Disability, Well-Being and (In)Apt Emotions

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Abstract: Many people view disabilities as misfortunes, call this the standard view. In this paper, I examine one criticism that has been launched against the Standard View. Rather than determine in advance whether having a disability is good or bad for a person, some critics argue that the Standard View is reflective of and brings about inappropriate emotional responses toward people with disabilities and their circumstances. For instance, philosophers have recently argued that in holding the standard view, we become prone to a destructive kind of unwarranted pity or that the view leads us to hold certain untenable or inappropriate hopes for our children and for our society. I think this sort of challenge to the Standard View has a lot of appeal, but I worry that if it is not properly articulated, the approach is vulnerable to what has been known as "The Wrong Kind of Reason" problem. The paper highlights and addresses this worry.

"To think that a particular disability makes someone's life less good is not one of the ugly attitudes. It does not mean that the person who has it is of any less value, or is less deserving of respect, than anyone else." -- Jonathan Glover[1]

"In January, I was hospitalized with severe pneumonia in both lungs. On two separate occasions, doctors told me they assumed if I fell unconscious I wouldn't want to be given life saving treatment. I was so frightened of what might happen to me that I kept myself awake for 48 hours. My husband brought in a photo of me in my graduation gown and stuck it on the bed-head to remind the hospital staff that there was more to me than the shriveled form they saw lying in front of them. I was lucky: although I could barely breath, I had an assertive husband insisting to the authorities that I had everything to live for. Imagine what it would like if you were too weak to communicate. Or your relatives less positive about the quality of your life." -- Jane Campbell[2]

"I will always believe that blindness is a neutral trait, neither to be prized nor shunned. Very few people, including those dearest to me share that conviction. My husband, my parents, and so many others who are central to my life cannot fully relinquish their negative assumptions. I feel that I have failed when I run into jarring reminders

that I have not changed their perspective. In those crushing moments I fear that I am not truly accepted after all. But in recent years a new insight has gradually come to me. Yes, my own loved ones hold the unshakeable belief that blindness is and always will be a problem. Nevertheless, these same people have made me welcome. Though they dread blindness as a fate to be avoided at almost any cost, they give me their trust and respect. I don't know how they live without discomfort amid such contradictions. But I recognize that people can and do reach out, past centuries of prejudice and fear, to forge bonds of love." – Deborah Kent [3]

Many people view disabilities as misfortunes. They think that disabilities such as deafness, blindness, paraplegia, or autism, have a significant negative impact on one's overall quality of life. I will call this the Standard View.[4] Jonathan Glover's position, as is evidenced by the above passage, is a clear articulation of such a view. As he points out, the Standard View does not entail that a life with a disability is not worth living or that it would be better to never have been born than to have been born with a disability. Rather the Standard View is a comparative, counterfactual claim: a life with a disability can certainly be a good and worthwhile life, it is just not as good as that life would have been without the disability. According to Glover and others who defend the Standard View, what is disvalued is the condition of disability and not the people who have the condition. The Standard View thus lends itself to certain practical commitments concerning procreative and medical ethics. If disability is a misfortune, then prospective parents seem to have a significant moral reason to do what they can to create children who are not disabled.[5] Moreover, if disability is a misfortune, then parents and society seem to have a significant moral reason to seek out cures to eliminate such conditions.

The Standard View has been challenged by a number of philosophers and disability rights advocates. Some have argued that we should think of (at least some) disabilities as prudentially neutral traits rather than unfortunate ones – as the sorts of features of a person that are neither good nor bad for that person, or good and bad for a person to roughly the same extent.[6] Call this the Prudential Neutrality View. Alternatively, some have argued that insofar as being disabled carries with it certain disadvantages, these disadvantages are the product of an unaccommodating social and physical environment (which includes social stigma and prejudice against disability), not of the specific condition itself. Thus having a disability should neither be celebrated nor shunned.[7] Call this the Evaluative Neutrality View.

Both neutrality views offer us a way to think about disability that directly contrasts with the Standard View. However it is questionable whether the Prudential Neutrality View is really a plausible view to hold given the world we live in and the high impact that having a disability has on the shape of one's life. It would be a great coincidence if having a disability turned out to be good and bad for a person to precisely the same degree. Moreover, it is questionable whether the Evaluative Neutrality View is the best way to understand the position held by many people in the disability community themselves who celebrate and value their condition. For example, the Evaluative Neutrality View does not seem to capture the motivation behind couples who wish to have children who are disabled like them. Take for example a deaf couple who solicited a sperm donor who himself was deaf in order to have the best chances of conceiving a deaf child.[8] The couple insisted that they would love their child regardless of whether or not it was deaf. They claimed, "a hearing baby would be a blessing. A deaf baby would be a special blessing". The Evaluative Neutrality View cannot make sense of the excitement that these mothers would experience if they found out their child was also deaf.

