Book Reviews

Owen Flanagan, How to do Things with Emotions: The Morality of Anger and Shame across Cultures. *Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021, ix + 309 pp.*

In his recent book, Owen Flanagan discusses the so-called disciplinary emotions: anger, shame, and guilt. These emotions are called disciplinary due to their punitive character. However, they are not only punitive; they have a higher goal. Flanagan describes them as emotions that "are more sticks than carrots, [and] the goal of using them must be to reap the rewards of a shared, harmonious, mutually beneficial common life" (9).

So, the question is, how exactly emotions conceived as "bad emotions" make us do good things? Flanagan provides an answer to that question. In short, these emotions have a bad reputation that needs to be rebuilt. He proposes working towards reconstruction of emotions as well as rehabilitation of their reputation. Flanagan's method for the reconstruction of emotions is set from the perspective of cultural psychology, anthropology and cross-cultural philosophy. It aims at using "the evidence of variation as an invitation to think about how we do these emotions, to think of how we do these emotions as something we are in charge of and that we can change if we have reason to" (42). The overall idea based on such method is to critically think about "how we do emotions, and how we might do them better" (42).

The book is organized in three parts and eight chapters. The first part, "Anger," is divided into three chapters ("Anger and Morals," "Anger across Cultures," "Anger and Flourishing"). As Flanagan thinks, anger mistakenly has a good reputation because we are taught to think that daily display of a minimal amount of anger is good, healthy, permissible, and sometimes necessary since it shows that we care about something. There is a problem with the moral categorization of anger due to the fact that many people, as well as many moral philosophers, think that some forms of anger are virtuous (see 49). Hence, anger also needs to be rebuilt and rehabilitated. Rehabilitation consists of teaching that anger is bad, yet not every form of anger is a vice. Anger should not be a part of a healthy moral community, although there are some varieties of anger (e.g., anger against structural sexism) that help to increase awareness of things that we need to overcome. Forms of anger that we should get rid of are payback and pain-passing anger. Both are common and similar insofar as they aim to hurt and humiliate others.

Specifically, payback anger, which includes revenge, is intentionally cruel; it is set on the intention "to cause another physical or mental pain and suffering, and/or status harm, typically because they caused me pain" (67). Pain-passing anger is a kind of anger where one intends to cause pain to another because one is in pain, but that pain is not caused by the person who is the subject of inflicted pain at the moment (see 67). Pain-passing anger is "thoughtless and self-indulgent" (68). Both payback and pain-passing anger "hurt others for no greater good or higher purpose, such as improving the other, balancing a relationship, or changing harmful practices or institutions. The arguments against them apply to the other kinds of anger insofar as they embed, enact, and encourage payback or pain-passing" (68).

Thus, the rehabilitation consists of rethinking what we are being taught. For instance, Flanagan reassesses contemporary American attitude (more specifically, the attitude of the American Psychological Association and the dominant American view among psychologists and psychiatrists) towards anger that considers such emotion as a healthy and normal human emotion which needs to be expressed, externalized or released "otherwise there will be addiction, eating disorders, skin disorders, migraines, divorce, and general mayhem" (56). He challenges such an attitude: "Except when one examines the evidence, it is all bullshit in the technical, philosophical sense [referring to Harry Frankfurt's *On Bullshit*]. The message is designed to persuade, but with complete disregard for the truth and evidence" (56).

The truth that Flanagan has in mind includes, on the one hand, accepting that "[t]he world I live in partakes in an orgy of anger but doesn't see or acknowledge it" (57), meaning that expressing or releasing anger produces more anger (which he is trying to emphasize but which the world around him, by getting more and more angrier, does not realize). On the other hand, we need to include evidence about other cultures that may help us examine how *others* do anger (with the possibility to learn something from them and do *our* emotions better).[1]

According to the evidence, the Japanese—as Flanagan informs us—leave the room when they are angry, and the Ifaluk people stop eating. Americans associate anger with yelling and hitting, and Belgians with withdrawal and ignoring (80). Regarding the Ifaluk people, it is interesting to point out that they disapprove of most kinds of anger, especially about personal hurt feelings or personal misfortune. The only kind of anger considered justified among them is "primarily in response to selfishness and stinginess" (83). Among Utku Inuits, anger towards their sled dogs is justified, although all forms of interpersonal anger are considered vicious (see 82).

