I Don't Feel like That!
A Phenomenology-Free Approach to Moods

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Abstract

People in moods usually claim that they feel in a certain way, and yet they also say that moods are undirected states. If one takes these reports at face value, moods are a counterexample to representationalism, namely the doctrine of a necessary connection between phenomenal character and content. The standard representationalist answer is to deny moods' undirectedness in order to capture the phenomenal character of moods. I go in the opposite direction: I will deny moods' phenomenal character and secure moods' undirectedness instead. I will show that both our folk-psychological usage and our introspective based reports favour this proposal over standard representationalism.

Keywords: Moods, Emotions, Representationalism, Intentionalism, Functionalism.

1. Introduction

Being in a bad mood is something that everybody has experienced at least once in a lifetime. Considering the world to be a terrible place, holding beliefs about negative things, etc. are all experiences that anybody in a depressive mood may have had. Like emotions, moods are a common occurrence in our mental lives. Usually, people's introspective reports on moods highlight two features. Firstly, being in a certain mood is feeling in a certain way. In other words, we report that moods are mental states with a phenomenal character, we report that there is something *it-is-like* to be in a certain mood. Elation, for instance, is feeling extremely positive. Secondly, we report that moods are undirected.[1] In contrast to states like beliefs and desires, we take moods to be contentless. Someone who is elated, for example, reports a sort of positive and diffuse affection, but also that

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[1] For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term "representational", "directed" and "content" interchangeably. Indeed, the heart of the dispute is whether moods are about, *i.e. refer to,* something else than themselves. And this minimal notion of reference is common to any account of representations, directedness and contents. See also footnotes 2, 4 and 5.

this affection seems not to be directed. In contrast, emotions seem to have specific contents. For example, a person feeling happy may report that she is happy about *her friend* or, alternatively, happy that *her friend enjoys a certain fortune.*[2]

This overall picture causes a lot of troubles for philosophers attracted to the doctrine of phenomenal character called *Representationalism*:

> Representationalism: It is necessary for any phenomenal state to be also a representational state (Siewert 2017).[3]

Detractors of Representationalism (*e.g.* Voltolini 2013, Bordini 2017) usually argue that (*a*) moods are phenomenal states; (*b*) since moods are undirected, they lack a representational content; (*c*) Representationalism predicts that any phenomenal state has a representational content; (*d*) thus, anti-representationalists conclude, Representationalism is false.[4] Call this the *argument from moods.*[5]

The doctrine I call *standard representationalism* tries to answer to the argument from moods by providing moods with a representational content. Thus, standard representationalism rejects premise *(b)* of the argument from moods. It does so in two ways. The most common one is to assume that moods are directed to an object, contrary to what it seems. Usually this object is very general, like the *whole world* (Solomon 1993, Goldie 2000, Crane 2007), *everything* (Seager 2002), *our total environment* (namely, the totality of relations that a subject holds with things in the world, including past, present, future and possible relations) (Mitchell 2018a, 2018b), *things in general* (Tappolet 2018, Kriegel 2019). A recent proposal is by Rossi (2019), who claims that moods are directed to *undetermined objects*, namely something that the subject is not able to identify. A less popular view is Tye's (1995), according to which moods are about *changes in our bodily equilibrium*. The second way to reject premise *(b)* is Mendelovici's (2013a, 2013b). According to her, moods are not directed to any object, but they are directed to *sui generis, unbound, uninstantiated, evaluative properties* of the kind emotions usually attribute to their objects (for example "*being dangerous, being wonderful etc.*").[6] Standard representationalists aim to treat moods with the same analysis they adopt for emotions. Indeed, they start from the observation that emotions represent certain objects under certain evaluative lights, and all but Mendelovici think that this is true also

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[2] According to your conception of emotions, you may consider emotions either to be propositional states or directed only to objects (see Kriegel 2017), or both.

[3] This definition of representationalism is minimal. It is accepted by philosophers with very different representationalist accounts (Tye 1995, Dretske 1995, Horgan and Tienson 2002, Byrne 2001, Crane 2007, Mendelovici 2013a, 2013b, Kriegel 2019).

[4] The choice of the label 'representationalism', instead of the more common 'intentionalism', is to avoid any confusion with another doctrine called 'intentionalism': the thesis that all mental states are intentional states. I am not interested in defending this latter thesis, which can be accommodated also by phenomenal states that are representational only in a *contingent way*. For the same reason, I avoid speaking about intentionality *tout court*.

[5] Other scholars believing that moods are undirected are Armon-Jones (1991), Frijda (1994), Deonna and Teroni (2012), and Searle (1983).

[6] I believe also Mendelovici (2013b), who takes object-undirectedness at *face value*, is happy with this definition of directedness. Indeed, she assumes that moods *refer to* unbound properties. See Bordini (2017) for further remarks on this point. Moreover, further discussion on Mendelovici's unbound representationalism can be found in Kind (2013), and Hatzimoysis (2017).

for moods. For the purposes of this paper, I will assume that the standard representationalist analysis is correct for emotions, but, as I will argue, it should not be extended to moods.

The aim of my paper is to show that standard representationalism barks at the wrong tree in respect to the argument from moods. Indeed, the best account of moods for Representationalism should deny premise *(a)*, and reject both moods' phenomenal character and moods' directedness. My overall strategy is the following: I will turn the argument from moods into an argument for phenomenology-free moods, and defend its most controversial premise, *i.e.* that moods are contentless. The conclusion that moods are phenomenology-free comes from accepting Representationalism while denying that moods are representational.

