

LIVE AS YOU WISH AND RUIN YOUR LIFE

Haybron on unhappiness and well-being

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Master's thesis
Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the concepts of happiness, unhappiness and well-being developed by philosopher Daniel Haybron in his book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness*. The central thesis of this book is that human beings are not psychologically well-adapted to live in liberal societies, which are understood in this approach as option-rich environments. According to Haybron, in liberal societies people have freedom to choose whatever they want from a myriad of options in the pursuit of happiness. This condition, however, makes people prone to committing serious mistakes in choosing the options that are prudentially good for them. Haybron calls this phenomenon “systematic imprudence.” This systematic imprudence is the main explanation for the high rate of unhappiness and ill-being in liberal societies.

In order to provide a solution to this problematic, Haybron develops two theories of well-being: self-fulfilment and contextualism. The former theory sets up prudential values on the self: by fulfilling the inclinations and dispositions of the self (especially the emotional self) is how people achieve happiness and well-being. The latter theory sets up the prudential values on ways of living that are in accordance with psychological and anthropological facts of human beings as members of a hunter-gatherer species. I argue in this work that these two theories are incompatible with each other and they present serious inconsistencies at the conceptual level, which make them implausible. As a consequence of these problems, Haybron is unable to provide an answer to the problematic he raises with the thesis of systematic imprudence.

As a response to this theoretical gap, my thesis offers an Aristotelian interpretation of good life and emotional flourishing which can face the problems systematic imprudence represents to liberal societies. This goal is attained by introducing the concepts of narrative self and practice developed by Alasdair MacIntyre in his work *After Virtue*, and a cognitivist concept of emotion. In this interpretation, good life and emotional flourishing are in relation to the fulfilment of a person's roles in the framework of social practices. In this approach, a person is capable of attaining the good life when she chooses, after critical reflexion, the standards of the different practices in which she participates as a member of a community. This thesis explains systematic imprudence as the result of choosing options following one's transient desires without taking care of the roles one embodies within different practices.

Keywords: systematic imprudence, happiness, well-being, self, eudaimonia, emotion, practice.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Happiness as a concept

Concepts enable us to understand phenomena that otherwise would be unintelligible. They are also a response to certain problems in a determined context, and when the problems change, the concepts also change. Happiness is a concept which refers to a certain way of living. It sets up standards that determine what kind of psychological and rational characteristics distinguish a happy person from an unhappy one in a specific context. As every concept, happiness has its own history; a history in which different traditions clash with each other, thus producing concepts of happiness that are in conflict with other concepts. What distinguishes different concepts of happiness is the different conceptual constellations that support and give sense to those concepts. Only through this constellation the question what is happiness is comprehensible.

According to Aristotle, happiness is a flourishing life in which virtuous activity is essential. This idea of virtuous activity in close relation with happiness was common in many ancient visions: this was the horizon of eudaimonistic ethics. In this conception, virtuous activity is a matter of self-interest: it is always good for people to be virtuous, and vice is always detrimental to the soul. Nevertheless, the possible fragility of the relation between the concept of happiness and virtue was pointed out by Aristotle who, in contrast to what Stoics would assert later, believed that virtue was not sufficient for happiness and a terrible fate could damage life permanently and make people incapable of acting well (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099b2, 1101a6). External goods are also necessary in a flourishing life. Despite this observation, Aristotle was optimistic with respect to the capacity of the virtuous person to overcome any fate. However, centuries later Kant did not accept Aristotle's conceptual constellation. For him the connection between happiness and virtue was not a necessary one: to some degree a person could be happy yet vicious. Moreover, virtuous activity could be against self-interest: what a person ought to do is in many cases in conflict with their desires and feelings.

Kant's disagreement with ancient philosophers was not a case of a different taste or conflicting opinions, but was a difference in their horizons. Thus, for Kant happiness and virtue had a completely different meaning. The concepts he used were not the same, and as a result of this difference, in his conception of the complete happiness conditioned by the complete virtue in the framework of the highest good he developed in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, both happiness and virtue have a conceptual relation: a person is happy because he is virtuous. This idea is based, however, on a postulate of reason (the existence of God and immortality), because such perfection of complete virtue – which Kant understands as will's supreme commitment to morality – is not attainable in this world. By nature people seek their happiness, which in Kant's conceptual framework means satisfaction of desires, and this characteristic of human nature makes a complete commitment to moral law difficult. In contrast, Aristotle believed that the highest good, i.e., eudaimonia, in which reason and passions are working in harmony, was possible in this world.

This example shows us that there are many rival conceptions of happiness following different traditions. Due to this inevitable tension, determining who is a happy person has yielded a rich variety of concepts. Happiness has been identified with pleasure, satisfaction, contemplative life, maximized well-being and life in heaven, among others concepts. Moreover, political and economic ideas, as part of the historical context, have had a strong impact on the different conceptions of happiness. In this regard, some economists have believed that a happy person is he who gets from the market what he wants (see Sumner 1996; Crisp 2013).

This tension, however, is a signal of the necessity for new concepts of happiness, new combinations and interpretations that help us to understand what are the characteristics of a happy person. Daniel Haybron is one of the authors who has tried to synthesize evidence obtained from scientific research on happiness with philosophical concepts in order to shed light on the subject. His book, with its provocative title *The Pursuit of Unhappiness*, gives us the opportunity to understand in a new way the concept of happiness in our Western societies. His enquiry focuses on mental states, particularly on emotional states, and its purpose is to make sense of the way the term is used in the vernacular (English language) and by psychologists. For Haybron (2008, 30) happiness is a positive emotional state. One relevant characteristic of this theory is that it makes a clear distinction between happiness, well-being and good life: when people say they are happy, they are speaking of some

determined state of mind rather than of some evaluation of how they are living or what kind of life they are leading.¹ Haybron's account, which is a version of the so called affect-based theories,² has been well received for this emphasis on emotional states, and can be considered a serious adversary of the hedonistic and life-desire satisfaction theories that have increasingly received attention in the work of authors like Kahneman, Diener, Sumner and Feldman, for example (Tiberius 2006).

But Haybron's theory is not only a definition of happiness as a psychological concept. One relevant and profound dimension of this theory lies in the way it explains the concept of unhappiness. Unhappiness is the condition which makes our lives go worse, and in theoretical discussions about happiness, it is an unavoidable concept that forces us to find arguments and explanations in order to avoid such an undesirable state. Under the shadow of unhappiness the focus shifts from identifying who is happy towards examining who is unhappy. In this regard, Haybron has offered interesting ideas arguing that most people in our liberal societies are "not happy" or even unhappy, and they have learned to live that way: although unhappiness makes life miserable, people are able to adapt themselves to a significant degree of unhappiness. The idea that most people are in this category is not a new thesis,³ however, the interesting aspect in Haybron's work is how the concept of unhappiness is related to a new way of understanding the psychology of human beings in liberal societies.

According to Haybron (2008, 255), the assumption that people tend to fare best when they possess, more or less, the greatest possible freedom to live as they wish in an option-rich environment is widely accepted in Western societies. Haybron calls this assumption "liberal optimism." Haybron argues that this optimism is far from true, and it is actually an important reason for the incidence of unhappiness in our societies: human beings may not

¹ Feldman (2010) is another author who defends a similar idea. He makes the distinction between happiness and well-being. Happiness is the experience of "attitudinal pleasure" (in contrast with "sensory pleasure") towards things that deserve that response. Well-being indicates how people are living their lives and how they evaluate it from their point of view.

² Other accounts categorized as "affect-based" theories are hedonism and desire satisfaction. See for example Sumner 1996; Parfit 2011. A characteristic feature of these theories is the definition of happiness based on subjective experience of certain mental states such as pleasure or satisfaction. These mental states have normative force regarding prudential choices.

³ Cicero and Stoics believed that only few people are happy: the virtuous. The rest of the people are to some degree wretched: "Human affairs are not so happily ordered that the majority prefer the better things; a proof of the worst choice is the crowd" (Seneca, *"Of a happy life"*).

be psychologically well-equipped to live in an option-rich environment and to have freedom to design their lives according to their desires. (ibid., 249.) In Haybron's vision, the more options an individual has to choose from, the more he will experience feelings that he could have chosen a better alternative, and it is possible that he will regret his choice. Furthermore, when the individual is focused more on what he wants rather than on his circumstances, he may tend to become more needy and hence more vulnerable to disappointments and negative feelings. In addition, with more freedom to choose social cohesiveness declines as a result of the individual's excessive attention to his own needs, and the feeling of loneliness becomes something usual. Finally, individuals who blame themselves for the unsatisfactory outcomes of their choices are at a high risk of developing depression among other mental disorders. (ibid., 258–260.)

The presence of many options causes people to experience distress. Questions about what are the best options cannot be responded from an impartial position because the goodness of the options depends on people's preferences: the best option would be the one that the individual wants. The problem is that individuals very often do not know what they really want, or what is even worse, they do not know what they need. To be surrounded by a sea of options without knowing what one wants or what options are the best is a tragedy: in the process of discovering which choices would be the right ones, one can waste his life. Moreover, according to Haybron in this scenario it is all too easy to choose bad options.⁴ An example of this imprudence is the epidemic of morbid obesity caused by the consumption of junk food, and the tendency to overestimate economic competition and income. (Haybron 2008, 26, 216.) When Haybron explains these problems he proposes what he calls "*systematic imprudence*" thesis, which, according to him is the central thesis of his book. This thesis is articulated in the introduction of his work as follows:

"[...] people probably do not enjoy a high degree of authority or competence in matters of personal welfare. We should expect them systematically to make a host of serious mistakes regarding their own well-being. Surprisingly often, people's choices may frustrate their prospects for happiness and well-being rather than improve them." (ibid., 13.)

⁴ In this idea Haybron follows mostly the work of Kahneman. See for example Kahneman & Riis 2005; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz & Stone 2006.

I believe Haybron's ideas of systematic imprudence and liberal optimism make it possible to understand the concept of unhappiness in a new way. To some extent it has been recognised that something is not right in the optimism about the capacity of individuals to choose those things that are good for them, and now with Haybron's theory it is clear that more freedom to choose in an option-rich environment could mean less happiness or even unhappiness. What is needed here to resolve this problem – if unhappiness is a problem, as I believe it is – is to find some objective standards that would help people to understand whether some options foster happiness or diminish it. When we seek an objective standard, either moral or prudential, we usually expect something that does not depend on people's idiosyncrasy and, in some way, imposes restrictions and determinations on people's freedom and choices.⁵ What are those standards in Haybron's account?

1.2 Self-fulfilment and contextualism: the problem of two different theories answering the same question

In answering to the question about the objective standards people should follow to avoid unhappiness, the clarity of Haybron's arguments starts to blur. Following Haybron's affect-based theory, it seems that those standards derive from happiness itself, and it is expected that happiness guides people's choices in the pursuit of a better life (Haybron 2008, 50). Haybron's discussion is mostly directed to prove the value of our happiness as something that matters in our lives independently of our beliefs. Concepts such as "self," "fulfillment" and "intrinsic prudential value" are connected with happiness and form together a conceptual constellation. As a result of combining these concepts, happiness is not only an emotional response that occasionally happens to us, but instead an expression of our self: happiness is the fulfilment of our "emotional self," and when this fulfilment is in a "pronounced form," we have psychic flourishing. (Haybron 2008, 182–185.) For Haybron, the fulfilment of the emotional self is central in people's well-being: he defends a theory of well-being based on the idea of "self-fulfilment."

⁵ For more bibliography about standards in moral discussions see Bagnoli 2011; Sayre-McCord 2012. Regarding prudential standards see Tiberius & Hall 2010.

Haybron openly emphasises the importance of the fulfilment of the emotional self, and states that his theory of well-being is a more “sentimentalist approach” than, for example, Aristotelianism. Defending this thesis, he argues that “sometimes the demands of the emotional self will have normative primacy over the demand of the rational.” (Haybron 2008, 193–4.) This means that happiness sometimes will determine what we should do or choose, and to ignore this determination would be imprudent: psychic flourishing has prudential value because it makes our lives better off. Haybron also affirms that our emotional nature constrains the options that make sense for us (*ibid.*, 185). This statement indicates that the way we are emotionally determines what sorts of circumstances will make us happy and which ones will not. Consequently, Haybron argues that many people are unhappy because they have chosen the wrong options privileging things that do not meet the exigencies of their emotional self (or emotional nature as he usually calls it as well): they have followed their rational judgements or beliefs about what is good for them instead of the demands of their emotional self. This is a prudential mistake. (Haybron 2008, 180.)

I think Haybron’s thesis has relevance for the defence of emotional states as something important in our lives. Nevertheless, this approximation needs to prove its capacity to explain how happiness works in choosing between different options in a liberal society: how do our emotional responses reflect the quality of our options? How can they indicate whether something is good for us or not? It is well known that people can be happy in situations that are not good enough for them and for others, and this could be the expression or affirmation of an ill-constituted self. Here Haybron should give us a conception of emotional states that shows how they can reflect the quality of our options, otherwise it is difficult to see how happiness could ever have normative authority. One thing is to recognize that a certain option could cause happiness, but it is another matter whether we should choose it. In order to face this concern Haybron (2008, 185) introduces the concept of “authentic happiness.” Authentic happiness is an emotional response toward activities which are complex and that express the self as a whole in a rich manner. But is the concept of authentic happiness a real solution to the problem?

When Haybron starts to argue how happiness is possible in liberal societies and why many people are unhappy, a rather surprising change happens. Instead of explaining how the theory of self-fulfilment works in the real world, in the last two chapters of his book “The pursuit of unhappiness” and “Happiness in context” Haybron puts aside everything he has

said about happiness as an important part of self-fulfilment, to direct the discussion towards a theory of well-being in which the important concept is “contextualism.”⁶

In this new approximation, happiness is not the normative concept underlying the choices, but instead the meaningful social activities and the relation with the ecological environment take its place. In this part of the book theories such as evolutionary psychology, situationism and dual process psychology are the central topics. Descriptions of the life of fishermen, of people from the Pleistocene and of people who live in remote islands in hunter-gatherer societies are presented as paragons of happy people. This new thesis affirms that human beings are happy and better off when they live in a “bounded environment,” where the options are restrained by the conditions of the context and people live more in harmony with nature. In contrast, people are unhappy largely because they live in the wrong place, that is, they live in an option-rich environment. Regarding this latter point, Haybron asserts that evolution has not designed us to live in a liberal society. (Haybron 2008, 242–249.) This theory could perhaps answer how we should live in order to avoid unhappiness, but this would be at the expense of its plausibility.

The question here is why Haybron made this dramatic change: why he speaks largely about self-fulfilment, emotional states with normative value and authenticity only to finish his book with a contextualist view? What is the place of self-fulfilment in this new conception? I believe that the concept of self has some role in the framework of contextualism, but this is not clear because the concept of self-fulfilment loses its relevance in the arguments. If self-fulfilment and happiness are still important parts in well-being, then, what is their connection with contextualism? I think there must be some connection between them, otherwise Haybron would not have developed both approximations in the same book. But if there is no connection between them, then *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* is a confusing book.

The issue that has brought us to this point is the search for objective standards in preventing unhappiness. In the classic discussions virtue is the answer to the problem, and in the light of this concept unhappy people are either vicious or ignorant. Nevertheless, it

⁶ I have no evidence of any other author who speaks of “contextualism” in this way. What we have is “moral psychology.” This discipline examines, among other issues, situationism, the role of emotions in decisions, the relevance of evolutionary theories in moral discussions and so on. But this discipline has not presented any theory of well-being called “contextualism” or related to it. I assume that this concept is first proposed by Haybron. For literature in moral psychology see Doris & Stich 2012.

seems that we need new concepts and new interpretations that allow us to understand how unhappiness can be avoided in an environment where it is all too easy to make bad choices. It is the theories' task to find out what conditions are causing this high incidence of unhappiness we assume here.⁷ But in Haybron's account we have two different visions – which I think are incompatible – trying to answer the same question, in the same research. To what extent are those visions different? The concept of self-fulfilment has subjective characteristics because the flourishing of the self is something internal to us: it is bonded up with the self. However, it also has objective characteristics: the flourishing of the self is something that has objective prudential value; it is good for us independently of what we think. (Haybron 2008, 194.) Contextualism seems to have only objective characteristics: social activities, proper environment and living in accordance with human psychology (from an evolutionary perspective) have normative force concerning well-being. (ibid., 263–268.)

Perhaps these two theories are part of the broader concept of well-being that Haybron constantly says we need, but the question here is whether there is any connection between them. This issue is important because the purpose of the book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* is to give arguments for the existence of objective goods and to reject subjective theories such as hedonism and desire satisfaction. However, we cannot accept a blend of theories without a clear connection: this is methodologically wrong and maybe even a threat to the standards of philosophy. Nevertheless, Haybron's discussion of different topics gives us the opportunity to focus our attention on problematics that hardly would have been perceived in the light of other perspectives. This is the virtue of Haybron's approach.

1.3 The Structure of this work

In this work I will defend the thesis that self-fulfilment and the commitment to social activities can be connected coherently in the framework of a theory of well-being by using the adequate concepts. In the conceptual constellation that I will provide, it is possible to find objective goods in the pursuit of good life once the relation between self-fulfilment

⁷ “It will be enough, for my purposes, if people tend to be too often unhappy, or at the very least tend too often to judge and choose badly in matters of happiness” (Haybron 2008, 20). Perhaps this supposition is not so obvious. Perhaps there are more happy people than unhappy or not happy in liberal societies. Cf. Diener & Diener's (1996) article “Most people are happy.”

and the social activities has been established. Besides, I will provide an explanation of the role psychic flourishing has in a conception of good life. The central question that will direct this thesis is the following: *how is it possible to explain psychic flourishing in a liberal society following Haybron's intuitions suggested in the theories of self-fulfilment and contextualism?*

This question is pertinent because it opens the possibility of analysing the two theories that Haybron develops in his approach. I will argue that neither the theory of self-fulfilment nor the theory of contextualism provide a plausible answer to the problems that systematic imprudence represents for liberal societies. This failure is due to the serious inconsistencies in the conceptual framework of both theories. Moreover, I will argue that both theories are mutually incompatible, which makes the approach Haybron develops in his book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* confusing.

The question also brings up the challenge of determining the nature and role that psychic flourishing has in a concept of good life in the context of liberal societies. This is a topic that Haybron never clarifies due to his pessimism regarding liberal societies. He suggests in his theory of contextualism that from an evolutionary perspective any kind of flourishing is hard to achieve within liberal societies given the psychological make-up of human beings. I will challenge this position by arguing that human flourishing is possible in liberal societies once we understand the concepts of self and social activities in a different way. Thus, more promising concepts are needed. I will use the concepts of "narrative self" and "practice" developed by the Aristotelian philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in his seminal work *After Virtue*. I will show that these concepts actually make compatible the two ideas presented in Haybron's theories, and provide basis for avoiding systematic imprudence.

Regarding psychic flourishing, for methodological reasons I prefer to focus my reflexion on emotions. Moods and moods propensities, which according to Haybron are part of psychic flourishing, are different phenomena and therefore I leave them out of discussion. Due to this decision I will speak of "emotional flourishing" in order to make a clear distinction between it and Haybron's concept of psychic flourishing. Furthermore, since Haybron does not provide any clear concept of emotion, I will use a cognitivist concept on the subject. The virtue of a cognitivist concept is that emotions have intentionality and they are in close relation to a person's values: our emotional responses are towards things we

appraise as beneficial or harmful. Emotional flourishing in my conception will depend on the fulfilment of the person's roles within different practices. My thesis is an Aristotelian interpretation of good life and a reply to Haybron's account.

This research has the following parts. In the first chapter I will analyse the theory of self-fulfilment. Haybron holds that his theory is a reply to Aristotelian theories of well-being, but at the same time he views his own theory as a moderate version of Aristotelian eudaimonia: both theories share the idea of "fulfilment." I will argue that Haybron's interpretation of Aristotelian ethics is misguided, and it prevents him from seeing how far his own theory of self-fulfilment is from Aristotelianism: I believe his theory is not a case of Aristotelian eudaimonia. This misunderstanding leaves room for problems that render his theory implausible.

In the second chapter, firstly, I will provide some arguments that explain why the theory of self-fulfilment loses its relevance in Haybron's arguments. My stance on this topic is that Haybron himself refutes his own theory by incorporating a new thesis that he calls "affective ignorance." Secondly, I will analyse Haybron's arguments that support contextualism. His central argument is that people fare best when they live in a bounded society, and he justifies this position appealing to psychological and anthropological theories. I will argue that contextualism, supported by evolutionary psychology, situationism and dual process psychology, is a theory that has little philosophical relevance.

In the third and fourth chapter I will develop my own interpretation of how emotional flourishing may occur in liberal societies and how it is possible to avoid systematic imprudence. In chapter three I will define the concepts of liberal society, emotion and narrative self. In chapter four I will explain how this new constellation works. The result of this interpretation is a similar thesis to that of Haybron's: emotional flourishing is in relation to the self-fulfilment. However, my explanations regarding the meaning and functions of the concepts will be different. The intention of this thesis is, on the one hand, to provide a plausible answer to the question about the existence of objective goods in the pursuit of psychic flourishing and a good life, and on the other hand, to the problems the systematic imprudence thesis represents for liberal societies.

2 HAPPINESS AS A CRUCIAL PART OF WELL-BEING

In this chapter I will discuss the concept of self-fulfilment that explains happiness as an important part of well-being. According to Haybron (2008, 53), “happiness appears to be immensely important for well-being, indeed to be a central aspect of it, and people tend to regard it that way.” The concept of self-fulfilment is supposed to explain how happiness helps people to choose good options: happiness has normative force. Defending his theory of well-being, Haybron affirms that his vision is eudaimonistic because it shares with Aristotelianism, or more specifically, with Aristotle’s ethics, the idea of fulfilment. Happiness in Haybron’s conception is the fulfilment of the emotional self, and this fulfilment has the role that “nature-fulfilment” plays in Aristotle’s ethics: it is an objective good which has normative force in choosing options regarding well-being. (ibid., 178.) The introduction of the concept of individual’s self into his theory of well-being tries to avoid “any stringently objective approach to well-being” (ibid., 13).

By using the concept of fulfilment, Haybron develops emotional self into something that restricts the options that are significant to the individual. The fulfilment of the self functions as the standard people need in an option-rich environment to avoid systematic mistakes in choosing options regarding their well-being.

My intention is to discuss and clarify Haybron’s theory. My central questions in this chapter are the following: how is it explained that happiness is an objective and important good in well-being? How happiness helps people in choosing options? Along the discussion I will show important inconsistencies that contradict the central statements Haybron makes. Consequently, I shall argue that: a) happiness is not the only thing that is “immensely important” in well-being; b) if happiness is an objective good, it is not always a relevant issue in our deliberations; c) happiness hardly has normative force; and d) the concept of well-being Haybron defends falls into the perfectionism and externalism of the Aristotelian theory he is criticizing. All these inconsistencies explain why Haybron has to embrace a “contextualist” vision of well-being which has nothing to do with the theory of self-fulfilment. But this latter point will be developed in chapter two.

Firstly, I will explain the criticism Haybron develops against Aristotelian ethics. Haybron understands Aristotelian eudaimonism as a theory of well-being: it indicates the kind of

life people should live because it is good for them.⁸ After explaining this criticism I will discuss Haybron's theory of well-being and some of its problems.

Secondly, I argue that Haybron's interpretation of Aristotle's ethics is mistaken, and his own theory cannot be eudaimonistic in any way. The defence of Aristotle's ethics is important because in this work I will assume an Aristotelian version of good life. In addition, it is of philosophical interest to point out false interpretations of important and influential traditions such as Aristotelianism. As a conclusion, I will explain why Haybron's theory of well-being is incapable of responding to the challenges the systematic imprudence thesis represents.

2.1 Perfectionism: Haybron's interpretation of Aristotelianism

The idea of fulfilment is recurrent in accounts of well-being. For these theories the fulfilment of human essence or nature is the critical part of people's well-being, but according to Haybron the most relevant theories of this sort originate from Aristotelianism (Haybron 2008, 156). In Aristotelian tradition, the fulfilment of human nature is the central part of a good life, and virtue, understood as excellent activity, is an indispensable factor in this fulfilment: human nature cannot flourish by itself, and only through good activity people can fulfil what they are. According to Haybron, Aristotelians understand human nature as distinctive functions and capacities common to the human species, and people have to actualise this nature in order to be good humans, that is, to be good and functional specimens. This fulfilment, however, also requires external goods such as friends, family, goods of fortune and other goods. Hence in this vision having a good life is to live according to one's nature actualising one's capacities through excellent activity with the help of external goods. (ibid., 157–164.)

All these characteristics give Aristotelianism an objective dimension: human nature imposes non-subjective standards on people regarding how they should live and what is

⁸The interpretation, however, could be problematic because *eudaimonia* is about good life embracing all kind of values, like moral, prudential and aesthetic ones, not only about well-being (MacIntyre 1984; Sihvola 1994; McDowell 2002; Manzano 2012).

good for them (Haybron 2008, 173). Since Aristotelian theories are objective, they are perfectionist because an individual has well-being when he is good, perfect or admirable specimen actualising the potentialities human beings should actualise.⁹ Aristotelianism as a perfectionist theory is also externalist: human nature, characterised by some potentialities and capacities common to all human beings,¹⁰ is something alien to the “arbitrarily idiosyncratic make-up” of the individual, or more clearly, to the self (ibid., 193). Thus Aristotelian theories are objective, externalist, and perfectionist concerning well-being. Haybron asserts that these kinds of theories neglect people’s individuality (ibid., 157).¹¹

2.2 Why Aristotelianism is a wrong theory of well-being?

Haybron points out that the problem with Aristotelianism is the kind of questions it makes when it tries to figure out what is good for a person. To ask what our lives should be like in order to be good for us, what kind of priorities should we have and how we ought to live, is asking for an account of what kind of life is good to lead. In searching the answer to this question, the problem concerning our ultimate goal in life becomes a central task; since we are considering life as a whole, the usual answer is the ideal life of perfect activity according to human nature. Haybron (2008, 169) affirms that asking for an ideal of perfect life is not the same as asking for the individual’s well-being:

“One can achieve a perfection, at least to some degree, merely by fulfilling a capacity, even if one hasn’t the slightest desire for it, could not be brought to desire it, is in no other way oriented to seek it, and even if one responds with nothing but pain and revulsion toward it.”

⁹ Sumner (1996, 78) presents a similar idea. He affirms that Aristotle equates wrongly the idea of “being perfect” with the idea of being better off.

¹⁰ “Aristotelian theories are externalist in the intended sense: they ground well-being in facts about the species” (Haybron 2008, 157).

¹¹ Haybron’s explanations about the Aristotelian vision of eudaimonia and virtue are obscure and loose. This is in part result of the methodological mistake Haybron makes: he never distinguishes Aristotelians’ from Aristotle’s ethics. Given this problem, we don’t know where Haybron is taking his interpretations from, and the concepts he uses are more like a collages of different visions, some of them incompatible with Aristotle’s ethics. Here I have done my best in explaining what Haybron could understand by Aristotelianism and I have chosen the clearest examples and argument he uses. See my discussion below.

In this quotation, perfection is explained as something compatible with being worse off: a person should actualise his capacities to be perfect even if his life is full of pain and revulsion. Haybron offers many examples – perhaps too many, because the amount of examples cannot replace arguments – of perfectionism in this sense. One of them that he says he borrows from Sumner (1996) is the talented and miserable philosopher who has to continue developing his philosophical skills despite his suffering (Haybron 2008, 160–161). In this example the philosopher wants to live according to the ideal of leading a highly reflective life actualising the rational capacities he possesses in an exceptional way. He would be happy – in the emotional sense of being happy – if he spent his life doing something that is more in harmony with his emotional self, but he wants to be “perfect” actualising his distinctive capacities as a human being; he therefore continues doing that repulsive activity that makes him sad and distressed. The philosopher is unhappy and he is not really better off being a perfect specimen.

