BAD CONSCIENCE

A DISPOSITION TO FEEL NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF PR. FABRICE TERONI

NADINE MARACHLY
UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA
SPRING 2021

TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract

In this work, I give an account of the nature of *bad conscience*. I claim that having a *bad conscience* is an emotional disposition that manifests in the form of negative emotions, such as shame, guilt, remorse, and regret. First, I focus on the notion of *conscience*, which is the awareness of moral principles. Then, I introduce important moral emotions. Finally, I affirm that negative emotions play a crucial role in many aspects of our lives.

INTRODUCTION

One can have a *bad conscience* for many different things. Yesterday while eating a sandwich in the street, I fell upon a beggar. He looked at me and told me he was hungry. I was hungry too and I was about to have a seminar in fifteen minutes. I decided to ignore him. However, on the way to the seminar, my stomach started to ach and my heart felt heavy. Each bite of my sandwich started to taste bitter. I couldn't take the beggar's face off my mind. Something inside me told me that I was selfish, and then started to regret not giving the sandwich to the beggar.

This is what I call to have 'a bad conscience'. But what does it mean exactly? In common speaking English it is not very usual to hear this saying. The French expression *avoir mauvaise conscience* seems much more meaningful than its English equivalent. When one says that someone has *mauvaise conscience*, this ordinarily means that this person feels bad about something she did in the past. Suppose that Jean is celebrating his birthday. Everyone at the party is laughing and having fun when someone suddenly asks: 'where's Marie?' Jean fakes a smile and makes up lie: 'unfortunately, she couldn't come, for she's working late tonight'. Jean suddenly starts to feel anxious, for the truth about Marie is that she is having a rough time in her life, dealing with a tremendous disease. He did not invite her for he did not want her to ruin the party. Feeling bad, Jean regrets his selfish behaviour and wonders why he hasn't been more open-hearted. One can say that Jean experiences *bad conscience* for not having invited his friend Mary.

It looks like *having a bad conscience* is linked to our perception of *what is right* and *what is wrong*. Some of our actions feel right for they correspond to our goals and values. Other actions make us feel bad, for they go against our deep commitments. Let us say that *having a bad conscience* has to do with our interior dimension of morality, that is our fundamental system of values. There are two dimensions of morality: 1) a *public* dimension that tells us what is

required for a just and fair society; an *interior* dimension that regards what one feels about one's own conduct (Cottingham 2013, 729). Jean's *bad conscience* concerns the evaluation of his attitude according to his own values, he for example says to himself that he could have invited Marie, for she is his friend after all. This will be the starting point of our investigation on the nature of *bad conscience*. Our next step is to define 'conscience' as a naked concept.

In the first section, I treat the concept of *conscience* from a historical point of view. In section 2, I explore the nature of *conscience* from a modern perspective. We will then see the role of emotions in conscience. This will enable the introduction of 'bad conscience' as a disposition to experience negative emotions and its value. Finally, I ask the question whether it is possible to have a 'pacified conscience'.

1. A HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF 'CONSCIENCE'

It was the Greeks and Romans who first used the idea of 'conscience'. The Christians tradition then developed it for its own purpose. The word 'conscience' comes from Latin *conscientia*, which means 'with' (*con-)* 'knowledge' (*scientia*). The source of this Latin concept is its Greek equivalent συνειδέναι (*suneidenai),* which is also 'with' (*sun-*) 'knowledge' (*eidenai*).

One might say two things. First, this literal meaning does not specify what type of knowledge is involved. Second, it does not tell us whom this knowledge is shared with. About the first point, the concept of *conscience* traditionally refers to *moral* knowledge, even if the word doesn't evidently mention it. About the second point, at first sight one might think that this is the knowledge we share with someone else. Indeed, the Latin 'con' usually refers to a social fact. But surprisingly, the knowledge in question is the one shared with one *own self*[1], which is usually the consequence of a moral defect or failure (Sorabji, 2014, 13).

This *shared knowledge* metaphorically suggests that having a *bad conscience* is a splitting of the self into two separate selves, as Sorabji puts it: 'one of which has the guilty knowledge but keeps it a secret and the other of which shares that knowledge' (Sorabji 2014, 2). This idea of a 'guilty secret', shared with one own self only, makes us thinks of conscience as a private faculty. The intimacy created with one own self is a kind of *self-awareness*, for it requires the act of looking deeply into our own self. The idea can be expressed by the notion of *reflexivity*,

[1] In Ancient Greek, the literal translation of 'συνείδησις' (*suneidesis)* is 'knowledge with'. Its reflexive form is 'συνειδέναι' (*suneidenai*), which means 'sharing knowledge with oneself' (Hämäläinen, forthcoming, 4).

which suggests that conscience watches itself, separated into an observer and an observed object (Jankélévitch, 1966, 1-2)[2].

In the early Greek tradition, this knowledge is shared when oneself only when one has done something wrong; our conscience is not clear and tries to draw our attention on our bad behaviour. This idea of the self that splits into two different persons can also be taken in its negative: 'I do not share knowledge with myself', which would reflect having a *clear* conscience. Indeed, the 'voice of conscience' is often said to be quite when nothing wrong troubles our mind. In a more tardive Greek tradition, *sunedenai* was used to refer to the knowledge one shares with another person, that is some external source of morality. Our guilty knowledge is seen as being shared with God (identified with the natural law), the witness of all our actions.

Now, one might ask what is the difference between *having a conscience* and *being conscious*? There is an obvious etymological relation between these two concepts, for both derive from the Latin word *conscientia*. The similarity is that both imply a kind of *reflexivity*, that is inner knowledge. However, since the 17th century they were separated into two different meanings. On the one hand, 'consciousness' is *generally* related to the access to all our psychological states (the data received from the five senses, the reasoning ability, the faculty of imagination, emotions and memory)[3]. 'Consciousness' is both the awareness of our environment and of our own self. The more one gathers information via our senses, the more one is a*ware* and more *conscious* of our external world. This *awareness* also contains *self-awareness*, which is the internal perception of our thoughts, reflections, imagination, and emotions. Neurologists have discovered that many parts of the brain are active through the process of consciousness (such as the amygdala that play a role in memory, attention and emotions and the prefrontal cortex which is related to self-perception and metacognition, frontoparietal connectivity and the thalamus also play major role in consciousness) (for more details, see Vithoulkas & Muresanu, 2014;7(1):104-108)[4].

---

[2] 'Dans sa mobilité infinie la conscience peut se prendre elle-même pour objet : entre le spectateur et le spectacle un va-et-vient s'établit alors, une transfusion réciproque de substance : la conscience-de-soi, en s'aiguisant, recrée et transforme son objet, à savoir un phénomène de l'esprit ; mais l'esprit à son tour déteint sur la conscience, puisqu'en somme c'est l'esprit qui prend conscience' (Jankélévitch 1966, 1-2).

[3] The five senses enable the mind to receive information, then imagination and emotion process it, reason judges it, and memory stores or rejects it (Vithoulkas G, Muresanu DF, 2014;7(1):104-108)

[4] Beyond this neurological approach, some physicists have claimed that consciousness arise at the quantum physics level, for it would depend on 'self-observation'. The idea is that when one observes an electron, the wave-function collapses (that is the many possibilities of its location) for it comes into real existence (which is to have one location only). This image let us see consciousness as multiple possibilities of the same self. The process of consciousness would be to self-observe and to stop this superposition of many possible selves. But let

On the other hand, 'conscience' is much simpler than 'consciousness', for it is only related to morality, that is our sense of rightness and wrongness, a guidance regarding our actions and behaviour. Vithoulkas & Muresanu give the following definition:

> 'The concept of "conscience", as commonly used in its moral sense, is the inherent ability of every healthy human being to perceive what is right and what is wrong and, on the strength of this perception, to control, monitor, evaluate and execute their actions' (ibid.).

'Conscience' is essentially linked to our moral values, that is good and evil, just or unjust, right or wrong, etc. The more someone has a precise knowledge of these concepts, the more he will try to act in alignment with them, and therefore be a 'healthy human being'. Even if in a sense 'conscience' is less complex than 'consciousness', it is *higher* in authority. The reason is that it gives us the capacity to evaluate and judge our own behaviour and that of others according to higher moral principles. Maybe the difference between human beings and other animals is that the latter lack this evaluative ability to change their patterns of behaviour. Of course, human beings too sometimes fail to choose what is right, for their natural instincts can dominate them. However, this weakness or lack to act according to one's best judgement, that Aristotle called *akrasia*, can still be overbalanced by a 'conscience' that is looking for inner peace of mind. Before we go more in detail about the *nature* of 'conscience' which is our main object of interest, let us see how the Greeks from Ancient times first considered it.

1.1. Ancient Greece

Greeks and Romans played a major role in the development of the idea of *conscience*. In Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, one does not find a clear mention of *conscience*, that is 'sharing knowledge with oneself, but a similar form or idea. Plato says that Socrates his mentor (469-399 BCE) has a 'guardian spirit' that he names a *δαιμόνιον* (daîmon, spirit). This inner divine voice often warns him and tells him what he ought *not* to do, but never what he ought to do, for this voice opposes but never proposes (Sorabji, 2014, 21). At his trial, Socrates is sentenced to death for two reasons. First, he is accused of morally corrupting the youth. Secondly, he is charged of impiety, that is failing to acknowledge the gods of the city by introducing new deities (*daemonia*). He defends himself by saying that he is a pious man that respects the gods and that his *δαιμόνιον* which has always accompanied him in what he did remained silent, therefore he

---

us leave this quantum physics approach for it highly compromised, even though recent physicists are convinced that many possible worlds exist simultaneously.

could not have done something wrong (Plato, *The Apology,*74). There is a manifest analogy with *synderesis*, that is moral conscience, for it is also a voice that forbids. When Socrates says that his *δαιμόνιον* was silent this obviously means that his conscience was clear (on this interpretation see Lyons 2009, 479).

Surprisingly, in Aristotle's works, the notion of 'conscience' is absent. Instead, he develops a theory of virtue and of healthy living. He nevertheless mentions the idea of sharing knowledge with oneself of a moral failure. But by contrast with the Judeo-Christian point of view, there is no place for sin, and therefore for 'conscience' in the strict sense of the word (for a brief history of this concept see Cottingham 2019). The notion of *natural law* has a major place in Aristotle's thinking. He considers that disobedience to our nature, which is the natural attraction toward happiness, would have very bad consequences. *Self-love* is what can best characterize this vision, for he says that people that act against their human nature are in conflict with themselves for they are neglecting their desire for happiness. Aristotle gave a great importance to the phenomenon of *akrasia*, that is a moral failure to act in the best possible way. Someone can for example mistake the greater good for the lesser good, being under the influence of passion (see Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book VII. Ch. 3.). Aristotle also discusses the notion of *aidos*, which he defines as a 'fear of disrepute'. In our modern language, *aidos* is best translated by 'modesty' or 'shame'. The virtuous individual has no *aidos*, for there is nothing he should be ashamed of. Virtue comes with *habit*. At a very early age, the child internalizes (by *habit*) the rules and customs of the society in which he is growing. However, the purpose of life is not *righteousness* of behaviour, but flourishing. Happiness is what every human being should seek, which is a perfect match between one's natural inclinations and virtue. Let us now see how the notion of conscience has developed into Christianity where the focus is put less on the idea of 'living according to one's nature' than on that of sin.

1.2. The Judeo- Christian tradition

In Christianity, particularly Protestantism, the notion of 'conscience' has its importance, for it is strongly associated to that of sin. However, it is wrong to think that the use of this concept began with Christianity, for the Old Testament already had a similar concept. In the *Book of Samuel*, King David feels bad for something wrong he has done. One evening, from the roof David saw a woman bathing. This woman, Bathsheba, was so beautiful that David could not imagine having her. This desire leads him to arrange the death of her husband (2 Samuel, 24: 6). Nathan then said these words to David:

> There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup, and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now a traveller came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveller who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him[5].

To this David's reaction was to say that the man who did this must die for his act was awful. Nathan replied: 'You are the man'. David's heart therefore started to ache. The word *heart* was used as a proto word for 'conscience'[6]. The heart was seen as the seat of many different emotions in which the workings of guilt and remorse were vividly present. The Old Testament therefore clearly suggests that when a man does something wrong, he inwardly suffers. King David shows a guilty conscience, even if the Hebrew word did not exist yet (Sorjabi 2014, 11). The first appearance of the Greek word 'conscience' (*synderesis*) in the Christian tradition was in Paul's discussion in the New Testament.

For Augustine, *conscience* comes with divine illumination. Its voice is identical with that of the Holy Spirit. In his *Handbook of Faith*, he writes that in each of us there is a divine law written in the heart itself (Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 22:81 and 32:121). By contrast, Aquinas who is inspired by Aristotle's teleological view, sees conscience (*synderesis*) as a natural attraction to the *human good* and not as directly coming from God. Conscience would be a natural disposition or habitus to know and realize the first principles of natural laws. Aquinas puts the emphasis on *rational knowledge* and not on *childhood* as Aristotle did, nor on *illumination* as Augustine thought. Nevertheless, for Aquinas too, the principles of 'what is right' and 'what is wrong' are implanted in the soul by God. However, these first principles are learned intuitively by *synderesis,* a faculty given in the soul by God. The common point with Aristotle is that *synderesis* seems to be a *habit*. But the difference relies in the fact that Aristotle puts it in childhood, while Aquinas in a sort of innate disposition or *rational power* given by God (see Aquinas, *De Veritate,* 16.2. and Cottingham, 2019, 340).

[5] This translation comes from biblegateway.com.

[6] In Ancient Hebrew the concept of 'conscience' might have existed, which was 'heart', but the word itself, that is *synderesis*, did not exist yet. Medieval Arabic also lacked the word. It is only modern Hebrew that introduced the word *matzpun* and modern Arabic that introduced the word *dameer* (see Sorjabi 2014, for a detailed analysis of the word).

Joseph Butler, an eighteen-century philosopher, sees *conscience* as a principle by which 'man approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions' (Butler 1726: II). *Conscience* is a reflective principle on actions of oneself and others according to moral principles. By contrast with Augustine and Aquinas who put the authority of conscience in the divine source, Butler first appears to be taking an empirical approach. For, all human beings seem to naturally have a sense of right and wrong. But he then separates principles that are merely 'natural', in the sense that they are common in the human nature, and principles that are 'natural' in the sense that they carry with them an authority that comes from a divine source (Cottingham, 2019, 340). The idea is that God has implanted in us a natural guide which is our *conscience*. Its authoritative principle is superior to that of our passions and natural instincts, for *conscience* is 'our natural guide, the guide assigned to us by the Author of our nature' (Butler 1726: III, 5). The first principles are natural impulses such as kindness or compassion. However, these principles can be overridden by other natural dispositions such as anger or other passions that can motivate our actions. Take the example of someone who wants to find a remedy for cancer. The 'natural' principle that would motivate him according to Butler is that he cares for humanity. Now suppose he finds that remedy and someone tells him that he should keep secret so he can sell it at a very high price later. His natural principle of benevolence is overridden by that of self-interest. In this case, the role of *conscience* would be that he governs his greedy passion and acts for the common good. The explanation is that in comparison with the natural impulses that govern us, the natural principles of *conscience* are considered to have a superior authoritative status, for they pertain to our natural divine reason faculty. Butler therefore considers *conscience* as a superior principle of reflection that tells us which actions are right and which are wrong, its role is to put a hierarchy among the principles that govern us (Butler 1726, II).

In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argues that the faculty of conscience depends on the rational will as 'self-legislating' (Kant 1785: Ch. 2). In other words, Kant identifies conscience with reason, through which every individual can make the verdict of what is the best action to do. Interestingly, he compares *conscience* with the external court of law. The idea is that my acts are brought before the tribunal of reason, and they are either accused or excused. Of course, Kant's idea isn't to be taken in a literal sense, for there is no accused man sitting in a wooden court room nor any judge wearing a robe and a white hair on their head. However, if Kant says that it is quite absurd to think of a human being as being at the same time the one who is being judged and the judge 'who is an ideal person that reason creates for itself', his way of thinking is not completely wrong (Kant, ibid.). Just as the Greeks already considered

that the self is split in two different persons in the process of 'sharing knowledge with oneself of one's wrongdoing', Kant also acknowledged the idea that one can reflect and judge one's own actions. Moreover, this is what makes the 'autonomy' of an individual, that is his or her ability to act according to his own internal laws (given by reason). However, the judge that is within us has a special authority, that is the supreme authority of reason. For Kant, just as his predecessors, also considered that this ideal authoritative judge is God, who is the supreme 'scrutinizer of all hearts' (Kant, MS, 6: 439).

