

The Varieties of Mood Intentionality – Dr. Jonathan Mitchell

Chapter for Mood Collection

Introduction

In this essay I provide a philosophical account of the different ways moods – as personal level experiential states – are intentional, where intentionality can be understood, minimally at first, as the way in which such a state is directed towards or ‘about’ something.¹ Drawing on work in affective psychology I distinguish between two levels of mood experience: a first-order level (FOL) of phenomenal experience, and a second-order level (SOL), which consists in attention to aspects of the first-order experience. Using this distinction, I argue that the intentionality present at the FOL of mood experience is an immersed, non-propositional awareness of ‘the world’ – as what I call the subject’s ‘universal horizon’ presented under specific evaluative aspects – and it is only at the SOL that moods can also become explicitly (a) self-focused and (b) bodily-focused. So, my fundamental claim in what follows is that, while there are varieties of mood intentionality, I argue that we should recognize the primacy of their world-directed aspect.

Before the analysis begins some house-keeping is necessary. My focus in the essay will be on moods as personal-level occurrent experiences, that is, personally and temporally indexed conscious episodes of varying duration, which are a familiar feature of most people’s affective psychology and which have a distinctive phenomenal character. Folk psychology latches onto moods in this sense when we report of ourselves, and others, that we are ‘in a mood’. Moreover, we have at our disposal a relatively extensive mood-typology which reflects this usage, when we talk of being currently depressed, happy, sad, joyous, elated, listless, melancholic, anxious, morose, irritable, calm, etc. When thought of in these terms there is undeniably ‘something-it-is-like’ to be in a mood – moods have a first-person phenomenology.

Conceptual and phenomenological analysis substantiates the thesis, adumbrated in the above folk psychology, that moods are distinct kinds of personal-level occurrent (affective) experiences, not simply emotional dispositions or temperaments, or emotions masquerading under mood-terms. Here I take this understanding of moods – as occurrent personal-level experiences with a distinct phenomenal character – for granted in order to focus substantively on their intentional content, and specifically on the variety of that content.² Moreover, while I will have something to say about pathological moods (or moods disorders) – since confusion about the intentionality of moods is often the result of unwarranted generalizations from

pathological cases – I will not be concerned with computational or functional accounts which are framed at the subpersonal level.³ Neither will I be concerned to attempt a reduction of the manifest phenomenal intentional content of mood experience to the kinds of causal-nomological or teleosemantic relations which often figure in those computational and functional accounts.⁴ As such, my aim is limited to elucidating the personal-level intentional content of moods as experientially present in phenomenal consciousness.

The discussion proceeds as follows: section 1 explains an important distinction in conscious experience between first-order and second-order levels, and then provides a basic conception of personal-level intentionality; section 2 considers in more detail the different aspects of mood intentionality, namely that of ‘the world’, ‘the body’ and ‘the self’, and finally, the chapter closes with a summation of the analysis.

1. Different Levels of Experience and Mood Experience

1.1 FOL and SOL

To understand the varied intentionality of moods it is helpful to make a distinction in conscious experience between what I will call, following affective psychologists Anthony Marcel and John Lambie, first-order phenomenal experience (FOL) and second-order attention, as awareness of (or to) aspects of first-order phenomenal experience (SOL). The nature of the distinction can be clarified with some characterizations of contrasting features:

Def of FOL: (i) immersed, no distinction between is and seems (ii) not cognitively mediated (iii) non-propositional, an experience *of* not *that*, (iv) detects, rather than describes, (vi) self is implicit and recessive (as an ecological self-awareness), (vii) basic phenomenal presence of an attitudinal relation between self and world.

Def of SOL, as attention to FOL experience: (i) detached, distinction between is and seems (ii) typically cognitively mediated, (iii) typically propositional, can be both an experience of *and* that (iv) self-awareness is explicit and so can be taken as an object, (v) can be categorical, awareness of experience *as a* particular experience (when so is conceptual).⁵

It should be clear there are important differences between FOL and SOL, where the latter is understood, broadly, as attention to aspects of that first-order phenomenal experience. Talk of mood experience in what follows is taken to encompass both FOL and SOL. Yet before

analysing the kind of intentionality that arguably operates at these different levels I want to say more about the relation between the levels.