The primary aim of this paper is not to provide a knock-down argument for Representationalism in front of anti-representationalists' criticism. More modestly, it is to show that the *phenomenology-free approach* is the best shot a representationalist has for moods. My conclusion can be accepted also by anti-representationalists, albeit in a conditional form: *if* we assume Representationalism, the best way to account for moods is the phenomenology-free approach. Only Lormand (1996) has explicitly claimed that moods are not phenomenal states so far. This paper is purported to give new life to this currently discarded idea. For this reason, I will tentatively sketch a positive proposal, which marries Representationalism with mood functionalism.

I will address some unconvincing arguments for phenomenology-free moods in section 2 and I will propose my own one. In section 3, I will show that both folk-psychological explanations and introspection-based reports support contentless moods. In section 4, I will sketch a way to account for phenomenology-free moods. In so doing, I will explore the idea that moods are functional states. This, I will show, vindicates the idea that moods are both phenomenology-free and undirected (See Lormand 1996). Finally, some objections will be met in section 5.

2. Arguments for Phenomenology-Free Moods

Phenomenology-free moods seem *prima facie* implausible. So far, only Lormand (1996) has advanced an argument for the thesis that moods do not have a phenomenal character. He holds that it is necessary for any phenomenal state to be liable either to the "image illusion" or to the "appearance illusion". Since moods are liable to none, moods are phenomenology-free, Lormand concludes. Unfortunately, this argument is unconvincing. Lormand defines the "image illusion" as the illusion in which subjects take mental objects to have properties of nonmental objects (we do not take beliefs of a yellow banana to be banana-like, nor yellow). It is easy to see how standard representationalists can argue that moods produce the "image illusion": in elation we may take both the world and the mood itself to be wonderful. This is enough to dispel Lormand's argument. However, things are even worse. Lormand defines the "appearance illusion" as the illusion in which subjects experience nonmental objects as having properties that are proper of mental objects. But a representationalist about emotions may think that my fear of a dog is experiencing the dog *as dangerous,* but claim that the dog itself does not instantiate the property of *being-dangerous*. It may be my mental activity that projects the mental property of *being-dangerous* onto the dog. And this form of ap-

pearance illusion, the representationalist concludes, may constitute the phenomenal character of my fear.[7] So, the claim that the appearance illusion prevents mental states from being phenomenal seems unmotivated.

However, there is a simple argument for phenomenology-free moods to pursue. It is sufficient to notice that, if moods are undirected, moods cannot be phenomenal states. Thus, we can transform the argument from moods framed in the introduction into the following *argument for phenomenology-free moods*:

Argument for Phenomenology-Free Moods

1) *Representationalism is true* [assumption]
2) *Moods are undirected* [undirectedness is distinctive of moods]
3) *If Representationalism is true, undirected states cannot have a phenomenal character* [by definition of Representationalism]
4) *Therefore, moods do not have a phenomenal character* [conclusion].[8]

This argument is valid. However, its soundness crucially relies on premise (2). In the next section I will give some arguments in support: both our folk-psychological practice (section 3.1) and our introspective reports (section 3.2) suggest that moods are undirected rather than directed.

3. The Contentless-Approach

The task of this section is to provide two arguments in favour of undirected moods. Much of the discussion will be a confrontation with standard representationalism, whose main assumption is that moods are directed rather than undirected. The defence goes into two steps. Firstly, I will show that our folk-psychological usage of moods favours contentless moods over standard representationalism (section 3.1). Secondly, I will show that undirectedness of moods is favoured by the fact that standard representationalism has no clear account of some of our introspective reports (section 3.2).

3.1. Folk-Psychology and Moods

The *distinctive explanatory role* of moods in folk-psychology suggests that moods are contentless. I offer two Observations to make this point.

Observation n°1: Let us assume that Benny ran away from the room. Here is a list of possible folk-psychological explanations of her behaviour:

1) Benny ran away from the room because she believed there was a fire in it.
2) Benny ran away from the room because she desired to avoid the fire in it.
3) Benny ran away from the room because she feared the fire in it.
4) Benny ran away from the room because she was anxious.

These are all folk-psychological explanations (as certified by the "because-clause" in each sentence) of the same behaviour by Benny. Obviously, explanations (1-3) necessarily involve a content for the mental state. Indeed, let us compare (1-3), with the following:

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[7] This position is known as *projectivism*. Mendelovici's (2013a, 2013b) theory is an example.
[8] Curiously Lormand (1996) writes in a footnote that representationalism suggests phenomenology-free moods. He did not go for the full-blown conclusion that moods *are* phenomenology-free in a representationalist framework.

1*) Benny ran away from the room because she believed.
2*) Benny ran away from the room because she desired.
3*) Benny ran away from the room because she feared.

(1*-3*) are incomplete explanations of Benny's behaviour. We are tempted to ask "what" the mental state is about in each explanation. Without this piece of information, Benny's flight would remain unintelligible. The same is not true for (4), which is a complete explanation despite the state's lack of content. The first conclusion is obvious enough: (4) is an explanation involving a mood (anxiety). (1-3) involve contentful states (beliefs, desires and emotions respectively). We do not need content to make sense of folk-psychological explanations involving moods.

