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Olivier Massin

In Defence of Mixed Feelings

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In defence of mixed feelings

> And the argument implies that there are combinations of pleasure and pain in lamentations, and in tragedy and comedy, not only on the stage, but on the greater stage of human life; and so in endless other cases. *Philebus*, 50b

Abstract. Mixed feelings occur when a same subject experience both pleasure and displeasure at the same time. I argued that mixed feelings are not only possible, but that they constitute a widespread phenomenon. In the first part, I answer to three objections against the possibility of mixed feelings, the most important one being that mixed feelings contradict the view that pleasure and displeasure are contraries. In the second part, I argue that pleasure in effort, the pleasure we take in doing things, is a widespread phenomenon that constitutes a case of mixed feeling of a special sort: a case where the displeasure grounds or explains the pleasure. I argue that none of the usual strategies of the enemies of mixed feelings for dealing with putative cases of mixed feelings (oscillation between pleasure and displeasure, rejection of one of the two feelings) achieves to deal with pleasure in effort.

Mixed feelings occur when we experience pleasure and displeasure at the same time. For instance, eating a chocolate cake while having headhache, feeling sad but taking pleasure in scenting a lilac, feeling both happy and sad of the victory of a friend in a game in which we participated[1], having a cramp during an orgasm, feeling nostalgia (joyfull sadness of remembering a happy time), enjoying a tragedy, feeling ashamed of taking pleasure in listening to Michel Sardou, delighting a very hot curry, feeling relief that the agonie of a friend came to an end, being touched to receive a gift that we don't like, enjoying endurance sports, feeling a pain decreasing.

[1] Grennspan, 1980.

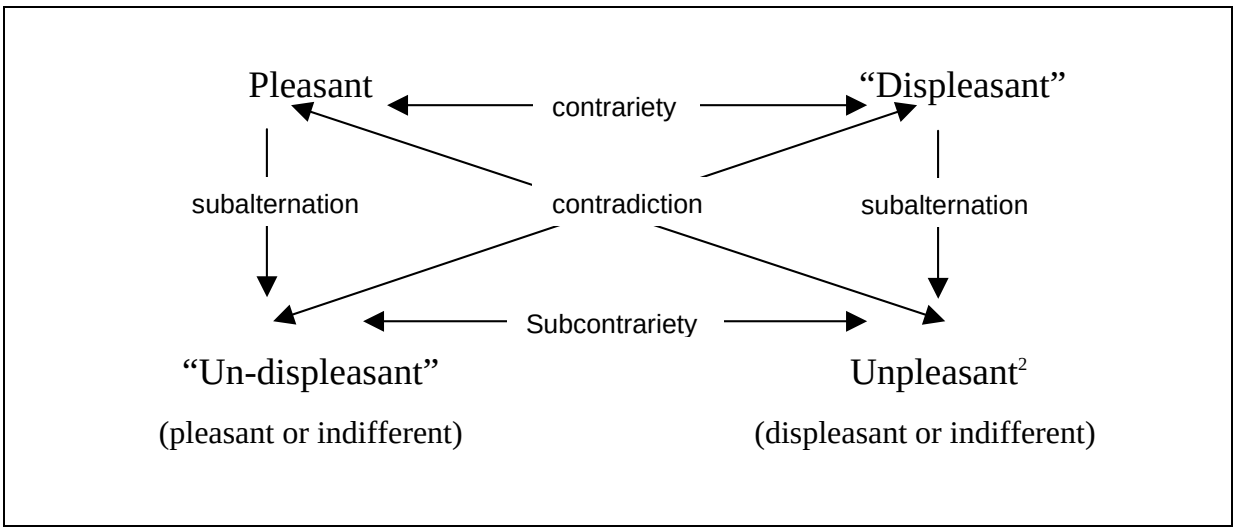
I intend to show that mixed feelings are a widespread phenomenon. Some psychologists and philosophers doubt it. The strongest arguments against mixed feelings questions their very possibility. Weaker arguments question their actuality. The weakest argument questions their generality: they would be confined to rare pathological cases.
I will envisage those three kind of arguments against mixed feelings successively in order to show that mixed feelings are (i) possible (ii) actual (iii) widespread.

