of your actual emotions can be judged. But the relation of satisfaction is not the same. On the one hand, emotions that are grade-2-rational may fail to exhibit grade 3 rationality because of faulty *conceptions* of suitable patterns of emotionality. On the other, being of necessity grade-1-rational, emotions may yet fail to exhibit grade 2 rationality by failing to *implement* one's normative conceptions: by feeling what one thinks one ought not; by not feeling what one thinks one ought; by granting occasions an import, or at least a weight, they do not, by one's own lights, have, and in consequence by *actually* responding inappropriately.

defensibility. This teleology is found in any emotion on account, not of its distinctive type, but rather of its being the work of reason at all. What establishes emotions' claim to grade 1 rationality is simply constitution by the operation, whether good or bad, of reason.

5.4. "Just like theoretical rationality!"

The gradation of rationality I have ascribed to human emotionality is not really peculiar to it. We find analogies in the rational structures of judging and believing. And also of acting. Indeed, if my understanding of emotionality is correct, its rational structures overlap with those of acting (4.4). But, given that the rational structure of acting seems to be an object of controversy, and given the prejudice that thought and emotion inhabit separate worlds, it may be more illuminating to compare the grading of emotional rationality with that of theoretical rationality.

Human beliefs exhibit their own grade 1 rationality (an analogue of emotional grade 1 rationality), viz. support by ostensible *reasons* to believe.[22] You believe, e.g., that p for the reason that (as you think) an honest friend has told you that p. – Theoretical grade 2 rationality requires your (evidential) support for *p* to agree with a pattern of theoretical inference that you yourself *accept as normative* – here presumably reliance on testimony (the pattern being, roughly: "A reliable source maintains that p, so p"). Your belief that p exhibits the second grade of rationality if its grounding in testimony reflects your conception of that pattern appropriately – appropriately in respect of the belief's distinctive content, the friend's degree of reliability, and other circumstances. And, finally, grade 3 rationality requires, in addition, that the pattern of support you accept (and take yourself to be using) be a valid one: that there is in fact nothing wrong with treating, *ceteris paribus*, testimony for *p* as a reason to believe that p.

So what I have tried to show is that the threefold gradation of rationality that characterizes human thinking and acting is also found in our emotionality. Here it articulates the conceptual structure of an inevitable aspiration to feel as we think we ought to feel, and to think so correctly.

Advancement beyond emotional rationality of grade 1 is of course not just a matter of thinking. Character formation requires one above all to habituate the *enactment* of some (quasi-)inferential patterns and the *omission* of others. But this is no longer part of my topic.

[22] It is frequently said that belief and judgement aim at truth. Right. But so do guesses. What belief and judgement aim at is defensibility, or something like knowledge (Müller 1992). And knowledge is typically secured by support from good reasons. Not always, if there is *a priori* knowledge on the one hand, and groundless certainty on the other. But such exceptions are not detrimental to the present analogy.

An attentive reader might now say to me: You think you have alerted us to an essential and important aspect of *emotionality* by showing the (quasi-)inferential structure of emotions and pointing to three grades of rationality that may be ascribed to them. But, on your own showing it turns out that, in a way, emotional rationality is just like theoretical rationality! Or, to be more cautious: inferentiality and grades of rationality also characterize other areas of human life in which there are Φ-ings done for reasons to Φ. So, what you say about the emotions should not really surprise us!

Exactly. It should not.

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