Moods as Ways of Inner Awareness

Anna Giustina

Abstract. The philosophical debate around moods has mainly focused on whether and how their seeming recalcitrance to representationalist treatment can be overcome by accommodating moods' apparent undirectedness through a peculiar representational structure. Through these theoretical efforts, though, most theorists have taken a double wrong turn (or so I argue), by maintaining that (i) (if directed,) moods are *outwardly directed* (i.e., directed toward something *external to* and *independent of* the subject's mind) and (ii) moods are discrete *mental states* (on a par with emotions, perceptual experiences, thoughts, etc.). By pointing at three as yet overlooked phenomenological features of moods—*subjective salience*, *undetachability*, and *globality*—I suggest that moods are (i) *inwardly oriented* (i.e., they pertain to the subjective aspect of experience and, if directed at all, they are directed toward one's experiences) and (ii) *structural features* of consciousness (rather than discrete mental states). I thus explore a new approach to the nature of mood experience, one that aims to do justice to those phenomenological features: I call this the "*ways of inner awareness*" view. On this view, moods are ways of being aware of one's own experiences. Different versions of the view may be developed, depending on various metaphysical commitments. I do not defend or recommend, here, any *specific* version. The aim of the paper is to motivate the general *ways-of-inner-awareness* approach to mood and hint at some possible ways it may be elaborated.

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1. Introduction

Moods pervade our inner life like no other kind of mental state. Although they seldom occupy the center of our consciousness, their constant background humming constitutes a fundamental contribution to our overall state of mind, influences our interaction with the world, and makes a crucial difference to our wellbeing.[1] Moods imbue and color our stream of consciousness, shape the way we experience and think about the world, affect our decisions and our actions, thereby playing an essential role in determining how we live our life.

Most of the debate around moods has focused on a peculiar feature displayed by mood experiences—their *apparent undirectedness*: unlike other mental states (such as perceptual experiences, emotions, and thoughts), moods do not seem to be directed at any specific object, and in fact they do not seem to be directed at anything at all (Searle 1983; Deonna and Teroni 2012). At least prima facie, this feature is at odds with the most widespread philosophical theory of consciousness—representationalism (the view that conscious experience fully consists in suitably representing something as being a certain way; see, e.g., Dretske 1995 and Tye 1995). Accordingly, the bulk of the debate has revolved around whether and how moods' apparent undirectedness can be accommodated by representationalism.

[1] On the relationship between mood and wellbeing, see Uriah Kriegel's (2022) deep and illuminating discussion.

On the most popular representational account of mood, introduced by Robert Solomon (1976) and developed in various ways by other authors (Kenny 1963; Lyons 1980; Crane 1998; Seager 1999; Mitchell 2019), moods consist in representing the *whole world*, or *everything in the world*, or *anything one encounters in experience,* as having a certain evaluative property—we may call this the "Generalized Content View." Roughly, on this view, depression represents the *whole world as pointless*, elation represents *everything as wonderful*, anxiety represents *anything one encounters in experience as threatening*. What all the versions of the generalized content view have in common is that (1) they construe mood's content as generic (rather than specific) and (2) what is represented is external to and independent of the subject's mind. These two features are meant to (1) accommodate the fact that moods do not seem to be directed at any specific object in (2) a representational framework.

Anti-representationalists have criticized this approach and argued that the relevant kind of generalized content is neither necessary nor sufficient for accounting for mood phenomenology (Kind 2014; see also Bordini 2017). Although I find those criticisms quite convincing, I am less sure that the most fundamental problem with extant representational theories of moods lies in their being *representational*. Rather, in my view, their primary shortcoming consists in construing moods as "*states of outer awareness*": extant theories of moods (I argue) have taken a double wrong turn, by maintaining that (i) (if directed,) moods are *outwardly directed* (i.e., directed toward something *external to* and *independent of* the subject's mind) and (ii) moods are discrete *mental states* on a par with (say) emotions, perceptual experiences, and thoughts.

This approach to moods overlooks some crucial phenomenological features of mood experience. The first is what I call *subjective salience*: moods display a peculiar salience of the subjective aspect of experience. The second feature is (what may be called) *undetachability*: unlike mental states such as perceptual experiences, thoughts, and emotions, moods do not seem to be *isolable* and *discrete*: they cannot occur independently of and in isolation from other mental states. The third feature is *globality*: moods display a special kind of *diffuse pervasiveness*; they spread over one's total experience and cast on it an "affectively colored light." As we will see, the first feature (subjective salience) suggests that moods are *inwardly-oriented*: they pertain to our inner experience, and if they are directed at all, they are *inwardly* rather than *outwardly* directed. The second and the third features suggest that moods are more akin to *structural* phenomenal aspects of consciousness (like phenomenal unity and phenomenal temporality), than to discrete and local mental states.

The purpose of this paper is to explore a new approach to the nature of mood experience, one that aims to do justice to those phenomenological features. The best way to go, I suggest, is to construe moods as *ways of inner awareness*, i.e., ways of being aware of one's own experiences. By assuming that all conscious experiences are such that their subject is aware of it, I argue that moods are *modes* or *modifications* of such an inner awareness. Inner awareness being awareness *of experience*, it is naturally *inwardly-oriented*. Inner awareness being a *holistic* phenomenal feature that *spreads* over one's whole concurrent experience suggests that it is a *structural* aspect of consciousness—rather than an extra experiential *item* alongside other conscious states (or so I will argue). So, construing moods as ways of inner awareness does justice the fact that they are inwardly-oriented structural phenomenal features.

In §2 I argue that *subjective salience*, *undetachability*, and *globality* are phenomenal features characteristic of mood experience and suggest that accounting for them requires construing moods as phenomenal features that are (i) *inwardly oriented* and (ii) *structural*. In §3 I briefly introduce the

notion of "inner awareness." In §4 I explain the core idea of a *ways-of-inner-awareness* approach to moods and illustrate how different versions of the view may be articulated. In §5 I show how the ways-of-inner-awareness approach explains subjective salience, undetachability, and globality. I am not going to defend or recommend, here, any *specific* version of the view. The sole aim of this paper is to motivate the general *ways-of-inner-awareness* approach to mood and hint at some possible ways it may be elaborated.