0. Definitions

Pleasure. Mixed feelings occur when pleasure and displeasure are experienced at once. But what should we understand by pleasure here? I shall say that a pleasure is a mental state or episode that exemplify the property of pleasantness. I will assume that pleasantness is an exclusive property of mental states: when we say that a journey was pleasant, we are just saying that it caused some pleasant states in us.
There are two different concepts of pleasure, one specific, the other generic. On the specific concept, pleasure is a type positive affect among others. It is to be contrasted with joy, (Duncker, 1941), happiness, enjoyment (Perry, 1967), happiness, good mood, and so on. The concept of pleasure on which I will rely here is, by contrast, the generic one. Pleasure, in the generic sense, is the class of all positive affects. Pleasantness then, is to be equated with positive valence or polarity, that is, with what all the positive affective phenomena have in common. This should sound controversial only to those who deny that there is such a natural class of "positive affects". But for those who admit such a natural class, no particular view of positive valence is implied here: pleasantness can be taken to be a primitive and intrinsic property of experience, often called hedonic tone, reduced to an extrinsic property of mental states (being liked, desired, preferred…), or to a set of bodily sensations associated to those states.
Pleasures are therefore those mental states that exemplify the property of pleasantness, that is, of positive valence, however we construe it. The contrary of pleasure if sometimes held to be pain. Nevetheless, since pain is often restricted to bodily sensation, while some pleasure are intellectual, the proper term for the contrary of pleasure is rather displeasure. Following Hamilton (vol. 2, p. 436-437), the relations between pleasure and its opposites go as follows (Hamilton uses pain instead of displeasure):

> Pleasure and pain are opposed to each other as contraries, not as contradictories, that is, the affirmation of the one implies the negation of the other, but the negation of the one does not infer the affirmation of the other; for there may be a third or intermediate state, which is neither one of pleasure nor of pain but one of indifference.

We get the following "hedonic square":



Note that displeasure is not the only contrary of pleasure: presumably, pleasure has also contraries of the same sign. For instance, an experience cannot be both extremely and moderately pleasant (just as the same water cannot be both extremely hot and warm at the same time.

Add sth one the distinction between mixed and incorrect feelings (pleasure in the displeasure of *sb else*)

1. The possibility of mixed feelings

Three main lines of objections have been raised against the possibility of mixed feelings, all fail.

1.1. First objection to the possibility of mixed feeling: simultaneous pleasures and displeasure are always added up.

[2] S. Rachels claims that « unpleasure is the antonym of pleasure ».

According to a first objection against the possibility of mixed feelings, pleasure and displeasure are always summed, and that only the resultant pleasure or displeasure is experienced. This view has been endorsed by A. Bain:

> Pleasure and Pain are opposites in the strongest form of Contrariety ; like heat and cold, they destroy or neutralize each other. A. Bain, *The Emotions and The Will*, 1876.

Wundt also endorses a close view. According to him this tendency to fusion, this toctrine of the "Totalgefühl" is even essential to feeling (=pleasantness/unpleasantness), and distinguishes them from mere neutral sensation:

> All the affective elements present in consciousness at a given moment connect to form an unitary affective resultant. Wundt, (quoted by Titchener , 1908: 46)

The idea of Bain and Wundt is that when pleasure and displeasure are mixed, they give rise to a true mixture that is either a pure pleasure or a pure displeasure[3]. Pleasure and displeasure are tea-and-milk entities, rather than oil-and-vinegar ones. Like colours or temperatures, when there are both in the same subject at the same time, they mixes in order to give rise to a new pure and simple mixture. Mixed feeling would be impossible on the ground that pleasures always add up and the resultant pleasure (or displeasure) supersedes the component ones. As a result, the argument of Bain and Wundt can be reconstructed as follows:

> (i) There a certain kind of qualities, such as temperatures of colours, that are such that when two of them are exemplified in a same subject at the same time, they destroy each other in order to fuse into a single new quality of the same type.
> (ii) Pleasantness and displeasantness are qualities of this kind.
> (iii) In mixed feelings, pleasantness and displeasantness are exemplified in a same subject at the same time.
> ∴ Mixed feelings are impossible.

