

## HUMAN FLOURISHING #4

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Pía Valenzuela

THE VALUE OF EMOTIONS  
BASED ON MAGDA B. ARNOLD AND  
BARBARA L. FREDRICKSON THEORIES

EDUSC 2024

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	13
Table of Abbreviations	15
INTRODUCTION	17
1. Context and background of the study	18
2. Structure, challenges and methodology	20
CHAPTER I	
MAGDA B. ARNOLD'S APPRAISAL-EMOTION THEORY	25
1. Magda B. Arnold's life and work: beyond bias and frontiers	25
2. Arnold's theory of emotion in a broader sense	38
2.1. Emotions are object-subject directed and presuppose cognition	40
2.2. The appraisal paradigm	45
2.3. The unity of the psychological and physiological in the emotional experience	52
2.4. The motivational function of emotions	62
2.5. Emotion regulation	72
2.6. The integrative role of the self-ideal	79
3. Towards the integration of psychology and philosophy perspectives on human emotion	88
3.1. Between psychology and philosophy	89
3.2. Free agency	93
3.3. Recovering Aristotle's proposal on practical rationality	95
3.4. Psychological and philosophical influences on Arnold	97
3.5. A phenomenological approach to psychological experience	107
Appendix	117

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2	
THE BROADEN-AND-BUILD THEORY OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS	119
1. Barbara Fredrickson's bio-bibliographic profile	119
1.1. The main works	128
2. The concept of positive emotions	134
3. Undoing, broaden and build hypothesis	143
3.1. The undoing hypothesis	143
3.2. The broaden hypothesis	146
3.3. The build hypothesis	153
4. Ten positive emotions	160
5. Love as positivity resonance	165
5.1. An epistemological look at Fredrickson's notion of love	174
6. Upward spirals	176
7. Positive emotions: hedonic or eudaimonic well-being?	189
7.1. Positive emotions and well-being	189
7.2. Positive emotions and eudaimonia	195
7.3. Corollary: Psychological equilibrium and personhood maturity	202
CHAPTER 3	
BEYOND ARNOLD AND FREDRICKSON ON EMOTION, VIRTUE, FLOURISHING	207
Introduction	207
1. The nature of emotion	209
1.1. The intentionality of emotions	209
1.2. Felt tendencies: Feelings at the core of emotion	216
1.3. Emotions are naturally embodied	221
1.4. Revelatory of the selfhood (person)	226
2. Arnold & Fredrickson on positive emotions	231
2.1. Positive emotions according to Arnold	232
2.2. Fredrickson's account of positive emotions	236
2.3. Positive emotions contrasted	236
2.4. (Positive) Emotional resonance	238

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2.5. Love, the main positive emotion	246
2.5.1. Arnold on love	247
2.5.2. Fredrickson on love	252
2.5.3. The view from here	256
3. The education of emotions. From emotion to virtue	261
3.1. Arnold on virtue	263
3.2. Excursus: The continuity of natural law and virtue	267
3.3. Fredrickson on virtue	271
3.4. Phronetic or virtuous emotions	273
3.5. Emotions and values	280
3.5.1. About Scheler's values and emotions	281
3.5.2. Some contemporary views on emotions and values	285
4. Through emotions towards a comprehensive understanding of flourishing	287
4.1. Hedonia & eudaimonia in contemporary debate	288
4.2. About Aristotle's <i>eudaimonia</i>	293
4.3. Emotional well-being and flourishing	302
4.4. Not without love	308
Conclusion	315
GENERAL CONCLUSION	317
1. About the nature of emotions	317
2. On the psychophysical dimensions of emotions	318
3. About the ethical perspective of positive emotions	319
4. On emotions and flourishing	321
5. Anthropological insights	322
6. Epistemological insights	323
7. Suggestions for future research	325