2. Moods as inwardly-oriented structural phenomenal features

2.1. Inward-orientedness

Moods are *affective* mental phenomena. Similarly to emotions, their phenomenology includes an affective aspect, and each mood has its own peculiar affective phenomenal quality. Some moods display an affective quality that is similar to the affective quality of some emotion (e.g., anxiety/fear, irritability/anger, elation/happiness, etc.), but not all moods do (e.g., serenity, restlessness, positivity…). In emotion, the affective quality is tightly connected to the *evaluative appraisal* of an object: fearing a bear involves attributing *dangerousness* or *threateningness* to the bear (on representational theories, it consists in *representing* the bear *as dangerous* or *as threatening*), and this is intimately related to the affective quality that characterizes the phenomenology of the experience of fearing a bear. Similarly, the *unpleasantly agitating* affective aspect that characterizes the phenomenology of anger is tightly related to attributing *disrespectfulness* or *offensiveness*; the phenomenal *pleasant peppy liveliness* of one's excitement at the upcoming party is tightly connected to casting the party under a *positively energizing* light (or just to representing the party as *exciting*); and so on.

So, affective phenomenology and evaluative appraisal are both aspects of emotional experience. What the intimate relation between them amounts to is matter of debate: they might be the same property, or one may reduce to the other, or one may be grounded in the other. For present purpose, we do not need to take a stance on this. What is important here is that the evaluative appraisal that is tightly connected to the affective phenomenology of emotion involves attributing some evaluative property to some particular object. Emotions are, in this sense, typically *outwardly directed*: they are intentionally directed toward some person, object, event, or situation and involve an evaluation of that person, object, event, or situation. In a representationalist framework, we may say that emotion represents some person, object, event, or situation as instantiating some evaluative property.[2;3]

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[2] The specific type of representation involved varies depending on the theory. On cognitivist views, for example, the representation is a proposition, and emotion is construed as an evaluative judgment (Solomon 1976; Nussbaum 2001). On perceptual theories, emotions are construed as (non-conceptual) perceptual representations of evaluative properties (Tye 2008; Mendelovici 2014; Tappolet 2016; Mitchell 2020). On attitudinal theories, evaluative appraisal is encoded not in the representational content of the emotion, but in the subject's attitude toward what the emotion is about (Deonna and Teroni 2012, 2015; Scarantino 2014).

[3] To be sure, some emotions are *self-directed* (e.g., being angry at oneself, being disgusted by oneself), and some are even *inherently* self-directed (e.g., shame, pride, guilt). So, not all emotions are outwardly directed (and a fortiori being outwardly directed is not part of the *nature* of emotion). This, however, does not jeopardize the point we are trying to make in this section. For the contrast between mood and emotion is aimed at bringing out features that are relevant to the nature of mood, and not of emotion. In this respect, what is crucial is that while emotions can attribute evaluative properties to worldly objects (the nature of emotion does not entail that emotion cannot be outwardly

In mood, on the other hand, there is *no particular object* to evaluatively appraise. Consider the following:

- Anxiety is characterized by a peculiar affective phenomenal feel of *paralyzing terror*, but it does not seem to represent any particular object *as dangerous* or *as threatening*.
- Elation has an affective phenomenology characterized by *pleasant peppy liveliness*, but it does not represent any specific object *as positively energizing* or *exciting*.
- Serenity displays an affective phenomenology of *peaceful and motionless calmness*, but it does not represent any worldly object *as quiet* or *restful*.
- Irritability features a phenomenology of *restless*, *rejecting*, and *unpleasant agitation*, but it does not represent any particular object *as upsetting*.
- Depression displays a characteristic mixture of *pointlessness*, *hopelessness*, and *dark emptiness*, but it does not represent some particular object *as uninspiring*.

In each case, there is no particular object in the subject's environment to which the relevant evaluative property is attributed. Rather, if a mood experience displays evaluative appraisal, this seems to pertain to the overall *state of the subject*—the way the subject is affected. It thus seems that, if moods involve evaluative property attribution at all, the relevant attribution pertains to the subject itself, or to its overall state or condition. While in emotion evaluative appraisal captures the way the emotion's intentional object (actively) affects the subject (fear represents the bear as threaten*ing* me, anger represents the cashier as offend*ing* me, etc.), in mood the relevant evaluative appraisal captures the way the subject is (passively) affect*ed*, rather than the way the subject (actively) affect*s*. Moreover, in mood evaluative appraisal captures how the subject is affected without specifying how some specific *object* (actively) affects the subject:

- Anxiety does not represent anything as threatening, but presents myself as *under threat*.
- Elation does not represent anything as positively energizing, but presents myself as *positively energized*.
- Serenity does not represent anything as quiet or restful, but presents myself as *in peace*.
- Irritability does not represent anything as upsetting, but presents myself as *upset*.
- Depression does not represent anything as uninspiring, but presents myself as *uninspired*.[4]

directed—in fact many emotions are), mood seems to have a fundamentally different structure and just does not seem to be able to be outwardly directed in the way emotion can. Moreover, although there obviously is a sense in which self-directed emotions are *inwardly* rather than outwardly oriented, that is not the same sense in which *mood* is inwardly rather than outwardly oriented. For with self-directed emotions there is still a *specific object* (i.e., the person that is the subject of the emotion) toward which the emotion is directed and to which the emotion attributes some evaluative property. In mood, by contrast, the evaluative property is *not attributed to the subject*. While *being angry* at oneself involves somehow attributing blameworthiness to oneself, *being irritable* does not attribute blameworthiness or offensiveness to oneself; rather, it casts oneself as somehow *offended* or *upset*. More on this in the next paragraph.

[4] I articulate the point in terms of moods "presenting," rather than "representing" oneself as affected in a certain way to remain neutral with respect to whether moods represent anything at all. In a representationalist framework, we may say that anxiety represents myself as *under threat*, elation represents myself as *positively energized*, etc.

In each case, mood presents the subject as affected in some way (specified by the evaluative property that is characteristic of each mood) without articulating *by whom* or *by what* the subject is so affected. What is relevant in a mood experience is not *what* affects the subject, but rather *how* the subject is affected. This suggests that mood experiences are not oriented toward the world—toward *what* affects the subject—but toward the subject's inner state—toward the *way* the subject is affected. This does not necessarily imply that moods are *intentionally directed* toward the subject or toward the subject's experience—that mood is *about* or *represents* one's inner experience. That *could* be a way to explain mood's inward-orientedness. However, in §2.2 I will argue that, in light of other features of mood experience (*undetachability* and *globality*), that is not an adequate explanation. For now, what is important is that moods pertain to the subjective aspect of experience, and if they are directed at all, they are somehow *inwardly*—rather than *outwardly*—directed.

