Abstract

Emotions are sometimes thought to be counterexamples to intentionalism, the view that a mental state’s phenomenal features are exhausted by its representational features. Emotions are accompanied by phenomenal experiences that do not seem to be adequately accounted for by any of their plausibly represented contents. This paper develops and defends an intentionalist view of the phenomenal character of emotions. On my favored version of the view, (1) emotions represent uninstantiated simple properties, and (2) like concepts, but unlike most perceptual representations, emotion representations can occur without binding to any object representations, yielding undirected emotions, such as sudden pangs of anxiety, and moods, such as sadness, elation, and irritation.

1 Introduction

Intentionalism is a theory of phenomenal consciousness, the “what it’s like” of being in certain states (Nagel, 1974). According to intentionalism, a mental state’s phenomenal features are determined by its representational features. All there is to the phenomenal experience of seeing blue is the visual representation.
of blueness. According to intentionalism, an experience of blueness does not involve “raw feels” or blue qualia; its phenomenal nature is exhausted by the represented blueness.

Emotions throw a wrench in the intentionalist project. The problem is that they really seem like “raw feels” or mere qualia. Even though emotions are sometimes directed at particular objects, their phenomenal character does not seem to be adequately captured by any of the features they seem to represent their objects as having. Worse, some emotions seem to be entirely undirected, such as a sudden pang of anxiety. Some undirected emotions are long-standing states that pervade our experiences without attaching to any particular objects or other targets, such as sadness, elation, and irritation; these are moods.

This paper develops and defends an intentionalist theory of the phenomenal character of emotions. The view I will defend is one on which (1) emotions represent simple properties that happen to be uninstantiated, and (2) like concepts, but unlike most perceptual representations, emotion representations can be tokened without binding to any object representations, yielding undirected emotions and moods.

The paper proceeds as follows: §2 clarifies some key notions, §3 provides an intentionalist account of directed emotions, and §4 provides an intentionalist account of undirected emotions and moods.

2 Intentionalism and emotion

Emotions are mental states like fear, anxiety, elation, and sadness. They are arguably complex states involving all or many of bodily, behavioral, neural, cognitive, normative, and phenomenal components. Intentionalism is a theory of phenomenal character, and so it is the last of these components, the phenomenal component, that primarily concerns it. Except when they affect phenomenal
character, intentionalism remains silent on the other components of emotions, such as their behavioral and neural features. The intentionalist’s explanandum is the phenomenal character of emotions, not emotions in their entirety, and intentionalism about emotions is a view about the phenomenal character of emotions, not about emotions per se.

Intentionalism is the view that a mental state’s phenomenal features are reducible to, supervenient on, type or token identical to, or determined by its representational features. Loosely, the idea is that phenomenal consciousness is nothing over and above mental representation. Somehow or other, mere mental representation gets us phenomenal consciousness.

In what follows, I defend a type and token identity version of intentionalism, on which phenomenal features are literally identical to certain representational features. This version of intentionalism is favored by many intentionalists.\(^1\) It is in a good position to provide a satisfying theory of consciousness, since it claims that phenomenal features of mental states are literally identical to their representational features, rather than merely supervenient on them or in some way determined by them that might leave open the possibility that phenomenal features are something over and above representational features. This makes the identity version fairly attractive.

Introspection also provides some initial support for an identity version of intentionalism. For many phenomenal characters, there is a matching represented property, and the two do not appear to be distinct. For example, consider a visual experience (or an aspect of a visual experience) of the blackness of the letters on this page. There is something that it is like to have this experience. And this phenomenal character has a matching represented property, blackness. But there do not seem to be two blackness-related mental features, a phenome-\(^1\)Gilbert Harman (1990), Fred Dretske (1995), Michael Tye (1995, 2000, 2009), Alex Byrne (2001), and Frank Jackson (2004, 2005) endorse an identity version of intentionalism.
nal what it’s like of blackness, and a represented content of blackness. It is more accurate to say that there is only one blackness, and that it may be correctly described as both a represented property of the letters, and a phenomenal character. The same holds for other aspects of experience. Introspection provides evidence for only one mental feature, and this provides some support for the claim that there is only one such feature.

In any case, for my purposes, it is appropriate to focus on the identity version of intentionalism because it arguably faces greater challenges in accounting for emotions. It must maintain that the phenomenal characters of emotions are identical to, rather than merely supervenient on or determined by, their representational contents. If this version of intentionalism can offer a plausible account of emotion, then other, weaker, versions should also be defensible on similar grounds. For brevity, “intentionalism” will be taken to refer to the type and token identity version of intentionalism.²

Intentionalist views can be categorized based on purity. **Pure intentionalism** is the view that phenomenal character is reducible to, supervenient on, type or token identical to, or determined by representational content alone (Mendelovici, 2010, Ch. 7). **Impure intentionalism** is the view that phenomenal character is reducible to, supervenient on, type or token identical to, or determined by representational content together with some other features. These other features are usually taken to be functional roles (Tye, 2000), or perceptual modalities (Lycan, 1996; Crane, 2003; Chalmers, 2004). Since the view I will defend does not appeal to non-representational factors in determining the

²The token identity version of intentionalism is compatible with there being representational features that are not identical with phenomenal features, but if we deny this then the view also counts as a version of the **phenomenal intentionality theory**, the view that a state’s intentional features are type or token identical, reducible to, supervenient on, or determined by its phenomenal character (Strawson, 1994; Siewert, 1998; Horgan and Tienson, 2002; Loar, 2003; Pitt, 2004; Kriegel, 2003; Farkas, 2008; Bourget, 2010a; Mendelovici, 2010; Kriegel, 2011). Sometimes intentionalists endorse the further claim that the intentional is explanatorily or ontologically prior to the phenomenal, in which case their version of intentionalism would not compatible with the phenomenal intentionality theory.
phenomenal character of emotions, a virtue of the view is that it is compatible with pure intentionalism. But it is also compatible with impure intentionalism, since it silent on whether non-representational factors influence the phenomenal characters of other mental states.