First, it is important not to confuse the SOL with separate acts of reflection about mood experience, say a detached non-affective reflection about a particular mood I was in, which takes a particular mood experience as an object. As already noted, mood experience should be taken to include both the FOL and SOL. Consider the difference between an experience of depression which includes SOL thoughts about worthlessness and hopelessness (the precise nature of which, in their relation to FOL phenomenal experience, I will explain in what follows), and a non-affective reflection about a depressed mood. Clearly the former thoughts, as grounded in SOL attention, are part of the experience.

Second, a central claim, made by Marcel and Lambie, about the relation between FOL and SOL is that in typical cases, unless there is attention (of some kind) one will not be able to report the phenomenal character of FOL, or be able to recall it in episodic memory. Yet, at the same time, the kind of attention that SOL brings to features of FOL modifies their character, and more broadly the experience as a whole, according to the precise mode of attention in question. For example, analytic focal attention to specific aspects of the phenomenal character of a pain experience might diminish its felt unpleasant quality. This results in the less than ideal situation that reports of FOL are typically only possible on the basis of SOL attention, but in many cases such attention modifies one's overall experience. This is especially evident in the case of the categorical dimension of SOL, which is likely to involve schematizing effects. For example, if a joyful mood was to involve a categorization of it *as an experience of joy* – perhaps mediated through a cognition of some sort – we might, in SOL attention, simply distort or overlook the fine-grained or rich phenomenology of the mood as experientially manifest at the FOL.

Given this, folk psychological reports – while they may be an instructive source of data for philosophical investigation – need careful analysis. We should resist the naïve idea that complex structural or constitutive features of FOL – say its intentional nature or the character of any intentional content – can simply be “read off” from first-personal reports.

1.2 Intentionality and Mood Experience

Before attempting to theorize the intentionality of moods, and examine mood experience, it helps to have a characterization of intentionality. We can provide the following definition of personal level intentionality:

Def of PLI (personal level intentionality):

- (a) The occurrent experience must be directed toward ‘something’ (directedness)
- (b) That ‘something’ must be presented under a determinate aspect (aspectual shape), ‘as thus and so’
- (c) That ‘something’ must be presented under a determinate aspect, to the subject of experience in phenomenal consciousness (indexicality) ⁶

If conditions (a), (b) and (c) are met then we have a personal-level intentional experience. The definition adds to the basic idea of directedness, that the ‘something’ presented through an intentional experience must be presented under a determinate aspect. For example, a paradigmatic visual perceptual experience would not just present a table, but present that table under determinate aspects, as having certain properties and not others – say as being of a certain size, or coloured red all over. Moreover, it is a necessary condition of personal-level intentionality that the ‘something’ presented, under a determinate aspect, is presented to a subject of experience, through phenomenal consciousness, securing that the what-it-is-likeness of the experience is a what-it-is-like-*for-me*. From this definition, we also get a minimal conception of manifest intentional content, specified as ‘the something as it is so determinately presented to the subject of experience through phenomenal consciousness’.

To mark out the different kinds of intentional content of moods, and where they fit in to a two-tier account of conscious experience, we need some phenomenological data to probe. We can begin with a rich description of the mood of joy:

“I feel like smiling...I’m loose relaxed, there’s sense of well-being...I’m completely free from worry...I’m in tune with the world...the world seems basically good and beautiful...there is an inner warm glow, a radiant sensation...a sense of being very integrated and at ease with myself...I’m at peace with the world...there’s a particularly acute awareness of pleasurable things, their sounds, their colours, and textures – everything seems more beautiful, natural, and desirable...there is an intense awareness of everything...there is a sense of lightness, buoyancy and upsurge of the body...I’m experiencing everything fully, completely, thoroughly; I’m feeling all the way...I’m less aware of time...the feeling seems to be all over, nowhere special, just not localized...the feeling fills me completely”⁷

The least controversial claim that can be made on the basis of the above description is that we are dealing with an occurrent, experiential state with a first-personal phenomenology; consider the extensive use of the terms ‘feel’ and ‘feeling’, and relatedly, ‘seems’, ‘experience’ and ‘aware’. In addition, we can identify the following three recurrent features as present: (a) ‘the world’, or ‘everything’, under specific determinations (‘as beautiful’, or ‘as good’); (b) the self, under specific determinations (e.g. ‘as free from worry’, ‘at ease’); and (c) the body, under specific determinations (‘as buoyant’, or ‘upsurging’). Consider another rich mood description, this time (non-pathological) depression:

“I feel empty, drained, hollow...there is a sense of being dead inside...my body seems to slow down...there is a sense of uncertainty about the future....a sense of being totally unable to cope with the situation...everything seems out of proportion...I’m completely uncertain of everything...everything seems useless, absurd, meaningless...there is a lack of involvement and not caring about anything that goes on around me...there is an inner ache you can’t locate...there is a lump in my throat...it seems nothing I do is right...I keep searching for an explanation, for some understanding; I keep thinking “why”...my body wants to contract draw closer to myself...it’s a bottomless feeling”⁸

Again, aside from the fact such a report details an occurrent experiential state with a first-personal phenomenology, we can identify the same three recurrent features as present: (a) ‘the world’ or ‘everything’, under specific determinations (‘as out of proportion’, ‘as useless, absurd, meaningless’); (b) the self, under specific determinations (‘nothing I do is right’, ‘unable to cope with the situation’); and (c) the body, under specific determinations (as ‘slowed down, an ‘inner ache’, as ‘contracting’). For sake of brevity, I will not detail every mood in this way, and will use joy and depression as paradigmatic. It is plausible that, if we were to do so we would find these three dimensions recurring.

One view suggested by the above reports is that moods, as occurrent experiential states, are directed to, or about, the world, self and body synchronously – all under specific aspects, and all presented in and to phenomenal consciousness (thus satisfying the conditions of PLI). However, such a view is problematic. If in joy I am experiencing ‘an intense awareness of everything’ (world-focus), can I synchronously be explicitly aware of ‘an inner warm glow’ or ‘radiant sensation’ (bodily-focus), or indeed of myself as ‘free from worry’ or ‘at ease’ (self-focus)? Likewise, in depression, if I am aware of a ‘sense of being totally unable to cope with the situation’ (self-focus), can I also be synchronously explicitly aware of ‘an inner

ache' or 'a lump in the throat' (body-focus), or that 'everything seems out of proposition...useless, absurd, meaningless (world-focus)?

Arguably, it is part of the nature of explicit 'awareness of' in the intentional sense, and so as a necessary dimension of a criterion of intentionality, that it is in any given moment (at time *t*) directed toward one object, or one 'something'. In other words, intentional directedness, at least as manifest in personal level experience, seems monadic (about "X"), rather than conjunctive (about "X, Y and Z"). Note that this point should not be confused with the different, and incorrect, claim that intentional directedness needs to pick out only one feature of its object. Rather, the claim is that it can only have only one intentional object at a time, although that intentional object could be complex, and admit of a conjunctive specification, e.g. as square and black all over, or a full state of affairs, say, an entire visual scene as perceptually presented. In any case, it seems intuitive to say I do not typically, in one and the same moment, have a conscious experience as exteroceptively directed towards my spatio-temporal environment and synchronously towards myself or my body. Notwithstanding this, intentional directedness may oscillate, of course, between these different objects fairly rapidly, and when it does so one or the other will fall into the background or come into the foreground.

However, one problem with rejecting the above synchronous account – that moods could be, at the same time directed towards world, body and self – is that the reports of joy or depression above attest to the presence of all these features, as that towards which the mood is putatively directed. To accommodate them all within a theory of moods' intentionality we need to deploy the distinction between FOL and SOL in conscious experience.

2. World, Self and Body

2.1 The World

The first substantive claims I want to make about the intentionality of moods are as follows: (i) paradigmatic mood experience involves an experience of 'the world' as affectively presented under determinate evaluative aspects, and (ii) this experience of 'the world', as evaluatively qualified, is the fundamental level of mood intentionality, as present in FOL (first-order phenomenal experience). However, we need to say more about what this evaluative presentation of 'the world' amounts to.⁹

The first point to note is that the sense of the 'world' as presented in a mood is not to be equated with any perceptually present spatio-temporal particular, or indeed in general with the world of perceptually present spatio-temporal particulars (although it may include the

latter). While it is difficult to pin down this sense of ‘the world’ as involving ‘everything’ and ‘nothing in particular’, the sense deployed in folk reports seems close to what the phenomenologists, and specifically Edmund Husserl, call the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) of the world as the ‘universal horizon’ for the subject,¹⁰ which will include modal, temporal, agentive relations. Modal and temporal relations are explicit in the report of depression which highlights that ‘there is a sense of uncertainty about the future’. But this aspect is also found in a mood like joy, as involving a sense of optimism about the future. Note here that it would be too restrictive to think of these modal and temporal relations exclusively in terms of opportunities for specific action, or lack thereof. While such agentive aspects are clearly present, we might say, in more general terms, that ‘the world’ is given in a depressed mood as not affording a broader sense of meaningful engagement.