The inwardly-oriented nature of mood's evaluative component is mirrored by its affective phenomenology, which features a marked salience of the subjective aspect of experience. Moods just do not phenomenally *feel* outwardly directed. The affective qualities that constitute mood phenomenology seem to be responsive not to changes in the world or in the way things in the world are represented by the subject, but rather to changes in the overall inner state of the subject herself, or in the way the subject apprehends her overall inner state. What is relevant to the mood is *the way one feels* in experiencing what one does, rather than the way things in one's surroundings appear in one's experience. This is compellingly pointed out by Davide Bordini (2017: 62, italics added):

> [T]he world does not seem in any way "responsible" for one's experience, quite the contrary: the mood seems to be there quite independently of it. Either way, mood experience does not really seem to inherently involve the world—or anything coming from the world-side, so to speak: being in a certain mood appears to be *an entirely subjective matter*, a matter of having certain feelings that have nothing to do with the way the world is.

Indeed, the way the outer world appears to the subject may have no effect whatsoever on mood's phenomenology. When I feel elated, my experience has an affective phenomenology characterized by *pleasant peppy liveliness*. This affective quality is not responsive to how things in my surroundings appear to me: the chair in front of me and the cup on my desk do not appear to me as if they were full of peppy liveliness or energetic positivity, nor do they seem to cause the positive feeling I experience. Rather, the feeling seems to spring from inside of me, saturate my mind and body, spread a peppy and joyful glow all over my feelings, perceptions, and thoughts, and lighten with a rosy gleam the way I experience myself and the world around me. Some things and people may indeed even appear sad, miserable, or otherwise negatively affected; this would not necessarily mar my inner joyful state.[5]

To be sure, moods may causally *affect* and *be affected by* the way we represent things and people in outer awareness. On the one hand, being in a certain mood has often an effect on which thoughts, emotions, desires, and intentions we tend to have, as well as on what we tend to notice: when I am depressed, my thoughts tend to cluster around life's dark pointlessness; when I am elated, I tend to notice the goodness in the world; when I am irritable, I am more prone to burst

[5] Similar considerations apply to other mood experiences. I articulate more examples to make the case for subjective salience in Giustina (forthcoming).

out in anger against a fellow; and so on. On the other hand, the onset of a certain mood (or a change in the intensity of its phenomenology) may be caused or facilitated by our surroundings affecting us in certain ways: the unbearable annoyingness of a passenger watching a video on his phone without earbuds may irreversibly crack my inner serenity and skew me toward a starkly irate mood; receiving the news that you got the job of your dreams may considerably boost your previously mild good mood—and perhaps turn it into uncontrollable euphoria. In both cases, however, the relevant outwardly-directed mental states are *causally* related to the mood experience—not *constitutively* related: they are mental states that are *distinct* from the relevant mood—the mood and the outwardly-directed state bear independent covariation. An outwardly-directed state with evaluative content may cause or facilitate the onset of, or may be caused or facilitated by, a mood experience; but it is not a *constituent* of the relevant mood.

So, if we carefully isolate the mood experience from what causes it, and from its effects on other experiences and thoughts, we see that, while the mental states that are causally related to the mood may be outwardly directed, the mood itself is not. The mood is *inwardly* oriented: it pertains to the subject and/or its experiences, rather than the worldly things those experiences are about. Accordingly, what is most salient in the phenomenology of mood is the *subjective* (rather than the worldly) aspect of experience.

In Giustina (forthcoming) I develop further arguments for *subjective salience*. Here I can only summarize the basic ideas:

1. Outwardly-directed experiences are paradigmatically *transparent*: when you try to introspectively attend to your visual experience of a yellow banana, your attention falls onto what your visual experience is about—the banana—and attending to the visual experience itself is often claimed to be either impossible or very difficult. Moods, on the other hand, are paradigmatically *opaque* mental states: when we introspect a mood, we attend to the way we feel—we direct our attention inward, toward our inner state, not outward, toward the world.

2. When the phenomenal intensity of an outwardly-directed experience increases (e.g., when a light looks brighter, or a sound sounds louder), the *worldly object* toward which the experience is directed becomes experientially more salient; but when a mood becomes phenomenally more intense (e.g., when my good mood is enhanced into a euphoric state, or when my anxiety becomes even more unbearable), what becomes more salient is *me* and the way *I* feel—I feel more intensely my inner joy, or my inner paralyzing terror.

3. Changes in the way the world appears necessarily make a difference to the phenomenology of outwardly-directed experiences: if a red patch on my screen turns to yellow, the phenomenology of my visual experience changes—from reddish to yellowish. But mood phenomenology is not equally sensitive to changes in the way the world appears: my inner serenity may remain equally peaceful, regardless of what I happen to see, hear, or taste.

If all this is right, there is an important phenomenological datum that any philosophical theory of moods needs to account for: moods display a peculiar salience of the subjective aspect of experience and pertain to the subjective, inner side of our mental life. Accordingly, moods are somehow inwardly-oriented—rather than outwardly-directed.

2.2. Structurality

Moods are characterized by a special kind of *pervasiveness* and *phenomenal diffuseness* that is displayed by no other mental state.[6] Moods imbue and impregnate one's whole state of mind, spread over the totality of one's inner life, and cling to each and all of one's thoughts and experiences. This is reflected by the "colored lenses" metaphor, often used to describe mood phenomenology: mood feels like a colored filter applied to all the mental representations one happens to have, each mood featuring a characteristic "color," where the relevant "color" is the mood's peculiar affective phenomenal feature.

This may sound impressionistic; but there is a way to unpack mood's pervasiveness and diffuseness and dissect its phenomenological components. On the one hand, moods are *undetachable* from the rest of one's experience (they are *diffused* as opposed to *discrete*). On the other hand, they attach to the *totality* of one's experience (they are *pervasive and global* as opposed to *punctate and local*). Let us consider each feature more closely.

2.2.1. Undetachability. Mental states such as perceptual experiences, emotions, and thoughts can be picked out and mentally isolated from other concurrent experiences. Take some of the mental states I am having right now: seeing a computer screen, hearing the air conditioner's hum, feeling a sore throat, thinking about the next sentence I am going to write. Each of these can be conceived as occurring independently of the others: these are conscious mental states that co-occur in a phenomenally unified way, but phenomenally manifest themselves as juxtaposed to one another, rather than "glued" and "spread" onto one another. They are, we may say, *discrete* and *isolable*. Moods, by contrast, are *diffused* and *undetachable*. The sense of generalized anxiety that has permeated my whole being throughout my afternoon is not yet another merely juxtaposed mental state. It is not mentally *detachable* from the rest of my inner life in the same way as *seeing the computer screen* or *thinking about the next sentence* are: unlike these, the mood just seems to *spread* over and *attach* to my other mental states.