As mentioned above, it is unclear what the intentionalist can say about emotions. Intentionalism is at least initially plausible for experiences such as color experiences, shape experiences, and sound experiences. In the case of shape, intentionalism claims that the phenomenal character of a shape experience is exhausted by the representation of shape properties. This is somewhat plausible at least largely because there are suitable candidate represented properties that adequately “match” the experiences’ phenomenal characters. Consider the phenomenal character of an experience of a circle. The represented property circle seems to be similar enough to the phenomenal character of the experience to be plausibly identified with it. Similarly, the phenomenal character of color experiences seems to suitably “match” the color properties represented by color experiences. Phenomenal redness seems to match represented redness in a way that phenomenal greenness and pain do not. More generally, intentionalism about an experience is at least initially plausible when there is a suitable candidate represented content that adequately “matches” the experience’s phenomenal character. When there is no suitable candidate content, intentionalism is significantly less plausible. This is seen most clearly in the case of the identity version of intentionalism. This version of the view is an identity claim, and identity claims seem more plausible when the items that are to be identified seem similar. Phenomenal circularity and represented circularity seem similar, so it is at least somewhat plausible that they are in fact one and the same thing.

In the case of emotions, however, it seems that there are no suitable candidate represented properties to “match” emotion’s distinctive phenomenal char-
acters, such as the distinctive phenomenal character of anger, fear, or elation. First, it is not even clear what emotions represent, or if they represent anything at all. In contrast, shape experiences clearly represent shapes. Second, it is not at all clear that any candidate representational contents that emotions might plausibly be said to represent adequately match their distinctive phenomenal characters. In the case of fear, it seems that there is no candidate representational content that could be attributed to it that could adequately match its phenomenal character. In contrast, shape properties plausible match the phenomenal character of shape experiences. This is why emotions might be thought to be particularly challenging for intentionalism.  

The special challenge posed by emotions is that of accounting for emotion’s distinctive phenomenal character. On many views of emotion, emotion involves visual, auditory, cognitive, or other states that might contribute to the overall phenomenal character of emotions. If such views are correct, then the intentionalist must account for all these phenomenal characters in order to provide a complete account of the phenomenal character of emotions. However, visual, auditory, cognitive, and other such phenomenal characters don’t pose a special problem for intentionalism about emotions. Presumably the intentionalist must already account for the phenomenal character of these experiences. Emotions pose a new problem for intentionalism because they seem to have phenomenal characters that outrun visual, auditory, etc. phenomenal characters, such as the distinctive phenomenal characters of anger, fear, sadness, and elation. It is obvious that there are phenomenal characters unique to emotions. One way to get a grip on these phenomenal characters is to consider the case of two different emotions that are directed at the same intentional objects, for example, excitement directed at an upcoming event represented in thought, and

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3Pains, itches, and other bodily sensations arguably pose the same kind of challenge. I will later suggest that colors do too.
anxiety directed at the same upcoming event represented in thought in the same way. The two states differ in phenomenal character. This difference is in the distinctive phenomenal characters of excitement, on the one hand, and anxiety, on the other. In what follows, I will be concerned with offering an account of the distinctive phenomenal characters of emotions.

Various theories of emotions involve representations, either perceptual representations, cognitive representations, or both. Charland (1995) argues that both types of views can be integrated in a representational framework. Given the role of representation in theories of emotions, one might hope that representational features can explain the distinctive phenomenal characters of emotions. However, while many intentionalists endorse an intentionalism about all states they deem to have phenomenal character, there have been few endorsements of intentionalism about emotion experiences specifically.

In the emotions literature, Peter Goldie (2000; 2002) has a view of emotions’ phenomenal character that arguably anticipates intentionalism about emotions. On his view, emotions consist in both an awareness of bodily states and a “feeling towards” particular objects. Both of these components account for the phenomenal character of emotions. “Feelings toward” are representational states that are automatically imbued with phenomenal character, much as the intentionalist would like. However, for Goldie, the bodily state component of emotions is not construed representationally, so he is not properly classified as an intentionalist about emotions.

Jesse Prinz’s view (2004; 2005; 2006) can be classified as a type of intentionalism about emotions. On Prinz’s view, emotions are perceptions of certain bodily states. Emotions also represent some of the causes of those bodily states, namely the causes of bodily states that it is their function to indicate. Prinz calls these causes “core relational themes” or “concerns” (Prinz, 2006); exam-
amples include danger, loss, and threat. On Prinz’s view, it is only the perception of bodily states that accounts for the phenomenal character of emotion.

Michael Tye (2008) specifically aims to offer an intentionalist account of emotions. Tye’s view is that emotions represent objects as (1) having evaluative features, such as threateningness, and (2) causing or accompanying a certain physiological or bodily disturbance. Both of these kinds of contents account for emotion’s phenomenal character.

As we will see, these views offer useful insights. However, I will argue that they do not get things quite right. Instead, I will urge a pure intentionalist view of emotion experience, on which emotions represent sui generis emotion properties that objects don’t really have and on which emotion representations can occur without qualifying any objects.

3 Directed emotions

There are two interestingly different types of emotions that intentionalism must deal with in order to offer a successful account of the phenomenal character of emotions: directed emotions and undirected emotions. This section is concerned with directed emotions, while the next section deals with undirected emotions, including moods.