There are some replies to Observation n°1. For example, some may notice that an explanation like (5) is fully intelligible:

5) Benny ran away from the room because she was anxious about the fire.

So, is (5) a "moody" explanation involving contents? I am not sure that (5) is a counterexample to my position, and no standard representationalist theory accepts that anxiety in (5) is a genuine mood. Indeed, no standard representationalist proposal assumes moods to be directed toward particulars like the fire. And for a good reason: if moods were about particulars, they would be considered by standard representationalists as emotional episodes.[9] Standard representationalists consider (5) to involve a mood term 'anxiety' picking up a contentful emotion.[10] An alternative suggestion comes from Mendelovici (2013b) and Stephan (2017). They claim that there are different kinds of affective states, corresponding to the kind of directedness involved. For example, moods *senso strictu* are genuinely undirected, moods *senso latu* may have a content (either a general one or a particular one). We may restrict our analysis only to the former kind of mood.

The second reply to Observation n°1 is to notice that (4) may be an abbreviation of (4*):

4*) Benny ran away from the room because she represented X *as dangerous*. [Where "X" may stand for a general object, an undetermined object, or simply marks that dangerousness occurs unbound].

In other words, the standard representationalist may complain that our folk-psychological explanations only superficially treat moods as contentless. Rather, mood terms are just abbreviations hiding a reference to mood contents. Finally, she says, also folk-psychological explanations involving contentful moods are adequate to explain Benny's behaviour.

I think this is false: Benny's flee in (4*) is unintelligible. Indeed, following the reconstruction by the standard representationalist, Benny is motivated to run away from the room because she takes a general object, her total environment for example, to be dangerous. But why should she run away *from the room*, if she takes *her total environment* (instead of the room) to be dangerous? The obvious move is to consider that the room is part of her total environment and claim that Benny is

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[9] Tappolet (2018) might disagree. According to her modal account, there is a genuine difference between the emotion of fear, which represents the fire to be dangerous, and the mood of anxiety, which represents the fire as *likely* to be dangerous. However, the endorser of such a proposal should provide an answer to the following question: "If moods have a so clear object like the fire, why do we misreport their lack of directedness?". It is a difficult task, as shown in section 3.2.
[10] This is suggested also by Lormand (1985).

ultimately running away from her total environment of which the room is part. But her total environment also includes outside the room. So why should she go outside the room, since it is also dangerous *there*? In general, it makes no sense to run away from our own total environment to reach again our own total environment. Actually, it makes no sense to run away from our total environment *at all*. (Ditto for the other proposed general objects.) The point easily generalises to unbound dangerousness and to undetermined objects, which should be located anywhere by Benny's lights.

Standard representationalists may be tempted to appeal to other mental states to adjust the explanation. For example, Benny may still *believe* that it is safer outside the room, even if this contradicts the information provided by the mood. This complicates the structure of the folk-psychological explanation of her behaviour. There are *parsimony reasons* against this solution. Folk-psychological explanations treating moods as contentless do not need to pose other mental states to make Benny's behaviour intelligible. Moreover, in the same vein, it is more parsimonious *per se* to treat moods as contentless, rather than inflating our ideology of moods and assume they enjoy the property of directedness.

Observation n° 2: As Lormand (1985), Sizer (2000), DeLancey (2006), Deonna and Teroni (2012), and Rossi (2019) maintain, our moods seem *arational*, that is moods are insensitive to reasons and norms of rationalisations. A cluster of folk-psychological features points to this direction. Among these features, we find moods' inability to both rationalise behaviours and transmit justifications (Lormand 1985, Sizer 2000, Deonna and Teroni 2012); their inability to be derived from practical reasonings (Lormand 1985); their usage for asking for mitigating circumstances (Goldie 2000, Deonna and Teroni 2012); the idea that moods, in contrast to emotions, do not provide subjects with goals to act toward objects (the point is advanced by Lormand 1985, Sizer 2000, and DeLancey 2006. In a slightly different vein by Price 2006 and Rossi 2019. Tappolet 2018 makes it part of *pervasivity*, namely the ability of moods to influence a greater number of mental states than emotions). So, it seems that folk-psychological explanations involving moods are much more like causal explanations connecting two events (*e.g.* "Mary gave the wrong answer because her concentration dropped"), than to explanations involving rationality (*e.g.* "Mary made this choice because it was the best chance to achieve her goal").[11]

The arational character nicely fits the idea of contentless moods. Rationalization crucially relies on contents: it is all about explaining and predicting what a person *ought to* do, think and feel *in virtue of* previous information in her possession (*e.g.* her goals, the different ways in which goals and means are delivered to the subject etc.). It follows that arationality is a necessary feature of contentless states, but it is not sufficient for establishing that moods are not representational. Indeed,

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[11] This clarification is important to avoid a certain ambiguity. One may claim that "Mary gave the wrong answer because her concentration dropped" is an explanation that makes it rational, *i.e.* makes it intelligible to a third party why Mary behave that way. This is not the sense of rationality involved here, since in my sense rationality norms are those governing deliberative practical reasoning. They are applied only to the subject whose behaviour has to be explained. Moods seems to escape rationality in this sense, so they are arational.

there are contentful states which arguably do not obey norms of rationality. Perceptions may be a significant example. I take Observation n° 1 to support the claim that moods are ultimately contentless and they differ from perception in this respect. Here I defend the arational character of moods against recent criticisms.