1.3. A NATURALIZING APPROACH

So far, all the approaches we've seen put the authority of conscience in a divine source (that is God, which is sometimes identified with the natural law). Now, it is problematic if you doubt the existence of God, for you would hardly believe in the authority of the divine voice of *conscience*. In the Seventieth and Eighteenth Centuries, philosophers have tried to give a naturalizing account of our moral capacities and judgements. These were defined in terms of natural sentiments, drives and impulses within us (Cottingham, 2019). Their aim was to give a more 'naturalizing' account of the notion of *conscience*. Later, in the Nineteenth Century, Freud introduced the notion of *superego.*

Before we look at some of these pre-Freudian views, let us say that one cannot separate the concept of *conscience* from its historical background. As already said, *conscience* provides us with moral knowledge. In the 16th century, the natural law tradition of *conscience* comes to its decline. The Protestant reformers will remove this idea of 'natural attraction to human good', for they conceive *conscience* as an infallible normative guidance (see Hämäläinen, forthcoming). Indeed, Martin Luther regards *conscience* as elevated to a position of self-sufficient moral authority which he identifies with the Word of God. This means that everyone should follow his own *conscience*, for it never lies. In 1521, he rejects the authority of the Pope which contradicts with his own opinions about Christianity, for (to say it simply) salvation isn't a matter of relics, prayers, fasting and indulgences for the Catholic Church. Salvation is only a matter of *faith* (in Latin, *sola fide*). Another aspect of Luther's ideology is that he protests the link between *conscience* and 'attraction to human good' established by Aquinas, which equates to the Greek notion of *synderesis* (ibid.). According to Luther, only personal faith can enable us to act virtuously, for human beings are 'innately and necessarily evil and corrupt' (Luther, *Career of the Reformer I,* in Works, vol. 31, 9). *Conscience* is essentially a matter of subjectivity for Luther. It neither comes from the teachings of the Church, nor from the correct conception of some natural law inscribed within the human heart, but from one's personal faith and reading

of the Scripture (the Ten Commandments of Moise). For Aquinas *conscience* gives us access to the principles of the Natural law; one ought to pursue what is good and avoid what is evil, which is an alternative to Saint Paul conception for whom the law is written in our hearts (see Sorjabi, 2014, 27). But for Luther, only one's personal belief in God justifies the judgments of one's moral conscience, that is faith and not nature. Luther replaces *synderesis*, that is the natural law that gives authority to our acts, with 'freedom of conscience' from all laws. According to Thomas More, there is an important problem with Luther's view, for there is no intersubjective ground, only faith based on the subjective readings of the Scripture, and that would inevitably lead to religious fragmentation. As a matter of fact, More was right about his vision, for fragmentation indeed happened among the Protestants (Hämäläinen, forthcoming, 8).

In the 17th century, thinkers like Hobbes, Locke and Hume will reject this exclusively theological view of moral conscience by reducing it to a mere acquired 'sentiment' (ibid.). Thomas Hobbes was sceptic about the ability of conscience to guide our actions. Similarly, to Luther, Hobbes contrasts moral conscience (*conscientia*) with the natural law (*synderesis*). However, Hobbes does not share with Luther the idea that moral conscience comes from God. He rather identifies moral *conscience* with sentiments of interest. The reason why *conscience* is essentially subjective for Hobbes is that our moral sentiments are instruments for the purpose of advancing self-interests (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chap. 29, 212). Conscience is just the voice of mere preferential judgments; it should not have any special authority over our actions, for 'just as the judgement can be erroneous, so also can the conscience' (ibid.).

For David Hume, our moral judgements only express our passions, which are the result of *having been brought up* in a certain way. He adds that *reason* (defined as our capacity to discover what is true and what is false) is completely inert in moral processes, which appears to be a matter of passions, volitions, and actions only (that are neither true, nor false) (Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, 458). While Luther had only removed *synderesis* (the natural attraction to the good), Hume removes almost everything from moral *conscience,* so that there remains nothing special about it. He thinks human beings pretend to act according to their *conscience* as an 'excuse', taking some acquired passions to be superior because of their moral character. Another reason Hume rejects the authority of *conscience* is because he sees its 'voice' as nothing more than that of our education, which can be completely misguided. He finally concludes that only reason can guide our actions, for contrarily to our passions, reason can genuinely distinguish between the true and the false.

In the 18th century, French philosophers were influenced by the pattern of British philosophers (especially Locke and Hobbes). They criticized the purely theological view advanced by Luther: *conscience* is an unquestionable voice of faith within each of us. By contrast, with the Protestants who thought that the law of *conscience* is given by God, the *Philosophes des Lumières* considered that it is given by nature. But contrarily to British philosophers, *conscience* is not reduced to mere passions or sentiments inscribed in a world of efficient causes. Rather, it is linked to practical reason, for it is a rational (but fallible) ability to select actions that would satisfy our natural desire for happiness. Surprisingly their conception is very similar to that of Ancient philosophers who viewed *conscience* as a natural tendency for happiness. In fact, *natural teleological* concepts such as 'happiness' and 'end' are recycled by this French tradition (Hämäläinen forthcoming, 11).

In the 19th century, the concept of *conscience* takes psychoanalytic overtones. Sigmund Freud portrays a demystified picture of *conscience*. His view is quite sophisticated, for what replaces the inner voice of God, as Christianity sees it, is a mere 'internal sanction' that comes from what he calls the *superego*. The *superego* is produced by childhood conditioning. It manifests itself as a painful feeling that punishes us when one fails to obey internalized rules. It seems like there is an independent agency in the ego that evaluates my behaviour (Freud, 1933,149). Most of the times, its voice is harsh: 'You suck! Why did you do that! You should have done this!'. A reason is that some parents do not talk to their child in a very sweet way. The particularity of the Freudian superego is that it is not directly accessible to consciousness, for it lies in the field of unconsciousness.

For John Stuart Mill, who is an empiricist that writes from a secular viewpoint, this knowledge comes with experience. He links the notion of *conscience* to that of 'pure idea of duty', for it must be a 'disinterested' feeling he says (Mill, 1861, ch. 3)[7]. Now, when someone violates his duty, unsurprisingly what comes with it is a feeling of pain. This is what Mill calls an 'internal sanction' (ibid.). Every human being as child seems to have internalized some patterns of what is right and what is wrong. This is also why Mill associates conscience with paternal authority. This idea that the child attributes moral authority to his father will reappear with Freud later (O'Shea, forthcoming). However, let us precise that this doesn't exclude 'feeling bad' as a response to a failing to our religious duty. He writes:

> … [These] doctrines that have been derived from no better original than the superstition of a nurse or the authority of an old woman, may, by length of time and consent of

[7] The notion of duty can be opposed to that of 'preference'.

> neighbours, grow up to the dignity of principles of religion and morality… [and] to have the reputation of unquestionable, self-evident, and innate truths (ibid. chap. 3)

As parents play the authoritative role for the child, religion is the main source of authority for grown-up. However, the religious authority is not of a superior kind, for according to Mill these religious feelings are also *empirically* 'internalized sanctions'. Mill's point is to demystify *conscience*, which is nothing more than psychological events and subjective feelings. One can say that his account is grounded in moral psychology, for what gives to *conscience* its authority is not a divine source, but a duty that has been internalized in childhood. In brief, *conscience* is a secular knowledge that has its source in our experience. Interestingly, this implies that there are no infallible moral rules, for each of us has different experiences. The power of Mill's position is that it can explain the existence of moral dilemmas (Cottingham 2019, 342). Finally, *conscience* has its utility for Mill, it is implanted into a society to maximize allegiance, that is to induce people to comply and cooperate. Mill therefore seems to see *conscience* in a positive way, even if his account of it is quite deflated, for *conscience* is reduced to nothing more than psychological events and subjective feelings.

In the *Descent of Man,* Charles Darwin examines the evolution of our moral sensibilities. He reduces *conscience* and other 'higher' feelings to nothing more than natural impulses that have evolved through some selection pressures (Darwin 1898, chap. 4). He for example discusses *altruism* which is the attitude of helping others. In a time where tribes were in constant war against each other, being altruistic toward the members of one's group or even sacrificing ourselves was necessary for the survival of the whole tribe. He writes:

> All that we knew about savages, or may infer from their traditions and from old monuments, the history of which is quite forgotten by the present inhabitants, shew that from the remotest times successful tribes have supplanted other tribes' […] 'It is, therefore, highly probable that with mankind the intellectual faculties have been perfected through natural selection' (ibid., chap 5, 160).

Altruism and other moral attitudes would have arisen through natural selection, which is describes as the supplanting or victory of some tribes over other tribes. The central aspect of Darwin's view is that our moral feelings or attitudes do not have some divine source, for they are the pure product of nature. These dispositions have evolved from our primate ancestors, which leads us to think that our whole human morality remains only a part of the natural world. However, some modern evolutionary theorist call into question Darwin's view about the survival value of our moral dispositions. For some empires, such as the Roman empire, have sustained the supremacy for hundreds of years and this by making use of attitudes such as

cruelty and savagery that have nothing to do with morality (see Cottingham, 2019, p. 343). It is not totally true therefore to say that our moral values maintain the flourishing and survival of one's society, for being ruthless can also bring long term prosperity to a group. To this objection one can reply that it is quite implausible that the Roman empire has survived only because of its barbarism. Despite of the violence and cruelty that were very common, Roman citizens had rules that they had to obey to maintain a kind of social equilibrium. Some historians have even declared that among many ages, the Roman age is one of the most prosperous. Darwin's claim about morality enhancing the survival capacity of group is therefore not that strange.

2. THE NATURE OF 'CONSCIENCE'

Now that we've explored the notion of *conscience* from its historical side, let us look at some modern accounts. But before we ask about the nature of *conscience*, let us be curious about what it is like not to have a *conscience*[8]. Interestingly, 'psychopaths' are often seen as people lacking any moral principles.

A psychopath can be described as someone who does not has a *conscience,* for most of the time, he does not feel bad for the immorality of his acts. He behaves as someone arrogantly egoistic, manipulative, and lacking any empathy for others. Moreover, he does not experience moral emotions such as remorse, shame, or guilt, for he doesn't feel responsible for his actions. He or she is also impatient and without any commitments to anything or anyone except the satisfaction of his own short-term self-centred desires. From this negative picture, one can draw a positive picture of *conscience* (Lyons, 2009, 489).

Conscience seems to have failed to develop in the psychopath's psyche. Some have argued that to form a moral *conscience* one must first overcome the 'egocentricity of childhood' and be capable of enough empathy for others (ibid, 489). That is, for example, thinking about others while pursuing our own goals. In this 'developmental' perspective, William Lyons argues that *conscience* is the result of an internal development of deep commitments to moral principles. Piaget, when he describes the development of the child, says that in the final stages (that is 5 & 6) the adolescent starts to turn away from any form of external authority and begins to create

[8] This is Lyons' strategy for introducing the nature of conscience: 'I am going to begin on this task by taking what might seem, at least at first sight, a strange path. It is well known that an important way to who gain scientific insights into the workings of, say, the kidneys, is to study someone with complete renal failure. In similar fashion I believe that we can gain some insights into the nature of conscience by studying someone who is clinically described as 'totally lacking a conscience', namely a psychopath' (Lyons, 2009, 489).

his own moral values and standards (Piaget, 1966, 118-120). This is what Piaget calls 'moral autonomy' and Lyons 'personal integrity' (Lyons, 2009, 491). The personal dependence of the child transforms into *autonomy* in a period called 'adolescence'; the individual creates his own personal point of views typically by recalling into question the moral principles from his parents, authority figures and peers. An individual arrives at a stage of full moral development when he overcomes childhood egocentrism and feels more responsible for his behaviour in relationships with others. Just as the child gains social expertise, *moral expertise* also emerges through the process of adolescence. He comes to this expertise by a trial-and-error method (ibid.). Locke and Freud already considered that our *moral expertise* is empirically gained from our environment. Nevertheless, the problem with their interpretation is that the subject seems to be completely *passive*, for he is just receiving the knowledge from the external world. According to Lyons things are quite different, for the process of *moral expertise* is essentially *active* and *dynamic*. It is true that the adolescent soaks everything from his parents, peers, books, movies and other figures of authority, but, he is *active* in the sense that he recalls into question and even disagrees with what he has been assimilating over years now. This is also why adolescence is such a critical and turbulent phase of one's life, and it can last for quite a long time. Future parents should not ask whether they want children, but rather whether they are ready to cope with monstruous adolescents. This leads Lyons to define *conscience* as 'generated by an essentially active and dynamic process, that for most part operated internally in a person's own conscious life, **over a considerable period of time**' (ibid., 492). During this process the young person examines, accepts or rejects the values and principles he has integrated, and finally commits himself to what he wants. These principles will become part of his integrity, and normally he will try to act on them, that is realizing his ideals in real life. Interestingly, one could think that he feels totally free from any authority now. But not really. Unfortunately, the principles to which he is committed will exert an *internal* psychological pressure on his behaviour, very similar to that of an external authority (ibid.). So breaking his commitments and violating the values he holds deer will feel very disturbing, for it will threaten the integrity of his own person. Imagine Marc who gets very easily irritated when his mother treats him like a three-year-old baby and asks too many questions. He gets angry at her and then gets mad at himself for he wishes he could be nicer to her. This example reflects someone who fails to be the ideal person he expects. Errors to act on the principles we most value will feel like 'a deeply personal failure' (ibid. 493). This failure will not only mark the subject in the thought of his *conscience* (that is at an intellectual level), but it will truly feel bad in his body as bodily motions. Moreover, the voice of conscience is often depicted as an affective (or

emotional) one. As a consequence, a person of integrity feels truly bad when she does wrong to others. This 'sense of personal failure' typically manifests in the form of negative emotions such as guilt, shame, or remorse. Interestingly, Lyons describes emotions as 'complex psychosomatic episodes that involve not only our cognitive and evaluative attitudes but also our visceral reactions – our heartbeat, respiration rate, perspiration levels and gastro-intestinal motility, the very things that provide the feelings integral to the emotions' (ibid., 493).

What is interesting in Lyons' view is that there isn't a single external source for these moral principles, but many that one seems to have integrated over many years[9]. In the process of moral development an essential part will be the 'distancing ourselves from the authority of external sources as our moral and developing an objective moral point of view of our own and committing ourselves to act on it' (Lyons, 2009, 488). Although Lyons account is internalist, for our moral principles aren't completely given from an external source, he still holds an *objectivist*, while non-authoritarian, view about these principles[10]. Now, some have argued for a completely neutral account of *conscience*, where there remains almost nothing *objective* about its content.

When one looks at the notion of *conscience* in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, the first criterion that appears is *neutrality.* Imagine an 'empty box' that can be filled with any moral content (Giubilini, 2016, §1). Now, replace this box with *conscience* (as a morally neutral concept); it isn't linked to any particular content, for each individual fills her 'box' with her own system of moral beliefs. This *neutrality* also presupposes that nothing can be added to moral justification, for *conscience* does not have any special authority anymore (such as God's voice). If you tell the truth because your *conscience* tells you to do so, this can eventually explain your act, and make it right *for you*, but it doesn't make it acceptable more generally, based on some objective values or ethical truths. It only represents *your* moral point of view, that is subjective.

Some have claimed that neutrality entails individualism, for the content of each *conscience* is determined by each person for themselves (O'Shea, forthcoming, 2). In the essay *On Liberty*, Mill explains how 'liberty of conscience' is essential for the flourishing of each individual (Mill, 1859, 13). This also leads to plurality, for there isn't a unique *conscience* (that would be collectively shared), but there are several different ones. In this view, *conscience* is a pluralistic notion, for it doesn't have a defined identity. Even if social and historical contexts can still

[9] By contrast, both the Christian and the Freudian view consider that there is a single *external* source, God for the former and the authority of parents for the latter.

[10] This means that he isn't *subjectivist* about values and thinks that objective moral truths exist.

influence on the *conscience* of an individual, its ultimate authority remains internal. In earlier times, *conscience*, as a moral response, was essentially linked to a a social context; its authority was external to the individual. However, our now-dominant conception of *conscience* sees it as something individual and no more as an intersubjective faculty to detect ethical truths.

In *Modern Moral Conscience*, Tom O'Shea challenges the neutrality and the individuality of modern moral *conscience*. O'Shea excavates ancient and traditional notions of *conscience* to show how important social and objective dimensions are. He calls our modern conception a 'shift toward an egocentric and normatively neutral understanding of conscience' (O'Shea, forthcoming, 1). The social and normative aspects should therefore be rehabilitated. But the old pattern should nevertheless be adapted to more modern conditions. So what have we lost from the old tradition? In the next paragraph, we will see what contrast traditional views from more modern ones.

