Review of Philosophy and Psychology (2021) 12:311–327
https://doi.org/10.1007/s13164-020-00480-y

Reason to be Cheerful

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Published online: 1 June 2020

Abstract
This paper identifies a tension between the commitment to forming rationally justified emotions and the happy life. To illustrate this tension I begin with a critical evaluation of the positive psychology technique known as 'gratitude training'. I argue that gratitude training is at odds with the kind of critical monitoring that several philosophers have claimed is regulative of emotional rationality. More generally, critical monitoring undermines exuberance, an attitude that plays a central role in contemporary models of the happy life. Thus, prominent notions of what it takes to maintain emotion rationality and what it takes to maintain happiness are in tension. To resolve this tension, I argue that some people have good reason to depreciate critical monitoring—even while maintaining the requirement of emotion rationality that we be sensitive to facts about how our concerns are faring.

Keywords Emotion · Rationality · Happiness · Well-being · Exuberance · Absorption

1 Introduction

It is commonly said that intelligence and happiness are in conflict. Famously, Mill explores the issue in *Utilitarianism* (1863/1993) and argues that intelligent people have greater opportunities for satisfaction. Recent psychological studies have also addressed the issue, with rather mixed results.[1] My focus in this paper is somewhat narrower. I want to determine whether

[1]For instance, Nikolaev and McGee (2016) find that individuals with a greater verbal intelligence than their peers report higher levels of happiness. Similarly, Kanazawa (2014) finds that greater intelligence correlates with greater stability in happiness levels, itself correlated with a greater mean average. Yet Penney et al. (2015) find that verbal intelligence is a predictor of worry and depression while Zettergren and Bergman (2014) find that though individuals with high IQ adjust better in adolescence (mostly because of school achievement) they report moderately worse life satisfaction in adulthood. I suspect that these mixed results could be mitigated if the concepts of both well-being and intelligence were straightened out, but I will not pursue this issue here.

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there is a conflict between the happy life and emotional rationality. This is a question that has very rarely been subject to philosophical analysis.[2] Yet it is here that intelligence and well-being may most directly come into contact, given the plausible assumption that intelligent people like to maximise rationally justified mental states.[3]

On the basis of both empirical evidence and philosophical considerations, I argue that there is indeed a tension between emotional rationality and well-being. That is, dispositions constitutive of well-being and emotional rationality, while not mutually exclusive, tend to pull in opposing directions. The reason for this is that pursuing and maintaining emotional rationality places certain cognitive demands upon us that tend to undermine an exuberant approach to life, and there is good reason to think that exuberance is a major component of the happy life.

Given the cliché that well-being and intelligence are at odds, the diagnosis of a tension between well-being and emotional rationality is unlikely to be mind-blowing, though it is worth clarifying where the conflict lies. What should hopefully be more surprising is how I then overcome the conflict. In the last section of this paper, I argue that once we properly understand the concern-relative nature of emotional rationality, there will be some people for whom it is maximally emotionally rational to be exuberant. This is the case even when we focus not on prudential or strategic rationality, but on the kind of epistemic rationality where we are sensitive to facts about how our concerns are faring.

2 Gratitude Training

I want to begin my argument by critically examining a psychological intervention known as 'gratitude training'. This technique raises certain worries that serve as a useful illustration of issue I am getting at. Following this discussion, I will generalise my worries to identify the wider tension between well-being and emotional rationality.

Gratitude training is one of the flagship techniques of the contemporary positive psychology movement (Bono et al. 2004; Seligman et al. 2005). The technique requires that each evening before you go to sleep, you simply write down a list of things for which you are grateful. There are different recommendations about how many items you are supposed to list, and the amount of contemplation required when making your list, but one of the key advantages of the technique is that it is fairly liberal and easy to maintain (Geraghty et al. 2010a; Seligman et al. 2005). It is also clear that the positive psychologists work with a broad notion of what counts as meriting gratitude. We are not limited to cases where you receive a favour from another person. Acceptable items include all kinds of things that make a positive difference: sunny days, health, job security and so on. Moreover, the individual is not typically encouraged to dwell on the contingency of these benefits. Accordingly, in a review by Wood et al. (2010), the authors define the kind of gratitude encouraged as "a life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in life."

The results of this simple technique are apparently dramatic. Researchers observe significantly improved reports of well-being, less depression and worrying, (Geraghty et al. 2010b; Seligman et al. 2005; Watkins et al. 2003) as well as improvements in hours of sleep and

[2] The only other study I am aware of is Kahane 2011, which I discuss below.

[3] I will use the terms 'happy life' and 'well-being' interchangeably in this paper. Note the distinction between this long-term state and episodic states of happiness.

refreshment upon waking (Emmons and McCullough 2003). One of the studies in Emmons and McCullough (2003) even finds improved functioning in people with neurodegenerative diseases. Most notably, the effects of gratitude training are reported to be robust, with benefits to well-being persisting in one study even after six months (Seligman et al. 2005). Moreover, the more intensely one engages in gratitude training, the more powerful the effect (Emmons and McCullough 2003).