Directed emotions are emotions that are obviously directed at particular objects. Examples include fear of a dog, anger at the government, regret about a wrong one has committed, and anxiety about an upcoming event. An intentionalist account of the phenomenal character of directed emotions must specify which of the contents that emotions represent account for their distinctive phenomenal characters. After canvassing various options, this section suggests that the representational contents that account for directed emotions’ distinctive phenomenal characters are sui generis emotion properties.
3.1 Bodily states

On many views of emotions, emotions involve the awareness or representation of bodily states. On the James-Lange theory, for instance, emotions involve the awareness of bodily states, such as one’s heart racing, one’s blood pressure rising, or perspiration (James, 1884; Prinz 2004, 2005, 2006). It might be suggested that directed emotions represent, perhaps among other things, bodily states, and the representation of bodily states accounts for emotions’ distinctive phenomenal characters; call this the bodily states view.

The James-Lange view is currently out of fashion, and the reasons for this are instructive for the view’s usefulness to intentionalism. A common objection is that the same physiological processes, and presumably the awareness of the same physiological processes, is associated with different emotions (Cannon, 1929). For example, physiological arousal is associated with both anger and euphoria (Schacter and Singer, 1962). While there may in fact be subtle differences in the physiological reactions associated with these emotions (LeDoux, 1996), it seems doubtful that awareness of these subtly different physiological reactions is sufficient to account for their difference phenomenal characters as the bodily states view would require.

The bodily states view also faces a challenge in accounting for the experienced directedness of directed emotions. Fear of a dog seems to in some way be directed at the dog, and this directedness is reflected in emotion’s distinctive phenomenology. While the bodily states view allows that emotions exhibit directedness towards bodily states, this is not the type of directedness we’re after. We’re after directedness towards dogs and other extra-bodily entities.

Another way to see the worry that the bodily states view fails to account for the phenomenal character associated with directedness is to consider the following phenomenal contrast case: Compare (1) visually experiencing a dog
and a raccoon while fearing the dog, and (2) visually experiencing a dog and
a raccoon while fearing the racoon. Suppose the visual experience, the level of
fear, and the physiological response to the fearful object is the same in both
cases. It is plausible that there is a phenomenal difference between (1) and
(2). But the bodily states view treats the two cases alike. They both involve
the same visual experience and the same physiological response that we are
presumably aware of. Thus, the representation of bodily states does not fully
account for the phenomenal character of emotions.

3.2 Intentional objects

Directed emotions are in some sense directed at various objects; call these their
intentional objects. It is quite plausible that emotions involve the representa-
tion of these intentional objects. The intentionalist might suggest that the
phenomenal character of emotions has to do with the representation of these
intentional objects; call this the intentional objects view.

An emotion’s intentional object need not be the object that caused it (for ex-
ample, workplace stress can cause us to become irritated at an innocent friend).
These intentional objects need not even exist (for example, we can be afraid of
monsters under the bed). Emotions can be directed towards a diverse range of
intentional objects, including items belonging to a diverse range of ontological
categories, such as concrete particulars (e.g. fear of a dog), events (e.g. anxiety
about an upcoming performance), propositions (e.g. happiness that one has
achieved a goal), regions of space-time (e.g. fear of the dark alley at night),
the world as a whole (e.g. despair at the meaninglessness of it all), and our-
selves (e.g. embarrassment at oneself). Emotion’s intentional objects can be

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One might suggest that the phenomenal difference between the two cases is a difference
in attention, detail in the representation of the racoon versus the dog, or some such. While
there probably are such accompanying differences, it is implausible that they exhaust the phe-
nomenal difference between the two cases. It seems introspectively obvious that experienced
fear in some sense attaches to the objects that it is directed towards.
represented in various modalities, such as in various perceptual modalities, in
imagination, or in thought (Tye, 2008). For example, fear can be directed at a
dog represented in perception, imagination, or in thought.

Intentional objects might be or involve singular contents, where singular contents are contents involving individual entities as direct constituents, or they might involve property clusters or existentially quantified expressions. There is much debate surrounding how perception and thought represent intentional contents, but we need not take a stand on it. Indeed, since it seems that the objects of emotion are generally provided by other types of mental states, such as perceptual states and thoughts, one might look to considerations concerning those types of states to settle these questions. Of course, which of these views about intentional objects is correct will have an effect on what phenomenal characters intentional objects can contribute to an experience. However, the intentional objects view fails on all these views.

The problem for the intentional objects view is that it does not seem that intentional objects are relevant to emotion’s distinctive phenomenal character. While there may be phenomenal character associated with emotions’ intentional objects and their non-emotional features, such as the phenomenal character associated with the brownness of the dog’s fur or even the dog itself qua object, these phenomenal characters are not unique to emotion. Rather, they are the phenomenal characters associated with color representation, object representation, thought, etc. The phenomenal characters that an intentionalist theory of emotion must worry about are those unique to emotions, such as the fearfulness of fear experiences and the joyfulness of joy. One reason to think that there are such distinctive phenomenal characters that outrun the phenomenal character of the ordinary representation of intentional objects is that phenomenally different emotions can be directed towards the same intentional objects. The
same perceptual experience of the same dog barking in the same way can be provide the object of fear, the object of joy, or the object of irritation. If this is correct, then the representation of intentional objects in perception, thought, or imagination does not account for the distinctive phenomenal character of emotion.

3.3 Special emotion properties

Perhaps the intentionalist can find the contents that determine emotion’s distinctive phenomenal character not in emotions’ intentional objects, but rather in some special properties they represent their intentional objects as having; call this the properties view. It does seem that directed emotions somehow qualify their intentional objects, or present or represent them in certain ways. This qualification goes beyond the ways perception, imagination, and thought qualify these same intentional objects. For example, when we fear a dog, we not only experience the dog as brown, moving, barking, etc., but we also experience the dog as scary. When we are frustrated at a situation, we experience the situation as frustrating. When we experience joy directed at an event, the event itself is experienced as joyous. But what do these properties of being scary, frustrating, and joyous amount to?