In this paper, I want to turn our attention to a different sort of challenge that has been launched against the Standard View – one that does not rely on the notion that having a disability is neutral in anyway. Instead this line of argumentation claims that the Standard View is reflective of and brings about inappropriate emotional responses toward people with disabilities and their circumstances. Rather than determine in advance whether having a disability is good or bad for a person, we should look at what *viewing disability as a misfortune* disposes us to feel. If such a view disposes us to feel inappropriate emotional attitudes toward people with disabilities, this is itself a consideration against holding it. In a recent paper, Stephen Campbell and Joseph Stramondo warn us that once we start viewing disability as a misfortune, we become prone to a destructive kind of unwarranted pity.[9] And as I will argue, Eva Kittay can be understood as recently defending the claim that viewing disability as a misfortune leads us to hold certain untenable or inappropriate hopes for our children and for our society.[10] I want to ask what makes these emotions unwarranted, untenable or otherwise inappropriate? And how does the inaptness of these emotions bear on whether or not we should reject the Standard View?

As the second and third opening passages illustrate, our perception on the quality of disabled peoples' lives ends up influencing the actual quality of disabled people's life. For Jane Campbell, who has spinal muscular atrophy, her doctors' negative view of her overall quality of life is a source of deep and unnecessary anxiety that not only negatively effects her hospital experience but can have drastic implications for her health – requiring her to stay awake and vigilant at a time when she should be resting. On the other hand, her husband's positive view of her quality of life motivates him to act as a dogged advocate for her rights and interests. For Deborah Kent, the mismatch between her views and her loved ones' views on the effects that blindness can have on a life is a source of confusion and frustration. Perhaps her family sees Deborah as an exception to general rule that blindness makes a person worse off. Or perhaps they think that Deborah herself would have been better off had she not been blind. Either way, her family's outlook causes for Deborah certain feelings of isolation and being misunderstood. Do Campbell, Stramondo, and Kittay's challenge to the Standard View offer any sort of clarification about what is going on in these interpersonal cases?

Do they offer us a new way of thinking about the sorts of "ugly attitudes" that Jonathan Glover and other bioethicists worry about and want to avoid?

Here is the structure of paper: First, I will introduce the two arguments against unwarranted pity and against untenable hope. I will then take a step back and examine how these two arguments fit in the general debate concerning well-being and disability, and in particular how they are related to past Expressivity Arguments that have been launched against proponents of 'procreative beneficence'. I will suggest three ways we can interpret the force of Expressivity Arguments and consider whether an upshot of Campbell and Stramondo's and Kittay's arguments is that certain emotional responses to disability are unfitting because of what they express. I think their challenge to the Standard View has a lot of appeal, but I worry that if it is not properly articulated, the approach is vulnerable to what has been known as "The Wrong Kind of Reason" problem.[11]

I should note that for the purposes of this paper, I remain agnostic about the correct model or definition of disability. Rather I will follow Campbell, Stramondo, and Elizabeth Barnes, in using disability as an umbrella term to pick out a class of conditions that are commonly labeled 'disabilities' (and where there is a distinction between impairment and disability, the term picks out conditions of 'impairment').[12] Down syndrome, deafness, paraplegia, autism, blindness, are all paradigmatic examples of disability. This inclusive terminological strategy allows us to examine the merits of the different arguments without first assuming there is some constitutive relationship between disability and well-being.

§1. Unwarranted Pity and Untenable Hope

Let me start by considering the argument against unwarranted pity. In their paper, *The Complicated Relationship of Disability and Well-Being,* Campbell and Stramondo examine the many ways in which disability might have an impact well-being. Their analysis ends up undercutting the plausibility of both the Standard View and the Prudential Neutrality View. Ultimately, they argue, we cannot generalize about the impact that having a disability will have on an individual's life – not even that it will have an overall neutral impact. This is because of the highly individualized and context sensitive nature of the experience of living with a disability: "One's response to the challenges that a disability can bring, the way in which one's disability factors into one's sense of identity and purpose, the opportunities that are created as a result of one's condition – these are all things that may render people better off than they would have been in the absence of disability."[13] Moreover, as they note, these are all things that may render people worse off as well. Ultimately, disabilities are 'high impact traits' according to Campbell and Stramondo; they significantly influence the character of a person's life and so we should not assume that they typically will make no difference to one's level of well-being.

There is, however, one relationship between disability and well-being that they do admit as likely to hold: while it is not the case that being disabled is generally bad for a person, it is the case that being disabled makes it more likely that one will have a lower level of well-being because of their condition. This is a "probabilistic claim" about an individual's susceptibility to facing certain hardships as a result of disability rather than a general claim about the prudential impact of having a disability in a vast majority of cases.[14] So Campbell and Stramondo maintain that for a majority of cases, we cannot say that having a disability has been or will be bad for that person, however they do concede that given the unjust social conditions we live in and given the suffering and early death associated with specific disabilities [which 'pull down' the average for all those with disabilities], having a disability raises the probability that a person will be worse off for it than a nondisabled person would have been worse off in light of possessing other high impact traits.

Campbell and Stramondo go on to argue that insofar as generalizations about disability and well-being are not well-founded, certain emotional reactions that non-disabled people have in regards to disabled people become questionable. More specifically, non-disabled people often pity disabled individuals without knowing much about how having that disability has affected their lives. According to Campbell and Stramondo, this is an unwarranted reaction. Here is their general argument.

Unwarranted Pity Argument:

1. Pity is an emotional response to the perception that someone is doing poorly in some significant respect or on the whole.
2. The prevalence of pity directed at people with disabilities is an indication of the widespread acceptance of the Standard View.
3. The Standard View is false and should be rejected.
4. Therefore, pity towards people with disabilities is unwarranted.[15]

One immediate question we should have about this argument is what are we to do with the Standard View as it is interpreted in probabilistic terms. If we should accept the probabilistic interpretation of the Standard View, then isn't it the case that pity would be warranted in situations where the person feeling the pity recognizes that – while it is not set in stone – things *could* go much worse for the person pitied just in virtue of their disability? In such a situation the pity doesn't seem to rest on a mistaken generalization about the disabled person's condition, so why not think the pity is warranted?

