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Editor's Introduction: How Should We Think about Co-Occurring Emotions?

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Emotion theory tends to be concerned with emotions as if we ever only experienced one emotion at a time. It also tends to ignore, or at least downplay, emotions' temporal extension, on the assumption that our descriptions of them fit equally at all points of their unfolding. In other words, we are being told a story in which an emotion is a discrete and isolated event nicely delimited by the situations that give rise to it, on one side, and the behaviour or set of behaviours it tends to provoke, on the other. Of course, nobody denies that an emotion may take time to unfold, but the assumption seems to be that it stays largely the same throughout this period of time. This is an unjustified assumption, as the now extensive literature on emotion regulation shows (e.g. Gross 2014a). For we often modulate our emotions through various means. Most famously, we down-regulate emotions that feel bad, such as sadness, anger, or pain. Less researched, but no doubt equally important, is the *up-regulation* of positive emotions, such as joy or pride. What happens in these instances is that the emotion is modified by some, usually effortful, intervention on the subject's side. This might consist in re-evaluating the significance of its cause (cognitive re-evaluation), suppressing its expression, changing one's attentional focus, or modifying the eliciting situation (Gross 2014b). Most of these methods are taken right out of the Stoic playbook (see, e.g., "On Anger" in Seneca ca. 40/2020). Eastern religions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, have other suggestions for a therapy of emotions, such as making oneself experience "an opposite" emotion (McRay 2015).

Now, it might be thought that we modify our emotions under more-or-less extraordinary circumstances, during which we exert real effort, so that, most of the time, they run their usual course in orderly fashion. This is belied by the following facts. People working on emotion regulation find it useful to stress that regulation can be either conscious or unconscious (e.g., Eisenberg, Hofer, Sulik, and Spinrad 2014), suggesting that it is much more common than suggested above. Psychiatrists insist that emotion regulation is central to mental health (e.g. Berking and Wupperman 2012; Menefee 2022), and some empathy researchers have argued that good emotion regulation is needed for empathy to lead to prosocial action (Spinrad and Eisenberg 2014). Moreover, Jamil Zaki (2014) has collected an impressive amount of data indicating that empathy is motivated, and that people use a variety of means to *avoid* or *reduce* the experience of empathy for those who suffer. Additionally, there is much evidence that doctors and nurses downregulate their empathic response to pain more or less automatically (Ayledahl et al. 2011; Gleichgerrcht and Decety 2014; Hunt, Denieffe, and Gooney 2017; Neumann et al. 2011).

But what this issue focuses on is not the temporal dimension of emotions as such, but on how isolated they actually are. This question turns out not to be altogether separate from that concerning emotions' temporal dimension. Why? Because an overall emotional experience appears to be a composite result of what other emotions are experienced at the same time, or during intervals in the unfolding of an emotion. For instance, empathic distress and sympathy are almost invariably experienced at the same time when someone is presented with a person in need (Batson, Early, and Salvarini 1997; Carrera et al. 2013; Grynberg and López-Pérez 2018). Nonetheless, they are characterised as quite different emotions, not just in their affective qualities, but also with respect to their motivational effects. What happens at the level of psychological theorising with respect to empathic distress and sympathy is quite similar to the treatment of shame and guilt in the psychological literature. Essentially, one emotion is charged with all, or as much as possible of, the negatively valenced, morally and behaviourally problematic aspects, and the other is charged with the positive. Thus, empathic distress is typically described as *personal* and as leading to egoistic motivation, even though the evidence we do have suggests that people who experience distress at another's distress experience an equal amount of distress for the subject and for themselves (Batson, Early, and Salvarini 1997). Sympathy is the warm-hearted and concerned counterpoint to the worried and stressful affect just described, and can be morally and behaviourally beneficial; it leads to helping the person in distress, which is often the morally right thing to do.

When it comes to guilt and shame, the situation is much the same. These are emotions that are very often experienced at the same time, and which are difficult to pry apart (see, e.g., Tangney et al. 1996). Hence the many papers offering a distinction, particularly among philosophers. Psychologists, on the other hand, have settled, more or less uncritically, on the following. Shame is a problematic emotion affecting a person's sense of their own value, and guilt is a prosocial emotion concerning an agent's *actions*. Consequently, shame is operationalised as an almost exclusively *negative* emotion in the most commonly used measures of guilt and shame, TOSCA (Tangney, Wagner, Dearing, and Gramzow 2000; for a critique see, e.g., Maibom 2019). Guilt, by contrast, contains all of the positive aspects of the emotional episode, namely in motivating the person to repair and in being less aversive than shame. We therefore have lots of papers showing that shame is highly problematic and guilt very good. But this could not be otherwise, given the measure used. I don't need to tell you why that is problematic. When shame is more positively construed—and not as an extremely strong aversive emotion, which leads to retreat or reactive aggression—it turns out that the psychological data suggests that it leads to some of the more positive behaviours that studies using TOSCA would only ascribe to 'guilt' (Berndsen and McGarty 2012; Berndsen and Gausel 2015; Fessler 2004; De Hooge, Breugelmans, and Zeelenberg 2008; De Hooge, Zeelenberg, and Breugelmans 2010).

All of this strongly suggests that either the boundary between shame and guilt, on the one hand, and empathic distress and sympathy, on the other, is much more fluid than current characterisations lead us to believe (*and* that we need to be very careful in philosophising about such emotions not to rely uncritically on the psychological research). Recognising this interesting fact encourages us to ask new questions, such as “What effect does the fact that I experience *both* guilt and shame have for each of these emotions?” “Does their co-occurrence *alter* how each are experienced, how the subject comes to think about the relevant action or herself, and what effect, if any, does it have for any subsequent motivation?” Or “Is guilt felt with shame just the same as guilt felt without shame?”

