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A psychological-enriched version of Tiberius' value-fulfillment theory of wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

This paper integrates Valerie Tiberius' theory of wellbeing as value-fulfillment with a range of complementary theories from psychology, especially the psychology of the self. These theories include self-discrepancy theory, self-determination theory, self-verification theory, theories of multiple selves from developmental psychology, and the notion of contingencies of self-worth. Tiberius argues that wellbeing consists in the fulfillment of "appropriate" values, which are those values that are "emotionally, motivationally, and cognitively suited to a person." The psychological theories and empirical results integrated herein provide a great deal of depth regarding how emotions, motivations, and cognitions fit together to guide processes of goal achievements and self-actualization, which is how psychologists speak of value-fulfillment. This depth allows Tiberius' theory to respond more forcefully to a range of critiques, and also to explain the *process* by which appropriate values are identified, refined, and affirmed.

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1. Introduction

Tiberius (2018) outlines a compelling theory of wellbeing as *value-fulfillment*. She argues that (p. 13): "Wellbeing consists in the fulfilment of an appropriate set of values over a lifetime . . . we can say that wellbeing is served by the successful pursuit of a relatively stable set of values that are emotionally, motivationally, and cognitively suited to the person." Tiberius goes on to define "appropriate" values more precisely (p. 41): "appropriate values are (1) suited to our desires and emotions, (2) reflectively endorsed, and (3) capable of being fulfilled together over time . . . appropriate values are objects of relatively sustained and integrated emotions, desires, and judgements." These definitions invoke a large number of psychological concepts, notably emotion, motivation, cognition, desire, and judgment. Yet several relevant corpuses of psychological literature are missing from her analysis, despite much of that literature being written

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with wellbeing in mind. This is understandable. There is a lot of psychological literature out there and scholars can't be expected to be across all of it. Tiberius also does integrate quite a lot of psychological literature, especially on emotion and empathy. Furthermore, Tiberius is a philosopher and her audience is predominantly philosophers and people who want to offer advice or help to others. Nonetheless, her theory can be deepened by integrating ideas and findings from psychological science more thoroughly, especially the psychological science of the "self." That is the purpose of this paper.

There are at least three benefits to integrating perspectives from psychology. First, insights from psychology can sometimes answer or at least illuminate challenges facing a particular philosophical theory. This is illustrated below with reference to Tiberius' concern regarding the problem of self-sacrifice. Second, it helps to map philosophical theories onto real life cases, and to ground philosophical reflection in such cases rather than hypothetical intuition pumps so unrealistic as to be actually impossible, like Rawls (1971, p. 432) authentic blade-of-grass counter. And third, it can sometimes provide the psychological mechanism underlying a process that has only be described in outline by a philosophical theory. For example, this paper illustrates, using psychological insights, how values come to integrate emotions, motivations, and cognitions.

While it is outside the scope of this paper to defend Tiberius' account of wellbeing against criticisms and alternate perspectives, the paper does aim to demonstrate one of the principle merits of Tiberius' theory, namely its psychological realism (Besser-Jones, 2014). Tiberius' theory, along with similar "values-based" theories of wellbeing, such as Raibley's (2013) "agential flourishing" account, is exceptionally compatible with and can even make sense of much of the literature in psychological science. While some philosophical accounts of wellbeing are explicitly idealistic (e.g., Hausman, 2015), others want to lay claim to psychological realism. This is typically because a theory of human wellbeing should, it is argued, be appropriate to the kind of organism we are and therefore implementable by humans in their everyday lives (see Raibley, 2013, p. 204). Badhwar (2014, p. 8), for example, in elaborating her Aristotelian theory of wellbeing, appeals to the need for objective values but insists that these are "dependent on human needs, interests, reasons, and emotions." She further argues that these objective values should be "compatible with true metaphysical and *empirical* beliefs and theories" (emphasis added). This paper functions as an illustration of the sort of interdisciplinary work that can and should be done to evince the compatibility of philosophical theories with the facts on the ground regarding human psychology. Going forward, theories that claim such compatibility should explain how they are superior to Tiberius' theory in this regard.

The analysis proceeds in the following stages. The paper begins by discussing psychological literatures on goal setting and achievement in the context of psychological wellbeing. These describe a process that philosophers sometimes call "self-actualisation" that is guided by affective and social feedback. Introspection upon that feedback leads to the calibration of goals over time to suit the individual in question and promote their psychological wellbeing. These forms of feedback are thus integral to Tiberius' notion of "standards" by which individuals assess whether they are fulfilling their values. Taken as a whole, the psychological literatures on self-actualization provide a psychologically rich account of how values can "integrate emotions, desires, and judgements" and what their "reflective endorsement" could realistically involve. Psychological perspectives on self-actualization also provides some insights into how subjective values can become more "reasonable" over time through introspection and consequent recalibration. These insights can be used to extend Tiberius' analysis of whether value-fulfillment should be assessed moment-by-moment or from a "top down", "whole of life" point of view. They can also enrich Tiberius' discussion of what it means for values to be incompatible, and how individuals sort through such incompatibilities. The analysis then moves to an extended discussion of how self-determination theory's (SDT) account of motivation can strengthen Tiberius' response to the problem of self-sacrifice. Finally, Sheldon and Elliot's (1999) model of self-concordance and the literature on "contingencies of self-worth" give further texture to the notion of "inappropriate" values and validate Tiberius' implicit appeal to the importance of goodness of fit between values and an individual's personality and dispositions.

A brief clarifying note before proceeding: I will use the phrase "psychological wellbeing" to refer to accounts of wellbeing that preponderate in psychological science (Martela & Sheldon, 2019), notably the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017), the inverse of depression, anxiety, and other psychopathologies (Marsh et al., 2020), and "subjective wellbeing", which consists of a balance of positive over negative affect, life satisfaction, and feelings of meaning and purpose (Stone & Mackie, 2013). I use the term "wellbeing" on its own (that is, without prefixes) in the manner of philosophers to refer to the prudential good.