The Minangkabau, a numerous ethnic group of people in Indonesia, believe that anger is a vice. It is harmful to socialization because it goes against respecting others. Admittedly, shaming children for the Minangkabau is useful and beneficial. Respecting others is an important value of

[1] "Our" or "We" refers to contemporary Americans and/or some groups of people who are connected regionally, politically, socioeconomically, religiously, educationally, ethically, by age etc. and/or the WEIRD cultures (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) since "most psychology is based on experiments with North American college students, and this is one of the most unrepresentative populations in history" (110). North-American students are WEIRD.

the Minangkabau people, and shame cultivated at an early age ensures this common and social emotion. The Bara, an ethnic group in Madagascar, believes that anger is necessary for teaching children the norms of good behaviour. Their life credo is to live well. Moreover, if that good life is somehow disturbed, anger is necessary. Anger, in the mentioned monocultures, is a social and moral emotion—it has a moral feature, for it represents what one ought and ought not to do. In that sense, "[t]hese emotions [namely, anger and shame] are used to inform others that they are out of normative conformity or, at minimum, that they are doing something we don't like or approve of" (7).

Both Minangkabau and Bara people agree that anger is bad in interpersonal adult relationships, but Bara people consider it useful in upbringing and socialization. Both the Utku Inuits and the aforementioned ethnic groups are examples of monocultures in which it is possible to live in an "unambiguous" collective in which a norm violation is experienced as a collective violation of the norm. In a multicultural society, the matter of emotions is not that simple.

Since doing emotions in a multicultural society and in general is not that simple, Flanagan calls attention to several things about anger that are worth mentioning and that are emphasized throughout the book:

(1) there is no universal agreement on what anger is (see 126) since it is "a cultural matter, the result of cultural learning, including, especially, how elders model it for the young" (xiii);
(2) "[w]hat is universal is that anger is unpleasant; it has negative valence for the person who experiences it, and it is unpleasant for the recipient, producing pain, fear, anxiety, and sadness" (126);
(3) "[t]he best world is one in which when anger is necessary, it is motivated by love and compassion for the person or community of persons that one is angry at or with and does not aim at revenge or harm but only to make the person or persons, at the limit the world, better. This is loving anger" (59);
(4) "[a]nger and shame are generally even more implicated in normative life than emotions like sadness, fear, and happiness" (34);
(5) what we could do is examine the culturally scripted emotions and borrow emotional patterns in the same way we borrow "a cuisine or fashion or practice from an alien tradition because they like it or it looks good on them or it improves mental or moral health" (120).

The conclusion regarding anger is that as a moral emotion, it is, like all emotions, culturally scripted. By getting informed on different ways of living a human life, we can rethink how, when and why we get angry and think of ways to improve that.

The second part of the book, titled "Shame," is divided into four chapters ("Generic Shame," "The Science of Shame," "Shame across Cultures," and "The Mature Sense of Shame"). According to Flanagan, we lack shame when we ignore or violate values—what is good, true and beautiful. He puts it as follows: "Shamelessness is common, and it reflects a situation in which many values are weakly held, and in which norms suited for a common life that aims at the common good yield to precepts for winning friends and influencing people, gaming, and getting ahead. In a world in which it is every

ego for itself, it is better to seem honest than to be honest, and acquisitiveness of the "greed is good" sort—once a deadly sin—has various honorific disguises" (xi).

That is why Flanagan proposes to upgrade shame to a level of mature sense of shame. He cheers for the positive acceptance of shame or good shame "as an ideal protector of deep value commitments [...] [as] an emotional instrument that can be used to teach and protect values" (134). As Flanagan sees it, shame is an emotion that "starts out feeling bad but is eventually autonomously endorsed as a positive self-monitoring emotion" (134). So, the crucial part of upgrading shame is considering it as a shield for values. Currently, there are two dogmas about shame:

(1) "Shame is an essentially social emotion, ultimately a response to the disapproving eyes of others" (181);
(2) "Shame is directly morally bad" (181).

