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THE EMOTIONS: FROM THE (INTER) PERSONAL TO THE NORMATIVE DIMENSION

abstract

Recent debate in the intersection between philosophy and cognitive sciences have underlined the relevance of emotions in our lives. Emotions seem to play several different roles: from our inner and personal experience of the world, especially in all its alleged value aspects, to our relations to others. Yet, philosophical and scientific debate has not reached a consensus on what emotions are and on their specific contribution to our personal and social lives.

In this introductory chapter we present the different debates on emotions this issue focuses on and we briefly summarize the papers collected here.

keywords

Spring School of Philosophy 2016, theories of emotions, emotions morality and political theory, hate speech, emotions and intersubjectivity

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The present issue of *Phenomenology and Mind* “Emotions, Normativity, and Social Life” contains a selection of papers presented at San Raffaele Spring School of Philosophy (SRSSP) 2016 both by invited speakers and by contributors selected through double-blind peer review. Moreover, it includes papers that were selected for presentation but whose authors could not attend SRSSP 2016.

SRSSP was held at Vita-Salute San Raffaele University in Milan in June, 6th – 8th, 2016. It was organized by the research centers CeSEP, CRESA, and PERSONA of the Faculty of Philosophy and it also received support from the Faculty and from the Ph.D. program.

Emotions and the Affective Life

Recent debate in the intersection between philosophy and cognitive sciences have underlined the relevance of emotions in our lives. Emotions seem to play several different roles: from our inner and personal experience of the world, especially in all its alleged value aspects, to our relations to others. As for the former, the way we perceive the world and understand it is deeply influenced by our emotions. As for the latter, several researches have shown that emotional engagement with others is crucial both for understanding them and their states of mind and for building a relation with them. Just to provide a few paradigmatic examples of this interpersonal role, one can think of the constitution and maintenance of the bond between a newborn and his or her primary care-giver as an emotional one. Similarly, research on moral dilemmas have underlined that emotions play a crucial role in what we decide to do or to avoid doing (Greene *et al.* 2001). Yet, besides these roles, philosophical and scientific debate has not reached a consensus on what emotions are and on their specific contribution to our lives. There is great amount of data on the fact that they play a role, but what exactly that role is or what relation emotions entertain with other human faculties and abilities is not yet clear. Furthermore, the epistemological status of emotions is controversial. Moreover, theories of emotions constitute a relevant attempt to bring empirical work to bear on philosophical theorizing, so providing the touchstone for interdisciplinary analysis. Some of the more interesting debates concerning emotions focus on their role in moral and political theory, on their relation to language and hate speech, on their role in intersubjectivity – both in typical development and in pathologies –, and on our emotional self-understanding. Focus on each of these dimensions provides a more detailed understanding of what emotions actually are and of how they guide our lives.

Within this framework, papers have been selected to contribute to one of the following sections:

- *Theories of Emotions*

What are emotions? What relationships do they entertain with perception, thought, and rationality on the one hand, and with their bodily and social expressions on the other? The aim of this section is to focus on these topics, trying to contribute to the contemporary debate on the ontological and epistemological status of emotions (Frijda 1986, 1988; Goldie 2000; Nussbaum 2001; Prinz 2004; Whiting 2011) and on their role in our personal and social life (Gallagher 2001, Zahavi 2014).

- *Emotions, Morality, and Political Theory*

The debate in morality and in political theory on whether emotions do and should play a role in our decision-making has been crucial for centuries. New life has been given to this debate by the general renaissance of emotional theories linked in particular to psychological and social research. The questions guiding this section are: What emotional constructs or abilities – if any – play a role in our moral and political understanding of ourselves, of others, and of the world surrounding us? What consequences can derive from an emotional understanding of morality and political theory – that is, are emotions a good candidate for explaining them? What specific emotions – if any – constitute a touchstone for political and moral decision-making? Are emotions – or should they be – the only mechanism to pass moral and political judgment or is there or should there be something else too?

- *Emotions, Language, and Hate Speech*

The debate on hate speech and slurs underlines how language can convey emotions and phobias as well as bring about negative emotions on the target of derogatory language. Moreover, it focuses on the evaluative properties of slurs and derogatives. The guiding questions for this section are: What are slurs and hate speech? What kind of evaluative properties – if any – do slurs have? What kind of emotional, psychological, and societal consequences do slurs and hate speech have? Should we regulate their usage by limiting freedom of speech?