Perfectionism in the sense explained above is to live fulfilling one’s distinctive capacities no matter how miserable one could be. Nevertheless, perfectionism takes into account the activities that boost excellence: virtuous activities (Haybron 2008, 164). In the case of the philosopher the performance of his rational skills in the reflective life he leads is admirable or virtuous. That performance displays his capacities making him an excellent human being. However, it is clear that not everyone has the exceptional rational capacities the philosopher has, and for this reason in less perfect kinds of lives, virtuous activities are related to admirable actions such as doing work that is considered laudable or doing self-sacrifices helping others. Haybron (2007, 10) asserts that those admirable actions could be profoundly unpleasant and represent quite substantial personal sacrifices bearing serious problems to self-respect. In one of his examples a painter named Frank has to take care of the autistic son of his dead friend (Haybron 2008, 163). This situation forces him to neglect the activity of painting. He acts virtuously in the sense of acting admirably as every perfect and good friend would act, but he is worse off because he has to give up painting or to do it poorly and be a mediocre artist. By making that choice, Frank puts aside the single most important activity in his life, through which he used to express himself, to lead an admirable life. Individuals in similar situations usually do things that are admirable instead of doing what is important to them.

These problems of perfectionism are the result of a misunderstanding of two kinds of values. According to Haybron, well-being should be considered as “success value” taking as a central aspect individual’s goals, aims or desires (elsewhere he explains it as a “prudential value.” I suppose there is some relation between both these values).¹² Success, in a broad sense, is to attain goals that one welcomes or responds to favourably. (Haybron 2008 164.) In contrast, perfectionism has no concern with the individual’s goals but with those of the species: it seeks admirability and excellence in life according to human capacities. Thus, perfectionism takes “performance value,” a type of value that is related to doing things well or being a good example of one’s kind, as if it was success value. Given this explanation, one of the ideas that Haybron leaves open is the possibility that perfection has no fundamental role in well-being, only a minimal one, if any. (ibid., 164–169.) If this idea is true, then perfectionism is false as a theory of well-being (ibid., 158). But this thesis is something that Haybron does not develop exhaustively.¹³

Finally, Haybron criticizes the function of the concept of eudaimonia in Aristotelian theories following Julia Annas’ explanations. With this criticism Haybron tries to prove that Aristotelians are based on an empty concept of good life. Following Haybron’s quotation, Annas holds that “‘for Aristotle it is trivial that my final end is eudaimonia’, for the notion of eudaimonia is the ‘notion of living our life as a whole well.’” The text continues: “and eudaimonia ‘in ancient theories is given its sense by the role it plays; and the most important role it plays is that of an obvious, but thin, specification of the final good.’” (Haybron 2008, 171.) From this explanation Haybron draws the following conclusion: “But if we begin our inquiries with this understanding of eudaimonia, then we are effectively stipulating that eudaimonia is equivalent to the good life. Any account of

¹² When people have success in their goals they consider that success as something good for them. When someone considers something to be good for her, that good has prudential value. However, for Haybron it seems that success value is not the fundamental characteristic of well-being. As it will be explained later in this chapter, psychic flourishing is good for a person even if this flourishing is not part of the person’s desire or goal; that flourishing is an objective prudential good regardless of whether people take that flourishing as something important.

¹³ To defend this idea Haybron should explain why people that have a “good performance” could not be better off. He explains that perhaps perfection is good for the individual when it is in relation with other phenomena: “If perfection does seem to be a great benefit for most of us, this is probably due to its relation to other things, like pleasure or the achievement of goals” (Haybron 2008, 168). This does not explain why someone *is not better off* fulfilling his capacities without any relation to pleasure or achievements. For example, it is good for us to be rational and autonomous beings instead of being mentally insane and completely dependent on others. The execution of our rationality is good for us independently of our subjective experiences or goals. A similar idea is presented in Russell 2012, 51–52.

eudaimonia that cannot credibly explain what it means to live one's 'life as a whole well' is simply a non-starter." (ibid, 171.)

Thus, Aristotelians defend the idea of eudaimonia as living one's life well as a whole, but none of them can explain what that really means, and the worse thing is that they believe that eudaimonia is something obvious. Nevertheless, in my mind it is difficult to see how this criticism is relevant, since Haybron himself has explained that for Aristotelians to live one's life well is to live virtuously. It seems that Haybron has the purpose of exposing the implausible nature of Annas' explanations; however, he loses the thread of his argumentation.

In any case, Haybron's conclusion is that Aristotelian theories are more about how to be a perfect specimen, but they fail to explain what is good for the individual in terms of success value which is central in well-being. Despite this criticism, Haybron believes that his theory about well-being is eudaimonistic because it defends a version of fulfilment based on the self.

2.3 Happiness, self-fulfilment and well-being: clarifying the concepts

From Haybron's point of view Aristotelianism has certain useful characteristics: by understanding eudaimonia as something essentially based on the fulfilment of human nature, Aristotelianism provides objective standards which determine what is genuinely good for people. Haybron thinks he needs this characteristic of eudaimonia to defeat theories that are purely subjective, such as hedonism and life-desire satisfaction. These theories, as it is well known, base well-being on the experience of pleasure and satisfaction (Sumner 1996; Parfit 2011; Crisp 2013), but the problems they face is that those psychological states are compatible with lives that are not good for individuals: people can feel pleasure and satisfaction in situations that are harmful for them and for others or that

lead to deception.¹⁴ Haybron (2008, 178) thinks that an objective standard can help his own theory to avoid these kinds of problems:

“The best accounting of happiness’s value requires, instead, a eudaimonistic, and non-subjectivist, conception of well-being. The type of eudaimonism I have in mind centers on the idea of self-fulfillment, which I understand as a specific form of nature-fulfillment: the fulfillment of the self. While sharing the eudaimonism of Aristotle’s views, we will see that my approach departs from the Aristotelian mold in important ways.”

The concept of self in Haybron’s theory plays the role human nature plays in Aristotelianism: the fulfilment of the self is a central part in well-being. “Self-fulfilment” is the idea of people becoming what they, as individuals, are. However, Haybron’s emphasis is on the fulfilment of the emotional part of the self which he understands as happiness. This new conception avoids the perfectionist and externalist characteristic of Aristotelianism by placing the fulfilment in the self.

In order to understand the concept of self-fulfilment and its importance for well-being we need to start by defining the concepts of self, emotional nature and happiness. Haybron (2008, 192) defines the self as the “psychological constitution of the individual person.” What this means is not clear, and what we get is a list of the constitutive parts of the self: social identity, character, temperament, self-understanding or self-conception, personal identity and emotional nature (Haybron 2008, 184). This is as close as we get to a definition in Haybron’s theory, which is unsatisfactory and obscure – a list of elements is not really a definition. How these parts are interrelated, why the self is all the things on the list or why the self is a psychological phenomenon, are issues that are not discussed.¹⁵ We have to formulate definitions from some phrases Haybron uses.

According to Haybron the self is “what we are” as individuals; what we “truly are” (Haybron 2008, 190). It is the deeper aspect of the mind (*ibid.*, 139). It is what makes us disposed to respond to the world in a particular way (*ibid.*, 131). The self also reflects our

¹⁴ See for example the famous “experience machine” in Nozick 1974, 42.

¹⁵ For criticism against the concept of self understood as a psychological concept see MacIntyre 1984, chapter 15.

real values; all those things that are important to us (ibid., 194). The self is “those aspects of us that are important to making us the distinct individuals we are, that are important to understanding who we are.” (ibid., 183.) I think this is enough. We can say that the self is that what makes the person a particular individual: it determines what goals, desires, dreams, interest, decisions, inclinations and duties are important to the person. In relation to the world, the self equips the agent to live in certain way, choosing certain options. I think my explanations clarify what Haybron tries to express.

When Haybron explains the importance of self-fulfilment in well-being, he is focused on the emotional nature which is one part of the self in the list showed above. What is this emotional nature? As a constitutive part of the self, I assume that the characteristics that define the self also apply to the emotional nature, with the following specifications: a) the emotional nature disposes the individual to respond emotionally in a particular way under certain circumstances (Haybron 2008, 184); b) it reflects what is important to the individual from the emotional perspective (ibid., 118); c) it disposes the agent to experience certain affects rather than others (ibid., 130). The emotional nature includes moods and emotions – and perhaps pleasures and satisfactions that are in close relation to emotions and moods.¹⁶ It excludes all kinds of superficial pleasures and arbitrary desires which result from occasional situations. In general terms, this emotional nature reflects what people are emotionally. In relation to the world, the emotional nature disposes the individual to appraise different situations in a particular way under certain circumstances.

Now that I have explained the self and the emotional nature, it is possible to examine the concept of happiness. Actually it has been already partially explained. Happiness is understood as a specific way people are emotionally, however, the feature of positivity has to be added into the definition: happiness refers to having an emotional nature that is generally positive (Haybron 2008, 109). As a part of the self, happiness disposes the individual to respond in a positive way in certain circumstances and not others (ibid., 184). Fishing, for example, makes some people happy, but not others. Happiness also disposes the individual to experience positive emotional states more frequently, whereas negative emotional states are less common to him. When the individual has this positive response

¹⁶ Haybron sometimes makes a sharp distinction between emotional states and experiences of pleasure and satisfaction. However, elsewhere he understands positive emotions and moods as pleasurable experiences that we desire (Chapter 10). If positive emotions are desirable because they feel good, then Haybron's concept of happiness is falling into some version of hedonism. Here I leave this problematic open.

expressing himself in different ways of living that are important to him, he experiences psychic affirmation (ibid., 111).

In the case of unhappy people, we have at least two alternative explanations for unhappiness: unhappy people are those who are living under situations that do not match with their emotional nature; in other words they are living against their emotional self. Haybron expresses it as follows: “[unhappy person] will assume an emotional posture characteristic of someone living under unfavorable conditions that call for a substantial change.” (ibid., 144.) The other explanation is an extreme case: unhappy people are the way they are because they have a negative emotional nature.¹⁷ We can find an illustrating example of unhappy people, which is aligned with Haybron’s conception, in Sartre’s (1949) novel *Nausea*. The main character, Roquentin, appraises the world around him in a determined way through the experience of the nausea, which is some kind of affective disposition that resembles Heidegger’s concept of *angst*: Roquentin sees the world under the power of the nausea as meaningless and absurd, and he is disposed to see it that way constantly.

The experience of “attunement” is an example of psychic affirmation in Haybron’s work. This experience is constituted by tranquillity and some kind of emotional expansiveness. Haybron depicts Santiago, the main character of the novel *The old man and the sea* by Hemingway, as an example of someone who is happy under this category. Santiago’s emotional disposition is close to the Epicurean *ataraxia*, and this is the way he is used to responding emotionally to the world: he feels “like at home” in his life as a fisherman, he is rarely in a bad mood and he can face any difficulty. (Haybron 2008, 110.) If he is sad, this sadness is only momentary; he recovers his good mood quickly. The contrary mental state is to be disposed to feel anxiety, stress and emotional compression. Other examples of happiness as psychic affirmation are “endorsement” and “engagement.” However, I will not be able to go into these concepts in more detail in this work.

The explanations Haybron provides are problematic and perhaps against the common way of understanding happiness in the psychological meaning.¹⁸ If a person hears good news

¹⁷ This is something Haybron (2008) suggests in some part of the book. See for example, p. 139, 183.

¹⁸ In positive psychology, happiness (also called emotional well-being) is understood as the presence of “positive affects” (joy, enthusiasm, cheerfulness, satisfaction), and the absence of negative affects (sadness, hopelessness). In this definition the concepts of “self” or “emotional disposition” have no relevance (see for example, Snyder, R. & Lopez, Shane J. 2007, 71)

and experiences a positive emotional response at that moment, he is not officially happy according to Haybron's concept unless he has the emotional disposition to respond continuously in a positive way. Consider again the case of Roquentin: if Roquentin has a positive response one day because something that is important to him has happened, he is not officially happy because his emotional disposition is prone to be negative as a whole; thus that day Roquentin feels momentary positive feelings such as joy, pride or enthusiasm but not happiness. The converse example is also problematic: if Santiago is very sad or distressed one day, he is not officially unhappy, because his emotional nature is disposed to respond in a positive way as a whole. Thus, Santiago is only experiencing negative emotional states.

Feldman has criticized Haybron's idea of happiness as a disposition. Explaining Haybron's thesis Feldman (2010, 28) says: "If you are happy at a time, you must be disposed to have more 'positive emotions' in the future." The good and obvious question Feldman asks is why happiness should be essentially a disposition; what is the relevance? Feldman's answer is that this emotional dispositionality is not relevant in a theory of psychological happiness (ibid., 27–31). Here I cannot give a detailed explanation of Feldman's theory; however, the relevant point in this approach is that happiness is not a "state of being" but an experience of taking pleasure in things. This experience is represented in a "positive propositional attitude" towards things at determined moments. According to Feldman (2010, 111) this propositional attitude is expressed in vernacular as to be "in favor of something" or "to be pleased" or "glad" about some states of affairs rather than "against them." Other expressions regarding this kind of attitude are phrases with the verbs "liking, wanting, preferring, being amused by or hoping for something." Feldman calls all these experiences "attitudinal pleasure," which is not restricted to or essentially composed by sensory pleasure, positive feelings or moods. (ibid., 109–115.) After giving birth a mother can be in pain and with mixed emotions, but very happy when she holds her baby in her arms (ibid., 109).

Now, regarding the discussion with Haybron, Feldman proposed the concept of "fragile happiness:" "I have in mind something that I will call 'fragile happiness.' A person will be said to experience fragile happiness at a time if she is happy at that time, but is also disposed to lose that happiness, or to lapse into unhappiness." (ibid., 29.)

With this concept of fragile happiness, we can say that Roquentin was experiencing happiness the day he experienced pleasurable mental states, enjoyment, satisfaction, the experience of fulfilment, and so forth, “with respect to or about something.” If fragile happiness is possible, Feldman (2010, 29) says, “this shows that Haybron is mistaken when he claims that in order to count as happy at all, a person must be disposed to go on feeling happy.” Here I am not going to give the verdict on whether Feldman is right or not, but I think this criticism is important to keep in mind for subsequent considerations. Now my intention is to clarify the role happiness plays in Haybron’s theory of well-being in order to understand how systematic imprudence can be avoided. For now we just have to accept the definitions Haybron offers, or rather, the conceptions he suggests.

But before the concept of well-being comes to the scene, I must explain one characteristic of the self and happiness: the “objective” argument. This is an important step because Haybron believes, as I noted above, that the self is something that has the same function human nature has in Aristotle’s ethics. The “objective” argument is properly part of the theory of well-being, however, I prefer to explain it here in order to give more coherency to my presentation. Haybron (2008, 190–191) suggest that the self does not depend on people’s choices or desires, but on social and psychological determinations and it is more or less permanent. Because the self is considered to some extent as something permanent and independent of our preference, it is objective.¹⁹

The idea of the self as something objective is derived from the discussion Haybron maintains with the theory of life satisfaction defended by Sumner. According to this latter theory, a person is better off if she *judges* that she lives according to her values. However, Haybron explains that frequently people regard as important things that do not reflect the values of the “true self” (Haybron 2008, 190). This true self is what the person really is, as opposed to who this person takes herself to be. Briefly, people can be wrong about who they are. This seems to be sufficient for Haybron to suppose the idea of an objective self. Now, with the explanation of the concept of self as something objective, Haybron does not seem to find difficulties in affirming that happiness as the affirmation of the emotional part of the self is an “objective good” (ibid., 194). From this point of view, it is good for us to live according to our emotional natures, and this goodness has prudential value; happiness

¹⁹ At least the emotional nature is objective. It is not clear whether the other parts of the self are objective in the same way.

is something that necessarily benefits us. The converse case, the repression of our self, is something objectively bad for us: it makes us miserable because it arouses negative emotions and moods such as sadness, depression, boredom, anger or anxiety.

Now that I have explained happiness as psychic affirmation and as objective good, we can examine how happiness works in the theory of well-being. Happiness as a psychological phenomenon is a descriptive concept: it explains whether someone has psychic affirmation or not (Haybron 2008, 54). As a descriptive phenomenon, it makes no judgement about how people live their lives. Well-being, in contrast, is an evaluative and normative concept: it indicates whether people are living their lives well or not. The concept has prudential value (and surely success value) and it embraces commitments in life, goals, desires and whatever people think makes their life worth living. In other words, it embraces things that are matter of personal interest (see for example Sumner 1996; Tiberius & Hall 2010; Crisp 2013). But this is not an exhaustive description of well-being. According to Haybron, our well-being is in part self-fulfilment. When explaining what part this self-fulfilment occupies in well-being, Haybron employs different adverbs: “well-being consists *largely* in self-fulfillment” (2008, 120. Italics added). In another part of his book he says: “well-being consists, at least *partly*, in self-fulfillment” (ibid., 22. Italics added). Unfortunately “largely” and “partly” are not synonymous, thus it is a mystery what “part” this fulfilment really occupies.

Now, one part of this self-fulfilment is happiness. What part does happiness occupy in self-fulfilment? “One important part of this fulfillment is happiness” (Haybron 2008, 185). Elsewhere Haybron says: “Happiness forms a *major part* of my self-fulfillment theory of well-being” (ibid., 6. Italics added), and in the phrase I quoted in the introductory part of this chapter, happiness is “immensely important,” a central aspect of well-being (not only of self-fulfilment). Putting the pieces together, happiness is a major part of self-fulfilment, but self-fulfilment is “largely” (or “partly”) part of well-being. The central idea is that happiness as a part of our self-fulfilment is very important in our well-being. It is a matter of personal interest to live happily, and the absence of happiness makes life necessarily miserable. In order to live well we need to “express” our true selves through different ways of living, particularly when it comes to our emotional self:

“Our propensities for being happy or unhappy in various ways of living are important to who we are. This matters, I argue, because it seems important to live in accordance with who we are.” (Haybron 2008, 22.)

This argument strikes me as erroneous due to its evident circular reasoning – our propensities for being happy in various ways of living are important to who we are because to live according to these propensities seems to be important to who we are – but let us move on. The fulfilment of the emotional self is what I have explained as psychic affirmation, and when this affirmation is constant and “pronounced,” we have psychic flourishing (Haybron 2008, 184). I suppose there are also goods that are important for our well-being, for example some desires and values based on pleasurable experiences, but they are not as important as happiness is.

Now, let us return to the case of Santiago, who from Haybron’s point of view is a happy man. Santiago has self-fulfilment and consequently he has well-being because he lives according to who he is. He lives expressing himself, particularly his emotional self, through ataraxia or tranquility: he is happy living as a fisherman. Note that to be happy is not to have exclusively positive emotions such as joy or ecstasy; it is enough that people can live according to their positive emotional “make-up.” The assumption here is that Santiago’s true emotional self is determined as a peaceful nature that is fulfilled when Santiago is fishing and sailing. Moreover, Santiago has the disposition to be happy in those circumstances and not in others. We can imagine, for example, that Santiago would be very unhappy living in an industrial town far from the sea. Such a place does not suit Santiago’s nature. Furthermore, he is capable of facing and resolving problems in his environment with equanimity and ability (like fishing the big fish described in Hemingway’s novel). As a result, Santiago has psychic flourishing because he lives constantly fulfilling his emotional self: his emotional make-up is expressed in a pronounced way.

For now I think the conceptual framework is complete. In this conceptual framework happiness as the affirmation of the emotional part of the self is something prudentially good: to be happy is something that benefits us. In practical matters happiness should therefore be regarded as an important issue in our choices concerning well-being. In this respect, Haybron argues that well-being “depends substantially on the *verdicts* of our emotional natures, to a significant extent independently of what we think about our lives.”

(*ibid.*, 195. Italics added.) Then, when people face questions about their well-being, they have to ponder their options and find out which of those options suit their emotional natures: if one option suits the emotional nature, then that option is good for the individual.

Defending the importance of the “verdict” of the emotional nature, Haybron gives the following example. A fictional character called Henry chose to be a farmer because he rationally thought this profession would foster his well-being. He succeeds in almost all the areas of his life. However, he finds himself profoundly unhappy because he has a real passion for model trains, not for his profession. Henry does not pay too much attention to his emotions and continues with his life. Before his choice Henry had the option to go into business with a profitable model railroad shop at which he would have been happy, but instead he put this option aside because he preferred what he rationally thought was best for him (Haybron 2008, 179). Haybron holds that Henry has made a prudential mistake. He is living according to what he thinks is good for him, but actually he is living against his emotional self; the choice he has made does not suit his emotional nature. He is unhappy as a farmer and he should make changes in his life. With the help of this example Haybron tries to prove that our opinions and rational judgments about our lives are not as important as the verdict of our emotional nature.

The central point in the example is that Henry is not really better off being unhappy, and he should choose the option that makes him happy instead of following what he thinks is rationally good for him. In this regard, Haybron claims that sometimes “the demands of the emotional self will have *normative primacy* over those of the rational.” (*ibid.*, 193–194. Italics added.) When Haybron explains this strong assertion, he says that his theory, even though it is a case of *eudaimonia*, is “less intellectualistic” than Aristotle’s ethics (*ibid.*, 193). Thus, instead of living according to our reason, which is the human distinctive function (“*ergon*”) in Aristotle’s ethics (*Nicomachean Ethics* (NE) 1098a7), we must live according to our emotional nature.

It is important to remember that in Aristotle’s ethics, practical reason is what determines what is good for the individual in particular situations aiming at a good life (*eudaimonia*), and emotions are some sort of “signals” that inform the presence of relevant situations in relation to concerns or worthiness (Sherman 1997, 40–41; see NE 1149a30-35). Although emotions are important in Aristotle’s thinking, they are not by themselves reasons for acting, and people who act following the impulse of their “passions” (here including

pleasure and pain) are incontinent. Nevertheless, in Haybron's view reason is neither the distinctive function of human beings nor the only way to detect what is good for us. Regarding this latter idea Haybron (2008, 196) claims: "but it does appear that our reflective judgments do not bear the sort of authority regarding our welfare that many of us take them to," and he adds elsewhere that the value of happiness is "something that matters independently of its connection with reason." (ibid., 193.)

These statements suggest that happiness, which is part of the true self (or objective self) is good without the necessity of being object of a further evaluation because "it is good whether one values it, or would value it given all the facts etc., or not." (Haybron 2008, 180.) Haybron (ibid, 84) points out that a tormented artist who does not care about his happiness and who even takes his unhappiness as a source of inspiration, is worse off although he might regard his life as successful. Thus, in deliberating what options are the best for us we must listen to our emotional natures because they "constrain the options that make sense for us." (ibid., 185.) If happiness determines what options make sense for us, it functions as a reason-giving value: "when deliberating about important life decisions, the judgment that one option will leave you happier normally suffices to settle the question of which best serves your interests." (Haybron 2008, 51.)

As a conclusion, happiness as a psychic affirmation which entails the fulfilment of the emotional nature is something that really shows us what options are good for us and we should act following its "*verdict*." Furthermore, if a person is happy and better off, he has more chances to have a good life. Here good life means a life that is good all things considered, taking account of all the values that matter in life (moral and aesthetic values for example), whether they benefit the individual or not (Haybron 2008, 36). Now it is time to examine how this theory works in the real world.

2.4 The problems of happiness as objective and normative concept

The central thesis in Haybron's book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* is that people do not enjoy a high degree of authority or competence in matters of personal well-being. Henry is a representative example of this situation. His decisions have made him unhappy, and

many people in liberal societies make the same mistake as he: they follow what they think is good for them, but actually they choose what makes them unhappy (Haybron 2008, 250). Haybron's theory of well-being whose important part is happiness should help people to choose good options. But before answering this question, there is something that does not sound all that convincing in Haybron's explanations, and it is precisely regarding the two strong aspects of the theory: the importance of happiness as an objective good and its normative force.

If we suppose that happiness is an objective good, it seems that actually it has a very small role in matters of well-being and good life following Haybron's theory: happiness is (major) part of self-fulfilment, self-fulfilment is part of well-being, and well-being is part of good life. I suppose that one part of the self cannot be more important than all the self, and if self-fulfilment is the relevant concept in our well-being *all* the components of the self should be taken as something important; after all we are not only emotional beings. Now I suppose that beliefs and rational judgements about who we are and what our role in our communities is are important parts of the self too (see the list of the components of the self above) and it is expected that sometimes those beliefs and judgements will be in conflict with the emotional self: "what makes us happy often conflicts with our priorities" (Haybron 2008, 22).

Haybron constantly warns us that some improvements in happiness might not improve our lives on the whole, since they may deprive our lives of too much meaning (Haybron 2008, 194). Here Haybron recognises that our emotional nature can be in serious conflict with other areas of the self and with the conditions of our lives: "gains in happiness can fail to make us better off if they require deep enough conflicts with our commitments." (ibid., 182.) When we have these kinds of conflicts we have to give up our happiness. In those moments we will be less happy or "not happy," but not extremely unhappy. In such cases we should do, if it is possible, "substantial changes" in our life in order to be happy (ibid., 144).

We can find these kinds of examples in our everyday life. We have all seen or heard of parents that constantly have conflicts with their children because they behave most of the time badly, and many parents are not happy in those cases. In another example, when work is stressful and the situation is something recurrent, people may be "not happy" or even unhappy. And if someone is the parent of a child with behaviour problems and also has a

stressful job, happiness will be absent most of the time and surely he or she will be disposed to have negative emotional responses, such as stress, anger and disappointment. The dimension of unhappiness is more pronounced if individual's emotional nature is characteristic of a person who enjoys tranquillity. But unhappiness is not a good reason to abandon the child or to stop working. It is part of well-being to take care of one's child and to do one's job well: these things are matter of self-interest and intrinsic parts of well-being.

Returning to my reconstruction of Haybron's fragmentary theory, happiness is only one part of the self, and perhaps it is not even the most important. It is intrinsic to well-being, but so are the other parts of well-being such as one's role as a parent. Then Haybron is exaggerating when he states that our well-being depends *substantially* on the "verdicts" of the emotional nature. Moreover, our well-being also consist of some other states or activities, such as being morally good and acting well (Parfit 2011, 39–40), and sometimes by doing what is morally right we will be not happy or less happy. Consequently, that what is relevant for our well-being is determined by a large and complex relation between different values at different times, and in many conflicts between values in which happiness is involved the latter has to lose, otherwise we would accept that in the name of psychic flourishing we are allowed to do anything.

As a response to this concern Haybron (2008, 180) asserts that "we ought not to live in conflict with our natures, or at least the aspect of the self involving happiness, without good reasons (e.g., a weight moral reason)." Thus Haybron accepts that while happiness is important, sometimes (or perhaps very often) it is not more important than other areas of our self or some duties. In these cases happiness will not have "normative primacy" over any other part of the self or moral duty.

In this clarification, however, we suppose that the person knows what is good for him or what is good to do and chooses it. Nevertheless, it is possible to imagine that someone can be wrong about the quality of his life. In this case the person believes or feels he is leading a good life, because he experiences self-fulfilment and some of his goals are achieved, but in fact he is ruining his life as a whole, or perhaps he is not living a flourishing life. In order to answer to this concern Haybron (2008, 187) introduces the argument of authenticity:

“Authentic happiness has intrinsic prudential value as an aspect of self-fulfillment, which in turn constitutes at least part of well-being. This value, moreover, is objective in the sense that it benefits you whether you want it, or would want it after reflection, or not.”