The point is *not* that my anxiety can only occur jointly to screen-seeing, hum-hearing, sentence-thinking, and sore-throat-feeling: obviously, just as I can *see the screen* without hearing the hum (and hear the hum without seeing the screen), I can *feel anxious* without hearing the hum (and hear the hum without feeling anxious). The point is that while mental states such as perceptual experiences, emotions, and thoughts can be conceived as occurring independently of and in isolation from *any* other mental state, moods do not seem to be similarly isolable: while I can (relatively easily) conceive of a mind whose only experience is hearing a hum, it seems much harder to me to conceive of a mind whose only experience is anxiety. If moods phenomenologically manifest themselves by casting an affective "color" on one's conscious states, then for one to have a mood experience some *other* experience needs to be co-occurring with the mood itself—some experience needs to be there to be affectively colored by the mood. This suggests that moods' occurrence

[6] Except, in some sense, *inner awareness*. As we will see, this is indeed further motivation for construing moods as ways of inner awareness.

depends on that of *some* other experiences: moods need to "piggyback" on other experiences and are not themselves individual "self-standing" experiences.[7]

2.2.2. Globality. The occurrence of a mood does not just piggyback on the presence of *some* self-standing conscious state: it spreads on the *totality* of one's concurrent conscious states—on one's *overall experience*. To illustrate this, compare moods with metacognitive thoughts. Some metacognitive thoughts bear a constitutive connection to some first-order thought and are thereby undetachable from it. For instance, the meta-thought "I am thinking that Rome is beautiful" is undetachable from the first-order thought "Rome is beautiful": I cannot entertain the former without entertaining the latter, because entertaining the former *makes it the case* that I entertain the latter. However, although undetachable from the first-order thought that constitutes its content, the metacognitive thought *can* be detached from *all the other* conscious states its subject is concurrently having. Mood, by contrast, is undetachable from the *totality* of one's current experiences. It spreads over one's overall experience and casts on each conscious state in it an "affectively colored" light. It infuses and affects the way each concurrent experience phenomenally manifests itself to the subject, by laying on each an affective tinge.

To be clear, it is not a fact of *metaphysical necessity* that a particular mood experience is undetachable from all *those* particular experiences it happens to co-occur with (or with other tokens experiences of the same types): obviously, I can conceive of a mind who feels the same type of anxiety I feel right now but whose other concurrent experiences are *not* screen-seeing, hum-hearing, etc. Rather, the point is about the special *structure* of mood's undetachability. While the meta-thought is undetachable from only *one* particular mental state (its first-order thought),[8] a mood is undetachable from *all* the conscious states one has at the time of the mood's occurrence, whatever and however numerous they happen to be.

2.2.3. From undetachability and globality to structurality. Construing moods as higher-order representations with a generalized *content* attributing some evaluative property to one's overall experience does not suffice to do justice to moods' peculiar phenomenology of diffuse globality. For one thing, being in a mental state with generalized evaluative content is insufficient for being in a mood. This is compellingly argued for by Uriah Kriegel (2019b), who calls it "the problem of shared contents": I might think that *my overall experience* is *uninspiring* without thereby feeling depressed; or I may wish that *the totality of my conscious states* be *positively energized* without thereby feeling elated. For another, mood just does not phenomenally appear to *attribute* some evaluative property, either to my overall experience or to anything else. Depression does not seem to "say" that my overall experience is uninspiring. Rather, and more subtly, it seems to somehow cast a "darkly empty" light on my overall experience: it is the *way* I am aware of my experience that is affected by the mood, rather than *what* I am aware *of* by being aware of my experience. Construing

[7] Plausibly, mental states other than mood are isolable and detachable partly in virtue of having some specific intentional content (the screen, the hum, the throat, the sentence): I can distinguish and mentally isolate humming hearing from throat hurting partly in virtue of the fact that the former represents AC humming while the latter represents damage in my throat. Moods, on the other hand, do not have a specific intentional content by which they can be mentally isolated and detached from other mental states.

[8] And, incidentally, it *is* metaphysically necessary for the metacognitive thought that it is undetachable from *that* particular mental state.

moods as meta-representations with a generalized evaluative content is unfitting to account for this.

So, mood's *undetachability* and *global diffuseness* cannot be explained in a framework where moods have a similar structure to discrete mental states such as perceptual experiences, emotions, and thoughts. These phenomenological features, I argue, can only be vindicated by construing mood as a kind of mental phenomenon that is fundamentally different from those states. The way moods spread over and cling to one's overall state of consciousness suggests that they are more akin to *structural features* of consciousness—such as *phenomenal foreground/background*, *phenomenal unity*, or *phenomenal temporality*—which are fundamentally different from punctate mental states such as seeing a screen or feeling pain in one's throat.

Take *phenomenal unity*. Right now I have a visual experience of a computer screen, an auditory experience of AC humming, a sore throat feeling, and a thought about the next sentence I am going to write. Not only do all these experiences occur together, but they are *experienced as* occurring together in one single "field of consciousness": they are *phenomenally unified*. *All* the conscious states of a subject at any given time are unified in this way and their concomitant and unitary occurrence is *phenomenally manifest*: their being unified brings a constitutive contribution to the overall phenomenology—it contributes to *what it is like* to be a given subject at a given time (*cf.* Dainton 2000; Bayne 2010). Now, the fact that my computer-screen seeing, humming hearing, sore-throat feeling, and sentence thinking are phenomenally unified is due *not* to an extra mental state—on a par with those just mentioned. The experience of unity is not a *representation* of all my concurrent experiences *as unified*—it does not itself amount to a distinct co-occurring mental state *attributing unifiedness* to all of my experiences. Rather, phenomenal unity is a *structural feature* of consciousness: it pertains to the *way* distinct co-occurring mental states *relate* to one another and has to do with *how* I experience the totality of my experiences, rather than to *what* I experience.