The standard representationalist Mitchell (2018a) argues that moods are "rationally intelligible". According to him, subjects feel a causal relation between their total environments and their moods. So, subjects interpret their moods as an *appropriate response* to their total environments. This sense of appropriateness is Mitchell's "rational intelligibility", and it is very different from the sensitivity to reasons employed in Observation n°2. Hence, it is not a counterexample to the arational character of moods. Moreover, in Mitchell's view, moods are close to perceptions: they make subjects aware of their own (total) environment, and are not dependent on previous information. This is further evidence that Mitchell's "rational intelligibility" is not in tension with arationality, which may be true for perceptions.

Rossi challenges the idea that moods are not employed in rationalising behaviour by offering the following cases:

> 6) She decided she needed a change, something more stimulating in her life, because she was assailed every day by an endless boredom.
> 7) She decided to call a taxi, as she felt quite anxious in the street alone at such a late hour of the day (Rossi 2019: 18).

Rossi points out that in explanations (6) and (7) moods are not just causal pulls for the subjects: the subjects *are informed* by their moods that something is wrong, and they decide to act accordingly. It is not just a belief of being in a certain mood that motivates their behaviour, Rossi concludes. I do not think Rossi's cases are conclusive. The persuasive force of his claim relies on the usage of the verb "decided" in both explanations. The assumption by Rossi is that the final behaviour is the product of a practical reasoning. However, it does not immediately follow that the mood provides information about the environment to the subject within this practical reasoning. Both explanations (6) and (7) make perfectly sense if the subject desires to avoid the unpleasant mood itself and deliberates consequently. In other words: the belief of being in a mood is sufficient to make sense of both (6) and (7).

Rossi claims that moods themselves may be rationalised. He offers the next two explanations as a case study:

> 8) "Why are you so irritable? There is nothing to be upset about!"
> 9) "Susan was in a good mood for no particular reason" (Rossi 2019: 18).

Again, these cases seem unconvincing. (8) seems to pick up an emotion (being upset) called with a mood term ('irritability') rather than a mood. In (9), Susan's elation does not rely upon information already in her possession. This is in line with the arational character of mood.[12]

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[12] Rossi (2019: 20) is ultimately trying to show that moods can be evaluated like perceptions with these examples. Therefore, the same answer we provided to Mitchell holds: the kind of rational character envisaged in examples (8) and (9) is not the same of that of Observation n°2.

Kostochka (2020) claims that moods are sensitive to beliefs. She provides some cases of moods starting to change as soon as our beliefs change. In one of these examples, Kostochka suggests that a depressed person may start feeling better after positively re-evaluating what she has done during the day. This person undergoes a change in her beliefs: she does not believe that the day was negative anymore, she now believes her day is positive. And the mood changes accordingly. Again, this example does not jeopardise the arational character of moods. Indeed, if successful, Kostochka (2020) offers a case of correlation between change in beliefs and change in mood. But it is doubtful that this sensitivity to belief variation takes place in virtue of moods' contents, as we should expect if moods were genuinely part of practical reasoning. Kostochka does not offer an account of what the object of a mood may be. So, we have no clue about how the content of beliefs interacts with the alleged information provided by the mood. Thus, in this example by Kostochka, it may be the case that moods are still arational after all: they can be automatic reactions *caused* by belief change.

To sum up, our usage of moods terms in folk-psychological explanations and their arational character support the view that moods are contentless. This motivates premise (2) of the argument for phenomenology-free moods in turn. Other evidence comes from our introspective reports, as it will be shown in the next section.

3.2. Introspective Reports

As Bordini (2017) suggests, introspective reports are part of the reasons why we take moods to be undirected. People report that their moods are undirected after introspection. A simple explanation of why people speak this way is that moods *are* undirected. According to this view, people' introspective reports should be taken at *face value*. However, this is not the explanation a standard representationalist may give, since she believes that moods have objects. Thus, endorsers of standard representationalism are in charge to provide an alternative explanation of people introspective reports about moods. If moods are directed, why people (mis)report that moods lack directedness?

Standard representationalists are not explicit, but they seem to assume that the object the mood is about plays the trick: in representing the world in general, we are not representing its parts (individual dogs, telephones, trains, etc.) distinctly. Our experience presents us with an indefinite whole with no discrimination among its parts. Given that we usually notice that our experience is directed towards x *by noticing* how x distinguishes itself from the other things, we misjudge this lack of discrimination as lack of directedness. Thus, the standard representationalist concludes, we misreport.

At a closer look this proposal is untenable. In general, it is not obviously true that we mistake the lack of discrimination as lack of content. I may hold beliefs about the whole world (*e.g.* the belief that the world is of an infinite size), and probably I do not discriminate the proper parts of it. But I do not fail to recognise that my belief is directed upon the world, and this is what I am prone to report. Another example may be the hallucination of an undetermined, shapeless blob in front of me. I see no reason why the very same presentation of such a thing should prevent me to report that I am experiencing at least *something.* But reporting that I am experiencing *something* is tantamount to report that my experience is directed. There is little or no reason to assume that things are any different for moods.

Other standard representationalist theories are not on a better ground. Representing undetermined objects is to represent that *an undiscriminated object* is in a certain way (Rossi 2019: 2). So, it is still the case that we represent that *there is something*, and the same problem remains. If moods are about unbound properties, we should still report about the occurrence of *some* properties. The same is true for representations of bodily changes. Please notice that my point holds even if the content is nonconceptual (Tye 1995). In perceiving red things, we effectively report that we are perceiving something, even if we cannot report which kind of red shade we are presented with. The same should apply for moods.