Given this, ‘the world’ as presented in a mood, is not a neutral presentation but rather is given under a specific evaluative aspect, *as depressing, as joyous, as offensive* – in that sense the intentional object is ‘the world’ as the universal *evaluative* horizon for the subject (as including my projects, values, desires). That ‘the world’ is so evaluatively presented is reflected in the above mood descriptions: in joy ‘everything seems more beautiful, natural, and desirable...the world seems basically good’; in depression ‘everything seems out of proportion...useless, absurd, meaningless’. And it is because in depression ‘everything seems useless, absurd or meaningless’, that ‘the world’, so presented does not afford opportunity for meaningful engagement; or contrastingly in joy because ‘everything seems more beautiful, natural, and desirable, that ‘the world’, so presented, affords opportunity for meaningful engagement. Finally, it should be clear that ‘the world’, as the subject’s universal evaluative horizon, is presented to the subject of a mood through phenomenal consciousness; there is something ‘the world’ is like for them (as we shall see below, however, the affective dimension of moods complicates this picture somewhat).

So, if mood experience involves being directed at ‘the world’ in the above sense – as directed towards the subject’s universal evaluative horizon – what is the motivation for locating this kind of intentionality at Marcel and Lambie’s FOL of phenomenal experience? In answering this question, further features of mood experience and this world-focused aspect of their intentionality can now be elucidated.

Following the definition of FOL provided in section 1 above, a mood in which ‘the world’, is experienced as having a specific evaluative character, plausibly is (i) an immersive state, in which the distinction between ‘the world’ seeming a certain way and being that way does not arise. For example, when experiencing a joyous mood, it seems phenomenologically

correct to say the subject does not immediately question whether ‘the world’ is indeed joyous; rather it just seems it is, and is taken at face value (likewise for non-pathological depression). Second (ii) this kind of ‘world-directed’ mood experience seems intuitively described as instantiating a basic kind of intentionality, akin to perceptual experiences and emotions, which are not typically cognitively mediated or thought involving. Non-reflective or pre-reflective experience of a joyous mood, need not, and typically will not involve entertaining thoughts approximating to “the world is a joyous place” (although as we shall see in section 2.4 FOL mood experience might ground them). Third, and relatedly, (iii) mood experience of this kind is non-propositional, in that it does not involve entertaining thoughts with the content ‘that the world is depressing’ or ‘that the world is joyous’, but rather is constituted by an experiential evaluative presentation of the world: it detects rather than describes, as so is an experience *of*, not *that*. And fourth, (iv) insofar as ‘the self’ that figures at this level is not an explicit object of awareness, but rather is ‘implicit and recessive’, the self is minimally present as the subject undergoing the experiencing.

Furthermore, a complex and distinctive feature of moods – along with other affective experiences – is that they are felt responses, such that being in a mood is experienced as being responsive to something. Given that we are focusing on the world-directed aspect of mood experience, we can plug in this aspect, and say moods are experienced as felt responses to ‘the world’, as the subject’s universal evaluative horizon. In this sense, the world-directed dimension of mood experience not only satisfies the final FOL criterion of involving ‘basic phenomenal presence of an attitudinal relation between self and world’, but also indicates that, in mood experience, this attitudinal relation is an affective one, as a felt response to ‘the world’, so evaluatively presented.

On the basis of the above analysis we have the following picture: moods, at the FOL level, are experienced as immersive, non-cognitively mediated, non-propositional, affective attitudes towards ‘the world’, as evaluatively presented under a specific aspect. The basic phenomenology of moods is one of directedness towards a subject’s universal evaluative horizon (‘the world’), through an affective attitude. The basic attitude component here can be thought of as a favour or disfavour with the characteristic of globality, as a negatively or positively charged intentional attitude, which picks up on, and so is a response to, that universal evaluative horizon.¹¹

It should be clear that the world-focused intentionality of moods is apt to be placed at the FOL level. Not only does it satisfy all the defining features of that level, but it should be clear that ‘self-focused’ and ‘body-focused’ intentionality would in various ways fall short of those

criteria. For example, if the self, under specific determinations, was the main object of awareness at the FOL level, then it would cease to be implicit or recessive, and it would therefore be puzzling how it could constitute one part of the attitudinal relation between self and world. Likewise, if the body, under specific determinations, were considered to be the main object of awareness at the FOL level, then again it seems that the basic phenomenal presence of an attitudinal relation between self and world would be significantly complicated (see 2.2 for more on this).