3.3.1 Ordinary physical properties

One option is that properties such as scariness end up being just ordinary physical properties, like those of having a certain mass or that of being a table. Presumably, these would be subject-independent physical properties that are at least sometimes had by the intentional objects of fear, frustration, joy, etc., such as dangerousness or threateningness. Call this the ordinary properties view. Both Tye (2008) and Goldie (2000) accept that the properties emotions
represent are ordinary physical properties of emotion’s intentional objects, although on Tye’s view, they also represent that the intentional object causes or accompanies a certain physiological or bodily disturbance.

The problem with the proposal is that it is not at all clear which ordinary physical property scary dogs and scary economies can be said to have in common that can be identified with scariness. The physical properties that tend to elicit emotions form a complex and disjunctive set. These complex and disjunctive properties are foreign to the phenomenology of fear, and thus are poor candidates for the properties fear represents. Not only do these properties fail to capture the content of fear, but, perhaps more obviously, they also fail to capture fear’s phenomenal character. Something similar can be said about elation, anxiety, and other emotions.

There are two standard moves that can be made to defend the claim that experiences represent properties that appear foreign from a phenomenological perspective: First, one might claim that the apparently foreign properties are represented under a particular (less foreign) mode of presentation. Although Goldie does not seem to have the present worry in mind, his view appeals to something much like modes of presentation. Goldie’s “feelings towards” represent properties objects at least sometimes have, such as dangerousness and threateningness. But Goldie claims that the contents of emotions differ from the contents of thoughts attributing the same properties to the same objects. “The difference between thinking of X as Y without feeling and thinking of X as Y with feeling . . . [at least partly] lies in the content . . .” (Goldie, 2000, p. 60, italics in original) It seems that what Goldie has in mind is that thoughts and emotions can represent the same objects as having the same properties, but they do this using what we are calling different modes of presentation.

There are several problems with this strategy. First, we are now owed an ac-
count of the relevant mode of presentation. Modes of presentations are generally thought to be representational. For example, the distinct modes of presentation of our concepts MORNING STAR and EVENING STAR correspond to their involving distinct contents, namely last heavenly body to disappear in the morning sky and first heavenly body to appear in the night sky, respectively. Thus, for this strategy to work in the case of emotions, we would need to find another type of content that emotions represent to account for their modes of presentation. Another problem is that the mode of presentation would now be doing all the work in accounting for the intentionality and phenomenal character of emotions, since it is what matches the phenomenologically familiar intentional and phenomenal aspects of emotion. Further, absent some other role to play, the representation of complex physical properties would be an idly spinning wheel.\footnote{Perhaps there are nonrepresentational ways of understanding modes of presentation, but these start looking a bit like qualia or “raw feels”, and these are precisely the kinds of entities the intentionalist wants to avoid.}

The second strategy in defense of phenomenologically foreign content attributions is to claim that the contents are represented nonconceptually. This strategy has been utilized by Tye (2000) to argue that color experience represent phenomenologically foreign surface reflectance properties and that pains represent phenomenologically foreign bodily damage, and it is utilized by Tye (2008) again to argue for similar claims in the case of emotion. The basic idea is that nonconceptual representation allows us to represent contents that we do not have concepts for. Although Tye aims to remain somewhat neutral on how to understand the notion of nonconceptual content, he does suggest the following account: a state has nonconceptual content just in case its subject can entertain its content without possessing the concepts involved in specifying that content, where, for Tye, one has a concept of $P$ when, perhaps among other things, one is able to identify instances of $P$ on multiple occasions (Tye, 2000, p. 62-3). For example, my perceptual representation of a particular shade
of blue, blue_{421}, has nonconceptual content because when I see blue_{421} again, I will not recognize it as the same shade of blue. But this appeal to nonconceptual content is unconvincing. It’s unclear how representing a property in a way that doesn’t allow me reidentify it on multiple occasions entirely occludes its representational content from me.

It’s also unclear how, on a view like Tye’s, the phenomenologically familiar phenomenal characters of emotions arise from the representation of phenomenologically foreign properties. Tye’s view is that phenomenal characters are identical to representational contents that are nonconceptual, abstract, that is, not involving particular objects or property instances, and poised to affect cognitive systems, such as belief systems.\(^6\) Being nonconceptual and poised are non-representational features of mental states, making Tye’s view a type of impure intentionalism. The problem is that it is hard to see how these impure elements transform the representation of surface reflectance properties, bodily damage, and ordinary properties like dangerousness into the phenomenal experience of colors, pain, and fear, respectively. While there may be other candidate impure elements, it’s unclear how any such features of mental states can turn phenomenologically foreign contents into phenomenal characters.\(^7\)

Put otherwise, the problem with identifying the phenomenal character of emotions with phenomenologically foreign contents, even phenomenologically foreign contents that are poised and nonconceptual, is that the two seem distinct. Not only does this account offer a phenomenologically inadequate view of emotion’s content, but it also offers an implausible account of emotion’s phenom-

\(^6\)This account, in effect, limits phenomenal consciousness to non-cognitive conscious states. A consequence of this view is that there is nothing it is like to think, which many will find absurd.
\(^7\)Dretske (1995) has a similar view on which the intentional contents to be identified with phenomenal characters are those had by systemic representations, that is, representations that are phylogenetically fixed, or innate, and that are available for calibration by concept-forming mechanisms.
enal character. Of course, one might bite the bullet and maintain that despite appearances, emotion’s phenomenal character is identical to phenomenologically foreign contents. This move might be theoretically motivated, perhaps by one’s theory of mental representation. For example, a tracking theories of mental representation, on which mental representation is a species of causal or other tracking relation (Dretske, 1981, 1995; Millikan, 1984; Fodor, 1987), might predict that emotions represent, perhaps among other things, ordinary physical properties, and this might motivate the ordinary properties view. However, on the face of it, the ordinary properties view is empirically inadequate, so we will continue to search elsewhere for the representational contents that account for emotion’s distinctive phenomenal character.