How is gratitude training supposed to work? Naturally, there is some difficulty in establishing the causal processes involved, but there are several plausible hypotheses. The first and most obvious explanation is that gratitude training disposes the individual to pay more attention to the positive things that happen to them (cf. Rashid 2013: 987; Watkins et al. 2003; 449). For instance, the individual tends to make a mental note of positive matters in order to write about them later on. This leads to the more consistent stimulation of positive emotions. A second, related, hypothesis is that gratitude training prompts the individual to interpret situations and the behaviour of others as meriting some positive emotion (cf. Wood et al. 2008). Thus while the affective significance of a situation may be mixed, the individual is encouraged to see matters in a positive light. A third suggestion is that a grateful attitude can encourage a self-reinforcing behavioural strategy. If you are made more aware of the supportiveness of your social networks, you may be more likely to make use of these resources when you need them (Wood et al. 2010: 901). Thus grateful people may deal with their problems better. Moreover, by expressing gratitude, individuals may build the good will of other people towards them (McCullough et al. 2001: 261; Emmons and McCullough 2003: 386; Rashid 2013: 986).

On top of the above proposals, it is known that emotions generate mood-congruence biases. That is, it is easier to remember and attend to matters that reflect one's occurrent emotional state than ones that don't (Yiend 2009 provides a helpful meta-review of the various evidence). When suffering anxiety for instance, individuals are quicker to respond to stimuli that confirm feelings of vulnerability, and have a tendency to ignore or respond slower to disconfirming evidence (de Jong and Vroling 2013). In the same way, the stimulation of positive emotions will encourage the individual to discern or to recall scenarios that stimulate further positive emotions. In this way, gratitude training should be self-reinforcing.

Thus we have three or four different ways to account for the effectiveness of gratitude training. But all of these hypotheses have something in common. Note that even when appealing to behavioural strategies, the effectiveness of gratitude training on each hypothesis relies on a greater tendency to see the world as providing opportunities for positive emotions. This is where worries about rationality can get a foothold. Gratitude training functions by inculcating a cognitive bias towards noticing the positive in life. That is, you are manipulating the way you direct your attention such that the positive things stand out more. Attention is a limited resource. As a consequence, making the positive things stand out more entails making other matters recede into the background. Thus, gratitude training may encourage an individual to neglect matters that genuinely warrant anxious concern, indignation, or the recognition of loss.

A positivity bias may have further worrying consequences. There is evidence that positive emotions can make individuals prone to attribute success to their own efforts when this is not the case. This is known as the self-serving bias (see e.g. Jundt and Hinsz 2002; Ifcher and Zarghamee 2014). Negative moral consequences may also accrue. One study by Tan and

Forgas (2010) observed that in games where participants were in charge of allocating scarce resources, participants made to feel 'happy', either as a consequence of doing well on a test, or watching a comedy, tended to act more selfishly.

Finally, note that the acceptable items when engaging in gratitude training can include one's own abilities (Wood et al.: 891).[4] In this case, gratitude training could also generate what is known as the licensing effect. This is where establishing one's credentials as a good or moral person can lead to a relaxing of efforts to be good or moral later on. For example, in a study by Sachdeva et al. (2009) individuals encouraged to think about their positive traits donated one fifth as much to charity as those encouraged to think about their negative traits.

As with most findings in empirical psychology, the significance of these worrying effects may well be revised or refined in light of further evidence. Even if the effects are firmly established, they may turn out to be mild or transitory. We also don't know to what extent gratitude training might exacerbate such effects, or whether there are ways to refine gratitude training so that these effects are avoided. For instance, the kinds of items that are acceptable to list could be restricted to favours from other people. Yet, to the extent that positive psychologists promote this intervention, these potential side effects ought to be investigated. Gratitude training is not risk-free.

These concerns are rarely addressed in the gratitude training literature (perhaps positive psychologists are caught up in their own positivity bias). We do however find one brief, though quite plausible response in a book by the psychologist Tal Ben-Shahar:

> Our culture tends to highlight the negative and underplay the positive, leading to a distorted view of reality. The underlying cause of this biased perspective is to some extent the news media, which by and large plays the role of a magnifying glass (selectively focusing on the negative) rather than a looking glass (accurately representing reality). While there is certainly a value to the media's negative focus—playing the role of a watchdog—there are unhealthy side effects in the form of a distorted worldview. To counter this bias toward the empty part of the glass, we need to be hypervigilant about identifying the part of the glass that is full. (Ben-Shahar 2012: 40)

So Ben-Shahar claims that there is an existing balance of positive to negative issues that, due to the distorting influence of the news media, our everyday emotional lives fail to reflect. Thus it is justified to inculcate an attention bias towards sources of happiness, because it counteracts a pre-existing attention bias towards sources of worry and frustration. Moreover, no one is suggesting that the things one is grateful for may not genuinely merit gratitude. Thus gratitude training is rather like wearing corrective lenses in order to fix short-sightedness.

In so far as a person may be suffering from clear and pronounced biases towards sources of worry and frustration, Ben-Shahar's response is sensible. However I continue to worry about the rationality of gratitude training for the average newspaper-reading member of the public. Suppose that the news media is a biasing influence. Which is the more rational response: to ignore that news, or to critically evaluate how well it reflects the actual state of the world? What if the state of the world is actually getting worse? Someone paying less

[4] Note that feeling in control of one's own well-being is believed to be conducive to well-being (e.g. Sanjuán et al. 2008).

attention would not be able to track this as well as someone who is simply more sceptical about the news.