Campbell and Stramondo don't accept that pity is warranted in such cases even if they are willing to accept that the probabilistic attitude underlying the pity is itself warranted. This leads to their second argument against pity, which we can call the *Anti-Proleptic Pity Argument*:

> "If enough people believe that having a disability is likely to make an individual worse off and respond with pity, this will diminish disabled people's well-being and make it more likely that they are worse off."[16]

You treat someone as pitiable (whether it is warranted or not) and you make it more likely that they become an appropriate object of pity. This of course doesn't mean that pity is warranted after all. On the contrary, Stramondo has suggested elsewhere that a more appropriate and constructive response to the predicament of people with disabilities would be shared sense of moral outrage. [17]

I find the Anti-Proleptic Pity Argument to be quite compelling and want to further investigate how we should evaluate the aptness of certain emotions on Campbell and Stramondo's view. We should notice that on this second argument, the standard of correctness [or fit] for the emotion of pity is not determined by whether or not it rests on warranted beliefs, rather it is determined by whether the emotion itself is of practical use. Given that our perceptions of disability have an effect on the experience of living with disability, perhaps we should aim to view disability in a way that is most conducive to the lives of people who are disabled; and perhaps our emotional responses are only appropriate when they reflect these more conducive views.

We need to clarify what conditions are necessary for pity to be fitting in such cases. Is it the fact that people with disabilities are pitied regardless of whether or not they are actually worse off? Or is it the fact that being pitied (warranted or not) makes it more likely that people with disabilities are worse off? One way to address these questions is to argue that although pity is a warranted response to the situation, it isn't the most constructive way to emotionally respond to the facts on the ground. That is, shared outrage is also warranted in such situations and shared outrage doesn't itself contribute to the likelihood that someone's life will go less well for them just in virtue of their disability. While both pity and outrage may be warranted, only outrage leads to better consequences and is thus more fitting. However this is not what Campbell and Stramondo want to say; they want to criticize pity in such circumstances as unwarranted, not just less warranted than other emotions. I will return to why in the third section.

For now, let us move on to Kittay's argument against what I will call, "Untenable Hope." I should note that hope isn't something that is mentioned in her chapter, but she does entertain the desirability and even the imaginability of certain future states of affairs. And she is responding to two sets of philosophers in particular who motivate their argument by presenting to their readers what they take to be a utopian vision of the future. That is, a future worth hoping for.

> **Allen Buchanan, Dan Brock, Norman Daniels, and Daniel Wikler**: "[T]here can be a obligations of justice… to require genetic interventions. From this perspective, we are committed to the judgment that in the future the world should not include so many disabilities and hence so many people with disabilities. But it is not the people with disabilities that we disvalue; it is the disabilities themselves."[18]

> **Glover:** "Great changes in what human beings are like are becoming possible [3]…I think that, other things being equal, it is good if the incidence of disabilities is reduced by parental choices to opt for potentially more flourishing children. To think that a particular disability makes someone's life less good is not one of the ugly attitudes. It does not mean that the person who has it is of any less value, or is less deserving of respect, than anyone else."[19]

Let me highlight a few features about Brock et. al.'s and Glover's hopes. First, Brock et. al. believe that the future world *should not* include as many people with disabilities, whereas Glover (at least when he is talking about the society at large) argues only that *it would be good* if fewer people with disabilities were born. Accordingly, both of these arguments defend a variation of the view often called, 'Procreative Beneficence', which holds that parents and society have moral reason to do what they can to produce children with the best chance at flourishing.[20] While Brock et. al.'s position is that these moral reasons constitute a duty on the part of parents and society, Glover seems to believe that such reasons can be overridden by other considerations. Regardless of the flavor of their procreative beneficence, both views see a future world with fewer disabled people as both desirable and feasible. It is a world for which it is reasonable to hold out hope.

Second, if we are to bracket the first sentence – ie. 'that justice requires genetic interventions' – there is a way for many people in the disability rights community to get on board with Brock et. al.'s utopian future. To do this, of course, we would have to keep in view the distinction between impairment and disability. Hoping for a world with less disability and fewer disabled people can be understood more specifically as hoping for a world where more people with impairments are not disabled. Such a world would be achieved primarily through social and material accommodations rather than through genetic interventions. This indeed seems like a future that we can all hope for, regardless of whether we accept the Standard View. It is not the world that Brock et. al. have in mind however. Their vision of a world is one in which fewer people are born with disabilities as a result of prenatal genetic selection and individual reproductive choices.