Similar considerations apply to other structural features, such as *phenomenal foreground/background* and *phenomenal temporality*. When the pain in my throat comes to occupy the center of my conscious field (say, because I draw my attention to it, or because it suddenly becomes more intense), my overall phenomenology is affected, but I do not enter a *new mental state* just in virtue of the pain becoming more salient (as I do when, say, I turn my neck and come to *see books on my left*, or when the *thought that I need to buy a present for my aunt* suddenly occurs to me). Rather, my whole conscious field is *restructured* in such a way that the pain comes to the foreground while other items in my overall state of consciousness recede to the background (*cf.* Kriegel 2009; Watzl 2017); the *way* I experience all my current conscious states is affected accordingly. Similarly, we experience our experiences as temporally succeeding one another, and this experience of phenomenal temporality is not an extra mental state in the stream of consciousness, but is rather the *way* distinct experiences in the stream of consciousness relate to one another and are experienced by us (*cf.*, e.g., Dainton 2000).

In a similar fashion, *elation* does not *represent* my experience *as positively energized*: it is not a discrete mental state that attributes some positive evaluative property to my experience; rather—like phenomenal unity—it affects the *way* I experience the totality of my experiences. As it does not make sense to ask "What is the content of phenomenal unity?" it equally does not make sense to ask "What is the content of elation?"—indeed, the phenomenological observation of *apparent undirectedness* points exactly in this direction.

So, while conscious *states* are isolable and local, and have to do with *what* is experienced, structural phenomenal features are *global* and holistic, and have to do with the *way* one's experiences are experienced (as *unified*, as *foregrounded/backgrounded*, as *positively energized*, etc.). They are features of the overall state of consciousness (to which each conscious state belongs) *as a whole*. They do make a phenomenal difference, but their phenomenal manifestation does not amount to adding a new *item* (i.e., a new mental state) in the field of consciousness, but rather to changing or otherwise affecting the way the items that are already present in the field of consciousness, as a whole, are *experienced* by their subject.

Relatedly, structural features are such that they cannot be conceived in isolation from the rest of one's conscious experience—they are *undetachable*. I cannot form a positive conception of a mind whose only experience is *phenomenal unity*: to experience phenomenal unity there need to be a bunch of experiences that are *experienced as* unified. Moreover, whatever experiences one happens to have at a given time, *all* of them are phenomenally unified. As argued above, moods display a similar kind of global undetachability.

These phenomenological considerations eloquently suggest that moods should be understood as structural phenomenal features. So, they are not discrete mental states, and therefore they are not mental representations: they are not *about* anything. Accordingly, they are not *intentionally directed* (either outwardly or inwardly)—they are inwardly *oriented* but not inwardly *directed*.

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So, besides apparent undirectedness, moods display three peculiar phenomenal features, *subjective salience*, *undetachability*, and *globality*, that make them fundamentally different from mental states. Subjective salience suggests that moods are *inwardly oriented*. Undetachability and globality suggest that moods are *structural features* of consciousness. In the remainder, I argue that, to account for these phenomenal features, we should construe moods as *ways of inner awareness*.[9]

3. Inner awareness

At any time during our waking life, our mind is populated by a panoply of experiences (perceptual, algedonic, proprioceptive, affective, cognitive, conative, etc.). At the same time, there is also, according to many philosophers, a permanent *awareness* of those experiences: while we see, hear, feel, emote, think, and desire, we are at the same time also *aware of* seeing, hearing, feeling, emoting, thinking, and desiring the way we do. This awareness of our own experiences is what we call here "inner awareness." It is a kind of awareness that is not (or not necessarily) introspective, in the sense that it is a *non-attentive*, *non-conceptual*, *non-thought-like*, and *non-inferential* background awareness of the conscious states we are currently undergoing.

[9] For reasons of space and exposition, here I do not develop the "destructive" part of my motivation for a *ways-of-inner-awareness* approach to moods—here I want to make some progress on the constructive part. I have done some work on the destructive-motivational front in Giustina (forthcoming), in which I articulate some arguments against the main extant theories of moods.

The claim that each of our conscious experiences is accompanied by an inner awareness of it is of course not universally accepted.[10] Here, however, I am just going to assume it. That is, I am going to assume what I call the "Awareness Principle" (AP):[11]

AP: For any subject S and conscious mental state C of S at time *t*, S is aware of C at *t*.

AP proponents have defended stronger versions of the principle. It has been argued that inner awareness is a *necessary condition* for consciousness (AP^{+}):

AP^{+}: For any subject S and mental state C of S at *t*, C is conscious *only if* S is aware of C at *t*.

And, more strongly, that inner awareness is what *makes* a mental state conscious (AP^{++}):

AP^{++}: For any subject S and conscious mental state C of S at *t*, C is conscious *in virtue of* S's being aware of C at *t*.

The most prominent theories of consciousness that have AP^{++} at their core are *meta-representational*: S's being aware of C amounts to being in a mental state C* that suitably *represents* C. On *higher-order representationalism*, C* is distinct from C, so that inner awareness amounts to being in a higher-order representational state (Armstrong 1968; Lycan 1996; Rosenthal 1997); while on *self-representationalism*, C* is identical to C—inner awareness amounts to C representing itself (Kriegel 2009). Recently, an alternative (non-representational) reading of AP^{++} has been put forward, one on which inner awareness is *acquaintance*: being innerly aware of C consists in *being acquainted* with C (Hellie 2007; Coleman 2015; Williford 2015; Levine 2019; Giustina 2024; Horgan and Timmons, this volume). Acquaintance is understood as a relation of *direct awareness* that is fundamentally different from representation in that it entails the existence of its relata (if S is acquainted with *x*, then *x*—as well as, of course, S—exists).[12] Despite their fundamental differences, what all these theories share is the idea that inner awareness is the "consciousness maker": C is conscious only if, and in virtue of the fact that, its subject is innerly aware of it.

In the remainder, I will only assume the weakest version of the principle (i.e., AP). I will just consider in passing how the ways-of-inner-awareness approach may interact with stronger versions of the awareness principle.