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY	327
1. Primary sources	327
1.1. Magda B. Arnold and Barbara L. Fredrickson's works	327
1.2. Other authors' works	331
2. Secondary sources	337
3. Other sources	347
SUBJECT INDEX	349
INDEX OF NAMES	355



## THE HUMAN FLOURISHING SERIES

*Human Flourishing*, a new series of monographs and essays, is the fruit of recent research by a group of doctorate students and professors from the Pontificia Università della Santa Croce (Rome), in collaboration with Universidad Panamericana (Mexico). The works in this Series delve into fundamental topics found in the crux between the philosophy of the person, or philosophical anthropology, and psychology today. The research behind the Series has been carried out in close collaboration with specialists in both clinical and experimental psychology; many of these works have been presented in their various stages of development at interdisciplinary congresses and encounters.

The Series tackles topics that have been the object of a widespread interest that has gradually emerged across fields and over time. The relatively recent development of experimental psychology has been marked by the intention of maintaining it separate from its speculative origin in classical philosophy. Moreover, in broad sectors of applied thought, such as business ethics and organizational ethics, the axiological discourse has remained linked to the advances in experimental psychology. Nevertheless, in these contexts, connections to philosophical thought are not at all remote, as a good number of the scholars and promoters of organizational psychology and other such developments in the first half of the 20th century come from research areas that inevitably touch on the interdisciplinary: medicine, anatomy, biology, philosophy.

In successive generations, now-renowned authors initiated the incorporation of philosophical questions, hitherto unexpressed, into the fabric of experimental investigation. Magda Arnold, Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, and Viktor Frankl recuperate central themes such as the meaning of life, happiness, and the significance of the emotions in the person's growth.

The combination of a philosophical vision with psychological experimentation, inaugurated by William James, encountered new development channels for these rediscoveries of humanistic sense and exis-

tential meaning, leading to more studies on personality and attitude. In recent decades, the boom of positive psychology has brought into sharp relief the importance of profound and methodological analysis of these notions, sparking the collaboration of psychologists, educators, and philosophy scholars.

The first studies of this Series have their roots in two seminars organized at the Università della Santa Croce—one in September 2012 and another in January 2013. Collaboration from these encounters has matured and continued ever since.

The first seminar was eminently practical in scope, principally venturing into the coaching instruments. The impulse of Luis Romera and the participation of Federica Bergamino set things in motion, marking out the work for the following years. The availability, reliability, and openness of Evaristo Aguado and Edith Castellarnau helped us understand the depth behind the application of some psychological tools to build up and amplify a professional's capacity for work. The added value of the systematic application of these instruments was not so much in the increase of professional efficiency as in the promotion of becoming aware and conscious of one's own responsibilities and growth in autonomy.

The second seminar (January 2013) was organized by Martin Schlag and Juan Andrés Mercado as part of the work of the *Markets, Culture, and Ethics Research Centre* (MCE). Around twenty professors from various management schools in Mexico, Spain, Chile and Argentina participated, generating a fruitful exploration which helped us confirm or discover tracks for future investigations.

The anthropological aspects of some of the issues dealt with in these encounters converged in an international conference hosted by the School of Philosophy of the same Università della Santa Croce, "Personal flourishing in organizations," in February 2014. Seven months later, a collection of texts presented in said congress and revolving around the method of coaching was published, with Federica Bergamino as editor: *Desiderio e consapevolezza. Fondamenti e fenomenologia del coaching* (EDUSC, 2014). Furthermore, another publication collecting some of the major papers and presentations was released in a single volume later on: *Personal flourishing in organizations* (Springer, 2017).

Shortly afterwards, Livia Bastos Andrade finished the first systematic study on *eudaimonia* in the thought of Martin Seligman, a vast and detailed presentation on the movement spearheaded by the American

psychologist. While Dr Bastos published her thesis *L'eudaimonia nella proposta della psicologia positiva di Martin Seligman* (EDUSC, 2019), other doctorate projects were on their way to maturity—works now in the final stage of revision and soon to be included in the *Human Flourishing Series*.