I think some important lessons can be drawn from how Kittay responds to these utopian visions. In reaction to Brock et. al.'s hope for a future world in which disability is for the most part eradicated, Kittay asks, "Do I accept that the universe would be better without the disability my daughter has?" This is not merely a rhetorical question. She tries to the best of her abilities to imagine what that world would be like and whether it would be a better world than the one we live in:

> "Although it is a difficult place to go – a dark place unenlightened by the life Sesha has lived since – I will, on occasion try to imagine who Sesha would be without her disability. But my imagination quickly falters. I have no way of knowing what about Sesha's personality, appearance, emotional makeup, and so on are the ones that she would have without the disability…To imagine that life otherwise would be a vain and futile exercise."[21]

For Kittay, it seems that the kind of utopia for which Brock et al. are holding out hope (both for society and for individuals) is not one that is accessible to her as Sesha's mother. If it is a world that doesn't include Sesha, it is not a world she is interested in. And if it is a world that includes Sesha but without her disabilities, it is not a world she can easily picture. It is a mere abstraction – a contentless possibility – that is not fully fleshed out. Such a world does not seem to warrant hope since there is nothing particularly good about that world to fix one's attention.

Glover, for his part, insists that his hopes for the future are not one of the ugly attitudes. This is because he argues that the following two propositions are not in conflict:

Claim 1: Having a disability makes someone's life less good.

Claim 2: Having a disability makes a person's life no less deserving of respect.

Glover is not specifically hoping for a world that is rid of people with disabilities, he is rather hoping for a world in which the children born are the ones who have the best possible chance to flourish – which may happen to mean fewer people with disabilities. So he maintains that he can hope for a world where disability is diminished, without expressing any disrespect to people with disabilities.

In response to this argument, Kittay's concern is not about the compatibility of the two propositions in theory, but rather the tenability of *holding* both positions in practice:

"…if we equally respect that life, we also think that we should not settle for a lesser life.

> Thinking about what respecting a disabled life equally means reveals for us the tension [between claim 1 and claim 2]. That is, if we respect a life as being of equal worth, that impels us to do what we can to ensure that the disability not be a disadvantage, that her life not be less good."[22]

In what way does Kittay take claims 1 and 2 to be in tension? It seems, at least in the abstract, there is no contradiction in believing both that people with disabilities are worthy of equal respect and that people with disabilities have lives less good. Kittay's point, however, is that things change when we pay closer attention to what these beliefs dispose us to do and to feel. Kittay argues that if one really appreciated the truth of the view that a person with a disability is worthy of equal respect, one would be motivated to do everything in one's power to ensure that that person has an equal chance at a flourishing life just like everyone else. So if one really believed claim 2, one would not be able to endorse claim 1. To hold both views at once is practically unsustainable.

Glover's vision of what the world full of flourishing children looks like also happens to be a vision where fewer of those children will be disabled. As it is the case with Campbell and Stramondo's rejection of proleptic pity, it seems that there is something untoward about hopes that accept as a given that a person's disability will ultimately lead to misfortune. Such hopes concede too much too soon. They are not the sorts of hopes that will appeal to many people who are disabled themselves or to those who care for and about people with disabilities; insofar as they are working hard to ensure that a life with a disability is not inherently a life that is less good or with less opportunity to flourish. To hope for Glover's world is to view as unnecessary one's present efforts at making this world more accommodating. We may thus understand Glover's and Brock's hopes, as exclusionary hopes. They are hopes for the future of society and for one's children that cannot be shared by many people with disabilities or many of their loved ones. One remaining question to consider is whether the fact that these hopes cannot be shared by all itself constitutes a reason to reject such hopes.

So here are my two general questions moving forward in the paper. In regards to Campbell and Stramondo's argument, is pity ever warranted? If so, under what conditions? And what is it about pitying people with disabilities that makes it unfitting? Is it the consequences of the emotional response or is it something about what the emotional response is attaching to? Similarly, in regards to Kittay's argument, what is it about holding out hope for a world without disability that is unfitting? Is it the fact that such a world is undesirable in itself, that it is not accessible to many people within the disability rights community, or can the problem be found in what holding onto such hope does to a person (ie. that it leads them to be complacent about certain features of society that can be changed)?

These two sets of questions can be put most broadly in terms of the fittingness relation between the world and our emotions. How are we to evaluate these emotional responses that we have in such situations and when can we say that certain emotional responses are unwarranted. I ask these questions both because I think that examining our emotional responses to people with disabilities can lead to a fascinating contribution to the philosophy of emotions and to moral psychology. But also because I worry that these arguments put forward by Campbell and Stramondo and Kittay are going to disregarded or misunderstood by their interlocutors. In order to see this worry, I want to place this discussion in relation to the ongoing debate about the relationship between disability and well-being and the susceptibility of some views to the expressivity argument.

§2. Responding to Expressivity Arguments and the Wrong Kind of Reason Defense

There is often a sense in the debate surrounding disability and well-being that the positions are intractable. That is, for disability rights advocates, the Standard View is a non-starter for our ethical and political thinking. For many philosophers and bioethicists, on the other hand, such a view seems to be self-evident. And regardless of the evidence offered by disability rights advocates which demonstrates that people with disabilities lead satisfying lives and thus calls into question both the truth and the practical implications of the Standard View, bioethicists and philosophers continue to assert it and offer up new arguments in the service of fortifying the Standard View against the provided evidence or in the service of disregarding the evidence in the first place as unreliable, confused or biased. Reciprocally, when proponents of the Standard View offer evidence that people with disabilities are disadvantaged on numerous objective metrics of quality of life – poverty rate, morbity, mortality, etc. – disability rights advocates point out that these metrics cannot disambiguate the effects resulting from the disability itself and those resulting from the unjust social marginalization and lack of accommodation for people with disabilities.