4. A *ways of inner awareness* approach to moods

4.1. Ways of inner awareness: the core idea

The core idea of the *ways-of-inner-awareness* approach is based on two contrasts. First, moods involve awareness of something *inner*, rather than *outer*. Second, moods have to do with the *way* one is aware, rather than with *what* one is aware of. What we are innerly aware of are our own concurrent

[10] First-order representationalists (Dretske 1995; Tye 1995) and transparency theorists (Harman 1990) reject inner awareness. A sustained attack against inner awareness has recently been put forward by Daniel Stoljar (2023).
[11] AP was famously defended by Brentano (1874), it is a central tenet of the phenomenological tradition, and plays a fundamental role in various contemporary theories of consciousness (e.g., Rosenthal 1997; Kriegel 2009; Montague 2016). It has been motivated largely on *phenomenological* grounds. Recent *theoretical* arguments for AP can be found in Kriegel (2009, 2019a), Giustina (2022), Giustina and Kriegel (forthcoming), and Duncan (this volume).
[12] To learn more about acquaintance, see Raleigh (2019) and Duncan (2021).

experiences, and the relevant ways are *affective* ways. So, at a first approximation, the idea is that moods are *affective ways* in which one is *innerly aware* of one's own concurrent experiences.

By assuming AP, the idea is that inner awareness comes in different modalities, or in different kinds, in virtue of the occurrence of mood. By being innerly aware of our experiences we somehow *experience* our experiences: we are *phenomenally aware* of them (*cf.* Kriegel 2009, Ch. 4). Now, being in a certain mood affects the way the totality of our experiences is experienced by us in inner awareness: like a colored filter interposed between the experience and the subject's awareness of it, mood contributes with an affective tinge to the way the subject is innerly aware of the experience, so that the relevant experience is not *just* experienced but *affectively* experienced. When you feel elated, the totality of your experiences is presented to you under a peppy and joyful glow: you experience all your concurrent conscious states through a rosy and shiny light. When you feel depressed, you are aware of the totality of your experiences through a dark, meaningless, and empty light. When you feel anxious, you experience all your concurrent experiences through an affective filter of "terrifyingness." To be sure, you are not aware of your experiences *as rosy*, *as meaningless*, or *as terrifying*. That is, your inner awareness does not *attribute* rosiness, meaninglessness, or terrifyingness to your experiences. Rather, *what* you are aware of in inner awareness is (just) *experience*, and your mood determines *how* you are aware of your experience.

If, for example, we adopt a meta-representational framework for inner awareness, we may say that mood does not amount to inner awareness having an evaluative *content*, but to it having an evaluative *attitude*. So, when I am in an elated mood, it is not that my inner awareness has an evaluative content that attributes positive energizedness to my experience: the representational structure of my inner awareness does *not* amount to representing <my experience as positively energized>. Rather, my inner awareness represents-as-positively-energized <my experience>, where *my experience* is the content of the meta-representation, and representing-as-positively-energized is the moody attitude that constitutes the (affective) *way* I am innerly aware of my experience.[13] In a different framework (e.g., one on which inner awareness is *acquaintance*), the structure of inner-awareness ways will be spelled out differently (i.e., not in *representational* terms).[14] Regardless of how the view is developed into a specific theory, what is common to all ways-of-inner-awareness views is that mood has to do not with *what* one is aware of in inner awareness, but with *how* one is innerly aware.

So, the basic idea is that inner awareness may come in a "moody way," and that is what constitutes mood experience:

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[13] This form of *impure meta-representationalism* is reminiscent of Uriah Kriegel's (2019b) impure representationalism about moods, but applied "one level up." On Kriegel's theory, being in a certain mood consists in taking a certain moody attitude toward things in general, where the relevant things are things *in the world*; so, being elated amounts to representing-as-positively-energized things, where "things" is the content of the mood state and "representing-as-positively-energized" is the moody attitude. In a ways-of-inner-awareness meta-representational framework, mood consists in having a mental representation that has a similar kind of moody attitude but whose content is the subject's experience.

[14] In an acquaintance-based framework, the relevant *affective ways* cannot be construed as representational *attitudes*, since, on acquaintance theories of inner awareness, acquaintance does not have a representational structure. Different theories of the nature of inner awareness thus put constraints on how the ways-of-inner-awareness approach to moods can be developed. I do not have the space to explore these interactions here—though I do think this is a potentially fecund topic of further work.

WIA: If subject S is in mood M at time *t*, then for any conscious state C of S at *t,* S is innerly aware of C *in an M-moody way*.

By "M-moody way" I mean the affective way that is characteristic of the relevant mood. When I am elated, I am aware of each of my experiences *elatedly*; when I am depressed, I am aware of each of my experiences *depressively*; when I am anxious, I am aware of each of my experiences *anxiously*; and so on. "Elatedly," "depressively," and "anxiously" stand for the peculiar (and, arguably, ineffable, at least in the fullness of its subtlety) affective phenomenal feel that is characteristic of the relevant mood experience.

WIA is the basic formulation of the *ways of inner awareness* approach to moods: it offers a first-approximation characterization of mood experience. As it stands, it is not yet a specific *theory* of mood: several details need be specified. On the one hand, there are at least two ways to conceive of the *metaphysical structure* of moods as ways of inner awareness. On the other hand, depending on its scope and modality, the claim about the *relation between mood and inner awareness* may come in different degrees of strength. By combining these two variables with each other and with different versions of AP (AP/AP^{+}/AP^{++}; meta-representationalist vs. inner acquaintance views), we may obtain different ways-of-inner-awareness theories of moods. Here I do not have the space to explore all those combinations; I will just briefly survey some options concerning (1) the *metaphysical structure* of moods as inner-awareness ways (§4.2) and (2) the *strength* of ways-of-inner-awareness theories depending on *modality* and *scope* (§4.3).

4.2. The metaphysical structure of moody ways of inner awareness.

There are at least two ways of conceiving the metaphysical structure of moods as ways of inner awareness.

On one view, moods are inner awareness *modifiers*: they alter inner awareness by modifying it affectively. Call this the "IA-MODIFIER" view. Inner awareness, on this view, does not come in different ways *in and of itself*: there is just one kind of inner awareness. Coming in a certain affective way is a contingent modification of inner awareness, which, in and of itself, is fundamentally the same (of the same kind) at every instance: whenever S is innerly aware of a mental state M, it is one and the same kind of awareness that is instantiated; more precisely, for any two conscious mental states of S, C_1 and C_2, S's inner awareness of C_1 is of the same type as S's inner awareness of C_2. Inner awareness, however, may be *altered* by mood: possibly, S is *moodily*$_1$ innerly-aware of C_1 and *moodily*$_2$ innerly-aware of C_2. Impressionistically speaking, if inner awareness is analogous to a white light illuminating all of one's concurrent conscious states, moods are like *colored filters*, interposed between the light and those conscious states, that modify the way the light illuminates them. Inner awareness, in itself, has no affective color—it is like white light—and, at least in principle, can be instantiated independently of mood experience: S may be *just* innerly-aware of C, without being innerly-aware of C in any moody way.