So my worry is this: the gratitude training regime encourages the individual in a broad way to pay less attention to sources of worry and frustration. But to systematically manipulate attention in this way risks desensitising the individual towards changes in their circumstances that warrant negative emotions. In particular, there is no provision in gratitude training for correcting an overly optimistic attitude. Thus the individual may end up happier, but may also over-shoot the most appropriate ratio of positive to negative emotions.

But now suppose the individual compensates by taking the time every evening to consider the negative things in life, in addition to the positive things in life. In all likelihood, the observed benefits of gratitude training would be reduced, if not fully undermined. Indeed, the control conditions in the gratitude training experiments confirm this (e.g. Wood et al. 2010: 898). The probable causal mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of gratitude training entail that the whole point is to reduce the attention one pays towards worries and frustrations. The more powerful the effect is to be, the more it must suffuse one's everyday life with an attention bias towards the positive.

3 Emotion Rationality

So far, I have developed the worry that while gratitude training may contribute to the happy life, it may make you less rational because you are blinkered, or 'pollyannaish' towards circumstances that warrant negative emotions. However, this worry is nebulous until we get a clearer sense of what it is to be either rational or irrational with respect to one's emotional life. In particular, emotions may not be the sorts of things that are amenable to high standards of critical rationality, so systematic interventions like gratitude training may be our best alternative.[5]

To sharpen this debate, it's worth briefly considering what philosophers have had to say about emotion rationality. Once we've done that, we will more easily see where it is coming into conflict with gratitude training. My aim here is modest. Drawing on existing views, I present the requirement that emotionally rational people engage in significant critical monitoring. This condition is sufficient to count against gratitude training. Moreover, it will allow me to build the case that there's a conflict between emotion rationality and well-being more generally, not just with a particular psychological intervention.

There is disagreement about what emotions are exactly. Some philosophers and psychologists think that emotions are a kind of evaluation or judgement (e.g. Scherer 2005; Solomon 2007) where others treat emotions as something like perceptions, (e.g. Prinz 2004; Tappolet 2016) and a third group treats emotions more like behavioural tendencies (e.g. Frijda 1986;

[5] This is close to the line that Guy Kahane (2011) takes. Kahane's main argument is that emotional reasons can conflict with hedonic reasons, for instance that emotional reasons tell us that we should feel grief, while hedonic reasons counsel avoiding such emotions. However, he offers cautious support for mood enhancing drugs, given findings regarding emotional set-points (that individuals tend to maintain fairly consistent emotion profiles over the long-term, no matter what triumphs or catastrophes occur). That is, emotional set-points indicate that our emotions are highly influenced by a-rational factors anyway. I don't have space here to criticize set point theory (Bishop 2015: 170–180 has a very good discussion). I merely note that I am much more optimistic than Kahane that emotions can be held up to rational standards, specifically by means of critical monitoring.

Deonna and Teroni 2012). On only the first of these views can emotions be treated as instances of rational cognition in themselves. However, all three views agree that emotions are geared towards tracking factual states of affairs, and specifically the values in play. Thus it is appropriate to feel fear only when the situation really is dangerous, or to feel envy only when one really is being outshined.

A key idea here is that each type of emotion is specified by a formal object, e.g. 'dangerousness' or 'enviableness', which is an abstract property borne by the situation towards which the emotion is fittingly directed (e.g. de Sousa 1987; D'Arms and Jacobson 2000; Prinz 2004). Determining the formal object partly depends on how the world is—a tiny yapping Chihuahua is nowhere near as dangerous as a rabid St Bernard. Partly it depends on us and what we care about—the chess grandmaster's ability is not enviable if I regard chess as a totally trivial and meaningless activity.

For the purposes of this paper, I am not concerned with whether our values have any objective merit. I am interested in what makes a person emotionally rational when we take their concerns or values as a given. If a man cares deeply about avoiding the cracks in the pavement and his capacity to achieve this really is threatened, then it is rational for that man to feel fear. From this perspective there's still a couple of different ways to be irrational. If the man compulsively fears that passing cars will unbalance him, despite his explicit belief that they will not, then by his own standards his emotion is irrational. A second sort of irrational emotion is where the subject experiences fear on the basis of misconstruing the facts; he fears that the passing car will upset his balance but actually, the car has little effect or is even a positive influence. Note that such misconstruals need not result from faulty inference. We can get things wrong in emotional episodes by fixating on certain trivial details to the exclusion of more relevant factors.

The important point in either sort of case is that even taking our values as given, our emotions can be wrong or false.[6] My question now is: what does it take to be emotionally rational beings, such that our emotions are unlikely to mislead us? For instance, it is widely recognized that emotions are often triggered in a fast, automatic manner. Indeed, this is a feature not a bug. If we are in a dangerous situation, it's a bad idea to stand around contemplating the pros and cons of running away. It's perfectly appropriate to panic now and leave reflective justifications for later. But it is the very fact that emotions can be triggered so automatically that means that, when a response isn't urgently demanded, we need to pay attention to their justifications.