In light of the contentious nature of the debate and the seeming intractability of the positions on each side, there is a sense in which Kittay's as well as Campbell and Stramondo's challenges embody an important philosophical virtue of argumentative modesty. Early on in our philosophical training, we are taught that we should not start out an argument with assumptions that our opponents are sure to reject and that we should not overstate our case in the conclusions that we make. This strategy broadens the reach of our arguments to the widest possible audience, inviting people from deeply disparate perspectives to engage with our views – and hopefully to be persuaded.

These two challenges employ this strategy well. They do not start out their argument with the general assumption that a life with disability is no worse than a life without disability, nor is this an ultimate conclusion. Rather they approach the debate from an agnostic position, questioning whether it is possible to make such general assumptions about how living with a disability will affect an individual life. For example:

> **Kittay:** "Life is so strewn with contingencies that the presence or absence of a disability in an individual's life is still a poor predictor of what would be a better life for that person."[23]

> **Campbell and Stramondo:** "The diverse contingencies of life lead to all kinds of variations in well-being—even among similar people living in similar environments. Given all of these variables, it is impossible to make any true generalization about the tendency of disabilities to generate intrinsic goods and bads."[24]

Perhaps no stronger claims are forthcoming not because of any philosophical virtue on their part but merely in light of the fact that Kittay, Campbell and Stramondo recognize that their position will seem counterintuitive to the majority of people (most of whom happen to be nondisabled). Nevertheless, their agnosticism seems warranted, especially given all the empirical data and testimony concerning the life-satisfaction level of people with disabilities, along with the fact that those who do not live with a disability cannot fully understand what it is like to have a disability and those who do live with a disability cannot fully understand what it is like to live without one. Given the limited epistemic situation that everyone in the debate find themselves in, isn't the philosophically responsible posture here one of agnosticism about the possibility of making non-invidious comparisons?

Not according to those who hold the Standard View. Regardless of what one thinks about the validity of the view, we should recognize how strong of a thesis it is, especially in comparison to the relatively modest positions argued for in these two challenges. Those that hold the Standard View either presume at the outset that disability is a misfortune, or they make arguments in defense of that presumption, usually in the service of defending further ethical or political claims about parental reproductive obligations or the justice of certain distributive schemes.

The thing is, however, the Standard View is not even a necessary position to take up in order to defend these policies and practices that advocates of the Standard View want to defend. First, you don't need to presume that it is worse to be disabled than nondisabled in order to see what is wrong about causing someone to have the disability or even failing to prevent someone in your charge from becoming disabled. Blindness doesn't need to be worse than sightedness for us to see what is wrong with shining a blinding laser into someone's eyes, nor is the comparison necessary for us to see what is wrong about refusing to vaccinate one's child against the measles. Becoming blind can be bad for a person without it being comparatively bad for a person to have always been blind.[25] Second, as Kittay convincingly argues, you don't need to presume that it is worse to be disabled than nondisabled in order to see why it is important to protect women's rights to make informed reproductive choices – especially when such choices have a significant impact on their lives and against the background of a history of taking these choices away from women. Genetic testing and accessible and safe abortion procedures can thus feature into the rights of women to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. As a final example, you don't need the Standard View to explain why governments may be justified in funding medical research on and offering treatments for certain impairments.[26] So philosophers and bioethicists can argue in defense of prenatal testing, the right to have abortions, the right to genetic testing, social programs that encourage vaccinations and research, etc. without holding onto the strong and contentious view that disability is a misfortune.

Why, then, the continued insistence on the Standard View? I think the answer to this question is not only that these philosophers think the Standard View is correct, but that they also judge it to be *the realistic* view to hold. By 'realism' here I mean the opposite of the naïveté that is associated with idealism. I imagine that those who continue to defend the Standard View think that it contains a hard and inconvenient truth about people with disabilities. A truth that it is understandable, perhaps even admirable, for people with disabilities and for their loved ones to reject.

There is evidence of this in the way that upholders of the Standard View tend to respond to the Expressivity Argument. The Expressivity Argument as it is usually made, claims that certain practices such as genetic selection against disabilities *express views* that stigmatize and reinforce discrimination against disabled people. One way of understanding the novel challenge that Kittay, Campbell and Stramondo is that they are extending the Expressivity Argument to matters concerning our attitudes rather as well as matters concerning social practices and policies. In light of this expansion, one can understand the Expressivity Argument as the following claim:

> **Expressivity Argument:** Certain practices and sentiments, such as genetic selection or pity, express views that stigmatize and reinforce discrimination against disabled people.

