Intentionalism about moods*

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Abstract

According to intentionalism, phenomenal properties are identical to, supervenient on, or determined by representational properties. Intentionalism faces a special challenge when it comes to accounting for the phenomenal character of moods. First, it seems that no intentionalist treatment of moods can capture their apparently undirected phenomenology. Second, it seems that even if we can come up with a viable intentionalist account of moods, we would not be able to motivate it in some of the same kinds of ways that intentionalism about other kinds of states can be motivated. In this paper, I respond to both challenges: First, I propose a novel intentionalist treatment of moods on which they represent unbound affective properties. Then, I argue that this view is indirectly supported by the same kinds of considerations that directly support intentionalism about other mental states.

^{*}This paper is forthcoming in Thought: A Journal of Philosophy. DOI:10.1002/tht3.81

1 Introduction

According to intentionalism, phenomenal consciousness, the "what it's like" of mental states, is a matter of mental representation. All there is to the phenomenal experience of seeing blue is the visual representation of something as blue. The experience does not involve any "raw feels"; its phenomenal nature is exhausted by its representational nature.

Moods, such as sadness, elation, and irritation, present a special challenge to the intentionalist project. The problem is that they really seem like "raw feels." They seem entirely undirected, pervading our experience, rather than representing things as being a certain way. This paper develops and defends an intentionalist theory of moods. My account builds on intentionalist views of emotions on which emotions represent special kinds of properties, affective properties. I argue that the similarities between moods and emotions motivate a view of moods on which they represent affective qualities that are not bound to any represented objects.

Section 2 defines key terms; Section 3 presents the motivations for intentionalism about perceptual experiences and emotions, and describes the problem with moods; Section 4 presents an intentionalist treatment of moods; Section 5 argues for it.

2 Key terms

Intentionalism is a view of phenomenal consciousness, the "what it's like" (Nagel, 1974) of being in certain mental states, on which a mental state's phenomenal properties are reducible to, supervenient on, identical to, or determined by its representational properties. Loosely, the idea is that phenomenal

consciousness is nothing over and above mental representation.¹ My aim is to defend an identity version of intentionalism about moods, on which every phenomenal property is identical to some representational property.² For brevity, I will use "intentionalism" to refer to this version.

Moods are affective states that tend to be long lasting, have pervasive effects, are not associated with a specific stimulus, and appear not to be directed at anything. Examples include happiness, sadness, and anxiety. Emotions are affective states that tend to be fairly short-lived, are associated with a specific stimulus, and appear to be directed at something specific. Examples include fear of a dog, joy about a recent victory, and anxiety about an upcoming event.

The best way to characterize moods and emotions is a matter of some controversy. Delancey (2006) argues that many of the allegedly distinguishing features of moods are also exhibited by emotions, and thus fail to distinguish between moods and emotions. Kind (2013) argues that the various allegedly characteristic features of moods and emotions can come apart. For my purposes, I set these issues aside. Since the putative feature of moods that presents a special challenge to intentionalism is their apparent lack of directedness, I will take moods to be affective states that appear to not to be directed at anything, and ignore the question of what other characteristics they exhibit. Likewise, I will take emotions to be affective states that appear to be directed at something.

Interestingly, for most moods, there is a corresponding phenomenally similar emotion. For example, an anxious mood is phenomenally similar to anxiety

¹There are pure and impure versions of intentionalism. Pure intentionalism is the view that phenomenal character is reducible to, supervenient on, identical to, or determined by representational content alone (Mendelovici 2010, Ch. 7; Bourget 2010). Impure intentionalism is the view that phenomenal character is reducible to, supervenient on, identical to, or determined by representational content together with some other features, such as functional roles Tye 2000 or modalities Lycan 1996; Crane 2003; Chalmers 2004. Also, while intentionalism is often combined with a tracking theory of mental representation, on which mental representation is a matter of detecting or otherwise keeping track of items in the world, there are versions of intentionalism that do not incur this extra commitment. See Bourget and Mendelovici (2013) for an overview of the options.