As we have already seen, Ancient Greeks understood *conscience* as the self's awareness of one's own moral dimension. The moral knowledge one shares with one own self is not a mere abstraction of what is right and what is wrong, but an awareness of *real* moral demands in particular situations. This 'shared knowledge' is also the consciousness of our moral judgements, in this sense, one can say that *conscience* is an evaluative moral knowledge (Sorabji, 2014, 15). But this way of seeing has changed with time: *individualism* and *neutrality* are now predominant features of our modern conception of *conscience*. *Conscience* is seen as separated from any social attitudes. The person of *conscience* is the one who stands alone against the majority. She resists the consensus because she follows her own sense of moral rectitude. What counts in this individualistic view, is what *I* believe. Nevertheless, this individualism was not completely absent from ancient views. It already had its roots in the Greek term *synderesis*, which means 'knowledge with' and which is derived from the expression *synoida emauto* (I know with myself), that indicates a relationship with oneself rather than with others (O'Shea, forthcoming). But anyhow, in ancient societies, it was above all the public's opinion that counted as *conscientia* (ibid.). This social aspect of conscience will then even have a greater importance in the Catholic Church. *Conscience* was a matter of shared ethical judgments and it was deeply linked to the institution within which this person was embedded. According to More, it is a good thing that *conscience* is socially oriented and conforms to the laws of its time (it was then the laws of the Catholic Church). More condemns individualism, for if everyone frames himself a *conscience* of his own which is not in consonance with others, then this would be disobedience to God (More, 1534, *Dialogue on Conscience*). By contrast, contemporary understandings of *conscience* see it as something

individual which is not subject to social influences, for the authority of conscience is identified with the inside self (and not with external sources). Moreover, the importance of *conscience* lies in the fact that it secures personal integrity or individual identity. Traditional views see *conscience* as an awareness of moral truths or laws. These laws that lie in *conscience* are often associated with natural laws. As already seen, Christians such as St. Paul consider that the sense of what is right and what is wrong have been implanted by God within our hearts.

Now, let us introduce O'Shea intermediate position. He argues that *conscience* cannot be reduced to an external account of authority alone (that is social norms or parents' injunctions). He agrees with modern views that see *conscience* as individualistic, its standards being independent from society and relating to a particular person only. However, just as traditional views, he thinks that there are objective moral truths. Additionally, he holds an account about the *value* of *conscience*, which is what maintains our personal integrity.

Agents are allowed to protect their moral integrity by speaking their *conscience* out loud. The 'convictions of conscience' that the agent holds correspond to what he judges to be good according to his own beliefs. If he fails to act according to the values he holds deer, this can harshly violate his moral integrity. Integrity can therefore be seen as coherence between moral beliefs (or values) and actions. If I say that stealing is bad and I then steal a television, I lack integrity, for my acts contradict with my values (O'Shea, forthcoming). The role of conscience is to secure integrity.

However, in this view, it is difficult to see what is so important about integrity, for all it requires is consistency, and this irrespective of the justification of the beliefs, values, and actions of the agent. Imagine someone who thinks that throwing sharp objects at people is good for him, he can therefore harm others without lacking any integrity, for his actions are consistent with what he thinks. It is right to think that *conscience* is what helps us solve psychological conflicts and moral contradictions. But one can object to this that having a system of coherent beliefs do not say anything on the content of these beliefs. Human beings often tend to lie to themselves to get what they want. This self-delusion tendency can be compatible with a person lacking any inner conflicts. Moreover, someone who is always perfectly aligned with themselves seems to lack personality. Life's situations are rarely either black or white but are quite often very contrasted and nuanced. It seems to me that it requires a lot of practice to act in harmony with one's value all the time. The call of *conscience* seems rather to be something that creates disharmony in us in the first place. One often depicts conscience as something that *bites*, for it isn't just something that reveals inconsistencies among our beliefs, but it points out to moral

values of which the existence has been ignored. Conscience is therefore both something that maintains coherence as something that can create dissonances in our inner self.

Integrity is also sometimes understood as wholeheartedness: consistency in our beliefs and values, but that we keep fidelity to these fundamental commitments (O'Shea, forthcoming). The task of *conscience* would be to make us aware of these commitments. But again, it is difficult to see what is so valuable about integrity, for *conscience* or wholeheartedness does not justify the content of our commitments.

Some philosophers claim that we find our identity in such commitments, this is what Bernard William calls the 'conditions of my existence' (1981, 12). This is compatible with the idea that *conscience* safeguards integrity. However, in all these modern views the content of our conscience remains *neutral*, in the sense that no particular beliefs or values are clearly pointed out. In the absence of such information, it seems hard to say in what the role of conscience, that is maintenance of personal integrity, is so important. Think of someone who has a rotten identity but who is coherent enough in his thoughts and commitments that one could say that he has an integrated personality. Conversely, some people go through identity crisis, for it is hard to be who they are in the society they live in. Think of a Muslim woman for whom it is obvious to weir the niqab every day. Now that her country forbids face dissimulation, she faces a violation of her integrity, for she is forced to abandon a deep commitment which is part of her identity. Sometimes achieving integrity is too high a cost (O'Shea, forthcoming). This appeal to integrity is not sufficient to explain why *conscience* is so valuable.

However, one might still be able to argue that integrity has its importance, even if one remains neutral about the content of *conscience*. For the lack of such integrity, specifically in the long terms, would amount to great personality/identity damages, such as the lack of clarity in one's behaviour (ibid.). But there are still good reasons to resist a defence of purely *formal* integrity (that is *conscience* with a neutral content). A wrongdoer can still have such an integrity and be completely wholehearted in his existence and this doesn't make his actions less wrong. By contrast, some people are very ambivalent in their actions. I might for example think that social media are detrimental for all that matters is appearance. At the same time, I really want to be socially accepted in the society in which I live, and having Instagram shows to others that I'm a sociable person. Maybe I do not have a totally integrated personality, for I still have internal conflicts, but this does not make of me a bad person. It therefore seems doubtful that what makes *conscience* valuable is integrity.

Why is *conscience* so valuable then? Something must do the job to justify its importance in our lives. A possible answer is that what gives *conscience* its value is the appeal to external norms

or standards. This brings us back to a natural law conception, that is the idea that there are independent moral truths. This also rejects the neutral account of *conscience* and leads to a more substantial account (O'Shea, forthcoming). However, abandoning neutrality (the idea that *conscience* is a matter of subjectivity, just as an empty box, it can be filled with any content) would threaten our liberty of conscience, for everyone would have to conform to the same moral principles.

This objection can be escaped by saying that liberty of *conscience* and having a moral *conscience* is not totally incompatible. One can have a normatively oriented moral *conscience* and still have liberty of *conscience* understood as freedom of conviction. But how can we prove that this freedom of *conscience* would not be redundant, knowing that our convictions would already be chosen for us (by our parents and our society)? Moral *conscience* and liberty can be separated. This doesn't mean that people would act like they want, for there would still be a social authority. Just as we have seen in Lyons' account, the adolescent is free to choose what values he wants to commit to, but these are given by external sources (Lyons, 2009). Maybe one can say that our individual moral intuitions must be justified by external ethical judgments. This conclusion sounds a bit weird, for when one thinks of liberty, what comes to our mind is the freedom to think and to act differently from others. Having our deepest moral commitments aligned with those of society is awesome when it happens, but one knows that it is not always the case and that our liberty is most of the time frustrated. One can soften this account by requiring only a broad correspondence of our own commitments with the normatively required behaviour, this means that justification is not demanded in every little case (O'Shea, forthcoming). Some people only have a general awareness of what is morally acceptable, for their *moral expertise* is not that much developed because of their education. Others are more accurate and precise in their moral conduct, for their moral knowledge is deeper (Lyons, 2009,492).

Another question one could pay attention to is 'how our *conscience* connects to external moral sources?' In theological conceptions, it is God that ensures *conscience*'s awareness of natural moral principles[11]. However, a secular approach cannot explain the relationship between

[11] Concerning the question of the *nature* of moral principles, Christian philosophers such as Aquinas claim that these are natural laws. By contrast, secular philosophers tend to speak of 'ethically naturalistic forms'. However ethical naturalism faces many problems. Among them is the *naturalistic fallacy*, the idea that the 'is' implies the 'ought'. In other words, it is the attempt to base moral judgments on facts. Other non-naturalistic realistic approaches, which also claim that moral properties are real and exist as *sui generis* entities, face metaphysical and epistemological problems. If these entities are real, why can we not see them as mere physical objects then? And how can we grasp them? This puts pression on the account of *conscience*, especially if one doubts the idea that *conscience* is responsive to external moral norms and values. I am not going to treat this complex subject here.

conscience and moral norms via a divine source. *Conscience* is more described as a faculty that is sensitive to moral sources. But how does that happen? One might for example have moral intuitions, however, these cannot be innate. The most plausible answer would be that *conscience* has to be socially educated, for it is 'better able to be morally responsive when it is buttressed by appropriate social architecture' (O'Shea, forthcoming). Nonetheless, *conscience* might still have an innate disposition to receive moral principles. As already said before, there is a wide spectrum of degrees of moral knowledge. Some people have undergone a richer ethical education and have developed a 'better' moral sensitivity. This echoes Aristotle's claim about moral education. His idea was that *conscience* develops as the child slowly builds good habits through his life. Aristotle's view was not directly about *conscience*, but more about becoming a virtuous being through practice and awareness in every particular situation. Furthermore, every community provides ethical resources. Every language has some ethical vocabulary, so everyone can share his experiences and feelings by finding common points with others. Art, religion and philosophy also contribute to the socialisation of *conscience*. The art of storytelling also helps to heighten our moral awareness, and this not by pointing to general moral principles, but by drawing our attention on particular cases (O'Shea, forthcoming). Each community has its own moral patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviour, which one can compare to a sort of 'collective imagination'. Now, in this view, is there a risk for the individual's *conscience* to be completely overwhelmed by these social influences? Giublini thinks that the main role of *conscience* is to protect our personal identity, he writes:

> Moral integrity is considered valuable and worth protecting because of its conceptual and psychological relations not only with our *conscience*, but with our sense of personal identity, i.e., our idea and our sense of what type of person we are' (Giublini, 2016).

Against this, O'Shea argues that the dichotomy between individual and social *conscience* should be soften. A well-functioning *conscience* has integrated the social patterns, so that it can live in harmony with its society. The claim according to which *conscience* is what makes our personality isn't to be taken so seriously (O'Shea, forthcoming). But this should not lead us to think of the socialisation of *conscience* as a total alienation, for the agent can still oppose himself to social rules. *Conscience* is not about blindly conforming to traditions; it requires a deep analysis of one own inner self. It can be visualized as an inner voice that is shaped by a phenomenon of socialization. However, this voice is not determined by external authorities only, our individual verdicts and self-assessments are also important. One should therefore

soften the dichotomy between the influence of social infrastructure and individual *conscience*. Nevertheless, this does not mean that all social influences are good, for some communities can be corrupted by spreading vice and other negative patterns of behaviour. So not all social influences on *conscience* are benign (O'Shea, forthcoming). How can we know if we can trust social traditions then? Some ethical traditions might be more acceptable than others. A possible criterion to evaluate their legitimacy is if they are rational enough. I am not going to go into too many details here. Let us say a word about *pluralism*, that is the idea that there exist different opinions for each individualistic *conscience*. We can say that shared standards are important, for if we lack some external widely recognised arbiter, this would lead to too many conflicts within a society. A certain degree of homogeneity is therefore required so that moral agreements can be established. However, one can object that there still exist many disagreements. But even so, this does not prove that moral truths do not exist or that it is a subjective matter only, for maybe some of these objective truths simply contradict one another (this is another subject). The claim that moral *conscience* secures personal integrity is still doubtful. Even if there are moral disagreements, this doesn't mean that one cannot not understand *conscience* in a normative and social way.

Finally, let us say a few words about the private character of *conscience.* Interestingly, Gilbert Ryle considers that *conscience* applies to the first person only, for it sounds quite strange to say that 'my conscience told me you should do this or this' (Ryle, 1939). Judgments about the morality of others cannot be called judgments of *conscience* according to Ryle, for one can only disapprove of one's own conduct. The reason is I cannot directly feel what you feel or think what you think. But arguably, I can create moral problems in my head, I can for example imagine myself what it would be to be in your shoes and say: 'if I were you, I would not do so and so, for my *conscience* wouldn't bear it'. But I cannot say: 'my *conscience* would not be clear if *you* do it'. Why can my *conscience* only make judgments on *my* own actions? The difference according to Ryle is that between *conscience* and moral convictions. Originally (in Antiquity), *conscience* referred to self-knowledge, or more generally to self-consciousness. Introspection was seen as an activity of *conscience*. With the Reformation, *conscience* was attributed to the knowledge of the divine commands only. *Conscience* then began to have the narrower meaning of 'my duties' and 'my faults' (ibid., 32). This partly explains why introspection can only be applied to *my* thoughts, deeds, and behaviour. What can explain the privacy of *conscience* is therefore that I have *knowledge* of myself, but only *convictions* about

others' behaviour[12]. To draw the nuance between having a *conscience* and having moral convictions one must first know what it is to have moral convictions, or principles. Having a moral principle is knowing that this proposition is true. The knowledge of general moral principle is then purely intellectual. This intellectual knowledge differs from the fact of being disposed to act in a certain way, that is in accordance with one's *conscience*. There is a difference between intellectually *knowing* a concept and having experienced the sensation of this concept. I might tell you very accurately what it tastes like to eat avocado, however, if you have never tried it, you can't know what it's like to eat it. Applied to moral principles, I might *know* that it is wrong to hurt others (that would be the knowledge of a moral principle), however, if I don't feel bad, or guilty, for doing it, this shows that my conscience of this principle is absent. Psychopaths for example intellectually *know* the existence of moral principle, they might even tell others what's right and what's wrong, however, they lack any moral *conscience*, for they do not feel bad for their social disorders. Still, there is a difference between (1) having the *knowledge* of a moral principle, (2) being *convinced* of a moral principle, and (3) act on that principle. (1) One might intellectually accept that being honest is a moral principle; (2) one might be convinced that being honest is a moral principle, but still failing to tell the truth (this is what Aristotle would call *akrasia*, that is moral weakness); (3) one is honest, for one possesses the concept of honesty and it is part of one's nature (ibid., 33). *Conscience* should be linked to point (3), for the moral concept is operative in our emotions and motivation. So, there is a difference between knowing a rule of conduct and acting according to it. In the *Concept of the Mind,* Ryle gives the famous example of a kid who perfectly knows all the chess rules, for he has learned them by heart, however, he does not know how to play, for he hasn't put his knowledge into practice yet, this is what he calls the difference between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how' (Ryle 1949, 28-30). In the same way, someone might perfectly know all the Spanish grammar rules, but still do not know how to speak Spanish, for she hasn't practiced it enough yet. Someone might perfectly know rule of *etiquette*, but when at a party, he is unable to behave correctly, for he doesn't know *how* to do so. I may perfectly criticize the swimming skills of others, for I may know what mistakes they are making, and still do not know *how* to swim well myself. The manifestations of my skills are in my performances and not my evaluations of others behaviour. In the same way, the proper manifestations of my *conscience* are in my acts, behaviour, emotions, and not merely in my knowing of moral principles.

[12] One can object that introspection is not a source of infallible knowledge. I can be wrong about my own thoughts and motives by describing them. But this epistemological point should be treated elsewhere.

Conscience is having moral convictions for sure, but at an operative level (Ryle, 1939, 35). It is an active faculty. Emotions are triggered when one acts contrary to one's moral convictions. On the contrary, it doesn't say anything when I am aligned with my principles. If I speak the truth because I value honesty, then my *conscience* remains quiet. However, when there are conflicts, pangs and bites can occur. These bites manifest in the forms of negative emotions. This explains why I cannot consult *my conscience* about what others do. The reason is that my *conscience* can only conduct its own self to behave according to moral principles. *Your* actions cannot trigger the pangs *my* conscience.

In summary, we have seen that *conscience* plays a major role in our lives; its function is primarily that human beings do the good. Whenever one does not act according to one's *conscience*, the painful consequence is that one feels bad. Let us turn to the nature of *bad conscience*.

3. BAD CONSCIENCE – A DISPOSITION TO FEEL NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

In this section, I want to argue that *bad conscience* is an affective disposition to feel negative emotions. First, I say what an emotion is (mainly relying on Deonna & Teroni's theory). Then I try to explain how they are related to *conscience*. To put things very simply, a clear *conscience* would experience positive emotions, such as joy, love, gratitude and so on. *Bad conscience* is the darker side of *conscience*, we will therefore look at some negative emotions such as guilt, remorse, shame, regret, etc.

Emotions play a major role in our lives, for they are reactions to things that matter to us. They are responses to values. Fear is a reaction to danger, surprise to the unexpected, disgust to what makes us sick, outrage to insult, love to what makes us shiver and so on (Brady, 2018, 76).