2. Psychological theories of self-actualization

"Values" enter into many psychological theories through the notion of goal pursuits (Emmons, 1986, 1999). Some of these theories are concerned with innate drives and other aspects of behavior and the motivational system that do not meaningfully engage with reasoning, reflection, or valuation, which

makes them an ungainly fit with Tiberius' theory. As such, the analysis here is restricted to a subset of goal-pursuit theories from psychology that *do* involve reflection and rationalization, bear in some way on value-fulfillment , and explicitly discuss wellbeing in some way. For example, Higgins (1987) self-discrepancy theory posits that individuals aim to harmonize, over the life course, their actual self, their ideal self, and their ought self. Your actual self is who you are right now, including some dispositions, talents, and biological characteristics that are to some extent innate. Your ideal self is who you would like to be. And your ought self is who you feel a responsibility to be. Higgins posited, and empirical evidence suggests, that discrepancies between the actual and ideal selves trigger depressive feelings while discrepancies between the actual and ought selves trigger anxiety (Silvia & Eddington, 2012). Individuals reflect on and refine their understanding of their actual self and their conceptualization of their ideal and ought selves over time through introspection on feedback.

Two types of feedback are especially relevant for Tiberius' theory of wellbeing. The first is affective feedback: emotional responses that provide us with information, especially following introspection. For example, unexpected anxiety after some act might stimulate us to ponder whether we actually hold an intuitive normative compunction against that act and should thus articulate that intuition for inclusion in our ought self. The second important kind of feedback is social – studies in self-verification theory (Swann, 2011) find that people seek to confirm their understanding of themselves in the comments of others. In contrast, narcissists don't seek confirmation but instead manipulate others in order to convince them that they, the narcissist, are a certain way (so-called "self-solicitation").

These types of feedback provide some mechanistic weight to Tiberius' discussion (p. 74) of "standards" by which individuals can judge whether they are successfully pursuing values and consider whether they should detach from or double down on those values. Tiberius writes:

> When we find we are falling short of fulfilling one of our values, we have several options. We can admit failure and abandon the value entirely. We can reject the standards we have taken to count as success and replace them with other standards. Or, we can modify the standards that we have had.

Theories of affect and motivation from psychology suggest that particular affective signals typically incline agents to one or other of the resolutions that Tiberius outlines. Self-discrepancy theory would suggest that anxiety inclines us to "abandon" a behavior because it goes against our ethical values. In contrast, depression, assuming that it arises out of a discrepancy between the actual and ideal selves, communicates to us that the ideal self really is valued. As such, it may provoke us to strengthen our resolve and *try*

harder, an option Tiberius' does not list but that seems reasonable. If we continuously fail to achieve such values, reflection on the attendant depression might help us to discover that our ideal self is incompatible with some aspect of the actual self. For example, we may desire to play basketball professionally but we are just too short. Given that the ideal is not the problem but rather the constraints of the actual self, the individual here might just adjust their value slightly. They might, for example, abstract from basketball to "sports" more broadly, and swap to a different sport for which their physique is better suited. This connects to an earlier part of Tiberius' discussion where she talks about how we might relate reflectively to inter-subjective or objective standards (pg. 71):

> There are standards of true excellence in sports that are inter-subjective—the standard set by an Olympic athlete, for example. Our personal standards may be lower . . . because they take into account a reasonable assessment of our ability and circumstances . . . or they may be higher than inter-subjective standards of success because we are willing to demand more of ourselves than we do of others.

What the psychological perspective offers here is some account of how varieties of affective signals incline us to assess whether we should adjust our standard or adjust our *effort*. Self-discrepancy theory also gives a slightly deeper account of the *self-reflexive* aspects of reflection on our values. We would presumably be contemptuous of ourselves for failing to meet an achievable ideal self. Certainly more contemptuous than if we set an ideal self that, upon reflection, turns out simply to be incompatible with our actual self. In the latter case, we are more likely to take Tiberius' third option: "modify the standards we have had." The basketballer might define value-fulfillment in terms of securing a college sports scholarship or playing in the highest grade of their city, rather than playing in the (W)NBA.

A further set of affective signals is provided by self-determination theory (SDT, Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT posits a spectrum of motivation running from intrinsic at one end to extrinsic at the other (see Figure 1). Intrinsically motivated activities are undertaken for their own sake. They are commonly though not always innate – some of us are simply predisposed toward music, for example. Activities so motivated are "self-*determined*." At the other end of the spectrum, activities undertaken due

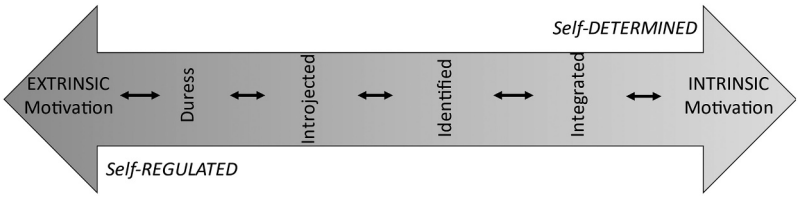

Figure 1. Self-determination Theory's spectrum of motivation.

to duress are "controlled" and rely on extrinsic motivation. Such activities are performed not for reasons inherent to the activity but to avoid the duress. Similarly, "introjected" motivation involves "self-*regulation*", which uses willpower to prosecute some activity in order to acquire contingent rewards. A common example is performing boring tasks in order to secure parental approval. Moving a step closer to intrinsic motivation is "identification", this is where the individual comes to value a behavior but does not (yet) possess intrinsic motivation for it. For example, many budding social scientists discover that they need to be quite competent at statistics in order to engage in scientific enterprise. They consequently identify with statistical competence, but motivation to study statistics may be hard to come by initially as what they are interested in is social phenomena, not mathematics. As their competence grows, math becomes easier and, crucially, they are able to apply their new statistical skills to social science endeavors. Their motivation for statistics will consequently become "integrated." This is where behaviors are motivationally associated with or linked to other intrinsically-motivated behaviors. In this case, statistics becomes linked to social science. This integration makes motivation easier. The process of moving from relatively extrinsic to relatively intrinsic forms of motivation is known as "internalisation." This is because intrinsically motivated behaviors are more "internal" to the self. I will return to these notions below in a discussion of the problem of self-sacrifice.