²See Harman (1990), Dretske (1995), and Tye (1995).

about something, say, an upcoming performance. An elated mood is phenomenally similar to elation directed at something, say, a new pet. This similarity between moods and emotions will play a key role in my arguments.

Moods may be complex states involving not only phenomenal, but also bodily, behavioral, cognitive, and normative features or components. Since intentionalism is a theory of phenomenal character, its explanandum is the phenomenal character of moods, not any of their other features, and intentionalism about moods is a view only about moods' phenomenal features, and not their other putative features.

3 Motivating intentionalism about perceptual experiences and emotions

This section overviews what I take to be the best motivation for intentionalism about perceptual experiences. I argue that this motivation applies to emotions, but not to moods. This serves the dual purpose of motivating intentionalism about emotions, which my argument for intentionalism about moods will rely on, and highlighting the special challenges facing intentionalism about moods.

Perception involves various experienced *qualities*, like blueness, squareness, loudness, etc. According to intentionalism, all such qualities are represented contents. Many opponents of intentionalism, in contrast, claim that at least some of these qualities are not represented; they are mere "raw feels."

In my view, the best reason to take the qualities presented in perceptual experience to be nothing over and above represented contents is that they *behave* like nothing over and above represented contents.³ Consider the case of color

³My argument is similar to the argument from transparency developed by Harman (1990) and Tye (2000), but differs from it in important ways. For example, it does not rely on what appear to be direct realist intuitions and avoidance of error theory about the location of the qualities of experience.

experiences. Color-related qualities of experience seem to qualify represented objects.⁴ When we visually experience a blue sea, our experience seems to be an experience of an object, the sea, as being a certain way, blue. In other words, the blueness quality of our experience behaves like represented blueness in that it binds to represented objects to yield representations of ways things are or might be. This is why it is appropriate to treat the blueness-related quality of experience as a represented quality of experience, rather than merely a "raw feel."

The intentionalist needs to further pursuade us that this blueness-related quality is completely exhausted by the representation of blueness, that there is no extra component of the quality that could qualify as a "raw feel." This further step can be motivated by arguing that once we take into account the representation of, say, the sea as blue, there introspectively seems to be no extra "blueness" of experience to be accounted for, no remaining "raw feel." All the blueness qualities seem to attach to the represented sea.

In short, the blueness-related qualities of experience *behave* like nothing more than represented properties of represented objects. This motivates intentionalism about color experiences. Similar arguments can be made about other qualities present in perceptual experience, such as squareness and loudness.

A similar case can be made for intentionalism about emotions. The affective qualities of emotions, e.g. the "fearfulness" bit of an experience of fear, seem to qualify objects. A fear of a dog qualifies the dog itself as being a certain way, as being scary. Happiness at a recent event qualifies the event as joyous. Anger at a friend qualifies the friend as irritating or annoying. Since the affective qualities of emotions behave like contents, we might conclude that they are contents.

⁴Representing an object might be a matter of representing a singular content involving the object itself as a constitutent, or it might involve representing an existentially quantified proposition to the effect that there is an object with such-and-such properties. Which view one takes does not matter for my purposes here.

We can call scariness and other qualities that emotions represent affective properties.⁵ It's a matter of controversy among intentionalists about emotions just what such affective properties end up being. Affective properties might be evaluative properties, like badness, or threateningness, which register the valence or significance of the intentional objects they qualify (see Seager 2002, Seager and Bourget 2007, and Tye 2008 for variants of this view). Or they might be ordinary physical properties, such as being prone to induce lacerations and other such changes in living things. They might also be response-dependent properties, such as the property of causing or accompanying certain physiological changes (see e.g. Tye 2008). Or they might be sui generis properties that cannot be reduced to ordinary physical properties, such as scariness (Mendelovici 2013a). These views differ in various ways. Seager and Tye take their affective properties to sometimes be instantiated, while Mendelovici takes emotions to be cases of reliable misrepresentation.⁶ Seager and Tye allow that emotions are appropriate to the extent to which they are veridical, while Mendelovici relies on various alternative ways of understanding the appropriateness of emotions, e.g. in terms of the appropriateness of the behaviors they give rise to. For my present purposes, I can remain neutral on the question of what exactly is the correct account of affective properties.⁷