We intuitively know when we are undergoing emotions. For they feel very different from other psychological phenomena. For example, a visual experience represents the fact that the sky is blue. It is the blueness of the sky that causes me to see it as blue. Unlike these types of experiences, emotions aren't directly triggered by objects. What makes me fear the lion isn't the lion itself but the belief that it is dangerous. By contrast with perceptions, which give us direct access to the object, emotions are always grounded on other mental states, these are cognitive bases. Let us say that emotions represent objects in a particular way, for they depend on the evaluative judgment of the subject, which is a cognitive base for the emotion. This is why one can have different emotions in relation to the same object or event. I may feel sadness about the idea that you lost my favourite book, but you may feel shame or guilt instead. My

sadness is triggered by the evaluation of the object as a loss. While your guilt is triggered because you consider your own behaviour as reproachable. This is because our emotions are intimately linked with our tendency to make evaluative judgements (Deonna & Teroni, 5-6).
Moreover, emotional reactions to values are often accompanied by a sensation or feeling. In other words, emotions have a *phenomenology*; it feels a certain way to have an emotion. Positive emotions, such as love for our friends, feel good; they come with a sensation of pleasure. Negative emotions, such as anger, do not feel good; they are most of the time felt as painful. Negative emotions manifest themselves through bodily agitations and disturbances. Anger is for example followed by 'an acceleration of heart rate, quickened breathing, an increased blood pressure, a rush of adrenaline' (ibid., 2).
Let us add that emotions are also subject to *standards of correctness*. The question one might ask is: 'does my emotion represent the world as it is?' If I feel disgust at the listening of Beethoven's music, this might be seen as *inappropriate* as an emotional reaction, for this music contains no disgust. Most people that listen to Beethoven feel pleasure instead. Emotions are seen as *correct* or *incorrect* whether they fit the facts the represent or not. Now, *standards of correctness* should be distinguished from *epistemological standards*. Just as in the case of beliefs, emotions can be *justified* considering the reasons someone gives for having them (Deonna & Teroni, 2012, 6-7). If I mistake a big spider for a mygale, my fear is *appropriate*, but one cannot say that it is *justified*. My fear is *correct* because the spider resembles a mygale, however, one cannot say that it is *justified* for the spider in question is innocuous.
Now let us pause for a moment and try to understand how emotions can be linked to *conscience.* Until now, we have presented *conscience* essentially as a moral faculty, for almost every individual has a *conscience* about what it is morally right and what it is morally wrong to do. This restricts the scope of emotions that are linked to *conscience.* Indeed, there are moral emotions and non-moral emotions (ibid., 18). Moral emotions are for example shame, guilt, compassion, for they have a moral value in various situations. If I feel guilty about hurting your feelings, I will try not to do it again. Non-moral emotions are for example envy or *Schadenfreude*, for they do not bring any good. As already said, emotions are reactions to values. In other words, they are reactions to what matters to us. It is because I love my dog that I panic when I see it cross the road, for it might be hit by a car. There must be some *concern* in the first place, so that there could be an emotional reaction. If I don't care about my dog, then I would be indifferent whether it could be hit or not. These concerns that underpin our emotional reactions are our values. Emotions have an epistemic value, for they play a crucial role in the detection of important objects and events (Brady, 2013, 13). They play a role in evaluative

judgments or beliefs, for they enable us to have evaluative knowledge. Fear tells me about danger, jealousy about infidelity, joy about good things. Emotions constitute the evaluative knowledge that generates our judgments of approval or disapproval[13]. It is in this sense that one can say they are intimately related to *conscience*, for they can be seen as constitutive of our moral knowledge.

Finally, an important element that should be mentioned is the contrast between emotions and closely related phenomena: affective dispositions. Suppose someone accidentally forgets to zip his pants in front of all his colleagues. When he realizes the incident, he cannot do anything but feel shame. In this case, shame is experienced as a particular episode. Now if someone always feels shame, for no particular reason, then he has an affective disposition to experience shame. Interestingly affective disposition can include several distinct emotions (ibid., 8). Here, I want to argue that *bad conscience* is an affective disposition to feel negative emotions. A person that has a *bad conscience* will have a great tendency to experience emotions such as shame, guilt, remorse, and regret. A metaphor might be helpful. *Bad conscience* can be compared to a 'black cloud' that would chronically rain on your head and follow you wherever you go; you constantly feel bad[14]. Note that *affective dispositions* have no phenomenology, for they have no felt quality. They only find their expression in emotions (ibid., 9). These *affective dispositions* can also be said to be character traits, for the subject possesses them even when they do not manifest. I may have an angry temperament even if I do not feel angry all the time. My claim is that negative emotions such as remorse, guilt, shame, and regret are constitutive of *bad conscience*. Let us now identify these negatives emotions.

3.1.REMORSE

The word *remorse* derives from the Latin word *remodere,* i.e., 'to bite again'. Most of the time, one feels remorse for something bad one has done. This emotion is directed at the past. As we've seen earlier, each emotion has a 'particular object', this is the cognitive base on which it is grounded (ibid., 5). The object of remorse is the belief that one has done something wrong. Alan feels bad for he has not told the truth to his wife. He evaluates his action (or omission to tell the truth) as something bad. This emotion has an *epistemic* value, for it reveals to the person the fact that they have done something wrong. It also has a *motivational* value, which is the

[13] Here, I am not very clear about the idea whether it is the evaluative judgement that triggers the emotion, or the other way around, the emotion that triggers the evaluative judgement.

[14] To tell the truth, this is Julien Deonna's metaphor while I once met him on the train and talked with him about the subject.

motivation to repair what we've done, that is atonement. Remorse therefore involves a construal of oneself as having done something wrong and a concern or desire to make reparations (ibid., 77). In Brady's view, emotions have the power of making certain objects and events *salient*, they signal that something needs attention. Just as physical pain alerts the subject that he is being injured and that his physical integrity is being threatened, emotional suffering sheds light on important things. Fear for example signals danger. He considers remorse as an emotional suffering but also as a virtue, for it can be regarded as a power or ability to attain certain accomplishments. This emotion enables the subject to register his moral mistakes (through suffering) and then be motivated to accomplish reparation and atonement. However, remorse generates the recognition of a wrongdoing only under the condition that one has the appropriate moral concern. He adds that a disposition to suffer emotionally is necessary for remorse to manifest (ibid., 78). Finally, acting to remove the source of pain is a way of making things less painful. This is why we feel better when we make apologies. As we will see in section 3, negative emotions such as remorse can be considered as virtues (ibid, 80).

Robert C. Roberts defines remorse as an emotion that arises when a person construes that some particular action of her violates her standards (Roberts, 2003, 222). She construes this action or omission as something she did intentionally or negligently, she therefore feels blameworthy. Imagine Robert driving a car. He accidentally hits a dog and kills it. Although he was driving attentively and it was not his fault, he believes that what he has done is horrible. His family keeps repeating to him that he is not responsible for what happened, but he feels remorse. Although his emotion is irrational, he keeps blaming himself for not having been enough attentive to the dog that jumped in front of his car. Remorse's consequent concern is to make reparation for the offense, to make things right. But sometimes, it is impossible to repair what has already happened. Robert cannot bring the dog to life again by some prayer. In cases where a reparation seems impossible, the remorseful person may find satisfaction in suffering for her offense. You can maybe seek forgiveness from the dog's owner. As many emotions, remorse comes in degrees of intensity. Sometimes it can only manifest as a little itch that fleets and faints immediately, other times it can painfully burn and torment us for an entire life (ibid.). In summary, remorse is a construal that one has violate one's own standards; the feeling of blameworthiness motivates the subject to atone for his action, whether it was truly wrong or not.

3.2. REGRET

Just as remorse, regret is also directed at the past. However, the object of this emotion is not an action construed as wrong, but a loss or something we wish to be different. In other words, regret can be seen as a negative emotional response to irreversible loss, that is the recognition of lost value (Jankélévitch, 1993). Imagine that some years ago you said some unkind words to your grandmother. Now she is gone, and you have not had the opportunity to say sorry. You deeply regret her presence and the way you treated her. You wish you had been kinder. Regret can be seen as a sensitivity to counterfactual possibilities; according to Eldridge, it is a 'consciousness of time' (Eldridge, 2017). A regretful person wishes she had acted differently in the past (If only I had done that instead this). She wishes she could travel back in time and change something. This emotion is mostly about temporality. Even if it is mostly turned toward the past, for it focuses on regretful memories, it can nevertheless be about future events that we know we will later regret. Interestingly, regret can also sometimes be directed at the present, but only if what is regretted is seen as a 'fait accompli' (Roberts, 2013, 240). I might regret that there *is* so much violence in this world. I might also regret that I shall die before my grandchildren are old enough. What triggers regret in all these cases is the thought that things could have been otherwise. You could have been kinder to your grandmother. The world could have been more peaceful. You could have lived to 120. Regret has therefore many possibilities. According to Roberts, one can think of other emotions such as sadness, sorrow, grief, remorse and guilt as forms of regret, for one regrets something lost (ibid., 240). By contrast, in emotions such as remorse and guilt, one regrets a misdeed, something wrong one has done: 'I could have thought twice before throwing the cat out the window'. Remorse is based on a concern to act morally; guilt on a concern to be a moral person; sadness and grief on attachment to things, places, and persons (ibid., 240). Regret seems more global; it has a broader range of basic concerns. Most of the time, it is accompanied by the thought that things might have been otherwise[15]. Regret is an emotional manifestation of *bad conscience*, for it is a negative emotion. Some people are constantly experiencing regret; they for example think that the good days are gone. Their *conscience* is blocked toward the past. This emotion manifests as a rumanition in *conscience*, for the subject incessantly reiterates the past. Furthermore, the subject suffers because of his awareness that things could have been different. Regret considers the gap

[15] Vladimir Jankélévitch, in *La Mauvaise Conscience*, distinguishes *remorse* from *regret* by saying that remorse is directed toward an action, while regret is about loss and the irreversibility of time: 'le regret voudrait prolonger; mais le remords voudrait anéantir; celui-là déplore un passé absent, celui-ci au contraire, un passé qui n'est que trop présent.' (Jankélévitch, 1933, 73).

between what *is* and what could have been. It is an affective emotion, for the subject considers the past through an affective lens, he values what is gone more than what is now. Regretful memories therefore consist in valuing other possibilities of choices you could have taken (Eldridge, 2017, 647). Nevertheless, even if this emotion is phenomenologically painful, it still has moral value, for it forces us to live in the present, to anticipate and make choices that we won't later regret[16]. Finally, one can also regret some character trait seen as a defect; the thought of the alternative possibility would for example be: 'if only I was less apologetic, why do I excuse for existing all the time?'. But this kind of thought would more properly be attributed to shame, a negative emotion that is less about irreversible loss than about the *self*.

3.3. SHAME

Red is the colour that can be associated with shame[17], for our faces turn red when we are embarrassed of a situation. Shame is relatively undermining when it happens. We feel disgusting, not because we've done anything bad, but about the simple fact of being ourselves. Shame is a self-evaluative emotion. In modern cultures, it is often linked to self-image (that is thinking what sort of person we are in relation to others). Guilt by contrast has more to do with self-recrimination (that is blaming oneself for failing). Curiously, this emotion is often related to nakedness. As a matter of fact, Ancient Greeks already tended to associate shame with nakedness. They named the genitals '*aidoia*', which is a derivative from *aidos*, 'shame' (Bernard Williams 1993: Ch. 4). The Greek playwriter Euripides distinguished good from bad shame. The former role is to advert future wrongdoings, it has value for it helps us become better persons. The latter is bad because it only torments us like a sickness, without bringing any value (Sorjabi, 2014, 15). This second type of shame can typically be associated with the affective disposition of *bad conscience*, for it seems to last longer than an episodic emotion. Greeks and Romans did not clearly separate guilt from shame. If a given situation provoked shame, it also provoked guilt. However, they are more considered as a culture of shame, this because of its public dimension. Shame is entirely public, for the Greeks never conceived anything like private *conscience* (ibid., 17). By contrast, Christianity is said to be a culture of guilt, for this emotion has more to do with our private *conscience*. Let us come back to the idea of nakedness and its intimacy with shame. In the Genesis, we find the story of Adam and Eve that are both described as naked. Surprisingly, they are not ashamed. It is only after the Fall,

[16] Regret has a *protentional* component, for even if it is mainly turned toward the past, regretful memories have a strong link to the future.
[17] It can nevertheless also be associated with anger, fear, and passion.

that followed the act of eating from the forbidden tree, that they become aware of their nakedness and feel bad for it. Consequently, they decide to cover their private parts with fig leaves. To say it in other words, before the Fall, they were *innocent*, for they were not 'conscience' of their nakedness. Why were they now ashamed and why hadn't they been before? This is what Velleman asks in his article *The Genesis of Shame*. The Bible suggests that they became ashamed when they realized that they were naked. It is not that they couldn't see it before, as if they were blind, but they did not think about it, nor about the possibility of wearing clothes (Velleman, 2001). What did bring this necessity of clothing then? For it suddenly came like an evidence. Something must have opened their eyes to their nakedness. The explanation relies in the fact that they acquired *knowledge* of what is good and what is evil (ibid.). It is only after eating from the Tree of Knowledge that the eye-opening happened. They now *know* that nakedness is something evil. But why is nakedness something sinful? The reason is that it is connected with lust, passions and temptation (especially sexual passions that have the power to distract from God). Initially, their nature was good, for the temptation was external (it came from the snake). After eating from the forbidden tree, they internalized sin and temptation.

In our modern societies, nakedness violates social norms. A condition to be socially accepted is therefore to wear clothes. According to Velleman, shame is an emotion of reflected self-assessment: the one who feels shame thinks less of himself than how he is really seen by others. Curiously, in the pre-social context of Adam and Eve, there were no such conditions. What distinguishes Adam's and Eve's shame from our modern shame then? First, shame as it is described in the Genesis doesn't seem to involve any other observer's eye, that is society. Adam and Eve were only ashamed because of the possibility of sex and not because of self-image (Velleman, 2001, 29). Before eating from the tree of knowledge, they ignored this possibility, but they now know why God has given them genitals. Their shame is essentially related to their 'private parts'. This sheds light on an important element, which is *privacy. Privacy* may be an essential component of shame. Think of our modern societies (even if this also could have been the case in older civilisations), many things are *private*, this by choice or convention. Velleman defines *privacy* as choices the agent makes between his inner and outer selves. It is this ability to choose what he wants to show and what he wants to keep hidden that will shape his external behaviour. Interestingly, Velleman contrasts *privacy* with inclination, where there is no space for control; the agent's actions being directed by an impulse. By choosing which behaviour one wants to express, *privacy* is the ability to resist desires. We are self-presenting creatures; the reason is we care for our self-image. Threats to this self-presenting image engenders anxiety

and is what constitutes the emotion of shame according to Velleman. He writes: 'the realm of privacy is the central arena of shame, I think, because it is the central arena for threats to your standing as a social agent' (ibid, 37). Indeed, when something private about us is showing, sometimes it is because one has failed to manage one's public image. This is what Velleman calls an 'inadequacy in self-presentation'. According to Bernard Williams, 'the root of shame lies in exposer', especially when you are at your disadvantage, which he compares to 'a loss of power' (William 1993, 220). It is this failure of *privacy* that threatens your image and generates anxiety, which constitutes the emotions of shame[18]. Now, remark that there is a difference between *failure* of privacy and *violation* of privacy, for the latter doesn't necessarily occasion shame. If someone secretly looks at you while you're taking a shower, you do not automatically feel ashamed for it, for no doubt is cast on your capacity of self-presentation. The same holds when one intentionally violates our own *privacy*, for it is a deliberate choice to expose oneself in public. Only unintentional self-exposure entails shame[19], for it is a reaction to the loss of the standing as a self-presenting person (ibid., 38). Now strangely, some people like to keep things private, not because they are ashamed of them, but because they are proud of them. If one holds something deer, one may try to hide it from the regard of other, for they wouldn't understand its value, even if they would approve of it. Think of a poet who wants to keep his poems secret; they are too precious to be exposed, even if he knows that others would admire him. Williams writes: 'people can be ashamed by being admired by the wrong audience in the wrong way (*Shame and Necessity*, p. 82). We have seen that failure of privacy is the central occasion for shame, but it is the not the only occasion. Sometimes one can feel ashamed for something that one did not hope to keep private. One can feel shame about things that are public too. A kid can be ashamed of showing off with his parents in front his friends, even if it is completely normal (ibid. 44). The reason he feels shame is because the company of his parents undermines the self-presentation he has among his peers, which is that of an independent and autonomous individual. Being seen with his parents proves that he is still a dependent child. This example does not involve privacy, for the teenager has only tried to accentuate some public traits and to diminish others. There is no failure of privacy, for it is a matter of self-definition. In the same way, one can be ashamed of some physical or other conspicuous aspects one is not responsible for. Someone can be ashamed because he has excessively long arms; it is not his fault, for he is

[18] But remark that privacy is not the only locus of shame. For, there are things about which we can feel ashamed that do not involve any privacy. Shame can extend beyond the body and beyond matters of privacy.
[19] However, nakedness is always accompanied by some natural shame, even if someone intentionally poses for a painter for example.

just born this way. Or think of someone who is excessively beautiful. Great beauty can sometimes occasion shame, particularly when it undermines our self-presented image. Exposing one's beauty can be taken as arrogant. Or take the example of a kid who is very clever and who intentionally makes bad grades for he doesn't want his classmates to mock him. Because he feels the need to be integrated, he considers 'intelligence' as something to be ashamed of. Similarly, someone who is bound by stereotypes because of the colour of his skin, or his gender, may feel shame for it, for no room is left for her to express her self-image. The one that has been called 'nigger' may feel shame for the colour of his skin, even if he needn't be ashamed of it in response to racism. Similarly, the kid that is good at school may feel shame for his good grades; he despises the idea of being called 'Steve Urkel' by his classmates. The reason these types of character feel ashamed is because they feel vulnerable about their self-image, about which they feel they lack control (ibid., 46).