- *Emotions and Intersubjectivity - Typical Development and Pathologies*

Developmental research has pointed to the emotional environment in which a child grows up as an indicator of how capable he or she would later be to enter in relation to others and to understand them (Kohut 1977; Stern 1990; 1985; Hofer 2006; 1981; Schore 1994; Bornemark 2003). Emotions and intersubjectivity seem to be strongly linked from a developmental perspective. Thus, on the one hand, this section elaborates on this relation. On the other hand, this section focuses also on the relationship between emotions, emotional regulation, and pathologies – such as, Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Dieter Lohmar (Husserl-Archiv der Universität zu Köln) opens the section *Theories of emotions* with his invited paper “Emotions as a Multi-modal System of Representation in Non-linguistic Thinking”. In this paper, Lohmar claims that emotions can carry meaning, evaluations, knowledge, experience and sometimes also plans for the future. For this reason, he believes they can function as part of non-linguistic thinking. He thus investigates the function of emotions as an important part of an effective system of thinking and deciding that does not use the concepts of language but visual scenes combined with feelings.

In her invited paper, “Is the Perceptual Model of Emotions Still A Good Competitor? A Small Phenomenology of Feeling”, Roberta De Monticelli (Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan) defends a version of the Perceptual Model of feeling, according to which feeling is the mode of presence of axiological aspects of reality, or values. After considering the objections to

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this Model, she presents an intentional analysis of feeling as the core of all emotions, more generally of all the phenomena of affective life, for which she proposes a taxonomy. She also presents a special phenomenology of the consciousness that feels and of the degrees of intuitive cognition of values which may be distinguished in it. Finally, she reconsiders the objections to the Perceptual Model in order to make sense of them, showing the extent to which they are valid, and the way to overcome them.

In “The Rationalities of Emotion”, Cecilea Mun (Independent Scholar) argues that emotions are rational in-themselves and that they are also instrumentally rational, epistemically rational, and evaluatively rational. After discussing what it means for emotions to be rational or irrational in-themselves, she proposes a criterion for the ontological rationality of emotions. Finally, she discusses some of the implications of this account.

In his paper “Emotional Intelligence as an Intellectual Virtue: Theoretical Analysis and Empirical Assessment”, Paul Poenicke (University of Buffalo) claims that virtue theory has long recognized the significance of emotion for cognition, yet little philosophical research has been dedicated to identifying an intellectual virtue related to emotion. According to the author, applying recent work in virtue epistemology reveals emotional intelligence (EI) to be an intellectual virtue. People who score high in EI better attend to epistemically-significant features of the environment, which could explain the significance of stakes for knowledge attribution. While testing did not confirm higher EI with stakes sensitivity (the hypothesis), study methods, including stakes vignettes, inadvertently caused the hypothesis to be disconfirmed.

The fifth paper of this section “Affectivity and Self-Displacement in Stein’s Early Phenomenology. On the Role of Self-Experience in Empathy” by Elisa Magrì (University College Dublin) focuses on the role of bodily self-displacement in Stein’s account of empathy, pointing out its relevance in the general dimension of affectivity. According to the author, Stein grounds empathy on a dynamic model of embodied self-experience, which shares significant similarities with Varela & Depraz’s neurophenomenology. However, Magrì argues that Stein’s view of empathy cannot be reduced to a naturalized phenomenological sense and that bodily self-displacement is pre-condition of a more complex disposition towards others as is in line with Ratcliffe’s theory of radical empathy.

Sandy Berkovski (Bilkent University) closes the section with his paper “A naturalist View of Humiliation”. The author argues that a naturalist analysis of humiliation begins with the notion of social interaction, a public encounter with other people. Interactions are an essential element in cooperation, a vital condition of survival and well-being. In the course of interaction, the person presents himself or herself as someone possessing the qualities necessary for successful cooperation. An act of humiliation is designed to inflict damage on the agent’s self-presentation. Any such damage would be a sign that the agent is not successful in conducting the given interaction. Such damage would tend to decrease of cooperative value of the humiliated individual and to decrease his or her chances of survival and reproduction.