On another view, moods are inner awareness *modes* or *species*. Call this the "IA-SPECIES" view. Here there is not just one kind of inner awareness, but several, each corresponding to a different mood. Inner awareness is a genus with several species and each species is defined by an affective moody color. Inner awareness always and necessarily comes in some moody way because inner

awareness as *genus* cannot occur independently of inner awareness as a determinate *species*, and inner awareness species *are* moods. Impressionistically speaking, inner awareness is a *constitutively colored* light—no colored moody filter is applied: it is moody by its nature, and not because of any modifier that affects the way it illuminates conscious states.

4.3. Strength of the relation between mood and inner awareness.

Depending on the scope and modality of the posited relationship between *moody way* and inner awareness, different versions of WIA may be distinguished.

First, the thesis may be either *existential* or *universal*. The *existential ways-of-inner-awareness* thesis (EWIA) is that, at least *sometimes*, inner awareness comes in a moody way:

EWIA: For *some* subject S and conscious state C of S, S is innerly aware of C in some moody way M.

The idea is that sometimes inner awareness is affectively (moodily) modified and, when it is, the subject is in a certain mood (each mood corresponding to a distinct affective modification). EWIA is not weaker than WIA, which is only about what happens *if* S is in some mood, without commenting on how often, so to speak, we are in a mood.

The *universal ways-of-inner-awareness* thesis (UWIA) is that inner awareness *always* comes in some moody way:

UWIA: For *any* subject S and conscious state C of S at *t,* S is innerly aware of C in some moody way M.

This thesis entails that a conscious subject is always in some mood or other. This may sound prima facie implausible to some readers. However, first, mood phenomenology may be very subtle and elusive. Indeed, moods seldom occupy the focus of our attention and typically lie at the fringe of our conscious field. Therefore, if one is in a particularly low-intensity mood, or the mood lies particularly far into the periphery of one's consciousness, one may fail to notice it and thus fail to realize *that* one is in a certain mood. Secondly, beside moods with a pronounced (and/or pronouncedly valenced) affective character, there may be blander (and/or more blandly valenced) moods, whose affective phenomenology is mild and flat. The blandest mood may be called the "neutral mood": a mood experience with neither negative nor positive valence and with dull phenomenal character. So, to those who find intuitively implausible that we are always in some mood or other, a UWIA defender might suggest that when it seems that we are in no mood, we really are in the neutral mood.[15]

Secondly, the relation between mood and inner awareness (i.e., inner awareness coming in a *moody way*) may be *metaphysically contingent* or *metaphysically necessary*. Both EWIA and UWIA may get either modal specification (the two distinctions are cross-cutting). The necessity specification of EWIA, though, is not very plausible: at least prima facie, there does not seem to be any reason for thinking that there is something peculiar about the cases in which inner awareness comes in a

[15] All this is, of course, controversial and would need much more thorough defense. Here I am just hinting at a possible line of argument.

moody way that makes it do so *necessarily*. By contrast, both specifications may be plausible of UWIA.[16] The strongest version of the ways-of-inner-awareness thesis—the *necessity ways-of-inner-awareness* thesis (NWIA)—combines UWIA with a necessity claim about the relation between mood and inner awareness. The result is that, necessarily, inner awareness comes in a moody way:

NWIA: *Necessarily*, for any subject S and conscious state C of S at *t,* S is innerly aware of C in some moody way M.

This thesis implies a very strong connection between mood and consciousness. It entails not only that a conscious subject is *always* in some mood or other, but that this is *necessarily* so: it is impossible for one to be conscious and not to be in some mood.

4.4. Interactions

By combining different options depending on the two variables mentioned in §§4.2-4.3, different ways-of-inner-awareness theories may be articulated. Not all combinations are internally consistent, though, and some combinations are more plausible than others.

For example, IA-SPECIES implies the strongest ways-of-inner-awareness thesis (i.e., NWIA): if inner awareness is *constitutively* moody, then, a fortiori, it is *necessarily* so. On the other hand, although NWIA is best coupled with IA-SPECIES (plausibly, inner awareness is moody *necessarily* because it is so *constitutively*), it does not imply it—it is compatible with IA-MODIFIER: possibly, even though moods are extrinsic inner awareness modifiers, it is a necessary fact that inner awareness comes in a moody way (either in virtue of a brute fact, or in virtue of more fundamental underlying facts). This is not inconsistent but, arguably, it is less plausible and less explanatorily powerful.

At any rate, NWIA is the only ways-of-inner-awareness thesis that is compatible with IA-SPECIES. IA-MODIFIER, by contrast, can be coupled with any scope/modality-defined version of the thesis. As noted, the combination of IA-MODIFIER and the *necessity* thesis (NWIA) is possible but poorly motivated.

A last combination that is particularly interesting is between UWIA/NWIA and AP^{++}. If (*a*) inner awareness is what *makes* a mental state conscious (as per AP^{++}) and (*b*) whenever one is innerly aware of a mental state C, one is innerly aware of it *in some moody way* M (as per UWIA), then what makes a mental state conscious is always affectively modified by mood: mood permeates the very constitution of consciousness. Even more strongly, if both AP^{++} and NWIA are true, then, *necessarily*, what makes a mental state conscious comes in a moody way: mood does not just *permeate* the constitution of consciousness, but is *part* of its very nature: it is (a constituent of) that in virtue of which a mental state is conscious—mood is *consciousness-maker*. This thesis may certainly sound prima facie extreme (and it may indeed be ultima facie *too* extreme to be plausible). I do not

[16] For completeness' sake, we should also consider other kinds of modality, in particular *nomological/psychological* modality. In principle, UWIA is, in itself, a nomologically contingent claim: inner awareness always comes in a moody way but this is not entailed by the laws that govern our psychology. However, arguably, nomologically-contingent UWIA is implausible and unmotivated. Plausibly, if UWIA is true, it is true because the laws of psychology are such that, given our cognitive architecture, inner awareness always comes in some moody way. For this reason, I am going to assume a nomologically/psychologically necessary reading of UWIA and contrast this with the modally stronger claim that it is *metaphysically* necessary that inner awareness comes in some moody way.

intend to defend (or even recommend) it here. But it is interesting to highlight its potentially significant consequence. The combination of AP^{++} and NWIA strongly vindicates the special and unique significance of moods in our experiential life, by putting mood at the core of the very making of conscious experience, while, at the same time, doing justice to mood's phenomenological peculiarities.