The problem is typically one of selective attention. An emotion like anger can be triggered merely by observing the expression on someone's face, taking the expression as an offence. However, the agent may not be aware of the various contextual factors behind that expression. If they were, they may recognize that anger is not warranted. In fact, some entirely different emotion, such as sympathy, might be warranted instead.

Moreover, as mentioned in the previous section, once emotions are stimulated, they have a reciprocal effect on the way we interpret ongoing situations. Here, emotions are implicated in all kinds of cognitive biases. When we respond more to authority than rational arguments, when we stereotype, over-personalise, ignore evidence that disconfirms our beliefs and so on, it is very often the case that there is an emotion lurking in the background. As Peter Goldie

[6] Cf. De Sousa (1987, 2011) on the 'axiological rationality' of emotions.

(2004) memorably put it, emotions "skew the epistemic landscape"; the presentation of facts becomes oriented around whatever serves our current feeling.

Indeed, Goldie has argued that not only do emotions occasionally skew our awareness of the world, they are also responsible for *systematic* rational failures. He points to male aggression, xenophobia and sexual jealousy as emotion types that systematically distort our thinking. Goldie argues that emotions are all the more dangerous because they undermine our capacity to notice rational failures. Below the level of our conscious awareness "the pale non-emotional evidence is already discounted and the vivid emotional evidence is already given too much weight" (Goldie 2008: 160).[7]

So while philosophers of emotion have wanted to celebrate emotions as the very stuff of the good life, we are also frequently reminded that it's important to keep an eye on them. That is, a commitment to emotion rationality seems to recommend a significant degree of monitoring of one's emotions. We need to monitor both how our emotions are stimulated, and whether we have neglected relevant information. For instance, Catherine Elgin claims that while emotions play a positive epistemic role in attuning us to salient information, we can improve the yield of our emotional sensitivity by critical-monitoring: "attending to our responses and our responses to our responses, assessing appropriateness, learning to discern subtleties that align with circumstances, and so forth" (Elgin 2008: 47). Daniel Dohrn (2008) (drawing on Descartes) similarly recommends an ideal of "critical reflective awareness" of one's emotional states.

These philosophers' recommendations are in line with everyday practice. Suppose that your partner explodes with rage in response to a mildly critical remark. It is common to demand that he or she justifies this emotional response. Moreover, you will distinguish excuses from genuine justifying reasons. Complaining that he or she hasn't slept well is not a good reason for anger. Instead, the ensuing argument is more like to focus on the rudeness of the triggering remark. You will argue about whether in fact it was rude, or if it was, whether it was deserved. All of this practice assumes the capacity for critical monitoring, and the expectation that emotionally rational people practice it.

Many people only reflect on the justification for their emotions when challenged. But the ideally rational person goes further. Michael Brady (2013) in particular articulates a standard of optimal emotional rationality. His most general claim is that emotions "raise rather than silence the justificatory demand". That is, in the properly rational agent, emotions should spur the search for justifying reasons, to understand more fully the basis for feeling. Thus:

> The [rationally] virtuous person, in other words, grasps the need for reflection on the accuracy of her emotional appraisals in circumstances where she doesn't possess an understanding of why things are thus-and-so. As such, the virtuous person will feel the need to reflect on the accuracy of her responses and on the adequacy of her underlying concerns, as a result of her awareness that she presently lacks access to the reasons why the relevant object or event has (or does not have) the relevant evaluative feature, and hence lacks understanding on this matter. This is why the virtuous person will not rest content with her initial emotional appraisals in circumstances where she lacks understanding, but will instead subject them to critical scrutiny. (Brady 2013: 179)

[7] Compare Adam Smith (1767, part III, chapter 4, page 220).

Note the strength of Brady's claim. We may experience hundreds of emotions a day, many of which are likely to be subtle. Yet Brady argues that all emotions should be accompanied by a full understanding of the factors driving them. Optimal emotion rationality is when one is in the best possible condition not to be misled by one's emotional states, and this is what critical scrutiny achieves. Of course, this is an ideal that we can only approach.[8] Still, it is fair to add that the more noticeable or irruptive one's emotional response, the more the rationally virtuous person can be expected to reflect on its accuracy.

Given these sorts of views, we can now see why philosophical accounts of emotion rationality clearly speak against gratitude training. Critical monitoring requires that we be open to evidence that both confirms and disconfirms one's current emotional state, or better yet, actively seek such evidence. It is when one's emotions can survive such critical scrutiny that we can be confident of their rational justification. Yet gratitude training encourages a strategy whereby we repeatedly focus on the positive emotional interpretations of the situation.

Could Ben-Shahar's perspective on emotional rationality accommodate these points? Ben-Shahar claims that because there is an existing bias towards negative matters, we need an opposing disposition to consider what is positive. This means that if one engages in gratitude training, one may develop the tendency to confirm positive emotions and disconfirm negative emotions. Yet this can only take us half way towards the rational ideal. Gratitude training discourages the search for defeaters of positive emotions and confirmers of negative emotions. As mentioned in the previous section, gratitude training includes no provision for achieving critical balance. For instance, nothing in gratitude training tells you to only write down the positive thing once you've thoroughly checked that it really is positive and outweighs one's negative reasons. Perhaps this would be an appropriate modifier of the practice, but as I noted in section 2, such a modification may well undermine its effectiveness.