The invited paper “Straight and Twisted Self-deception” by Anna Elisabetta Galeotti (University of Eastern Piedmont “Amedeo Avogadro”) opens the section *Emotions, Morality, and Political Theory*. The paper analyzes two different forms of self-deception – straight and twisted ones – claiming that they are both actual cases of self-deception, even though the way to account for them is not a unitary one, as in Mele. The paper critically examines the claim that in twisted self-deception the motivational state of the subject is dominated by emotions. Galeotti, thus, proposes an alternative explanation of self-deception in which emotions – together with wishes – play a role in both types of self-deception.

In his invited paper “Moral Emotion, Autonomy and the ‘Extended Mind’”, Edward Harcourt

(Oxford University, Keble College Oxford) considers a ‘micro’ thesis on shame and guilt and a ‘macro’ thesis on self-regulation. According to the former thesis, shame and guilt are equally other-dependent. Moreover, because other-dependence in either emotion is not a mark of heteronomy, neither emotion is more characteristic of a well-functioning moral consciousness. As for the ‘macro’ thesis, the author argues that the other-dependent view of self-regulation usually ascribed to children can also be found in adults. So that, if one assumes that only the moral consciousness of typical adults can be well-functioning, then there is all the more reason to think that other-dependence and a well-functioning moral consciousness can go together. If other-dependence can generally be a characteristic of our self-regulatory mechanisms when they function well – the paper’s ‘macro’ thesis –, then there is all the more reason to accept the paper’s ‘micro’ thesis – that other-dependence can characterize the well-functioning of both shame and guilt. The conclusion is that heteronomy lies not in the fact of other-dependence but in the nature of the dependence.

In her paper “Caring about an Ethics of Care: A New Dimension”, Maria Giovanna Bevilacqua (University of Italian Switzerland) wonders whether ethics of care could provide a useful tool to understand some of the contemporary issues in our societies. In order to do so, she focuses on some themes that ethics of care underlines – namely, the responsiveness of the moral subject for others’ needs and the difference between concrete other and generalized other. Gian Paolo Terravecchia’s (University of Padua) paper – “Social Stances, Emotions and the Importance of Fear” – presents five main social stances: to refuse, to suffer, to accept, to assent, and to make something one’s own. According to the author, they all depend on different types of relationship between an interior attitude and an exterior manifestation. The second main contribution of the paper consists in a discussion of fear and its relationships to social stances. Studying emotions helps to stress the similarities and the differences between social stances and emotions, and among social stances themselves. The paper gives an example of how ethics can be enlightened by the tools of social philosophy.

Robin Jeshion (University of Southern California) opens the section *Emotions, Language, and Hate Speech* with her invited paper “Slur Creation, Bigotry Formation: the Power of Expressivism”. In this paper, Jeshion presents two novel problems to be added in the current debate on slurs. The *Slur Creation Problem*: How do terms come to be slurs? An expression ‘e’ is introduced into the language. What are the mechanisms by which ‘e’ comes to possess properties distinctive of slurs? The *Bigotry Formation Problem*: Speakers’ uses of slurs are a prime mechanism of bigotry formation, not solely bigotry perpetuation. With a use of a slur, how are speakers able to introduce new bigoted attitudes and actions toward targets? She concludes by arguing that expressivism offers powerful resources to solve the problems. In his paper “Slurs: Semantic Content, Expressive Content and Social Generics”, Federico Cella (Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan) discusses the thesis that the offensiveness of slurs is related to the semantic encoding of stereotypes in their meaning. As noticed by Robin Jeshion, the stereotypical strategies do not seem to provide a satisfactory analysis of slurs’ functional traits. For this reason, Cella proposes to modify her view by making a distinction between two offensive dimensions of slurs: a negative expressive component encoded in the semantic content and directed toward a certain group of individuals, and the social generics related to that group conveyed as conversational implicatures.

In her paper “Not All Slurs are Equal”, Mihaela Popa-Wyatt (LOGOS, University of Barcelona) argues that, in contrast with the standard view that slurs convey contempt based on group-membership, slurs are not a unitary group. In order to defend her thesis, she analyses two dimensions of variation among derogatives supporting the thesis that contempt based on group-membership doesn’t cover all the data.