In order to understand this conception it is useful to start from “inauthentic” ways of living. If someone experiences self-fulfilment, but in his life as a whole has neither “autonomy” nor the complexity and richness that is required by an “ordinary human life,” he is not authentically happy (Haybron 2008, 186).²⁰ Here Haybron views happiness as a result of brainwashing, lobotomies, deception by experience machines and the enjoyment of unhealthy and immoral behaviours. In these cases even if people could feel happiness or achieve fulfilment at some time, they are ruining their lives and the life of others: they are not living in a flourishing way. In order to have a flourishing life people should choose “autonomously” activities that express their self as a whole in a rich way, but those activities should be complex and meaningful. (ibid., 185–187.) Then, for example, to expend life playing video games instead of doing things like fishing, writing poetry or loving other people, is to waste one’s life, since playing video games is not considered a complex and meaningful activity and it cannot really express the self in a pronounced way even if the person is very happy and fulfils some of his goals only in that situation. We can therefore say to the couch potato²¹ who is happy playing video games that he is not authentically happy, and he should make changes in order to have a more flourishing life.

Nevertheless, I think there is still something that is not convincing in these new clarifications. I have outlined that the fulfilment or the expression of the self is good for the person, but now it seems that this fulfilment is good only if the person has an “adequate self” which finds its expression in complex activities. I suppose that the kind of self which finds fulfilment in activities that are not complex and whose expression does not correspond to the standards of “an ordinary human life” – whatever that means – is an “inadequate self:” in this case any fulfilment would be inauthentic.

However, if the concept of authenticity is now what determines what is good for us, I think that the real standard of living a good life is precisely in the engagement with complex

²⁰ What an “ordinary human life” means for Haybron is something unclear because he does not explain this point.

²¹ Haybron uses the example of a “couch potato” in his article “Happiness” in the *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Here I use a similar example.

activities that sometimes may be external to a person's values – as in the case of the couch potato. In this new explanation it is implicit that people *should* want to live in an authentic way responding in a “favourable way” to complex and meaningful activities; they should find those activities as the source of their happiness. Thus, Haybron gives us a version of an objective theory that resembles perfectionism: people have to live according to a determined ideal (authenticity) because it is good for them to live in that way. We have to remember here that Haybron is precisely trying to avoid this kind of theory, and that is the reason he rejects Aristotelianism, more specifically, his own version of it. Now it seems that he cannot escape from it. I think the argument of authenticity only spoils Haybron's theory by making it more difficult to understand and it reflects the problems he has in expressing his ideas. By making authenticity and the ideal of an “ordinary human life” the standards for well-being, Haybron transforms his theory into a perfectionistic and externalist account. Next I will discuss this point.

2.5 You shall not be happy...if you are a couch potato

My stance is that with the introduction of the concept of authenticity, the central standard in the pursuit of well-being and good life is the engagement with complex activities, not self-fulfilment as such. My idea is as follows. If someone wants to have well-being and a flourishing life as a whole, she should be engaged autonomously in complex activities that express her “self” in a pronounced way if she has an “adequate self.” Besides, it seems that those complex activities are good because their qualities make human life richer independently of any idiosyncratic make-up.

Here I think there are implicitly two ideas: first, human beings, independently of their idiosyncratic make-up, *need* complexity and richness in life; and second, complex activities exist in the world as objective goods.²² Regarding the first idea, I think there is the assumption of some kind of human nature: humans are those kinds of beings that by nature need complexity and richness in life in order to be better off. This explains why the

²² Haybron never asks himself where the value of “complex activities” derives from. In literature on values, there is an intense debate on how a single thing can have any value, but for Haybron it seems to be an obvious matter. For a discussion about values see Zimmerman 2010.

couch potato in my example cannot be considered to achieve a flourishing life only by playing video games: his life lacks complexity and richness. If he realises that he is wasting his life and that he would be better off with a different lifestyle, he has to fulfil its “natural” need for complexity and richness instead of fulfilling his idiosyncratic make-up. This is so because his needs as human being are more primordial than the inclinations of his self.

Viewed from this perspective, Haybron’s theory is not based in first place on the fulfilment of some idiosyncratic self, but on fulfilling certain needs characteristics of human nature. However, the individual’s make-up gives the guidelines for understanding the way a person chooses certain activity instead of another. In this regard, people choose some activity following their personal inclinations derived from his self. There has to be selection because there are many different activities that are considered as meaningful and complex, but as individuals we cannot choose all of them. We need to turn to our inclinations to figure out what activities suit our make-up, otherwise we would carry out those activities poorly or in a bad mood. For example, if I choose a life of a fisherman because I consider the activities in that profession as rich and complex, but I deem fishing as boring or as something that has nothing to do with my inclinations, I will carry out the activity poorly and probably I would also be psychologically stunted. In this case the activity will prevent me from achieving self-fulfilment, but it is worth noting that this is not a detriment to the value of the activity itself. This leads us to the second implicit idea. Following the example of fishing, the activity as such, by the virtue of the skills it demands and the benefit it provides for sustaining life, is objectively good in fostering richness and complexity in human life independently of whether I choose it or not. In contrast, playing video games, or turning to one of Haybron’s examples, “eating crackers,” is not a complex activity that fulfils human needs.

Now I think it is clear why I argue that Haybron’s theory falls into the category of perfectionism and externalism. On the one hand the theory is perfectionist because it presupposes that in the pursuit of well-being we should live according to the exigencies of human nature: to live in a complex, rich and autonomous way doing complex activities. This way of living has “performance value,” that is to say, people’s lives are good only when they function as they are supposed to, and the individual can be considered a “good specimen” of human kind in that case. On the other hand, the theory is externalist because the relevant standards that determine whether someone is living a good life for him are

“outside” the psychological make-up: it is based on human nature in relation to complex and meaningful activities.

With these explanations I defend the idea that Haybron’s theory is perfectionist and externalistic, and in this respect it does not offer anything different from any Aristotelian theory – at least not in the way he interprets Aristotelianism. However, some reader might ask whether my interpretation is not a misrepresented version of Haybron’s theory. A critic may suspect that perhaps I have been using phrases out of the context only to justify my criticism. I think this question is justified. Haybron’s theory is new, complex and discussed only partially in books and reviews. Many articles on well-being quote Haybron’s criticism against hedonism and desire satisfaction theories.²³ Other articles appreciate the idea of emotions as a relevant part of happiness,²⁴ but hardly anyone has discussed seriously the arguments Haybron offers regarding his own theory of well-being. An exception is Neera Badhwar (2009), who in her detailed review suggests that Haybron “has left a door open for perfectionism:”

“It seems that, like Sumner, Haybron cannot bring himself to say that a badly deceived, heteronomous individual can be authentically happy because it conflicts with our picture of a normal, healthy human being. As he himself puts it, the individual must be functioning properly, and must lead a life ‘with all the richness of an ordinary human life,’ to be genuinely emotionally fulfilled. But what is an ‘ordinary human life’ if not a normal, healthy life? A judgment of proper functioning also requires appeal to the notion of a normal, healthy self, the very human self that Haybron has been at pains to reject in earlier chapters. And if Haybron needs to appeal to the idea of a normal, healthy human self after all, then, like Sumner, he has left a door open for perfectionism about well-being to make a comeback.”²⁵

This criticism is in the context of the authenticity argument, and Badhwar suggests, to my judgment correctly, that Haybron is falling into the conception he is trying to reject. With the arguments I have provided here this point is clearer. Perfectionism has passed through the door and has taken over the house: Haybron assumes some human nature whose fulfilment is more relevant than the idiosyncratic self. Moreover, with the concept of authenticity Haybron suggest that not every kind of self should be fulfilled; there are people whose self is ill-constituted. In those cases self-fulfilment shall be prevented to

²³ See for example, Tiberius & Hall 2010; Suikkanen 2011

²⁴ Mattila 2009; Jäger 2009, Martela 2013

²⁵ <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=17645> (retrieved on February 25, 2014)

avoid immorality and harm. In this discussion I have shown that Haybron's position is that happiness is a reason-giving fact:

“[...] we often appeal to considerations of happiness when *deliberating* about important decisions [...] people often take the impact of their choices on their own, or others', happiness to be the most important factor in their decisions (at least where the decision is significant—people rarely think about happiness when deciding what to order for dinner).” (Haybron, 2008, 50. Italics in the original.)

Now we know that Haybron's real position is that happiness could be considered the most important factor in decisions only when it is authentic and only sometimes when there are no deep conflicts with other values (actually conflicts between values are very common). Nevertheless, my conclusion is that this theory cannot explain satisfactorily any function of happiness in choosing options given the following results:

First, well-being has been explained as something that depends “substantially” on the verdict of the emotional nature. This is false. There are many other things that are more important for our well-being than happiness, and I have shown that Haybron accepts this statement. Second, we have been told that happiness has sometimes normative primacy. This is hard to believe now that we see that it is not so important in relation with other values in cases of conflict (as is the case of moral duties). Of course people can ask themselves whether choosing some options will make them happier (if they really can predict that), but happiness is not the ultimate reason in choosing important options. And third, we are told that happiness has intrinsic prudential value in well-being when it is authentic. This only means that the real value of happiness is outside of it, in the engagement in meaningful and complex activities. My concluding remarks show that happiness does not have the role Haybron supposes in some of his statements. As a result of all these inconsistencies it is difficult to understand what this theory of well-being is all about.

Due to these results we cannot expect that Haybron's theory says anything about the role of happiness in choosing important options neither in an option-rich environment – the liberal society – nor in any possible environment. If some option is good for us, it is in part because we believe it is good, and in part because some features of that option make it desirable or worth achieving, but not because we have a positive emotional response towards it.

Here I do not argue that happiness as psychic affirmation or emotional fulfilment is unimportant, but instead I argue that it does not have the role Haybron supposes in his statements about well-being. In the next chapter I will show how Haybron abandons this theory once he proposes a new thesis which he calls “affective ignorance.” If affective ignorance is true, then nobody can take happiness as a serious standard in choosing options. I will interpret this new thesis as the step Haybron takes to shift the discussion towards a contextualist vision of well-being that he defends in the last two chapters of his book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness*. For now it is enough to keep in mind that the theory of well-being whose central and immensely important part is happiness, shows important problems in the way it is presented and it is not credible that the theory could face the challenges the systematic imprudence thesis poses. Thus it is false that in order to avoid systematic imprudence in matters of well-being, people should choose what makes them happy.

Now it is the time to discuss Haybron’s interpretation of Aristotelianism and to find out whether the theory of self-fulfilment could be categorized as eudaimonistic. This question is important because I will defend an Aristotelian vision of good life following MacIntyre’s concept of self, and as a first step it is necessary to understand some of the central tenets of Aristotle’s ethics. Besides, it is of philosophical interest to point out the mistakes Haybron makes in his interpretation of Aristotle’s ethics. In the next section I will explain Aristotle’s concepts of virtue and eudaimonia only in the context of the discussion with Haybron; it is not my intention to develop an extensive explanation of those concepts.

2.6 A reply to Haybron’s interpretation of Aristotle’s ethics

Every philosopher faces different problematics immersed in a determined context or horizon. Language and history provide basis for concepts that make possible the articulation of different questions and solutions. But even if a question or conception seems to be similar in two different contexts, it is not exactly the same: it has a different meaning and intention. Within the Aristotelian tradition, for instance, different authors make their own interpretations of Aristotle’s concepts drawing on the possibilities given by their

horizon. In this regard, it is incorrect to talk about Aristotle's ethics and Aristotelianism as if they were a monolithic notion.

There are, of course, some formal aspects that are shared such as the conception of eudaimonia as the highest good towards which all actions are undertaken and virtuous activity as essential part of a good life (*Nicomachean Ethics* (NE) 1102a2–3). Even though these formal aspects are shared, that does not mean that the interpretations are exactly the same. For example, for Thomas Aquinas, *felicitas* (*perfecta beatitudo*, the equivalent to Aristotle's eudaimonia) is only possible in heaven, and his conception is in accordance with the catholic tradition. Aquinas' concept of happiness is already a different interpretation from Aristotle's concept. Furthermore, different questions and concepts have different intentions: it is not only what one is asking that matters, but also what one is capable of thinking under specific circumstances. Aquinas applies a whole conceptual framework in trying to make catholic tradition and Aristotle's thinking compatible in a context where certain problematic were at the stake.

Haybron, as far as I am concerned, makes serious mistakes in the interpretation of the concept of virtue and the meaning of eudaimonia, and I think these problems are a result of the lack of clarity in the differentiation between Aristotle's ethics and other Aristotelian interpretations. In relation to the concept of virtue, Haybron argues that one of the problems of perfectionism is that it depends on virtuous activity or excellence, but he gives loose explanations of what virtue is. He says that it is an admirable action external to people's goals and values as it is shown in the example of the painter Frank who takes care of the autistic child. In this example, virtuous activity as an admirable action is in relation to self-sacrifice and to the idea of doing good deeds. It is unclear whose interpretation of virtue this is, but it is not Aristotle's.

In Aristotle's ethics we have two different kinds of virtue: moral and intellectual. Moral virtues are in relation with character traits (*hexis*), which are qualities that dispose the individual to act adequately in different situations and to respond emotionally in an appropriate way toward the appropriate things (NE, Book II). Because virtuous activity is the expression of a character trait, it is something internal to the individual; it is the way an individual is used to responding as a result of upbringing (*paideia*) and the practice of

noble actions. As commentators say, this character trait becomes “a second nature.”²⁶ Aristotle explains this as follows:

“[...] but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyreplayers by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.” (NE 1103a30.)

In a first step the child is trained to do what is good for humans in the society in which he dwells – the city-state in Aristotle’s case – and over time he learns to enjoy, to want and to love that what is good:

“Their life is also in itself pleasant [of the virtuous]. For pleasure is a state of soul, and to each man that which he is said to be a lover of is pleasant; e.g. not only is a horse pleasant to the lover of horses, and a spectacle to the lover of sights, but also in the same way just acts are pleasant to the lover of justice and in general virtuous acts to the lover of virtue.” (NE 1099a7–12.)

It seems that for Aristotle there are different kinds of situations in the life of the city which require certain actions and attitudes. There are situations that demand courage, temperance, the disposition to have fun in an appropriate way depending on the circumstances, magnificence and so forth. With the appropriate training the child is used to acting according to the requirements of different situations, and he enjoys carrying out good actions and feels distress when he does what is wrong: he learns what kind of things are praised and what are disapproved of. In a further step, when the individual has enough experience in the life of the city and has adopted good habits as a part of his way of living, he learns to choose autonomously what is good for him in different situations in terms of avoiding excess and defect regarding actions and emotions:

“Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.” (NE 1106b36–1107a1.)

²⁶ See for example McDowell 2002, 184.

This latter point leads us to intellectual virtues, which are those concerning with rational functioning. The most important in *Nicomachean ethics* are both theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom, but this latter is the relevant one in choosing what is good in everyday life. Practical reason is also a moral virtue, not by reason of its nature but by its object, which is to *perceive what is good for the individual in particular situations in order to achieve eudaimonia*. Thus when someone is considered a virtuous person it is not only on the basis of the actions he performs and the emotions he feels, but also taking into account the understanding that person has of the situation in relation to his life and the goal he is aiming at.

A fully virtuous person is that who performs both kinds of virtues, which actually are interrelated: without practical wisdom, on the one hand, a person acts following his dispositions in a blind way, doing things without knowing the appropriate moment or the appropriate way. With the absence of moral virtues, on the other hand, people do not have the disposition to do what is right. In this case some people will be incapable of doing good and noble actions because they are cowards, self-indulgent or irascible. In those cases practical wisdom is reduced to a cunning capacity for linking goods to ends other than those that are good for human beings (MacIntyre 1984, 154; see NE 1144b14–33). The virtuous person is that who lives as a rational being would live, but when Aristotle speaks of living according to reason he means the kind of life that a good person who is *part of a community* would live given his position and role in that community. We have to remember that for Aristotle human being is *zoon politikon*. It is only because people are rational that they are capable of living together and seeking justice, i.e., giving each other what they deserve.

Returning to the discussion of Haybron's interpretations, if virtuous activity were something external to individual's goals it would be some kind of action demanded by a general rule that determines what one ought to do in different situations. Those rules presuppose that some actions are by nature good, independently of what people's intentions or understanding of different situations are. However, Aristotle denies the existence of actions that are good by nature: "Now noble and just actions, which political science investigates, exhibit much variety and fluctuation, so that they may be thought to exist only by convention, and not by nature." (NE 1094b17.) Life is complex and different

situations demand different solutions that only rational and virtuous people can find.²⁷ Moreover, if virtuous activity is the actualization of character traits (the second nature), then it is not something external to people's goals or desires. Thus, Haybron is speaking of some other concept of virtue that is not the one Aristotle discusses.

When it comes to the idea of virtue as something whose essential characteristic is admirability – as Haybron understands it – I think it is false. If admirability were essential to virtue, then virtuous activity would be something rare because it is not possible to carry out admirable or “laudable” actions that involve some kind of self-sacrifice every day. However, Aristotle perceives virtuous activity not as a special kind of action but as a way people live in everyday life. In this regard Russell (2012, 49), while criticizing Haybron's conception of virtue, says:

“For Haybron, virtuous activity is a special *type or class* of activity—the doing of “good deeds,” perhaps, as opposed to doing other, more everyday sorts of things. By contrast, Aristotle thinks of virtuous activity as *any* kind of activity, insofar as it is done with practical wisdom and emotions that harmonize with practical wisdom—this is the activity, he says, that characterizes the virtuous person (*NE* I.13). A virtue is a state of character (II.5) concerned with one's actions and emotions (II.3), and thus with the making of good choices (II.6).” (The italics in the original).

This quotation supports my idea about the misguided interpretation of virtuous activity as essentially an admirable activity. It is astonishing that Haybron does not provide any evidence to support such a view; there is no quotation which could justify or corroborate this conception of virtue as “admirability” he is criticizing here. It seems that Haybron makes these inferences from his own examples, which are designed to defend his own theory, instead of quoting Aristotle's or Aristotelian's definitions. I think this is a case of the fallacy of “the straw man.” Haybron creates a superficial figure that resembles Aristotle's virtue and then he destroys it proclaiming himself to be the one who has refuted that conception, when in fact he has not refuted anything. I think we cannot create our own interpretations of important traditions without any firm basis. To say that Aristotle or Aristotelian authors are defending a concept of virtue whose important characteristic is “admirability” without any evidence is to misrepresent the thinking of an important philosophical vision.

²⁷ For a discussion about the impossibility of universal moral rules see McDowell 2002, pp. 50-73

In this misrepresentation of Aristotle's thinking, Haybron holds that virtuous activity as admirable actions could be compatible with lack of self-respect given the condition of virtue as something involving self-sacrifice, as is the case of Frank. This is, however, false: a person who either makes "major sacrifices" while acting "virtuously" or shows no self-respect in such activity is a fool, or perhaps a rare case of incontinence. Perhaps Frank is following his strong desires for helping disabled people against what practical reason would appraise. In this example, the person would not be a virtuous one in the strongest sense of the word (see *Nicomachean ethics* book VI; cf. McDowell 2002, 77–94). A virtuous person loves himself and has no conflict while acting virtuously: he has harmony in all the different parts of his soul and knows what he's capable of doing and what he is not in determined situations. We can, of course, believe that Aristotle's virtue, specifically the supposition of the harmony of the soul, is too demanding or lacks credibility in our days (cf. Sherman 1997, 97), but this is different from adding to Aristotle's ethics something that is incompatible with it.

As regards the idea of actualising potentialities in order to be a perfect human being, no matter what one feels, thinks or wants, is as erroneous as the idea of admirability. As social and rational animals we have certain potentialities and capacities whose fulfilment is not always possible because of our circumstances: it may be that the institutions of the society are corrupted or our psychological dispositions are not well-trained (MacIntyre 1984, 151). In such circumstances it may be irrational to carry out a contemplative or philosophical activity when other requirements are not met. In this regard, the miserable philosopher who tries to live according to some ideal actualising the capacities and potentialities he possesses in order to be excellent, is more like a person who has failed in choosing the course of action that would be a case of eudaimonia in his circumstances: he lacks practical wisdom, and to be talented in some activity may not be a sufficient reason to do it. Besides, I think the example itself is problematic: I do not find it credible that someone can be good at something that is repulsive to him; it is more likely that those things that are repulsive are done poorly if they are ever done. Haybron's example seems more like a case of a very disturbed person than the case of a virtuous one. A virtuous person is not obsessed about actualising his potentialities at times that may not be appropriate for it.

Other serious problems in Haybron's interpretation are brought out once we ask for an explanation of the concept of eudaimonia. This question is relevant because Haybron himself believes his theory is a case of eudaimonism. Eudaimonia, as it is well known, means happiness in the sense of living well. A life that has eudaimonia in Aristotle's ethics is a flourishing one, but flourishing in human beings is essentially determined by virtuous activity. Virtuous activities are those whose ends are not extrinsic to themselves: someone carries out brave acts in order to be a brave person. On the contrary, productive arts do not have the end in themselves, but in some product. However, Haybron (2008, 171) in one part of his arguments explains eudaimonia as if it was a case of some empty ideal that could mean anything: "it [Eudaimonia] is claimed to represent whatever it is that would constitute an ideal life, a life that is most choiceworthy, and thus occupies a role akin to the broad understanding of 'good life'."

There is a debate on whether Aristotle's attempt is to make a model of good life when he explains the contemplative life as the best one (see *Nicomachean ethics* Book X, 7–8). But according to Kraut (2010, § 10) this can be interpreted as Aristotle's attempt to justify his own way of living: "Evidently Aristotle believes that his own life and that of his philosophical friends was the best available to a human being. He compares it to the life of a god: god thinks without interruption and endlessly, and a philosopher enjoys something similar for a limited period of time."

The contemplative life was the best way of life Aristotle could imagine in the context he was living, but it does not exclude other kinds of life (cf. McDowell 2002, 13–22). In general terms, what Aristotle defends is that eudaimonia is to live well according to virtuous activity, and external goods are necessary for securing such activity. Every time someone lives in this way in his particular context and conditions, he lives well. In this regard, when Julia Annas points out that for Aristotle it is trivial that our end is eudaimonia, she means that happiness as the goal of human life is what everyone agrees on, and she is preparing her argument for defending virtuous activity as a central part of eudaimonia according to Aristotle (Annas 2006, 521–2). The point is clear because some people, according to Aristotle, believe that happiness is to have riches, power, pleasure or honour. Nevertheless, Haybron takes Annas' words out of context and presents them as if Aristotle and Aristotelians were holding that eudaimonia is just to live well whatever that

means for everyone. In this case the term is something completely abstract and empty, open to every conception of living well that comes to mind.

Haybron has no hesitation in saying that Genghis Kahn, who is depicted by him as a murderer and a looter, is a case of “dangerous flourishing.” In this case he argues that Aristotelians would assert that such a life is not good for the agent. However, according to Haybron, this answer is not credible because Genghis Kahn is flourishing, that is, actualising his capabilities and living well according to his conception of good life which is described in the following quotation: “Happiness lies in conquering one’s enemies, in driving them in front of oneself, in taking their property, in savoring their despair, in outraging their wives and daughters.” (Haybron 2008, 155.)

But taking this criticism against Aristotle’s ethics (I do not know whether it works against some form of Aristotelianism) is unjustified. Aristotle thinks that some actions and emotions are always wrong for the negative impact they have on the life of a community:

“But not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder; for all of these and suchlike things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not the excesses or deficiencies of them. It is not possible, then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must always be wrong.” (NE 1107a9–15.)

From Aristotle’s perspective, Genghis Kahn – at least as Haybron depicts him – is not a case of flourishing, not only because he undertook activities which were not a case of virtuous activity, but because his case is an example of a life that is not entirely rational. As I have said, Aristotle does not exclude any way of rational life, and the evidence of this stance is that a political life is the second best life (Kraut 2010, § 10). However, he excludes from eudaimonia every kind of life that is selfish and based only on satisfaction of desires. With respect to the life devoted only to achieve pleasurable experiences and satisfaction, Aristotle takes it as Plato did i.e., as a low sort of life: “Now the mass of mankind are evidently quite slavish in their tastes, preferring a life suitable to beasts.” (NE 1095b19.)

If my explanations are right, Haybron’s criticism against Aristotelian eudaimonia is unsubstantiated because he never really discusses any clear concept of eudaimonia; all his

criticism is based on a few phrases he takes from Annas' articles. Even though Haybron could accept this criticism, he has yet what seems to be his most important argument against eudaimonia: eudaimonia as living a good life is not necessarily in close relation to well-being. Both concepts have two different values: well-being has prudential value, whereas eudaimonia has "performance value." The former explains whether someone is better off, whereas the latter explains whether someone is doing things well. I think this criticism is based on a misunderstanding of the way Aristotle used the concept of eudaimonia.

In his discussion about human flourishing, Haybron's interest is in the nature of well-being and its relation with a person's emotional states (with the assumption that emotional states have been neglected in philosophical debates). Aristotle, for his part, is interested in human's goal and how to achieve it. These are two different approximations with different intentions and concepts. Haybron understands well-being as a matter of self-interest, and the reason we have to achieve it is that we want to be better off. Now, as John McDowell suggests in his explanations of Aristotle's ethics, it is a mistake to categorize the reasons we have for seeking eudaimonia as moral, prudential, aesthetic or other kinds of reasons (we could say "perfectionist reasons"), since in Aristotle's thinking there is no sharp distinction, a virtuous activity is morally good, beautiful and good for us (McDowell 2002, 10-12; cf. Kraut 2010; Manzano 2012). In scholastic discussions on self-interest, this union started to dissolve, and it was possible to think of someone acting against his own good for the sake of the good commanded by God (see for example, Lagerlund & Yrjönsuuri 2002); however, that problematic is something quite different than Haybron's.

If my explanation is correct and Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia is not just a matter of "performance value," Haybron incorporates into Aristotle's ethics categories that are incompatible with it. Russell (2012, 42) in his criticism points out that Haybron interprets eudaimonia as an agent-neutral value: there are some facts about human nature that have neutral value from which ethical or prudential facts are derived. The problem is that an agent-neutral fact cannot be reason-giving. Only those kinds of facts that have agent-relative value, that is to say, facts that are already appraised as a good reason for acting are reason-giving. When Aristotle asked what the human function was, he did not have in mind to speak of nature as if it was something neutral and objective in the modern sense of the word. If eudaimonia was something that is based on neutral facts, "human flourishing"

would be similar to the flourishing of a beautiful, but completely unconscious and irrational flower.

I think Aristotle's concepts of eudaimonia and virtue are sufficiently complex and deserve to be understood from their own context, and this is something that is missing in Haybron's interpretation. Haybron (2008, 156) may defend his position, as he actually does, asserting that he is not interested in the "historical Aristotle." I believe this is a mistake. We cannot understand Aristotle's thinking if we do not take into account the way he saw the world and the context in which he developed these concepts. It probably would have been a better option for Haybron to leave Aristotle's ethics out of this discussion and to examine only some current Aristotelian accounts and explain the problems current Aristotelianism faces in discussions about the nature of well-being. Instead of doing this, he presents Aristotelianism, including Aristotle's ethics and maybe a great part of medieval Aristotelianism, as a wrong theory of well-being.

Now that I have elaborated on some of the problems of Haybron's account of Aristotelianism, I will move on to analyse what he means when he calls himself eudaimonistic. Haybron believes his theory is eudaimonistic because it shares with Aristotelianism the idea of fulfilment as a central part of well-being. I think Haybron's arguments could be outlined followingly: "self-fulfilment is a central part of my theory of well-being; in Aristotle's ethics the conception of nature-fulfilment plays an important role; since I share with Aristotle the idea of fulfilment, then I must be Aristotelian. As I am Aristotelian in relation to the concept of fulfilment, I must be eudaimonist." In this reasoning eudaimonia has the idea of fulfilment as its only component. Nevertheless, eudaimonia has as an intrinsic characteristic the idea of *telos*, end, hence eudaimonistic accounts of happiness are teleological: good life is the final goal of our actions. But in Haybron's conception self-fulfilment is not the end of human beings, because if it were so, then prudential values determined by our idiosyncrasies would be more important than those actions that are aesthetically or morally valuable. Nobody in his senses could defend that kind of thesis. Even Haybron argues, as I have pointed out above, that the fulfilment of our emotional nature, which has internal prudential value, should be suspended in order to undertake some moral duties.