Relatedly, it is more difficult to make sense of moods as an affective phenomenon - that is as felt responses - if they are principally a response to the self or the body. On such a picture, moods would be, at the FOL level, primarily reflexive or inward-looking states. Aside from any other considerations this seems to be phenomenologically inapt. Consider the following competing explanations. (1) In a depressed mood, there is a first-order phenomenal experience of 'the world' as *depressing*, on the basis on which subjects may come – in second-order attention to aspects of that phenomenal experience – to explicitly focus on their body or self, under specific determinations. (2) In a depressed mood, there is a first-order phenomenal experience of one's self or one's body, under specific determinations (say, in the first case as 'worthless', or in the second as 'sluggish, heavy'), on the basis of which subjects may come – as a matter of second-order attention to that phenomenal experience – to explicitly focus on the world 'as depressing'. I expect it will strike most readers that (1) is a more phenomenologically apt description of non-pathological mood experience.

Further, on the second picture – of 'the world' as an object of second-order attention – we would no longer strictly have an affective attitude, as a felt response, but a thought involving a propositional attitude *that the world is thus and so*. As such, this picture overlooks the phenomenological datum, reflected in folk reports, that there is a phenomenal experience of 'the world', in paradigmatic mood experience, which is different from any cognitively mediated thoughts or representations about 'the world'. The world being affectively presented as joyous or depressing is phenomenologically distinct from the entertaining of thoughts to the effect *that* 'the world' is joyous or depressing. And while such thoughts may come to be part of the overall mood experience, in SOL, it seems the FOL of moods is best thought of as constituted by a non-propositional experience of 'the world' affectively presented under a specific evaluative aspect. Accordingly, it makes more sense to say moods can become 'inward-looking' or reflexive, rather than essentially beginning as inward-looking or reflexive.

So, on the basis of this discussion we have sufficient motivation for thinking of the intentionality of mood experience, at the FOL, as a matter of ‘the world’ being affectively presented under a specific evaluative aspect. In what follows I concentrate on the way the body and then the self can come to be the explicit object of awareness in mood experience at the SOL, and explain how this relates to FOL mood experience.

2.2 *The body*

It is an undeniable feature that bodily states figure in mood experience, and those folk psychological reports of depression and joy testify to their presence.¹² Nonetheless, positing bodily states as the intentional object in FOL phenomenal experience of moods is problematic for a number of reasons.

One immediate problem with that proposal is that it would be insufficient to distinguish FOL mood experience from the phenomenal experience of a range of other affective states, say pains, somatoform disorders, and arguably some emotions (on a somatic feeling theory). Consider the case of depression in which the relevant bodily states are those of feeling drained, heavy and sluggish. If the FOL phenomenal experience of depression was directed towards such bodily states it would be indistinguishable from somatoform disorders described in similar terms. Absent some distinguishing criteria at the FOL level we would be forced into the counter-intuitive position of saying mood experience is distinguishable from analogous states only at the SOL of explicit attention to features of FOL, say in virtue of the way we attend to phenomenal experience. Second, reports of different moods highlight the same somatic aspects as consciously present, for example, sluggish or heavy body in depression, boredom, and apathy, and a tense body in irritable mood, anxiety, and nervousness.¹³ If we take this at face value, then the bodily states present to which FOL phenomenal experience is putatively directed would not provide the resources to be taken up in SOL type-identification (of categorical experience, of awareness of depression *as depression*). There would be no immediate phenomenological difference between being in a mood of irritability, anxiety or nervousness, or depression, boredom and apathy which could then serve as the basis for a distinguishing criterion for being in these different moods.

Given these considerations, there is sufficient motivation for not positing bodily states as intentional objects in FOL mood experience. Rather, it seems more plausible to claim that bodily states can become intentional objects of mood experience at the SOL, in which certain implicit features of FOL can become explicitly thematized.

However, one immediate problem with positing bodily states as objects of second-order attention in mood experience is that we need a story about the presence of bodily states prior to that explicit thematic attention to them. It cannot be the case that an act of attention to a bodily sensation in a mood – say in depression the feeling of being ‘empty, drained, hollow’ – brings that bodily state into existence; rather it just brings it to explicit (intentional) awareness. As such, we are led the following important claim about bodily feelings in FOL mood experience: the first-order phenomenology of moods includes, as part of its overall phenomenal character, bodily states as non-intentional accompaniments (or ‘raw feels’ akin to Reidian sensations). Without such bodily states as non-intentional accompaniments in FOL mood experience it would be mysterious how SOL mood experience could subsequently become explicitly ‘about the body’.