In the sixteenth century, the protestant movement of the Puritans had a special practice for shame: the pillory. The pillory shamed a wrongdoer by exposing him to his neighbours' disapproval. (ibid., 47). The practice consisted in a physical constraint that was applied to his hands and face, the primary parts of self-presentation; the aim was to ensure that the wrongdoer could not present himself as he wished. He could not hide his face, and by this way alleviate his shame. The pillory was mainly a device that taught shame to those who did not feel ashamed for their wrongdoings. Hiding one's face in shame is a symbolic act, it also shows the subject's recognition of having socially failed (ibid., see footnote, 47). Hiding one's face is also a gesture of self-repossession; it restores our self-presentation. The pillory prevented this act of withdrawal and reestablishment of one's self-presentation, for one was forced to confront the disapproval of others. The disability of the wrongdoer of publicly presenting himself stripped him of his social status, losing all his credits as a self-presenter.

Let us go back to *nakedness* and figure out why it is so shameful. In our modern societies, women's nudity is less shocking than men's nudity. One of the reasons is that our world is dominated by men; women are mostly seen as sexual objects (ibid., 39)[20]. Another explanation why male nudity is more shameful is because the genitals are external and therefore more explicit. Men cannot hide an unwanted erection, which is an explicit manifestation of their feelings and a failure of privacy. Interestingly, this confirms St. Augustine's hypothesis that what is shameful about nakedness is the 'body's insubordination to the will'[21]. It is this

[20] I know it is quite controversial to say this. But it is true that female nudity is far more present in cinematic representation than is male nudity.

[21] Here I simply paraphrase what Velleman says about St. Augustine (ibid., 39).

insubordination of the body that threatens the agent's social position, for it shows his vulnerability and the fact that he cannot control his feelings or desires. Hiding one's nakedness is therefore a way of conservating our capacity for self-presentation (ibid., 40).

Shame, as a physiological response, very often manifests as blushing; one's face unintentionally turns red. This again reminds us of the insubordination of the body to the will. Indeed, this response to failure of *privacy* is in itself a further failure of the same kind. For one's face betrays many feelings; a bare face is therefore as shameful as naked genitals (ibid., 41). When someone has no control on his facial reactions, his self-presentation is threatened, for it shows that he cannot control his emotions. This is also why we usually use the expression 'a loss of face', which suggests the undergoing of a shameful event. This brings us to redescribe *privacy* as a capacity to control some of our impulses, which one allows the manifestation in solitude only.

According to another account, shame is related to specific value judgements. It is considered as an emotion of self-reflected assessment. To feel shame is to feel vulnerable to particular negative assessments. But according to Velleman's account, these judgements stand outside the content of shame, for he suggests that shame can occur without them. Let us see how these judgements can be associated with shame, even if this is a contingent association only.

One can be ashamed for failing to realize some values one holds deer. Such as being ashamed for being a coward in situations that demand courage. Notice that many of our moral failings consist in impulsive or compulsive behaviours, which is a manifestation of our private realm. Ideally, one prefers to keep these impulses private, for their exposure brings embarrassment, principally because we are concerned about what others think of us. Shame is therefore triggered by thoughts such as 'people will think that I am weak'. However, the link between shame and negative assessments is not so obvious. What we associate with negative self-assessments is that our self-presentation is compromised, which induces shame. But imagine someone who doesn't care about her self-presentation, nor about what others will think of her. This person does not associate shame with self-disapproval judgements. Consequently, showing her nakedness in public would not produce any shame in her, even if she perfectly knows that what she does is chocking and morally wrong. Another kind of attitude is humility. Imagine someone who decides to speak his feelings for someone else in front of many people. Others mock him and think he is weak, but he does not feel ashamed for it. These two examples show that shame is not always linked to what others think. In Velleman's view, what induces shame is the compromising of our self-image. Humility is a way of not feeling ashamed about the criticism we face, for feeling humble deflates our pretensions and thereby our sense of being compromised. An opposed attitude to humility is pride. Pride is incompatible with shame, for

even if one perceives that others denigrate us, one does not feel that our self-image is compromised[22] (ibid., 42). Finally, one can say that shame has often been associated with a *social* dimension, for this emotion regulates our image or standing with others (Teroni & Deonna, 2017, 729). As we have seen already, emotions are forms of evaluations. Emotions motivate behaviours that allow us to live in harmony with others. Morally good behaviours may be called social, and morally bad behaviours, anti-social. Shame is a morally good emotion, for it favours a pro-social behaviour, which promotes the fitness of the individual and the group. Even though it is painful to experience this negative emotion, shame has moral value, for it facilitating interpersonal relationships, which fosters the well-being of the greatest number. (Deonna & Teroni, 2011, 14). Now, let us turn to a moral emotion that is slightly different from shame: guilt.

3.4. GUILT

One says of someone that he has a guilty *conscienc*e when he feels bad for something he has done. The English expression 'to have a guilty conscience' straightforwardly draws the link between *conscience* and guilt. The reason may be that guilt is one of the most important moral emotions, for it is a negative response to bad actions. Guilt is principally linked to norms, by contrast with shame which is linked to values (Teroni & Deonna, 2017)[23]. One feels guilty when one perceives that a norm is being flouted. In religion for example, guilt arises when one is guilty of having committed a sin, for a divine command has been flouted. Most of the time, guilt is felt over actions that are intentional. However, it can also be felt over unintentional actions and omissions. The notion of *behaviour* is what envelops all these cases. I can for example unintentionally ignore someone and feel guilty for it. This flouts the social norm of 'saying hello' to someone you know. In the case of an omission, I can for example forget to thank someone, for I take their help for granted, this flouts a moral norm. Now, compared to these insignificant events, some episodes of guilt can have such an impact as to render our lives almost meaningless. This is what some philosophers have called *devastating guilt.* Such cases

[22] This last claim is quite radical. Imagine someone who feels very proud about his newly bought red Ferrari. However, he suddenly notices that a bird has left a remarkable poop. He might be ashamed, for others can think that he cannot keep his car clean.
[23] We will come to the main differences between shame and guilt in a further section.

of guilt can give rise to negative assessments about one own self (and not about our actions only)[24].

Some culture value guilt, while others do not. In Western societies, guilt is regarded as a vital moral emotion (Cockelet & Maley, 2019). It plays a role in moral development and progress. Guilt can be seen as what constitutes morality itself, for a truly moral person will feel this negative emotion whenever she does something wrong. Some philosophers consider that it is an *emotion*, others that it is a *feeling*. Corey J. Maley and Harman argue that guilt is not an emotion but a feeling (ibid.). I prefer to argue that guilt is an emotional manifestation of the affective disposition of *bad conscience*[25]. Now, we've already said that guilt is a negative response, but to what *kind* of bad features does it typically respond? It seems to react to something wrong one has done, that is an action. Here arises a problem, for sometimes one can feel bad because one is guilty. The distinction is very subtle. On the one side, one can feel bad because one harms someone for whom we care. On the other side, one can feel bad for being guilty about the same wrongdoing. Only the latter is an instance of guilt. One can only feel bad for being guilty of some wrongdoing[26], that is the 'bite of conscience'. The object of guilt is therefore not the wrongdoing itself, but the *belief* that one is guilty (ibid., 53*)*. In a nutshell, our responsiveness to having harmed someone else is not itself an instance of guilt, for guilt arises only when one believes that one is guilty.

Now, one should ask, what does distinguish guilt from remorse? People often tend to mistake both emotions and say that they are feeling guilty when they are feeling remorse, and feeling remorse when it would be more appropriate to speak of guilt. Even if these two emotions look like one another, they are distinct in nature. Guilt, that is 'feeling guilty', by contrast with remorse, focuses less on a particular action (construed as offensive by the agent) than on the 'offender's status of being guilty' (Roberts, 2013, 223). Guilt is about the self, it is about some trait of ours, for example one's wickedness. By contrast, remorse requires some reference to a particular action that one construes as offensive[27]. One can feel guilty in a more diffused way, even there not being any particular offense. For it is an emotion of self-assessment. In guilt the

[24] This is important in connection with the contrast between shame and guilt. Shame focuses on the *self*, while the object of guilt is something wrong one has done. However, the boundary is sometimes blurry, for guilt can also affect the *self*, and shame be generated by a failure or transgression. I give more details when I explain the respective differences of these two emotions.

[25] But let me precise that even if guilt is an emotion, it still has a certain *feeling* or phenomenology, that most of the time is experienced as painful by the subject.

[26] Here the nuance is between being guilty and feeling or experiencing the emotion of guilt as a consequence.

[27] This is quite surprising, for previously we have seen that the difference between guilt and shame is that the former concerns one wrongdoing while the latter is about the self (that is the kind of person one is) (Teroni & Deonna, 2017). See note footnote 24.

subject sees himself as morally reprehensible; in remorse, he only construes himself as having done something wrong (but this doesn't affect his moral status, or at least, less than in guilt). Nevertheless, these two emotions are quite connected, for the subject can easily turn from remorse to guilt. Remorse can also be considered as an emotion of self-assessment, for the subject makes an evaluative judgment to what 'she' has done. Let us then say that what truly differentiates remorse from guilt is the *degree* to which the self is included. Guilt involves a more general impression of badness of the self. Remorse is more focused on the deed than on the self. However, as already said, these emotions are so close that one can easily shift from a remorseful response to a guilty emotion (ibid. 223).

Guilt is often accompanied by a painful feeling, which can be seen as a kind of internal punishment. Punishments have a 'burdensome dimension', for they often manifest as a physically painful feeling that we seem to deserve as a treatment for having acted wrongly (ibid., 224). Punishments are indeed very powerful; they can induce a feeling of guilt even if one perfectly knows that one has not done something wrong. Robert writes: 'the power of angry judgment and punishment and rejection to induce guilt feelings explains why people who are innocent of any wrongdoing and know themselves to be so will sometimes feel guilty under questioning and accusation, and why people who have committed wrongs and know it may start feeling guilty only after accusations or questions suggesting accusations are put' (ibid.). Sometimes, one can feel guilty about things other than actions, such as wishes; I can for example wish that this successful person does not get the job she applied for and feel guilty for having such thoughts. As well, one can feel guilty for one's privileges: Sam feels guilty because he doesn't do something charitable with his fortune. One can also feel guilty for deeds that are not ours; Sam might feel guilty about his father's misdeeds. Curiously, remorse seems more appropriate in these types of cases, for the characteristic of remorse is to ascribe to oneself personal responsibility for wrongful actions. While guilt requires a sense of *being* blameworthy, which involves the self (ibid., 224). When one is rich one *is* not really sullied by this privilege. In the same way, being the son of a 'wicked' father that has done wrong to many people does not make of us a morally rotten person. In Roberts' view, blameworthiness (which pertains to the concept of guilt) is detached from any ascription of responsibility (which pertains to the concept of remorse). Additionally, to experience the emotion of guilt, one must have an aversion to being morally spoiled (ibid.). People who do not care about being morally spoiled have little chances of experiencing the emotion of guilt. In parallel, people who have no aversion to being the author of moral wrongs, will not experience remorse (ibid.). Both emotions require some moral concerns from the subject.

Now, is the *self* essential to guilt? As we have seen in Deonna and Teroni's article *Distinguishing Shame from Guilt*, guilt does not have the self as a primary object, for it involves the reference to an action or omission that generates blameworthiness. And just as in the case of remorse, the consequent desire is to repair or to atone. This may take the form of a real reparation (or of suffering in the case of impossibility of reparation). Interestingly Roberts writes: 'if the blameworthiness seems irreparable by atonement, then the subject may desire to be free of the sense of blameworthiness by *any* means – by rationalization, drugs, sleep, oblivion, suicide, or psychotherapy' (ibid.). Robert seems to insist on the need of freeing oneself from the blameworthiness, that is the construal of oneself as being a bad person. Finally, in Roberts' view, for the emotion of guilt to occur, aversion of the person one might be is necessary. He then adds that there is an *alienation* of the individual's self. The reason is that it is not the real self that is morally sullied, but an image of the self, construed by the agent, for the agent's real self still wants what is morally good. What is morally painful in guilt is the seeing of the real self as morally sullied. One way to deal with guilt is therefore 'self-dissociation', being free of blameworthiness, one should say: 'my guilty self is not the real me' (ibid., 225).

Now, let us look at some special case of guilt. Some individuals have a higher guilt-proneness than others. This is the medical case of people who suffer from an obsessive-compulsive disorder. OCD is an anxiety disorder that causes a lot of suffering, for patients with OCD feel guilt in response to their negative thoughts. These thoughts often involve imaginary scenarios such as harming others. Now, it seems quite strange to experience the negative emotion of guilt even if one has not done anything wrong; there will not be anything to repair. As a matter of fact, most people do not *feel bad* for having negative thoughts. The case of OCD is quite special, for it contests the claim according to which guilt is triggered by a deed of ours; that is an action (or an omission) that violates a norm to which we adhere[28]. Additionally, the guilt of OCD does not involve anyone else other than themselves and their thoughts (Cokelet, Bradford & Maley, (2019), 195). This challenges the notion of guilt. Should we redescribe it or ask whether it is really guilt these individuals suffer? Deonna and Vazard suppose that it is 'fear of anticipatorily experienced guilt' rather than guilt itself that OCD patients experience in response to their negative thoughts. The fear these patients suffer is indicative of a defective self, which is very difficult to repair. They then tend to focus on this defective self and feel even more guilty or

[28] I need to be more precise here. Earlier we defined guilt by saying that it wasn't a reaction to the action itself, but to the belief that one is guilty. The case of OCD challenges the claim whether one has to be *truly* guilty of a wrongdoing in order to experience guilt.

even ashamed of it. These subjects are trapped in a spiral of negative self-oriented thoughts and emotions (ibid., 196).

OCD mostly implies obsessions that take the form of (1) intrusive unwanted 'thoughts, ideas or images' and (2) compulsive acts that will take the form of a ritual in response to obsessions (ibid.). The OCD patient will for example have checking compulsions, he or she will be obsessed with ordering, counting, and repeating. Now, a lot of people like it when their kitchen or desktop is clean an in order. However, OCD patients can spend entire days cleaning things up, washing their hands repeatedly and aligning objects in symmetry. Their behaviour is justified by their obsessive thoughts. Most of us do not control our thoughts with a deliberate process, they just come and go. Even if some thoughts are intrusive and disturbing, one does not develop an obsessive disorder such as OCD, for one has the ability to neutralize and suppress the thoughts (ibid., 197). Many studies have shown that OCD patients have a greater tendency to guilt. Conversely, people who have a high guilt tendency are more prone to develop an OCD disorder, this proves the strong link between this negative emotion and OCD. OCD can also be described as a kind of *scrupulosity,* specifically when the obsessions of the subject involve religious or moral content (ibid.). The emotion of guilt is seen as being at the root of obsessive behaviours in OCD patients. For compulsive acts such as cleaning, checking, repeating, counting, and ordering are responses to guilty thoughts such as aggressive or sexual scenarios.

Guilt is *reflexive emotion*, for it involves the violation of one's norms. Experiencing guilt therefore implies that we see ourselves as agents who can succeed or fail to act according to norms, and others are sometimes included. Guilt is rational when it is felt toward things for which we are responsible. One can be guilty of actions, omissions, but also for character traits. I can for example feel guilty for being too anxious[29] (ibid., 198). So, in what sense can the OCD patient feel guilty about intrusive thoughts? Some have argued that OCD patients do not truly suffer guilt for they are not responsible for their thoughts. Again, OCD patients do not think they have done anything wrong, they only feel guilty about their thoughts. The point is that they are not *active* in the flux of their thoughts, they do not purposely imagine that they harm other people. Otherwise, we would easily concede that they are experiencing guilt, for they would be

[29] This is controversial, for one could argue whether one can control our anxieties, thoughts and emotions.

responsible for the pleasure they take in imagining scenarios where they cause harm. However, OCD patients do not have any satisfaction over these intrusive and disturbing thoughts[30].

Psychologists have introduced a model of *meta-thoughts* that gives to OCD sufferers the opportunity to change the beliefs they have about their own stream of consciousness. For, what causes them to suffer is not literarily the negative thoughts they have, but what they think about these. They make negative assumptions about the significance of their thoughts. Furthermore, they believe that the mere thought of an event might increase the probability of this event to happen. Consequently, they put into place coping strategies such as checking repeatedly, for they fear they might cause the harm they thought about. But mostly, they do not want to be responsible for such harm, which might induce guilt. This metacognitive description makes sense of OCD's guilt, which is experienced as an anticipatory or 'future oriented' guilt. Although OCD sufferers feel complete responsibility, it is better to speak of an 'inflated sense of responsibility' (ibid., 201). This metacognitive responsibility is about the content of their intrusive thoughts and not about the harming acts the subject must prevent from happening (ibid.). OCD sufferers feel responsible for their thoughts and feelings, for they consider them as 'unacceptable'. What they try to prevent most is not the harm itself but the emotion of guilt it might generate. They have what psychologists have called a 'sensitivity' to negative emotions, such as guilt. This 'sensitivity' manifests as a tendency to overestimate the negative consequences of guilt, a highly unpleasant emotion; whence the motivation to perform compulsive actions such as repeatedly checking and ordering. The way guilt is related to OCD symptoms is throughout intense apprehension; their distress can therefore best be described as a fear of guilt rather than guilt itself (ibid., 202). Indeed, OCD troubles have more to do with the fear of feeling bad than with harming others. This sheds light on the importance of moral rules (ibid.). Breaking a moral rule is taken very seriously by OCD patients, for if it happens, they would not be able to forgive themselves[31]. Why do OCD sufferers think that their wrongdoing would be unforgivable or unalterable? A possible answer is that it might compromise their identity. They fear they might be horrible persons. 'Normal' people overcome guilt by reparation and forgiveness, for contrarily to OCD's guilt, the self is not deeply affected.