The aspect Haybron's theory shares with Aristotle's ethics, i.e., the idea of fulfilment, is not a sufficient reason to categorize it as eudaimonistic according to the standards of Aristotelianism: the teleological aspect is missing. Finally, I think that in an Aristotelian theory of eudaimonia virtuous activity should be an essential aspect, but Haybron rejects the idea of virtuous activity as something relevant in well-being. As a conclusion, Haybron criticizes some kind of perfectionist theories of well-being that have nothing to do directly with Aristotle's ethics, and his assertion concerning the eudaimonistic nature of his theory is grounded on a misunderstanding of the concept of eudaimonia: his theory of well-being is rather a blend of self-development with prudential concerns, but not an eudaimonistic one.

Now it is time to move on to the discussion of the next topic: the theory of contextualism. This theory offers an answer to the problems the systematic imprudence thesis raises. The question is whether the answers this theory provides are plausible.

3 CONTEXTUALISM: ANOTHER VICISSITUDE IN HAYBRON'S THOUGHT

In this chapter I will analyse the theory of contextualism which Haybron develops in the last two chapters of his book. Contextualism is precisely the theory that pretends to offer a solution to the problem that systematic imprudence represents for people's pursuit of well-being in liberal societies. My stance in this chapter is that contextualism is an implausible theory. First, I introduce some arguments that attempt to explain why Haybron changes the course of the discussion from a theory of self-fulfilment to a theory based on evolutionary psychology, situationism and cognitive dual process. This is, however, a surmise because Haybron never explains this change. Secondly, I discuss the theory of contextualism and its parts, and thirdly, I evaluate the theory. One of the results of this analysis is that contextualism and self-fulfilment are incompatible theories; consequently, they cannot be part of a broader theory of well-being.

3.1 How Haybron refutes his own theory of self-fulfilment

As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, Haybron believes that happiness is an objective good because it is the affirmation of the self. By giving the example of Henry he tries to justify why happiness should be taken as an important matter in our decisions, and how sometimes it will have normative primacy over reason. These ideas suppose that people know what circumstances or states of affairs make them happy and consciously recognise some mental states that can be called happiness. In Henry's case model trains are what makes him happy and he is conscious about this fact. Haybron's position is that Henry has reasons to choose activities related to model trains because this is the option that makes him happy. Nonetheless, in the tenth chapter "Do we know how happy we are?" I think Haybron commits a mistake: he proposes a new thesis that refutes the theory he previously defended. In that chapter Haybron (2008, 200) argues that people's capacity to

assess their own happiness, including the hedonistic aspect of positive emotional states,²⁸ is “weaker and less reliable than we tend to suppose.” Haybron calls this phenomenon “affective ignorance.” Next I outline some of the causes of this ignorance.

Affective ignorance is possible because some of our emotions and other mental states are unconscious. In this regard, someone can be happy or unhappy without noticing it. According to Haybron one example of this phenomenon is the experience of “flow” which is one of the ways psychic affirmation occurs. In this mental state the person loses self-awareness while doing meaningful activities (Haybron 2008, 204; cf. Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 2006, 124). Unhappiness in this unconscious way is shown in cases of long-lasting depression with no severe symptoms. In these cases people learn to live with their unpleasant emotional state to the point of being unaware of it (Haybron 2008, 206).

Another factor in affective ignorance relates to beliefs about happiness. Ideas about how happiness should feel like, under what circumstances happiness is an appropriate response and what psychological changes one should experience while feeling happiness, can make people evaluate their experiences in a biased way (Haybron 2008, 208). In these cases people can evaluate their emotional states as “not happy” when actually they are happy, and vice versa: they can evaluate that they are very happy, when they are not.

There is affective ignorance too, given the psychological fact that people tend to recall emotional experiences that are congruent with their present emotional state. If people are in a good mood or having positive emotions it is more likely that they remember happy situations rather than negative ones (Haybron 2008, 214). This tendency usually affects people’s judgments about the quality of their lives as a whole, and they could believe that they have been very happy at another time when in fact they have not. Finally, the most important problem is that we are not sure how happiness really feels; we have only our language and our interpretations to understand and explain what we feel (ibid., 221–223).

Haybron provides a lot of evidence from current psychological research to back up this thesis. Here I am not interested in that evidence, and I think it is easy to accept the central ideas of affective ignorance. Psychoanalysis makes a remarkable contribution, not only regarding psychic flourishing, but also with respect to unconscious emotions in general.

²⁸A positive emotional response is such because in part it feels good. Unhappiness feels bad. One of the reasons why happiness is desirable is because it is a pleasurable state: “being happy seems, with few or no exceptions, to be a pleasant or otherwise prudentially desirable condition.” (Haybron 2008, 53.)

Psychoanalysts understand unconscious emotions as an important part of the psychic apparatus, and they attempt to reconstruct conflicts in the personal emotional history through psychological defences such as repression, reaction formation, projection, introjection or sublimation, among other defences. Regarding our limitations in emotional assessment, I think it is an everyday experience. We do not always know what we feel and every one of us has sometimes tried to put into words our experience without a complete success, and our explanations obscure our experience instead of clarifying it. As Peter Goldie (2002, 240) explains, our knowledge and identification of our own emotional responses is not something automatic; it is part of the process of using language and experience in life. I acknowledge that I am sympathetic to the central ideas of the affective ignorance thesis. I believe that mental states are not “transparent” to the person in many times.

It is possible to attain awareness of what we feel and to decipher the meaning of those feelings. This process, of course, takes effort and time. The thesis could be outlined in different versions. On the one hand, a strong position would stress that great part of our mental states are unconscious or misunderstood, and only with a great effort their meaning can be deciphered; on the other hand, a weaker position would maintain that great part of our mental states could be conscious and understood with a little effort. It seems that Haybron holds a position close to the strong one: “[...] serious errors in the self-assessment of affect are a genuine possibility—one worth taking very seriously. That many of us may be badly mistaken even about our *experience* of life is, I think, an interesting claim in its own right.” (Haybron 2008, 200.)

The problem with this thesis in Haybron’s account is that if serious errors in the self-assessment of affect are a genuine possibility, then the theory of self-fulfilment is impractical. Only people with an extraordinary capacity of self-knowledge could make good choices regarding their well-being by following their emotional natures, but in general terms the theory is not practical for the rest of mortals.

In the light of these explanations, happiness cannot be taken as a normative concept in choosing a course of action either because we may be unaware of what we feel or because we might make considerable mistakes in the interpretation of our own mental states. We cannot recommend Henry to listen to his emotional self while making important decisions in his life because he is psychologically prone to interpret his own mental states

incorrectly. Perhaps the model trains do not make him very happy and to be a farmer does not make him unhappy; it all may be a misinterpretation. Another possibility that Haybron does not contemplate is that Henry's situation might be a case of mixed emotions that are in connection with conflicting beliefs.

The implications of the affective ignorance thesis are devastating for the theory of self-fulfilment. First, it makes the access to the self very difficult. For Haybron happiness is the affirmation of the emotional self, and he supposes in his examples and arguments that people are able to know who they are – otherwise there is no point in saying that people, while deliberating about their well-being, take their happiness as an important aspect in their decisions. If someone knows what makes him happy, then he knows himself. But if the strong version of affective ignorance is true, then this self-knowledge is not that obvious.

Our intuitions make us stipulate that people are in some way capable of recognising who they are and what is important to them. The problem in Haybron's work is that he never explains how a person gains knowledge of herself.²⁹ Questions about how we know who we are, how we can be sure that we are not another person (like schizophrenics sometimes think) and how we persist in time, among other questions, are never raised in his work. Based on the lack of this information on the one hand, and the endorsement of the strong version of affective ignorance on the other, I infer that even those mental states that are part of the emotional self could be unconscious or misunderstood. The implication of this stance is that very often we do not know who we are emotionally. If we often fail to recognise our emotional self, it is hard to see why happiness should deserve “a central place in deliberation” (Haybron 2008, 76). How can we take something as important in our deliberations if we do not know it or we are not sure about it? One solution to this problem would be to ask our friends and family what they think about us, or to search for physical manifestations of our emotional states:

“Who among us hasn't at one time or another learned of their emotional conditions only through the testimony of observant friends and family members, or by attending to the physical manifestations of their emotional states, such as muscle tension or gastrointestinal symptoms best left to the imagination? And who hasn't encountered blinkered souls who seemed spectacularly misinformed about their own emotional lives?” (Haybron 2008, 215.)

²⁹ For a philosophical discussion about questions concerning the self, see Kotkavirta & Niemi 2004.

The problem with this solution which is a kind of indirect self-knowledge, is that on the one hand our friends and family may be wrong about their interpretation of who we are, and thus their contribution only obscures our knowledge of ourselves. On the other hand, nothing prevents the interpretation of our physical symptoms from being biased. For example, a person who has read a book about somatoform disorders might misrepresent certain physical manifestations as a sign of some emotional conflict, when in fact they signal a physical illness. I think that in both cases the supposed solution only reinforces the misinterpretation of mental states. It seems that there is no way out of the problems of affective ignorance, and one reason for this failure is that Haybron regards the self only as a psychological phenomenon.

Another problem the affective ignorance thesis represents to the theory of self-fulfilment is that it renders impossible the distinction between the emotional self and other mental states: there is no way of sorting out in a reliable way the expressions of our emotional natures from those transient emotional responses. Haybron may answer to this concern in the following way: those emotional states that are relevant in happiness are “profound” because of the relation they have with the self. In this regard Haybron (2008, 131) offers figurative expressions:

“Profundity is part of what we have in mind when we speak of something’s ‘getting to’ us, lifting our spirits, or bringing about a deep sense of joy, anxiety, etc. Contrast such states with that of orgasm: while manifestly intense, this state may not always feel emotionally profound, at times seeming more a superficial pleasure that fails to move us.”

Haybron also says that happiness or unhappiness feels like something that is “‘perturbing’” or “‘disturbing’” us (*ibid.*, 129). Returning to Henry’s case, we may suppose that he feels like something that is moving or perturbing him when he assembles model trains. This perturbation gives him reasons to think that he is happy doing activities related to model trains. The question that arises in the framework of this aesthetic solution is whether the things that move and perturb Henry are really something that is in connection with his self. Here Haybron supposes that “profundity” and “self” have some connection, but in his work there is no clear explanation or justification of such connection. Moreover, one problem in using poetic utterances as standards in discriminating emotional states is that a great

variety of emotions, pleasurable experiences and satisfaction could be felt in the way the utterances suggest. This is so because those mental states are subjective, and the way they are felt depends on people's mental dispositions. Hence this attempt to solve the problem fails. Furthermore, the expressions Haybron uses do not reflect the characteristics of those mental states that are part of the self although they are unconscious. Affective ignorance disables any standard in identifying a difference between emotional states.

Now let us consider the fortunate case in which a person is able to recognise a feeling that corresponds to what is called happiness and he knows he is happy under determined circumstances given his inclinations. What would happen in this case? The problem of authenticity that I have discussed in chapter one returns. Happiness cannot help us in choosing options because having it does not say anything about the *quality* of our options; it only says who we are and towards what we are used to responding emotionally in a positive way. This is why happiness in the case of the couch potato cannot be taken as a normative reason for choosing options: the situations in which such response occurs are not considered to be good for human beings. In the case of unhappy people, we only know that their emotional responses toward certain situations are negative, however, this does not say anything reliable about the badness of those situations. Given this problem, Haybron has to introduce the concept of authenticity, otherwise his theory would have exactly the same problems hedonism and desire satisfaction theories have: they are compatible with situations of self-deceit, immorality or a mediocre life.

The theory of self-fulfilment could be defended if a moderated conception of affective ignorance was defended. However, Haybron does not even consider the possible consequences that affective ignorance represents to the theory of self-fulfilment – here I have made explicit some of these consequences. He just starts from zero and in the last two chapters of his book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* he proposes a new theory called contextualism that does not have any explicit connection with the theory of self-fulfilment. The theory of self-fulfilment, after 200 pages of explanations and suggestions about how important the self and mental states are in well-being, disappears. What is clear, however, is that the theory of self-fulfilment is weak and incapable of facing the challenges posed by systematic imprudence thesis. Let us now see whether contextualism can help to resolve the problem that Haybron himself has raised.

3.2 The concept of Contextualism

In the twelfth chapter Haybron (2008, 264) claims the following:

“To some extent, the pursuit of happiness will depend, not on personal wisdom, but on being situated in the right social and physical context: living in the right place, with the right people, where this is not simply a matter of personal choice. The pursuit of happiness, in other words, will not be solely, or perhaps even mainly, an individual affair: it will be substantially a societal matter.”

These ideas are the core of contextualism. For contextualists well-being is “better served when individuals’ lives are substantially, and non-minimally, shaped by an obliging context. People do best, that is, when the context constrains or guides their choices in certain ways, beyond the minimums imposed by the unalterable facts of human existence.” (Haybron 2008, 263.) This vision is the opposite to individualism, which elucidates well-being as the fulfilment of people’s desires. Haybron argues that contextualism is the right theory, while individualism is the wrong one. First I will explain Haybron’s criticism against individualism, and then his defence of contextualism.

According to Haybron, individualists affirm that in matters of well-being and happiness people are an authority: they are capable of choosing their own good pretty well. The idea supporting individualism about well-being is what Haybron calls “liberal optimism.” Liberal optimism, in general terms, emphasises that people tend to fare best when they possess, more or less, the greatest possible freedom to live as they wish. (Haybron 2008, 256–257.) In this respect, more freedom to choose is always better in the pursuit of happiness; the more freedom the individual agent has, the happier he is. However, the greatest possible freedom needs an appropriate environment in order to flourish. This demand is met by an option-rich environment, and this is the case of our Western societies.

Moreover, liberal optimism assumes that people have the appropriate psychological skills required to secure their well-being. Haybron calls this idea “aptitude assumption,” and he explains it as follows: “*Given (roughly) the greatest possible option freedom, and otherwise reasonably favorable conditions, individuals will tend to choose prudently, so that most can expect to do well over the course of their lives, and better than they would given less freedom to shape their lives.*” (Haybron 2008 228–229. Italics in the original.) In

the light of this assumption people have more possibilities to succeed in pursuing well-being because option-rich environments suit very well their psychologies: human beings have natures that are strongly idiosyncratic and extremely needy (ibid., 270). The solution to satisfy this nature is a civilization that offers a limitless range of options for everyone. Haybron's position is that liberal optimism and the aptitude assumption thesis provide a misguided picture of human nature. He says the following:

“[...] we should take seriously the possibility that human beings have environmental needs that are best not left entirely to the individual's discretion. Even as adults, we may need an obliging social and physical context to help shape the way we live. And the successful pursuit of happiness may be less an individual affair, and more a matter of living in the right social and physical context, than the modern tradition has normally assumed.” (Haybron 2008, 255.)

According to Haybron, human beings need a healthy community, meaningful activities (including work), time for relaxation in the company of others, and a close relationship with nature. In this picture freedom to choose is still important but it has to be tempered by circumstances that either constrain the choices or steer people toward certain options rather than others (Haybron 2008, 264). The favoured options need to be good ones for human beings; the kind of options that promote human flourishing – including psychic flourishing. The question here is what concept of human nature Haybron proposes and for what reason is it different from the corresponding concept in the liberal tradition. I will return to this point later. Since individualism has a wrong understanding of human nature, it is expected that people would make wrong choices regarding their well-being in an option-rich environment. Haybron articulates the “systematic imprudence” thesis in the eleventh chapter as follows:

“Human beings are systematically prone to make a wide range of serious errors in matters of personal welfare. These errors are weighty enough to substantially compromise the expected lifetime well-being for individuals possessing a high degree of freedom to shape their lives as they wish, even under reasonably favorable conditions (education, etc.).” (Haybron 2008, 227. Italics in the original.)

Haybron's thesis is that when people choose whatever they want according to their desires and idiosyncrasies, they may end up pursuing their unhappiness. He offers a lot of examples and categories depicting this point, but I think the idea is sufficiently clear: people choose wrong professions, wrong spouses, they do not know what to do with their

free time or how to use prudentially their money, and so on. These are things that we already know. What is more relevant is to find out the kinds of theories on which Haybron bases his criticism against individualism. We find a constellation of three different theories that are supposed to sustain contextualism: “evolutionary psychology,” “dual process psychology” and “situationism.” These theories function as the justification of a certain conception of human nature. They are also the ground for the arguments against individualism and its presuppositions.

3.2.1 Evolutionary psychology

In the framework of evolutionary psychology, Haybron says:

“[...] my point is that we have little evolutionary reason to expect high levels of prudence in contemporary environments. If you doubt we have evolutionary reason to expect much of anything about human psychology, all the better: for then we *really* should not expect people to have special talents for navigating option-rich environments.” (2008, 245. Italics in the original.)

Haybron's arguments can be categorized in two types: the “ancestors” and the “adaptation” argument. The “ancestors” argument can be described as follows: our ancestors from the Pleistocene were quite different from Western people; they formed hunter-gatherer societies. If in the beginning of human evolution the way of living was in the form of hunter-gatherer society, then, Haybron (2008, 243) says, “[...] from a biological perspective, we are basically a hunter-gatherer species.” Hence, according to evolution we should be living as hunters-gatherers, and this kind of life, Haybron suggests, is good for us because it suits our nature. In order to support his arguments, Haybron uses as an example a story one of his friends who works with quasi-hunter-gatherer societies (current examples of human’s original society) once told him: “these people” (the quasi-hunter-gatherer), his friend said, “love their lives” (ibid., 272). When a member of those societies lived for a while in the United States for further studies, the story follows, he found life in that country “exciting” for the first few months, but after this period he found it “miserable” and returned to his tribe. This example allegedly shows us that people are more “at home” in a tribe than in an American city. The problem with Americans is that

they are used to living in an environment that does not suit their nature. This situation makes them miserable but they no longer are aware of how stressful their lives actually are.

Furthermore, our ancestors from the Pleistocene fulfilled almost automatically their essential needs given the way they lived and the kind of environment they inhabited. Their societies were *bounded*: they had fewer options but they were better ones; they had a close relationship with a challenging and rich environment, and their identities as individuals depended mostly on the community and the activities that the community imposed on them. Those people had more fulfilling lives. In contrast, people from liberal society, which is an unbounded environment, are left to the stressful task of determining what they want to be, what they want to do and where they want to live. Unfortunately they make the wrong choices very often. This latter point lead us to the “adaptation” argument: people are not adapted psychologically to live in an option-rich environment.

The hunter-gatherer societies have been the “historical norm;” they have provided the conditions in which “most human evolution occurred, with civilizations only starting to arise in the last 1 to 10 percent of our tenure here on Earth.” (Haybron 2008, 271.) Since this kind of life has been the norm, the new environment we face in liberal societies is strange for us. Nevertheless, in this new environment we are still seeking avidly goods that for our ancestors were important to seek such as food and material goods. This could explain why people eat compulsively high-fat food or constantly seek riches: in the Pleistocene world there was not any of these two goods in abundance, and for this reason, people were forced by their circumstances to seek them in order to survive. Today, however, when life is too easy in this respect in most of the liberal societies, this behaviour is inadequate. Perhaps we cannot help seeking those things because of evolutionary determinations:

“We have evolved a formidable sweet tooth and ‘fat’ tooth—a sensible disposition in light of the dietary constraints facing our Pleistocene ancestors. Perhaps human beings have evolved other ‘teeth’ as well—such a ‘stuff’ tooth or a ‘status’ tooth—that cause us to seek certain things even when doing so threatens our interests.” (Haybron 2008, 245.)

Given the idea that we may make serious errors in our lives because we are not well-adapted to liberal societies, we face the possibility that maybe we are not so smart.

Nevertheless, Haybron asserts that we are too smart: the fact that we can live in an option-rich environment is the evidence of our capacity of adaptation, the problem is that we are not well-adapted psychologically. Furthermore, it seems that our cognitive capacities are more adapted to resolve problems in a bounded society than in an unbounded one. This premise leads us to the theory of “dual process psychology.”

3.2.2 Dual process psychology

When people from hunter-gatherer societies faced problems in their environment, they used what Haybron calls “the intuitive or automatic system” which operates quickly, holistically, and automatically. This system was indispensable for the kind of life they had: “For the hunter contending constantly with the natural world, the automatic systems’ speed and holistic processing of vast amounts of information would be crucial to daily survival.” (Haybron 2008, 246–247.) This idea is in line with the evolutionary perspective introduced above: if in the beginning of our evolution as a species the intuitive system was in charge most of the time, then by nature that system should be in charge today. This intuitive system is our principal cognitive skill from the evolutionary perspective. The problem seems to be that in our liberal society we use more the “analytic or reasoning system” which supports explicit or conscious thought. This system “slowly processes information in a resource-intensive, serial, rule-based manner, often involving language, and is under voluntary control” (ibid., 245). Contrasting both systems Haybron asks us to accept the idea that as a species, human beings have a more gratifying and more fully human life when they live according to the intuitive system:

“It is not uncommon for those who have lived close to the land to remark on the extraordinary cognitive differences between that existence and life within urbanized society, for instance talking about a shift to the ‘animal’ mind in the former case, as contrasted with the ‘calculating’ mindset one acquires in the latter. The former also tends, perhaps not coincidentally, to be characterized as much more gratifying, not to mention more fully ‘human,’ brutish metaphors notwithstanding.” (Haybron 2008, 247.)

In the light of this quotation, the two systems can be called “animal mind” and “calculating mind.” From an evolutionary perspective the animal mind, which is the “more fully

human,” is what makes the work of coping with challenging situations. However, in a liberal society which is an option-rich environment, we tend to use more the calculating mind because such an environment imposes upon us the task of deliberating about our goals and actions taking into account the possible consequences and our future: “Compared to our predecessors, we need to be able to devise and pursue a much more extensive and varied set of plans ranging over much longer periods of time [...] We must sustain longer chains of prudent choice in pursuit of more complex hierarchies of goals.” (Haybron 2008, 243.)

In our unbounded society we face the arduous task of deliberating about things that in the bounded society were already imposed on, and the risk of making mistakes is higher given the nature of our calculating mind, which is a slow and “clumsy” process (Haybron 2008, 248). Moreover, the analytic system, which is depicted by Haybron as a kind of instrumental reason, is prone to choose options that seem more advantageous. On this subject, Haybron asserts that people choose options that give them monetary payoff because it is the more “rational” thing to do. For example, some indigenous people embrace tourist development following the normative force of this kind of “rationality,” losing their rich culture and transforming it into a souvenir (ibid., 234–235.) In this case the monetary compensations are minimal compared to the great losses of meaningful activities; however, the analytic system does not detect the harmful consequences of such choices. From this case it can be inferred that this kind of rationality can ruin our lives:

“Indeed, there appears to be a massive disconnect between people’s values, at least in the United States, and the way they live. It may simply be that our most important values, like family, friends, and personal happiness fare poorly in rationalistic terms next to money, possessions, and the like. And so our choices fail to cohere with our values.” (ibid., 235.)

This does not mean that people have materialistic values; rather, it means that the analytic system is considerably disconnected from important values. Hence, it is not surprising that there is an epidemic of unhappiness if people choose things that are more in relation to what seems to be rational instead of choosing what is important. However, this tendency to use more our analytic system and to choose goods that are useful and profitable is reinforced by a psychological mechanism rooted in human nature. This point leads us to the third theory, situationism.

3.2.3 Situationism

We do not need to be sociologists or psychologists in order to acknowledge that people tend to go with the flow: the environment has a strong impact on people's behaviour (Haybron 2008, 271). However, this is not a negative characteristic, but an adaptive one. In this regard, Haybron says:

“It makes good sense as well for people to be delicately attuned to others around them, constantly adapting themselves to fit with their social situation. Human beings have to be capable of getting along with virtually all other members of their species, since they have tended to live in close quarters with each other, with little choice over their companions.” (ibid., 248.)

According to Haybron (2008, 247), situationists maintain that human behaviour depends far less on matters of personality and character than we tend to suppose, and far more on external features of the situation. From an evolutionary perspective, the members of hunter-gatherers societies had to be highly sensitive to their environment, acting in a similar way to survive either seeking what everyone else seeks or avoiding what everyone else avoids. Nevertheless, as I have shown above, in a bounded society the intuitive system is what rules behaviour, whereas in a liberal society, which is a strange environment for our species, the analytic system has the burden of dealing with many options and making decisions. The consequence of this disruption in the cognitive hierarchy is that people from societies such as the United States are making choices based on what is “rational” to choose, and at the same time, they go with the “flow.” Hence, there are millions of people that want to be doctors, lawyers, dentists or successful entrepreneurs because those are the more rational choices that everyone should want. The high expectation of achieving high incomes and other kinds of capital has as a consequence a fierce competition and this makes those goods hard to attain. In this competition there are always winners and losers.

Regarding success and possibilities, the average American has inflated opinions of himself, indicated by which is the belief that he is above average and that he will be the lucky one who will succeed. As consequence of this optimism, people tend to privilege risky goods at the expense of sure things, for example wealth versus relationships. The obvious problem is that not everyone can succeed in such environment, and the risk of suffering disappointments is very high. The few who succeed will be unhappy as well because they

will lack much of the good things human beings need by nature: healthy community, meaningful activities, relationships, and so forth. (Haybron 2008, 232–236.)

Putting all things together, contextualism specifies that human beings cannot flourish in a profound and rich way in a liberal society because it is not their original environment. Since it is not their original environment, their psychological constitution is not well-adapted to cope with the problems of that new environment. Furthermore, due to the insufficient psychological adaptation to the new environment, they make serious mistakes regarding choosing options in the pursuit of well-being and happiness:

“Perhaps liberal optimism’s psychological assumptions will turn out not only to be wrong, but *really* wrong. We may, in the fullness of time, conclude that our civilization is founded on a fundamentally mistaken view of human nature and what we need flourish. As if a misguided zoo established a habitat for tigers with the idea that they were dealing with dingoes.” (Haybron 2008, 251.)

3.2.4 Contextualism as the solution

In the middle of the disaster that liberal optimism represents for human flourishing, Haybron claims that contextualism helps to moderate liberal optimism making possible a version of liberal society more according to human nature (Haybron 2008, 277). One consequence of embracing contextualism is that governments would be able to regulate people’s options in order to make human existence less stressful although less economically prosperous. This latter consequence, however, is not a real loss. Governments also have to rescue and preserve meaningful local practices with historical and cultural value, as well as natural environment. From a moral point of view, the recommendation that has been given since ancient times still remains valid: to temper one’s desires and conform oneself to the world rather than viewing it as a resource of gratification. This movement to a more contextualist perspective, Haybron stresses, is something urgent. Local ways of living are endangered, making possible the extinction of cultures and the impoverishment of human life in global scale. Perhaps this is the principal concern of Haybron and the motive of this movement to contextualism. By reducing options the systematic imprudence could be avoided.

3.3 The problems of contextualism

Haybron tries to respond to the problems that systematic imprudence represents in liberal societies through the theory of contextualism. The relevant question is whether contextualism does its task well. Contextualism explains us that the liberal society is not our original environment, and consequently it is very difficult to achieve happiness and well-being. Our well-being is better served when we live in an obliging context. However, I believe that contextualism is an implausible theory. I will explain briefly the problems I detect in this theory.

3.3.1 Haybron's interpretations of the three theories

Evolutionary psychology holds that much, if not all, of our behaviour can be explained by appealing to internal psychological mechanisms that are the result of natural selection in the process of adaptation (Downes 2010). This definition is consistent with the explanations Haybron provides; at least when it comes to the idea that our psychology is the result of adaptation. Nevertheless, Haybron focuses his arguments on the way people lived in the Pleistocene affirming that we are “biologically hunter-gatherer species” (what I called the “ancestors” argument). This latter idea is not part of an evolutionary psychology theory. In the bibliography I have reviewed, evolutionary psychologists do not make the assertion that people are biologically hunter-gatherer species. Their thesis is that some “modules” or “cognitive programs” helped our ancestors to resolve problems, to survive and reproduce in their environment, and those programs are still functioning in our days, although some of them are maladaptive in Western societies (McCauley 1999; Valli & Rusanen 2006; Ketelaar 2009; Downes 2010).