3.3.2 Response-dependent properties

Instead of identifying emotion properties with ordinary physical properties, we might opt for a response-dependent account on which emotions represent objects as having some effect on us. For example, emotion properties might be dispositions of objects to cause certain mental, behavioral, or other effects in us, or the manifestation of such dispositions. One of Tye’s components of the contents of emotion is response-dependent: emotions represent their intentional object as causing or accompanying a certain physiological or bodily disturbance.

This account also seems phenomenologically inaccurate: when we represent a dog as scary, our fear does not represent the dog as being disposed to cause certain states, reactions, or behaviors in us. Rather, our experience of the dog qualifies the dog itself as having a non-dispositional property of being scary. Our experience qualifies the dog itself independent of our relationship to it. Further, and perhaps more obviously, the phenomenal character of fear does not seem to be adequately captured by these sophisticated dispositional contents. As in the case of the previous proposal on which emotion properties are everyday physical
properties, one might appeal to modes of presentation or nonconceptual content. But these strategies are unsatisfactory for the same reasons mentioned above.

To be clear, I am not claiming that a response-dependent account of the content of emotion-related concepts is implausible. Emotion-related concepts are concepts such as the concept SCARY involved in the thought expressed by “The Exorcist is scary.” Perhaps the concept SCARY has as its content a dispositional property, such as that of being disposed to cause experiences of fear in certain subjects. This view would explain why we might believe that a particular dog can be scary to a child but not to an adult. My claim, however, is that a response-dependent account of the content of emotions is not plausible.

3.3.3 *Sui generis* properties

So far, we have examined and dismissed views on which the properties represented by emotions are everyday physical or dispositional properties on the grounds that such views are phenomenologically inadequate. My suggestion, instead, is that emotion properties are *sui generis*, perhaps primitive or basic, properties, such as scariness, annoyingness, joyfulness, and so on. By describing emotion-properties as *“sui generis”*, I mean that, as a group, they are not reducible to other types of properties. This view takes emotions at face value and attributes to them representational contents that exactly fit the intentional/phenomenal bill. Emotion properties are exactly those familiar qualities we experience when we are angry, sad, elated, etc. They are akin to David Chalmers’ (2006) Edenic color, shape, and sound properties. Chalmers argues that the phenomenal content of experience—a type of content that is intimately

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8It is an open question whether some emotion properties reduce to other emotion properties. If there are basic and non-basic emotions (see Ekman (1992)), the basic emotions might represent primitive emotion properties, while the non-basic emotions might represent composite emotion properties. There are other accounts of the basic/non-basic emotion distinction, including accounts on which non-basic emotions are basic emotions together with cognitive states. These issues can be left open for our purposes.
related to phenomenal character—involves Edenic properties of e.g. primitive redness, primitive squareness, primitive loudness. These are the properties our experiences, taken at face value, present us with. My suggestion is that the kind of contents that can be identified with the phenomenal character of emotions are analogous *Edenic emotion properties*. Call this the **Edenic view**.

Objects need not actually have the emotion properties our emotions represent them as having. On Chalmers’ view, objects do not really have Edenic colors. Instead, they have properties that reliably cause us to have color experiences. In the case of emotions, it is quite implausible that objects ever actually have Edenic emotion properties. Though Edenic emotion properties are phenomenologically familiar, they are foreign to our scientific understanding of the world and we have no emotion-independent evidence for their existence. The most plausible view here is that they are never actually instantiated. Instead, some kind of **projectivism** might be true of our emotion experiences. On one version of projectivism, which Sydney Shoemaker (1990) calls **literal projectivism**, we mistakenly attribute properties of ourselves or our mental states to represented objects. On a different version, Shoemaker’s **figurative projectivism**, we mistakenly attribute to objects properties that they don’t really have, but that we only represent them as having as a result of our own interests, mental features, or constitution. On literal projectivism, the properties in question are instantiated, although not where we represent them as being instantiated, while on figurative projectivism, the properties in question need not be instantiated at all. Since it seems there is no good reason to attribute emotion properties to ourselves, figurative projectivism is preferable. In any case, the intentionalist should opt for figurative projectivism, since the emotion properties the literal projectivist posits look a lot like qualia and it is hard to see how we might offer an intentionalist-compatible account of them.
To put it somewhat metaphorically, we can think of emotion representations as qualifying our internal world in ways that do not veridically reflect external reality, but that are only relevant to us, much as when we highlight important lines of text in documents based on our own interests and desires. When we highlight lines of text, the highlighting signifies importance, but the highlighted lines need not have any objective property of importance. Similarly, dogs, governments, landscapes, and the like are “highlighted” as scary, irritating or euphoric, but they need not actually have the property we highlight them with. We can think of different types of emotions as analogous to different highlighter colors. Although the highlighted objects have significance for us and are important for us to keep track of, the world itself need not contain these highlights. As long as our highlighting objects (e.g. as scary) allows us to react appropriately to them (e.g. with avoidance) it does not matter if they do not actually have this property, but instead only have other properties (such as those of being violent or otherwise harmful to us).