However, we need to say more about how the body figures in FOL in contrast to its being explicitly thematized as an intentional object at the SOL. Marcel and Lambie make a number of important claims about this issue. They say that due to the holistic character of FOL affective-evaluative experience, it is not the case that separable bodily states or changes, for example specifically feeling a high temperature, or a lump in the throat, are salient as such – that is under those specific determinations. As they put it, ‘bodily changes are not available in experience as separate components...unless analytically attended to in second-order awareness.’¹⁴ In this sense the bodily states which figure in FOL mood experience as non-intentional accompaniments, will be of a holistic kind, say that of a general ‘sluggish feeling’ (depression) or a general sense of relaxation of ‘well-being’ (joy). Note though, at this level the subject will not be entertaining descriptive thoughts of the form “my body is relaxed”, but rather there will typically be a holistic non-intentional state of the body which accompanies the world-directed phenomenology.

It is a complex question why, for certain subjects at least, mood experience typically tends towards analytic focus on specific bodily states or changes. One distinguishing criterion might be the intensity of the bodily states in FOL. While it might be the case that all FOL mood experience has somatic accompaniments, these will be stronger in certain cases. For example, the non-intentional somatic accompaniments, if there are any, in a mood of serenity or listlessness are likely to be of a sufficiently low level of intensity that it would be atypical for a subject to come to focus on bodily states in SOL. Contrastingly, ‘hot’ moods, and especially those which are more towards the spectrum of pathology, such as clinical depression, intense anxiety, and mania, will typically involve a much higher intensity of bodily feeling as present in the FOL, such that analytic attention to specific bodily changes is

much more likely, happens much more quickly, and in certain cases might be almost inevitable. The transformative power of such explicit bodily attention is often deleterious for the subject; for example, analytic attention to specific bodily states in anxiety can snowball into hyper-analytic attention to breathing rhythms and heart-rate, leading to anxiety attacks.¹⁵ Such a pathological mood experience, as including this kind of SOL hyper-analytic focus on bodily states, is significantly different from a non-pathological FOL mood experience of ‘the world’ as hostile (as generally anxiety inducing). So, the temptation to think of moods as fundamentally about ‘the body’, likely stems from an over-generalization from ‘hot’ moods, and unwarranted generalizations from pathological cases.

Moreover, understanding the role of the body in mood experience is an instance in which we need to be careful when examining folk reports as a means to elucidate the nature of those experiences. Asked to describe their moods, subjects may readily and repeatedly pick out bodily states, and while this means that any account of mood experience will have to account for their somatic phenomenology, it should not lead theorists to jump to the implausible and problematic claim that FOL mood experience takes the body as its intentional object, or that mood experience is first and foremost about the body. As we have seen there are ways of accommodating holistic bodily states within the FOL, and one which makes sense of how they can be taken up as explicit objects of attention in SOL, without committing to such a somatic view of FOL mood experience.

Moreover, as a final point, we might note that in cases when somatic states become the focus of attention, arguably the bodily feelings are experienced as caused by – as apparent effects of – that prior affective representation of ‘the world’ as being a certain way at the FOL.¹⁶ For example, it might be on the basis of a felt disfavour toward ‘the world’ as depressing that I then come to explicitly experience my body as drained, therefore explaining the switch of intentional focus from FOL to SOL.

2.3 The self

In section 2.1 we saw that ‘the self’ is a poor candidate for the intentional object of FOL mood experience, largely due to features of FOL which seem to place ‘the self’ in a different role, namely as implicit and recessive, rather than explicit. However, as with body states, folk reports of moods often highlight an awareness of the self under specific determinations; in joy the subject putatively experiences oneself ‘as free from worry’ and ‘at ease’, or in depression that ‘nothing I do is right’ or that I am unable to ‘cope with the situation’. Such

statements reflect a directed experience of oneself under specific determinations, as present to phenomenal consciousness, and so meet the basic criterion for personal-level intentionality.

To understand the role of the self in mood experience, we should first distinguish what I will call self-presentations from any more obviously detached, cognitively mediated categorical self-ascriptions. The latter more obviously operate at the SOL of mood experience, in the form of representing myself as being in a *joyous* or *depressed* mood. There is an intuitive and important phenomenological distinction between representing myself as joyous and pre-reflectively being in a joyous mood,¹⁷ and is it not difficult to see how on the basis of FOL mood experience of ‘the world’ as depressing or joyous a subject might come, in thematic attention to aspects of that FOL phenomenal experience, to reflectively deploy such categorical self-ascriptions.