SDT's motivational spectrum can help to interpret affective signals and bridge various parts of Tiberius' theory. Appropriate values are defined as emotionally, motivationally, and cognitively suited to a person. Introjected motivations are, broadly speaking, unsuitable to a person because they are exhausting to sustain and aim at values that are contingent to the activity in question. The emotional evidence of this unsuitability is thus boredom or more generalized lack of vitality associated with introjected activities. Identified behaviors require some degree of willpower to enact and can therefore also be tiring. But the authentic valuation that undergirds identified behaviors means that their successful pursuit and especially their integration in the long term will be accompanied by positive affect, notably a sense of accomplishment that does not attend introjected behaviors. Integrated and intrinsically motivated behaviors are associated with vitality and a sense of self-expression. They directly nourish basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which is empirically associated with subjective wellbeing and the absence of psychopathology (Chen et al., 2015; Church et al., 2013; Sheldon et al., 2009, 2004b). Intrinsically motivated behaviors are also more likely to trigger flow states (Csikszentmihaly, 1992). This is a feeling of being "in the zone" or "lost in the moment." Flow is profoundly pleasurable, but individuals in flow states

do not notice this pleasure in the moment as doing so would disrupt their flow state. Values associated with intrinsic motivation thus seem highly "appropriate" because they integrate emotion and motivation.

3. Social feedback

Besides affective feedback, we also rely on social and social-environmental feedback to develop our standards and assess whether we are fulfilling our values. These forms of feedback are especially relevant for the "inter-subjective standards" Tiberius discusses, such as those of Olympic athletes. Broadly speaking, there are many values where an assessment of their fulfillment depends on information that goes beyond the individual's own emotions or rationalizations. As Tiberius neatly points out, (p. 72): "The fact that our values often impose objective standards means that you are not likely to be an infallible source of information about how your life is going." Indeed, there is an abundance of evidence that we are prone to self-enhancement in our opinion of ourselves, so it makes sense to cross-check those assessments (Sedikides et al., 2005). The opinions of others becomes useful to us in this regard. This is an example of where psychological science can flesh out a mechanism only described in outline by philosophical theories.

"Social self-analysis" in psychology is concerned with how people evaluate themselves relative to others (Alicke et al., 2012). Social appraisals have been found to exert more influence on self-appraisal when the perceiver is considered by the perceived to be relevant to their self-concept, an in-group member, desirable, valued, or otherwise important (Wallace & Tice, 2012). Neuroscience studies align with this result. They show that when an appraiser is from a group you care about, their appraisals of you will activate the self-assessment part of your brain. This is not the case when they are from a group you don't care about or a random stranger (Devos et al., 2012, p. 158).

These findings are not so relevant in cases where there is near unanimous agreement over intersubjective standards, as in athletics. Regardless of your opinion of athletes and athletic associations, if you value running fast you will need to run faster than other athletes. However, these findings are important to understanding standards of value-fulfillment when those standards are *contested*. Consider someone whose value is to be good at art. What determines whether art is good is notoriously amorphous and fickle. Here it becomes important whether you care about some group's taste in art. An early impressionist, for example, may have cared little for whether a classical artist or school commended their work, but may equally have cared deeply about the opinions of other impressionists. The impressionist is *motivated* to become a good impressionist as judged by other

impressionists. When classical artists disparage their work they *cognitively* pay these social appraisals no heed, whereas they do put stock in the appraisals of other impressionists. Here we see the integration of motivation and cognition. If the painter found that they actually cared a great deal about the assessment of the classical painters and not much for those of the impressionists, then this would suggest that their value of becoming a good impressionist was inappropriate. Becoming a good classical painter would more coherently integrate their emotions, motivations, and cognitions.

"Self-verification" theory provides additional complementary insights (Swann, 2011). It conjectures that self-views guide social interaction and, provided they are stable, make an individual's behavior more predictable to others. This predictability stabilizes the way others respond to the individual, which makes it easier to verify one's self-view through social interaction. Stable self-views thus encourage the emergence of a stable, coherent, social environment and vice versa, leading to a virtuous cycle wherein both self-concept and social environment become clearer and better fitted to each other. This would seem to corroborate Tiberius' proposition that we judge the extent to which we have fulfilled some values by reference to standards set inter-subjectively. Another important, empirically-validated hypothesis that emerges from self-verification theory is that people prefer social appraisals that align with their self-view even when these appraisals are negative (Swann & Buhrmester, 2012). People move away from both incorrect and correct-but-negative appraisals over time toward groups that are both affirming and accurate in their social appraisals. So it seems that we seek to bring our values, our assessment of whether we have fulfilled those values, the values of our peers, and the assessments of our peers of our value-fulfillment, into alignment. This suggests that social standards are a channel that connects motivation and cognition in the context of appropriate values. We check with our peers whether our *understanding* of ourselves and our sense that we have fulfilled certain values aligns with how they understand us.

A final dimension of social feedback to discuss is the social emotions of guilt, shame, and (low) self-esteem. These link the motivational and cognitive aspects of social feedback discussed above to affective feedback. Shame, guilt, and low self-esteem are associated with moral trespass (Haidt, 2012). Guilt emerges when we transgress our own moral principles. We can thus tie it into the discussion of negative affective signals associated with developing the ought self discussed above. Shame and low self-esteem, however, tend to emerge when we transgress the expectations of valued others, i.e., our social groups. Leary (2012)has argued that self-esteem is a kind of sociometer that provides you with an affective gauge of how attractive you are as a partner or comrade. These emotions and their physical cues, like

blushing with embarrassment, help us to track social cues, show contrition and, ultimately, to learn, obey, operate in, and act to change normative codes within normative communities (Leary & Baumeister 2012). We can see in these social emotions a neat manifestation of Tiberius' postulate that appropriate values integrate emotions, motivations, and cognitions. Appropriate values need to at least be identified. Introjected values, which we may endorse for social reasons, are exhaustive to maintain, so we will eventually detach from them. This may cause shame, but not guilt (because we don't identify with the introjected values). Following introspection, we will try to swap to different values and a different group. These new peers will endorse our values and consequently our sense of self, leading to self-esteem. That positive affect will in turn encourage us to remain with those values and that group.