The case of emotions is one of reliable misrepresentation: emotions misrepresent, but they misrepresent in the same way all or most of the time. This misrepresentation is reliable because the same emotions are caused by the same kinds of environmental features on different occasions. These environmental features are something like the ordinary physical properties discussed in §3.3.1. In other words, while emotions might represent uninstantiated Edenic emotion properties, they quite plausibly track complex and disjunctive actually instantiated properties that are important for survival and flourishing. These tracking relations help account for why emotions are so useful despite misrepresenting.\(^9\) As long as our mental highlighting corresponds to features of the environment that are important for our survival and flourishing, we can use our highlight-

\(^9\)In Mendelovici (forthcoming), I have argued that reliable misrepresentation can be just as useful as veridical representation for performing certain tasks.
ing to appropriately guide behavior. For example, while our emotions might misrepresent a dog as scary, they might also track certain properties the dog actually has, such as the property of being capable and likely to cause harm. As long as we react to scary things in the way that it is appropriate to react to things that are likely to cause harm, our misrepresentation can be just as useful as a veridical representation of the dog as harmful. Indeed, perhaps it is more efficient or effective for us to misrepresent the dog as scary rather than to veridically represent it as having a potential to cause harm.

The main advantage of the Edenic view over other versions of intentionalism about emotion is that it gets the phenomenology right. By taking emotion experiences at face value, it delivers emotion properties that are phenomenologically familiar.

Another advantage of the Edenic view is that it can automatically account for the phenomenal difference between emotions and thoughts. Consider the cases of fearing a dog, on the one hand, and believing that a dog is scary, on the other. On both the ordinary physical properties view and the response-dependent view, both mental states arguably attribute the same properties to the same object. We have a case of two experiences that are intentionally alike but phenomenally different, which is a counterexample to intentionalism. A typical response to this kind of counterexample is to restrict intentionalism so as not to apply to cognitive states on the grounds that factors other than intentional content are relevant to phenomenal character and those factors are absent in cognitive states, that is, to adopt an impure version of intentionalism. For Tye (2000, 2008), having nonconceptual content is one such further requirement for having phenomenal character that thoughts do not satisfy. Someone like Goldie (2000, p. 60) might instead appeal to differences in modes of presentation to partly determine phenomenal characters. Both strategies, however, end
up invoking extra ingredients whose relevance to phenomenal character might be challenged in the ways outlined earlier. My version of intentionalism about emotion, in contrast, naturally allows for the view that emotions and thoughts involving emotion-related concepts have different contents: emotions represent *sui generis* Edenic emotion properties, while thoughts represent dispositional or other properties. This neatly accounts for the phenomenal difference between the two states without appealing to non-representational factors.\(^\text{10}\)

### 3.4 Objections

I now turn to objections to the Edenic view. One might object that the view is incompatible with tracking theories of mental representation, on which mental representation is a species of tracking relation (Dretske, 1981, 1995; Millikan, 1984; Fodor, 1987). If emotion properties are never instantiated, it’s difficult to see how we can track them.\(^\text{11}\) I want to suggest that the correct response to this worry is for the intentionalist to reject the tracking theory of mental representation. While many intentionalists explicitly endorse a version of the tracking theory (e.g. Dretske (1995); Tye (2000)), others endorse a functional role theory (Rey, 1998) or primitivist theory (Pautz, 2007), and others chose to remain neutral on the question of whether mental representation can be reduced.

\(^{10}\)For the pure intentionalist, however, this is only a minor victory, since the same kinds of problems arise for intentionalism about perceptual experiences. For example, it seems that color concepts and visual experiences of colors represent some of the same contents, but differ phenomenally. For a treatment of these problems along the same spirit as my proposed treatment in the case of emotions, see Mendelovici (2010, Ch. 7 and §10.5).

Additionally, it seems that the pure intentionalist must maintain that we cannot represent Edenic emotion properties in thought, for if we can, they should give rise to the phenomenal character distinctive of emotions, and it seems that thoughts never give rise to such phenomenal characters. My preferred response to this worry is to agree that Edenic emotion properties are never genuinely represented in thought. However, they might be *derivatively* represented in thought, in much the same way that sentences derivatively represent in virtue of their relations to non-derivatively representational states (Bourget, 2010a; Mendelovici, 2010, Ch. 10).

\(^{11}\)There are some special circumstances in which we can be said to track uninstantiated properties, such as cases where the property *used* to be instantiated in our environment (Mendelovici, ming), but it is quite unlikely that such circumstances obtain in the case of emotions.
to something else (Bourget, 2010b).

It would be costly for the Edenic view if emotions were the only case requiring the intentionalist to reject the tracking theory. But there are other cases, such as that of color experience. According to the tracking theory, color experiences represent surface reflectance properties, such as dispositions to reflect certain proportions of certain wavelengths of light. But this doesn’t plausibly account for the phenomenal character of redness (Stoljar, 2007) in the same way that the representation of ordinary physical properties doesn’t plausibly account for the phenomenal character of emotion experiences (§3.3.1). Likewise, according to the tracking theory, pain experiences represent something like bodily damage. But bodily damage does not plausibly match the phenomenal character of pain experiences. In response to these worries, intentionalists have suggested that the relevant contents are represented nonconceptually, or under a certain mode of presentation. However, as argued in §3.3.1, it is utterly mysterious how these additional features can turn, say, a representation of bodily damage into the phenomenal experience of pain. In short, the phenomenal character of many of our experiences fails to match any properties that are actually instantiated in the world. This requires a plausible intentionalism to adopt an error theory about these experiences, which requires the rejection of the tracking theory. Emotion is not a special case in this regard, and so it is not an objection to the Edenic view of emotions that it requires the intentionalist to give up on the tracking theory.\footnote{\footnotetext{That a plausible intentionalism is incompatible with the tracking theory might count against intentionalism in general. This depends in part on whether the tracking theory offers an independently plausible view of mental representation, which is a matter of much controversy.}}

Another type of objection concerns my appeal to the sui generis. There are several possible worries here. One is that appealing to the sui generis involves positing new entities and thereby inflating our ontology, something which should
generally be avoided. However, it is important to be clear on the extent of my commitment to Edenic emotion properties: I am merely claiming that our experiences *represent* these properties, not that they are actually instantiated, or, depending on one’s views about what it takes for a property to exist, that they even exist. I am not suggesting that dogs actually have the property of scariness, for instance, but only that our experiences represent them as having it. If the objection to the *sui generis* stems from a resistance towards positing new entities, then it does not apply to my proposal, since my proposal does not require any new entities.