So far, it seems clear that emotional rationality requires that we commit to, and frequently succeed at critically monitoring our emotional states. But this is easier said than done. The crucial problem is that being in the grip of an emotional state can undermine one's capacity to criticise that emotion. To overcome this, it looks like we must cultivate the tendency to 'detach' ourselves from our emotional reactions to some degree (cf. Lambie 2008). That is, critical monitoring does not demand complete inhibition of the emotional state. But it does demand the capacity to interrupt thoughts and impulsive responses that serve the emotional bias. One must take a little time to observe or reflect upon one's emotional state. Only then can one evaluate the appropriateness of one's emotion, or whether one has neglected relevant considerations. This is how detachment allows us to break the cycle of the emotional confirmation bias. For example, if I'm having an argument with my partner, a tendency to detach enough to notice that I'm feeling more and more irritated is a vital first step to questioning whether my emotions are blinding me to my partner's point of view, or whether my attitude is really serving the goal of sustaining a healthy relationship.

It is also important to note that if one is to achieve *optimal* emotional rationality, the tendency to detach or engage in open-minded contemplation of one's emotions must be 'always on'. Partly this is because emotions tend to strike without warning, so we must always be ready. But mostly it's because tendencies aren't the sorts of things we can switch on and off

[8] Note that Brady does not apply this ideal to ordinary beliefs gained through perceptual experience. One of Brady's main claims in the book is that perceptual experience is a default justifier of belief while emotions are not. This drives his criticism of the perceptual theory of emotions.

at will; they are the sorts of things that are gradually internalised. Thus to the extent that one is emotionally rational, one will have a standing disposition to become reflectively conscious of one's emotions. However, given that emotions can often be very subtle, the ideal can allow that the more intense or irruptive the emotion, the more one should be apt to become reflectively conscious of it.

If the reader is concerned that, even as an ideal, this requirement is far too strong, then be assured that I share their worries. The requirement cannot simply be dismissed however. We must seek principled justifications for its moderation.

4 The Tension

So far, I have fleshed out a certain ideal of emotional rationality. Rationally virtuous people should cultivate a tendency to detach to a degree from their emotional states, allowing them to seek confirming or defeating considerations. This already contradicts the recommendations of gratitude training. But it is at this point that a more general conflict between emotional rationality and well-being arises. The problem is that it seems to be a common feature of the happy life that one is disposed *not* to critically monitor one's emotional state.

A prominent contemporary model of well-being is offered by Daniel Haybron in his (Haybron 2008) book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness*. Here Haybron identifies three major strands of happiness: i) emotions of endorsement (e.g. pride, joy, gratitude); ii) an attitude of strong engagement or exuberance and; iii) a state of feeling attuned, or at home in one's surroundings. Haybron's model also bears striking (unacknowledged) parallels with the model proposed by psychologist Martin Seligman (2002) who similarly divides up well-being into the three areas of: i) positive emotions; ii) high engagement, and; iii) the pursuit of meaning.

It is the second factor in both models—exuberance or high engagement—that potentially counts against the reflective rational disposition. Exuberance is a tendency towards highly motivated engagement in activities, displaying vitality and absorption as opposed to listlessness or withdrawal. Both Haybron and Seligman link exuberance to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's well-known concept of *flow* (Csíkszentmihályi 1990), where the demands of an activity match well one's cognitive capacities, fully absorbing one's attention. Since flow is partly defined as a lack of self-consciousness, this clearly speaks against self-reflection. But even when we consider engagement in a broader sense, there is a definite tension with detached reflection. To be highly engaged is to be task-focused and not self-focused.

At the same time, it is a feature of strong commitment to a task that one is disposed to feel intense emotions serving that commitment. Thus, the highly engaged person is liable to feel intense excitement, frustration or anxiety depending on how well the task is going, and to maintain task-focus while undergoing such emotions, rather than becoming self-reflective. For example; when my son plays tennis he undergoes a wide variety of emotional states such as pride, shame, anger, joy, disappointment, and worry. To me, his dispassionate opponent, it is clear that a large number of his emotions are poorly justified. This is not just because it's merely a game. I can fully grant the value that playing and winning at tennis has for him. What may make his emotion irrational is, say, that he may not really have been responsible for winning or losing a point, or that the point has no significant bearing on the score line (he still reliably thrashes me). Yet we can say that having all these emotions is part and parcel of my son being passionately

engaged and absorbed in the game. Moreover, to be so absorbed is part of the good life. He plays tennis precisely because it is so absorbing.

Thus, high engagement is compatible with the elicitation of negative emotions. However, in its contribution to a happy life, Haybron *prioritizes* engagement over the mere preponderance of positive emotions like cheerfulness, or indeed pleasure.[9] Haybron argues that the energetic pursuit of one's goals is a better indicator of a happy life because it is fundamentally life affirming.[10] Besides, engagement tends towards achievement, and thereby emotions of endorsement, rather than the other way round. In contrast, a life that on average contains more cheerful emotions than gloomy ones is compatible with daily crises of confidence and listlessness that would suggest that, at root, the individual is not particularly happy at all.