Granting the first premise and the last premisses, such an argument raises three problems.

[3] see also Schimmack & Colcombe, 1999 for an exposition of Bain's views.

First, the second premise appears as a *petitio principii* against mixed feelings. Not all qualities are such that there summation destroys them in order to give rise to a new mixture. It is true that in the case of temperature, when we add cold milk in a hot soup, only the resultant temperature appears to be real, while the component ones seem to have disappeared. But this is not always so. Consider the summation of vectors. From the fact that vectors can be summed it doesn't follow that only the resultant vector is real. Take displacement vectors. Julie is on her boat on the lake of Geneva, and, starting from Geneva, goes to Lausanne via Thonon. There are two component displacements: Geneva-Thonon, and Thonon-Lausanne and one resultant displacement Geneva-Thonon. In such a case, it seems clear that the real displacements are the component ones, and that the resultant displacement is only a theoretical fiction. Why shouldn't we say that the same thing happen in the case of pleasure and displeasure? That is, suppose Julie has a little pain in a toe while talking enormous pleasure in eating a Florentine. Why should we say that she experiments a moderate pleasure rather than a little displeasure and an intense pleasure? Why should we make temperatures, and not displacements to be the model for the summation of pleasures?

A second related point is that even if there is a resultant moderate pleasure that Julie experiences on the whole, why should this global hedonic state preclude the two local ones? Why shouldn't resultant and component pleasures be all real?

The third objection against Bain and Wundt's argument questions its validity. Even if we grant that pleasure and displeasure are temperature-like qualities, the argument appears to assume what it is intended to deny. Indeed, if pleasures and displeasures add up, it is that they first exist apart. When we say that Julie experiences a moderate pleasure on the whole when she experiments a little pain in her toe and a great pleasure in eating a Floretin we are assuming that she experiments at once one pleasure and one displeasure. If there is a summation, there are things that are summed. The first premise suggests that if at t1, the subject experiences both pleasure and displeasure, then at t2 it will necessarily experience only pleasure or displeasure. If so, there there is a time, t1, in which a same subject experiences a mixed feelings. The argument then, only shows that mixed feelings cannot last. The first premise may be understood in another way: the pleasure and displeasure that are summed shouldn't be understood as anterior in time, but, so to speak, as anterior in mind. They would be sub-conscious or sub-attentional pleasures. This seems to have been Wundt's

view (see Reisenzein, 1992)[4], but this doesn't amount to a rejection of mixed feelings but rather to a rejection of *conscious* mixed feelings. As a result Bain and Wund's's argument shows at best that mixed feelings cannot last, or that they recede in attention.

What may have led Wundt and Bain to this mistake is a confusion concerning the possibility of hedonic calculus. The fact that one can say that one prefers *on the whole* to have a little pain and and intense pleasure rather than only a little pain[5] does not implies that the little pain and the intense pleasure have to be fused into one unique moderate feeling. Our ability to compare between different global hedonic states only implies a certain homogeneity between those states, but not that they merge into one unique feeling. For instance, when we say that we prefer to be moderately suffering for a short time and to be importantly pleased for a long time after that, rather that to be only moderately pleased during the same time, we are not implying that the sufferance followed by the pleasure constitute one unique and unanalysable state.

1.2. Second objection to the possibility of mixed feelings: pleasure and attention.

A second argument against the possibility of mixed feelings goes as follows:

> (i) There is no sub-attentional pleasure (or displeasure): every pleasure is attended to. (it can be either pleasure necessarily attracts one's attention or because pleasure is constituted and dependent upon attention, see Charland, 2005).