So far, we have reason to think that emotions represent affective properties as qualifying represented objects. But do these contents exhaust their phenomenal characters? Might there be a component or aspect of affective qualities that does not qualify represented objects, a "raw feel"? Whatever scariness amounts to, it introspectively seems that all the scariness of the experience described above

 $^{^5}$ These affective properties need not be the same as the properties our *concepts* SCARY, IRRITATING, etc. represent. For example, the concept SCARY might represent the property of being disposed to cause fear.

 $^{^6\}mathrm{See}$ Mendelovici (2013b) for discussion of reliable misrepresentation.

⁷ Affective properties are not the same as the properties of being in certain emotional states. For example, the dog's threateningness is not the same thing as the property of being afraid of a dog. The first is a property of the dog, while the second is a property of a subject.

attaches to represented objects, such as the represented dog (or, compatible with some view, such as Tye's, the represented dog and one's represented body). There does not seem to be any aspect of scariness that is detached from its represented objects. There is no free-floating aspect of scariness that does not pertain to them, no extra "raw feel" of scariness. All the scariness pertains to the dog (or the dog and one's body).⁸

It's quite plausible that all this holds in the case of other emotions. If that's right, then this supports intentionalism about emotions. Just as blueness is not a "raw feel" or a quality of mental states, but rather a represented property of represented objects, so too are scariness and other affective qualities not "raw feels" or qualities of mental states, but rather represented properties of represented objects.⁹

Moods present a special challenge for intentionalism. Unlike emotions, they do not seem to qualify any objects. When one suddenly feels anxious, or suddenly wakes up feeling happy, one might not feel anxious or happy about any particular thing. This apparent undirectedness of moods not only precludes us from motivating intentionalism about moods in the same way that we can motivate intentionalism about color experiences and emotions, but it also seems to independently militate against intentionalism about moods. This challenge can

⁸One might object that in at least some cases, there is a bit of scariness that doesn't pertain to the dog. Suppose you have an intense fear of dogs. Upon encountering a dog, you fear the dog. But this fear also permeates your experience, and, at times, might even attach to other items in your experience, such as an innocent passerby or a ringing cell phone. Or consider a case in which you feel happy about an upcoming vacation, but, at the same time, the thought of this upcoming vacation just makes you feel happy in general. It seems that not all your happiness attaches to the upcoming vacation. In such cases, I agree that some parts of the fear and happiness occur detached, not qualifying any represented objects. However, these are not cases of mere emotions. They are cases of emotions accompanied by phenomenologically similar moods, and, in some cases, additional emotional states (e.g. fear of a passerby). The undetached fear and happiness described above are relatively long-lived, undirected affective states, though they are, perhaps indirectly, caused by a specific stimulus. But if we focus on clear cases of emotions, that is, relatively short-lived, directed affective states caused by a specific stimulus, it is quite plausible that all aspects of emotions' affective qualities qualify the objects they are directed at, such as dogs and upcoming vacations.

 $^{^9{}m For}$ a defense of intentionalism about emotions, see Seager 2002, Seager and Bourget 2007, Tye 2008 and Mendelovici 2013a.

be put in terms of two problems for intentionalism about moods:

Problem 1 Since moods appear not to qualify represented objects, intentionalism about moods seems not to be viable.

Problem 2 Since moods appear not to qualify represented objects, even if intentionalism about moods is viable, it seems it cannot be properly motivated.

