

International workshop: Affective states and well-being
Maison des Sciences de l'Homme - Amphithéâtre 220
14-15 November 2019

Program

Thursday November, 14th

9H15-9H30: Welcome address

9H30-10H30: Daniel Haybron: *"Happiness and the Metaphysics of Affect"*

10H30-11H30: Julien Deonna & Fabrice Teroni: *"What's Good In Emotions for Those Who Have Them?"*

11H45-14H: Lunch Break

14H-15H: Mauro Rossi & Christine Tappolet: *"Wellbeing as fitting happiness"*

15H-16H: Samuel Lepine: *"Moods, happiness, and well-being"*

16H-16H30: Pause

16H30-17H30: Vincent Boyer: *"Justice, Emotion and Well-Being"*

Friday November, 15th

9H30-10H30: Anti Kauppinen : *"The Intentionality of happiness"*

10H30-11H30: Magalie Schor: *"A New Route Towards the Final Value of Emotions for Well-Being"*

11H45-14H: Lunch Break

14H-15H: Stéphane Lemaire : *"Which pro-attitude for subjectivism about well-being?"*

15H-16H: Antonin Broi: *"How Do Affective States Contribute to Well-Being? A Hedonistic Perspective"*

16H-16H30: Pause

16H30-17H30: Julien Claparède-Petitpierre : *"The cultural settings of individual affectivity : integration and well-being"*

Attendance is free and all are welcome !

Details

Although the philosophy of emotions and the philosophy of well-being have both undergone major developments in recent decades, they have rarely been addressed together. This is surprising, since affective states are closely linked with well-being and happiness. For example, having positive emotions or being in a good mood may be necessary for well-being. But what are the exact relations between these states? In order to answer this question, this workshop aims to examine the following issues:

- What is the nature of affective states such as emotions, moods and desires, and do they constitute a specific type of epistemic access to our well-being?
- Are affective states discrete causes or constituents of well-being?
- How do we distinguish between happiness and well-being? Is it possible to draw the distinction by appealing to affective states only or do we have to appeal to other psychological states as well?
- Can we measure well-being by focusing on affective states? Are there better measures, independent of affective states?

Organising committee: Julien Deonna (University of Geneva), Stéphane Lemaire (University of Rennes), Samuel Lepine (UCA), & Fabrice Teroni (University of Geneva)

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Daniel Haybron
Saint Louis University

"Happiness and the Metaphysics of Affect"

In earlier work I defended an “emotional state” theory of happiness, on which happiness (and unhappiness) are identified with a person’s emotional condition. A key aspect of this view that distinguishes it from hedonism is the idea that one’s emotional condition is substantially dispositional: to be happy just is, at least in part, to be disposed in various ways (e.g., not prone to anxiety). But some aspects of this view remain unclear: what exactly does it mean to speak of a person’s “condition,” and is there a generic category of conditions to which happiness belongs? What is the significance of this point, if so? Is one’s emotional condition purely dispositional, or does it also include occurrent states? In this talk I examine these questions, suggesting that there is indeed a class of condition concepts, where conditions are one kind of state, and distinct from events. The ramifications for thinking about happiness and its significance are also explored.

Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni
Université de Genève

“What’s Good In Emotions for Those Who Have Them?”

In this talk, we are interested in whether emotions can have final prudential value for the individuals having them. Drawing from traditional and more recent objective list approaches to well-being, we focus on (dis)pleasure, knowledge, and virtue. Given their relations to such goods, can emotions be of final prudential value? The answer regarding (dis)pleasure is straightforward: the most convincing approaches to (dis)pleasures implies that emotions are specific types of (dis)pleasures. The answers regarding knowledge and virtue are much more complicated. As regards knowledge, we may think that emotions, being reactions to what we (seem to) know, are at best consequential on what is of final prudential value. We argue that this presupposes a controversial conception of knowledge and that, in any case, knowledge is just one final prudential value amongst others in the epistemic domain. As regards virtue, we may think that emotions, being manifestations of virtuous dispositions, are at best of derivative prudential value. We argue that this claim rests on the failure to appreciate that manifestations of dispositions sometimes are achievements, and that achievements are of final prudential value.