In the fourth paper of this section – “Building Evaluation into Language” –, Bianca Cepollaro (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa and Institut Jean Nicod, Paris) spells out the conditions for a uniform analysis of thick terms and slurs. The main claim is that thick terms and slurs convey evaluations via presupposition and represent a device through which language implicitly conveys linguistically encoded evaluations.

In their paper “Slurs and Negation”, Francesca Panzeri (University of Milan-Bicocca) and Simone Carrus (Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan) present the results of two experimental studies. The first study aims at establishing whether the offensive component of slurs exhibits nondisplaceability. Data show that the derogatory content survives in conditionals and questions (supporting a pragmatic approach), and diminishes in indirect reports (in line with presuppositional accounts). Surprisingly, the offensiveness of slurs results almost nullified in negated sentences. In the second study, the authors explored the hypothesis that negated slurs were rated as not offensive because the negation was interpreted as metalinguistic.

“Silencing Speech with Pornography” by Laura Caponetto (Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan) closes this section. The aim of this paper is to offer a map of the dynamics through which pornography may silence women’s illocutions. Drawing on Searle’s speech act theory, the author takes illocutionary forces as sets of conditions for success. According to her thesis, the different types of silencing originate from the hearer’s missed recognition of a specific component of the force of the speaker’s act. She concludes by suggesting another kind of silencing produced by the failure to acknowledge the speaker’s words as serious (*seriousness silencing*).

The final section of this volume, *Emotions and Intersubjectivity – Typical Development and Pathologies*, is opened by the invited contribution by Thomas Fuchs (University of Heidelberg): “Intercorporeality and Interaffectivity”. According to phenomenological and enactive approaches, human sociality does not start from isolated individuals, but from intercorporeality and interaffectivity. To elaborate this concept, the paper introduces a concept of embodied affectivity, regarding emotions as a circular interaction of the embodied subject and the situation with its affective affordances. This leads to a concept of embodied interaffectivity as a process of coordinated interaction, bodily resonance, and ‘mutual incorporation’, which provides the basis for primary empathy. Finally, developmental accounts point out that these empathic capacities are also based on an intercorporeal memory that is acquired in early childhood.

In their invited article “Emotion Dysregulation in Borderline Personality Disorder: A Literature Review”, Cesare Maffei (Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan) and Viola Fusi (Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan) propose a review of the literature with the aim of describing the state of the art related to emotion dysregulation in Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) patients and to illustrate a possible descriptive model. Besides the absence of a general consensus, the authors claim that there is a general agreement in understanding emotional dysregulation both as affective instability and as a frequent recourse to dysfunctional regulation strategies. The latter is what emotion dysregulation is from an operational point of view. The descriptive model explained in this paper is a possible way to bridge the conceptual and operative views of emotion dysregulation in BPD.

The paper by Flavia Felletti (University of Barcelona) – “What Autism Can Tell Us about the Link between Empathy and Moral Reasoning?” – discusses the relationship between empathy and moral reasoning among people with autism. By discussing the specific deficit that can be found in autism and by providing some experimental data, the author supports the thesis that, unlike typically developed, people with autism have difficulties in perspective-taking.

Moreover, she concludes that studies on autism do not help to assess the influence of the affective components of empathy on moral reasoning.

In her paper “Extended Affectivity as the Cognition of Primary Intersubjectivity”, Laura Candiotti (University of Edinburgh) explains why the distributed cognition model is the most convenient to understand the collective and the subjective dimension of extended affectivity. She proposes extended affectivity as the cognition of primary intersubjectivity after considering both the primordial affectivity approach and the extended emotions theory. She claims that the novelty of extended affectivity as the cognition of primary intersubjectivity consists in the recognition of the protocognitive valence of affectivity.

The last paper of this section – “On the constructive role of conflicting emotions: The case of early mother-child interaction and its relevance for the study of social behavior” – by Roberta Patalano (Parthenope University) defines a preliminary basis for a dialogue between philosophy and psychoanalysis on the topic of emotional conflict. The author argues that the interaction between mother and child in the latter’s first year of life represents a privileged vertex of observation for the positive effects that can be produced by coping with emotional ambivalence, both on the quality of the relationship and on the development of the child. Furthermore, tolerance for emotional conflict not only contributes to the development of the Self in the infant, but it also favors the acquisition of prosocial attitudes, such as the capacity for concern, authenticity, and creativity.

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