To sum up, a view that treats moods as undirected has a simple explanation of why people report moods as having no object. Reports should be taken at *face value*. Standard representationalism has no clear account of why people report that moods are undirected. Introspective reports about moods' lack of object favour a view according to which moods are contentless.

4. The Phenomenology-Free Approach

The argument for phenomenology-free moods in section 2 is valid, my defence of premise (2) makes it also sound. We are now in position to sketch how a representationalist, phenomenology-free theory of moods might look like. The aim of this section is not to defend a certain account of phenomenology-free moods over the others. More modestly, it is just to show that at *least one* phenomenology-free account of moods is viable. The starting point of this inquiry will be the next three questions. I take them to be the most common worries a proposal involving phenomenology-free moods might rise. The answers will shed lights on the positive view of moods I am advancing in this paper. These are:

1) How is it possible that we misreport about the phenomenal character of moods?
2) What kind of states are moods?
3) Is there a tension between the representationalist framework and phenomenology-free moods?

Without an answer to the first question, the phenomenology-free approach would be obviously incomplete. This is the topic of section 4.1. The second question arises because moods are neither phenomenal nor contentful states in my view. So, one might wonder what kind of mental states they are. In section 4.2, I will explore the possibility that moods are functional states. Although functionalism and Representationalism are usually considered rivals, they can be compatible in respect to moods. The third question arises because some might consider contentless moods at odds with the very representationalist project to account for mental states in terms of representations. The question will be assessed in section 4.3.

4.1. The Phenomenological Error

Why do we misreport about moods' phenomenal character? Before answering this question, we should notice that there is consensus on the fact that moods are responsible for the occurrence of certain congruent emotions (Lormand 1985, Sizer 2000, Chomanski 2017, Tappolet 2018). Therefore, even if moods are mental states with no "specific" phenomenal character by themselves, they systematically come with an associated phenomenal character: that of the emotions caused by the mood itself. Crudely put, according to the phenomenology-free theory, we

misattribute the phenomenal character of the emotions the mood generates to the mood itself. How is it possible to *mistake* the phenomenal character of the emotions as if it belongs to the mood, then?

We can understand the phenomenal character and the content as two different *aspects* of the same thing: the emotions related to the mood. A great array of emotional states is generated when we are in a certain mood. It is impossible to pay full attention to our affective states all the time. Therefore, we tend to devote just a small amount of peripheral attention to the phenomenal character of the emotions generated by the mood. The relevant "part" of the phenomenal character of emotions is linked to our bodily changes, which are still maintained in a mood state. Since we do not direct all our attention to a single emotion in this state, we do not attend to its outward content. When we are in the mood of anxiety, for example, token emotions of fear occur. So, we should expect that also bodily changes preparing the subject to fight or flee are in place (Deonna and Teroni 2012). These bodily changes are those constituting part of the phenomenal character of anxiety. Suppose that I am anxious and there is a dog in front of me: token episodes of fear of that dog occur in me because of my mood. My suggestion is the following: it is possible to pay peripheral attention to our bodily changes, without paying attention to the dog. And we misattribute this phenomenological element of fear to the mood.[13] Finally notice, peripheral attention is directed toward emotions' features. It's directed to nothing regarding the mood.

This goes along with the idea that the phenomenal character we misattribute to the mood is reported to be unitary, not a mere juxtaposition of emotional characters. Let us take the case of anxiety again. Many different emotions are generated when we are in this mood: fear about particulars in the environments, worries about possible situations in the future, anger about both offensive and innocuous things. As long as we are not attending to any particular content, we are not able to make a distinction between the felt characters of these emotions: we are not attending to their external contents. So, we do not discriminate among the different emotions, and we may report a sort of unitary phenomenal character for the mood.[14] However, we know anxiety makes us much more sensitive to what goes on outside: a strange noise would be soon the focus of my attention. In that moment we can start being afraid, and we can single out our fear from the "over-

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[13] This nicely fits attitudinalism about emotions (Deonna and Teroni 2012, Kriegel 2017), according to which we feel our body as an attitude toward an external content: peripheral attention would be directed to attitudinal features. Pure representationalism (Tye 2008), according to which bodily changes are represented in the content, can accommodate this view by assuming that peripheral attention is directed to *part* of the emotion content: the one representing bodily changes.

[14] Does it mean that we cannot distinguish two similar emotions (*e.g.* anger and fear) if they are directed to the same object? Nope. According to the customary analysis of emotions by representationalism, when we attend to the content of our fear of Darth Vader and to the content of our anger against Darth Vader, we attend to two different contents. Anger and fear attribute different evaluative properties to Darth Vader (*e.g. as dangerous* vs. *as despicable* respectively).

all" phenomenal character by attending to its content, the strange noise. This attention trick obviously explains why sometimes we feel an emotion "flowing" into a mood or *vice versa*.[15]