[4] Wundt clearly admits mixed feelings indeed :

> « The composite character mentioned is the reason why there are common feelings which can not, strictly speaking, be called pleasurable or unpleasurable, because they contain elements belonging to both classes, and under circumstances either the one kind or the other may predominate. Such feelings made up of partial feelings of opposite character and deriving their characteristics from this combination, may be called *contrast-feelings.* A simple form of such among the common feelings is that of *tickling.* It is made up of a weak pleasurable feeling accompanying a weak external tactual sensation, and of feelings connected with muscular sensations aroused by the strong reflex impulses from the tactual stimuli. These reflex impulses may spread more or less, and often cause inhibitions of respiration when they reach the diaphragm, so that the resultant feeling may vary greatly in single cases in intensity, scope, and composition. »
> Wilhelm Max Wundt, *Outlines of Psychology*, 1897, trans. Charles Hubbard Judd (1897), II, §12 « Composite feelings », 6.

[5] But see Rachels, 2004 for a critic.

(ii) As far as pleasure is concerned, there is no divided attention: pleasure (or displeasure) not only attracts but also exhausts one's attention. It is impossible to focus one's attention on two different hedonic qualities at the same time.

(iii) In mixed feelings as same subject experience both pleasure and displeasure at the same time.

∴ Mixed feelings are impossible.

The line of argument has been clearly endorsed by Alechsieff (1907). Both premises of the argument are questionable. First, it is not clear that sub-attentional or background pleasure is impossible. After a certain time on a chair, I can realise that the chair was hurting me. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Rachels (2004) the most convincing example of background pleasure or displeasure are long lasting states such as happiness of good mood: we are still in a positive affective state even if we do not attend to such states. Some psychologist even think that attentional pleasure are impossible:

> Attention to an affection is impossible. If it is attempted, the pleasantness or unpleasantness at once eludes us and disappears, and we find ourselves attending to some obstrusive sensation or idea that e had not the slightest desire to observe (Titchener, 1908: 69).

But there is no need to go so far here: the existence of some unattented pleasures is sufficient for rejecting the first premise.

Second, the second premise, according to which it is impossible to attend to two feelings at once is doubtful: thanks to psychologists such as Treisman, divided attention is now a well documented phenomenon, and there is no a priori reason why it should not apply to hedonic states as well.

1.3. Third objection to the possibility of mixed feeling: the contrariety of pleasure and displeasure

The third argument against the possibility of mixed feelings goes as follows :

(i) Pleasure are displeasures are contraries.

(ii) Contraries cannot be true of the same subject at the same time.

(iii) In mixed feeling, a same subject is experiencing both pleasure and displeasure at the same time;

∴ Mixed feelings are impossible.

This argument seems to have impressed a great deal of defenders of mixed feelings. In order to answer it, they have developed two kinds of answers. I shall present these two answers and reject them, in order to defend a third, right answer.

The first answer, the most radical one, consists in rejecting the first premisse. According to this strategy, pleasure and displeasure are not contraries, but two independent dimension of variation of experience. In the same way that colours vary along hue, saturation and brightness, hedonic experiences would vary along pleasure and displeasure. A same experience can be both pleasure and displeasant, since pleasantness and displeasantness are orthogonal dimensions. This position, or something close to it, have been endorsed recently by some psychologist (Diener and Emmons, 1984 ; Watson & Tellegen, 1985 ; Cacioppo & Bernson, 1994; Watson & Clark, 1997[6]).

Claiming for the compatibility and independence of pleasure and displeasure insure the possibility of mixed feelings. Nevertheless, such a radical solution should be rejected for two reasons. First, it implies a quite important conceptual revision, so that it should be adopted only as a last resort. Second, to accept that pleasure and displeasure are not contraries lead to reject other well-accepted contrarieties. *Ceteris paribus*, we desire to have pleasant experience and we avert from unpleasant experience. In case of mixed feelings, if pleasantness and displeasantness are not contraries, we should then be desiring and averting a same experience, why implies that desire and aversion are not contraries either.