4. The psychological process of living a value-fulfilled life

Much of the psychological science of the self emphasizes these sorts of processes, namely a tendency toward integration of emotions, motivations, and cognitions on the basis of iterative engagement with the environment and introspection on consequent social and affective signals. One of the richest articulations is given by Morf and Mischel (2012, p. 22):

> The self and its directly relevant processes (e.g., self-evaluation, self-regulation and self-construction) may be conceptualised fruitfully as a coherent organisation of mental-emotional representations, interacting within a system of constraints that characterise a person (or a type) distinctively . . . but it is also a motivated, proactive knowing, thinking, feeling action system that is constructed, enacted, enhanced and maintained primarily in interpersonal contexts within which it develops. Through this organised system the person experiences the social, interpersonal world and interacts with it in characteristic self-guided ways, in a process of continuous self-construction and adaptation.

So Tiberius' theory seems quite compatible with perspectives from psychological science. However, a useful extension to her theory would be to emphasize the *iterative* way in which "appropriate" values are developed and shaped. Iteration is implicit in Tiberius' account, but under-explicated. Values that are emotionally, motivationally, and cognitively integrated do not come about suddenly or through mere reflection (indeed reflective endorsement seems to come quite late in the process). As Morf & Mischel note, the "self" of which values constitute a large and important part is developed over time "in a process of continuous self-construction and adaptation." The discussion above, especially regarding self-discrepancy theory, suggests that values are calibrated for appropriateness over time through a process of identification, affirmation, feedback, and introspection

upon that feedback. This process of self-actualization resolves compartmentalization and dissonance and gradually brings about something approximating a unified self with a coherent set of values (Fabian, 2020).

This notion of an iterative process of self-construction provides the psychological mechanisms underlying how individuals work past the pursuit of mismatched values. Tiberius writes (p. 84): "value-fulfilled lives for most of us embrace some tension between values. Tension comes in degrees, however, and when tension veers into incompatibility, it is not conducive to wellbeing." Wellbeing is undermined in Tiberius' account because pursuing two incompatible values simultaneously compromises the pursuit of each one individually. Tiberius' gives the example of someone who values being both an astronaut and a stay-at-home parent. Pursuing one of these goals necessarily undermines the other. The empirical evidence suggests that such incompatibility also undermines psychological wellbeing. Such incompatible values tend to result in compartmentalization and dissonance, which are hallmarks of psychopathology and are correlated with depression and anxiety (McGregor, 2004). Self-discrepancy theory can make sense of some of these cases, namely those where the ought and ideal selves are in conflict. Consider astronaut as an ideal self and stay-at-home parent as an ought self. Being an astronaut will cause anxiety due to discrepancy with the ought self. Being a parent will cause depression due to discrepancy with the ideal self. Something has to give.

By what process would the individual work through such an incompatibility? Tiberius provides (p. 85) an excellent discussion of how people can *reason* their way through conflicting values. She gives the real-life example of John Gustave-Wrathall, who experienced a tension between his homosexuality and evangelical beliefs. He resolved this by forming a community for LGBT Mormons. Tiberius writes (p. 85) that John,

> . . . through the LGBT community and his own writing, found a way to interpret the Church's rejection of him that does not undermine his own sense of worth. Instead of thinking that to honour the value of his faith he must accept everything the Mormon Church says, he takes the Church to be in need of reform.

This is a good analysis, but it paints the resolution of incompatible values as a kind of logic puzzle. On Tiberius' theory, this cannot be the whole story, but the rest of the story is underdeveloped in her analysis. Why didn't John simply abandon his faith? That would be a logically sound resolution to his conundrum. There must be *emotional* and *motivational* foundations for his valuation of Mormonism such that he put in the *cognitive* work to iterate his way to a compromise solution. Relatedly, one can imagine some incompatibilities that don't require laborious reasoning to resolve. Many young athletes stepping on to the professional track must choose between two sports they are equally good at. Both Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal

famously had to choose between tennis and soccer around the age of 10. Perhaps they reasoned their way through this decision, or perhaps they opted for whichever sport they *enjoyed* marginally more. This may have not been immediately obvious – they needed to experiment – which is why they stuck with two sports until the cusp of adolescence. The point here is that *affective feedback guides reasoning*. Perhaps why John did not abandon his faith was because he had a strong affective and motivational sense that Mormonism (and homosexuality) was something he wanted to do. His working his way through to a solution was likely a *process* of testing different mixes of faith and homosexuality in his life, not just as values but as behaviors, until he found something that worked. Building a community of LGBT Mormons is critical here because it ensures positive social feedback associated with Mormonism that he would not get from a more traditional church.

The iterative process of identification, affirmation, feedback, and introspection discussed earlier is prominent in many psychological accounts of how incompatible "values" are resolved. First, psychological science emphasizes the existence of "multiple selves" that we must harmonize as our personality develops (Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2012). Adolescence is punctuated by a growing awareness of these multiple selves and "a dramatic rise in the detection of contradictory self-attributes that lead to conflict and confusion" (Harter, 2012). Adolescents consequently engage in individuation, which is part self-discovery through introspection and part self-creation through the affirmation of desired character traits (Higgins, 1991). The most common way of integrating these multiple selves is to determine which self-concept is most appropriate for what context. Showers and Zeigler-Hill (2012) offer the example of a "superdad" who is a nurturing father at home but a hard-arsed executive at the office. The superdad will need reasoning to determine whether to engage his nurturing persona or his more cutthroat persona, but this reasoning will respond to affective and social feedback. His children might not take kindly to an executive style of household management, for example. Their distress would communicate to him that he is failing to fulfil his superdad value and provoke behavior change.

Psychological theories of "evaluative compartmentalisation" and "evaluative integration" make similar points (Showers, 1992a, 1992b, 2002). Evaluative compartmentalization sees positive and negative beliefs about the self separated into distinct constructs, with each one containing primarily positive or negative items. For example, a weightlifter might have two self-concepts organized around their time at the gym and their interpersonal behavior. The former contains mostly positive self-concepts like strong and hard-working. The latter contains mostly negative self-concepts like moody and one-

dimensional. Evaluative integration produces self-concepts that mix such positive and negative categories together so that the negative concepts are associated with their positive correlates. The weightlifter is boring because they work hard at the gym and don't have much time left for culture and socialization. They are moody because their emotional state depends substantially on the quality of their most recent training session, but their emotional involvement in training is also what makes them high-achieving. What we are seeing here is reasoning applied to make cognitive sense of motivations and emotions.