Contrastingly, the non-categorical self-presentations described above – of myself as ‘free from worry’ in joy, or as ‘unable to cope’ in depression – have a more complex genesis. As with bodily states and changes, it cannot be the case that SOL attention creates such self-presentations from nothing; there must be some aspects of FOL phenomenal experience that involve ‘the self’ which allow for the self, under specific determinations, to be taken as an explicit object of thematic attention.

The answer to this question has in fact already been adumbrated in the section on ‘the world’ (section 2.1), where we discussed directedness towards the subject’s universal evaluative horizon, as including modal, temporal, and agentic relations. Consider the following explanation: in non-pathological depression, it is because ‘the world’ seems bleak and hostile to its subject that it does not afford opportunities for meaningful engagement. In such an account ‘the self’ that figures in FOL phenomenal experience is a recessive and implicit one, which is dependent, for its general comportment, on the world-directed intentional content of mood experience. Those explicit self-presentations - that is those involving explicit attention to ‘the self’ as an intentional object, under determinate aspects (oneself as useless or unable to act) - are therefore dependent on that more basic phenomenal presence of attitudinal relation between ‘self’ and ‘world’ in FOL mood experience. At the SOL, it is one term of that attitudinal relation, namely the implicit and recessive self, that can be taken as an explicit object of attention, switching from content of the form “the world does not afford opportunities for meaningful engagement” to “I am not capable of meaningful engagement” (i.e., I am useless). In this kind of SOL attention, such self-presentations will typically take the form of determinate thoughts about oneself, or judgements, with a

propositional structure, for example, ‘that I am useless or ‘that I am at ease’, or ‘that I am able to cope with everything’.

It is interesting to note, however, that the tendency towards a switch of focus specifically to ‘the self’ in SOL attention might be more prevalent in negative cases, in which FOL mood experience involves significant limitations on the possibility of meaningful engagement. A FOL level experience in depression of the world as not affording opportunities for meaningful action seems more likely to give rise to (at the SOL) self-presentations, and self-ascriptions of worthlessness, uselessness and so on. Pathological negative moods, like clinical depression, might be especially susceptible to this form of thematic attention to the self under negative determinations. However, even in these cases it seems right to say that we can make sense of the way ‘the self’ can become an explicit object of attention in mood experience only on the basis of a more basic or minimal, recessive self which is, in FOL mood experience, given in terms of a relation between the self and ‘the world’.

As a final point about the role of ‘the self’ in mood experience we should also be careful not to confuse the above analysis with the claim that subjects can come to gain a certain kind of self-knowledge on the basis of their mood experience – that moods might ‘reveal something about the subject’ (say that I am of a melancholic disposition). Reflective assessments of moods, and what they tell us about ourselves, are clearly neither part of the pre-reflective phenomenology of mood experience, nor to be built into SOL thematic attention to that first-order level.

As a final point, we should note that explanations of why subjects, in SOL, come to focus attention on the self, rather than the body, or vice-versa, are most likely highly dependent on the precise character of the FOL mood experience combined with complex dimensions of the subject’s prior affective psychology (including affective dispositions, and dispositions to attend in certain ways, e.g. melancholic subjects may be more disposed to self-focus in SOL, whereas anxious subjects may tend more toward bodily focus in SOL). Understanding in general terms why SOL attention takes the specific direction it does in particular cases, rather than a different one, will therefore be suggestive rather than definite, proceeding on a case-by-case basis.

2.4 ‘World focus’ in SOL

As a final dimension to the analysis I want to say something about is the way immersed, non-propositional directedness towards ‘the world’ (as the subject’s universal evaluative horizon), in FOL phenomenal experience, is transformed in SOL. As we have seen SOL can be

characterized by an explicit thematic attention to the body, or the self. However, SOL can also take ‘the world’, as providing the intentional content of FOL phenomenal mood experience, as an object of second-order thematic attention. This will be manifest in specific thoughts or judgements about ‘the world’, under determinate aspects, say ‘that the world is joyous’ or ‘that the world is depressing’. Note the distinction here between ‘the world’ as presented in FOL mood experience and ‘the world’ as represented in SOL attention, in that we switch from a non-propositional intentional presentation, to a propositional cognitively mediated mental state.

