

Introduction

Emotions: From Cases to Theories

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During the last three decades, emotions have become a critical topic in several branches of the contemporary philosophical debate, ranging from metaethics and value epistemology to philosophical psychology and normative ethics. Emotions are supposed to play a crucial role in our life, with a strong impact on our first-person experience and our social interactions, on our choices and values but also our implicit attitudes and unintentional behavior. Thinking of emotions, philosophers have focused on affective phenomena as diverse as disgust with the smell of rotten meat, awe for a magnificent musical composition, fear of snakes, hope for the future of a cherished friend, and embarrassment over a slight deviation from a social norm. It is indeed a theoretical challenge to account for the full spectrum of what ordinarily falls under the term “emotion” and to identify its place in the broader affective domain, to the extent that the very unity of the category is disputed.

As a consequence, despite virtually all philosophers’ agreement on their relevance, emotions are understood in a broad variety of philosophical perspectives. Some scholars highlight the cognitive import of emotions and argue that they are a sort of evaluative judgment, others explain emotions in terms of bodily changes that result in a kind of perception of value, and still others appeal to the idea of bodily attitudes or action tendency.

The purpose of this special issue is to collect relevant studies to facilitate interaction between different perspectives via a focus on single emotions. The core idea of the special issue has two facets. Firstly, the volume aims to show how different theoretical frameworks on emotions influence the

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philosophical analysis and description of a specific emotion. Secondly, as the title “Emotions: From Cases to Theories” makes explicit, we also want to explore the matter the other way around. In-depth analysis of a single emotion, in our view, is a good way to make evident the merits—and the limits—of a given theoretical approach and to allow us to concretely grasp relevant differences among diverse theories.

The issue begins with no less than three contributions devoted to empathy, compassion, and related emotional events. This fact testifies to the liveliness of philosophical interest in this range of emotions.

In her paper, “Resentment, Empathy and Indignation,” Jacqueline Taylor links resentment to sympathy and indignation. From Aristotle to Martha Nussbaum, philosophical tradition has often deemed resentment as a destructive emotion. Taylor joins other philosophers, such as A. Smith, D. Hume, J. Butler, and P. F. Strawson, in considering resentment as a form of anger targeting injury or injustice and, as such, an essential item in moral and social relations. Particularly, she argues that sympathetic indignation, felt in concord with another’s resentment, can rectify injustices and moral wrongs.

In “Compassion without Cognitivism,” Charlie Kurth offers a defence of a sophisticated account of compassion, arguing that it is not a parochial emotion and it doesn’t lack motivational force when directed beyond our friends and family. Kurt claims that to vindicate the moral value of compassion, we don’t need to adopt a cognitivist approach.

In a similar vein, in “I Don’t Want Your Compassion!”, Manuel Camassa opposes the philosophers and psychologists, such as Jesse Prinz and Paul Bloom, who find empathy useless or even dangerous. Camassa claims that empathy involves a peculiar psychological mechanism and must be distinguished from similar emotions such as compassion. Furthermore, even if empathy is not necessary for moral judgment, it plays a crucial role in moral development and moral conduct.

In “Making Sense of Emotional Contagion,” Carmen Isern-Mas and Antoni Gomila focus not on a specific emotion, but on the complex phenomenon of emotional contagion. The authors criticize the mimicry theory, according to which emotional contagion is mediated by an automatic process of mimicry of the perceived expressive movements and argue instead for a general theory of emotion elicitation. Thus, emotional contagion is better understood as an emotional response.

Lorenzo Greco's paper, "On Pride," focuses on a related but different topic. The author presents the traditional commendation of pride by Christian ethics. In doing so, he examines B. Mandeville's view, according to which pride is a beneficial passion to society, even if it's a vice for the individual, and then he reviews the Humean conception of pride and its place in moral life. In a typical Humean fashion, Greco defends pride as a virtue and discards humility as a vice.