[30] These obsessive thoughts have an *ego-dystonicity*. This means that the content of the obsessive thoughts stands in contradiction with the subject's values and norms. The subject will for example have a horrible thought of harming his own child that will totally contradict the image he has of himself as a loving parent. OCD patients constantly worry about their streams of consciousness, for they do not know what intrusive thoughts might pop out. Most of the time their thoughts have nothing to do with who they are, which causes them to suffer (Cokelet, Bradford & Maley, 2019,198).

[31] Some thinkers make a distinction between *deontological guilt*, which is elicited by the perception of the transgression of a moral rule, and *altruistic guilt*, which is elicited by the perception that one has gone against an altruistic goal (Bradford Cokelet and Corey J. Maley, 2019, 203).

From a metacognitive perspective, OCD patients judge themselves about their negative intrusive thoughts, thinking that these reveal hidden aspects of their personality. They think that deep down they are evil or insane. A negative intrusive thought will be so repetitive that they will finally believe it is true. They are afraid that certain unwanted traits of their personality would manifest; these personality traits are often interpreted as dangerous or bad for the subject and for others. One traditionally distinguishes the 'actual self', the 'ought self' and the 'ideal self'. OCD patients also have a 'feared self'. Guilt is usually described as a reaction to the discrepancy between the 'actual' and the 'ought' self. But in the case of OCD, guilt is a reaction to the discrepancy between the 'feared' and the 'ought' self. This is quite strange for the tension takes place between two non-existing persons. OCD patients are not guilty about the person they 'actually' are, but they are fearful they might embody an unwanted version of themselves. Interestingly, this shows that guilt can be about character traits and not about our deeds only. One can for example feel guilty for being selfish. So, OCD sufferers do not only fear the emotion of guilt, but they also experience it for being so 'unreasonable' and for having such horrible thoughts. One question we should then ask is 'are we responsible for our character traits?' If what dominates some OCD patients is guilt about character flaws, then it seems extremely difficult to make any amends or reparation for it (however, one can still work on our selfishness by doing some generous actions). Specialists have called this 'pathological guilt'. This form of guilt is insoluble, for the focus is not on the wrongdoing that can somehow be repaired, but on the self: 'it is fused with a form of shame in which the self is perceived as inherently faulty, deficient, and evil' (ibid., 206). From a traditional viewpoint, shame says: 'there is something wrong with me'; while guilt says: 'I have done something bad'. Sometimes shame and guilt can fuse together. This is the case of pathological guilt, for it is about the self; the subject both regrets what he has done and sees his own self as unworthy. By contrast, normal guilt, that is 'shame-free' guilt, can be resolved by amend and reparation of one's transgression. Pathological guilt is unsolvable, for at its roots no action can be fixed, but only a self that is seen as deeply evil. Again, the suffering of OCD has more to do with the person they dread to be than with the damages they might cause to others. Moreover, being guilty would only confirm the rotten character of their self (ibid., 206). The guilt that OCD patients fear to experience is therefore truly connected to the way they see themselves (ibid., 207). Even if this pathological guilt focused on the actions presented by the intrusive thoughts of the subject, at the background there is a diffused shame, for the potential bad action might confirm the belief that one is a horrible person. Nevertheless, this can also be case for non-pathological individual who experience guilt. Guilt, whether it is actual or anticipatory signals bad actions that might

affect the way we see ourselves, for it reveals who we *are*, this is why it is very often fused with shame (ibid.). Now, it might be interesting to draw clearer differences between shame and guilt.

3.5. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHAME AND GUILT

Shame and guilt are both self-conscience emotions, for they involve self-assessments about one own self and behaviour. But what differentiates them exactly? Traditionally, one of the main differences that has been pointed out is that shame is a *social* emotion while guilt is about *private* (or internal) sanctions. In this same view, some anthropologists have argued that shame is linked to external judgments and that guilt is about internal judgments. It therefore seems that a condition for shame to happen is the presence of an audience, for this emotion arises when what we do triggers laughter or contempt. By contrast, guilt is more considered as a personal or private emotion. Bernard William has contested this view. In his book *Shame and Necessity*, he argues that shame does not always involve a real audience, for it can also involve an imaginary audience, what William has named the 'internalized other' (William, 1993, 82). But even this is not totally true. As we will see, to involve an audience (whether it is real or imaginary) is not constitutive of shame, for this emotion is essentially related to the *self*. Is shame more private than guilt then? This is just an example to illustrate how the traditional view is problematic; the boundaries between shame and guilt do not seem as sharp as we thought. In this section, I will rely on Deonna & Teroni's article *Differentiating Shame from Guilt* to contest some of the conventional distinctions that have been made between these two emotions.

Before we go on, one might ask why I am introducing these distinctions for the subject that I am treating, which is the affective disposition of bad conscience. I think that differentiating these emotions is fundamental, for even though they are distinct in nature, they are unified within a same state of conscience, which is the negative side of conscience. Cleary understanding the functions of each of these emotions will helps us understand the global role of bad conscience.

The first difference that will take our attention is that shame is related to the entire self while guilt is tied to some specific behaviour only. The experience of guilt is often described as the regret of having done something wrong; someone who feels guilty about something will tend to say 'if only I hadn't done this'. By contrast, shame is more seen as related to *who* we are; someone who experiences shame will more likely think 'if only I *weren't* so and so' (Teroni &

Deonna, 2017, 727). Now, the idea that shame is about the self and guilt about a specific behaviour can be challenged. Teroni and Deonna contest the claim according to which shame concerns oneself (that is our personal traits) and guilt one's actions only. Even if grammar suggests that shame is more linked to the self, for one says, 'I am ashamed of *myself* for having cried in public', the idea is that shame has two objects of evaluation: the self as a primary object and some behaviour as a secondary object (e.g., the act of crying in public). One is mostly ashamed of oneself, but one can also feel shame for some behaviour. Conversely, the self is not totally absent from guilt, but its primary object remains an action. Even if grammatically speaking guilt doesn't seem to imply the self, for one says 'I am guilty of having killed my cat', the self is also implicated as a secondary object. Perhaps, the killing of my cat makes of me a horrible person. The implication of the self is therefore not what contrasts shame from guilt (ibid., 731).

Another nuance that has been made on shame and guilt is Freud's opposition between the *ego-ideal* and the *superego.* In this view, shame is seen as a reaction to the failing to stick to one's standards. These standards are set by the *ego-ideal,* an idealized figure the subject wishes to resemble. On the other hand, guilt results from violating the prohibitions set by the *superego*, an internalized parental authority (or other forms of external authorities) (ibid., 228). In both emotions, the subject feels bad for having failed to act according to some internalized rules or standards. There is a gap between the way she is and the way she wishes to be or ought to be. This is what contemporary empirical psychology has called the phenomenon of *self-discrepancy*. In shame, it is our ideals that are not met (this echoes Velleman's shame which results of a failure to present ourselves the way one wishes to). By contrast, guilt is linked to prohibitions, that is the external rules one has internalized as a child. According to this criterion, shame is triggered when one feels that our values are undermined, and guilt when one violates some norms. The difference between shame and guilt would therefore be that of values and norms. Again, the idea that shame is linked to our goals and ideals, while guilt is related to internalized prohibitions, echoes the Freudian distinction between *ego-ideal* and *superego*. The *ego-ideal* refers to our values and goals. By contrast, the super-ego is a mechanism that helps us regulate our behaviour to norms (ibid., 732). Shame and guilt can therefore be distinguished in terms of norms and values. Let us draw the contrast between norms and values then. Among values there are esthetical values (*harmony*), intellectual values (*intelligence*) and moral values (*loyalty*). Among norms there are the forbidden kind of things, such as 'it is forbidden to take your own food in a restaurant'. A major difference is that values admit of degrees; a given object (such as a piece of art) can be more harmonious than another. Norms do not admit of

degrees, they are either flouted or respected. Another difference is that values are either said to be *thick* or *thin*. Thick values are more descriptive (*courage*), while thin values are quite general (*the good*). Norms are neither thick nor thin. Shame is appropriate when one perceives that our values have been undermined; it focuses on values such as the 'degraded' or the 'worthless'. Guilt is appropriate when norms are flouted, it arises when one for example flouts religious or social norms[32].

But this distinction in terms of values and norms is too rigid. For guilt isn't just about norms, and shame about values. Teroni and Deonna have proposed that one should reformulate the difference between shame and guilt using the notions of *evaluative attitude* and *formal object*. The first idea is that the emotions of shame and guilt are grounded on distinct *evaluative attitudes*. The evaluative attitude of guilt would be *caring,* while that of shame would be *valuing*. *Caring* is believing that something is important, but not fundamental to who we *are*. By contrast, *valuing* is directly linked to our sense of self-worth (ibid., 733). Valuing is deeper than caring, for it gives us a sense of who we are. However, caring is still not enough for guilt and valuing is not enough for shame. For again, guilt can also be about values, and thereby be grounded by a *valuing* attitude. On the side of shame, respecting norms is also important for our sense of self-worth. This brings us to the self/behaviour contrast, which as already said, is not pertinent for what differentiates shame from guilt (for shame can also include our actions and guilt be about the self). One can clarify the distinction between norms and values by introducing the notion of *formal object*. The *formal object* is to be contrasted with the *particular object*. Each emotion has a particular object, this is the *what* it is about. Fear for example takes *particular objects* such as dogs, spiders or giraffes. One is always afraid of something. By contrast, the *formal object* is about a common feature of all the instances of fear, that is *danger* (giraffes seem quite inoffensive, but one never knows). *Formal objects* play an explanative role in the link between the given emotion and the behaviour it triggers; they are used to evaluate whether the emotion is correct or not. Being afraid of a kitty would be inappropriate, for it isn't dangerous. Being afraid of a wolf would be correct, for the formal object of one's fear is truly the *danger* of the wolf. The contrast between shame and guilt can therefore be established in

[32] Nevertheless, the opposition between values and norms is not as strong as it seems. Norms are attached to values and values to norms. If you decide to respect some social norm, the reason might be that you value what this norm dictates. Conversely, if you hold a value, you must act according to some norm-conforming behaviour that is grounded by your value. However, values and norms are not always congruous. One might respect social norms even if they do not correspond to one's values. Or one might act according to one's values and flout social norms.

this way. Guilt is a reaction to the violating of a forbidden norm; it is appropriate when a norm is indeed flouted. Shame is a reaction to an undermined value; it is correct if one has indeed failed to meet one's values. This explain why one can be ashamed of one's behaviour. A primary object of shame is for example 'reputation', which is a typical value for shame. Behaviour (whether it is flouting a norm or something else) and even traits are important only as secondary objects for shame, especially if they are construed as undermining values (for example someone who feels ashamed about being fat, for it undermines his self-worth). The primary object of shame is the self, what Velleman have called a *person's self-conception* (Velleman, 2011). Again, one's own *self-conception* is a function of one's values (Teroni & Deonna 2017, 737). This is also why one tends to identify with values and not with norms. Shame is connected to our self-image, or more precisely, to unwanted images of ourselves. However, one might be careful with the notion of *image,* for it involves an image, and as already seen, an audience is not necessary to trigger this emotion. In shame, our identity is threatened, this is the *particular object* of shame (the what it is about). Guilt is more linked to behaviour towards prohibitions, it is only *partially* about the self. Norms are the *particular objects* of guilt; as we will see, the function of these is to regulate a communal behaviour.

Traditionally, shame has been associated with a social dimension and guilt with a more private one. The social thesis claims that shame is related to standards one shares with others, while guilt has to do with one's personal dimension (ibid., 728). Indeed, what others think of us is very important, but this idea according to which shame is essentially social should be questioned. It is true that shame is often thought to be related to our reputation or honour, but 'loss of reputation or invasion of privacy *are only some of the possible reasons* for shame' (ibid., 730). Even if 'reputation' and 'privacy' are important values, this is not sufficient to conclude that by contrast with guilt, shame is essentially social. Shame does not always involve an audience (real or imagined), one can be ashamed of things that no one saw, for as we said earlier, shame is linked to our *personal* ideals and values (which do not depend on others' judgements). And still according to this view, one can also contest the idea that guilt is essentially private, for this doesn't explain why it triggers a reparative behaviour, which is supposed to be received by others. Since shame is deeply personal and guilt interpersonal, what does differentiate these two emotions then?

According to another view, shame is *self-related*, while guilt is *communal*. Shame is linked to loss of reputation, which has to do with self-worth. Guilt is others-orientated for it is associated with norms transgression and reparation. This interpretation is not very correct neither, for these different aspects are not constitutive of shame and guilt. I can feel guilty for not having

exercised today; this involves only me, it has nothing to do with others. Conversely, even if shame is more self-focused, it can also motivate conciliatory and reparative behaviour, especially towards loss of reputation.

This criterion of self-oriented vs *communal* emotions can be transposed in terms of *action-tendencies*. Guilt motivates other-directed behaviours, that is reparation typically. If I feel guilty because I haven't visited my grandma' for three weeks, I will try to compensate my absence by offering chocolate. By contrast, shame motivates self-directed behaviours, that is concealment and rumination (ibid., 735). But again, this interpretation is not constitutive of these emotions. For I can feel guilty for having eaten too much junk food. This would motivate me to go out for a run, which implies only me. Same for shame, the action-tendency can be directed toward others. I can apologies for being the way I am, this is not only about me, for it concerns people that surround me also.

Maybe one should contrast these emotions by focusing on their *functions*, rather than on their *action-tendencies*. For this allows both emotions to manifest in self-related and others-oriented behaviours, even though each emotion has its own function. The function of guilt is to foster a communal behaviour; however, it can also sometimes manifest itself in a self-directed way. The role of shame is to promote a self-effacing behaviour; however, it might be accompanied by self-orientated tendencies (such as self-improving and appeasement of others, which are a reparative and conciliatory behaviours).

So, from all this we must retain that the claim that shame is essentially *social* and guilt *private* is not correct, nor the idea that guilt is other-oriented more that shame is. What distinguishes shame from guilt is that the former is more *self-directed* while the latter principally concerns one's behaviour *with others*. But again, shame can also have one's behaviour as a second object, and guilt can imply the self. Finally, the second relevant criterion is the contrast between undermined *values* and flouted *norms*. Most of the time (but not always), the formal object of shame is undermined values and that of guilt is flouted norms. Norms are linked to behaviour and values to the self. Again, sometimes one's behaviour do not concern others, it can be about our values and the person one wants to represent (e.g., exercising for a *dreambody* after feeling guilty); conversely, an episode of shame can lead to a reparative behaviour towards others (such as the respect of social norms). So, the distinction between values/norms is present but not

constitutive of what differentiates shame from guilt[33]. Now, let us turn to the value of these negative emotions, that is the global function of the affective disposition of *bad conscience*.

4. BAD CONSCIENCE – ITS VALUE

Among emotions, certain have been recognised as 'self-conscious' or 'moral' emotions. These are qualified as 'self-conscious' because they contain self-assessments, that is evaluations about our own self and conduct. In contrast with 'basic emotions' such as anger, fear, sadness, or love, these emotions are also called 'secondary emotions'. Basic emotions are said to have 'a clearer biological basis'; they are universally recognised through facial expressions and emerge at an early stage in the child's development for they do not require any self-reflexion (Bradford Cokelet and Corey J. Maley, 2019, 113). Other emotions are more complex, these are for example pride, guilt, shame and nostalgia. These 'secondary emotions' are said to be 'reflexive emotions' for the subject has an attitude towards her own self (Deonna & Teroni, 2012, 18). In this section we will focus on the role (whether it is positive or negative) of these more complex emotions. We will look at them as evolved moral emotions that have a function in the survival of the human species. We will centre our attention on the emotion of guilt.