The second wrong answer to the present objection against the possibility of mixed feelings also address the first premises, but in a more subtle way. According to it, only pleasures and displeasures *of the same type* are contraries. The idea that there are different types of pleasantness, that is, the idea that two experiencex having the same content may differ in their type of pleasantness (a mere variation of intensity of pleasantness doesn't count

[6] Note nevertheless that if these authors agree that (in some circumstances) the positive and the negative valnece of emotions are independent and not contraries, they often urge that valence should not be understood as hedonic tone or « affect valence ».

a a change in type of pleasantness) has been introduced by J. S. Mill (1891)[7]. Lotze (according to Scheler) T. Lipps (1912) (according to Scheler and Duncker), Hobhouse (1921) (according to duncker p. 407) and R. B. Edwards (1979) alos endorse such a distinction. Mill originally uses this distinction in order to define a refined form of moral hedonism according to which when the intensity and duration of two pleasures are the same, the intellectual pleasure are more intrinsic value that the sensational one. But the use of the distinction between types of pleasure in order to ensure the possibility of mixed feelings is due to M. Scheler, :

> 'both types of feeling can coexist in one and the same act and moment of consciousness, and this most clearly when the possess different, i. e. , both positive and negative characters. This is most clear in extreme cases. A human being can be blissful while suffering from bodily pain ; indeed, for a true martyr, in his conviction of faith, this suffering may itself be a blissful suffering. ...One can also drink a glass of wine while being unhappy and still enjoy the bouquet of the wine. In these and similar cases the feeling-states involved do not constitue a rapidly changing sequence —as in the case if one takes different value-aspects of an event into consideration— for these feeling-states are given at the same time. But they do not blend into the unity of a total feeling-state. Nor are they different from each other merely by virtue of differences among their objective correlates.' M.Scheler, *Formalismus in Ethics and Non-Formal ethics of Value*, 1973 : 330.

There are two objections to such a solution. First, it is costly. To account for the possibility of mixed feelings without resorting to a distinction between types of pleasures would be more economical. Second and more importantly the solution threatened the unity of the generic concept of pleasure. Recall that by types of pleasure here, it is not meant a difference in the content of pleasant experience, but a difference in their very pleasantness. The problem is that pleasantness, or positive valence, is suppose to be the common factor of every positive affect. Now, if there are different kinds of pleasures, or positives valences, what do they share that the different kind of displeasures, or negative valences do not share? If there is nothing, then the generic concept of pleasure dissolves. This is the worry raised by Moore aginast Mill's distintion between higher and lower pleasures :

[7] *But see Broad, p. 232, mentionne 2 lectures différentes de Mill sur les types de plaisirs : soit Mill veut dire que les différentes entre types de plaisirs sont des differences entre les porteurs de l'hédonic tone. Soit il veut dire que ce sont des differences entre types d'hédonic tone.*

> ‘If you say “pleasure”, you must mean “pleasure”, some one thing, which may exist in different degrees but which cannot differ in kind’, Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 8.

If there is some second order quality shared order pleasantness, then the question of mixed feelings recurs concerning these second order qualities: can a same experience exemplifies both the quality common to all pleasantness and the qualities common to all unpleasantness?

The right answer to the present objection against the possibility of mixed feelings is rather the following one. As it stand, the objection isn’t valid. For the reference of the term “subject” changes between the last premises and the conclusion. We we say that incompatible property cannot be true in the same subject at the same time, we mean by “subject” the bearer, whatever it is, of the properties. But when we say, as in the conclusion, that mixed feeling occur in a same subject at the same time, “subject” refer to a person, a sentient being.
Therefore, the argument against mixed feelings relies on an hidden premisse:

> (iv) The subject (bearers) of pleasantness and displeasantness are subject (sentient beings).