Flanagan discusses both dogmas. He believes shame is a complex social emotion whose moral categorization, like anger, depends on how each culture defines it. Despite that, there are two very widespread dogmas about shame.

According to the first dogma, shame is a social emotion arising from disapproval or non-compliance with norms. Flanagan does not deny this but adds that it does not necessarily have to be an emotion that entails the gaze of others.

According to the second dogma, shame is directly a morally bad emotion because we associate it with "one kind of bad feeling" (134) that an individual has when another judges him for violating a norm. Furthermore, shame occurs in combination with feelings of embarrassment, fear, anxiety and sadness (some consider that this mixture of emotions is shame itself), and it is a "social emotion" (135), not an individual one, which means that the individual does not, in principle, feel it self-initiated. The initiator of shame is always the other. As a collective emotion, shame opens up the possibility of exclusion from that collective. In this sense, shame is a painful and humiliating emotion; shame is public, comes from outside and is not an emotion that an individual chooses independently.

Flanagan sees shame in another manner. The idea of a mature sense of shame or good shame is that such an emotion is autonomously endorsed and serves as a positive self-monitoring emotion. Thus, shame results from setting boundaries one does not want to cross because otherwise, he would do something wrong. This does not mean that with this kind of shame, we would have a perfect or sinless individual. It only means that the individual who endorses shame can relate to the sociomoral order and is open to feedback from others. In other words, shame is related to social relationships but also to personal values and ideals, so in that sense, it is based on personal choice, not on criticism from others.

Shame is thus separated from humiliation and embarrassment, and it is far from a bad emotion. It is elevated from a bad and unnecessary emotion that depends on another's judgment (as an emotion that, e.g., "attacks a person") to an emotion that protects values.

On the other hand, guilt is an emotion that is conceptualized throughout the book in the same way shame is. Flanagan considers shame and guilt "different to some extent," although he "often use[s] the terms interchange-

ably" (192). The extent he has in mind is that shame, in contrast to guilt, is focused on character traits, more precisely on weaknesses or shortcomings of an individual, while, for example, guilt is linked to an action or an act.

The third part of the book is "Conclusion" and has one chapter, "Emotions for Multicultures." In that part, Flanagan summarizes what he wanted to achieve with the book, namely, to offer assistance for moral imagination about various moral possibilities and, thus, a mature attitude towards emotions.

In a gist, Flanagan's idea is simple: we need to do emotions better because we can be better at feeling shame and anger, as well as many other emotions. There are possibilities for changing how we do emotions (5) and by recognizing them, we can experience emotions differently and live a better life. The basis of this is the understanding that emotions are the things we do (xiv). Emotions are under our control. Moral or disciplinary emotions are designed to produce bad feelings because the idea is to stop doing what we should not—that is their intention. The ultimate idea of rehabilitation regarding moral emotions is to achieve self-regulation or self-observation in terms of norms, values and ideals.

This book is a work of philosophical art, and this review cannot do justice to how engaging and valuable it is. It was so refreshing to read about emotion from a philosophical point of view and, at the same time, get such a dense and insightful look on moral emotions. Reading an author who can deliver a fascinating philosophical book written in plain language is always a privilege.*

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Frauke Albersmeier, The Concept of Moral Progress. *Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022, 248 pp.*

The phenomenon of moral progress has been attracting increasing interest in philosophy in recent years. Ever since the publication of Peter Singer's book *Expanding Circle* in 1981, numerous authors have attempted to grasp the concept of moral progress and to answer the question of whether there is indeed progress in morality and how we should understand it. It is not surprising that, like many other philosophical concepts, there is not much consensus on the concept of moral progress. What is specific to this concept is that the attempt to understand it delves into the very heart of the question of how to understand morality itself. In order to arrive at a plausible concept of moral progress, it seems that we must address, if not resolve, a whole range of contentious questions that accompany ethical thinking. Frauke Albersmeier has embarked on such an attempt in her book *The Concept of Moral Progress*.

The book is a revised doctoral thesis the author defended in 2020 at the University of Düsseldorf. It consists of five main chapters in which the

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