In short, intentionalism about moods appears unviable and unmotivated. In the next two sections, I address both problems. I address Problem 1 by proposing what I take to be a viable intentionalist treatment of moods that respects their phenomenology. I address Problem 2 by arguing that even though intentionalism about moods cannot be motivated in the same way as intentionalism about other kinds of states, it can be indirectly motivated by considerations coming from the same direction. In addressing the two problems, I accept both that moods appear not to qualify represented objects, and that they in fact do not qualify represented objects, and aim to show that this is not an impediment to offering a well-motivated intentionalist account of moods.

4 Intentionalism about moods

This section proposes and argues for an intentionalist view of moods. I begin by discussing a common intentionalist strategy for dealing with moods (Section 4.1) and arguing that it doesn't cover all the cases. I then describe my proposal, thereby addressing Problem 1 (Section 4.2).

4.1 Existing intentionalist views of moods

Existing intentionalist views of moods claim that while moods appear not to be directed at anything, upon closer examination, it turns out that they are in fact

directed at special kinds of objects: bodily states or unusual external objects, such as the world as a whole, indeterminate intentional objects, or frequently changing objects (see Goldie 2000, 2002, Seager 2002, Seager and Bourget 2007, and Tye 2008). For example, a pervasive feeling of elation might represent the world as a whole as positive or good. An apparently undirected fear might represent that something, though nothing in particular, is scary.

These suggestions might account for a broad range of cases. Perhaps some cases of apparently undirected anxiety actually turn out to be directed at the world as a whole, frequently changing intentional objects, or indeterminate objects. However, at least some cases of moods escape this treatment. Some cases of anxiety really don't seem to be plausibly directed at anything at all. One just feels anxious. Similarly, some cases of sudden elation really don't seem to be directed at the world as a whole, an unspecified object, or anything else. One just feels elated. Insisting that these experiences are in fact directed at unusual objects simply gets their phenomenology wrong.

We can call such moods undirected moods. While some moods may end up being directed at special kinds of objects, undirected moods are genuinely undirected. While the view that there are undirected moods seems plausible from a theory-neutral perspective, intentionalists have been resistant to this claim, arguing that all moods are directed. However, I think intentionalists should accept that there are undirected moods. As argued above, this is plausible from a phenomenological perspective. There are at least two other reasons for the intentionalist to accept undirected moods.

First, insisting that all experienced moods require the representation of intentional objects overintellectualizes the states in question. In order to experience moods, one would have to be able to represent particular objects, the world as a whole, or unspecified objects. This seems to be too sophisticated a requirement for experiencing a mood.

Second, the intentionalist needs undirected moods in order to make sense of all the different kinds of phenomenal experiences we can have. There is a phenomenal difference between mere sadness and sadness directed at the world as a whole (the kind of state that is expressed by, "Everything's terrible!"). The most natural explanation of this difference is that the former state is an undirected mood whereas the latter is a directed mood that represents the world as a whole as having certain affective properties. It's unclear how the intentionalist who denies the existence of genuinely undirected moods can comfortably account for this difference.

In what follows, I set aside cases of moods that turn out to be directed (if there are any), and focus on undirected moods.

4.2 My proposal

Undirected moods seem to be a lot like emotions, except that they lack objects at which they are directed. My suggestion is to take this appearance at face value. Moods are what we get when we have an emotion that is not directed at something: a representation of a mere affective property.

It is helpful to contrast moods with color experiences. In the case of color experiences, color qualities always attach to particular objects. We can't experience blue without experiencing something as blue. In contrast, in the case of undirected moods, we experience unbound instances of affective properties. We feel the fear, joy, or anxiety, but we don't experience anything as having these affective qualities.

The main advantage of this intentionalist treatment of undirected moods is that it takes the phenomenology seriously. At least some moods *appear* to be undirected. Unlike other intentionalists treatments, my treatment makes sense of this appearance. While undirected moods have contents, and so in some sense can be said to be directed at those contents, they are undirected in that they do not have specific or general intentional objects that they qualify.