Examples of psychological modules are the mechanisms that help people to find a mate or the ability to detect cheaters in a group. Furthermore, these theories do not claim that people are designed by evolution to live in bounded societies; rather they say that our cognitive programs are a product of adaptation that happened in the Pleistocene and they no longer are under natural selection (Downes 2010, §2). Hence, evolutionary psychology is interested in cognitive programs, not in determining what kind of society suits human psychology. Haybron's version of evolutionary psychology is different from the scientific

theory that I have briefly explained here. From now on I will discuss Haybron's interpretation and leave the scientific version out of discussion.

In Haybron's version of evolutionary psychology, there is a necessary connection between the figure of the hunter-gatherer lifestyle from the Pleistocene and the idea of people being designed by evolution to live in a bonded society. This connection makes him assume that people are not well-adapted by nature to live in a liberal society which is an unbounded environment. Now, by putting these ideas into the contextualist theory of well-being, Haybron assumes that living in a bounded society is in relation with being better-off and happy. Nevertheless, he supports this conclusion through the story his friend told him about happy quasi-hunter-gatherers. Those people, the story tells us, "love their lives" when they live in the tribe, and they are miserable when they live in the United States. However, I think that examples of happy tribes in our days do not support the idea that in the Pleistocene people were, in general terms, happier than us or that we, as human beings, need a similar environment to be happier and better off. Indeed, contemporary hunter-gather societies are not living in the same world as the people from the Pleistocene did: the former already know that other kind of societies exist, and in some cases, they have received some benefits from them (such as medicines or tools). This fact changes everything. Moreover, the position which assumes that the hunter-gatherer lifestyle is more fulfilling and happier may be biased by a negative stance towards Western societies, as I think is Haybron's case.

It is possible to defend the idea that individuals that live in a bounded society are actually happier; however, this should not be inferred from the strong assertion that people by nature are a hunter-gatherer species. To the question of why those people may be happier, the answer or possible answers could be very simple. Here there are a couple of responses: they are happier because they are less stressed given the fact that they have fewer options. When human beings perceive many stimuli as it is the case with many options, they are prone to be more stressed, and to be constantly stressed compromises well-being. This fact could be inferred from the mere constitution of our perception. Something similar happens with other mammals: they are stressed when they perceive many stimuli, and they are relaxed when there are fewer stimuli around (cf. LeDoux 1998; Lazarus 1999). In this explanation we do not need the version of evolutionary psychology that Haybron endorses. The other answer is that those people are happier because they satisfy the necessity for

close relationships human beings need by nature. This could be inferred from the fact that people are essentially social animals, and effectively individualism offers a fictitious image of persons as beings that can determine themselves as they wish independently of their community and any social role. These are two examples that I can provide regarding how people in bounded societies are probably happier than dwellers of liberal societies. However, this is not the central topic of my discussion.

From a more philosophical point of view, we human beings are complex and contradictory animals and the question about our place in the world and what we have to do with our lives is an open issue. It is possible that as a species we have never been in the world as “at home.” If those beings in the Pleistocene were people like us, their lives were complex and contradictory, nothing near to the romantic idea of some kind of “happy savage” that lived in harmony with the environment. Those people had fears and concerns, and it is not absurd to think that many groups wanted to change the quality of their lives; that is why there have been migrations, innovation of tools and new forms of societies.

I want to make clear that I am not against evolutionary theories (the scientific version), and I find some ideas convincing, such as the tendency of humans to use tools, or the psychological need to be a member of a group, or the wariness towards out-group members and so on. These mechanisms and behaviours may be the result of natural selection. But this characteristic does not say anything definitive about human nature or what people have to do with their lives or what is their appropriate environment. We humans, unlike any other species on Earth, have *history*. I have in mind Deleuze’s (1994) concept of history. In this conception history is a contingent movement: the transformations in the way of living and thinking are not a necessary consequence of the conditions of the previous epoch. Human creativity has a central role in the historical changes. Nevertheless, human creativity is not something that creates whatever it wants to in an arbitrary way; this creativity is only possible within the context, and for this reason it has limits. Following this Deleuzean concept of history that I have simplified here, I think that if people have lived in a certain way, it is not because they are determined by evolution to do so, but because their conditions and their own responses to challenges have opened new possibilities. In this regard, the way people have faced their world is insufficient to resolve the problems concerning human nature, human psychology or to make the inference that

evolution has designed people to live in a determined context and not in others as Haybron suggest.

The next step would be to discuss the theory of dual psychological process. Nevertheless, I see no good reason for delving into this topic, since this psychological theory is under development, and there are many interpretations and it has faced important criticism.³⁰ What is relevant for the purpose of my analysis is that the theory of dual psychological process has nothing to do with a theory of well-being: it only tries to identify the function of and the relation between the intuitive and the analytic systems. Regarding the way Haybron uses this theory in contextualism, I find no credible arguments which could show us that using more the intuitive system is in connection with being more “fully human” or with living in a more gratifying way. Haybron asks us to believe it because he believes it. Moreover, the conception of reason presupposed in the “analytic system,” which Haybron understands as the “slow” and “clumsy” skill whose goal is utility, is an aberration inspired by the reading of books that have been written for a wide audience, that is to say, for people who are not specialised in philosophy or psychology.³¹

Concerning the theory of situationism and its place in contextualism, I think the explanations are as weak as the previous ones. Haybron brings up situationism because he sees that people in the liberal society tend to make similar mistakes regarding their well-being by choosing things that are considered to be good, and in his reconstruction of the hunter-gatherer’s adventures in the Pleistocene he thinks that to be sensitive to the behaviour of the others members of the tribe was a central concern. For Haybron situationism is a theory of social adaptation. The problem is that situationism is not originally a theory of social adaptation or sensibility to the environment; it is about morality and it is a response to virtue ethics. Virtue ethics makes the assertion that people carry out good actions (or wrong actions) in part as a result of certain character traits they possess – practical reason is also an important part, however, situationism seems not to take it into account. On the contrary, situationism maintains that people do right or wrong actions according to the situations and the factors that surround those situations. (Doris & Stich 2012.) If my explanation is correct, then we see that Haybron again makes misguided interpretations of a theory.

³⁰ For discussion on this matter see Evans & Stanovich 2013

³¹ Haybron quotes the book *The Happiness Hypothesis* by Haidt.

Regarding the place his version of situationism has in contextualism, Haybron argues that people need to be attuned to the environment in order to successfully achieve well-being and happiness. I think this statement can be accepted: we use the experience and behaviour of other members of the group as reference, and we choose certain options concerning our well-being going with the flow. The problem is that this statement is too strong: it does not explain why individuals' choices sometimes differ from those of the average people. As individuals we have our own preferences, likes, and in philosophical discussions it is usually accepted that people are capable of making individual decisions: we speak of agency and not only of going with the flow. Without this agency it is not possible to explain social changes, creativity or new interpretations of what it means to live well. Unfortunately, Haybron does not clarify his position and for this reason it is difficult to make a further analysis of this interpretation of situationism.

I have now briefly discussed Haybron's version of the three psychological theories in order to support contextualism. One of the results of this discussion is that these three theories, as they are explained by psychologists, have nothing to do with the issue of well-being. It is possible to defend situationism without being engaged with a theory of well-being, and the same happens with the other two theories. Another outcome of my discussion is that there is no necessary relation between the three theories. Dual process psychology and evolutionary psychology may be linked, but that link is made in order to explain the variety of psychological mechanisms, some of which are fast and automatic, others of which slow and reflexive.

Haybron modifies and joins these three theories in order to defend the idea that people who dwell in the liberal societies are dwelling in the wrong environment, and consequently it is expected that they will make serious mistakes in pursuing well-being. Nonetheless, the unity of those theories depends desperately on the figure of the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. I have shown in my discussion how Haybron makes the connection between higher levels of well-being with the hunter-gatherer lifestyle by using the anecdote of his friend. However, Haybron is incapable of offering a convincing argument for why we should accept this connection. Even if in the history of evolution the hunter-gather societies have been the "norm," there is no way to prove that those societies were necessarily better off and

happier. Finally, I have suggested that current hunter-gatherer societies are not a reliable evidence for this thesis.

Since there is no other explanation that could give us strong reasons to believe in such an approach, I think we do not have any reason to accept it. Besides, since we cannot prove or deny this thesis, it cannot be taken seriously: we just do not know whether the hunter-gatherer lifestyle is our best option. If I am correct in these assertions and the connection is not acceptable, contextualism loses its theoretical basis.

3.4 The myth of the paradise lost and the conclusion of the general analysis of the theories of self-fulfilment and contextualism

O miserable mankind, to what fall
 Degraded, to what wretched state reserved!
 Better end here unborn.
 (Milton, Paradise lost, book X)

The central assertion of contextualism is good. It is certainly possible that people's well-being is served in a better way when the society is bounded. The problem is that Haybron tries to justify it with the old myth of the paradise lost but now disguised in scientific language. This version of the myth could be outlined followingly: "Once upon a time there were very happy people, the hunter-gatherers. However, the extravagancies and the instrumental reason of some of their members made them lose that paradise. Now they live in the misery of liberalism. The survivors of this fall, the current quasi-hunter-gatherer societies whose lives resemble the original social structure, are endangered. Nevertheless, by studying and learning from them we can take the right track again." I think this picture is unacceptable and against what it is expected from a philosophical inquiry.

I think that in the last two chapters of his book, Haybron takes a wrong path by embracing psychological and anthropological theories in order to resolve the problems of systematic imprudence and liberal optimism without making a serious interpretation. He just connects theories according to his goals without any plausible justification. When Haybron (2008, 17–18) explains his methodology in the introduction of his book, he claims that his inquiry

is philosophical and his attempt is to be faithful to reality. But when he defends the kind of theory that I have analysed here, I have to say that these two points are not met.

Next I am going to suppose that someone accepts contextualism because she likes the idea. What could follow from this acceptance? How does contextualism resolve our problems? It is expected that Haybron's contextualism helps liberal governments to moderate their policies by providing them the scientific evidence about human nature and well-being. The first problem is that liberals have no reason to believe in that conception and change their own. As I have shown, Haybron's arguments are not convincing. Second, there are many governments that already embody "liberal sobriety," as Haybron (2008, 226) calls the alternative position that is between liberal pessimism and liberal optimism. This liberal sobriety, which is a moderate form of liberalism, could be found in social democratic governments of Nordic States, for example. I am sure that they have made political changes in their history for other reasons than those Haybron offers in his theory. A different question is whether Nordic people are happier or better off than other people. Finally, Haybron claims that contextualism is not the rejection of liberalism: some libertarians may embrace contextualism (*ibid.*, 266). This idea is hard to believe. The two theories as Haybron sets them forth have an incompatible view of both human nature and the propitious environment for human flourishing. Haybron opened the discussion in this way: liberals hold that people do pretty well in option-rich environments because human nature is strongly idiosyncratic and needy, whereas contextualism rejects this vision. It is difficult to see how these contradictory theories could be made compatible.

In order to complete my analysis of Haybron's theories and to open my own interpretation of the possibility of psychic flourishing in liberal societies, I want to show how incompatible the theory of self-fulfilment and contextualism are. My position is that these theories cannot be part of the broader theory of well-being Haybron (2008, 194) acknowledges we need. On the one hand, the theory of self-fulfilment tries to avoid any "stringently" objective theory by taking the affirmation and flourishing of individual's self as a critical part of well-being (I discussed this issue in chapter one). Contextualism, on the other hand, seems to embrace a stringently objective theory: facts about human species are central to well-being. With my exposition it is now clear that contextualism is similar to Haybron's version of Aristotelianism discussed in chapter one: in both theories facts of the species are central, that is, both are externalist regarding the self. If we accept the theory of

self-fulfilment, as Haybron suggest we should do given the importance of mental states like happiness to well-being (ibid., 13), we are implicitly rejecting contextualism.

Contextualism rejects the theory of self-fulfilment because the critical aspect that fosters well-being is the luck of being in the right place with the right people. Consequently, people's idiosyncrasies and the psychological "make-up" are irrelevant to the pursuit of well-being. Also, I have shown that the theory of self-fulfilment is transformed into a purely objective approach when Haybron introduces the argument of authentic happiness. It seems that Haybron actually wants to defend a stringently objective theory of well-being, but he does not acknowledge it. The outcome of my discussion is that there is no relation between self-fulfilment and contextualism. Thus, Haybron's approach outlined in his book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* is confusing as a whole. From this kind of approach it is not possible to give an answer to the problems of liberal optimism and systematic imprudence Haybron brings out. We do not have any clear standard of what is good for human beings and what are those things that have normative force.

I hereby conclude my analysis of Haybron's theories. Now it is time to develop my own approach regarding the topic of emotional flourishing – and the failure to flourish – in liberal societies. I think Haybron's virtue is precisely opening this problematic as a philosophical concern. It is true that many authors discuss the topic of human flourishing, but Haybron has made explicit the specific importance of the environment in emotional flourishing. Also, the idea of thinking of certain environment, the option-rich environment, as harmful to human flourishing is of particular interest. Unfortunately Haybron focuses only on the negative side of liberal societies, that is, in how they impede human flourishing by offering a myriad of options, which causes stress and anxiety in individuals. This position supposes that emotional flourishing is very difficult, or in some cases impossible, in Western societies.

I regard Haybron's approximation as biased because liberal societies are not only option-rich environments. Furthermore, liberals do not accept unanimously that people can do whatever they want with their lives.³² Haybron's negative attitude towards liberalism is very similar to those works from the 60s and 70s in which Western societies are depicted

³² Dworkin's theory of social justice is an example of this position. See Dworkin 2002.

as a “prison” and as a harmful environment that spoils the quality of human life. Desmond Morris’s books such as *The naked ape* and *Zoo human* are examples of writings that present Western societies this way. Like Morris, Haybron interprets quite freely psychological and anthropological “facts” in order to defend his theses; nevertheless, this is at the expense of achieving philosophical depth.

In this work I want to explore the other side of Haybron’s thesis: how emotional flourishing could happen in liberal societies. The possibility of emotional flourishing in the contexts we live in is an important concern and a relevant philosophical question once we accept that human life depends on the environment. In the following chapter I will explain the concepts I will apply in this thesis.

4 THE CONCEPT OF EMOTION AND SELF

In this chapter I will define the concepts of emotion and self. The cognitive conception of emotion and the concept of narrative self provide the framework to connect the ideas Haybron outlines in his theories of self-fulfilment and contextualism. Firstly, I open the discussion of human flourishing by analysing briefly Seligman's and Nussbaum's perspectives on well-being and flourishing. Secondly, I will argue that Haybron's intuition about the importance of self-fulfilment in matters of well-being is correct, and consequently I agree that human flourishing cannot be explained by appealing to some determined list of "goods," as Seligman and Nussbaum seem to assume. And thirdly, I will define the concepts of emotion and self. From now on I will use the concept of "emotional flourishing," and regard this flourishing as referring exclusively to emotions.

4.1 Opening the topic of human flourishing

In current philosophical and psychological literature on well-being, it is generally accepted that human flourishing – including emotional flourishing – is in relation with the performance of morally praiseworthy activities, the achievement of goals that are considered important, and the engagement in rich and meaningful activities (Peterson & Seligman 2004; Carr 2004; Nussbaum 2004; 2006; Snyder & Shane 2007). Human relationships, work, social practices and a propitious environment are of critical importance concerning flourishing. It is also accepted that a person who flourishes possesses certain characteristics that enable him to attain well-being: it is not only important what he or she does, but what kind of person he or she is. Temperament, character, intentions, and beliefs are those characteristics that help us understand the way people are.

When it comes to emotions, the person flourishes emotionally when she responds in a determined way towards the conditions of her life. From the point of view of psychology, Martin Seligman, one of the founders of "positive psychology," has proposed that some "character strengths" are necessary for the cultivation of emotions in order to attain self-

regulation and flourishing. These strengths have the function of channelling (and rechanneling) emotional dispositions into activities and ways of living that are praiseworthy. “Strengths” in Seligman’s terminology are a constitutive part of virtues. The relevant virtues Seligman enumerates are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. (Peterson & Seligman 2004, 28–30.) Seligman’s theory resembles eudaimonistic philosophies; nevertheless, he and other researchers try to explain those strengths and virtues by using psychological methods, and their intention is to justify a list of virtues applicable to all cultures.

In the field of philosophy, Martha Nussbaum justifies human flourishing and well-being by appealing to human capabilities and needs. She believes that a person can display *all* her essential capabilities through education and opportunities. Her list of capabilities has the following items: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; sense, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play and control over one’s environment. (Nussbaum 2006, 76–8.) Regarding emotional flourishing, the cultivation of emotions such as love, compassion, joy, or indignation, is important part of becoming a good human being and a good citizen.

What is characteristic of Seligman’s and Nussbaum’s approaches is the attempt to explain human flourishing across all cultures by appealing to objective standards – character strengths and capabilities. This is the kind of approach I am going to avoid. My question here is not how human beings as a species have emotional flourishing – or any kind of flourishing – but how people in liberal societies may flourish emotionally. This way of articulating the question accepts the intuition that in different societies there are different ways of interpreting human flourishing. Flourishing is in connection with goods, and what is good for individuals in liberal societies differs in its dimension and hierarchy from the goods of other societies. Here I accept Haybron’s intuitions which suggest that what is good for us is in relation to who we are, the individual self, and the self is always moulded within an environment. In this regard, the theories of Seligman and Nussbaum, from the point of view of Haybron’s intuitions, are externalist because flourishing is explained in terms of “facts” about humans as a species, and every single way of flourishing is elucidated in these terms.

My reason for rejecting Seligman's and Nussbaum's theories is due, not only to a disagreement in what is important for human flourishing, but to conceptual problems as well. Seligman has made a remarkable work in categorizing and analysing the different character strengths and virtues that according to him can be found in all communities, in all traditions and in all times, from Western to Eastern societies. The philosophical problem here is that those strengths have different functions and value depending on cultures and situations. For example, to be a brave warrior in the savannah is not the same as being a brave fireman in New York: the goods they achieve, the actions they perform and the understanding of what is good life, are simply different. The shared characteristic Seligman would find between them, that is, that both persons do what has to be done despite fear (Peterson & Seligman 2004, 36), is unsatisfactory. Even a vicious person might do what he believes he has to do despite fear, but such action is not considered by Aristotelians as virtuous activity.³³

The concept of character strength is in itself problematic. In this respect, Seligman is focused on the list and the detailed explanation of the different strengths that are constitutive of virtues, but problems such as the harmony between character traits or a possible hierarchy between virtues are topics he does not consider central, and he openly states that he is not interested in those problems (Peterson & Seligman 2004, 13). This makes the approach very abstract, atomistic, and from a philosophical point of view, superficial. Moreover, this theory supposes that all strengths and virtues could be developed in harmony in the quest for human flourishing. However, it is possible to think that the development of some strength at a determined moment may impede the development of another strength, and this may not be people's fault, but the consequences of conflicting situations (for example those situations that entail conflicts between different roles a single person embodies within a society). For this reason it is very important to examine character strengths and virtues within a context, because depending on the way people understand themselves, their virtues will have a determined dimension.

Nussbaum is a prolific author in matters of social justice and opportunities who is constantly quoted in different research. Nonetheless, her theory faces a similar problem as Seligman's theory: the assumption that human capabilities can be fulfilled harmoniously.

³³ See for example Bailey 2010.

Nussbaum (2006, 401) asserts that if there is a conflict between the fulfilment of different capabilities, it is because there is something wrong with the society, not with the capabilities themselves. Regarding this point, Juha Sihvola (1999, 166) has argued that Nussbaum's optimism regarding the harmony between goods is unjustified. In a similar vein to Aristotle, she removes from life its tragic dimension in order to create an ideal (cf. MacIntyre 1984, 163–164).

Given these problems in both theories, I accept that conflicts cannot be avoided, and I reject the possibility of finding a definitive model of good life for all cultures. Before I define the concepts of emotion and self, I will outline the concepts that I will take for granted. By liberal societies I understand societies with strong institutions based on the conception of human beings as individuals with equal rights, capable of using their reason and choosing what they identify as good. Ideas of democracy and human dignity are central here. This is in general terms the way Sihvola (1999) and Dworkin (2002) understand liberal societies. I acknowledge that in different liberal societies (and within a single society) there are different customs and different hierarchy of values; nevertheless, liberal principles are recognised and accepted as the pillar of a just social interaction. In the light of this definition, I regard Haybron's conception of liberal society (the option-rich environment) as an insufficient interpretation. I accept that some liberal societies are option-rich environments, as it is the case of large cities; however this aspect is not the essence of liberal societies, but the temptation these environments have fallen into. Liberty in economic interchange, the desire for immeasurable riches and consumerism have become an obsession in many cases. But I do believe that our societies give us the possibility of flourishing, and here I will try to develop one perspective of how it happens.

It is clear that people from all societies need some goods that are necessary for any kind of flourishing. Here I am thinking of basic goods: food, cloths, dwelling and, social relations. These things are obvious, but they lead me to the concept of human I will assume. I accept that we are a species of animals: rational, social or political, but animals. We have bodies and these bodies work independently of our discourses or fantasies. These bodies also have similarities with the bodies of other species, and like those species, we are vulnerable to and dependent on certain things. It is important to accept this animality. The reason is that our emotions are in close relation to this animality. From Plato to the contemporary neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, bodily changes have been regarded as an important aspect

of emotions. Besides, emotions are responses that we share with other species. We share with vertebrate organisms responses such as fear, anger, and surprise; and with complex mammals, emotions such as guilt, shame or compassion (Damasio 2010, 120). In the case of human beings cognitive functions are an important part of emotional responses.

In philosophical discussions, however, it is accepted that we have a “second nature” (see chapter one of this work), our nature that is developed through socialization and education; this is the characteristic that makes us unique and different from others. Cultural expressions, world views, appropriations and interpretations of different values are characteristics of this second nature. It is towards this difference and uniqueness where I will move my discussion. In this second nature, emotions acquire their possibilities of appraising different things as good and as harmful. Emotions are conceived as evaluative responses towards objects appraised as beneficial or harmful. This definition is generally accepted. The difficulty starts when we try to elucidate how an object is perceived and evaluated this way. I believe that a cognitivist concept of emotion can clarify these problems more successfully.

4.2 Defining central concepts: emotion and self

4.2.1 Concept of emotion

There is a considerable number of theories of emotions, but I find the cognitivist theory the best option for the purpose of my work. In order to explain this theory we can begin with an example:

Agathon hosted a symposium to celebrate his victory for his first tragedy in a competition. Socrates and other close friends were participating at the party. Suddenly Alcibiades arrived completely drunk, roaring and shouting. He saluted the guests, crowned Agathon’s head with violet flowers and ribands and took the vacant place between Agathon and

Socrates without noticing Socrates's, who made way for him, presence. When Alcibiades finally knew that the man on his right side was Socrates, he started up and rebuked Socrates for his desire to be always close to beautiful men, in this case, close to Agathon. Socrates turned to Agathon asking for help, because he was in fear of Alcibiades's passionate love and jealousy.

Cognitivist theories affirm that an emotion has as essential component cognitions. Here cognitions mean evaluative judgments, appraisals, thoughts or beliefs that are in relation to personal concerns regarding what is good or harmful. These cognitions, however, are not entirely under a person's control; they emerge from the relation the person has with his environment (cf. de Souza 2010). In this vision Alcibiades is jealous because he makes the evaluation or the judgment that his beloved may prefer to love someone else. This judgment does not need to be explicit, but it is a necessary part of the emotion. If Alcibiades did not have that judgment or belief, he could not be jealous. Another characteristic is that this evaluation is aroused under certain type of situation in which an emotion of a given type is fitting or appropriate: there was a party where Socrates and Agathon were together before Alcibiades's arrival, and the closeness between these two is a danger for Alcibiades's love. Jealousy is connected to situations in which love is in danger.

Given this relation between cognitions and situations, emotions have intentional object: they are directed towards determined states of affairs or objects, and different emotions differ from each other by their objects. Richard Lazarus (1991, 121–122) has proposed his *core relational themes* that are involved in emotions:³⁴ anger, for example, is elicited by the core relational theme “a demeaning offence against me and mine,” sadness by “having experienced an irrevocable loss,” guilt by “having transgressed a moral imperative” and jealousy by “resenting a third party for loss or threat to another affection.” These core relational themes are cognitive appraisals that result from the relation between the person and world. They dispose the person to act in an adaptive way according to different situations that foster or compromise well-being. In this regard, the world imposes demands which the person must respond to. This response, however, depends on person's history,

³⁴ For Lazarus (1991, Chapter 3) the core relational themes are constituted by two kinds of appraisals: primary and secondary. Primary appraisals refer to whether what is happening is personally relevant; secondary appraisals refer to coping options and prospects.

identity, and the way she has learned to interpret her world. Briefly, cognitive appraisals involve a “personal meaning of some sort” (ibid., 131).³⁵

Other characteristic of the core relational themes is that they can be conscious or unconscious (in the sense of the absence of awareness), explicit or tacit,³⁶ and they do not imply rationality in the usual meaning, i.e., to be a deliberate and reflective thought or a true belief.³⁷ The clearest definition Lazarus (1999, 100) offers is the following: “[emotions are] complex organized system consisting of thoughts, beliefs, motives, meanings, subjective bodily experiences, and physiological states, all of which arise from our struggles to survive and flourish by understanding the world in which we live.”

The conception of emotion as a phenomenon with cognitive content is not a new one. In Aristotle’s work a version of a cognitivist concept can be found. In *Rhetoric* he says: “Anger may be defined as an impulse, accompanied by pain, to a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight directed without justification towards what concerns oneself or towards what concerns one’s friends” (*Rhetoric*, 1378a31–33). In this definition, someone has to believe that he has suffered an offense, otherwise he cannot be angry. This belief is connected with pain (for the offense) and has a motivational aspect (impulse for revenge). Hence emotion generally has three parts: the belief (in this context the cognitive component), pleasure/pain experience, and motivation (cf. Sherman 1997, 52–74).

Another example of cognitivist concept is found in stoicism. For stoics emotions are judgments, although mistaken ones; to feel sadness or fear is the result of the false belief that certain things or states of affairs are important for our well-being, whereas, in fact, they are not (cf. Baltzly 2010). In this view emotions involve attachments to objects that are contingent and highly unstable. Emotions as judgement are generally accompanied by

³⁵ On the one hand, Lazarus says that cognitions in the context of emotion are a kind of knowledge that touches on one’s personal well-being; such knowledge is “hot or emotional” (Lazarus 1991, chapter 3). On the other hand, “cold knowledge,” for example the knowledge of scientific facts, doesn’t involve personal well-being and for that reason are not part of the emotion.

³⁶ In this regard Lazarus affirms that his conception of rationality is close to Heidegger’s concept of “understanding” in the sense of nonreflective interpretation of the self in the world: “in Heidegger’s analysis, we grasp the situation directly in terms of its meaning for the self, which is what I believe most commonly happens in appraisal” (Lazarus, 1991, 153).

³⁷ Because emotions do not entail deliberative or reflective thoughts, there may be conflict between reason and cognitive appraisal. Someone can acknowledge that flying is the safest means of transportation and yet suffer fear of flying. In this example it is the personal meaning of flying that is relevant for the emotion, not the knowledge about whether it is safe or not (see de Sousa 2010 § 5).

bodily changes; nonetheless, these changes are not the essential aspect of the emotion. According to stoics, people who live under the power of emotions live in ignorance and the way they can be freed is through virtue which is understood as perfection or excellence in reason (cf. Seneca, *On Anger*). In addition, Martha Nussbaum (2001) has presented a theory which resembles stoicism. In her view emotions are also thoughts. These thoughts are evaluative ways of seeing situations; they are responses towards items a person appraises as salient in matters of her well-being. Such thoughts are not static or “cold”: they have “heat,” can move rapidly with violence, they are “upheavals of thought” (ibid.)