This premisse, I submit, should be rejected. What is pleasant or displeasant, the bearer of hedonic qualities, are experiences. True, each experience is one of the constituant of the sentient being that has it, but there is no contradiction in having two experiences, one pleasant, the other displeasant. To put it in a nutshell, the objection does the same mistake as the one would say that since colours are incompatible, not shirt can be both blue and yellow at once. The mistake, of course, is that the shirt has different spatial parts, and that it would violates colours-incompatibility only if the very same part were both blue and yellow all over. The same is true for sentient being: they would violate the incompatibility of pleasure and displeasure only the very same mental states were both pleasant and displeasant. This, I submit, cannot happen. What can happen nevertheless, is that one pleasant and on displeasant mental state occur at the same time in a same sentient being.
Note that this solution is more restrictive than Scheler’s concerning the extension of mixed feelings. According to Scheler, a very same experience, with the very same content, can be both pleasant and unpleasant. I think this is impossible. It seems to me that were Scheler diagnose a difference in hedonic valence, there is always also a difference in the content of the valenced states.

Therefore, mixed feelings are possible.

2. The actuality of mixed feelings

Once the possibility of mixed feelings is secured, it remains to be seen whether there are actual mixed feelings. Two main strategies have been adopted by the enemies of mixed feelings in order to deal with putative mixed feelings: (i) pleasure and displeasure are not experienced at the same time. (ii) one of the two feelings is not a true one. Even if the enemy of mixed feelings can't show convincingly that such feeling are impossible, they still can hold that there are in fact none.

2.1. First strategy for rejecting putative cases of mixed feelings

This first type of strategies for rejecting the reality of mixed feeling claims than pleasure and displeasure are never experienced at the same time, but that there is always an oscillation between the experience of the one and the experience of the other. Arnold (1960) compares the case of mixed feeling to the visual case of the duck-rabbit: one can never attend to pleasure and displeasure at the same time. Such a view deals relevantly with certain cases such as the example of the player that enjoys the victory of his friend but deplores its own defeats. Such a case, it may be argue cannot be treated by distinguishing numerically distinct experiences, having different objects, since the victory of the friend and defeat of the player are only one an the same state of affairs look at from two different point of view. In the same way a bottle can be considered successively a half-full and half-empty. Though this is presumably a same fact, the way we describe it conditions the feeling we have in reaction.

2.2. Second strategy for rejecting putative cases of mixed feelings

The second type of strategy in order to reject the reality of mixed feelings is to deny the reality or authenticity of one of the two feelings. This can be done in several ways:

(i) One can claim that one of the two feelings is an "as if" or a "make-believe" feeling (Duncker, 1941). Such as solution nicely account for the following cases: While the pleasure we take in looking at a tragedy is real, the displeasure we have in the fate of its protagonists is

merely an "as if" feeling. We are not really displeased by the fate of Oedipus, because we know that Oedipus is not a real character. In the same way, one can claim that in nostalgia, the pleasure in remembering a happy time is a pretence, while the displeasure we take in realising that this time is over is real. Plausibly, the same kind of account may be given for mixed feelings that arise from anticipatory (dis)pleasures, or empathic (dis) pleasures.

(ii) One can claim that one of the two feelings is only extrinsic. Feldman (1997: 100ff.) distinguishes extrinsic from intrinsic attitudinal pleasure:

> Sometimes a person takes propositional pleasure in a state of affairs purely for its own sake. For example, consider a person who loves the taste of peanuts…
>
> Sometimes a person takes propositional pleasure in one thing because he takes propositional pleasure in another. A common example concerns money. An ordinary, non-miserly person may take pleasure in the fact that he has a lot of money. …
>
> In other cases, a person takes pleasure in one thing not because he thinks that thing will enable him to get another, but because the first thing somehow is an indicator, or sign of the other thing. For example, consider again the man who takes pleasure in his children's good report cards. He takes pleasure in the fact that they got good grades, not because he thinks it will enable his children to become good students, and surely not because he thinks this will cause them to be good students, but because it serves as good evidence for the belief that they already are good students. He takes pleasure in their being good students. (F. Feldman, 1997: 100-101).