In 2020, *Acta Philosophica* released a monographic issue: “Virtues, Suffering, and the Search for Meaning. At the Crossroads of Philosophy and Psychology,” which featured works from scholars such as Nancy Snow and Antonella Delle Fave.

It is worth noting that from 2016 onwards, our work has received beneficial influence from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. In addition, the network of collaboration promoted by James Arthur and Kristján Kristjánsson has allowed us to broaden and deepen our academic friendship and exchange with a considerable number of high-level specialists. The congresses on virtues held yearly in Oriel College, Oxford, have been of particular importance.



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Finally, I thank God, the ultimate source of love, resilience, confidence, hope and joy: “What can I give God for his generosity to me?” (Ps. 116:7).



# TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

## 1. Magda Arnold's works

EP1-2	<i>Emotion and personality</i> , vols. 1-2
FE	<i>Feelings and emotions as dynamic factors in personality integration</i>
BAP	<i>Basic assumptions in psychology</i>
PPE	<i>Perennial problems in the field of emotion</i>
HP	<i>The human person: An approach to an integral theory of personality</i>
PIM	<i>Psychology and the image of man</i>
SSA	<i>Story sequence analysis: A new method of measuring motivation and predicting achievement</i>
PA	<i>Personal autobiography</i>
MAA	<i>Magda Arnold (Professional) autobiography</i>
OHMA	<i>An oral history with Magda Arnold</i>
MB	<i>Memory and the brain</i>
CMP	<i>The concept of mind in psychology</i>
IS	<i>The internal senses: Functions or powers?</i>
PDE	<i>Physiological differentiation of emotional states</i>
ETE	<i>An excitatory theory of emotion</i>

## 2. Barbara Fredrickson's works

WGPE	<i>What good are positive emotions?</i>
RPEPP	<i>The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions</i>
PEBB	<i>Positive emotions broaden and build</i>
BBTPE	<i>Broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions</i>
PE	<i>Positive emotions</i>
CAPE	<i>Cognitive aspects of positive emotions</i>

BUPEP	<i>The biological underpinnings of positive emotions and purpose</i>
PESR	<i>Positive emotions speed recovery from the cardiovascular sequelae of negative emotions</i>
PEBA	<i>Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires</i>
PETUS	<i>Positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward emotional well-being</i>
EPE	<i>The eudaimonics of positive emotions</i>
UPR	<i>Updated thinking on positivity ratios</i>
POS	<i>Positivity</i>

### 3. Aristotle and Aquinas' works

DA	<i>De anima (On the Soul)</i>
EE	<i>Eudemian ethics</i>
MM	<i>Magna moralia (Great Morals)</i>
NE	<i>Nicomachean ethics</i>
Met.	<i>Metaphysics</i>
Rhet.	<i>Rhetoric</i>
Pol.	<i>Politics</i>
PA	<i>Parts of animals</i>
De ver.	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate (Disputed Questions on Truth)</i>
ST	<i>Summa theologiae</i>
Lib. Eth. Nic.	<i>Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics</i>

### 4. Other abbreviations

Ibid.	Ibidem
cit.	cited
op.cit.	work cited
al.	others
ed./eds.	editor/editors
Pub.	Publishing/Publication
trans.	translated
vol./vols.	volume/volumes



# INTRODUCTION

The work's title, *The Value of Emotions Based on Magda Arnold and Barbara Fredrickson's Theories*, carefully reflects the study's purpose of highlighting the significance of emotions. It does so by reviewing both theories whilst attempting to go beyond them. The analysis focused but is not restricted to these scholars' research; instead, also connects it to the work of other classic and contemporary authors. That explains why the title says *based on* rather than *according to*.

The study aims first to underline the value of emotions in general, particularly positive ones. Secondly its objective is to foster interdisciplinary dialogue on (positive) emotions and their relation to flourishing.