Mauro Rossi & Christine Tappolet
UQAM & Université de Montréal

“Wellbeing as fitting happiness”

This paper explores the relation between happiness and wellbeing. We start by considering happiness, understood as a psychological state. We argue that happiness is constituted by affective states such as emotions, moods and sensory pleasures and that all these affective states should be characterized as perceptual experiences of values. According to this account, happiness can be fitting or unfitting. It is fitting if and only if all the affective states that constitute it are fitting, where an affective state is fitting provided that it correctly represents the evaluative property it aims at. Next, we provide an account of wellbeing as fitting happiness. We defend three claims. The first is that, in light of our characterization of fitting happiness, wellbeing consists in a broadly positive affective experience of genuine values. The second is that, insofar as happiness is constituted by positive affective states, wellbeing consists in an experience of values that has a positive phenomenology. The third is that insofar as happiness is constituted by relatively central affective states, wellbeing consists in an experience of values that correspond to the individual's deepest evaluative commitments. Finally, we show how our theory captures the main insights of traditionally opposed theories of wellbeing, such as hedonism and eudaimonism, but in a way that avoids their shortcomings.

Samuel Lepine
Université Clermont Auvergne

“Moods, happiness, and well-being”

It is sometimes argued that happiness is an emotion (Mulligan, 2016; Goldman, 2017). On the other hand, some have argued that happiness is better conceived as an emotional condition, made of positive emotions and mood propensities (Haybron, 2008; Kauppinen, 2013). In this paper, I explore a middle way between these two positions, and claim that happiness is better understood as a mood. I argue on the one hand that most properties attributed to happiness as an emotion make better sense when happiness is conceived as a mood. And I suggest that it is not necessary, if we are to understand happiness in its most basic sense, to include mood propensities in its definition. In a second step, I suggest that happy moods are also the main constituents of our well-being. In order to defend this view, I argue in favour of an attitudinal view of moods, according to which moods are specific evaluative attitudes directed at our relationship with the world. I confront this view with some obvious objections it faces, both from the literature on moods and from the literature on well-being. Finally, I will turn to the benefits of this approach for our conception of well-being.

Vincent Boyer
Université Paris 4

“Justice, Emotion and Well-Being”

A recent strategy put in place in order to show that the possession of virtues has a positive impact on a virtuous agent's well-being exploits an emotional account of virtue. My paper aims to focus on the very first premise of this argumentative strategy, *i.e.* its conception of what a virtue is. Indeed, I want to know if this defence of the relation between virtue and well-being, which exploits a specific emotion theory, really works for the whole set of virtues available for humanity, since the virtue of justice does not seem to correspond to a specific emotion to regulate.

Anti Kauppinen
University of Helsinki

“The Intentionality of happiness”

Happiness is an affective condition. Many of its constituents are positive emotions, which almost everyone now agrees are intentional or world-directed. In this paper, I examine how these emotions and related moods present or construe our situation and ourselves. This should give us a better understanding of the causes, constituents, and measures of happiness.

Magalie Schor
Université de Genève

*“A New Route Towards the Final Value of
Emotions for Well-Being”*

What role do emotions play in leading a good life? Do emotions have a final value for well-being? In this talk, I will suggest that the key to answer those questions is to focus on the epistemic value of emotions. According to popular views in contemporary philosophy of emotions, emotions are world-oriented affective evaluations and, in that respect, give the subject an epistemic access to the value properties instantiated in the subject's environment. In reflecting on virtue epistemologist's account of knowledge as a successful epistemic performance, and especially on Ernest Sosa's model of performance normativity, I will argue further that emotions, when some conditions are met, amount to instances of a kind of affective evaluative knowledge. According to this hypothesis, emotions are not only potential *contributors* to knowledge (by providing justification to evaluative beliefs for instance) but rather *constituents* of a kind of affective evaluative knowledge. This could thereby offer a new route for theorists of well-being to argue in favor of the *final* – versus merely *instrumental* – value of emotions in leading a good life.

Stéphane Lemaire
Université de Rennes 1

“Which pro-attitude for subjectivism about well-being?”

Subjectivism about well-being claims that an object contributes to one's well-being to the extent that one has a certain pro-attitude towards it under some conditions to be specified. In this presentation, I wonder which type of pro-attitude the subjectivist should pick for her analysis. Several options are on the table. In particular, it has been suggested that the pro-attitude is one of desiring (Sidgwick, Brandt, Railton, Heathwood), an attitude of valuing (Tiberius) or is a belief about what is good for one (Dorsey). I will argue that the relevant pro-attitude is one of valuing although my understanding of this pro-attitude is completely different from other existing proposals, in particular because my understanding of the attitude of valuing does not include any normative consideration. To this extent, my proposal will have some proximity with the idea that desire is the relevant pro-attitude. However, I show that there is a whole set of reasons to reject the latter in favour of my proposal.