The above analysis is relevant not only to Tiberius' theory of wellbeing, but also Raibley's (2013) closely related "agential flourishing" account. Like Tiberius', Raibley's theory also locates prudential value in the fulfillment of one's values, and places caveats around the sort of values that are "appropriate." For Raibley (p. 207), one must be "stably disposed" toward these values, they must be "coherent and jointly realisable over time", and they must be "responsive to evidence", by which he means that they "emerge and evolve in response to information about both the external world and the agent's own affective nature." The psychological perspectives outlined above detail the process by which these conditions come to be realized. On the basis of introspection on affective and social feedback, including affective feedback associated with motivation, individuals calibrate their goals over time. These goals are thus "responsive to evidence." Through introspection and by disengaging from unsuitable values, individuals become stably disposed toward their remaining values. And by harmonizing across their values and linking them to specific contexts, individuals ensure that their values are jointly realizable over time.

The empirical veracity of Raibley's theory is important because he uses his arguments about the nature of agential flourishing to rebut some prominent arguments against values-based accounts of wellbeing, specifically those of Arpaly (2003, p. 16) and Haybron (2008, p. 180). Both present situations where value-fulfillment is "accompanied by anxiety, nervousness, frustration, or other negative, burdensome emotions" (Raibley, 2013, p. 203). Haybron provides the hypothetical case of Claudia, a corporate attorney committed to material success whose value-fulfillment leads to stress and burnout and leaves her emotionally unfulfilled. Arpaly offers the hypothetical case of Lynn, a religiously-motivated homophobe to discovers her own homosexuality and then suppresses it to authentically fulfil her religious values. Arpaly also raises the case of anorexics whose mental illness sees them affirm personally harmful values in a deliberate, conscious, and highly

controlled way. How can this value affirmation be wellbeing? After a lengthy analysis, Raibley (p. 212) concludes his rebuttal of these cases by saying that:

> The real problem … is that Lynn [,Claudia,] and the anorexic's consciously held valuations are in conflict with sub-personal drives and affective dispositions that cannot easily be changed. This incoherence is directly and intrinsically harmful … Fully functioning agency not only requires values-realisation, bodily and emotional health, functionally appropriate affect, and coherent and evidence-responsive values; it also requires congruence among values, subpersonal states, and affective dispositions.

The analysis of theories and evidence from psychological science presented above supports Raibley's contention that people do indeed tend to detach from values if they cannot be made congruent with other values, subpersonal states, and affective dispositions. Failure to so detach is associated with psychopathology, something intuitively not associated with wellbeing. Tiberius and Raibley's conditions for "appropriate" values thus improve both the coherence of their theories with psychological science and make them more robust to counter-arguments from prudential philosophy.

5. Self-actualization and the momentary vs whole life perspective

Fabian (2020) analyses how the iterative process of identification, affirmation, feedback, and introspection – which he refers to as a process of self-actualization – leads to values becoming more *reasonable* over time. Introspection involves applying reason to sort through feedback and provide justification for the maintenance or abandonment of certain values going forward. As self-actualization proceeds, introspection is applied to a greater range of values, and values that repeatedly come under introspection have their reflective foundations refined. Values that are sustained over the long term thus tend to be not only reflectively endorsed, but reflectively endorsed because of sound or at least extensive reasoning.

This account of the increasing reasonableness of values plugs usefully into Tiberius' extended discussion of whether value-fulfilled lives should be judged moment by moment or from a "whole of life" point of view. She argues (pp. 46–48) that the value-fulfilled life sits more easily within the later. There are moments in which "values are being fulfilled", certainly, but broadly speaking, "values are not typically the kinds of things we can weigh by looking at them in isolation." Tiberius gives the example of a gourmand. Their value for gustatory pleasure is fulfilled in moments of eating, but a gourmand must organize their life in general so as to have opportunities for such moments to occur.

Despite this line of argument, Tiberius notes that the value-fulfillment theory does not allow for the kind of precise wellbeing identification and calculation that the whole of life point of view is seeking. She writes that (pp. 48–49):

> For any person at a time there is a set of values such that, were those values to be fulfilled according to those standards, that person would get the most value fulfilment overall. There may be more than one best set of values because values fulfilment is not fine-grained . . . This means that it's very unlikely that there will be a unique set of values and one best (richest) life for each person at a time. Further, the life richest in value-fulfilment for a person will change with time, as the person's circumstances, values, and standards of success evolve . . . Some readers might find this explanation . . . imprecise. One way to try to remove the imprecision would be to adopt the *rational life plan* view according to which wellbeing is evaluated in a top-down manner rather than constructed out of bits of momentary fulfilment.

Tiberius is quite accommodating of the rational life plan view, devoting several pages to discussion of it. Yet the analysis of the present paper suggests that neither the rational life plan nor moment by moment account fits neatly with the psychological realities of value formation and fulfillment. "Imprecision" is thus unavoidable. People often fulfil "inappropriate" values that don't bring them psychological or subjective wellbeing. They tend to disconnect from these values in the long run. Tiberius argues that the inappropriateness of these values means that they count relatively little for wellbeing. That's fair, but these values form an integral part of the self-actualization process: we stumble upon or muddle through to our appropriate values. As Callard (2018) explains in a decision-theoretic context, it is exceedingly difficult to draw a clear distinction between identified values, the self-actualization process an individual goes through to check that these values are appropriate for them, and the refined and endorsed appropriate values that emerge at the end of the process. Moreover, Tiberius notes (p. 49) that many values are in flux over the life time. This isn't just about allocating values efficiently to periods of life – like partying hard in youth and then settling down once you have kids. It refers also to, among other things, situations where life events radically alter your rational life plan. For example, you might value sporting prowess and think you'll play tennis while your body can handle it and then swap to bowling in your fifties. But when you start bowling you think it is the greatest activity ever and wish you'd been bowling the whole time. The rational life plan does not work in the context of wellbeing as value-fulfillment, because there is no way to clearly assess which values are rational at any one particular time or over the life course as a whole. "Rationality" works in idealized economic models – something like Hausman's (2015) notion of satisfying "well-laundered" preferences. But it doesn't work if the "appropriateness" of values is determined not by mathematical notions of rationality but instead by the extent

to which values integrate emotions, motivations, and cognitions. Unlike math, the latter is dictated by a messy process. The moment-by-moment approach is better because it is relatively easy to identify more or less appropriate values for a person at a particular point in their life. This will often be enough for people seeking to offer wellbeing advice, as Tiberius desires. But the moment by moment approach is hamstrung by its fixation on the *present*, which leads it to overlook that values formation and refinement is an *ongoing process* and thus involves more than just the present. A sophisticated accounting of wellbeing in the context of a value-fulfillment theory must make some assessment of how the *process of living a value-fulfilled life* is going. That assessment will no doubt be imprecise.[1]