The psychologist Magda Arnold (1903-2002) was chosen for developing a broad theory of emotions that allows a general evaluation of emotions. Arnold was also a focus of this study for her work on integrating philosophical and psychological perspectives within emotion research. She pioneered the concept of appraisal as a distinct element in the emotional process.

Barbara Fredrickson's (b. 1964) work was selected because she leads psychological research on positive emotions through her broaden and build theory of positive emotions. She especially relates them to human flourishing and well-being.

The comparison seeks to complement and integrate the philosophical perspective of Arnold's psychological work with the updates of Fredrickson's research for an avant-garde perspective of how emotion concerns flourishing.

This study unveils several anthropological issues and assumptions, such as the psychophysical unity of human beings, aspects of human cognition and tendencies, and free agency. The relevance of these issues is enormous for the right approach to human psychology and human nature in general, and emotion in particular while avoiding reductive explanations as with cartesianism, psychoanalysis, behaviorism, et al.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See A. Malo, *Antropología de la afectividad*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2004 pp. 23-58.

Most of these issues are addressed in Arnold's work while untreated by Fredrickson's research.

Studying two psychologists is a gamble for dialogue and interdisciplinarity, but it is an effort to broaden the horizon of rationality by bringing science and philosophy together so that both may prosper.

Therefore, the work herein encourages an interdisciplinary dialogue between philosophical and psychological approaches to emotion. There are references to classical philosophical perspectives on emotion from Aristotle to Aquinas. The latter are enriched mainly by Scheler and Strasser's phenomenological insights and that of other contemporary scholars (e. g. De Monticelli, Steinbock, Haybron, Fowers). At the same time, contributions from psychology and neuroscience are highly appreciated to complement and provide empirical data helpful to philosophical analysis.

## 1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The issue of emotion is current, especially in the last two decades after the affective turn we find in different fields from education to cognitive sciences. In general, research on emotions is recent to both psychology and philosophy. Several emotion research associations have been established, for instance, the International Society for Research on Emotion (ISRE), European Philosophical Society for the Study of Emotions (EPSSE), Society for Affective Science (SAS), The Swiss Centre for Affective Sciences (Centre Interfacultaire en Sciences Affectives- CISA), Society for Philosophy of Emotion (SPE). Some of these research associations have launched their journals with titles such as *Emotion* (APA), *Emotion Review*, *Cognition & Emotion*, and *Journal of the Philosophy of Emotion*.

Research on positive emotions has emerged lately in psychology. We cannot forget just how young the field of psychology is. It is a relatively new science that has suffered internal debate regarding its identity as a science (method, perspective, scope).

Philosophical classical thought favoured preeminently the study of virtues and viewed emotions with some suspicion; that is why human feeling, desiring, and emotional behavior has been scarcely treated systematically. Although this view has changed in contemporary scholarship, there is still no significant treatment of emotions, even less positive ones. In this sense, philosophical scholarship is lagging behind psychology research into emotions.

This imbalance means that emotions have been studied in psychology. Many resources are being devoted, and there are significant advances not connected with classical or any philosophical thinking because they are born out of another context.

In the second half of the past century, the little-known psychologist Magda Arnold appears. By that time, humanist psychology by Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) and Carl Rogers (1902-1987), and Viktor Frankl's (1905-1997) existential analysis developed contrasting influences of psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Arnold criticized psychoanalytical arguments against self-determination and behaviorist reduction of human action and mental life by first understanding organisms engaging in simple behaviors learned by association, reward or punishment. Behaviorism considered emotions as mentalistic events of the 'black box,' thus, an unscientific field of study.

With Arnold, among others, emotion research had a new start. Gradually, some theoretical treatises on emotion appeared along with neurophysiological research, such as bodily changes in emotion.