Concerning mixed feelings, one may claim for instance that one takes intrinsic displeasure in being very thirsty while taking extrinsic pleasure in seeing the waiter coming.

(iii) One third way of dismissing one of the two feelings is to claim that it is only the indifferent cognition of a value of the object. This hypothesis was proposed by Young (1918)[8] in his detailled study of mixed feelings. As we have seen in the introduction, we use the term pleasant in two different senses: in order to refer to hedonic property of affective experiences, or in order to refer to property of the object that typically causes pleasant experiences. It may be that when a certain object is said to be both pleasant and unpleasant at once, two different senses of pleasantness are in play. The object may be said to be unpleasant in the sense of actually causing displeasure, and said to be pleasant in the sense of usually causing pleasure.

2.3. Dependent mixed feelings: when pain grounds pleasure

[8] See also Beebe-Center, 1932.

I agree that those two types of strategies (alternation between pleasure and displeasure and dismissal of one of the two feelings) can account for some important cases of putative mixed feelings. It is not to be claimed here that all putative cases of mixed feelings, such as the one presented in the introduction are real cases of mixed feelings. What I want to claim, nevertheless, is that such strategies cannot deal with *all* putative cases of mixed feelings.

One important type of mixed feelings, which I shall call *dependent mixed feelings*, include cases in which the pleasure is existentially dependent on the displeasure and the reverse cases in which the displeasure is existentially dependent on the pleasure. That means that it is sometimes essential for pleasure (or displeasure) to occur that displeasure (or pleasure) occurs. One sometime experience pleasure (or displeasure) because one experiences displeasure (or pleasure).

One clear example is *masochism*. The masochist takes pleasure in displeasure. In masochism, displeasure and pleasure are not only conjoined, but the one grounds the other. It is hard to see how the strategies of oscillations of dismissal could account for such cases. Surely, the pleasure that the masochist take is a real one, and not an as if or an extrinsic one. And the same must be true of its displeasure: it is because displeasure is indeed unpleasant that the masochist is pleased. It doesn't seem either that the masochist alternates between pleasure and displeasure: he is at once please and displease, because he take pleasure in its very actual displeasure.

Note that masochism pleasure doesn't contradict the view that pleasure and displeasure are incompatible properties of an experience. What is unpleasant is a first order mental act, while the pleasant act is a second order act that takes the first one as its object (Goldstein, 1989; Feldman, 2004: 89[9]).

So there is at least one case of mixed feelings. But are mixed feelings confined to such rare or pathological cases? One could try to answer that masochism, in a wide sense, is not so rare. Even so, the martyr who blissfully suffers, the mountaineer or cyclist enduring effort with pleasure, the melancholic poet (having a "complacent delight for sadness", Ribot, 1939) are uncommon characters. In the last part, I shall suggest that there is a very widespread type of mixed feelings, that most of us commonly experience.

[9] See Zimmerman, « Feldman on the nature and value of pleasure » for an interesting objection to Feldman's account of masochism.

3. The generality of mixed feelings

A widespread type of pleasure is pleasure in activity. We enjoy doing certain things. (Bain, 1892; Sidgwick, 1907; Allen, 1930; Bühler, 1928; Mulligan, 1988; Johansson, 2001). Pleasures in activity are the pleasures we sometimes take in pursuing a goal, by contrast to pleasure of attainment of this goal. We enjoy playing even if we finally lose the game. Good examples of pleasure in activity or play or creative work. Pleasures in activity are distinct from both pleasure of satisfaction or attainment, and of pleasures of anticipation (Shand, 1920).