Guilt might have emerged as a reaction to 'a breach or tension in a valued relationship or group membership' (Bradford Cokelet and Corey J. Maley, 2019, 113). In this view, guilt seems to be inappropriate when the subject has no power of control over what he feels guilty about (that is for example his physical traits, or the environment within which he is born). Here, it is important to contrast guilt with shame. Guilt has the particularity to be felt in reaction to 'right actions' that one has failed to perform (which violates social norms). By contrast, shame involves the experience of an undermined self (when one fails to meet our personal standards). Sometimes but not always, one can feel guilty because of something wrong one has done, but still think that one is a 'good person', for the failing does not affect our identity. Other times, it affects the sense of who we are. In the child's development, this emotion has been recognised as emerging at a very early age (around two years old); that is when children begin to evaluate their actions according to standards of conduct they have learned. They slowly develop the capacity to self-evaluate by reference to others' reactions and become capable of emotions such

[33] In my understanding of the article *Differentiating shame from guilt*, there is no constitutive differences between these two emotions; shame and guilt seem quite entangled. At the prima facie level, these two emotions are easy to distinguish, for shame concerns the self (our values and ideals); guilt is about transgression of norms and reparative behaviours that will afterward manifest. However, this is not always the case, for shame can also concern one's actions and guilt be about the self. To say it simply, at a deeper level these two emotions are very close to one another. Interestingly one can say that they belong to the more general affective disposition of *bad conscience*, for in both emotions we feel bad about ourselves (the whole self or only a part of it). And because we are social animals, I guess that most of the time this will automatically include others. In my view, others are also central to our identity. *Bad conscience* is an affective disposition that principally concerns one's moral behaviour, which defines who we are in regard with others. Failling to meet our ideals and to act as we wish threatens our peace of conscience.

as guilt and shame. An essential component of guilt is that the individual will feel responsible for what he has done. On the other hand, when a child meets approbation, he will feel pride. Let us consider that guilt is the emotion that results when one fails to meet some social standards. This emotion is called 'moral' for it involves self-assessments regarding whether one has met some standards or rules. Culture plays an important role in this emotion for it imposes many rules and standards that can be met or not by the subject. These social ideals are strongly internalized by the subject. Indeed, our self-conscious emotions (such as guilt and shame) motivate us to act according to these social goals and self-representations.

Some empirical studies have shown that guilt tends to happen in close interpersonal relationships. This emotion motivates the need from the part of the subject to repair or rectify a given mistake with the aim to maintain the threatened relational bond. Guilt induces individuals to scan their own behaviour, and therefore to avoid or repair transgressions. It can be resolved through an apology or other reparative actions that generates reconciliation. This moral emotion helps to keep relational bonds intact. It can be explained by some evolutionary perspective. The evolutionary account sustains that the capacity to feel guilt has been selected by evolutionary forces to improve the reproductive success of a given group. An example of natural selection is *binocular vision*, which gives powerful sight and distance recognition. In the same way, *cooperation* also increases the *fitness* of a group (that is its natural reproductive success). In the course of the fitness-enhancing of a certain group, the trait will proliferate through generations until most individuals of a population have this trait (ibid., 116). Guilt can be described as the capacity to see and recognize one's own and other's wrongdoing, which is necessary for the survival of the species (for don't forget that human beings are animals in the first place, their deepest nature is self-interested). Human beings live in interdependence, this means that they depend on each other for the maintenance of their lives. The actions of an individual can either have good or bad consequences on the welfare of others and therefore affect the fitness of the whole group. The function of guilt is to recognize bad actions and to resolve these transgressions. It is an *adaptative* emotion for it maintains relationships, cooperation and solidarity in a group. Relationships have a centrality for the survival of a species. Note that these are governed by social norms, the violation of which will induce guilt. This also means that individuals are held *accountable* towards others for their actions. By experiencing guilt, the individual seems to acknowledge this *accountability* and the possibility of exclusion by others. Violation of norms can happen in the form of insults or other non-appropriate behaviours, that is for example verbal or non-verbal expressions of hurt that can manifest in the form of anger, social distancing, or criticism.

Some philosophers have identified what they have called a 'guilt-proneness', that is a tendency within some individuals that reduces immoral behaviours. In other words, this tendency avoids transgressive-type actions and therefore the inducement of the negative emotion of guilt. The guilt-proneness trait indicates that some individuals are more inclined to feel guilt than others, they are therefore less likely to violate the norms of relationships. These individuals have a powerful anticipatory capacity for the avoidance of moral transgressions. However, this guilt-proneness can also be excessive and lead these individuals to experience guilt for little things that have no importance (ibid., 115).

Guilt motivates one's behaviour. It pushes us to repair the damages we have caused with the aim to maintain our relationships intact. However, what leads to a real reparation of relationships is that others be able to recognize when amends are made. They must be able to *forgive* someone's offence. Forgiveness, that is acceptance of efforts and amends-making, has the power of repairing and even strengthening relationships. Guilt therefore appears as an adaptative emotion, for according to evolutionary scientists it is designed to facilitate well-functioning relationships, which contributes to human fitness more broadly. In this view, guilt is essentially seen as a means by which one avoids negative consequences in relationships. However, one can ask whether the moral emotion of guilt is so intimately linked to relationships, such that it cannot be separated from social bond harmony (ibid., 118). In other words, knowing that the motivation to avoid negative consequences is essentially selfishly motivated, what does make guilt so praiseworthy? In the evolutionary tradition, human beings are often depicted as being fundamentally self-interested. Indeed, many scientists see morality as a matter of self-sacrifice, which is an insane behaviour. A normal behaviour would be that of a self-interested person. The idea is that self-interest is at the bottom of every motive, including the motivational efficacy of guilt (ibid., 118). This sheds light on the individualistic reality of human beings. However, individuals have the ability to activate their identity as group members. This activation has the power to transform their cognition and affect their behaviour to create harmony with others (ibid.) Another element that the evolutionary account puts forward is that emotions such as guilt are not controlled, for they are the result of causal forces that are beyond the individual's awareness. This causal account sustains that guilt would be similar to a knee-jerk reflex that is mechanistic rather than involving any conscience choices. However, this account seems to rule out agency and therefore responsibility, for the individual does not seem to endorse any norms and standards consciously. This seems problematic, for an essential component of guilt is responsibility. By contrast, *agency* theorists think that guilt is elicited by the violation of standards consciously endorsed. Now, the problem with the

evolutionary account is that it reduces guilt to a means to avoids negative consequences. But these consequences can be avoided by other means (e.g., one can hide one's transgressions by lying to others). In other words, there are many ways to avoid social punishments for transgressions. If the goal of human beings is to avoid negative consequences, then intelligent individuals will less likely choose guilt than other means that seem less costly (for remember, guilt is not very pleasant to be felt as a negative emotion). This interchangeability of means to reach a given end, that is the avoidance of negative consequences in relationships, proves that there is no inherent connection between guilt and the maintenance of close relationships.

Means are selected based on their efficacy, which depends on circumstances. Human beings tend to put more value in the desired end than in the way it is achieved, even if this is contrary to the 'the end does not justify the means' statement. Guilt is therefore not *constitutive* of having close relationships, for there are other means for avoiding bad consequences in these. Guilt is only *instrumental* to the maintenance of close relationships, and consequently the fitness of a group. Interestingly, some philosophers sustain that guilt is constitutive in some other way. It is constitutive for the maintenance of one's *identity*. Relationships and standards are very important for human beings, for they are part of their identities. As it happens, transgressions undermine the agent's identity (ibid., 121). The reason is that individuals tend to identify with groups; the basic function of guilt would therefore be to maintain one's good standing within a group. At a very early stage, children identify with their family or social group. Through imitation, they learn how to participate in social interactions. At the age of three, the emotion of guilt starts to develop; the child starts to recognize moments when he fails to meet social expectations (ibid., 122). Through this process, he might struggle and therefore question his identification with the group. Identification can be very problematic for individuals that have difficulty with norms compliance, for they can live a form of social exclusion, which can be destructive for their psychology and well-being. Some have argued that guilt is a 'key detector of potential social exclusion'; when one has failed to meet some social expectations, guilt forces us to align with norms again (ibid.). Guilt is therefore more than a means to the avoidance of bad consequences, such as punishments; it seems to maintain the integrity of our identity as a member of a relationship or a group. But besides helping us keeping one's personal integrity intact, it is also an instrument to the avoidance of painful punishments. Guilt manifests as a violation of *how* one should act but fails to. Repairing how one acts is constitutive of the maintenance of close relationships and personal integrity, which is also important for the human fitness.

Now, this can be transferred on other negative emotions such as shame, remorse, regret and so on. For example, the evolutionary justification of regret would be to help us take better decisions in the future (Eldridge, 2017, 648). Shame has the evolutionary role of signalling that we are not presenting the most attractive version of ourselves, which enables the avoidance of social exclusion (Teroni, 2011, 64). These can be regrouped under the more general affective disposition of *bad conscience*, which is contributive to the wellbeing and harmony of the human species. Having a *bad conscience* can be very productive, for it allows us to become better versions of ourselves. Remember that *conscience* is self-reflective, just as the act of looking oneself into the mirror with a judgmental eye, *conscience* has the function of regulating one's own behaviour. However, this must be taken with moderation. A little bit of negative emotions can be very helpful for human progress and adaptation. A lot can be destructive. Imagine yourself always criticizing what you do or think, your life would be miserable. Indeed, some people suffer from pathological forms of guilt or shame, just as in the case of OCD's guilt. However, as we will see, in non-pathological cases, having a *bad conscience* can be of great benefit. Even if the experience of negative emotions can be very painful, these play a major role in the development of our moral capacities.

Let us introduce a virtue ethicist perspective. The idea is that having a *bad conscience* has a great moral value, for it is necessary to the development of moral virtues. In other words, experiencing negative emotions is *aretically* valuable (from the Greek word *arete*, which means virtue). Virtues are dispositions that helps us respond appropriately or excellently in various situations. Without the experience of *bad conscience*, one would fail to morally improve and would probably cause a lot of damage to others and ourselves. In his book *Suffering and Virtue,* Brady argues that suffering helps to the development of moral virtue. I think that having a *bad conscience* is a sort of psychological suffering. From that, one can imply that the suffering of having a *bad conscience* is essential to the development of virtues. The more one has suffered, the greater our potential of wisdom (which is one of the highest virtues) will be (Brady 2018, 112). Of course, this claim is controversial, for one could ask whether suffering is always beneficial. It seems that sometimes *having a bad conscience* can be unsane and thus unnecessary. In *La Mauvaise Conscience,* Vladimir Jankélévitch calls people who always think they have done something wrong 'les scrupuleux'; by trying to achieve moral perfection, they beat themselves up and always question the goodness of each one of their actions[34]. From an

[34] […] ils passent leur temps à se travailler, à éplucher leurs souvenirs dans la crainte d'avoir fait trop ou trop peu, ils se perdent dans la contemplation ridicule de leur propre image […] (Jankélévitch, 1966, 255)

Aristotelian perspective, any kind of excess is a vice. The acquiring of virtues demands subtility, for it is a question of dosing. For example, a virtue such as *courage* is in the middle of two extremes, a lack (that would be *cowardness*) and an excess (*temerity*). Applying this to emotions (either negative or positive) one can say that some emotional reactions are healthier than others. If I get excessively angry because you've accidentally walked on my foot, this response would be *inappropriate*. But if I get angry because you insult my mother, this reaction would be totally *fitting*. In Brady's perspective (which is slightly different from Aristotle's), pain and suffering help to the development of virtues (such as courage) but not only; they can be virtuous responses themselves. For example, remorse is an instance of emotional suffering which is the appropriate response to wrongdoing someone (Brady, 2018, 61). Some forms of emotional suffering are more adequate than others, for they allow us to deal appropriately (or excellently in the case of virtue) with important objects or events. On the contrary, some types of emotional suffering are pathological. Someone can for example feel guilty for everything he does, or even worse for everything that happens to him, that is things for which he is not responsible. These kinds of extreme or chronic suffering are incompatible with the existence of virtue. Someone that always has a *bad conscience* by having a deep feeling of shame cannot live happily; toxic shame creates the feeling that one's existence is not worthy. Contrarily to normal shame, toxic shame is not helpful at all and can only lead to destructive behaviours.

According to Nietzsche, having a *bad conscience* can be *self-destructive*, but it also is the ground for the creation of a *good conscience* (Edward & Matheson, 2013). Christianity is at the source of having a *bad conscience* he says, which he defines as a 'painful repression of one's aggressive and anti-social instincts and drives, one's whole ancient animal self' (Nietzsche, 1967, II. 18). He also points out that our modern societies are deeply influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition, for even if religious institutions aren't as present as they were, our feelings of guilt and shame are still deep-rooted within us. Nietzsche seems to think that negative emotions (especially guilt and other self-blame emotions) have no worth. He is pessimistic about having *a bad conscience*. He firmly argues that people would be better off if guilt or shame were absent from their lives (Bradford Cokelet and Corey J. Maley, 2019, 212). However, some thinkers have objected to Nietzsche, that it is psychologically impossible to stop having these emotions, for they are part of our deepest nature. Other thinkers assess that one could possibly eradicate guilt from our lives, but this would not be a good idea, for nothing would stop us from harming others. Why does Nietzsche think that guilt and self-blame should be eradicated then? One reason is that he sees these negative emotional phenomena as contingent. His idea is that our negative emotions have been turned on the inside, that is against

our own selves. He presents things like this: human beings have a primary instinct to aggression which used to be externalized in the wild state. Now, this instinct has been 'internalized' for it cannot be expressed anymore in a legalized state. In most societies, when one goes against a social norm, one is usually punished through external or internal sanctions. However, one is not allowed to be externally aggressive. The only solution that remains is to be internally aggressive, that is attacking one own self. Nietzsche calls this phenomenon *bad conscience*, which he compares to an illness that has emerged when human beings have created societies and laws. He adds: 'all instincts which are not discharged outwardly *turn inwards* (Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Moral II,* 16). He also insists on the notion of 'indebtedness' which he says is at heart of Christian guilt. Here's the explanation: earlier societies (such as that of hunter-gatherers) had groups of people, usually a minority, that were more powerful than the majority (the weaks). As this minority became more and more powerful, they imposed an increasing dept that had to be paid by the many, supposedly to bless the gods and ancestors. This mirrors the Christian tradition, where the original sin must be expiated by the redemption of mankind, which sheds light on the guilty feeling of indebtedness. Sadly, because this dept cannot be repaid, some individuals have adopted a behaviour of constant damnation. It seems like they do not deserve to be happy and must punish themselves for something they did not even do (after all, it was Adam who ate the apple). This state of mind generalized itself after our species ceased to be hunter-gatherers, that is with the settlement of communities. So that it could be possible to live together, one had to repress our instincts. This repression of our instincts produced self-destruction, for our violent instincts, that used to be externalized, were now turned toward the inside. Unfortunately, this makes of us depressed animals, for now we cannot hit and kill each other freely anymore. We are so repressed that we feel bad for the slightest thing we do (or even think). Nietzsche compares this state of having a *bad conscience* to a sickness, such as depression. Depression is a state where your instincts are repressed, and you cannot live according to your fundamental nature, 'not getting what you're built to go after is a demoralizing and frustrating experience' (ibid., 213). Now here's the solution: as to remain healthy one should satisfy these primary instincts. In the *Genealogy of Morals,* Nietzsche argues that it is possible to overcome negative feelings. What he names an *Übermensch* is someone who has been able to create a *good conscience*, for he is freed of all Christian values. He keeps those he holds deer only, for he sees them as valid; but he throws others away. To heal from a *bad conscience*, one should not oppose to our natural instincts but to everything that goes against vitality instead. Against the 'illnesses of Christianity, that is sin, self-torture and guilt', one should turn our consciousness toward an affirmation of life (Edward & Matheson, 2013).

Interestingly, ancient Greeks manage to avoid this phenomenon, for they allowed the expression of their aggressive instincts. Nietzsche describes how in Ancient times 'nobles' were allowed to be aggressive toward the plebs; they justified their cruelty by attributing it to the gods so that they could be discharged of any feeling of guilt and blame from others (ibid, 23). This shows that our modern inability to express our aggressive instincts is a contingent fact, for the Greeks' solution was to abuse others in public and then say that it was the fault of the gods. However, even if war still exists in many countries, I doubt we can satisfy our *death drive* by adopting these ancient practices today (instead we have Netflix where we can watch violent and horror series). What other solutions do we have to the suppression of safe-blaming moral emotions, so that we can express our natural instincts, but neither as an outward aggression toward others, nor as a form of self-annihilation? If our instincts are not expressed, we end up depressed, with a sickness that Nietzsche calls *bad conscience*. To overcome this problem, one should distinguish 'aggressive instincts' from 'natural inclinations' (Bradford Cokelet and Corey J. Maley, 2019, 219). 'Natural inclinations' are for example desires for sex, superiority or even happiness. Judeo-Christians have forbidden these things, for they see them as pertaining to our animal side, which is blamed, in contrast with our divine nature that is praised. To liberate our animal instincts. Nietzsche's solution is *creativity*. *Creativity* allows us to self-overcome and liberate these instincts. Rather than using the energy of aggressivity against one own self, one can turn it into art. These 'natural instincts' are a strength that can either be turned into a creative energy or into self-destruction. In other words, Nietzsche encourages people not to be hard on themselves. Instead of beating one-self up and self-flagellating after some wrongdoing one should instead go ahead and do better, that is overcoming ourselves. He suggests that one should not take others' wrongdoing so seriously, which is the highest expression of strength. If someone insults you, instead of reacting by taking things personally, you should just tell yourself that you are strong enough and that other people's words or misdeeds cannot hurt you. Furthermore, one should not feel bad for having aggressive instincts (such as ambition, competition, contempt or even jealousy), for these are just part of our nature and they are not intrinsically evil as Christianity claims it. For Nietzsche if we want to live happily, we must stay close to our nature. Christianity has asked too much; human beings are not divine, for they are 'human, too human'. One should replace blaming people with compassion. Finally, emotions such as guilt or shame emerge from a kind of self-loathing; this is why Nietzsche compares having a *bad conscience* to having a sickness. In next section, we will see how some have claimed that it is possible to alleviate the experience of these negative emotions. The idea is not to supress them completely, but to transform them into virtues.