To Haybron's considerations we can also add points made by psychologist Tayyab Rashid. Rashid observes that unlike simple pleasures, engagement endures. We are less prone to habituation or satiation when engaged with activities like rock climbing, cookery, or artistic creation (Rashid 2013: 982). Rashid also emphasises the ways in which engagement combats negative emotional states like boredom and depression: "Anhedonia, apathy, boredom, multitasking, and restlessness—hallmarks of many psychological disorders—are largely manifestations of disrupted attention" (cf. Killingsworth and Gilbert 2010).

Rashid's point here aligns with a general inverse correlation that has been observed between happiness and self-conscious monitoring. For instance, Lyubomirsky and Leeper (1999) find that dispositionally happy people tend to be less introspective, while Ingram (1990) reviews various evidence indicating that chronically unhappy people show high levels of self-focused attention, confirmed in a meta-review by Mor and Winquist (2002).[11] Add to this the (fairly unsurprising) finding of Schooler et al. (2003) which found that instructing participants to monitor their enjoyment levels correlated with less self-reported enjoyment.

The central role that exuberance or engagement plays in the happy life is something I hope we all recognize. A life without significant periods of such exuberance may, on the whole, be content. But it is exuberance—where we are caught up in the flow of an event, a conversation, or an ongoing project—that characterises many of the happiest times in our lives.

My argument can now be summarised. Exuberance generally counts against critically reflecting upon whether one's emotional state is justified, because exuberance is characterised by increased task-focus. Reduced self-focus is a consequence of increased task-focus, because attention is a limited resource. Since reflection upon one's emotional state is a sub-type of self-focus, we can expect less critical monitoring during periods of exuberance. Yet emotional engagement itself does not count against task-focus. Indeed, intense emotional engagement is a way of being task focused. Thus we can predict that during periods of

[9] Here is another significant point of contrast between my argument and Kahane 2011. Kahane focuses on the way that emotional reasons can conflict with pleasure, whereas I am focused on the broader notion of the happy life. There are nevertheless a number of points where our arguments converge.

[10] See also Fred Feldman, who though he does not explicitly define engagement as a key component of the happy life, devotes several pages to discussing the case of a philosopher thoroughly absorbed in his work, who never reflectively questions his level of well-being, and might even deny it if asked. Feldman says, "surely the philosopher is in fact quite happy at the moment described—he is wholeheartedly engaged in an activity he loves. Those who think that happiness is The Good would want to say that the imaginary philosopher is enjoying very high—perhaps maximally high—welfare at this moment" (Feldman 2010: 83).

[11] Self-focused attention is defined as "an awareness of self-referent, internally generated information that stands in contrast to an awareness of externally generated information derived through sensory receptors" (Ingram 1990: 156). It is accordingly a very general sort of cognitive disposition.

exuberance the individual has a tendency to experience emotions and not to critically reflect upon them.

Thus my argument is that exuberance tends against critical monitoring of one's emotions while emotional rationality tends towards this. That is, these are dispositions that pull in opposing directions when it comes to critical monitoring. Since we have reason to regard exuberance as a major component of the happy life, we have reason to believe that there is a tension between a happy life and emotional rationality. This is a more general version of our earlier problem with gratitude training: Critical monitoring is at odds with achieving and sustaining a happy life.

Note that the tension does not require that we are *never* critically reflective when feeling happy. We can allow that many episodes of happiness are robust enough to withstand critical scrutiny. But it is intuitively plausible that self-conscious reflection upon one's state of mind tends to weaken one's passionate engagement with activities. So the strength of the tension is not only that, while critically reflecting, one may come to notice factors that undermine positive emotions. The tension is also that critical reflection, by itself, involves a more detached attitude that counts against passionate exuberance.

It is also compatible with the tension I have identified that exuberance can land you in messes that critical monitoring would avoid. For example, suppose a whirlwind holiday romance leaves you in a disastrous marriage that you could have avoided had you realised that your joy in a certain person's company had less to do with their qualities and more to do with being on holiday. In such instances, critical monitoring would lead to a happier life. Similarly, to subject certain negative emotions to critical scrutiny may well expose them as unduly biased and thereby help one to feel happier. Yet the existence of such examples does not overturn the fact that exuberance tends towards a happy life, while critical monitoring tends against exuberance.

Potentially, individuals can fluctuate between critical monitoring and exuberance, depending on the context. However, both reflective monitoring and exuberance are dispositional. We are liable to develop general tendencies either one way or the other. Indeed, I believe the tension I have articulated sits on a fault line dividing basic approaches to living. One could either maximise a tranquil life of sober reflection, or else embrace the passionate, carefree lifestyle; become either a devotee of Apollo or a devotee of Dionysus. The contrasting Dionysian and Apollonian strategies align quite neatly with the well-known introvert-extrovert divide in personality theory, where the extrovert is characterised as out-going and fun-loving while the introvert tends to be more quiet and self-contained (Shiner and Caspi 2003: 4; McCrae and Costa 2003: 49).[12] These personality styles are largely a product of different approaches to emotion regulation (Ashton and Lee 2007; Cochrane 2018: 162–168).