Here is how Glover and Brock et. al. each have responded to the possible charge that some of their views concerning disability fall prey to such expressions:

> **Glover:** "People should not be prevented from choosing children with more rather than less potential for flourishing. And sometimes it may be a good thing to make such choices. But there is a possible cost to the self-esteem of people already disadvantaged. I think that, other things being equal it is good if the incidence of disabilities is reduced by parental choices to opt for potentially more flourishing children. But we should not deny the potential cost to

> which the expressivist argument draws attention. And we should try to reduce the cost as far as possible."[27]

> **Brock, et. al.:** [After arguing against the Expressivity Argument,] "None of this is to deny that some members of the disabilities rights community are genuinely offended by what they take to be the misplaced zeal to harness the powers of science to prevent disabilities. Granted the shameful history of discrimination against and insensitivity toward persons with disabilities, their taking offence is perfectly understandable. However, it is one thing to say that a certain behavior is offensive to a particular group, and quite another to say that the fact that the group is offended constitutes a violation of anyone's rights."[28]

What do we notice about these two responses? First, that Glover and Brock, et. al. understand the Expressivity Argument to be one primarily concerned with the negative consequences of expressing an attitude or proposing a policy rather than the truth or fittingness of that attitude or the value of that policy. Second, they understand the negative consequences to be primarily its offense to people with disabilities or the lowering of their self-esteem. This understanding of the force of the Expressivity Argument allows Glover and Brock et. al. to continue to think that their views accurately represent the world but also to concede that publically expressing these views and acting on these views may upset certain populations. The solution then, as Glover makes clear, is not to change one's position, but to do what is in one's power to minimize hurt feelings.

I worry that similar responses may be made by advocates of the Standard View to the arguments concerning unwarranted pity and untenable hope. In response to Campbell and Stramondo, they may say: "Sure the fact that we think disability is a misfortune may lead us to pity people who have disabilities and this may lead to a loss of well-being. But the pity is fitting, living with a disability closes off opportunities that they otherwise would have. It is *this* feature of their condition that makes it appropriate to pity them, regardless of the consequences that the pity may bring about." In response to Kittay, they may say: "Sure that fact that we hope for a world with fewer disabled people may lead to some bad consequences in the present. It may make us more complacent about creating certain opportunities for existing people with disabilities. But we shouldn't get rid of our hope, we should instead counteract its negative effects. The hope is fitting; its target is a world that is both desirable and achievable. It is these two features that makes this future world worthy of our hope, regardless of the consequences the hope may bring about."

These two possible responses defend the Standard View by employing 'Wrong Kind Of Reason' (WKR) arguments. Justin D'arms and Daniel Jacobson, among others, have argued that our emotional responses can be fitting despite it being bad (or vicious) to feel them.[29] This is because our emotions are tracking certain evaluative features of the world. According to D'arms and Jacobson, "we must be able not simply to distinguish good and bad reasons to feel an emotion…we must also be able to distinguish good but irrelevant reasons to feel from those that can properly brought to bear on a property ascription [of whether the emotion is fitting]. The fact that shame is an unpleasant feeling, for instance, or that it would be counterproductive to feel on some occasion, are perfectly good reasons not to be ashamed, which are nevertheless irrelevant to whether what one has done is shameful."[30]

That the lion will smell our fear is not the right sort of consideration in determining whether fear is fitting. What determines whether fear is fitting is some attribute inherent in the lion (and its relationship to us and our interests). The lion poses a real danger to us, therefore fear is fitting even if feeling fear is injudicious. That it is petty to feel envy for someone else's good fortune does not yet prove that such envy is inapt. The envy may be fitting given that this other person has something valuable that one lacks. Therefore moral and prudential considerations about whether to have an emotion are irrelevant to whether the emotion accurately represents the world. They offer us a wrong kind of reason in favor of the emotion. Ugly attitudes can nonetheless be fitting and virtuous attitudes can nonetheless be unfitting.

We should note that there is a difference between being responsive to bad reasons in favor of some attitude and being responsive to the wrong kind of reasons in favor of that attitude.[31] The fact that your daughter took sixth in her class spelling bee is conceivably a good (albeit perhaps minor) reason to be proud of her. The fact that being a proud parent improves your daughter's self-esteem and may result in greater achievements down the line is a potentially strong consideration in favor of being proud of her. However, this pragmatic consideration about the effects of your attitude on your daughter's behavior is at best a good but Wrong Kind of Reason (WKR) to be proud of her. While the attitude of pride may be beneficial in such a case, such benefits do not weigh on whether your daughter's actions merit your pride.

If you don't find this distinction persuasive, contrast this scenario with the following: the fact that your daughter has kicked a puppy is clearly a bad reason to be proud of her. The fact that being a proud parent improves your daughter's self-esteem and may result in less animal cruelty in her future is a potentially strong consideration in favor of being proud of her. However strong the considerations about the benefits of your attitude, it seems clear that your daughter's actions in this case do not merit your pride. Up to some limit, being a good parent may entail being responsive to WKRs for being proud of one's children, even when their actions barely merit pride.[32] However, claiming that you should be responsive to WKRs in some situations does not change its direction of normative force. The right kinds of reasons for pride should track good-making features of the potential object of pride itself rather than the good-making features of holding the attitude of pride.

So the difference between bad reasons and wrong kinds of reasons is this: That she kicked a puppy is a *bad* Right Kind of Reason (RKR) to be proud of your daughter. The potential improvement of your daughter's behavior as a result of your pride is a *good* Wrong Kind of Reason (WKR) to be proud of her. WKRs for pride are at best considerations in favor of attempting to get yourself to be proud of your daughter; however they cannot offer any consideration in favor of evaluating her actions as worthy of your pride. Similar to the attitude of pride, one can ask whether the attitude of hope or the attitude of pity is merited in a specific case. We may want to distinguish between an argument offering reasons for why it would be better to be hopeful about some desired end and an argument offering reasons for why some desired end merits our hope. We may also want to distinguish between offering reasons for why it would be better to not pity a person and offering reasons for why some person does not merit our pity.