One might object that we can only represent propositional contents, contents that specify putative states of affairs. Since mere properties aren't propositions, we cannot represent mere properties. I think there is no reason to think that we can only represent propositional contents. There are many cases of non-propositional representation. For example, one can love one's mother. Likewise, the contents of concepts, the mental representations constituting thoughts, can occur unbound. For example, the concept CAT can occur outside the context of a propositional mental state. This occurs when we just think *cat* without thinking that anything is a cat or any other proposition concerning cats. Just as you can think about your mother without thinking any proposition involving your mother, the idea of a cat can occur to you without you thinking any proposition about a cat. That we can have such states is introspectively obvious. Absent strong empirical or theoretical considerations to the contrary, we should accept their possibility.^{10,11}

Of course, just as it is an open question what it is to think of one's mother, it is an open question just what it is to think *cat*. On some views of concepts, CAT represents the full-fledged property of being a cat Fodor 1987; Millikan 1984. On other views, CAT represents, at least in the first instance, the word "cat" and/or cat-related perceptual imagery Prinz 2002; Viger 2007. On still other views, CAT represents a prototype Rosch 1975; Rosch and Mervis 1975, set of

 $^{^{10}\}mathrm{Views}$ of mental representation that endorse something like a language of thought (see Fodor 1975) take representation of propositions to involve the representation of subpropositional contents, including properties. Since representation of subpropositional contents is prior to representation of propositions, it is natural for such a view to allow for subpropositional representations to occur independently of other representations, resulting in the isolated representation of subpropositional contents, such as mere properties.

¹¹See Grzankowski (forthcoming-a, forthcoming-b) for arguments that there are non-propositional attitudes and Baker and Woods (Ms) for arguments that affective attitudes have non-propositional contents.

exemplars Medin and Schaffer 1978; Brooks 1978, or a role in a theory of cats Murphy and Medin 1985; Carey 1985; Gopnik and Wellman 1994. Each view of concepts results in a different view about the content of a mere occurrence of a concept. But on most of these views, with the exception of an implausible interpretation of the theory view on which CAT represents an entire theory of cats, a mere occurrence of the concept CAT will not have a propositional content. If all this is right, then we can make sense of the representation of mere properties, and the representation of mere affective properties in moods should not be troubling.

Another possible objection to this view is phenomenological. It doesn't seem that we represent mere properties in experiencing moods. This points to a general worry with identifying represented contents with the likes of properties. One might similarly worry that when we think Whiskers is a cat, we don't seem to think something having to do with properties, abstract propositions, or the like. There are two possible reactions to this sort of worry. First, we might accept that in thinking Whiskers is a cat, we are thereby thinking about a properties and propositions, but in a very thin sense, on which thinking about a property or a proposition doesn't requiring thinking of it as such. Alternatively, we might take this worry to be a reason not to identify represented contents with properties or propositions. Contents might instead be ordinary concrete objects, mental items (ideas or sense data), or adverbial modifications of the subject. Deciding between these options is beyond the scope of this paper. However, whatever we say about Whiskers is a cat should apply in the case of undirected moods.

In summary, I've suggested that undirected moods do not represent everything, something, or other unusual intentional objects as having affective properties. Instead, they represent mere affective properties. This content ad-

equately matches their phenomenal characters. We represent, and hence feel, mere fear, anxiety, joy, sadness, etc.

This account addresses Problem 1. The problem was that since moods do not seem to qualify objects, intentionalism about moods does not seem to be viable. I have presented what I take to be a viable intentionalist treatment of moods that accords with the phenomenological observations. This strategy accepts that moods don't qualify objects, but maintains that this is compatible with their being representational.

5 The argument for my proposal

As we saw in Section 3, intentionalism about moods can't be motivated in the same way as intentionalism about emotions. This section argues that there is a fairly straightforward way of extending the argument for intentionalism about emotions to intentionalism about moods. Thus, intentionalism about moods can be properly motivated.