One reason to think that co-experienced emotions might have unique effects of their own is that it seems that if people experience just sympathy for someone in need, but little or no distress at their distressing situation or their distressed feelings, they are less likely to help that person (Lockwood, Seara-Cardoso, and Viding 2014;

Cameron and Payne 2011). Conversely, people who experience more distress alongside their sympathy are *more* likely to help people in need (Cameron et al. 2019; Barraza and Zak 2009). When that distress reaches a certain level, however, helping behaviour starts falling off and more selfish action increases if it is easier than helping (Batson 2011). It is, therefore, not at all unlikely that the prosocial effects that we are trying to ascribe to *one* emotion is, in fact, the result of the experience of *two* emotions. Moreover, some evidence suggests that the way the two interact is also rather consequential for subsequent motivations. Distress can be experienced quite strongly in the beginning or the middle of an empathic episode, but if it is the predominant emotion towards the end, the chances of the agent helping the person in need plummet. If, on the other hand, sympathy has the upper hand towards the end, then there are very good chances that the person will help (Carrera et al. 2013).

This second issue of *Passion* addresses the issue of how to think of emotions in light of their co-occurrence. The issue is (mostly) the final product of talks given at an EPSSE pre-conference workshop in Graz, which I organised in June 2022. We start with an article by Christiana Werner, who argues that the existence of concurrent emotions—emotions experienced simultaneously—complicates the task for empathisers. Typically, people tend to just empathise with one emotion. But people often experience different—sometimes apparently opposing—emotions. She gives the example of Desdemona from Jeffrey Eugenides’s *Middlesex*, who, upon finding her husband dead on the kitchen floor, experiences both immeasurable grief *and* relief. This challenges the idea that we can generally reach phenomenal knowledge of others through empathy, since the reproduction of such emotions would be a very difficult task indeed. Instead, Werner argues, it is really phenomenal *understanding* we aim for in empathy, i.e., an understanding that is *close enough*.

Werner’s paper is followed by one by Edward Harcourt, who wrestles with the distinction between shame and guilt and their respective connections with “the morality system” (following Bernard Williams 1985). As he notes, the difference between the two is much exaggerated. Nonetheless, he believes that, whereas guilt has a connection with the morality system, shame, when properly analysed, does not.

Laura Candiotta engages deeply with the diaries and letters of Etty Hillesum, a Dutch-Jewish woman who eventually perished in the camps. What is special about this woman is her ability to feel contentment at her suffering with other victims of the Nazi terror. We can see the willingness to feel for others in awful situations as being ennobling, Candiotta insists. Her claim is well supported by the empathy literature, which suggests that people spend a good amount of effort trying to *avoid* experiencing empathy for those who suffer (e.g. Zaki 2014), and when they do manage to do so, they are less willing to help those in need (Cameron, Harris, and Payne 2016; Cameron and Payne 2011). It is therefore plausible that *choosing* to experience the suffering of others is moral progress of sorts, assuming that it leads to something other than pure suffering. And here the combination of contentment and empathic distress is very promising. For one of the standard arguments one sees *against* empathising with people who suffer is that it just creates more suffering and might lead to bad psychological outcomes (see, e.g., Bloom 2016). However, an ability to be content in one’s empathic or compassionate relating to others is yet another example of how taking concurrent emotions into account can make a real difference to theorising about emotions.

Aleksandra Hernandez uses reactions to contrasting or conflicting emotions as a mirror to what she calls “the epistemic landscape.” Those whom the landscape favours, she argues, quickly resolve whatever emotional conflicts arise and are in any case prone to experiencing emotions that prevent them from re-examining the presuppositions of this landscape, which is in their favour. Oppressed groups, such as women and other factual minorities, on the other hand are more likely to experience epistemic anxiety as a result of these contrasting

emotions, and that, in turn, makes them better knowers. The way this unlevel epistemic playing field works in practice is illustrated by an analysis of Joy Williams' short story *Shepherd*.

Katharina Anna Sodoma examines co-occurring emotions through the lens of what she calls meta-emotions. These are emotions directed at other emotions. For instance, we might be embarrassed about loving a schlocky movie, angry that we are ashamed about being different, or happy that we are finally able to feel the sadness that we have bottled up for so long. Experiences such as these are very common, Sodoma insists, but have not received a lot of attention by emotion researchers so far. Her focus is specifically on affective empathy. Here, these emotions create challenges for the empathiser when it is the target who experiences them. More interesting, perhaps, are the ways in which the empathiser's emotional reactions to her empathic affect opens up for rather profound self-reflection and other-directed assessment.

Finally, Ditte Marie Munch-Juriscic argues against the idea that we are typically aware of what we feel and why we feel it. Instead, she presents a persuasive case for emotional "disorientation" being the norms. This is exemplified by a common observation that we are often able to explain our emotions in quite disparate ways and that those ways often change with time as we find new interpretations better suited for our current projects and ideas. Like many others in this issue, Munch-Juriscic uses empathy as an example. She critiques Dan Batson's framework by showing how it fails to account for a soldier who's suffered moral injury.

I hope you find this issue intriguing and that it will provoke you to think more about how co-occurrent emotions should change the way we think about emotions.

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