With this switch, we also establish a distinction between ‘is’ and ‘seems’. In FOL mood experience I said, following Marcel and Lambie, that this distinction does not typically arise; rather ‘the world’ being a certain evaluative way is taken at face value. Yet in SOL attention, with its propositional form, we get a variable mood-of-verb, such that we are no longer ‘immersed’ but ‘detached’, and so the distinction between ‘is’ and ‘seems’ is established. In other words, the content of FOL mood experience, as taken up in SOL cognitive attitudes, is no longer pre-reflectively taken at face value. I may assent to the belief ‘that the world is depressing’, say, but I might also ‘wonder whether it is’, or ‘doubt whether it is’. The propositional content ‘that the world is depressing’ may be taken up as the content of various different intentional attitudes, at least some of which involve withholding assent to whether that experiential content (re)presents things as they really are.

Summation of Analysis and Conclusion

In this essay I have provided an account of the varieties of mood intentionality. Making use of a distinction in conscious experience between FOL and SOL I argued that we do best to locate moods’ ‘world-directed’ intentionality at the FOL. The way moods can be explicitly about ‘the self’ and about ‘the body’ were shown to figure as SOL thematic attention to aspects of that FOL phenomenal affective experience of ‘the world’ (which provides the materials for SOL attention). The view articulated here is relatively parsimonious, insofar as it attempts to reconcile folk intuitions that moods are about ‘the world’, ‘the body’ and ‘the self’, without committing to an unrealistically complex, and philosophically problematic idea, of pre-reflective mood experience as involving synchronous intentional directedness towards all three aspects. Rather, by recognizing the ‘world-directed’ aspect as primary in FOL, we can better understand how SOL thematic attention to moods can come to take ‘the body’ and ‘the self’ as intentional objects. In this sense recognizing the varieties of mood intentionality is compatible with arguing for the primacy of the ‘world-directed’ aspect as I have done here.

It is the latter aspects which ground any further intentionality that moods may enjoy in SOL attention.

While the analysis provided here ‘demystifies’ mood experience by providing a schematic and hierarchical understanding of its intentionality and phenomenology, the hope is that it rings true to experience. No doubt more could be said about all the aspects of mood intentionality discussed here, and the analysis was not intended to be exhaustive. In particular, more work is required to clarify the evaluative dimension of FOL mood experience. Nevertheless, on the basis of the analysis provided, philosophers and affective psychologists, in particular, will have a more precise theoretical framework for thinking about mood experience than has previously been on offer.

¹ For contrasting, non-intentional views of moods in philosophy see Deonna and Teroni 2012: 4; Mulligan 1998: 162; De Sousa 1987: 7, 68, 285; Lormand 1985: 385-407.

² See Mitchell *forthcoming*, section 1 for the arguments.

³ See Lormand 1985: 385-407; Davidson 1994: 51-55; Sizer 2000: 743-769; 2006: 108-135; Price 2006: 49-68; Wong 2016: 179-197. Among these accounts opinion is divided about whether moods are intentional states (on the positive side see Price 2006; on the negative Lormand 1985; Sizer 2000: 742-769).

⁴ See, for example, Dretske 1980.

⁵ Marcel and Lambie 2002: 219-59. Other features are highlighted but these definitions will suffice for my purposes.

⁶ See Searle 1983: Ch.1 for more on these conditions, and Crane 1998 for broader discussion.

⁷ This description is an assemblage of descriptions of joy given in Joel Davitz 1969 study (see Davitz 1969: 68-70).

⁸ Again, this description is an assemblage of descriptions of depression given in Davitz 1969 study (see Davitz 1969: 45-47).

⁹ A number of philosophers claim that moods are in some sense about ‘the world’ but this claim is rarely developed in detail. See Ryle 1949: 96; Solomon 1993: 17; Lyons 1980: 104; Lazarus 1994: 79-85; Crane 1998: 229-51; Goldie 2000: 141-151, Frijda 1987. In psychology, see Reisenzein and Schonpflug 1992: 34-45.

¹⁰ See Husserl 1970 §37.

¹¹ For similar views of emotions see Mitchell 2017: 1-28; Poellner 2016: 1-28; Montague 2009: 171-92.

¹² For accounts of moods that make bodily awareness central see See Tye 1995: 130. Bodily states also figure as a constitutive part of Matthew Ratcliffe’s ‘existential feelings’ (Ratcliffe 2008).

¹³ See Davitz 1969: 32-84.

¹⁴ Marcel and Lambie 2002: 238.

¹⁵ For discussion of mood pathologies see Power 1994.

¹⁶ See Soldati 2008: 257-280 for this claim for emotions.

¹⁷ See Mendelovici 2013: 147.

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