Recall that for most moods, there is a corresponding emotion. For example, a fearful mood corresponds to directed fear, e.g. a fear of a dog. A happy, good, or cheerful mood corresponds to directed happiness or joy. Perhaps there are moods without corresponding emotions; I will deal with this possibility shortly, but for now I assume that every mood has a corresponding emotion.

This leads to the first premise of the argument: The very same affective qualities involved in moods are also involved in corresponding emotions. One reason to think this premise is true is phenomenological: In the case of fear of the dog and undirected fear, the two kinds of states seem alike in quality. This is why we label them both "fear." A second reason to think this is that moods often cause their corresponding emotions. For example, being in an undirected irritated mood can lead to the emotional state of being irritated at a particular

object. That moods involve the same qualities as emotions helps explain why this kind of transfer occurs. It is as if the state of irritation is already there in one's mind, waiting for an object to attach to.

The second premise of the argument is intentionalism about emotions, which was motivated in Section 3. According to intentionalism about emotions, the affective qualities present in emotions (e.g. the fearfulness of fear) are represented affective properties.

Combining the two premises, we have the following argument:

- (P1) The affective qualities (e.g. fearfulness) involved in moods are involved in corresponding emotions.
- (P2) The affective qualities involved in emotions are represented affective properties.
- (C) The affective qualities involved in moods are represented affective properties.

Moods are qualitatively similar to their corresponding emotions. This suggests that the very same qualities involved in moods are also involved in emotions, as (P1) claims. The affective qualities involved in emotions behave as if they are nothing over and above represented contents. This suggests that they are represented contents, as (P2) claims. But if the affective qualities involved in moods are the same affective qualities that are involved in emotions, then it's plausible that the affective qualities of moods are also represented contents, as (C) claims.

One might object to (P1), claiming that not all moods have corresponding emotions.¹² For example, perhaps boredom is a mood without a corresponding emotion. Strictly speaking, all I need for my form of argument to work is that

¹²Thanks to Stuart Brock for this objection.

all moods have a corresponding directed state, regardless of whether this state counts as an emotion. Since we can be bored of something in particular, we can argue that boredom-related qualities are represented contents along the lines I've described. The only cases that might escape such treatment are those of moods that do not have a corresponding directed state. I am not sure if such cases exist. If so, I agree that my argument cannot be run with them. However, all is not lost. If an intentionalist treatment of the majority of moods can be motivated in the way I describe, and if these putatively problematic states really are moods, then we might reason by extension that since intentionalism is true of the majority of moods, it is also true of them.

Problem 2 was that the qualities involved in moods do not appear to qualify represented objects, and so intentionalism about moods does not seem to be properly motivated. I agree that the qualities involved in moods do not appear to qualify represented objects, and so we cannot directly ascertain that the affective qualities of moods behave like represented contents. However, the observed content-like behavior of the affective qualities of emotions indirectly supports the view that the affective qualities of moods are represented contents. Thus, intentionalism about moods can be properly motivated, and it can be motivated from the same direction as intentionalism about perceptual states and intentionalism about emotions.

6 Conclusion

I have proposed and argued for a novel intentionalist account of moods. While some moods might in fact be directed at represented objects of some sort, other moods lack represented objects altogether. These undirected moods involve the unbound representation of affective properties. While intentionalism about moods cannot be motivated in the same way as intentionalism about perceptual

states and emotions, it receives indirect support from the content-like behavior of affective properties in emotions.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to David Bourget and two anonymous referees for comments on drafts of this paper. Thanks also to Amy Kind for multiple conversations online, offline, and in print, Jack Woods for helpful discussion, and the audience at the presentation of this paper at the World Congress of Philosophy 2013 meeting in Athens for useful comments and questions. Finally, I am grateful to Uriah Kriegel for encouraging me to publish this paper.

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