5. A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

Anyone who has experienced having a *bad conscience* knows that it is not very pleasant to feel. One can consider it as a form of *emotional* suffering, for negative emotions such as guilt and shame are phenomenologically painful to experience. What is the function of such negative emotions? We have seen that the experience of these is a necessary condition for the cultivation of moral virtues.

Human beings are vulnerable, for they are constantly being exposed to the possibility of being hurt, that is both physically and psychologically. But the good side of it is that this makes them grow wiser. Our claim is that suffering is necessary for the development of excellent moral traits, such as compassion, love and unselfishness (Brady 2018, 115). Compassion is a powerful virtue, for it immediately creates a bond with other sufferers. This virtue has the ability to diminish the suffering in our world. In this section, I argue that negative emotions matter and that having a *bad conscience*, which I describe as the affective disposition of experiencing negative emotions, plays a key role in virtuous agency. Here, I will focus on a Buddhist perspective.

In the Buddhist teaching, suffering (*duhkha*) has a great importance, for besides playing a role in the development of moral virtues, it also explains our condition as human beings. Most importantly, this suffering can be relieved by the understanding its causes. The Buddha has elaborated a path that leads to the cessation of suffering (Brady 2018, 118). In the *Four Noble Truths* which is the essence of Buddhism, the Buddha says: 'I teach suffering, its origin, cessation and path. That's all I teach'. So, what does trigger suffering exactly? It is said that one of the major causes is that things do not last forever. This brings us to the emotion of regret, which is the painful awareness that time passes and that one cannot go back. The world is made of fleeting events, and attachment is often considered as the source of our suffering. As a solution, the Buddha suggest that one should not get attached to material things, which are constantly changing. The truth is unchanging, but it is within us and not in the *maya*, that is the great illusion of life (Meister, 2017, Ch.2). This leads us to another cause of suffering, which is *ignorance*, for according to Buddhism, 'appearances are empty' and our perceptions, which are built up by our experiences, create wrong patterns of thought and behaviour. We human beings sometimes seem to have a distorted view of reality, for we tend to (falsely) believe that some things are lasting. The delusion our minds create lead us to the experience of emotional pains. Let us take a deeper look into the *Fourth Noble Truths* and see how Buddhism helps to understand the nature of our suffering.

The first noble truth is *dukkha* which literally means 'suffering'. It says that almost everything in life is suffering and pain: 'birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the unpleasant is suffering; dissociation from the pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering – in brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering'[35]. The second noble truth is about the *origin* of suffering, which is *craving*: a desire or 'thirst' that is so powerful that it totally dominates us: 'It is this thirst which produces re-existence and re-becoming, bound up with passionate greed. It finds fresh delight now here and now, namely, thirst for sense-pleasures; thirst for existence and becoming; and thirst for self-annihilation' The third noble truth is about the *cessation* of suffering; 'it is giving up, renouncing, emancipating oneself from craving and being in a state of detachment'. Finally, the fourth noble truth is the path leading to the cessation of suffering, which is the noble truth of the Eightfold Path. This one is constituted by eight elements: 'a right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration' (Rahula, 1959, 92-4 and Brady 2018, 119). Suffering is therefore at the core of Buddhism, for it is universal, and most of all, it is what makes us human. Someone who do not suffer would be called a robot, for he would lack sensitivity to anything around him. We are sensitive beings; our survival system is made in such a way that things that feel good (pleasant) or bad (unpleasant) condition our thoughts and behaviours[36]. There are at least two types of sufferings: physical and mental. Here one will focus on the latter. According to Buddhism, sometimes, suffering can be unnecessarily generated, for at its roots lies attachment and caring. When one cares for something, one gets attached and forms desires for this object. If our desires are not fulfilled, one gets frustrated. One way to stop the suffering is to give up on desires, in other words, it is not to care anymore (Brady 2018, 119). Abandoning our attachments to passing things should enable us to achieve a state of *nirvana*, which literally means 'blown-out', for all desires are blown-out. *Nirvana* is a state of non-suffering where the self can realize itself in the highest way. This is how Buddhism proposes to deal with suffering, which is seen as an evil. Now, how can we relate this to having a *bad conscience*? Earlier, we argued that the experience of negative emotions can cause a lot of pain. Think of an emotion such as remorse, it is quite uncomfortable and sometimes even unbearable to feel. Some emotions are so painful that people commit suicide;

[35] The five aggregates of attachment are also called *Skandha*. These are (1) the physical world, (2) sensations or feelings, (3) perceptions, (4) mental formations and (5) consciousness.
[36] However, sometimes some things that are pleasant can be bad for us (such as using drugs and other addictions), while things that are unpleasant can be good in the long term (such as exercising or hard working).

they do not know how to deal with their suffering. But we have also argued that the utility of suffering is that it brings growth of virtues. So, this challenges the idea that suffering is something intrinsically evil that has to be erased. Maybe what Buddhism suggests is that it is attachment to things that do not last (rather than the suffering itself, which is part of our sensitivity) that must be suppressed, for it produces unnecessary suffering. Interestingly, the Buddhist tradition also claims that suffering can be transformed into good things. As an instance, let us take the life (or legend) of the Buddha itself. Before he got enlightened, the Buddha used to live in a sumptuous Palace; he was the little Prince of the Empire of India (by this time, his name was Siddhartha Gautama). During his childhood and a part of his life as a young man, Gautama had been protected from the external world. He lived a life of pleasure and had no idea what suffering was. But one day, he decided to leave the Palace and to encounter the outside world. There he witnessed the way ordinary people lived and he could not believe his eyes. He then started to experience a lot of questioning and suffering. He met an old man, a sick man, a beggar, and a dead man. Gautama started to realize he had never encountered illness and disease before, and so that life was a kind of endless suffering. Coming to the fact that people always wanted more, which made them suffer, he decided to leave his life of luxury and pleasure. So, he first went on a life of total deprivation and austerity. However, he only experienced another kind of suffering, which was that of indigence. Neither the life of pleasures nor the life of misery were good solutions. So, he just sat and meditated on the human condition; he came to the conclusion that the middle way was the right path, this was the Noble Eightfold path. This is how Gautama became the Buddha, that is an enlightened being. The point of this story is that the meeting of the reality of suffering had an important moral effect on the Buddha. Let us distinguish at least five forms of suffering. (1) First there is the suffering that Gautama sees on others and that has to do with our condition as human beings (that is birth, illness, misery, and death). Then there is (2) the physical suffering of the poor that has to do with his misery, and which is different from (3) the suffering of the rich that is generated by his attachment to fleeting pleasures. Finally, there is (4) the suffering Gautama experienced when he opened his eyes on reality, for he started to understand the true nature of what surrounded him[37]. (4) has to do with the epistemological value of suffering. At first, the Buddha had a distorted vision of reality (which also caused him to suffer), for he ignored the truth. But confronting the painful reality opened his eyes. He came to a wider view of reality,

[37] In Ancient Greece, the tragedian Euripides (c. 480 – c. 406 BC) already held the claim that understanding the true nature of life comes with the inevitable experience of suffering. He used the formula '*pathei mathos'*, which literally means *learning through suffering*.

which also enabled him to overcome his own suffering as a human being, for he became wiser. Seeing the suffering of others and experiencing suffering himself transformed the Buddha from the inside and relieved his own suffering. So, everything is suffering, even overcoming our own suffering (Ashvagosha, 1959, and Brady, 2018, 120).

Neuroscientists have argued that Buddhism is right when it claims that widening our perspective on reality can relieve one's suffering, for by understanding the true nature of things, one changes our patterns of thought and behaviour. It is also agreed that our experiences leave imprints in our minds, which conditions the way we see the world. Changing our vision on things helps to the loosening of synaptic connections, which will create new patterns of thinking. 'Appearances are empty' according to Buddhism, but one can liberate oneself from false beliefs by widening our spectrum of experiences (Sharp, 2011).

By confronting suffering, the Buddha becomes enlightened, for he now *knows* the human condition and is motivated to deal with it appropriately. The important point is that through the experience of negative emotions, the Buddha becomes wiser. When he saw the reality of the poor, he might have felt *guilty* for the life of luxury he had (even if he had not chosen it). Negative emotions, if they are appropriate, make us see things as they are. These have two components: an emotional one, but also an epistemic one. Indeed, suffering is essential for knowledge and understanding; it is epistemically valuable. Negative emotions shed light on things that matter to us. But not only, the experience of suffering also makes us appreciate good things even more. When the Buddha went on a life of austerity, he realized what it was like to eat and to be in good health. Here there are two claims that must be distinguished. First, the experience of pleasures requires the experience of suffering: it is only if one knows what it is like to be hungry that one can appreciate food (where pleasure is seen as a relief). But there is also another way in which suffering helps us grasp the value of things. The idea is that negative emotions give us access to the evaluative realm. Without the experience of these, one would be blind to values we hold deer. Negative emotions such as shame and guilt direct our attention on what affectively matters to us (Brady, 2018, 131-133). Guilt might for example lead to the development of *compassion,* which is the understanding of the suffering of others. Finally, one can say that the suffering of *having* a *bad conscience* makes us become wiser, for it is what makes us develop virtues. Brady writes: "dispositions to feel negative emotions constitute virtues, and the feelings of emotional suffering constitute virtuous motives' (ibid., 75).

CONCLUSION

We have all experienced having a *bad conscience* at least once in our lives. This very common phenomenon usually makes us feel bad about ourselves, either for something we have done (that would manifest in the form of guilt), or simply for being who we are (this would be shame). At the core of this phenomenon, lies the faculty of *conscience,* which is the inner awareness of our moral mental states. *Conscience* is a self-reflexive faculty; it is constituted by self-assessments about what is right and what is wrong. Ancient philosophers considered it as a kind of self-knowledge; Christianity mainly related it to the idea of sin; more modern views linked it to our sense of personal integrity. In this work, we focused on the negative emotions in link with our conscience. We claimed that emotions such as regret, shame, remorse, and guilt play an epistemic role, for they give us access to moral values. We defined *bad conscience* as an affective disposition to feel such negative emotions[38]. Even if having a *bad conscience* is a kind suffering, it has its benefits. Feeling bad about oneself or what one did in the past, regretting one's behaviour toward others, enables us to become better versions of ourselves in the future. Interestingly, our *conscience* is deeply connected with time, especially with its irreversible nature. If time wasn't irreversible, on could easily go back to past episodes of our lives to fix them as we wished. However, no time machine has been proved to work yet. We are responsible creatures, for our actions have consequences on us and others. *Bad conscience* is the critical awareness of all our acts and thoughts; it is the voice that makes evaluative judgments about our own way of being in this world. Finally, having a *bad conscience* can be seen as something beautiful, for it enables us to grow as virtuous beings. Digging into the dark side of our *conscience* and understanding what our negative emotions have to say on our condition helps us become better persons, for as some of us know, it is often out of the deepest darkness that light comes.

[38] One could have extended having a *bad conscience* to the experience of other negative emotions also, such as disappointment, grief, lovesickness, loneliness, and fear. Nevertheless, I have chosen to focus on those that seem to have a stronger link to morality, for they are self-reflexive emotions, and *conscience* is a self-reflexive faculty.

REFERENCES

ARISTOTLE. (1920) Ethica Nicomachea. Edited by I. Bywater. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

AQUINAS, (1953) *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate,* Questions 10-20 translated by James V. McGlynn, S.J. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company.

BRADY, Michael S. (2018). Suffering and Virtue. Oxford University Press.

COTTINGHAM, John (2013). Conscience, guilt, and shame. In Roger Crisp (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics. Oxford University Press.

COTTINGHAM, John (2019). Conscience: what is its history, and does it have a future? History of European Ideas 45 (3):338-345.

DARWALL, Stephen, (1995), The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought' 1640–1740 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 1.

DEONNA, Julien A. & TERONI, Fabrice (2008). Differentiating Shame from Guilt. Consciousness and Cognition 17 (4):1063-1400.

DEONNA, Julien, RODOGNO, Raffaele & TERONI, Fabrice (2011). In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion. Oxford University Press.

DEWEY, John (1906). The terms 'conscious' and `consciousness'. Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods 3 (2):39-41.

ELDRIDGE, Patrick (2017) Regret and the Consciousness of the Past, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, 25:5, 646-663

FREUD, Sigmund (1933) New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, trans. J. Strachey, ed. Strachey and Richards, (Penguin, 1973), 145-147.

GIUBILINI, Alberto, "Conscience", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/conscience/>

GOUGH, James Edward & Matheson, Sue (2013). Nietzsche and Bad Conscience on Mosquito Coast. Film-Philosophy 17 (1):234-244.

HÄMÄLÄINEN, Hasse J. (forthcoming) Moral Conscience's Fall From Grace: An Investigation Into Conceptual History. Intellectual History Review:1-17.

HOBBES, Thomas. Leviathan. Edited by Edwin Curley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994

HOLY BIBLE, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®

JOSEPH, Butler, Fifteen Sermons [1726] Cambridge: Published by Hilliard and Brown; Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins, 1827.

KANT, I. (2017). The Metaphysics of Morals (2nd ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of

Philosophy) (L. Denis, Ed.; M. Gregor, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

(1998) Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy) (M. Gregor, Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University

KATCHADOURIAN, Herant (2011). Guilt: The Bite of Conscience. Stanford General Books.

LUTHER, Martin. Career of the Reformer I, Vol. 31 of Luther's Works. Edited by Helmut T. Lehmanand Harold J Grimm. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1957.

LUTHER, Martin. Career of the Reformer III, Vol. 33 of Luther's Works. Edited by Philip S. Watson. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1972.

LYONS, William (2009). Conscience – an essay in moral psychology. Philosophy 84 (4):477-494.

MEISTER, Chad and COPAN, Paul (2017) "The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion", David Burton on *Buddhism,* Ch. 2.

MILL, John Stuart (1863). Utilitarianism. Cleveland: Cambridge University Press.

MILL, John Stuart (2015). On Liberty, Utilitarianism and Other Essays. Oxford University Press UK.

MICELI, Maria & Castelfranchi, Cristiano (1998). How to silence one's conscience: Cognitive defenses against the feeling of guilt. Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour 28 (3):287–318.

MORE, Thomas (1534), *Dialogue on Conscience,* in The Correspondance of Sir Thomas More (Princeton UP, 1947)

PIAGET, Jean, (1966), *La Psychologie de l'Enfant, Que Sais-je,* 118-120.

PLATO, *The Apology*, in *The Last Days of Socrates,* trans. Trednnick, (Penguin, 2nd edit., 1959).

RAHULA, W. (1959), *What the Buddha Taught,* New York: Grove Press, pp. 92-4.

ROBERTS, Robert C. (2003). Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology. Cambridge University Press.

RYLE, Gilbert (1939). Conscience and Moral Convictions. Analysis 7 (2):31 - 39.

SHARP, Patricia (2011). Buddhist Enlightenment and the Destruction of Attractor Networks: A Neuroscientific Speculation on the Buddhist Path from Everyday Consciousness to Buddha-Awakening. Journal of Consciousness Studies 18 (3-4):3-4.

SORABJI, Richard (2014). Moral Conscience Through the Ages: Fifth Century BCE to the Present. University of Chicago Press.

ST. AUGUSTINE. (1955), Enchiridion: On Faith, Hope, and Love, newly translated and edited by Albert C. Outler, Ph.D., D., D.D.

TERONI, Fabrice & BRUUN, Otto (2011). Shame, Guilt and Morality. Journal of Moral Philosophy 8 (2):223-245.

O'SHEA, Tom (2018). Modern Moral Conscience. International Journal of Philosophical Studies 26 (4):582-600.

VAN GORDON W., SHONIN E., GRIFFITHS M., SINGH N. (2015) Mindfulness and the Four Noble Truths. In: Shonin E., Van Gordon W., Singh N. (eds) Buddhist Foundations of Mindfulness. Mindfulness in Behavioral Health. Springer, Cham.

VELLEMAN, J. David (2001). The Genesis of Shame. Philosophy and Public Affairs 30 (1):27-52.

VITHOULKAS G, MURESANU DF. Conscience and consciousness: a definition. J Med Life. 2014;7(1):104-108.

ZHAO, Michael (2020). Guilt Without Perceived Wrongdoing. Philosophy and Public Affairs 48 (3):285-314.