Let us return to Alcibiades’s case. Jealousy is an appraisal or judgment that affects his behaviour, his bodily state, his way of thinking and the way he sees things in certain situation. Cognition is central in this process. The strengths of these theories are that they describe clearly the relation between person and environment, and the understanding and evaluation of situations as something harmful or advantageous to individual’s well-being.

A frequent objection from neurosciences to cognitivist theories is that *not all* emotions need a cognitive content: animals and humans have emotions that do not entail judgments or thoughts about things, as is the case of fear (LeDoux, 1998). A mouse, for example, can be afraid when a cat is around without the cognitive evaluation or belief “I am in danger.” In the case of human beings, when a person sees a snake in the forest the response of fear is automatic: visual information is sent to the thalamus which “recognises” the stimulus as dangerous and then it sends impulses to the amygdala. The amygdala is activated and sends information to other regions of the brain; bodily changes (blood pressure, muscle tension, perspiration, metabolic changes, facial expressions), and behaviours (to run away or freeze in the place) appear. All these changes together are the emotion. In this process the information is handled by areas of the brain that have nothing to do with neocortical areas which are involved in thinking and consciousness. (LeDoux 1998, 166.) In this explanation the person is running, sweating or jumping before he knows what is happening to him. Only later he can become conscious of the emotion – this process is what neuroscientist call “feeling” – and the object towards which the emotion is directed.

Sometimes it happens that the stimulus is misunderstood, for example when the brain detects an image of an object (a stick) and represents it as something similar to a snake. In this case the areas of brain associated with emotional responses react to the image

regardless of the reliability of the information. This mechanism works in this way because the task of those areas of the brain is to maintain the well-being of the individual. LeDoux (1998, 165) illuminates this subject followingly: “From the point of view of survival, it is better to respond to potentially dangerous events as if they were in fact the real thing than to fail to respond.” However, neuroscientists accept that some emotions regarded as “complex” have cognitive content: they involve neocortical activity as it is the case of social and moral emotions such as compassion, grief and guilt (cf. Damasio 2010, chapter 5).

In Alcibiades’ case, he sees Socrates and Agathon together at the party. At that moment the areas of the brain represent this stimulus as something that threatens Alcibiades’ well-being (losing Socrates’ love), and send the information to specific cerebral areas where the emotion of jealousy is triggered. As a result of this mechanism different bodily changes and behaviours take place.

Another set of criticism derives from neo-jamesian theories. Prinz (2004) claims that emotions are just perceptions of bodily changes; therefore, they do not have anything to do directly with cognitions. Emotions are “gut reactions,” and cognitivist theories are wrong when they set beliefs or thoughts as a central part of the emotion. According to Prinz, when we see (perceive) something dangerous we have a set of bodily changes caused by this perception. These bodily changes carry the meaning of danger which is detected by the interoceptive system. When the interoceptive system detects the meaning of those bodily changes, the emotion occurs (Prinz 2005, 14).

Prinz (2005, 19) accepts that there are emotions with similar patterns of bodily changes as it is the case of sadness and guilt: the feelings corresponding to those emotions are very much alike. Nevertheless, he affirms that they have a different meaning because they are caused by different situations: “sadness is a bodily state caused by a loss. Guilt is a bodily state caused by transgressing a norm.” Some examples of the cases of a loss are the death of a child or a divorce, and cases of a transgression of a norm are, for instance, stealing a book from the library or cheating in an exam. The causal history is what determines the meaning of those bodily changes. In this process cognitions are relevant in explaining people’s emotional dispositions: ideas and beliefs can make people perceive different stimuli as dangerous or beneficial. This explains why some individuals are afraid of things

that others do not fear. Regardless of this importance of cognitions in the process of triggering emotions, they are not a part of the emotion itself. In Alcibiades's case, the interoceptive system detects bodily changes that are caused by the perception of Socrates and Agathon at the party, and through those bodily changes it detects the meaning of the situation triggering the emotion of jealousy.

I think that these criticisms are not a real danger for cognitivist theories. Regarding the discussion with neurosciences, it could be accepted that there are some reactions that are automatic and maybe without any cognitive content which we are used to calling "emotions." Paul Griffiths (2004) proposes the idea that there are different phenomena we call emotions which have analogical functions, but they are not a natural kind. For example, there are diverse kinds of fear, but one of them is a "basic emotion" (a fast automatic response developed through evolution and triggered by the cerebral areas that also other vertebrates have) and another is a "complex" one (a blend of basic emotions that entail high cognitive activity). In this regard, fear toward the snake is a case of a basic emotion, and the fear towards economic depression, for example, is a complex one. Both responses have an analogical function (to detect danger and develop coping solutions), but they are not the same phenomenon. However, this solution might be problematic once the concept of cognition is understood in a broader sense as "understanding meaning." Even a "basic emotion" demands some kind of understanding of the situation, regardless of whether it is a fast response or not. I shall say more about this topic in my discussion of Prinz's conception below. In any case, questions about morality and psychic flourishing are far more in relation to complex emotions than to automatic reactions. Another option is to understand those automatic responses as "proto-emotions" as Seneca did (*On Anger*, II). I leave this topic open, and for the purpose of this work I will focus on emotions as cognitions.

Neurosciences are not exempt from criticism. Analytic philosophy has put forth interesting critique of neurosciences. Bennet and Hacker (2003) say that the language neuroscientist use in their explanations falls into the "mereological fallacy." Neuroscientists explain that the brain "interprets" information, and "responds" towards objects "triggering" emotions. The problem with this kind of description is that brains do not do anything of those things by themselves: it is the persons, as a unity, who respond to situations and interpret the information they handle. The relevant relation is between the person and his environment,

not between the brain and the environment. If neuroscientists are using language in a fallacious way, as Bennet and Hacker argue, then they are saying nonsenses. I find this criticism really compelling and it warns us of being uncritical towards neuroscientific research.

Prinz's position is even less fortunate than that of neuroscientists because he defends the strong thesis that all emotions are perceptions of bodily changes without any kind of cognition. The problem with Prinz is that he misunderstands the concept of cognition. He regards cognitions as beliefs constituted by explicit utterances which suppose the use of language and concepts (Prinz 2004, 49-50). However, this conception of cognition is what some cognitivist authors openly reject. According to Nussbaum (2001, 127–128), beliefs and thoughts can be at the level of images, as happens with animals, and MacIntyre (1999, 36) defends the existence of prelinguistic beliefs.

In his book *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre argues that it is a serious mistake to assert that beliefs are always in relation to language or superior rational functions. He shows, following psychological research on the matter, that complex animals such as dolphins, gorillas or elephants have some kind of beliefs given the fact that they act pursuing goals, they have a complex relation with their environment and they have the capability of making agreements – not to mention their capacity to form a relationship with humans. The social interaction of certain animals is so complex that it would be problematic to say that they act without any kind of belief. Regarding the case of little children who do not have good command of language yet, MacIntyre (1999, 38–40) points out that they also have beliefs that are embodied in perceptive recognitions, classifications and identifications, and he concludes that if we deny that little children and complex mammals have beliefs only because they do not speak, it is no possible to make their intentions and behaviour intelligible. This way of understanding cognitions, beliefs and thoughts shows that Prinz should have taken the challenge of explaining why emotions do not have any cognitive content once the concept of cognition is understood according to the standards of cognitivist theories, not as he wants to understand it.

I have some observations regarding the concept of emotions merely as perceptions of bodily changes. Emotions as perceptions of this kind can only detect information of the environment (an actual danger for example) “indirectly” through bodily changes. Prinz

(2004, 69. Italics added) illustrates it as follows: “[the emotion is] *indirectly* caused by the danger that started the whole chain of events. It carries information about danger by responding to changes in the body. That further state is fear.” The problem with this definition is that the emotion itself is never in direct relation with events in the world but with bodily changes. Ronald de Sousa (2010) has argued that Jamesian theories cannot give a satisfactory explanation of how emotions can be directed towards an object or event in the world: emotions are trapped in the body. Moreover, Peter Goldie (2002, 240) points out that bodily changes in themselves only mean that something is happening, but they do not specify what exactly it is: “there is nothing intrinsic to the experience of, for example, the hairs going up on the back of your neck to suggest that it is characteristic of a feeling of fear.”

Prinz (2004, 69) tries to defend his position by telling us the story of how evolution with all its wisdom has designed our perceptions and emotions to detect and represent the meaning of relevant situations in an automatic way without the intervention of cognitive states. In this view the “meaning” that emotions detect through bodily changes is “semantic.” This “semantic” aspect of bodily changes is understood by Prinz as something different from cognitions (ibid, 78). Thus, for example, there is a set of bodily changes aroused by a dangerous situation that are perceived by the interoceptive system whose function is to detect the meaning of “danger.” When this detection takes place, the emotion of fear occurs. I acknowledge that the ideas and explanations Prinz provides are complex and challenging, but once he starts talking about “semantic” and meaning in the framework of perception, I realise that this is precisely a version of the concept of cognition that cognitivist theories attribute to emotions; what is different is the addition of the rhetoric of evolutionary theories (cf. Prinz 2003).

Another interesting question is why the emotion must be understood as the perception of bodily changes. Why not to call emotion all these bodily changes that have the meaning of the event? Why should there be a further perception? Prinz never proves his concept of emotions as interoceptive states. He believes we should share his enthusiasm for his concept once he provides us evidence from neurosciences (Prinz 2004; 2005). But the evidence he presents supports the idea that the bodily changes caused by the perception of relevant situations are the emotions, not that emotions are perceptions of bodily changes (see my discussion on neuroscience above). Moreover, for some neuroscientists

perceptions of bodily changes are properly feelings (Damasio 2010, 116; Nummenmaa 2010, 39–40). In this vision, the difference between emotions and feelings is that the former are bodily changes, whereas the latter are mental states that represent and interpret those bodily changes. It seems that Prinz only justifies his concept of emotion by appealing to the authority of James, nevertheless, this is unsatisfactory. Analogically, it is equivalent to asserting that we should believe that an “Idea” is a reality that exists independently of our experience only because Plato said so.

I keep the idea of emotions with cognitive content, understanding cognition in this context as a personal meaning of some sort. This meaning is not necessarily an explicit belief or a reflexive thought. Emotions are thus systematic responses which involve bodily changes, cognitions and experiences of pain and pleasure.

4.2.2 The concept of self

Haybron is correct in saying that the self is who an individual is. The problem is to explain what this “who” and this “is” mean. The topic becomes complex and difficult given the different traditions and interpretations of the concept of person. However, in classical and current discussions on the concept of self and personhood something is clear: we speak of persons when we are referring to those kinds of being that are in a complex relation with themselves.

The first clear definition of person was made by Boethius. For him a person is “an individual substance of a rational nature” (*De Duabus Naturis*).³⁸ This individual substance is independent, autonomous and distinct. Its rational nature is what makes it a person; because it is rational it is capable of undertaking free actions. Other individual substances such as animals are not persons because they do not possess reason. Centuries later Peter Olivi would say that to be a person is to be a self-reflexive substance (Yrjönsuuri 2002, 121). This self-reflexion involves a relation with oneself, and it is in this relation when we say that a person knows herself, loves herself or hate herself.

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 29, Art. 1.

Later in Locke's thinking, the concept of person is understood in terms of personal identity and consciousness which are determined by psychological characteristics. In recent years Parfit (1984) has developed an interpretation of this vision in his book *Reasons and Persons*. In Kierkegaard's *Either or*, which adopts a Hegelian terminology, the person becomes the scenario of a tension between the particular and the universal, the concrete and the abstract, the aesthetic and ethical stage, which is resolved in a decision. This decision, or the failure in making this decision, entails different grades of self-knowledge. In psychoanalytical tradition the concept of self becomes the place of conflicts between drives, desires, fantasies, and the exigencies of reality and ideals (id, ego and superego). In this conflict, however, the person as a unity is responsible for his mental states and his behaviour. Different grades of self-knowledge can be gained by listening to emotions and interpreting fantasies and dreams.

In other traditions, for example in phenomenology, the Heideggerian Dasein is forced by its being-in-the-world to take over its own possibilities (*Being and Time* §53). In existentialism, Sartre's concept of "being-for-itself" which is developed in *Being and nothingness* is the being that transcends itself, and this transcendence is freedom. Freedom, however, is a burden because it is the source of responsibility.

The discussion is endless and different concepts are in tension with each other. In chapter one I have argued that Haybron's conception of self is unsatisfactory. He is unable to provide any clear concept of self, and this serious mistake makes his theory of self-fulfilment unintelligible. Moreover, the relation between the person and the environment is obscured by the sketchy theory of contextualism – which is rather a blend of theories with no real connection – and the emotional self loses its relevance in well-being with the introduction of the "affective ignorance" thesis.

In order to resolve all these inconsistencies and to defend in a coherent way the idea that a person "is" in a context, and that his fulfilment depends on the relation he has with his environment, we need a concept of self that can overcome these apparent dichotomies. In my opinion, the best candidate to carry out this task is MacIntyre's concept of "narrative self." This concept of self has influences from different traditions. From hermeneutics it takes as relevant to the self the understanding an individual has of herself within a horizon. From Marxism, it takes the idea that the person becomes who he is in his engagement with

different practices in the social realm. Finally, Aristotelian tradition has influenced its viewpoint that the self is teleological, and that its goal is the good (cf. Noponen 2011).

From MacIntyre's (1984, 205) point of view, the concept of self is a narrative unity which consists of a beginning (birth) middle (different situations, vicissitudes) and an end (death). This narrative characteristic of life supposes a particular definition of a human being as a "story-telling animal" (ibid., 216). The stories that are told by this animal entail the actions undertaken in the framework of different practices. It is in this story where intentions have intelligibility and the person attains self-knowledge. In order to understand this concept of self it is necessary to analyse the conceptions of story, character, and setting.

The story is a temporal order with reference to the individual's roles and actions. Nevertheless, the story of a single individual is not told from a solipsistic position. Different stories from other individuals come into the scene to shape and draft the meaning of those actions and roles that constitute the story. These stories that clash in the context of different actions and roles become intertwined and affect each other. Hence, the story of an individual is also told and developed from the perspective of others' stories.

Every story has a "plot." The plot in a life understood as a story is the pursuit of a good life. This teleological character gives to the story its thread; actions and intentions are undertaken aiming at a good life. In the Aristotelian tradition, which MacIntyre follows, the good for a human life as a whole is to live well as an "independent practical reasoner" (MacIntyre 1999, chapter 8 and 9). This position, however, does not specify what kind of particular goods contribute to a good life as a whole for every single individual. To discover what is good in particular situations is the task of every agent as an actor and as a practical reasoner.

In the interrelation between different stories different interpretations of goods are at stake, and this creates conflicts; the search and pursuit of specific goods has a conflictive character. The good of Henry VIII was in conflict with the good of Thomas More, and the conflict was resolved with the execution of the latter. In this regard, the conflict, drama, and culmination of Thomas More's life cannot be understood independently of the story of Henry VIII.³⁹ The conflict between interpretations of what is good, nevertheless, is not only in relation to other stories: this conflict is already present in the story of a particular

³⁹ I take these characters (including Gauguin below) from MacIntyre's examples introduced in *After Virtue* with some modifications of my own.

individual. There is no single answer to the question “what is good for me” in different circumstances aiming at a good life; we have more than one possible good most of the time. This case is more evident in choosing the goods internal to some practice which are in conflict with the goods of another practice. In Paul Gauguin’s case, the goods internal to the role of painter were in conflict with the goods internal to the role of father. Gauguin chose the goods internal to his role as a painter, and failed as a parent.

The story of a person also has the characteristic of “unpredictability.” This crucial characteristic is based on the possibilities of shared futures that are disclosed in the actual interaction of the different stories and different roles. The decision of choosing certain course of action aiming at some ends is not predetermined by any kind of necessity (MacIntyre 1984, 96). Gauguin’s choice of moving to Polynesia cannot be explained as a necessary result of some previous course of actions. This was one possibility and Gauguin chose it. The course of his story could certainly have been different given the different relations he had and the roles he embodied, but once he chose certain options, other options were closed.

Moreover, unpredictability does not only regard what choices a person makes: Unpredictability also has to do with what “fortune” disposes (MacIntyre 1984, 93).⁴⁰ Nobody could ensure that Gauguin would reach Polynesia: a shipwreck could have prevented him from reaching his destination. And even when he had arrived at that island, nobody could have predicted whether Gauguin would paint something worthy of being admired there. The story is unpredictable but at the same time it is shaped by choices made in order to achieve certain goods.

MacIntyre (1984, 215–216) illuminates this point as follows: “Unpredictability and teleology therefore coexist as part of our lives; like characters in a fictional narrative we do not know what will happen next, but nonetheless our lives have a certain form which projects itself towards our future.” The story of Gauguin as a painter is considered in our time a successful one; his influence in Post-impressionism is undisputable and his paintings are valued in millions of dollars. The problem with this interpretation is that Gauguin as a person actually died poor, and in the last days of his life he was outraged by the injustice of French colonialists against the people of Polynesia. His story as a person

⁴⁰“We can by improvements in our knowledge limit the sovereignty of *Fortuna*, bitch-goddess of unpredictability; we cannot dethrone her” (MacIntyre 1984, 93).

was not only the story of a painter, he actually embodied other roles as well and interpretations of his life as a whole remain open.

Now that I have described the development of life as a story through actions and intentions aiming at the good for human beings, it is necessary to explain what the “genre” of this story is. “The true genre of the life” MacIntyre (1984, 213) says, “is neither hagiography nor saga, but tragedy.” The characteristic of tragedy is a conflict between goods, and the end of that conflict always results in some loss: there is no resolution which could attain harmony between all goods. For this reason, the story is not a saga where the hero attains what is good for him according to his destiny or the role the tribe has imposed on him. It is not a hagiography because the story is not about a person who lives in spiritual harmony, who has overcome all temptations, who has some sacred power or an emancipative mission. The tragic character lives most of the time without knowing what exactly is good for him given some conflicts in certain circumstances. He constantly fails, he succumbs to temptations, and sometimes he finds what is actually good for him, but this is something that is usually discovered after the decision.

I would like to add that this tragedy has to some extent a comic component: stupidity, ridiculous and embarrassing situations, confusion, idiosyncrasies, craziness and vulgarities give to the story a farcical dimension. As Schopenhauer (2011, 416) said in his work *The World as Will and Representation*, life as a whole is a tragedy, and in its details, a comedy.

The next step is to explain the “character” that embodies this story. The character of the story is an author and a co-author of his own and others’ stories. MacIntyre (1984, 213) depicts it as follows: “I must emphasize that what the agent is able to do and say intelligibly as an actor is deeply affected by the fact that we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives. Only in fantasy do we live what story we please.” Our intentions and actions, and the intentions and actions of others “write” part of those histories that are interconnected, as it is evident in the example of Henry VIII and Thomas More introduced above.

As an actor, the character has to respond for his own life not only from his psychological make-up (memory, inclinations, desires, fears), but from what MacIntyre (1984, 217) calls the “strict identity:” “I am forever whatever I have been at any time for others — and I may at any time be called upon to answer for it — no matter how changed I may be now.” Consequently, the self cannot be reduced to psychological continuity or discontinuity,

because as a narration, the self is already constituted by the narration that others make of it. In this interpretation, I will add that the self is also the responsibility of others, and for this reason, it can be destroyed, neglected and alienated when the interactions between the different histories are based on injustice, cruelty and abuses. Sartre's (1989) famous phrase "hell is other people" (*L'enfer, c'est les autres*) in the play *No exit* describes well these kinds of relations, which unfortunately are very common.

In "writing" his own story, the tragic actor chooses what he thinks is good for him on the basis of an understanding of what it means to live well for individuals like him that embody certain roles. However, when the tragic character is unable to "write" and understand his own story because every option and choice is meaningless, his story loses any sense:

"When someone complains—as do some of those who attempt or commit suicide—that his or her life is meaningless, he or she is often and perhaps characteristically complaining that the narrative of their life has become unintelligible to them, that it lacks any point, any movement towards a climax or a *telos*. Hence the point of doing any one thing rather than another at crucial junctures in their lives seems to such person to have been lost" (MacIntyre 1984, 217).

The unintelligibility of a story is thus reflected in the inability of the actor to recognise and pursue his *telos*. However, this is not the whole story. Here I would add that in the relation between different actors the meaning of a story becomes a battle for affirming the "version" of the story the author and the co-authors have; everyone attempts to impose their own version. This battle may in some moment prevent the person from attaining the self-knowledge he would attain in other circumstances. The way the authors and co-authors develop their versions of the story is something that takes place in a setting. This is the third characteristic of the narrative self.

According to MacIntyre (1984, 206) the setting is the "place" where actions and intentions are undertaken by agents. It is the "place" where the different actors and authors meet each other, and the different changes they experience in their story are in an important way changes in the setting. The essential aspect of the setting is that it is something inherited: when the story of individual begins, the setting where that individual is placed has already its own history. The setting is the result of what the forefathers and the adults of certain community have interpreted as those kinds of relations and activities that promote the good

for human beings in the specific place they have inhabited. Those relations and activities appoint to the individual his different roles and tasks.

The activities and relations relevant in the setting are what MacIntyre (1984, 187) calls “practices.” Examples of a practice are family, friendship, education, different skills such as agriculture, architecture, arts, sports, politics, religious activities, and of course, philosophy. All these practices possess some internal goods that demand protection and development through the roles the individuals perform. The performance of those different roles is determined by specific standards of excellence which are appropriate and partially definitive of the practices. In these contexts we speak of good friend (or bad friend), good parent (or bad parent), good painter (or mediocre painter), and of good philosopher (or mediocre philosopher).

Although those goods internal to the practices are partially definitive, they are open to discussion and changes – or reinterpretations – at determined moments. This possibility is open because in the relation between the actors that embody different roles within practices, practical reason as a virtue is something indispensable. The good for human beings cannot be achieved only by following rules in a blind way. The actor must choose something as good understanding that it is something that contributes to a good life for people in his position. However, the good for an actor is not independent of the good of other actors that participate in the practices. The good of a father is not independent of the good of the daughter; the good of a teacher is not independent of the good of the student; and so forth. In all these relations the development and exercise of practical reason is crucial. I will put it as follows: in the setting practical reason finds its development, but at the same time, as the person gains experience of what it is to live well, it finds its challenges. The internal goods to practices, as I have said, are open to discussion because they are interpretations of what goods contribute to the good life for human beings in a community, but as independent practical reasoners, individuals may find that some aspects of the practices, at a determined moment, prevent a full development and flourishing of some of the participants of those practices.

In those cases where an independent practical reasoner “opens his eyes” – following John McDowell’s (2002, 189) expression – he is capable of perceiving possible corruptions within the practice in which he is involved. Some goods of the practices have become to the eyes of the practical reasoner the result of particular interests which do not seek the

good for human beings, but seek the good for certain individuals who follow their own satisfaction. The corruption or protection of a practice is reflected in the way institutions work. In this regard, the authoritative father, the possessive husband, the manipulative mother, the brutal ruler, the mediocre teacher, the ungrateful son, the avaricious entrepreneur are the personification of corrupted practices which makes institutions unjust. From the perspective of the practical reasoner, those relations have become ideology. The internal good was only apparent, and now it appears as an instrument of power that tries to impose the versions of life that serve the goals of those who manipulate the practices. MacIntyre (1984, 195) explains this corruption as result of vices.

The vices are in relation to aiming at external goods to the practices. Those external goods, which are contingent to the practices, are money, fame, power and pleasures that are incompatible with or irrelevant to the practice as such. The pursuit of those external goods disposes actors to be cowards, unjust, dishonest and greedy. These vices “flourish” easily if the participants of the relations are to some degree vicious too. An entrepreneur can attain more money if his product, for example junk food, is consumed by intemperate people who have made of their stomach their devotion.⁴¹ The force against the corruption of the practices is the exercise of virtues, such as temperance, courage, justice, truthfulness and integrity.

The concept of self that I have presented above is complex and rich. My intention has been to highlight, using MacIntyre’s words and also my own words, the profoundness of this concept. My goal in this work is to show how emotional flourishing occurs in this concept of self. I conceive this concept of self as suitable in our liberal society, where we understand people as free persons, that is to say, rational beings capable of choosing what is good for them.

By assuming this conception of self, I reject any version of the self as something “profound” which inhabits in the “centre” or “nucleus” of somebody. In this conception, which is the one Haybron suggests in his work, the self is in some way independent of the situations and actions that take place in the life of the individual. This is evident when he speaks of “true self.” This true self which is “objective” remains the same in time independently of the different changes the person’s environment goes through. The tension

⁴¹ “Hence of gluttons it is written (Phil. 3:19): ‘Whose god is their belly’: viz. because they place their last end in the pleasures of the belly” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II, Q. 1, Art. 5).

and conflict between a “true self” and an “apparent self” assumed by Haybron in his examples is something that makes no sense. From the point of view of the narrative self we have different versions of a single story, and the story remains in construction in a dynamic movement. The understanding of one’s self takes place only in the framework of acting and choosing options embedded in a story which is written from different points of view. What is good is something that has to be discovered, it is not something given.

I also reject the concept of self as a mere list of different psychological characteristics that are to some degree independent of each other. Haybron’s concept of self outlined in chapter one is more like a monster with different heads; one of those heads is the emotional self, and it turns itself wherever its inclinations demand it independently of the other heads that in this analogy are the other parts of the self.⁴² In Henry’s case he chooses what he thinks is good for him, but his emotional nature has other inclinations. This picture suggests that the emotional nature has already a specific object toward which it moves itself independently of the values a person considers important.

In order to develop a conception of emotional flourishing in relation to the conception of narrative self, it is necessary to abandon the idea of emotional nature as an independent category of the self. In Aristotelian discussions human beings as animals possess the capacity to feel emotions by nature. The specific concept is “*dynamis*.” Once these capacities are actualised, we have emotions (*pathos*) which are responses to situations considered as advantageous or dangerous. However, human beings as social and rational animals develop “trained” emotional dispositions which help them to live well in a community. Without trained emotions people just cannot recognise situations in the appropriate way, and practical reason is not fully developed: it is just a cunning capacity that connects means to ends without knowing what is relevant for individuals that pretend to live well in a community. Education and the practice of moral virtues give to those emotions their proper object according to the circumstances the individual faces in his life and to his conception of good life. From the point of view of this Aristotelian conception of emotional dispositions, if there is such a thing as emotional nature, it is a constitutive part of what is called character trait (*hexis*), or what is also understood as “second nature.” This suggests that the way a person is used to responding emotionally towards his environment cannot be understood independently of his character, of the way he sees

⁴² See the “list” of the different part of the self in the chapter one of this work.

things and the way he acts. According to this interpretation, Haybron's conception of emotional nature as an independent category of self is misguided.

In the framework of the narrative self, emotions pervade all the self. They are responses in the unity of the actor, the setting and the story. Emotions emerge from the self in the different circumstances and relations the person faces. As Sherman (1997, 25–29) explains, emotions are the signal of relevance; they are perceptions of salience. They are modes of registering value, ways of communicating to others what one's concerns are and what one cares for. In this regard, there is love and hope in the relations between parents and children, the player who has achieved a prize in a game as a result of an excellent performance feels joy and pride, the painter is ecstatic when he discovers in the colours the figures he was looking for. In these cases, emotions are not responses of the amygdala, they do not emerge from psychological nucleus, and they are not in the mind inside people's heads. Emotions are embedded in the story of the self; they are an active part of the story's plot.