Activities are things we do. Because our will isn't omnipotent, all activities requires at least a slight amount of effort. That is, even when we manage to do what we wanted easily, a slight amount of effort was need. Activity is always costly: moving one's finder requires some effort, which may be to weak to be noted, but which is still there. By contrast, God's will is realised without any effort on his part. God doesn't have to strive for satisfying his desires.
Now, effort is intrinsically unpleasant. I take this to be a brut phenomenological fact, reflected by expression such as "to take great pain to do something" or "painless action".
If this is true, then we have a straightforward argument in favour of the widespread character of mixed feelings:

(1) Pleasure in activity is a widespread type of pleasure.
(2) Every activity is effortful (only an omnipotent god can act without effort).
(3) Every effort is unpleasant.
∴ There is an widespread type of mixed feelings: pleasures in activity.

It is important to note that pleasure in activity, like masochism, gives rise to *dependent* mixed feelings: displeasure grounds pleasure. An activity without any effort would be pleasant. The more we encounter resistance, the more we enjoy the game. Pleasure in activity is inaccessible to an omnipotent God. It is essential to the pleasure we take in a work or game that playing and working be effortful activities. The fact the pleasure in activity is a dependent mixed feeling should give a pause to any attempt to analyse it in terms of alternation between pleasure and pain, of as if feelings or of extrinsic feelings.

Finally, it is worth mention a third important type of mixed feelings, beside masochism and pleasure in activity. Malicious pleasures, the pleasures we take in the displeasure of other people aren't mixed feelings: even if the pleasure and the displeasure are here simultaneous, different persons experience them. Nevertheless, they may give rise to a simultaneous emotion of shame. One may feel ashamed to experience *Schadenfreude*. This is clearly a case of mixed feeling, since we experience both at once a (malicious) pleasure and a displeasure (shame). This mixed feeling is a dependent one: we experience displeasure *because* we experience pleasure. The pleasantness and unpleasantness are clearly exemplified by different mental acts. The pleasant mental act is the first order act that takes other's people misfortune as its object. The unpleasant mental act is the second order mental act that takes one's first order mental act as its object. Such mixed feelings, caused by the impression that our pleasures are incorrect aren't so rare. Neither are their opposite, the pleasure we can take in realising that our displeasure is appropriate. We can be proud to feel pity for instance.

One may raise the following objection: the reason why malicious pleasures give rise to mixed feelings is not necessarily that they cause negative feelings due to the realisation that our pleasure are incorrect. Think of the feeling(s) we may experience during the contemplation of a mass grave. There seems to be here a strange blend of pleasure and displeasure: a pleasant fascination co-exists with an unpleasant disgust. The problem that this raises is that both states seems to have the very same object, namely, the mass grave. To put it another way, pleasantness and unpleasantness appear to qualify the very same mental act, namely the sight of the mass grave. This would invalidate the preceding account since it way claimed that pleasantness and unpleasantness are incompatible properties of a same mental act.

As an answer[10], it is worth to point out that while it is possible to feel disgust without feeling morbid fascination, the contrary doesn't seem possible. It seems to be a necessary condition, for this kind of pleasant fascination to occur, that one also feels some kind of repulsion relatively to the situation. This suggests the following picture: the pleasure we take in morbid fascination is itself grounded in the displeasure we take in the contemplation of some situations. There are indeed two mental acts here. The first order one is the unpleasant seeing of the mass grave. The second order one is the pleasant consciousness that has the unpleasant seing of the grave as (one of) its object. If this is true, we found a fourth type of mixed feelings, namely, morbid pleasures.

[10] I am grateful to Anne Meylan for this answer.

Conjoining the third and the fourth type of mixed feelings, one may feel ashamed to feel a morbid pleasure. That complex case should be analysed as follows:

1 : (the perception of a mass grave) is unpleasant. (=disgust)

2 : [(the displeasure we take in perceiving a mass grave) together with some other condition (for instance, our knowledge that we are not in the grave)] is pleasant. (=morbid pleasure)

3 : [(the morbid pleasure) together with some other condition (for instance our moral conviction that it's bad to take pleasure in the contemplation of a mass grave)] is unpleasant (=shame).

I conclude that mixed feelings are possible, actual, and widespread.

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