Do Campbell, Stramondo and Kittay offer us arguments of the right kind? Campbell and Stramondo's Anti-Proleptic Pity Argument may be offering us a wrong kind of reason to refrain from feeling pity insofar as the inaptness of the pity is grounded solely in the negative consequences of holding the attitude of pity. Kittay's argument against untenable hope may be offering us a wrong kind of reason to reject certain hopes insofar as the inaptness of these hopes is grounded in the negative consequences of holding them or the viciousness of our character were we to hold them. However, I do not think that this is the best way to interpret the challenges that these authors present to the Standard View.

§3. Determining the Aptness of Emotions

Kittay, Campbell and Stramondo have ways to handle the Wrong Kind of Reason Defense. Both challenges to the Standard View highlight the fact that there is no matter of fact at present about how people's lives will go. They suggest that given the contingencies of life and that certain things don't (yet) hold true, certain attitudes that proponents of the Standard View maintain are unfitting and not merely inconvenient or upsetting. To see this, let me offer the following distinction of how to interpret the Expressivity Argument.

When we say, "certain practices and sentiments *express views* that stigmatize and reinforce discrimination against disabled people" we can mean a number of different things:

First Interpretation: we can mean that the views underlying the practice or sentiment are *informed* by harmful stereotypes of disabilities, therefore the practice or sentiment is itself *unwarranted.* Views that result from stereotypes fail to be reliably truth dependent. Take for example, the practice of speaking louder to a person who has a foreign accent. Regardless of the intentions of the speaker, such a behavior expresses a view – that people with foreign accents cannot understand English when it is spoken at the normal register – that is informed by certain stereotypes about their fluency. This view and the subsequent behavior is unwarranted, not necessarily because it is annoying or harmful, but because the stereotype is not moored in reality.

Second Interpretation: we can mean that the views underlying the practice or sentiment *express* harmful stereotypes of disabilities, therefore the practice or sentiment that is associated with such views is itself *vicious*. It is not the consequences of the expression, but the expression of the view itself that invites negative evaluation of the character of the person. For example, Virginia Woolf's description in her diary of walking past a group of people with cognitive disabilities: "It was perfectly horrible. They should certainly be killed."[33] Let's imagine that Woolf did not intend for her thoughts to reach any public audience. They were just thoughts she had and expressed to herself. No matter. Expressions of harmful stereotypes are vicious in themselves, they needn't contribute to furthering the stigma or discrimination against people with disabilities.

Third Interpretation: we can mean that the practice or sentiment itself *perpetuates* harmful stereotypes of disabilities, therefore these behaviors are themselves *deleterious*. Here what invites the negative evaluation is the choice to express the sentiment or attitude given the consequences, not that there is anything wrong with the sentiment or attitude in the abstract. I take it that Brock et. al. and Glover see the Expressivity Argument as mainly challenging their views on this third sort of interpretation. If not accurately understood, expressing their views and prescriptions *may* lead to harmful stereotypes of people with disabilities. The solution then is to ensure that in expressing these views, they are not giving credence to certain ugly attitudes of the past. However, nothing in their view is itself taken to be a misrepresentation of the world as it is or expressive of a vicious and biased character.

However as Kittay, Stramondo and Campbell suggest, under such uncertain conditions, some hopes and bouts of pity do not accurately reflect our current condition. These attitudes hold as fixed certain features of the world that are still malleable and they disvalue certain features of people's lives that should be taken into consideration. So it is not merely the consequences that make such attitudes inappropriate, it is the way they represent our world and the way they reflect on the character of our relationships to others. It follows that the first interpretation of the expressivity charge is open to Campbell and Stramondo as well Kittay. They can argue that the Standard View and its attendant feelings of pity and hope are unwarranted, not necessarily because they are harmful, but because they are not properly moored in reality. Campbell and Stramondo explicitly employ this sort of strategy by arguing that pity is not a fitting response to the mere likelihood that one's disability is bad for a person; rather, the disability must actually be bad for that person.[34] We often do not know a person's circumstances well enough to determine whether their situation has indeed been made worse off given their disabilities. Rather than immediately experiencing pity, it is appropriate to approach people with disabilities with "a degree of measured curiosity" about their life and the impact that having a disability has had on it.[35] Campbell and Stramondo can make this sort of argument without fear of offering any reason of the wrong kind against the Standard View.

There is a sense however that the first interpretation of the Expressivity Argument does not address all that is problematic about certain policies and attitudes. The consequences of our hopes and bouts of pity do seem to matter in these situations; it is not just that they do not fully reflect the contingent nature of disability. Our hopes and bouts of pity can close us off from being motivated to work alongside people with disabilities to ensure that the contingencies of life work out in their favor and to take it to be a matter of justice (and not just of fortune) that they do. It seems then that an important feature of the arguments that Kittay and Campbell and Stramondo put forward is that they raise the stakes of us having certain emotional responses to people with disabilities. Often, we think about our emotional apparatus as a private and reflexive matter – as an internal echo of the world that can have no practical effect on it. However, the arguments against unwarranted pity and untenable hope highlight the relationship between our emotions and our sense of agency. While we may not succumb to the sort of viciousness expressed in Virginia Woolf's diary, hoping for the wrong sort of thing and pitying people who do not merit it makes it harder for us to view ourselves as agents of change. Our unwarranted emotions can thus expose something more significant about us than the people we are reacting to. This may not itself be the right kind of reason not to have the emotion, but it can be a good reason to reassess our understanding of the facts of the matter and our beliefs about whether things ought to remain that way.