In the framework of the practices, mixed emotions are the reflection of different conflicts between the roles a person embodies. Choosing some goods and rejecting others cause fear, sadness, hope, enthusiasm. Here we have as an example Kierkegaard's choice for the life of a philosopher instead of a life as a husband; and we have Regina fighting like a lion for the love of Kierkegaard. Strong emotions made them shed tears. In relation to one's body, emotions such as hate, shame or pride are common, depending on whether someone considers his body as the living picture of Adonis, as a mythic monster or as a marsh, borrowing in this latter case Plato's description of this kind of bodies from *The Republic* (405d).⁴³ In moments of sickness the body becomes the source of frustration, a burden that is hated. In the Dionysian dance described by Nietzsche a profound joy emerges from the free movement of the body (*Thus spake Zarathustra*, XXXII. The dance-song).

The story of the self is an emotional story, and emotions have their history in the self. Anger appears different in different stories of bodies; love has many faces in different relations. Emotions have different dimensions in the same vein as the self does; unconscious emotions are hidden in fantasies, dreams, hopes, and confusing thoughts. How

⁴³ “Well, I said, and to require the help of medicine, not when a wound has to be cured, or on occasion of an epidemic, but just because, by indolence and a habit of life such as we have been describing, men fill themselves with waters and winds, as if their bodies were a marsh, compelling the ingenious sons of Asclepius to find more names for diseases, such as flatulence and catarrh; is not this, too, a disgrace?”

can emotional flourishing be explained in this conceptual framework in which emotions are part of the story of the self? This is the topic of the next chapter.

5 EMOTIONAL FLOURISHING AND ITS CONCEPTUAL CONSTELLATION

In this chapter I will describe how emotional flourishing is possible in liberal societies in which people are understood as autonomous and rational animals capable of choosing what is good for them. My thesis is that emotional flourishing is related to the achievement of internal goods to practices. In this interpretation, a person flourishes when she is capable of developing dispositions to feel emotions in the right way toward the right circumstances in the context of the different practices in which she is involved. This thesis endorses an Aristotelian vision of good life (*eudaimonia*) and cultivation of emotions. My intention is not to argue that this is the only possible way of explaining this flourishing; my arguments are in the framework of my appropriation of the concept of self introduced in the previous chapter. My thesis also shows that it is by pursuing those internal goods to practices how a person avoids systematic imprudence.

5.1 The concept of flourishing

In chapter three I have pointed out why flourishing in the case of human beings has to be understood in close relation with the environment. I showed that Seligman's and Nussbaum's theories attempt to explain some "formula" for good life applicable to all cultures. In such approaches good life is characterized as harmony between goods. Human strengths and fulfilment of capabilities are the objective standards that guide people's choices in order to achieve flourishing and to protect it. However, from the point of view of the concept of narrative self, flourishing is not understood as harmony between goods. The actor lives in a constant conflict in a life whose genre is a combination of tragedy and comedy. The excellence attained in some practices may be a loss of excellence in others. Gaugin's case is representative here. Moreover, human flourishing is not understood as the mere actualization or cultivation of capabilities and strengths. Human flourishing in this latter sense is the externalist vision Haybron criticizes, but he mistakenly he interprets it as Aristotle's ethics.

In my interpretation of the narrative self, *a person's flourishing is in relation to the achievement of those goods internal to practices, once they have been appraised and chosen as goods that foster what a person understands as a good life*. This definition is influenced by MacIntyre's interpretations of Aristotle's and Aquinas' ethics in his books *After Virtue* and *Dependent Rational Animals*. To choose particular goods in certain situations presuppose an understanding of what it is to live well. Good life as eudaimonia is the kind of life which a practical reasoner considers as a case of "doing well" (*eupraxis*) from his own circumstances.⁴⁴

Following MacIntyre's interpretation, particular goods are explained in relation to the goods internal to practices. Those goods, if they are understood and appraised as goods by independent practical reasoners – it could be the case that those goods are only apparent as a result of ideology – are objective standards in choosing a particular course of action. Knowledge of one's own tradition and experience of living in a community provide the basis for the development of a particular understanding of what is good for the person in his particular relation to practices. For example, what it means to be a good parent or a good teacher entails different interpretations and the use of creativity. There are no "copies" of good parents or copies of good teachers; we do not have two or more good parents or teachers that do or think exactly the same kinds of things. Everyone makes their own appropriations of their own roles while undertaking actions with unique particularities. However, we can identify a good parent or a good teacher thanks to the objective standards internal to those practices. When those standards are appraised as goods, the person learns to want and protect them. This kind of appraisal discloses one's roles as a good thing to fulfil.

The fulfilment of the self is not independent of the fulfilment of one's role in different practices. The failure in fulfilling one's roles, and consequently the failure in attaining internal goods to the practices, is an impediment for human flourishing given the unity between the author/actor, the setting, and the story. Again, an illustrative example here is to fail as parents and teachers. The failure is reflected in the deficiency of children to grow up as independent reasoners. This example opens another aspect of human flourishing that MacIntyre defends: the flourishing of an actor is not independent of the flourishing of other

⁴⁴John McDowell (2002) clarifies that "doing well" is equivalent to "having eudaimonia."

actors, and hence, the flourishing of the community. The failure of parents and teachers is reflected in the imprudence of members of the community: addictions, foolishness and lack of self-control are partly a consequence of those deficiencies as a parent and as a teacher.

Experience is crucial in the process of becoming a good parent or a good teacher. To use Hursthouse's (2012) expression, experience gives "sensitivity" to appraise different situations and to choose the right course of action. In this regard, teachers and parents have to be sensitive to the circumstances that surround the different children they are dealing with, and to understand that the solutions they have found in some situations in relation to one child are not always adequate for another child.

I have outlined this concept of human flourishing in the same vein as Aristotelianism usually does. However, I have to make some specifications. Human flourishing, as I understand it now, has always limitations. A life in which the person chooses *always* what is good in *all* the circumstances he or she faces, is in my mind impossible. Nevertheless, this is the picture Aristotle and other Aristotelian authors have suggested (Thomas Aquinas knew that such excellence is impossible in the world). Even MacIntyre (1984, 205) falls into the temptation of affirming something similar when he says that "someone who genuinely possesses a virtue can be expected to manifest it in very different types of situation, many of them situations where the practice of a virtue cannot be expected to be effective in the way that we expect a professional skill to be." In this regard, he adds that Hector exhibited one and the same courage in his parting from Andromache and on the battlefield with Achilles. However, I think that if certain situations are either alien to the experience that a person possesses or in relation to certain things that the person just cannot stand, then the practice of a virtue, such as courage, cannot be fulfilled adequately according to those situations. As Hursthouse (2012) correctly illuminates the topic, there are always "blind spots," that is, areas of life where people do not act as they should or their understanding of the situation is deficient.

In the framework of the narrative self it is also possible to find blind spots in person's actions and decisions concerning the roles he embodies. In this respect, if we accept that different situations have different characteristics, and we also add the unpredictable character of some of our actions (not to mention the role of "fortune"), I admit that a person may also fail in acting and choosing in the right way in matters regarding his

different roles. Virtues equip us to do what we ought to do according to the knowledge we have acquired through experience, but they do not guarantee a successful performance in every situation. I will say more about this point below in my explanations of what I understand as virtue.

The tragic (and comic) actor flourishes and succeeds in some practices, but not in others. In those cases where one's own experience and knowledge is limited, and the risk of doing unwise things is very high and dangerous, we need the help of others who possess the relevant experience and knowledge. This idea assumes that a person acknowledges his or her own limitations. In contrast, to pretend to know everything is what we call arrogance, a very tragic and comic characteristic of some persons.

Another factor that limits human flourishing is human finitude: we cannot be good at everything, because our time is limited. As human beings we must choose some options and close others, in many cases, definitively. Life as a tragic and a comic story is something unfinished; many things are left open, many failures were not overcome, many things could have been done in a better way, and so forth. We never end our life with our own "signature." It is death that finishes our life; it writes the last word of our story as it has been told from our own point of view. And usually the end of a life is not glorious: people die in the bathroom, in accidents, alone in their houses, in the hands of grumpy nurses, or surrounded by greedy children that think of the inheritances. Once one dies, other persons have to take care of the body, giving it respect and honour, or throwing it to a mass grave or to a dump. What happens to us after death is part of our story, nevertheless, that story is told by others, not by us.

In my interpretation of human flourishing people are not infallible and every one of us has limitations, due to biological causes, or as a result of our own actions and mistakes. With these clarifications, the concern Haybron has in his discussion of perfectionism becomes clearer; the problem is that his explanations are deficient. To flourish as a human being is to flourish in certain roles choosing goods that foster a good life for the person in those roles, but this flourishing is never complete.

5.2 The concept of emotional flourishing

In the framework of my concept of human flourishing, how can emotional flourishing be attained? Following the Aristotelian tradition, emotional flourishing is attained when *the person is disposed to feel emotions in the right way towards the right persons or objects and in the right circumstances* (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE) 1106b20). Now, I understand that to be disposed to feel emotions in the right way towards the right situations is in relation to the roles a person embodies.

MacIntyre clarifies in his book *Dependent Rational Animal* that most of the work of parents and teachers is to help children to feel emotions that are adequate according to different situations. The child learns to identify what the correct objects of pride, shame, joy, anger or sadness are, and learns to express these emotions in order to communicate meaning and value. In this way a child becomes an adult, who after gaining experience in the vicissitudes of the emotional life is responsible of his own emotions. According to Aristotle, the learning or failure in learning how to feel emotions in the right way in the right circumstances is what deserves to be praised or blamed (NE 1105b32). For example, a mother who hates her own children and loves neighbours' children is an abomination, because a mother *ought* to love her own children. She is blamed for failing in responding emotionally in the right way towards the right people – except if she is completely mad or in an altered state of mind. In this case we are talking about a person who is not autonomous. Thus, emotional flourishing in human beings means to be disposed to feel emotions in the way a rational animal ought to.

In this interpretation of emotional flourishing, a person can cultivate and change the way emotions respond to situations. According to my interpretation of the narrative self, this is something a person attains practicing the virtues relevant in the life of community. Virtue (*aretê*) in general terms means “excellence.” In the context of human flourishing, virtue as a good habit is the manifestation of a character trait a person possesses. This is the classic explanation, and MacIntyre (1984, 191. Italics in the original) defines the concept of virtue as follows: “A *virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.*” From this point of view,

virtuous activity as an acquired human quality makes the person disposed to recognise and appraise goods internal to a practice as such.⁴⁵ Moral virtues, together with practical reason (an intellectual virtue) give to emotions their correct objects. In the framework of the narrative self, emotions detect relevant situations when they are integrated in the story of a person through good habits.

A person who has acquired the relevant virtues that enables him or her to achieve the internal goods to practices, has the disposition to respond emotionally according to the success or failure in achieving those internal goods. To be a good teacher should trigger emotions such as pride. In this example, when the teacher sees how his pupils flourish acquiring the relevant skills, he justly can regard this fact as his own achievement too. According to Lazarus pride has as a core relational theme of taking credit for an achievement, either one's own or that of someone else or a group with whom the person identifies herself (Lazarus 1991, 122). The failure in feeling emotions in the right way under the right circumstances may be a result of deficiencies in character. The case of a teacher that does not take credit for his achievements and does not feel proud of them may be a case of low self-esteem. To feel too much pride is also wrong. In this case the teacher who believes that his pupils flourish only because of the extraordinary capacities he as a teacher possesses, is a fantasy called vanity.

Moreover, there is a relation between emotional responses and rationality. In this regard Aristotle, speaking of anger, says: "The deficiency, whether it is a sort of 'unirascibility' or whatever it is, is blamed. For those who are not angry at the things they should be angry at are thought to be fools" (NE 1126a2). To be incapable of feeling emotions in the right way as a rational animal should feel is a signal of the incapability of recognising and defending things that are valuable. The person who fails in recognising what is valuable is regarded as a fool. In contrast, someone who responds emotionally in the right way toward valuable things is considered prudent.⁴⁶

This idea of emotional flourishing that I have developed here is criticized by Haybron and other authors in the same line (for example Sumner 1996). The verb "ought to" is what

⁴⁵ Here MacIntyre uses the word "quality" following Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas understands habit (*hexis* in Greek) as a human quality. The concepts are equivalent (I-II Q. 49 a. 1).

⁴⁶ On this topic see for example, Sherman 1997; Nussbaum 2001; Lagerlund & Yrjönsuuri 2002.

sounds horrible to their ears, and they find it as a perfectionist approach. Here I remind about my discussion in chapter one. In Aristotelian tradition, the *ought to* does not come from outside of person's interest, concerns and desires; it emerges from what a person has reasons to do according to who he is and his understanding of what it means to live well. As Aristotle explains, the lover of just actions has reasons to do what is right and he feels joy and pleasure while undertaking those kinds of actions. Nevertheless, a possible danger in this explanation is that the person seems to "follow" the commands of his emotions. The lover of just actions undertakes such actions because of his love, not because those actions are good for their own sake – this is the classic critique Kant made to Aristotle. However, Aristotle and Aristotelians are clear here: reason is what determines whether a course of action is right or wrong, not emotions. Emotions detect concerns and valuable things and prepare the individual to act; however, practical reason is the eye that directs the course of action according to what is good to do in particular situations aiming at good life.

My interpretation of emotional flourishing is incompatible with Haybron's concept of happiness. For Haybron, psychic flourishing, which he calls psychological happiness, is the presence of positive emotions and the absence of negative ones. His concept is aligned with the new trend of understanding happiness developed by positive psychology and the "science of happiness" whose "godfather" according to Haybron is the psychologist Ed Diener (Haybron 2008, 283 n. 14). In contrast, emotional flourishing from the point of view of Aristotelian traditions has nothing to do with experiencing positive emotions instead of negative ones. The so called negative emotions, such as anger, shame, or fear, are also necessary in people's flourishing, of course in the right way toward the right situations. For example, it is right to feel anger and indignation toward injustice. Injustice compromises our flourishing and community's flourishing, and therefore we have reasons to respond emotionally in that way. I accept that a life that is filled with constant sadness, anger or fear cannot be a flourishing one; however, a life without those emotions is stunted. Given these problems in terminology, I have preferred to speak of emotional flourishing instead of happiness. I do not deny that happiness could be understood as psychologists from positive psychology background do. What I deny is that this concept of happiness could be equivalent to psychological or emotional flourishing from an Aristotelian perspective, as Haybron assumes.

In the light of this explanation regarding emotional flourishing, I think Haybron's concept of psychic flourishing is unsatisfactory. In my discussion in chapter one I have explained that in Haybron's approach a person flourishes emotionally – has authentic happiness – when his self finds its constant fulfilment in rich and complex activities. This richness and complexity, I showed, are rather external standards that are imposed on the self, and consequently, Haybron's theory of self-fulfilment falls into a version of perfectionism. Haybron is forced to transform his theory into perfectionism because it is conceptually impossible to defend the idea that self-fulfilment, understanding the self as a mere psychological make-up, is by itself good. Vicious people are the refutation of Haybron's theory. In the conceptual framework of the narrative self, emotional flourishing has nothing to do directly with the fulfilment of a psychological make-up, but rather it is related to the fulfilment of one's role within a practice. Once the practices and different roles are understood as constitutive parts of the self, the person is ready to respond emotionally according to the success or failure in achieving the goods internal to the practices.

Another problem I detected in Haybron's concept of emotional flourishing is that he supposes that the dispositions to be happy in certain circumstance and not in others are reasons for action. As I have explained, practical reason is what determines what is good to do, not emotions. The reason is that emotions understood as responses toward particular objects predispose the person to be focussed on certain characteristics of the situation and thus be "blind" to see other characteristics. In this case, the motivating force of the emotions may lead to actions that could be harmful either to other persons or to the person herself. Here I am not talking about "negative" emotions (anger, sadness, envy, guilt); even "positive" emotions can be harmful. Plato, when speaking about the erotic love in the *Phaedrus*, says that the lover, initially, is a seeker of physical beauty: "[the beauty] also moves him to revere his beloved as if he were a god. In fact, it is only concern about being thought completely insane that stops him from sacrificing to his beloved as if he were a cult statue or a god." (*Phaedrus*, 251a.)

This kind of "divine mania" could be detrimental to a person's life if it becomes an obsession, and for this reason, the person should not follow the impulse of such emotions. Haybron never takes into account this kind of problem because he does not even clarify the concept of emotion he has in mind. The only thing he says is that emotions are evaluative

responses that can be in conflict with reason, and his recommendation is that people who are constantly feeling negative emotions should change the way they are living because it is the signal that they are living against their emotional self, as it is suggested in the example of Henry and his model trains.⁴⁷ In this way of understanding such conflicts there is no way to speak of cultivation of emotions.

Nevertheless, I accept that good habits do not predict whether a person will feel certain emotions in the right way or whether the person will not follow the impulses of his emotions in specific circumstances. These ideas are in line with my conception of flourishing as something that has its limits. This is not the place for giving extensive explanations on this topic; however, I would like to discuss some possible cases.⁴⁸

There are some emotions that are triggered in certain circumstances and seem to be reluctant to changes. This could be the case of emotions that are rooted in infantile experiences. Psychoanalysis has interesting explanations concerning this phenomenon. Certain emotions are in relation with infantile phantasies and desires which “logic” is different from the way a grown person understands his environment. Following Melanie Klein’s ideas, a child understands his relation with important objects (parents) as either all-out good or bad objects, and from these relations different wishes and anxieties are represented in the psyche in the form of unconscious phantasies. (Sherman 1999, 154–172.) Those phantasies affect the way a person sees and feels the world throughout his life, and this way of perceiving and experiencing things influences certain emotional responses which are not easy to understand. For example, Nancy Sherman discusses the case of a father who has strong emotions of disappointment, anger and shame towards his son’s poor academic performance in a school test. The father knows that the test is only a small part of the child’s overall academic profile, and he knows that feeling those emotions is an

⁴⁷ It seems that Haybron supposes a “representational” concept of emotion, as Descartes did. According to Descartes, emotions (passions of the soul) represent situations according to their character of harmful or beneficial to the person. These representations are images of the soul caused by bodily changes triggered by perceptions of external objects. However, Descartes knew that passions may fail in representing appropriately different situations, given the fact that passions are directed to immediate ends, and consequently they exaggerate the goodness or badness of their objects. This is way he recommended some “remedies” for passions, such as time and repose to calm “the disturbance in our blood” when we have a strong emotion which impels us to do something that is not rational (*Passions of the soul*, III, art. 211). Regarding cultivation of emotions, Descartes defends a classic position: we need to change our beliefs about the things that are important to us. However, the novelty of Descartes’ thought is that these changes in beliefs can create changes in representing images from the world. In other words, we can change our perceptions (*Passions of the soul*, I, art. 50).

⁴⁸ For a discussion about mixed emotions see for example Carr 2009.

overreaction. Nevertheless, he cannot help feeling those emotions, and I would add to this scenario that the father even knows that it is unjust to feel that kind of emotions and tries to fight against them, which arouses guilt. In this case, phantasies that involve fear of failure and self-punishing emotions of shame and disappointment are projected to the son. (Sherman 1999, 165.) The emotional drama of the father that took place in his childhood is now reproduced in his relation with his son.

Infantile phantasies are constitutive part of how a person understands his world, and as a part of other logic, they cannot be changed easily: they form part of the first impressions a person has of the world, either as a source of satisfaction or frustration. Emotional transformations and self-knowledge at the level of those reluctant emotions can be attained with the help of others (a psychotherapist for example). However, a definitive self-control may never be acquired. It is possible that a person who has practiced virtues may attain some control in the expression of the emotions that are triggered by sensitive situations, and with time he could find balance by accepting them as part of his story. But the emotions as such may not disappear or be completely changed. Taking into account emotions of this type, our understanding of the emotional life becomes more complex: emotions are understood as phenomena with different dimensions, and we avoid the naïve conception of a virtuous person that knows herself perfectly and controls emotions in a definitive way.

Another problem in emotional flourishing can be found in the case of the conflict between different roles a single person embodies. As I have shown above, people cannot be good at everything, and this fact arouses mixed emotion when some goods have to be chosen instead of others. The resolution in choosing a particular good can be characterized as the absence of emotions such as joy or pride and the presence of guilt, shame or sadness. This is expressed by a person when she says that her choice does not make her happy, but it was the best thing to do. Examples of these situations are countless: a conflict between doing one's job well and being a good mother, or a conflict between helping one's friend or one's distant relative in extreme situations. In these cases, if the person has a disposition to feel joy, hope or love for what is worthy of doing to the right person according to what it means to live well, she can recover an emotional balance with time.

The topic of conflicts between emotions is intriguing and deserves an analysis, which is, however, beyond the scope of this work. From the point of view of Nietzsche, a person is certainly a field of battles between forces which never ends; however, he did not see this as a deficiency. The “passions,” no matter how irrational they could be, are not bad in themselves, and perhaps with time, their force and inclination can be rechanneled to creative forms. This attempt, of course, requires on the one hand avoiding self-indulgency, and on the other hand to be a little bit “hard” on oneself. In this way those forces can become “virtues:”

“And though thou wert of the race of the hot-tempered, or of the voluptuous, or of the fanatical, or the vindictive; all thy passions in the end became virtues, and all thy devils angels. Once hadst thou wild dogs in thy cellar: but they changed at last into birds and charming songstresses” (*Thus spake Zarathustra*, V. Joys and passions).

Here I let this topic open. The next step is to see how the concept of flourishing, which I have developed here, explains the problems Haybron interestingly raises with his theses of systematic imprudence and liberal optimism.

5.3 Systematic imprudence and the self

As I have noted in my discussion about systematic imprudence, Haybron argues that liberal societies are option-rich environments. This kind of environment is harmful for human beings given their nature, which from the point of view of evolutionary psychology (as Haybron presents it), is a hunter-gathered species. Haybron’s thesis is that human beings are not adapted to live in option-rich environments, and given this fact it is expected that people will make wrong choices most of the time. I have argued in chapter two that these explanations are unsatisfactory, and his theory of contextualism does not really resolve anything. With the concept of narrative self, which already entails a relation of an individual with the environment, it is possible to explain why people seem to make wrong choices.

Perhaps Haybron's intuition is partially correct: there may be a relation between having too many options and making systematic mistakes regarding well-being, although I think this is not a necessary connection. People have always had the ability to ruin their lives and the life of others regardless of whether they have ten or a thousand options. The problem is not the mere presence of options, rather it is the conflictive character of human life. This latter point is clear in my discussion of the concept of self as the unity of the setting, the plot and the author/actor. Following my interpretation of the concept of narrative self, systematic imprudence is the result of people's incapacity to recognise goods that are worth achieving. My stance assumes that people who choose wrong options are people who have not understood what a flourishing life is for them under the circumstances they inhabit. Here I am not talking about people that make a few mistakes; I am talking about people who systematically make wrong choices, as Haybron presents the panorama of liberal societies.

Systematic imprudence, thus, is the failure in acquiring the rational and emotional capacities that enable people to "see" what is good, and these people are blamed for this failure. This interpretation defends the Aristotelian vision of human beings as responsible for their actions and emotions. Concerning mistakes due to ignorance, the person is responsible for her ignorance in cases when it is the result of indifference to relevant facts in her community. This thesis however, is applicable neither to other societies where other understanding of human being is predominant, nor to those places where institutions and traditions are incompatible with liberal principles. Given these explanations, I reject Haybron's vision of systematic imprudence as the result of the mere presence of many options.

To further elaborate on this latter topic, if systematic imprudence were the consequence of the mere presence of many options, then people should be understood as beings at the level of little children. A little child is incapable of discerning what things are good and what are bad for him. For example, if someone lets a child in a room full of toys and other interesting things, but accidentally there are also sharp objects and dangerous substances, such as chlorine or drain cleaner, we can be sure that the child is going to get hurt. By nature a child is going to explore his environment, and if he gets hurt, it is not because he is a fool; rather, it is because he unfortunately has imprudent parents. In politics, this picture is the so called "paternalism:" there are some individuals in governments who know or should know what is good for the people, given the fact that the people, the

masses, are incapable of knowing what is good. Although Haybron (2008, 257) denies that he is promoting paternalism, the concepts he outlines reflect that position: he dreams of an environment full of good things for hunter-gatherers who get hurt in an environment full of dangerous things – fatty food, fashion industry, cosmetic surgery, credit cards, television, alcohol and so on.

In the view I defend, systematic imprudence is a failure in understanding what options promote a good life, and it might occur, for example, when people choose external goods to practices such as power, riches, pleasures and honour as ends in themselves. In these cases, people do not accept the authority of the standards of the practices; they have not subjected their own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to those standards that define a practice. Thus, practices and institutions are used only to achieve external goods, which are “the objects of competition in which there must be losers as well as winners” (MacIntyre 1984, 190). This is the way in which institutions and practices are corrupted. For those people that seek external goods, the goods of the community and the practices are not a priority. Consequently, they are ready to cheat, to be untruthful, cunning, cowards when the internal goods to practice need to be defended, and self-indulgent when they have failed in doing what is good.

I think this vision offers a more credible explanation of the causes of systematic imprudence than those that Haybron provides in his theory of contextualism. My interpretation also makes possible another way of understanding individualism in matters of pursuing well-being. According to Haybron, individualism is a consequence of “liberal optimism” – the thesis that people are capable of achieving their well-being when they have more freedom to choose whatever they want. In contrast to Haybron’s position, I affirm that the individualistic pursuit of well-being, that is to say, to choose “whatever one wants” is grounded in a misunderstanding of what it is to live well. The concept of individualism concerning well-being that Haybron provides is a version of the desire satisfaction theory, which is the approach economists usually defend (Haybron 2008, 253–256). For the sake of my arguments I will take for granted this conception.

Individualism, from the point of view of the narrative self is the refusal to acknowledge one’s debt to the community. As MacIntyre (1999, chapter 8 and 9) puts it, it is the incapacity to acknowledge one’s dependence upon others given the vulnerability of human

life. The individualist is like the “spoilt child” (*niño mimado*) described by Ortega y Gasset in his characterization of the psychology of the “mass-man” in his book *The Revolt of the Masses*. According to Ortega y Gasset, those people who are like spoilt children believe that the rich menu of possibilities the community offers belongs to them by nature, as the air they breathe. Everything is ready at their disposal, and they enjoy the good things that past generations have achieved (with their effort and suffering) without expressing gratitude for those goods. This condition promotes the free expansion of desires which gives to these people the impression that everything is permitted to them and they have no obligations towards anybody. (Ortega y Gasset 1993, 58.) In the light of this description of the psychology of a spoilt child, the problems with individualism are not essentially a matter of too much freedom and many options; it is a matter of ingratitude. The entrepreneur that does not want to pay taxes because he wants more possibilities to satisfy his desires is one example of the “spoilt child.” I will return to this idea below.

I agree with Haybron that in some liberal societies there are too many options. However, this is not caused by something called liberal optimism, but instead by a neurotic production in a competitive market and the incapability of some liberal states to enforce more strict and brave economic regulations. In this regard, the problem is actually capitalism, not liberal principles. I leave this discussion here because it is not the main topic of this work. The next step is to see how systematic imprudence, which is the result of individualism, prevents emotional flourishing from my point of view.

Haybron argues that in liberal societies the pursuit of happiness may end up in unhappiness. He tries to justify this thesis by presenting examples of stressed people who have adopted a competitive and individualist way of living. In this picture everyone wants to be rich, to get the best job, to secure the future of their children and to achieve a successful life (Haybron 2008 chapter 11). Certainly a stressful life diminishes moments of joy and tranquillity, and in large cities we can see that other people become an obstacle for attaining one’s goals. Emotions such as envy, bitterness, and “*schadenfreude*” (joy for the misfortune of other person) may become recurrent in such an environment. However, I think the concept of self that I have developed in this work opens new possibilities.

By examining the figure of the spoilt child alongside the concept of individualism, it is possible to elucidate the way that systematic imprudence takes place in liberal societies

and the emotional dispositions it entails. What follows is an interpretation of how I see different phenomena, taking as a point of departure the concept of self and flourishing I have developed. It is an outline and it does not close other kinds of explanations, and it describes only one possibility of the self.