6. The non-problem of self-sacrifice

Integrating self-determination theory's motivational spectrum into her theory of wellbeing as value-fulfillment would allow Tiberius to make a more psychologically sophisticated response to the "problem of self-sacrifice." She describes this problem as follows (p. 42):

> If wellbeing is getting what we want or value, it seems that it is conceptually impossible to sacrifice our own interest for the sake of a moral good we also want or value (Overvold, 1980). In other words, the worry is that the value fulfilment theory rules out moral sacrifice by definition, which seems wrong.

Tiberius argues that her theory is "not saddled with this result" (pg. 42). She gives the hypothetical example of Dahlia, who sacrifices everything else in her life to further action on climate change, a cherished moral goal. Tiberius argues that Dahlia's behavior may sacrifice some wellbeing over the long run if her work leaves her "burnt out, exhausted, and unable to attain much value-fulfilment in the second half of her life." Self-sacrifice is thus psychologically possible within her theory. Tiberius then goes further. What if Dahlia really has no values in her life besides action on climate change? Then there is no self-sacrifice here. But, Tiberius argues (pg. 43), this is not "such a bad result", because for this Dahlia moral goals and best interests are aligned.

Psychological science allows Tiberius to make this rejoinder more thorough and elegant. From a motivational perspective, the problem of self-sacrifice is not well articulated. All actions that emanate from us, even controlled behaviors, somehow involve the self. If someone puts a gun to your head and commands you to "do x on pain of death", you can *choose* death. Your motivational system will not comply with the command on autopilot. So the problem of self-sacrifice needs to articulate more clearly what the "self" is that it refers to, because inevitably some part of the self is sacrificing some other part of the self. Recall that Morf & Mischel

described the self as "a motivated, proactive knowing, thinking, feeling action system." Feeling and thinking are integrated here. Neuroscience similarly suggests that consciousness emerges from antecedent mental substructures and is interrelated rather than separate from them (Damasio, 2010). And finally, the notion of "multiple selves" discussed earlier suggests that we are made up of potentially conflicting identities that we try to integrate over time and assign to their appropriate context (Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2012). From this perspective, the most psychologically coherent way of understanding the problem of self-sacrifice is in terms of *motivational conflict*. The operative distinction for moral psychology here is not between self-interest and self-sacrifice, but between self-regulation and self-determination (for a much longer discussion of these issues, see Besser-Jones, 2014; Arvanitis, 2017). We can sharpen the problem of self-sacrifice by putting it in such motivational terms. Self-sacrifice refers, most powerfully at least, to a situation of an *other-regarding* behavior (i.e., moral) that is either introjected or identified in motivation and thus requires self-regulation clashing with a purely *self-interested* but intrinsically motivated behavior that is thus self-determined.

There doesn't seem to be much of a problem here for Tiberius' account of wellbeing. Let's begin with identified other-regarding vs intrinsically motivated self-interested behaviors. Both are *autonomous*. Neither involves "sacrificing" value-fulfillment, though identification can be in error. This is instead a case of trading off values, probably values associated with the ideal self against values associated with the ought self. It *feels* like a sacrifice because intrinsic motivation is hard to resist and identified behaviors are relatively hard to motivate, but there are values being fulfilled in both cases. Consider the Dahlias again. The Dahlia who authentically pursues climate activism single-mindedly is intrinsically motivated and self-determined. There is no self-sacrifice here because the ideal and ought selves are in harmony and Dahlia's values are consequently emotionally, motivationally, and cognitively integrated. In contrast, the conflicted Dahlia merely identifies with climate activism but possesses intrinsic motivation for family and leisure. As we have seen, value fulfillment over time often begins with identification and we can't tell whether these identifications will stick until we have gone through an iterative process that explores whether the identified values can be emotionally and cognitively integrated. So the conflicted Dahlia is not really self-sacrificing in pursuit of climate goals. She is exploring how to harmonize her competing values. It may turn out that the most authentic way to do this is to abandon everything but activism. Regardless of what balance she ultimately strikes between her values, her behavior doesn't involve self-sacrifice so much as a trading off between identified other-regarding values and intrinsically motivated self-interested values. Both are good for

her wellbeing provided she gets the calibration right. This is the situation Tiberius is worried about – it seems to rule out self-sacrifice as traditionally understood.

One response is simply to say that the traditional understanding of the problem of self-sacrifice is no good. Self-regulation in the service of identified, other regarding behaviors against intrinsically motivated, self-interested ones is difficult and requires willpower. Even if both behaviors ultimately serve wellbeing and thus even the regulated one is not "purely" self-interested, the intuitively important requirements for self-sacrifice to be "painful", "other regarding", and involve the forgoing of a desired end is met when self-regulation is involved. This response is analogous to Raibley's (2013, p. 196), who concludes: "there are other plausible ways of understanding the distinction between selfish and disinterested values that do not require the assumption that the realization of disinterested values cannot benefit one."

