

1. Introduction: Some Facts about Emotions

Some features of emotions:

Phenomenology: there's something it's typically like to feel an emotion.

Intentionality: emotions have intentional objects.

Rationality: emotions have correctness conditions. They seem to have a mind-to-world fit.

Diversity: emotions are a really diverse bunch, they differ in complexity, manifestation, etc.

Action: emotions are closely connected to actions.

2. Emotions & Feelings

Should we identify emotions with feelings? Our ordinary way of speaking often does. We talk about emotions and feelings interchangeably.

Most philosophical theories grant that emotions and feelings are closely related. But they deny that we should identify emotions with feelings:

1. Feelings are necessary but not sufficient components of emotions.

2. Feelings are contingent components.

3. Feelings aren't components at all, they are just ways of detecting emotions. (I feel angry like I feel the wind.)

Suppose we do take the connection between feelings and emotions seriously. What kinds of feelings should we be concerned with?

3. The Jamesian Theory

Feeling theories point to William James. According to James, the relevant feelings are those of changes in the body. When emotions occur, our bodies undergo perturbations: circulatory, respiratory, musculoskeletal. Our feelings of these changes just is the emotion.

Argument from Introspection

If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its characteristic bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind, no 'mind-stuff' out of which the emotion can be constituted, and that a cold and neutral state of intellectual perception is all that remains.... Can one fancy the state of rage and picture no ebullition of it in the chest, no flushing of the face, no dilatation of the nostrils, no clenching of the teeth, no impulse to vigorous action, but in their stead limp muscles, calm breathing, and a placid face? The present writer, for one, certainly cannot. The rage is as completely evaporated as the sensation of its so-called manifestations, and the only thing that can possibly be supposed to take its place is some cold-blooded and dispassionate judicial sentence...

In short; when we subtract the perception of all bodily manifestations of an emotion, we no longer feel the emotion. And so, the perception of bodily manifestation is the felt emotion. Emotions are perceptions of bodily changes.

Argument from Inference to Best Explanation

There is ample empirical evidence that emotions co-occur with bodily changes. Emotional experience goes hand in hand with excitations in areas of brain associated with bodily responses and interception.

What about more phylogenetically advanced emotions, such as guilt, love, loneliness, and jealousy? James himself allowed that moral and aesthetic emotions are not mediated by the body.

But empirical evidence suggests a Jamesian hard-line even here.

So far, so good. But to establish the Jamesian theory, we need to show that the perception of bodily changes is necessary and sufficient for an emotion.

Defending Necessity

Show that disruption of interoceptive responses leads to dilution of emotions. The evidence here is not entirely conclusive, but suggestive:

- Individuals who suffer from spinal injuries, sometimes report diminished emotional responses.
- Patients with injuries very high on the cord were more likely to report a loss of emotional intensity.

The case here is not entirely straightforward though because spinal patients continue to perceive heartbeat and gastrointestinal pain. So there's still some interception, through vagus nerve.

What about pathologies involving vagus nerve? There is some evidence that such individuals have impaired performance on gambling tasks.

Defending Sufficiency

We need to show that judgments are only contingently associated with emotions. Some suggestive findings:

- Drugs (adrenalin) that enervate the autonomic nervous system have emotional effects.
- False bodily feedback (e.g. false beliefs about one's heart racing) can influence emotional state and affect-laden judgments.
- Stroke can lead to pathological laughter and crying by creating random activity in laughter and crying nuclei in upper brainstem; when this occurs, patients report feeling happy or sad.
- Changing facial expressions and respiration influences self-reported emotions.
- Seeing another individual express an emotion can cause corresponding emotion.
- Nonvocal music has predictable emotional effects, which seem to work by eliciting patterned bodily response.

All these suggests that induction of bodily change results in subjective experience of emotions.

Perhaps evaluative judgements are also generated, but there is no reason to think that it is always the case and to stipulate this seems ad hoc.

Emotions and judgments can conflict. We can be afraid while believing that we are not in danger (horror film).

4. Are Emotions Feelings: Unconscious Emotions?

On a Jamesian theory, emotions are perceptions of bodily changes. Does it follow that emotions are feelings?

Not quite: not all perceptions need to be felt. There may be such a thing as unconscious perception. And so there may be unconscious emotions.

Are there such things?

Argument from Perception

The perceptual system in general allows unconscious perception. Subliminal perception: stimulus is displayed very briefly, followed by a mask, so that we have no conscious experience of it.

Nevertheless, it affects subsequent behaviour.

Is subliminal perception, perception? Yes, because what makes perceptual states *perceptual* is their aetiology: the role of sensory transduction from the world outside the mind.

So if perception can be unconscious and emotion is a kind of perception, then why should there not be unconscious emotions? If there are inner states that register patterned bodily change under conditions that cause conscious emotions in us, and those inner states lead to characteristic coping behaviours (e.g. approach or avoidance), we should call those states unconscious emotions.

Empirical Evidence

There's anecdotal evidence that some emotions may be unconscious. You may feel afraid without noticing because your attention is consumed with something else.

There's also experimental evidence. (Winkielman et al, 2005). Subjects saw faces that were neutral, angry, or happy, subliminal perception. Then presented with fruity beverage, asked to pour a glass and take a sip. No statistical difference between moods reported by those seeing different faces. Nevertheless, difference in behaviour. Those who saw angry face poured less of the beverage, drank less, and gave it less positive ratings.

5. Objections & Questions

1. Long-lasting emotions

Solomon (1976): emotions can last for hours across wide range of fluctuations in bodily states.

Response: It's an empirical question whether there is no enduring bodily state here.

2. Not Enough Bodily Feelings

There is not a distinctive bodily feeling for every emotion. For example, guilt and sadness can have identical phenomenologies. If emotions are feelings, how can two distinct emotions feel alike?

Response: Emotions are distinguished not just by phenomenology and bodily realization but also by their causal history. Both sadness and guilt are responses to loss. But guilt is a special kind of sadness: response to loss of standing and relationships in a community, due to a norm-violation.

The cause of an emotion determines its identity but those causes do not constitute it, nor do they constitute the conscious experience of the emotions. (Analogy: sunburn and wind burn.)

When we recognise that a particular feeling is guilt rather than sadness it's not in virtue of phenomenal difference but rather in virtue of recalling the eliciting conditions.

3. Intentionality

Emotions have intentional objects. They can be directed at things. But feelings cannot have intentional objects. Pains, tickles, twinges are not about anything. Therefore emotions cannot be feelings.

Response: There can be causal links between emotions and mental representations of objects or state of affairs. When certain causal links are in place, we say that the emotion has the content of those representation as its intentional object.

The key is to distinguish between emotions and emotional attitudes. An emotional attitude is a propositional attitude that establishes a causal link between an emotion and the representation of an object or state of affair.

Analogously: Tiredness does not have an intentional object. But I can be tired of a novel. The novel makes me tired. I can be sickened by the news: the news make me feel sick.

4. Is Pain an Emotion?

Pain is a perception of a bodily change. And according to Prinz, pain can also be unconscious:

"If there are mental states that function just like pains but lack consciousness, it is useful to group them together with conscious pains. Pain carries information from nociceptors and leads to withdrawal and soothing behaviours. If there are mental episodes that play that role without awareness, we should call them unconscious pains"