Antonin Broi
Sorbonne Université

*“How Do Affective States Contribute to Well-Being?
A Hedonistic Perspective”*

It is commonly thought that well-being is constituted, at least partly, by some affective states, such as emotions or moods. Why is this so? One could argue that it is the pleasantness and unpleasantness of affective states that explain why they matter for well-being. In this talk, I would like to clarify and tentatively defend this hedonistic view. I will try to show that, once the nature of pleasure is correctly understood, it can go a long way in grounding the contribution of affective states to well-being.

According to hedonism, well-being just is the balance of pleasure over unpleasure. But what exactly is pleasure? A traditional account has it that pleasure is a sensation-like quality of our experiences and that episodes of sensory pleasure, such as smelling a rose or having an orgasm, are paradigmatic psychological states that take part in the hedonistic calculus. This version of hedonism has legitimately been criticized. It overly restricts the scope of pleasure, and as a result puts too much emphasis on transient and psychologically superficial states.

To better account for the variety of mental states that intuitively appear to be pleasant, one should insist that pleasure is not exhausted by its sensory manifestations. Different options are available, like desire-based theories (e.g. Heathwood 2007), hedonic tone theories (e.g. Crisp 2006, Smuts 2011), or propositional attitude theories (e.g. Feldman 2004), but they all lead us to the conclusion that pleasure can occur in a variety of affective states. Given that pleasure is often considered as intrinsically good, this would suggest that the hedonistic view can go a long way in accounting for the contribution of affective states to well-being.

I will then attempt to show that the other aspects of affective states that may be thought to contribute to well-being can also be reduced to pleasure.

This is for example the case of valence. In psychology, valence is taken to be what distinguishes positive emotions like joy or hope from negative emotions like sadness or anger. One major interpretation of valence is straightforwardly hedonistic: the valence of an affective state is its pleasantness. But the case for the reduction of valence to pleasure has been disputed, since other accounts of valence are available (see for example Teroni 2011). For example, according to the action-tendency account, an affective state is positively valenced iff subjects tend to have an appetitive behavior toward the object of the state. According to the value representation account, an affective state is positively valenced iff the object of the state is somehow represented as good (roughly endorsed by Teroni 2011, Carruthers 2018). One could think that the existence of such alternative accounts undermines the case for the reduction of valence to pleasure. This is not necessarily the case, because pleasure itself has been subject to similar accounts in terms of action-tendencies, desire or value. This may imply that the same mental state could underlie both pleasure and valence, and thus that the contribution of valence to well-being could be said to be hedonistic as well.

Apart from valence, affective states have other aspects that may be thought to contribute to well-being. For example, Haybron (2008) defends the idea that emotional states of "attunement", like confidence or imperturbability, constitute a dimension of happiness (and thus partly constitute well-being). However, when these emotional states are described in more detail, it appears, or so I will argue, that attunement and other such aspects can also be reduced to pleasure.

Julien Claparède-Petitpierre
Université Clermont Auvergne

“The cultural settings of individual affectivity: integration and well-being”

In *Naven* – an anthropologic monograph on the Iatmul people of New-Guinea published in 1936 – Gregory Bateson used the term “ethos” as an analytic tool meant to describe “*a culturally 13oeur13rdized system of the instincts and emotions of the individuals.*” This statement turned out to be the beginning of a life-long enquiry on developmental and social psychology. Few years later, while working on *Balinese Characters* with Margaret Mead, Bateson noticed that early socialization was crucial in order to understand the cultural settings of individual affectivity. Being influenced by psycho-physiologic works of Henry Head and Fredrik Bartlett as well as American “Culture and Personality” research program, Bateson began to consider the initial social regulation of infants’ emotional expressivity as a proper coordination of emotional life. In urging and smothering different reactions and attitudes of the toddler and the young child, early education appears to be the matrix of the forthcoming adult emotional life. Considering that cultural injunctions constitute an underlying logical system constantly active in the individual affective life, Bateson undertook to track down pathological paradoxes in cultural settings such as those he referred to as “double-binds”, a term he himself coined. He concluded that emotional life, far from being an impulsive chaos, is a logical grid governed by “the algorithms of the heart” – an expression meant to refer to the French philosopher Blaise Pascal. Thus, if “le 13oeur a ses raisons”, then emotional life should avoid contradictions and logical fallacies in order to provide well-being. Hence, Bateson came to the idea that an inquiry concerning the logical consistency of implicit cultural rules could have a therapeutic effect on people suffering mental disorders such as schizophrenia.