A second response is that the traditional notion of self-sacrifice fits quite neatly with introjected other-regarding values. An example might be donating to your community church out of social pressure, rather than to a charity you feel more sympathy for. Such behaviors can be faintly autonomous, but are certainly self-regulated. They will be bad for wellbeing in the long run in the absence of internalization because introjected motivations are not well integrated. Introjected motivation is also draining and tends to psychopathology if sustained. The motivational taxonomy of identified values overtaking intrinsic ones over time makes sense of "saints" – they internalize other-regarding values and thus find their fulfillment self-expressive and easily motivated. It enhances their wellbeing. Introjection then makes sense of overly agreeable types whose generosity is preyed upon by unscrupulous parasites, or who yield too easily to social pressure. Their agreeableness makes them prone to motivating other regarding values through introjection, which ultimately burns them out. We can see here a way for someone to sacrifice their own wellbeing for the benefit of others, so Tiberius' theory leaves open the possibility of quite a pure form of "self-sacrifice."

All this might pose some concern for Tiberius' intended audience of friends trying to give advice to Dahlia (chapter 4). How can they be *sure* her behavior is good or bad for her wellbeing if motivation is so hard to pin down and value fulfillment is messy? The short answer is that they can't. But they can engage with Dahlia in her iterative process. If they suspect that she is compromising herself by overinvesting in activism they can communicate this to her – this is important social feedback. If Dahlia really does value family, leisure, or whatever, she will process this social feedback as part of social self-verification. It may help her to realize that she is drifting away from her ideal and/or ought self. Or not, in which case she will

communicate this back to her friends. If they persist in regarding her behavior as inauthentic she might reasonably think that they are substituting their own values for hers and disengage from them, perhaps to get new friends in the climate movement. This aligns with Tiberius' own analysis of whether her theory is objective or subjective in its account of wellbeing. She writes (p. 65) that wellbeing as value-fulfillment:

> ... defines wellbeing in terms of a person's individual psychology, namely that person's values. But it also allows for the possibility that a person's values are in need of improvement or transformation (thus allowing for the possibility of error) and provides standards for improvement that preserve the close tie between wellbeing and the subject.

There is an obvious tension here between respecting individuals' subjective assessments while holding open the possibility that those assessments are erroneous. This points to the need to accept that what wellbeing as value-fulfillment is for a person at a moment in time or over the course of a whole life cannot be solved *analytically* but only *iteratively*. The messy process must be embraced, both by friends and philosophers.

7. Self-concordance theory and appropriate values

There are several places in Tiberius' book where she makes an at least implicit appeal to something like "goodness of fit" between values and an individual. The notion is arguably inherent to the proposition of "appropriate" values. Goodness of fit seems necessary to determine whether the 1st Dahlia is erroneous in her single-minded pursuit of climate activism at the expense of other values. It also seems inherent to Tiberius' reply to concerns that wellbeing as value-fulfillment provides little evaluative guidance as to how someone should live as there could be a near infinite number of value-fulfilled lives for each person. Her reply is that (p. 52):

> ... people tend to care about certain things very deeply, they have fairly stable personalities, and they face consistent challenges ... the life in which I became a Catholic nun or hermit, given my personality, would not contain much fulfilment of appropriate values for me. While there may be many various lives in which I successfully pursue emotionally, motivationally, and cognitively appropriate values together over the long term is likely to be much smaller and more homogenous.

As it turns out, psychological science has a lot to say about such "self-concordant" values, and its findings support Tiberius' arguments. Building on self-determination theory, Sheldon and Elliot (1999) developed a model of "self-concordant" goals (i.e., valued ends). This model posits that people derive greater psychological wellbeing from goals that fit their personalities or innate selves. The notion of "innate" here is very minimalist, taking in only things like dispositions, talents, and biological

parameters. There are two requisites for a goal to be self-concordant. The first is that it must be pursued autonomously in the sense that the individual is intrinsically motivated. This pursuit might begin through identification, but the subjective and psychological wellbeing payoffs are strongest in the latter stages of internalization. The second is that self-concordant goals involve "intrinsic pursuits" like personal growth, affiliation, and community rather than "extrinsic pursuits" contingent to activities themselves, like financial success, image, and popularity (Kasser, 2003; Sheldon et al., 2004a).

A series of studies find that extrinsic pursuits do not produce the same psychological wellbeing payoffs as intrinsic pursuits (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996), and can even be negatively associated with psychological wellbeing (Kasser & Ryan, 2001). Experimental evidence suggests that this poor relationship holds even in social contexts like business schools and corporate law firms that espouse extrinsic aspirations like money and power and celebrate their achievement (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). The self-concordance model thus supports Tiberius' contention that (pp. 66–67): "Completely inappropriate values would be projects, relationships, and ideals that do not motivate us, that leave us cold, and that we could not successfully pursue over time even if we tried." Empirically, people tend to detach from introjected values because it is hard to sustain motivation for them and they do not have strong, consistent, or sustained positive affective payoffs. Introjected values are relatively external to the self. So it seems that "goodness of fit" is indeed a relevant dimension of appropriateness that circumscribes what values can make a particular person's life value-fulfilled.

Relatedly, Tiberius argues (pg. 67) that a value is inappropriate if "the value in question (perfection, money, power) [is] really a stand-in for something else (say, friendship, achievement, or acceptance)." This claim seems verified by psychological science, as the later set of values conform to intrinsic pursuits associate with basic psychological needs. The former, on the other hand, are extrinsic pursuits. A final point to make here is that there is some evidence that people pursue extrinsic motivations when their ability to satisfy basic psychological needs through intrinsically motivated means are thwarted. For example, Lammers et al. (2016) find that individuals whose autonomy is thwarted will seek to increase their power even though power is a poor proxy for autonomy.

There is a further piece of empirical evidence that supports Tiberius' recourse to "goodness of fit" from the psychological literature on contingencies of self-worth (Crocker & Park, 2012). Research herein suggests that people only have strong affective responses to goals that relate to identity. In other words, outcomes not associated with the fulfillment of

appropriate values do not integrate emotions. As evidence, consider Figures 2 and 3 (reproduced from Crocker & Park, 2012, pp. 312–313). They show self-esteem fluctuations for a student with little identity-involvement in academic goals and a student with a large amount of identity-involvement in academic goals. The lines track their self-esteem across a time span in which they receive acceptance and rejection letters from graduate schools.

The self-esteem of the student oriented toward academic goals is far more volatile in response to self-relevant information in the form of acceptance and rejection letters. In comparison, the self-esteem of the student with little ego-involvement in academic goals does not fluctuate much.