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[1] Jonathan Glover, *Choosing Children.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006),p. 35.

[2] Jane Cambell, "Choose Life,*" The Guardian,* Aug. 26. 2003. Last accessed Sept. 29, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2003/aug/26/health.lifeandhealth.

[3] Deborah Kent, 'Somewhere a Mocking Bird', in *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights,* ed. Erik Parens and Adrienne Asch, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press), p. 62.

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[4] Ron Amundson, "Disability, Ideology, and Quality of Life: A Bias in Biomedical Ethics," in *Quality of Life and Human Difference,* ed. David Wasserman, Jerome Bickenbach, Robert Wachbroit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 101-125.

[5] These moral reasons should be contrasted from prudential reasons. The idea is not that it is in the parents best interest to create children without disabilities, but rather that there is something morally problematic, perhaps even blameworthy, when they refrain from doing what they can to create children who are not disabled.

[6] For a discussion of the prudential neutrality view, see Stephen Campbell and Joseph Stramondo, "The Complicated Relationship of Disability and Well-Being" (forthcoming in the Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal).

[7] Deborah Kent's view of her blindness exemplifies this position.

[8] Liza Mundy, "A World of Their Own," *The Washington Post,* March 31, 2002. Last accessed, Sept. 29, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/magazine/2002/03/31/a-world-of-their-own/abba2bbf-af01-4b55-912c-85aa46e98c6b/

[9] Stephen Campbell and Joseph Stramondo, (Forthcoming)

[10] Eva Kittay, "How Not to Argue for Selective Reproductive Procedures" in *Disabled Minds and Things that Matter"* [Unpublished Manuscript].

[11] On the idea of Wrong Kinds of Reason Arguments more generally see, Wlodek Rabinowitz and Toni Ronnow-Rasmussen, "The Strike of the Demon: On Fitting Pro-attitudes and Value," *Ethics,* 114: 3, (April, 2004), pp. 391- 423.

[12] Campbell and Stramondo, forthcoming; Elizabeth Barnes "Valuing Disability, Choosing Disability," *Ethics*, 125: 1, (October, 2014), pp. 88-113.

[13] Campbell and Stramondo, forthcoming, 13.

[14] Ibid., 21.

[15] It should be noted that holding the Standard View is taken here to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for someone to feel warranted pity toward people with disabilities. That is, one may have other views both about their own relationship to the pitied person (ie. that they are superior) and about the extent of the misfortune that a disability brings about in order for pity to be triggered. One may see a friend's peanut allergy as a misfortune without feeling pity for that person because either they don't take the misfortune to be so dire so as to warrant pity or because they can't feel pity for a friend who they recognize as an equal. These considerations are orthogonal to the argument that Campbell and Stramondo present. For their argument to work, all they need to do is to presume that viewing disability as a misfortune

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is a constituent feature of warranted pity, and since the Standard View is false, pity towards people with disability is unwarranted regardless of whether or not the pity would be warranted (or unwarranted) given other factors.

[16] Campbell and Stramondo, forthcoming, 25-26.

[17] Joseph Stramondo "How an Ideology of Pity Is a Social Harm to People with Disabilities" *Social Philosophy Today,* vol. 26, (2010), p. 121-134.

[18] Allen Buchanan, Dan Brock, Norman Daniels, Daniel Wikler *From Chance to Choice.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 278. For the rest of the paper, I will call this citation Brock et. al since Kittay is specifically arguing against Brock's defense of reproductive beneficence.

[19] Jonathan Glover, (2006), 35.

[20] Guy Kahane and Julian Savalescu, "The moral obligation to create children with the best chance of the best life." *Bioethics,* 23:5, (2009), p. 274-90.

[21] Kittay, Unpublished Manuscript, 156-157.

[22] Kittay, Unpublisehd Manuscript, 177.

[23] Kittay, Unpublisehd Manuscript, 152.

[24] Campbell and Stramondo, forthcoming, p. 12.

[25] Barnes (2014).

[26] Francis M. Kamm "Disability, Discrimination and Irrelevant Goods" in Kimberley Brownlee and Adam Cureton, eds., *Disability and Disadvantage.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 317.

[27] Glover (2006), 35.

[28] Brock, et. al. (2000), 281.

[29] Justin D'arms and Daniel Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness of Emotions,'" *Philosophy and Phenomelogical Research.* 61: 1 (JULY, 2000), pp. 65-90.

[30] Ibid. 69.

[31] See Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, "Wrong Kinds of Reason and the Opacity of Normative Force," in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 9,* Russ Shafer-Landau, ed.,(Oxford: Oxford Uniersity Press, 2014).

[32] This view could be based on aretaic ideals rather than pragmatic considerations that weigh in favor of pride. That is, one could hold this view, not only because being a proud parent has good consequences but just in virtue of what it means to be a good parent. D'Arms and Jacobson argue that moral and pragmatic considerations for holding certain attitudes are often best understood as WKRs.

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[33] Glover, 2006, 29.

[34] Campbell and Stramondo, Forthcoming, p. 26.

[35] Campbell and Stramondo, Forthcoming, p. 27.