Alessandra Fussi, in "Envy and Its Objects," develops a detailed analysis of envy through a deep confrontation with the most relevant philosophical accounts. Firstly, she carefully presents envy as an emotion surrounded by several related emotions such as covetousness, longing, emulation, and admiration, which makes the categorization of envy problematic. In what follows, Fussi offers a fresh proposal for categorizing envy by critically discussing the well-established distinction between object-envy and state-envy made by G. Taylor. Working on variations of situational factors, Fussi argues that the ultimate object of envy is fame—and not the good one lacks—and that something like benign envy doesn't exist.

Maria Silvia Vaccarezza's "Admiration, Moral Knowledge and Transformative Experiences" fits with the renewed interest in the moral role of admiration both in psychology and philosophy. After presenting the main taxonomies and definitions of admiration, she engages in a critical discussion of Zagzebski's account of admiration as a reliable source of moral judgments, arguing that on the one hand, we have to allow admiration to provide *prima facie* normative reasons, but on the other hand, this provisional, emotive source of justification is often enough and sometimes is all we have. In the last sections, the author applies her analysis of admiration as a source of moral development to the case of transformative experiences.

Claudia Navarini and Ettore De Monte, in "Fear as Related to Courage: An Aristotelian-Thomistic Redefinition of Cognitive Emotions," elaborate on the connection between fear and courage by developing an account based on Aristotle's and Aquinas's insights combined with recent findings in emotion theories and empirical research. They argue that the virtue of courage has an intrinsic relation with the experience of fear that constitutes a precondition for courage itself. In other words, courageous agents do not rule out fear or merely struggle against it; instead they feel fear appropriately within the broader disposition of courage.

Tiziana Migliore, in "On Courage: The Sense of θυμός," conducts a wide and careful etymological and historical analysis of the concept of θυμός (*thymòs*) not only in philosophical psychology, but first and foremost in Greek historiography, literature, and medicine. By doing so, the author effectively shows

how complex and broad the meaning of θυμός was in ancient Greek culture. On this basis, the article goes on to articulate the relevance of the “thymic dimension” for semiotics and develops an original discussion of the role played by *thymòs*-related themes in the contemporary practice of tattooing.

Danilo Manca, in “Shades of Schadenfreude: A Phenomenological Account of Pleasure at Another’s Misfortune,” intertwines different philosophical traditions on Schadenfreude and provides a multifaceted and erudite introduction to this emotion. In the first section, the author puts forward an original interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of *epichairekakia*, relying on the phenomenological distinction between “noematic” and “noetic.” The paper proceeds by discussing how Schadenfreude relates to “resentment” in the modern framework informed by Scheler’s and Nietzsche’s views. The third section is devoted to integrating the analysis of Schadenfreude with major current theories of humor and laughter. Finally, the author applies his analysis to the peculiar case of philosophical attitude.

Alexander A. Juek’s “Concern and the Structure of Action: The Integration of Affect and Understanding” explores the idea of the prominent role of action in human existence emphasized by phenomenologists. The author elaborates on the Heideggerian notion of “concern” in order to improve the phenomenologically inspired embodied-cognition approach, which, despite the centrality it places on action to explain cognition, has been criticized for lacking a proper theory of action per se. The core of the paper develops an account of action based on the integration of affect and embodied understanding that together constitute concern, the main structural condition that motivates action.

The issue is completed by two very intriguing papers. The first one, by Larry A. Herzberg, “On Sexual Lust as an Emotion,” tries to overcome the traditional view of sexual lust as a desire or an appetite. Instead, according to Herzberg, sexual lust intersects with the usual categories and resembles desires, appetites, and emotions. There are philosophical, psychological, and neurological reasons to conclude *prima facie* that sexual lust rides on both sides, even if further research is needed.

In “Emotions and Literature: Robert Musil’s Young Törless,” Zeynep Talay Turner doesn’t focus on a specific emotion but deals with a long-standing topic concerning the relationship between emotions, literature, and philosophy. In particular, she explores the connections between literature and sympathy through Robert Musil’s theory of emotion.