One might instead object that, all else being equal, content attributions appealing to familiar instantiated properties are preferable over content attributions appealing to unfamiliar uninstantiated properties. It’s not obvious why our view of mental contents should be constrained in this way. However, even if we accept this constraint, it is not clear that it offers a basis for rejecting the Edenic view. As I have argued, only Edenic emotion properties can play the role required by intentionalism about emotions, so all else is not equal.

One might object to my claim that emotions reliably misrepresent on the grounds that it entails that our emotion properties are in error: They represent objects other than as they are. This may be thought to be problematic for two reasons: First, it is contrary to common sense. Second, it might appear to fail to account for the usefulness of emotions. Since I have already addressed the second worry in arguing that reliably misrepresenting emotions can be useful for survival and flourishing, I will focus on the first worry.

Suppose we grant, perhaps implausibly, that it is problematic for a view to be contrary to common sense. My preferred projectivist version of the Edenic view is committed to the claim that emotion properties are never instantiated. It is not clear just how offensive this claim is. Compare this claim to the
analogous claim that color properties are never instantiated: It seems we are more reluctant to accept the former than the latter. We can be persuaded that the dog is not *really* scary or that the scenic view is *not really* euphoric, but it is more difficult to persuade ourselves that the dog is not *really* brown or that grass is not *really* green. This suggests that the claim that emotion properties are never instantiated is not all that objectionable to common sense, compared to other analogous claims, and thus that even if preserving the truths of common sense is an important goal, the present view does not do a terrible job of meeting it.

A better response to this objection would be to argue that, in at least this case, we have no good reason to believe common sense. Such an argument might proceed as the following kind of debunking argument: Our common sense beliefs that objects actually have emotion properties are rooted in and justified solely by our emotion experiences. Our emotion experiences are not reliable indicators of the Edenic emotion properties they represent. Once we know this, we have no justification for believing our emotion experiences and the common sense beliefs they give rise to. Put otherwise, if the Edenic view is correct, it allows us to explain away our commonsense beliefs in emotion properties, rendering them harmless to the view.\(^{13}\)

One might further object that classifying all emotions as non-veridical obliterates useful normative distinctions between different emotions. For example, one might be *appropriately* afraid of a rabid doberman, but *inappropriately* afraid of a sleeping three-legged poodle. One way to cash out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate emotions is in terms of veridicality: The first emotion is veridical, while the second is not. This way of cashing out the distinction is not available to the error theorist about emotion experiences, since

\(^{13}\)See Mendelovici (2010, Ch. 5) for the how cases of reliable misrepresentation can form of the basis of debunking arguments.
on her view, all emotions are non-veridical. However, there are other ways to cash out the distinction. In the first case, one’s emotion is in line with one’s interests and well-being, while in the second case, it is not. Alternatively, we might say that in the first case, one’s emotion is triggered by environmental features that fear usually tracks (or that it is the biological function of fear to track), while in the second case, it is not. Finally, while I have focused on emotions’ representational content that determines their distinctive phenomenal character, I allow that emotions have other intentional contents. For example, they might regularly include beliefs or judgments, and the relevant beliefs or judgments might be veridical in the rabid doberman case but not in the sleeping poodle case.

A final objection to the Edenic view is that while there are English words for some emotion properties (e.g. “scariness”), other alleged emotion properties do not correspond to English words (e.g. the emotion properties corresponding elation and anger). This might be taken to suggest that no such contents are represented in experiences of emotion. While I readily concede that the Edenic view does not accord perfectly with the linguistic features of emotion terms, I claim it does accord well with the phenomenology of emotion properties, and this is far more important for a theory of emotions. In offering such a theory, we are not trying to analyze our everyday emotion vocabulary. Rather, we are trying to explain certain features of our emotion experiences.

To bolster this response to the objection, it would help to offer an explanation of why we lack words for the properties some emotion properties represent. An admittedly speculative explanation is that, as suggested above, we are not particularly committed to realism about emotion properties: We do not actually believe that objects have emotion properties. Since language primarily expresses the contents of beliefs, not of perceptual or other experiences, it is no surprise
that we lack words for properties we experience as instantiated but do not really believe to be instantiated.\footnote{Whether we are more committed to realism about certain emotion properties than we are to realism about others is an interesting further question. While it clearly bears on the issues presently under discussion, the question is beyond the scope of this paper.}

To summarize, in this section, I have argued that, at least in the case of directed emotions, emotions’ intentional objects include objects from diverse ontological categories that are represented in various modalities, and that the properties emotions attribute to these intentional objects are sui generis emotion properties that determine the phenomenal character of emotions.

4 Undirected emotions

Undirected emotions are emotions that are not directed at anything, such as sudden feelings of fear, or moods such as anxiousness, elation, and sadness. While it is plausible that directed emotions represent intentional objects as having emotion properties, it does not seem that undirected emotions represent anything at all.