5 Concern-Relative Rationality

For the sake of clarity, I have set up the tension between emotion rationality and the happy life as starkly as possible. Drawing on prominent and plausible models of emotional rationality and happiness I have set up a conflict which calls out for some kind of resolution. Of course it can't be right that we must constantly critically reflect on our emotions—it sounds far too

[12] The emotionally rational strategy also aligns quite well with the ancient Epicurean ideal of ataraxia or tranquillity.

demanding. And of course exuberance must be able to withstand periods of critical scrutiny. The point is that, as things stand, it seems we can only compromise between the two ideals. That is, we achieve a balance by reducing our commitment to either or both ideals. This response thus fundamentally accepts that happiness and rationality are in tension.

However, maybe we are not forced to accept the tension I have identified. In particular, there may be good principled reasons for moderating the ideal of emotional rationality. Here is one line of attack: So far, I've outlined an ideal of emotion rationality that demands the disposition towards self-conscious reflection upon one's emotional states. But if such a disposition truly undermines the pursuit of the happy life, can it really be emotionally rational? Plausibly, the existence of the emotional capacity is premised on the fact that emotions serve our concerns; they get us to protect or promote the things we care about. Presumably the happy life is one in which, broadly speaking, our concerns are optimally served. Thus, any attitude that undermines the happy life could not be emotionally justified. We should accordingly reject the earlier model of emotion rationality.

An argument along these lines has recently been proposed by Miriam McCormick (2016). McCormick argues that the rationality of hope partially relies upon its practical importance. She suggests that as the practical importance of feeling hope increases (e.g. to help one endure difficult circumstances), the evidential demands upon the emotion (i.e. how likely it is that the hoped-for event will occur) decrease. According to McCormick, "a hope is deemed "rational" if, overall, it allows for an augmentation rather than a diminishment of agency" (McCormick 2016: S134).

Perhaps then, a parallel argument can be made regarding the rationality of exuberance. The general attitude of exuberance allows the individual to pursue wholeheartedly her commitments, increasing the probability that these commitments will be well served. This practical value compensates for any increased likelihood that some of her emotional states fail to track the truth.

However, the Apollonian will respond that the Dionysian is confusing *prudential* or *strategic* rationality with the *epistemic* rationality relevant to grasping the facts that bear on one's concerns. The Apollonian may readily admit that the exuberance of the Dionysian is prudentially rational if it helps her to get the things that she wants. But epistemic rationality is when one acts in a way that is most likely to gain one access to truth and understanding. The Dionysian should be under no illusions that in pursuing passionate exuberance they are promoting their grasp of what's true or false.

So long as we insist that the strategy of exuberance or high engagement has a greater tendency not to notice false emotions, there seems no way to avoid the tension. Yet there is now a second line of response available to the Dionysian, somewhat more subtle than the first. We have admitted that the rationality of emotions is limited in scope. That is, it is only rational to have an emotion if one first of all has a relevant background concern. For instance, it is irrational to weep over a broken vase that one hates; that would be out of line with one's values. The Dionysian can now ask this: suppose I have a greater concern for living a happy, engaged life than I do for a life in which rational emotions are maximised. Now suppose that I manage to become highly engaged, but in the process come to have quite a few irrational emotions. In this situation, the overall ratio of engagement to irrational emotions in my life satisfies my priorities. So would it be *true* that something bad has happened to me, all things considered? That is, would emotions of disappointment or frustration be fitting or appropriate in this situation? No, they would not.

My life is in proceeding in accordance with my priorities. I should feel contented in this situation.

On this line of response then, the Dionysian may be experiencing a certain number of emotional states that poorly grasp the facts (i.e. emotional states resulting from his or her exuberant attitude). Yet it would be irrational for the Dionysian to worry about it. At the same time, the Dionysian can admit that the Apollonian is within her rights to cultivate a more reflective disposition. For various prudential or moral reasons, the Apollonian may be highly averse to irrational emotional states. She prefers a balance between engagement and irrational emotions that minimizes irrationality even at the cost of engagement. Thus, it is rational for the Apollonian to worry about the occurrence of irrational emotional states, but not the Dionysian.

Thus, the Dionysian should not worry about her engagement-induced irrational emotions. To worry about this would itself be an irrational emotion. Moreover, we can plausibly give greater weight to rational emotions about how one's whole life is going than rational emotions about more narrow issues.

Still, it remains the case that the Dionysian will undergo numerically more irrational emotions than the Apollonian. Despite the greater weighting of emotions about one's whole life, the Apollonian can still accuse the Dionysian of lacking in epistemic virtue. To be epistemically virtuous would be to maximize the number of rational mental states. In response to this, I have a final thought in defence of the Dionysian. This relies on a potentially controversial way of conceiving the self-evaluative process, but one that I will justify.