Arnold was the contemporary of renowned researchers studying the nature and expression of emotions: Paul Ekman (b. 1934), Nico Frijda (1927- 2015), Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991), and Richard Lazarus (1922-2002). Her work on appraisal, emotional processes, and neurophysiological research placed her among the leaders in her field of research. Her broader thought fits into the tradition of authors who, from the classical thought of Aristotle and Aquinas to phenomenologists like Scheler, highlight the cognitive and tendential aspects of emotion within a comprehensive understanding of the human person.

Thus, Arnold is a relevant scholar among Christians because of her philosophical thought in addition to her religious convictions. It is worth understanding her position and seeing how she attempts an integration of classical thought with the scientific discoveries of the time which she foresaw being updated, as we see now with neuroscience.

The research on positive emotions started much later with Alice Isen (1942-2012) and was consolidated with Barbara Fredrickson from 1998 onwards. Above all, with the advent of new research, the emotions studied were especially anger, fear, disgust —the ones which produce the 'flight or fight response'— as well as other similar emotions often related to psychopathological or clinical research. Pleasant and unpleasant emotions were treated with no particular distinction before Isen noticed some differences between positive and negative affects. Isen

(1990) discovered that positive emotions enlarge our cognitive context by making it much more elastic.

Exploring Isen's research, Fredrickson inquired about the cognitive and other effects of positive emotions. One of her first findings was the ability of positive emotions to undo the after-effects of negative emotions.

Fredrickson's work is framed in positive psychology, within which she is considered an authority in positive emotions research. I have had the opportunity to interview and talk to Barbara Fredrickson to appreciate her work and its limits from a philosophical perspective.

In the study, there are references to some positive psychology authors and other scholars with whom I have had the opportunity to interact, discuss, and collaborate. Many of them are quoted and referenced throughout this work. I have presented the findings of this research at different conferences and seminars, and some of them have been already published.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. STRUCTURE, CHALLENGES AND METHODOLOGY

The main general questions guiding this research have been: What is the nature of emotions? What is their unique role in human life? What is meant by positive emotions, and what are they for? How are related (positive) emotion and flourishing (happiness)?

The general questions are divided into specific research questions: What is the core of emotions? How is the process of emotion elicitation? If all emotions have a cognitive value and importance, why focus on positive emotions? How do (positive) emotions help the pursuit of our self-ideal? What is the relation between emotions and virtues? Can emotions become virtues?

Furthermore, may positive emotions lead to virtuous behavior? Do they improve or foster the cultivation of virtues? What is understood

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, P. Valenzuela, "Considerations about a psychophysiological perspective of love," *Forum. Supplement to Acta Philosophica*, vol. 5/1 (2019), pp. 325-338. <http://forum-phil.pusc.it/articoli/v05-a20>; P. Valenzuela, "Magda B. Arnold's work on the integration of philosophy and psychology perspectives on human emotion", a paper presented at the Women in the History of Philosophy Conference, British Society for the History of Philosophy, 21-23 April 2021, University of Durham, UK. [https://bshp.org.uk/site/assets/files/1029/bshp\\_2021\\_conference\\_program\\_me\\_no\\_cover.pdf](https://bshp.org.uk/site/assets/files/1029/bshp_2021_conference_program_me_no_cover.pdf); P. Valenzuela, "Fredrickson on flourishing through positive emotions and Aristotle's eudaimonia," *Conatus-Journal of Philosophy* 7/2 (2022), pp. 37-61.

by flourishing? How can momentarily positive emotional states have lasting effects on overall flourishing?

The answers to these questions are addressed throughout this study divided into three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to Arnold's theory of emotion. Firstly, it places her life and works in the context of her times. Secondly, it analyses the main elements of her theory, elucidating the nature of emotions: appraisal, self-ideal, referentiality, emotion education, conative and physiological aspects. Third, it deals with her valuable work integrating philosophical and psychological perspectives on emotion. It addresses the authors and ideas that influenced her thoughts. In the end, there are relevant epistemological and methodological remarks.