Directed and undirected emotions seem to have something in common. Fear of a dog and undirected fear have something in common, something like fearfulness. Sadness at a missed opportunity and undirected sadness also have sadness in common. Indeed, it seems that most undirected emotions a directed counterpart. This similarity between undirected emotions and their directed counterparts at least in part involves a similarity in phenomenal character. What it’s like to be sad is similar to what it’s like to be sad at a missed opportunity. It would be advantageous for a theory of undirected emotions to explain or at least accommodate their relation to directed emotions.

Tye (2008, §V) suggests that in at least some cases apparently undirected emotions turn out to have a frequently changing intentional object. For example,
in the case of road rage, while it may appear that one’s anger has no intentional object, in reality it has different intentional objects at different times (e.g. different cars or drivers). Additionally, one is in a dispositional state characterized by the tendency to frequently change the object of one’s anger. Tye treats other kinds of apparently undirected emotions, such as a sudden feeling of elation, differently. These kinds of emotions represent the world as a whole as having certain properties. In the case of sudden elation, the world as a whole is represented as positive or good. Another possibility is that apparently undirected emotions represent us as having emotion properties. For example, one might feel oneself as afraid. Yet another possibility is that they represent existential generalizations, such as that there exists something that has certain emotion properties. On all of these suggestions, apparently undirected emotions really are special cases of directed emotions. They have intentional objects, though their intentional objects either change over time or have special properties that lead us to mistakenly overlook them. Since apparently undirected emotions are just a special case of directed emotions, their similarity with directed emotions is unsurprising. Both apparently undirected emotions and directed emotions involve the representation of the same kinds of properties, and thus have some phenomenal character in common, though they are attributed to different kinds of things.

While it seems there are cases much like the ones described above, there are also cases that elude these characterizations. One can imagine a pervasive feeling of anxiety that doesn’t qualify the world as a whole, doesn’t have frequently changing intentional objects, doesn’t involve a representation of oneself, and doesn’t commit oneself to there being anything with the relevant emotion properties. And while one can imagine a case of sudden elation in which one represents the world as a whole as good, one can also imagine a case of sudden
elation that is not directed at the world or anything else, not even an unspecified object. One just feels elated. Such experiences appear to lack an intentional object altogether. They do not seem to “say” that anything has the relevant emotion properties. In other words, they do not have propositional contents.

It seems that the above-described emotions are a lot like directed emotions, except that they lack intentional objects. My suggestion is to accept this appearance at face value. My proposal is that undirected emotions are what we get when we have a directed emotion without an intentional object: a representation of a mere property.

Unlike the contents of color representations, the contents of emotion representations can occur without attaching to any object. In the case of color representations, we typically cannot experience a color property without experiencing something as having that property, but in the case of emotions, we can experience free-floating, or unbound, instances of the relevant properties. Undirected emotions can be thought of as analogous to the color of the ink in the highlighter. When we have an undirected emotion, no particular thing or group of things is “highlighted”, but we experience the mere color of the ink. We feel the fear, elation, or anxiety, but we don’t feel it as bound to or qualifying anything.

My claim that we can represent mere properties might seem strange. We are used to thinking of representational states as having a subject-predicate structure: they attribute properties to objects. I am claiming that some experiences represent only properties, without attributing them to objects. At this point, it is worth reminding ourselves that despite our experiential and perhaps theoretical familiarity with this subject-predicate structure, we do not yet have a fully satisfactory psychological account of just how experiences come to represent properties as binding to objects. This is the binding problem.\(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\text{For an overview, see Roskies (1999).}\)
Our lack of a fully satisfying solution to the binding problem might suggest that our relative comfort with mental states bearing a subject-predicate form and our relative discomfort with mental states lacking such form doesn’t track explanatory difficulty or costliness, or metaphysical weirdness.

In any case, there are familiar cases of representation of unbound properties. The contents of concepts can also occur unbound. We can think cat without thinking that anything is a cat. This would presumably involve tokening the concept cat without binding its content to the contents of any other representations. And so, while the capacity of emotion representations to have their contents occur unbound is very unlike the capacities of most perceptual representations, such unbound occurrences occur regularly and unproblematically with concepts. More controversially, some perceptual experiences might arguably involve unbound representations. For instance, a blue after-image might involve the representation of blueness without the representation of anything as being blue. The experience of Mark Johnston’s (2004, p. 141) brain-grey, the color we experience when our eyes are closed, might also be another example of an experience of an unbound color property.

This intentionalist treatment of undirected emotions explains the similarity between undirected emotions and their directed counterparts. Since both involve the representation of the same emotion properties, and emotion properties determine phenomenal character, undirected emotions have the same distinctive phenomenal characters of directed emotions.

The intentionalist view of directed and undirected emotions is arguably quite attractive regardless of one’s independent attraction to intentionalism. The view explains the directedness of directed emotions, the lack of directedness of undirected emotions, and at least some of the observed similarity between directed and undirected emotions. Directed and undirected emotions literally share com-
ponents, which explains at least some of their similarities. These shared compo-
ponents are representations whose contents can occur unbound. Since these shared
components are representations, they are of the right format to bind to object
representations to yield directed emotions. And since these shared components
\textit{can occur unbound}, they are of the right type to occur in undirected emotions,
which do not involve intentional objects.

In conclusion, undirected emotions involve the unbound representation of
the same emotion properties that are represented in directed emotions. Unlike
directed emotions, these emotion properties are not represented as qualifying
any objects, and this accounts for their apparent lack of directedness.

5 Conclusion

I have developed and defended an intentionalist view of the phenomenal char-
acter of emotions. Unlike other intentionalist views of emotion experience, my
view takes emotion’s phenomenal character at face value. Emotions represent
Edenic emotion properties. These emotion properties can be represented as
qualifying a wide range of intentional objects, yielding directed emotions. They
can also be represented without being bound to any intentional objects, yielding
undirected emotions.

References

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