This account has one further bonus. Mendelovici (2013a, 2013b), Tappolet (2018), and Rossi (2019) suggest the phenomenal character of moods to be similar to emotions. For example, we are able to mark out a corresponding mood for each emotion: happiness/elation; sadness/depression, anger/irritability, etc. Arguably, this is due to which kind of emotion is prevalently generated by each mood. The reason for this similarity is obviously that we become aware of being in a certain mood in virtue of the phenomenal character of the generated emotions. On the other hand, any putative difference we report between the phenomenal character of the mood, and the phenomenal character of the corresponding emotion, can be easily explained in virtue of the fact that, in making such a contrast, we have to put emotions into focus. Thus, we get access to those contents which were previously neglected. And the experience of contentful state feels different from a (putative) experience of a contentless state.[16] Finally, relying on attention has another advantage: it explains why we do not misattribute the phenomenal character of an emotion generated by, for example, a belief to the belief itself. Beliefs are contentful states: we can put our focal attention to their contents. This is tantamount to single out the belief from our train of thought, and understand that the putative phenomenology of beliefs, if any, is different from that of emotions. The same cannot be not true for moods, which are contentless states and cannot be singled out in the same manner.[17]

4.2. What Are Moods?

I assume Representationalism is true, but according to the phenomenology-free approach, moods are not representations. So, we need a nonrepresentational metaphysical account to explain their nature. The main rival of standard representationalism, unpopular nowadays, is the *functionalist account of moods*. This approach has been developed in length by Lormand (1985), Griffiths (1997) and Sizer

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[15] The transformation of emotions into moods and *vice versa* as a feature of moods is discussed by Deonna and Teroni (2012) and Rossi (2019). The choice of attention as responsible for the phenomenological error, rather than any other faculty, is driven by the assumption that attending to our inner or outer environment is necessary to perform judgments (including introspective reports) in the first place.

[16] Moreover, strictly speaking, the putative phenomenal character of elation includes happiness, the prevailing emotion, and the phenomenal character of a bunch of emotions of different kinds. For this reason, I take the phenomenal character associated to elation to be *similar* but *not entirely indistinguishable* from that of happiness. I thank an anonymous referee for pushing me to clarify this.

[17] This proposal is fully compatible with Chomanski's (2017) Manifestation principle. According to this principle, *what it is like* to be in a mood is to be aware that other kinds of mental states feel differently from how they usually do, and that this modification is somehow coherent. These states do not limit themselves to emotions, but they also include perceptions and thoughts (Chomanski 2017: 107). However, we should be careful to accept Manifestation. Full-blown Manifestation can probably be endorsed only by accepting both a sort of cognitive penetrability for perception and that thoughts have a phenomenal character. These are open options, but they need philosophical defence. Therefore, I prefer to be neutral. So, I just focus on the phenomenal character of emotions.

(2000). If functionalism is viable, it is possible to account for the nature of moods while considering moods as undirected.

Functionalist theories of moods are designed to account for a distinctive feature of moods, namely their *pervasivity*.[18] When we are in a mood our mental life undergoes a deep change: moods alter the standard functioning of our mind. Among the other things, we tend to undergo certain emotional episodes, thoughts and beliefs and avoid certain others. For example, in elation we enjoy positive thoughts about the joy of life, and we do not entertain beliefs about how painful our illness once was. Moreover, according to the empirical literature reviewed by Sizer (2000: 764), positive moods tend to generate mental states focused on a wider range of information, creative thoughts, and unusual associations of ideas. They also reduce the number of thoughts focused on details, which are peculiar of some negative moods. Moods have effects also on attention, memory, and people tend to interpret ambiguous situations according to the mood they are in (see also Eysenck and Keane 2010 for a review). Plausibly, given that their primary function is to alter our mental lives in a systematic way, they might have evolved to make the subject more responsive to the environment.[19]

Hence, the main idea behind moods functionalism is that moods are best described as *functions*. Moods are those states causing (and caused by) the occurrence of congruent emotions, beliefs and thoughts, and hampering (and hampered by) certain others. The *functional description* of a mood is the list of states systematically causing and caused by the mood. Emotions play a key role in this respect. Indeed, a certain mood would not be the mood it is, if it did not cause the related emotions. In other words, being responsible for the generation of certain emotions, but not of certain others, is part of the mood's functional description. And this fact explains why we systematically misattribute the same kind of phenomenal character to the same kind of mood. In other words, we do not feel "saddish" when we are in elation, because elation always causes happiness, joy etc. and hampers sadness. Finally, an additional reason to adopt a functional interpretation of moods is that the functional description may be deduced by our usage of moods in folk-psychological explanations. As a result, the functional role of any mood matches the way in which we use that mood in folk-psychology. We describe elation as that mood causing positive thought and hampering sadness, because this is the role elation plays in our folk-psychological explanations.

For our purposes, the main advantage of functionalism is that the functional description is the only thing that matters to identify moods: neither contents nor phenomenal characters are required for moods' identification (see Lormand 1985). In other words, functionalism about moods vindicates both the main features of the phenomenology-free approach: moods' lack of phenomenal character and moods' lack of directedness. In the same vein, the functional description does not rely on contents. Therefore, a functionalist account of moods makes sense of the arational character of moods we addressed in section 3.1 (Lormand 1985, Sizer 2000, Grif-

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[18] Pervasivity is taken to be a distinctive theory of moods by Sizer Lormand (1985), Sizer (2000), DeLancey (2006) and Chomanski (2017), Tappolet (2018), and Rossi (2019). According to these authors other mental states, especially emotions, do not have the same impact on our mental life. Pervasivity is criticized by Gallegos (2017). Chomanski (2018) offered a reply.