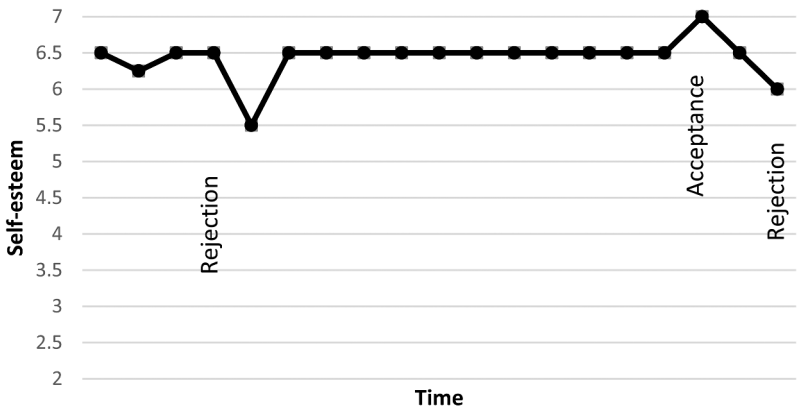

Figure 2. Student with little ego involvement in academic goals.

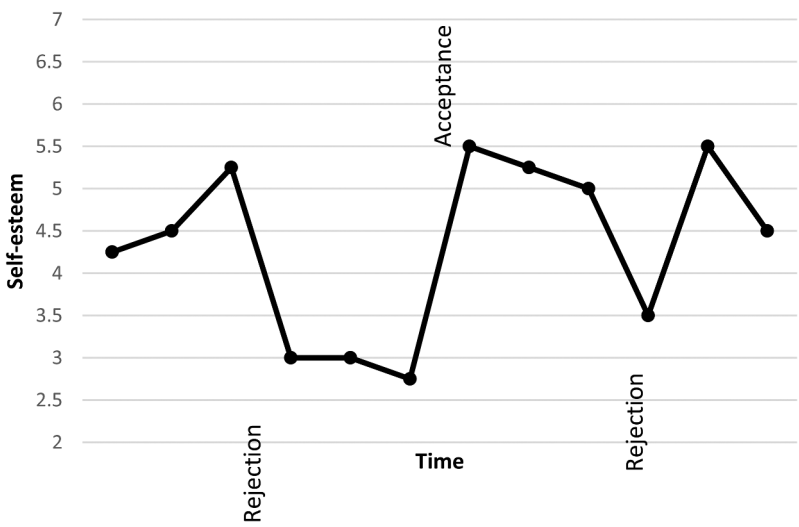

Figure 3. Student with substantial ego-involvement in academic goals.

The relationship between identity and affective payoffs from value-fulfillment are present in the qualitative responses of study participants. Three students *low* in academic orientation wrote (reproduced from Crocker & Park, 2012, p. 315):

> Getting into graduate school is a formality. It is a mere reminder of potential, rather than a reflection of hard work. It signifies a long, arduous road ahead in academia.
>
> . . .
> It means that I have been granted an opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills I need to be a competent and successful researcher. I will also be able to experience a different area of the country and make a fresh start somewhere else.
>
> . . .
> It really would not reflect on me as a person, but it would just be an accomplishment for me to be able to move on to the next step toward a career.

Graduate school obviously has little relationship to these people's sense of who they are, and so they are unperturbed by acceptance and rejection letters. Their motivation for attending graduate school appears to be largely introjected – they pursue it for reasons contingent to attending graduate school itself, like career progress. In contrast, consider the following responses from participants with a strong identity-involvement in academic goals:

> Getting into grad school (especially a really good one) would show me that I am one of the best students of an even more select group of students.
>
> . . .
> It means that my hard work payed [sic] off, and it would mean that at least one grad school recognised that I am a brilliant and motivated student. In other words, it would reaffirm what I already know.
>
> . . .
> Getting into graduate school would mean that I am truly a scholar. It would mean I'm intelligent, hard-working and a logical thinker. It would mean I can now be respected for being a good thinker.

In this later case we can see how graduate school as a value plugs into identity and from there to motivation and large affective payoffs from value-fulfillment. Respondents use the language of meeting a standard – "would show me", "it would mean", "I know." This implies reflective endorsement and the search for tangible evidence that would ground a subjective assessment. Graduate school is here an "appropriate" value as it integrates emotions, motivations, and cognitions.

8. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to broaden and build Tiberius (2018) theory of wellbeing as value-fulfillment by drawing on a range of theories and findings from psychological science. The paper drew especially on the psychology of "self", which seems somewhat underappreciated among philosophers of wellbeing, even those, like Tiberius, who utilize a great deal of psychological science in their work. The psychological literature seems to plug neatly into Tiberius' theory. It does not meaningfully alter her theory so much as make it richer and more thoroughly grounded in empirical results. In places, the psychological literatures even allow for stronger rebuttals to concerns some scholars may have with Tiberius' theory, as in the case of the problem of self-sacrifice, which turns out to not be much of a problem at all. That said, this paper did not seek to defend Tiberius' theory of wellbeing as value fulfillment against such critiques. It may be that Tiberius' theory is not a good account of the prudential good. Regardless, its coherence with these psychological theories and findings seems to make it stronger and more compelling. Philosophical critiques should probably at least remark on whether alternate theories of wellbeing do a better job of making sense of the psychological literature.

Note

1. Some scholars might see this imprecision as a telling weakness of Tiberius' theory. After all, one of the primary purposes for which we need theories of wellbeing is to compare lives, choices, policy outcomes, etc. over time in terms of their impact on wellbeing (Raibley, 2012). If a theory of wellbeing is inevitably imprecise and thus cannot provide particularly helpful insights in such contexts, that would count against the theory. Yet the analysis in this paper would suggest instead that the unavoidable psychological reality of wellbeing is that it is a messy thing. A wellbeing theory that is more tractable for measurement and other "applied" questions is thus not more accurate than Tiberius' but simply more tractable. Now tractability might be a decisive consideration in some contexts, like infrastructure cost-benefit analysis. This lends itself to thinking about wellbeing in context-sensitive ways, as advocated by Alexandrova (2017), and with more consideration of "practical adequacy", as advocated by Fabian (2020).

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