The thought is that the Apollonian's disposition to become emotionally detached is itself an emotional disposition. In other words, when the Apollonian interrupts the flow of her emotion and engages in critical self-monitoring, this is a meta-emotional response (cf. Jäger and Bänninger-Huber 2015). Alternatively, while the detachment process is not itself an emotion, it is caused by an emotion. Either way, we should therefore also count these episodes when we are adding up the number of rational or irrational emotions that we have. Then, once we do this, we find that the Dionysian actually has fewer irrational emotions than they would have, were they to adopt the critical disposition.

Why should we think that the engagement of critical monitoring is an emotional episode or caused by an emotional episode? The basic reason is that it fits the standard pattern of an emotional response. Note first that the Apollonian has a concern to avoid irrational emotions. Second, her cognitive monitoring strategy is driven by that concern. It is because the incidence of an emotion, particularly an intense emotion, threatens the Apollonian's concern to avoid irrational emotions, that monitoring is initiated. The overall structure here of concern-sensitivity, plus discernment of a potential impact on that concern, which then triggers a regulative response, fits the standard structure of an emotional episode, even across different ways of modelling emotions.

It may be objected that the motivated response here is a cognitive act rather than the kind of behavioural responses we usually see in emotions. However, it is very common for emotions to trigger cognitive responses. For instance, when feeling nostalgia we may rehearse old memories. When feeling anger we may nurture fantasies of revenge. When feeling anxiety we may plan ways to improve our security. Indeed, in civilised human beings, these sorts of cognitive responses dominate impulsive behavioural responses.

A second objection may be that the cognitive interruption of an emotion may not have a bodily response profile, where several philosophers regard bodily responses as a necessary

characteristic of emotion (e.g. Deonna and Teroni 2012; Prinz 2004). However, it seems to me that the interruption of a developing bodily response that accompanies an episode of detachment has a very characteristic bodily profile; precisely that of interrupting a response. It is rather like freezing in response to a threat.

Now if one's detachment strategy led one to fully inhibit the original emotion and become entirely calm, then at this point I would agree that one is not undergoing an emotion. But that's one particular consequence of detachment. It should not be identified with the process of detachment itself, which may well involve some significant bodily struggle. Indeed, most emotions seem to aim at the restoration of a calm state of equilibrium. That hardly counts against their having a characteristic bodily profile.

Suppose we accept that the engagement of critical monitoring is either an emotional response or caused by an emotional response. How can this come to the aid of the Dionysian? We have already admitted that, since the Dionysian does not care as deeply for ensuring the rationality of her emotions, it would be irrational for the Dionysian to feel bad about having an irrational emotion. We now add the following consideration: For the Dionysian to interrupt her emotions with critical-monitoring would be, *on each occasion*, to have an irrational emotion. This means that the Dionysian, by not triggering the monitoring response, is avoiding irrational emotions. Since it is presumably the case that not every single (intense) emotion that the Dionysian has is unjustified, the Dionysian ends up with *fewer* irrational emotions than she would have (given her concerns), were she to be disposed towards detachment. So given a certain understanding of what happens when the detachment strategy is enacted, the Dionysian can even claim that, relative to her, she is maximising rational emotions.

To clarify then, the argument I have presented in this section gives us a principled reason to moderate the call for critical detachment. Even if philosophers have offered good reasons for critical detachment, we intuitively grasp that constant critical scrutiny is too demanding. I believe the best way to justify this intuition is to allow that for some people who care a great deal about rationality, constant critical detachment may be a worthy ideal. But for a lot of other people it would amount to a kind of irrational anxiety. That is, the checking process itself, when taken too far, can poorly align with facts about what threatens my concerns; it is epistemically irrational.

6 Conclusion

Overall, while emotion theorists have claimed that the rationally optimal strategy is to critically monitor one's emotional states, the situation is actually not so clear-cut. What counts as the epistemically rational strategy depends upon the concerns of the individual. The Apollonian prizes respectable emotions above exuberance. Given this concern, the Apollonian maximises rational emotions by means of detachment. Things are different for Dionysian. She prioritises exuberance, so it would be irrational for her to adopt the detachment strategy. Thus, we should not assume that the optimal strategy for emotion rationality is critical detachment. And thus, so long as one is clear about the risks and rewards of the different strategies available, one can be rationally exuberant.

Interestingly then, we can envisage a kind of two-level emotional rationality, somewhat akin to two-level theories of utilitarianism (e.g. Hare 1981). There is the first order rationality of a given emotional state. Alongside this, there is the second order rationality of one's meta-

emotional regulations. Presumably, as with two-level utilitarianism, the individual can periodically reflect on which strategy brings about a state of affairs that is most in line with her concerns. Such a process can recommend both limits to critical monitoring and, it is worth noting, also constitutes a justifiable limitation to exuberance.

On this note, let us return to our earlier worries about gratitude training. It seems to me perfectly feasible that, having considered the various moral or prudential implications, one can end up prioritising a happy life over the avoidance of a positivity bias. One may accordingly choose to cultivate an emotional disposition that one knows can allow irrational positive emotions to go unchecked. So long as gratitude training generates a ratio of happiness to irrational emotions that conforms to one's priorities, one's life is proceeding according to plan, and it would be irrational to interrupt it. Thus, given these conditions, one can rationally engage in gratitude training.

Acknowledgements Thanks to Luca Barlassina and the referees of this journal for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

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