[19] As suggested by Price (2006), whilst she does not support functionalism.

fiths 1997). Finally, Sizer (2000) suggests that moods are best described as subpersonal states, influencing higher order states.[20] This proposal nicely fits the picture I am drawing. It explains why, strictly speaking, we encounter neither moods' phenomenal character nor moods' contents in our introspection.

These observations are enough to reach the purpose of this section: showing that there is at least *one* viable way to account for phenomenology-free and undirected moods. Remarkably, mood functionalism is compatible with Representationalism, which is the first premise of the argument for phenomenology-free moods. Functional states do not violate the rule according to which any phenomenal state must be a representational state. This is not to say that functionalism is the only game in town to account for phenomenology-free moods. I am claiming that the compatibility with Representationalism makes functionalism a good candidate to account for the nature of moods.

4.3. Representationalism and Functionalism

To recap, according to the phenomenology-free approach, moods are neither phenomenal nor directed. This conclusion is reached under the assumption of the truth of Representationalism within the argument for phenomenology-free moods. However, the phenomenology-free approach predicts that Representationalism does not apply to moods after all. This might seem a betrayal of the whole representationalist project. Standard representationalists, for example, might be motivated by a sort of theoretical unity. Not only might they believe that Representationalism is true, but also that it must be applied to any mental state (Bordini 2017).[21] So, the phenomenology-free approach may be unpalatable to those philosophers thinking that every mental state is representational. One might wonder whether it makes sense to assume Representationalism at the very beginning: the phenomenology-free approach to moods risks downplaying the force of Representationalism exactly because it accepts that some mental states are not representational.

These considerations should not be overestimated for three reasons. Firstly, theoretical unity is undoubtably a virtue of standard representationalism, but it cannot be a reason to prefer standard representationalism in this context. Indeed, our choice among two explanations can be driven by theoretical unity only when two theories have the *same performance* in respect to the *explananda*. Only if the two theories have both the same explicatory power and the same flaws, theoretical unity might be a reason to prefer one over the other. However, the discussion in section 3 has shown that standard representationalism has some problems at accounting for both introspective reports and our usage of moods in folk-psychology. These problems do not affect the phenomenology-free approach, which has all the merits of standard representationalism, with no flaws. Unless these problems are fixed, the lack of theoretical unity does not provide decisive ground against the phenomenology-free approach.

Secondly, theoretical unity may be one reason to accept Representationalism but there could also be independent ones. For example, materialistic-oriented people may agree with Dretske (1995) and claim that representations are still the

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[20] As Drayson (2012) convincingly argues, the high order/subpersonal distinction and the conscious/unconscious distinction do not overlap.

[21] This is the thesis according to which directedness is the "mark of the mental" (Voltolini 2013). See footnote 4.

best shot to naturalise phenomenology, namely explaining phenomenal properties in terms of natural properties. These materialist philosophers may be less interested in theoretical unity and more prone to accept phenomenology-free moods. Such an approach would allow emotions to be naturalised, since they are representational states, and moods come to be even less problematic: they do not need to be naturalised in the first place. Thus, the phenomenology-free approach must be very attractive for materialistically-oriented philosophers.

Finally, it is possible to appeal to Sizer's suggestion of subpersonal moods to vindicate a weaker interpretation of theoretical unity behind Representationalism. It may be the case that every *higher order* state, albeit not every *mental* state, is representational. But *qua* subpersonal, moods are not higher order states.

5. Objections and Replies

In this section I will explore some objections advanced to my theory and provide some replies.

Objection1: Moods are not the only kind of affective states which seem to have a phenomenal character but not a content. There may be cases of contentless emotions which are clearly phenomenal states but do not have a content. If these states are caused by a mood, then the problem returns: you misattribute the phenomenal character of these states, which are ultimately contentless, to the mood.

Reply1: I am sympathetic to this kind of reasoning, but I think it does not affect my theory. My aim here is to provide an account for moods, under the assumption that Representationalism is true for the other mental states, including emotions. So, the working hypothesis is that there are no states like contentless emotions, exactly because Representationalism is true. If we assumed the presence of such states in our mind's architecture, then it would be a problem for the representationalist, regardless of whether my account of moods is correct. In the same vein, analyses like DeLancey's (2006) stating that moods and emotions are contentless states of the same kind are ruled out by default. Ultimately, this line of reasoning does not affect my theory of moods, which is not concerned with other contentless states.

Objection2: It is possible to pay *full attention* to a mood and thus understand that it has a genuine phenomenal character. For example, when I am elated because I read philosophy, I focus completely on my mood, and I understand that it has a phenomenal character. So, whilst it seems plausible to misattribute the phenomenal character of emotions to the mood when we dedicate peripheral attention, it is hard to maintain that there is no phenomenology in the mood when we focus on the mood only.