The taxonomy of the spoilt child leads us to the concept of self. How is the self of a spoilt child? As I have described above, it is the kind of being that has received a myriad of goods from past generations. Those goods are not only material, but also moral and aesthetics goods. Freedom to choose is one of the most precious goods. This freedom expands its power once it has more options to choose. This kind of freedom presupposes that the basic needs are met and the person lives in an environment capable of producing a great number of material and symbolic goods. In this environment everyone has the possibility of choosing the options they like according to their idiosyncrasies. All the things that were difficult in another time are now ridiculously easy for the spoilt child. Food is easy to obtain; there are comfortable buildings with heating and air conditioning; there are shop, markets, and spectacles. If the spoilt child wants something, he can get it almost instantaneously. This is the environment in which the individualist self moves, an option-rich environment as Haybron explains.

The person with this lifestyle develops a peculiar way of understanding himself and the world he dwells. The world becomes a place which is there at hand, and it is just a source of options. In the relationship with himself, the spoilt child understands his essence as freedom, and regards his personal characteristics as the result of his own choices: he is who he wants to be. This self-determination can be seen in the relation he has with the different roles. The roles that he embodies are something external to him. As MacIntyre (1984, 33) points out in his discussion of the emotivist self, the person's "real me" is not there in the roles: those roles are only accidents to a substance called "me." For the spoilt child, certainly his goals are not based on the fulfilment of his roles but in how to become a "me," that is to say, how the person fulfils his self as freedom. The roles are like suits that he puts on, and he takes them off when he needs to. When he has the opportunity to strip the roles off of himself for a moment, he does it thinking "I give me the chance to be myself." Under this understanding, the roles are usually a burden.

With resources at his disposal, the spoilt child has the opportunity to pursue the goals he wants, and he experiences joy once he attains those goals.⁴⁹ He is proud of his achievements and understands them as the outcome of his own powers and abilities; other people only have helped him as a hammer helps the carpenter to make a table. Unfortunately those emotions change quickly. The goals the spoilt child achieves lose constantly their relevance. This is so because for the spoilt child, who is essentially freedom, it is always possible to achieve and to choose something else. Consequently, specific goals and achievements become irrelevant. Regarding particular goods, he does not have the experience of fighting for anything; he only uses the goods that have been result from previous fights. In this respect, his attitudes toward particular goods and possibilities are constantly changing because everything is relevant only if it provides satisfaction. As a result of having things at hand and achieving goals that lose quickly their relevance, the spoilt child does not see anything special in them. In this relation with the world and with himself, the individualist gets bored.

Boredom has been an important topic in philosophy. In the philosophical novella *Candide* by Voltaire (2006), boredom (*ennui*) is described as one of the “great evils” – the other two are vice and want. After Candide and his friends had suffered all kinds of horrible and hilarious incidents, they found themselves in Constantinople living in a farm that Candide had bought. Their lives became monotonous without the goods they once had or dreamed of: beauty, fame, riches and comfort. The consolation of some of them was the disputes about moral and metaphysical topics – the central one was whether the world is the best of all possible worlds. But the day they did not dispute, “time hung so heavily upon their hands.” One day an old woman who was with them said: “I want to know which is worse, to be ravished a hundred times by negro pirates, to have a buttock cut off, to run the gauntlet among the Bulgarians, to be whipped and hanged at an auto-da-fé, to be dissected, to row in the galleys—in short, to go through all the miseries we have undergone, or to stay here and have nothing to do?” (*Candide*, XXX.)

In the conclusion of the novella, Candide and the other characters follow the example of an old Turk and his children, whose work in their little garden provided them with everything they needed: “I know also,” said Candide, “that we must cultivate our garden.” (Voltaire

⁴⁹ Joy is the emotion whose core relational theme is “making reasonable progress toward the realization of a goal” (Lazarus 1991, 122)

2006.) Boredom, in this novella, is in connection with dreaming of those things that one has lost or that can hardly be attained. Boredom is related to being blind to the good options one has at hand in certain circumstances. Labour and honesty was the solution to the problem of boredom in Candide's circumstances.

Also Schopenhauer (2011) has analysed boredom. He understands boredom as the mental state which follows from the satisfaction of one's desires – physical and psychological desires alike. For Schopenhauer this was a necessary state given his metaphysical assumptions: life as unsatisfied will is between suffering and boredom, and happiness (as satisfaction) is something momentary. Kierkegaard's *Either Or* (1987) provides another perspective to boredom. Kierkegaard presents boredom as something that is all the time chasing the person who lives in the aesthetic stage of existence. This kind of person lives in the possibility, and his problems are related to how many new experiences he has had recently, or, as it is the case of Don Juan, how many women he has seduced recently: life is interesting when he has open options. However, he gets bored because he does not make the radical choice that would lead him to the ethical stage: he is trapped in a fragmented life in which he is dragged along by possibilities in a movement that has no end.

As for the case of the individualist in our time, the spoilt child gets bored because everything becomes irrelevant: his concern is his freedom to choose, and nothing else. As the aesthetic existence, the spoilt child loves new things with new ornaments, but he dreams of the new things to come: what is important is to actualise his freedom all the time. Under this movement, he is never satisfied: everything is too insignificant for his freedom. As Schopenhauer argues, when a person's goals are attained, this is the beginning of a new wave of boredom. In order to keep boredom away there is a demand for new products, new options and new possibilities. However, even the curiosity and the demand for new things will be exhausted. When the curiosity is exhausted, the spoilt child "flees unto his neighbour," to use Nietzsche's expression (*Thus spake Zarathustra* XVI. Neighbour-love). The "neighbour" is just another source of entertainment, whatever that might be: idle talk, pleasure or wasting time together.

However, everything is useless in the end: "boredom lies in wait for him at every corner" (Schopenhauer, *The wisdom of life*, Chapter II). Since everything becomes a source of boredom, the spoilt child starts to be a burden to himself: his freedom, as something

abstract whose endless movement is to want to choose, falls upon his shoulders. This abstract and unlimited freedom becomes something boring in itself. It is meaningless as it lacks a purpose external to itself, and the person says “I just want something but I do not know what.” In this sense the emotional life of the spoilt child is volatile. The minimum change in the day that causes pleasure is a motive of intense joy, which he or she loses quickly. The minimum disadvantage is a motive of intense anger or sadness; as if he were a king, he does not want that anybody bothers him (cf. Seneca, *On anger*, II, XXXI).⁵⁰ Since this way of living is very restless, the spoilt child constantly dreams of a life that Nietzsche finds equivalent to the herd’s happiness: the green-meadow happiness with comfort, and alleviation of life (*Beyond Good and Evil*. Chapter II. The free spirit).

From the point of view of the narrative self, the person is constantly called upon to respond for his actions regarding the performance of his different roles; this call entails responding for one’s failure as well. This latter possibility triggers emotions such as guilt or shame.⁵¹ The spoilt child feels guilt when the participants of a certain practice point out failures in the fulfilment of his roles, and feels shame because he has not become the person he should be according to the standards of the roles. Those emotions ruin his day, but he does not interpret those feelings as the signal of his failure as an actor who is embedded in a story that is in relation to other stories, but instead as the annoying demands of others who try to limit his freedom. Although the individualist sees his roles as something external to him, he cannot get rid of the obligations he has towards other people and his debt to the community. His story is not only what he affirms; it is what others also tell as authors and co-authors of that story. The story of this spoilt child is in part a story of a failure: a failure as a parent, as a teacher, as a son, as an honest entrepreneur, and so on. The spoilt child alleviates his guilt and shame with his curiosity and fleeing unto his neighbour.

I think this characterization illuminates some of the concerns Haybron elucidates in liberal societies. Of course, there are persons that are more individualistic than others. The kind of self I have described is an extreme case, and I am sure that many people change their lives and search for help once they realise that they have been living in an irrational way.

⁵⁰“We decide that we ought not to be harmed even by our enemies; each one in his heart has the king's point of view, and is willing to use license, but unwilling to suffer from it. And so it is either arrogance or ignorance that makes us prone to anger.”

⁵¹ Lazarus describes the core relational theme of guilt as the transgression of a moral principle, and of shame as the failure in living up to one’s personal or ego-ideal (Lazarus 1991, 122).

Moreover, the concept of narrative self provides other ways of understanding the different cases presented by Haybron. The high incidence of overweight and obesity in liberal societies is not only because there is junk food at hand as he thinks (Haybron 2008, 26; 241). The sedentary lifestyle of the couch potato is certainly the consequence of wrong options, as Haybron correctly says; however, in my interpretation this might be rather the result of the understanding the person has of herself as something independent of the roles she plays. This understanding entails a misconception of what it is to live well and how to spend one's time adequately. A person who wastes her time in front of TV eating at the same time everything she likes, is a person who is not doing what she ought to do according to her roles. Here the problem is not the food and TV, but instead the lack of practical reason and commitment to practices. The problem, of course, is more complicated when people have strong emotions towards food. It is not news that some people "love food," a kind of love that literally kills them, and other explanations are needed here, such as psychological traumas, drastic changes in life or personal characteristics such as shyness. Anyhow, temperance remains a cardinal virtue given the fact that people's love can be dangerous. Sports were highly appreciated by Plato (who was himself an athlete) as the means to maintain a healthy body and soul. I think Plato's recommendation remains valid in our days.

Another case Haybron repeatedly brings up is the case of competition for lucrative jobs. This competition arouses negative emotions such as envy, and a profound self-fulfilment cannot be achieved. Haybron claims that the problem here is that people's choices are made according to what seems to be "rational" instead of what is good for human beings. Here Haybron (2008, 234) borrows from psychologists the term "lay rationalism," which according to him is "the tendency to base decisions on 'rationalistic' attributes, such as economic values." Perhaps this concept works in psychology, but not in philosophy; I do not find any plausible relation between being "rational" and choosing lucrative options. For Aristotle, to choose something just because it is lucrative, is slavish. Instrumental reason could be the candidate in this lay rationalism, but further explanations need to be provided, and this is something that Haybron does not do. In the light of the concept of the narrative self, if someone chooses a profession only because it provides good money, a contingent and external good to practices, that person has failed in understanding what kinds of necessities the community has, how he can contribute to the common good, and

he does not know what his capacities are. These reasons might explain cases of mediocrity and lack of self-fulfilment in the working life.

Finally, Haybron (2008, 239–241) takes as a “social disaster” the high rate of divorces, family breakdown and loneliness. The emotions and actions that derive from these problems are indeed dangerous for people’s integrity: sadness, anger and self-destructive behaviours are examples of these situations. Haybron explains this disaster as a result of liberal optimism in matters of family life: people choose wrong partners and make economic mistakes when they are planning their lives together. However, Haybron’s explanation is problematic given the following questions: does his thesis mean that a high degree of freedom leads to choosing wrong partners? If this is true, who then has to choose them? Is it the task of parents or of an authority of the community to decide whom one has to marry? Haybron says nothing about this issue and only provides loose descriptions of islanders and Amish communities. Things do not become clearer when he explains his theory of contextualism (Haybron 2008, 227–230). In that theory he argues that there is a relation between living in contexts that constrain or guide people’s choices and a decrease of imprudence in matters of well-being. The question here is what thesis Haybron is trying to defend: is it the idea that people were better off when others decided for them whom they have to marry and the option of getting divorced was more restricted? This is hard to believe given the large history of inequality between men and women and the different functions marriage has had in different epochs.

My characterization of the spoilt child opens possibilities for other explanations as well. I am sure that some cases of divorce are justified. Other cases, however, can be explained as the result of emotional immaturity of the spouses in the relation. The spoilt child, who has the point of view of a king or a queen, does not take the standards of a family life as an authority. As the aesthete in Kierkegaard’s work, the spoilt child regards marriage and family life as a source of boredom, a burden, as something that restricts one’s possibilities. This attitude can provide neither self-fulfilment nor emotional flourishing within the practice. The intriguing question here is why these kinds of people get married or decide to live together in the first place. A possible answer is irony: to get married is just a caprice without taking seriously the responsibilities that are part of that life style; it is to say “yes” but on one’s own terms. Another possibility is that marriage becomes another way of “fleeing unto the neighbour.” In this regard, Nietzsche asks why a young person wants to

get married and have children: is it an “animal wish,” the necessity, isolation or internal discord? (*Thus spake Zarathustra*. XX. Child and marriage). I think the question Nietzsche asks is still relevant in liberal societies. I am sure that some people would be better off without the responsibilities of a family life, especially in the cases where a person has a strong commitment to other practices that demand time and effort. In these cases a family life would be a factor that prevents self-fulfilment and emotional flourishing instead of promoting them.

Here I conclude my exposition of the different problematics Haybron interestingly brings up. In this chapter I have shown how it is possible to explain emotional flourishing in relation to self-fulfilment and practices. The concept of narrative self that I have borrowed from MacIntyre’s ethics is central in this explanation. My intention has also been to provide an alternative explanation of systematic imprudence and individualism. Instead of saying that people choose wrong options because they live in the wrong environment, I have defended the position that wrong options are made by people who understand themselves in a way that is detrimental to their self-fulfilment.

Once a person understand herself not as a product of her choices, but as a part of a story that is told from different points of view, she understands the importance of different practices and opens her eyes to what has been good in her community. Through critical reflection she can choose the options that are important to her according to who she is. My statement is similar to that of Haybron’s, but the explanations are different.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Every concept is involved in a dynamic relation with other concepts; they influence each other and produce new possibilities of understanding different phenomena in a determined context or horizon. It is in this relation within a horizon where particular concepts acquire their sense and undergo transformations. Instead of “pure concepts” that have their meaning in themselves, independently of any relation, we have conceptual constellations in which every concept is supported by a network of meanings. Happiness as a concept has the same dynamic: it has its sense and transformations within conceptual constellations. In my reflection on the concept of happiness I have taken as a point of reference the concept of unhappiness. In this respect, happiness acquires part of its meaning and intention through its contrary: the question of happiness turns into a question of unhappiness. In our horizon we have different interpretations of happiness that are in conflict with each other, and consequently there are also concepts of unhappiness in conflict with each other.

Haybron’s thesis of systematic imprudence is relevant for this subject. I think Haybron’s concept provides the opportunity to reflect on how unhappiness appears in our Western societies. In his approach, unhappiness takes the form of stress, anxiety, depression and the prevalence of negative emotions when people live in an option-rich environment. Haybron successfully depicts the busy life of liberal societies, the neurotic competition for money and prestige, and the superfluous character of consumerism. His description also opens the opportunity to make distinctions between different concepts of unhappiness. Unhappiness in Haybron’s account is not related to vicious activity, foolishness or weakness of will as it has been thought in classical philosophical discussions, but instead to an environment that in itself makes human flourishing difficult.

One of the tasks of a theory of the good life or well-being is to explain how unhappiness could be avoided taking into account the exigencies imposed by the context. Haybron takes this challenge and develops a theory of well-being based on the self. He incorporates his concept of psychological happiness into his theory of self-fulfilment, and transforms happiness into the fulfilment of the emotional self. Haybron does this movement because a concept of psychological happiness is useless if it does not have any relation with the notion of normativity. There is no point in discussing the concepts of psychic affirmation and emotional flourishing in a philosophical account if it does not try to respond to the

question about what is good for people and why they should do certain things instead of others in a specific scenario. I have argued in this work, however, that Haybron's attempt to respond to the challenges of the thesis of systematic imprudence fails.

The relevance of Haybron's writings in discussions about happiness is based on his analysis and criticism of the theories of life-desire satisfaction and hedonism. I think Haybron's work as a critic of other theories is remarkable, but philosophy cannot limit itself to the level of criticism; it has to open possibilities for solutions to specific problematics. In my work I have examined the supposed solutions Haybron offers in his book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* and I have left aside his complex and extensive discussion of the theories mentioned above.

In chapter one I have explained Haybron's attempt to develop a theory of self-fulfilment in which happiness plays a central role. In order to be better off a person should choose those options that promote his self-fulfilment, specifically the fulfilment of the emotional self which is constituted by emotions and moods that are "central" and "profound." According to Haybron, his theory is relevant because in most of the philosophical approaches to well-being and the good life there is more interest in moral and prudential topics in relation to rationality, but psychological states have been regarded as a secondary concern. He also declares that the most important opponent of his theory is Aristotelianism. Aristotelian eudaimonia (which he understands as a theory of well-being) erroneously puts the emphasis on reason and facts about human nature as species. Well-being is thought of in terms of good performance aiming at perfection; people have well-being if they are capable of living up to an ideal life. Nevertheless, Haybron's theory of self-fulfilment is a version of Aristotle's ethics. Self-fulfilment is the fulfilment of one's nature as an individual and not as a member of the species.

I started my analysis of the theory of self-fulfilment by asking how it helps to avoid systematic imprudence. I supposed as hypothesis that people avoid systematic imprudence by following the inclinations and dispositions of their emotional self; people's lives are better when they live according to who they are fulfilling the different dimensions of their self (especially the emotional self), and this fulfilment in a "pronounced" way is what Haybron calls flourishing.

In my analysis, I have pointed out that Haybron does not explain how such a theory works as an objective standard in choosing options, and I have shown that the theory itself

presents serious internal problems. Haybron neither proves convincingly that the self is an objective value nor that happiness is good in itself independently of what people think of their lives. The notion of “objective” that Haybron uses is vague, and I think it is inapplicable to mental states whose interpretation and relevance depends on subjective experiences. In my interpretation an objective standard is a kind of good that does not depend on individual idiosyncrasies or psychological make-up. In the framework of the narrative self, those objective standards are the goods internal to practices that are fulfilled through people’s roles. These internal goods are constitutive parts of the self, and not accepting them is in some degree not accepting a part of oneself.

Regarding the topic of normativity, I have argued that happiness as the fulfilment of the emotional self cannot be taken as a normative concept because those mental states and dispositions cannot reflect the quality of the options a person has, and it is irrelevant whether those mental states are “central” and “profound” or not. The happiness of the couch potato is an example that makes the idea of psychic affirmation as a normative concept problematic, and Haybron’s introduction of the concept of “authentic happiness” as the solution to this problem is unsatisfactory.

I have provided some arguments that suggest that Haybron’s theory falls into perfectionism once he introduces his confusing notion of authentic happiness. This authentic happiness surprisingly appears when the concept of self-fulfilment is connected with rich and complex social activities. I think this is a strange case of a concept that undergoes literally a transfiguration, but without offering a real solution. If happiness is understood as a psychological state (pleasure, satisfaction or positive emotions), it is irrelevant to speak of authenticity or inauthenticity. I think those psychological states do not have any increase or decrease of quality whether they are directed to rich and complex activities or not. Pleasure feels like pleasure and positive emotions feel like positive emotions regardless of whether they are directed to some objects instead of others. What we could take as authentic or inauthentic is the way people live, but not what they feel. A person who does not want to make his own choices, who renounces to develop his practical reason and lets others to be in charge of his life is a case of an inauthentic person, but the pleasure and positive emotions he experiences as a result of this way of living are not considered authentic or inauthentic.

When the moment of explaining happiness and unhappiness in our context came, Haybron introduced a new theory that I regard as philosophically superficial; contextualism is a blend of anthropological and psychological theories without unity and coherence. By using “evidence” from anthropological and psychological research Haybron tries to give his approach a “scientific” dimension. This procedure also reflects his conception of philosophy. He understands philosophy as something “continuous with science,” and consequently philosophers should take scientific discoveries seriously in the construction of their arguments. For this reason he endorses a “naturalist” and “empirical” approach to happiness and well-being: “the nature of things is taken to be fundamentally an empirical question, and values are conceived in a broadly Humean fashion, as somehow a product of human sensibilities” (Haybron 2008, 55). The result of this methodology is, as I have tried to show in chapter two, a lack of sound arguments. I have argued that Haybron never develops a philosophical interpretation of those alleged “facts” of human nature that science supposedly has discovered. He just connects three theories by using the figure of the hunter-gatherer hero, thus making some kind of theoretical collage. This is something unacceptable. Another problem I detected in contextualism is that Haybron manipulates the theories of evolutionary psychology, dual process psychology and situationism according to his own goals. If it is possible to make a connection between philosophy and science in matters of happiness and well-being, I think Haybron’s account is not an example of it.

A general problem I find in the book *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* is that Haybron uses excessively his rhetorical skills. This way of using language obscures the few arguments he provides, and his concepts are rather ambiguous. For example, in his discussion on Aristotelianism, he just designs examples that resemble the conception of virtuous activity and then he refutes them by offering counterexamples. In this procedure Haybron never explains clearly what the concepts of virtue and eudaimonia mean and he never makes distinctions between Aristotelianism and Aristotle’s ethics. I have shown that as a result of these mistakes Haybron commits the fallacy of straw-man and he is wrong when he calls his own theory of self-fulfilment eudaimonistic.

The general conclusion of my analysis of Haybron’s proposal is that it is unclear as a whole. We have two theories without a real connection, and the solution contextualism provides to the challenges presented by the systematic imprudence thesis is trivial. In addition, Haybron commits the mistake of refuting his own theory of self-fulfilment when he introduces, for an inexplicable reason, the thesis of affective ignorance. This conclusion

shows that Haybron's theories do not meet the requirements expected from a philosophical reflexion: clarity, coherency and relevance. Haybron's project is ambitious and embraces many topics, and this is one of the reasons for its failure. He discusses and uses many complex concepts in a superficial way, and consequently his explanations suffer from inadequacies, as I have shown in chapter one and two of this thesis.

However, I think Haybron's virtue is to bring up different issues in an inspiring way. The way he writes is captivating, and the result of this magnetic force has been my attempt to give a different interpretation of systematic imprudence and to find a plausible answer to the question of how we can prevent such an undesirable state that we call unhappiness. In this thesis I have defended the idea that in liberal societies, in which people are regarded as independent practical reasoners, it is possible to explain emotional flourishing in relation to the fulfilment of people's roles within different practices. This fulfilment entails the development of practical reason and emotional dispositions that are directed towards internal goods of different practices. In the fulfilment of their roles, people are disposed to respond emotionally in the right way toward the right persons or objects according to the standards of the practices. This way of responding emotionally is what I have called emotional flourishing, which is a version of the cultivation of emotions in Aristotelian accounts. This thesis has been the answer to the general question I have formulated in the introduction of this work: *how is it possible to explain psychic flourishing in a liberal society following Haybron's intuitions suggested in the theories of self-fulfilment and contextualism?*

The question is relevant because it permits an analysis of the theories of self-fulfilment and contextualism. My analysis has given an answer to the questions why those theories are incompatible with each other and why they fail in providing a possible solution to the problems systematic imprudence represents to liberal societies. The question has also impelled to find a solution to the apparent conflict between self-fulfilment and the roles a person embodies within social practices.

My thesis has connected the concepts of self-fulfilment, social practices and emotional flourishing. In order to make this connection I have introduced the concept of narrative self. The self in this interpretation is constituted by the actor/author, the story, and the setting. With this concept of self it has been possible to join personhood and social activities as parts of a unity, and at the same time, I have avoided the reduction of the self

to a psychological phenomenon. I have also introduced a cognitive concept of emotion to the concept of narrative self, which entails appraisals or judgments of situations that are meaningful to the person from her point of view. This definition does not endorse a harsh division between affectivity and cognitive states, and it makes it possible to integrate emotions into the story of the narrative self: the specific objects toward which emotions are directed depend on personal values. In this way I have avoided a concept of emotion as a bodily reaction that comes from the activation of cerebral areas or from the interoceptive system when it detects bodily changes. I think that to define emotions as bodily changes resulting from brain activity or as mental representations of bodily changes is to impoverish the concept of emotion, and it makes it hard to explain convincingly the role emotions play in the construction of person's world view. In chapter three I have provided some arguments against these theories; more in this regard needs to be said, but that is a topic for another research. In my analysis I have accepted that there may be some automatic emotional reactions; however, I believe they are not relevant in moral discussions, and perhaps they are not part of a strict concept of emotion (they may be "proto-emotions"). I have left aside questions about pleasure/pain, moods and sentiments in my analysis, because I believe they are different topics although they are in close relation to the emotions.

With the concept of narrative self and cognitive emotion I have tried to explain how Haybron's intuitions are actually correct; the problem is that they are not connected in his work. In my interpretation, self-fulfilment is not independent of the roles a person embodies, and these roles are part of social practices. Furthermore, like Haybron I believe that emotional flourishing is in close relation to self-fulfilment, and my work has been in part to determine the place of this flourishing in a theory of good life. In so far as people take their roles in different practices as something valuable, they develop emotional dispositions that enable them to respond according to the success or failure in achieving the goods internal to practices. Emotional responses are intelligible to other people and to the person himself thanks to the story in which they are embedded. This topic has been central in chapter four.

In this way of understanding emotional flourishing, emotions and reason work together: not to respond emotionally in the right way toward the right objects may be a signal of foolishness, as Aristotle affirms. In this case, a person is unable to take care of things that are valuable due to the lack of practical knowledge of what is good for him according to

the roles he embodies. In the contrary case, to respond emotionally as a practical reasoner should do, is to be capable of appraising things that are worth achieving in the pursuit of good life, not only for the individual but for the other participants of the community as well. I do not share Haybron's idea that psychic flourishing presupposes an emotional nature whose inclinations are independent of what people think they have to do or take care of, as it is shown in Haybron's representative example of Henry and his model trains.

Concerning systematic imprudence, in my interpretation it is precisely the incapacity to choose the options that promote the good life in the framework of the narrative self. Instead of choosing the goods internal to practices, the person chooses options according to his transient desires and identifies the good life with satisfaction. Since the person chooses wrongly from the point of view of the concept of narrative self, he cannot flourish emotionally. The result is an emotional disposition characteristic of the "spoilt child." The spoilt child fails in responding emotionally to goods internal to practices the way that he should, and consequently he falls prey to boredom, to burst of joy and sadness toward worthless things or external goods to practices, and he is unable to listen to emotions such as guilt and shame. In this latter case, the spoilt child does not identify those emotions as signals of his failure in fulfilling his roles but as a result of the annoying exigencies of other people. The spoilt child understands himself as detached from any role: he is characterised by freedom to choose and what is important to him is to actualise that freedom. In this work I have not developed a detailed categorization of emotions and their formal objects (what Lazarus calls "core relational themes"); the topic is relevant, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis. I have also excluded the analysis of important emotions such as compassion and disgust, which are central topics in moral psychology today. My intention has been to focus on the definition of the concepts I have explored in chapter three and four and their relations.

In this work I have viewed the good life as equivalent to eudaimonia. This use of the concept is a consequence of my defence of an Aristotelian vision. In chapter one I have suggested that "well-being" may not be a good translation of eudaimonia, and I add here that happiness is not necessarily a psychological state as Haybron claims. Thus, in order to maintain my presentation clear and make conceptual distinctions, I have spoken of good life and emotional flourishing. As for Haybron's approach, he supposes that happiness is a psychological state because this is the way people speak around him: happiness is an emotional state in the vernacular English. However, the discussion about how we should

use the vernacular remains an open question, because concepts not only depend on how people speak in everyday life, but also on what is good idea to stipulate, at least in philosophical discussions. Perhaps appealing to the vernacular as a form of justifying concepts is a case of “jumping on the bandwagon,” and I found this procedure anti-philosophical.

The way I have defended my thesis has been by arguments following what I think is expected from a philosophical reflection: clarity, coherence, and conceptual distinctions. I acknowledge that perfection on this matter is never attained, but I have tried to meet those requirements to the extent of my possibilities. This thesis is the reflection of my formation as a student of philosophy, and the concepts I have discussed here are those that have left a mark on me. Aristotelianism, specifically Aristotle’s and MacIntyre’s approaches have provided me a basis for a critical reading of theories of happiness and psychological states. My work has been a defence of an Aristotelian interpretation of good life, and a reply to Haybron’s problematic reading of this important tradition.

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