The second chapter covers Fredrickson's theory of positive emotions. As in the first chapter, there is a contextualization of the author's life and research. It follows the explanation of what she meant by positive emotions. The analysis of the theory consists of referring to the three hypotheses: undoing, broaden and build. Next, there is a consideration of the ten positive emotions listed by Fredrickson. Among them, love or positivity resonance is regarded in a section by itself. Finally, after dealing with the concept of upward spirals, I offer a reflection on positive emotions and overall well-being, happiness or flourishing.

The third and last chapter aims to put together the central insights of both theories, however going beyond giving a mere synthesis. It contains analysis and findings beyond the authors' theories, using primarily phenomenological insights. That is the reason for the chapter's title: "Beyond Arnold and Fredrickson on Emotion, Virtue, Flourishing." It poses the question of how emotions can enhance flourishing. The answer is that (positive) emotions may enhance flourishing if they are 'virtuous' emotions—or at least natural emotional traits becoming virtuous. First of all, it deals with the *quid* of emotion, highlighting the particularity of its intentionality (which is objected-subjected) its core as a felt tendency, the natural embodiment, and the fact that emotions are revealing of our selfhood. Secondly, it focuses on both authors' accounts of positive emotions, contrasting them and underscoring similarities. Attention is mainly devoted to love as the central emotion. Thirdly, it refers to both authors' understanding of virtue. Then it regards the development of virtuous emotions, and finally, the relation of emotion to values is considered. Fourth and lastly, it discusses an account of flourishing that, considering the findings of our authors, integrates all the aspects present in

the current debate about hedonia and eudaimonia. Thus, the position defended considers the good life of the virtuous individual through the actualization of their potentialities and who enjoys emotional well-being and life satisfaction.

As a philosophy scholar myself, when studying two psychological theories I needed to revise my previous studies in psychology and familiarize myself with recent psychological vocabulary and scientific experiments. My study's exciting challenge has been to deal with the complexity of emotions: their structure, emergence, diversity, relation to cognition, etc. In addition, a challenge has been to address such interdisciplinary research bibliography from philosophical psychology, anthropology and ethics to social psychology and neuroscience.

I realized that phenomenological thought, closer to psychological observations regarding affective phenomena, could be very helpful for understanding emotions and Arnold's account since she used phenomenological insights. I have dealt with some classic and contemporary authors in phenomenology.

Another challenge represents studying living author's work, that of Barbara Fredrickson. Being an active and prolific researcher has demanded that I follow her publications and updated research more often than usual. At the same time, it supposes considering the somewhat provisional nature of her writings. Nevertheless, this research intends to focus on the most developed aspects of Fredrickson's proposal. Although they are not even wholly definitive, they appear to be more consolidated. This fact has also signified that the temporal perspective is missing to evaluate a theory properly, which I assume is a limitation of this study. It has also meant that there are no such (auto)biographies about her life and work, so it was not easy to sketch her biographical profile.

The bibliography of Fredrickson's work consists mainly of peer-reviewed articles published in scientific journals. There is no systematic work except the two non-academic but general audience books. Some bibliographic material on Arnold's research was challenging to obtain because her work is not so well known and, thus, is not entirely available or has not yet been published.

The methodology used in my research is primarily conceptual-interpretative through the commentary and analysis of both authors' work while considering the scope of interdisciplinarity and different epistemological levels. Relevant work has been to define fundamental concepts: emotion, positive emotion, appraisal, self-ideal, upward spi-

rals, flourishing, etc. It is not always an easy task due to their variety of meanings, applications, and even translations of the different terms.

Encouraged by Arnold's and Fredrickson's true scientific spirit and intellectual humility, I have taken both authors' research with utmost seriousness, trying to understand first their accounts while avoiding engaging in general criticisms or trivialisations. Any criticisms are reduced to what is strictly necessary.

My research makes no claim to historical completeness. There are minimal contextualizations and few historical references when trying to define or debate concepts. The rest is the description, analysis, and criticisms of such conceptions that seem significant as a contribution or hindrance to the topic's overall considerations.