Reply2: This objection is based on introspection. My reply is to deny that full attention reveals anything about the mood. In this case, it reveals that I am experiencing an emotion: I am happy about philosophy. Note that according to my theory, no attention whatsoever can be directed toward the mood: it is partly directed towards emotions and mostly directed toward the environment. This is so because moods lack semantic properties. Let us assume that the functionalist proposal in section 4.2 is the right metaphysical account of phenomenology-free moods. We should notice that when we pay full attention to our mental states, we pay attention to their contents, not to their vehicles. In a functionalist framework, vehicles are inaccessible to us: we have access to contents put in a "belief box" or in a "desire box", but not to the "boxes" themselves. And if moods are

purely functional parameters, then they are "vehicles" with no contents. Therefore they cannot be targeted by our attention. Indeed, we can attend to the fact that we desire that *p* instead of believing that *p*, just because we are entertaining *p*. We do not attend to "desire" full stop.[22]

Besides the former response to the objection, which is entirely "internal" to a functionalist view, a more general reason against the idea that moods can be the target of full attention is phenomenological. The alleged phenomenal character of the mood presents itself as a sort of diffuse "affective background" connoting our actions and thoughts. Speaking metaphorically, it is something that always stays in "the back of our minds": making it the centre of our attention would make the mood lose this character.

Objection3: Amy Kind (2013) makes her case against standard representationalism by stating how standard representationalism is not able to make sense of the variation in intensity of moods. She claims that we may feel a variation of intensity in her affective states, even though the represented object does not appear different to us.

Reply3: With some adjustments, a functionalist theory of moods such as the one envisaged in section 4.2 accommodates variations in the intensity of moods. A functional description of moods may allow that moods are similar to knobs regulating *quantitatively* the amount of emotions generated: the more emotions produced, the stronger the overall phenomenal character appears to be. In other words, an intense mood is simply a mood allowing for the production of a greater amount of emotions.

Objection4: People may report moods to be directed (see Mitchell 2018a: 123, commenting on Davitz's 1969 findings). Mitchell writes:

> For example, in Joel R. Davitz (1969) study, 42% of subjects reported depression as involving a sense that "everything seems useless, absurd, meaningless" and 34% reported anxiety as involving an experience that "everything seems out of proportion." On the positive side, 66% of subjects reported cheerfulness and contentment as involving a sense that "the world seems basically good and beautiful" and 62% reported serenity as involving "peace with the world" (Mitchell 2018a: 123).

The force of these statements should not be overestimated. The fact that a relevant part of interviewed subjects reports that moods to be directed does not prevent that another relevant part of people, including philosophers interested in moods, reports that moods are undirected. Therefore, an easy way to dismiss Davitz's reports is coming back to the distinction between moods *sensu stricto* and moods *sensu lato* and claim that only moods *sensu lato* are reported to be directed (section 3.2). So, we may take both reports at *face value*, but limit our analysis to moods *sensu stricto*.

Objection5: The phenomenology-free theory is still implausible. It is problematic to accept that, appearances notwithstanding, moods are not qualitative states, for they lack a phenomenal character. According to the doctrine of the *Cartesian collapse of qualitative appearance onto reality* (Cartesian Collapse for short), if one has a certain inner sensation with a certain phenomenal character, say a pain,

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[22] The only plausible exception is Deonna and Teroni's (2012) proposal according to which emotional attitudes are constituted by bodily changes. Obviously, attitude in this latter sense is completely different from attitude in the functionalist sense. See also footnote 9.

she has that sensation (Kripke 1980, but see Descartes 1641/2019). Alternatively, in a weaker formulation, if it seems to someone that she is sensing, this is enough for her to sense. So, to start with, how could she be wrong not only about the particular phenomenal character of her mood, but on the very fact that such a mood has a phenomenal character altogether?

Reply5: I am not impressed by this objection, which is question-begging in the present context. Again, it is based upon introspection. However, both the phenomenology-free approach and standard representationalism agree that some introspective reports are mistaken. The standard representationalist claims that reports about undirectedness of moods are erroneous. The endorser of the phenomenology-free approach thinks that reports about phenomenology are unreliable, instead. In other words, if any kind of Representationalism is true, we must admit that part of our introspective reports is wrong. The disagreement is about which type of reports is mistaken, and which is right. Assuming the Cartesian Collapse would set the issue in favour of standard representationalism *a priori*, by assuming that reports about phenomenology are more reliable than reports about directedness. But whether this is true is exactly the point at stake.

6. Conclusions

Anti-representationalists have elaborated the argument from moods to falsify Representationalism. A way to answer is to reverse the argument and claim that moods are both undirected and phenomenology-free. This approach is better placed than its main opponent, standard representationalism, in respect to both introspective reports and folk-psychology. So, it is the best approach to moods to adopt for those philosophers with inclinations toward Representationalism.

Moreover, let me show some little additional advantages that have arisen in the discussion, but that I have not explicitly assessed yet. My proposal is indeed able to make sense of other features commonly attributed to moods by philosophers (see Rossi 2019 for an exhaustive list). For example, why we are induced to take the phenomenal character of the emotions as similar of those of moods (see Mendelovici 2013a, 2013b) and why we take moods' "phenomenology" to be unitary and diffuse (Tappolet 2018). It accounts for why emotions "transform" into moods (Deonna and Teroni 2012). If moods functionalism is accepted, other virtues will be gained. It becomes possible to offer a reply to why we "feel" moods as varying in intensity (see Kind 2013), which is an objection to standard representationalism. Functional moods may be tailored to account for moods' arational character, their usage in our folk-psychological explanations (Lormand 1985, Griffiths 1997, Sizer 2000), and their pervasivity (Lormand 1985, Sizer 2000, Chomanski 2017, Tappolet 2018, Rossi 2019).[23]

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[23] I follow Kriegel (2019) and claim that duration is not a reliable feature of moods. However, it can eventually be accommodated as part of the functional description of moods.

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