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All this is very sketchy and far from giving an exhaustive idea of the possible ways in which the ways-of-inner-awareness approach could be developed. Yet, hopefully, the foregoing can offer a taste of the potential interest and fecundity of the approach.

5. Why ways of inner awareness

As we have seen in §2, a theory of moods must accommodate and explain not only mood's *apparent undirectedness*, but also (at least) three other features that fundamentally demarcate moods from other experiences: *subjective salience*, *undetachability*, and *globality*. As noted, to account for subjective salience, we need to construe moods as *inwardly oriented*; to account for undetachability and globality, we need to construe moods as *structural phenomenal features*. A *ways-of-inner-awareness* construal of moods, I argue, is ideally suited to this.

5.1. Ways of inner awareness and inward-orientedness

As noted in §2.1, moods display a peculiar salience of the subjective aspect of experience: they pertain to the overall inner state of the subject. This suggests that moods are somehow *inwardly oriented*: they pertain to one's inner *experiences*, rather than to what those experiences are *about*. Now, inner awareness is *by its nature* inwardly-oriented: it is awareness *of one's concurrent experiences*. If moods are *ways of inner awareness*, their inward-orientedness is naturally explained by that of inner awareness. The precise explanation depends on the metaphysical details of the theory.

If moods are *kinds* of inner awareness, as per IA-SPECIES, then they *are* inwardly oriented. On IA-SPECIES, each mood is a distinct type of inner awareness; thus, strictly speaking, mood *is* inner awareness. As noted, inner awareness is inwardly oriented: it is directed toward one's concurrent experience. So, on IA-SPECIES, the inward orientedness of mood *is* the inward orientedness of inner awareness: moods feel inwardly oriented because they are, by their nature (i.e., by being types of inner awareness), directed toward one's experiences.

If, by contrast, moods are extrinsic *modifications* of inner awareness, as per IA-MODIFIER, then moods are not *themselves* inwardly directed. Still, plausibly, by being modifications of inner awareness, they somehow "inherit" the latter's phenomenal feel of inward orientation, by contributing to, or being constituents of, something that is inwardly directed. By being a modifier of awareness of experiences, mood affects the way one experiences *one's experiences*, rather than the way one experiences the external world, and this is reflected by the salience of the subjective experiential aspect that is characteristic of mood phenomenology.

In §2.1 we also saw that, while (similarly to emotions) mood's affective phenomenology seems to reflect some evaluative appraisal that is constitutive of it, (unlike emotions) the mood itself does

not *attribute* any evaluative property to worldly things the subject is aware of. Nor does it attribute any "actively affecting" evaluative property (e.g., positively energiz*ing*, uninspir*ing*, etc.) to the subject. Rather, the mood's evaluative appraisal captures the way the subject's overall state of consciousness is (passively) affected (positively energiz*ed*, uninspir*ed*, etc.). Moreover, it does so without articulating *by what* it is so affected. This is also nicely explained by the ways-of-inner-awareness approach. Whether they are *species* or *modifications* of inner awareness, moods are not mental states with evaluative content, so they do not *attribute* any evaluative property either to the world or to the subject. Rather, it is the way one is aware of one's mental states that encodes the evaluative appraisal that is reflected by mood's affective phenomenology. We may say (admittedly very schematically, as it is often the case when we try to squeeze into words the hardly effable subtleties of phenomenology) that elation *presents-as-positively-energized* my overall state of consciousness (rather than presenting <my overall conscious state as positively energized>), and this accounts for its characteristic affective phenomenal "pleasant peppy liveliness" that spreads over the totality of my experiences.

5.2. Ways of inner awareness and structurality

In §2.2., we saw that moods are *undetachable* and *global*, and that these features suggest that moods are structural phenomenal features, rather than discrete mental states. The ways-of-inner-awareness approach accounts for those features, and it does so by construing moods as structural.

First, inner awareness is not an extra conscious mental state, on a par with other conscious states such as *seeing a computer screen* or *thinking about the next sentence*, merely juxtaposed to those conscious states, and mentally detachable from them.[17] All versions of AP (the Awareness Principle) imply that inner awareness "spreads" over all one's concurrent experiences and cannot be detached or isolated from them. For inner awareness is awareness *of* experience, in a way that cannot be mistargeting—inner awareness is factive: if S is innerly aware of C, then C is currently occurring, and S could not be so innerly aware in the absence of C. If moods are ways of inner awareness, they spread over all one's concurrent experiences together with inner awareness itself, and the fact that mood cannot be detached from the overall experience is a direct consequence of the fact that inner awareness cannot be detached from the overall experience.

Secondly, like the kind of undetachability that characterizes mood, and unlike the one that characterizes some metacognitive thoughts, inner awareness' undetachability is *diffused* and *global*. As noted in §2.2, although undetachable from the first-order thought that constitutes its content, a meta-thought can be detached from the rest of the conscious states the subject is concurrently having. By contrast, inner awareness (like mood) is undetachable from the *totality* of one's current experiences, at least on the most plausible way of construing it. For there are two relevant possible

[17] Some philosophers (e.g., Gupta 1998; Albahari 2009; Ramm 2023) defend the idea that (a kind of) inner awareness has a proprietary phenomenology that is thicker than the mere subjective character of experience: a kind of qualitative phenomenology on a par with, say, visual phenomenology or cognitive phenomenology, that is hardly detachable in ordinary life, but that in states of deep meditation can occur in isolation from any other mental state. Albahari calls this "witness consciousness," Ramm calls this "pure awareness." However, first, the existence of this kind of awareness is controversial. Second, and more relevantly, if such a pure awareness exists, it may be distinct from what here we call "inner awareness."

readings of AP. On what we may call the "atomistic" reading, a subject bears a distinct inner awareness relation to each of their concurrent conscious states:

AP$_A$: For any subject S and conscious state C of S at *t*, S bears a relation of inner awareness R to C at *t*, and for any conscious state C* of S at *t*, if C ≠ C*, then S bears a relation of inner awareness R* to C* at *t* and R ≠ R*.

This is certainly a coherent view; however, arguably, it is psychologically not very plausible, for it implies an unnecessary multiplication of inner awareness relations that puts an unrealistically heavy cognitive burden on the subject. More plausible is a "holistic" reading of AP, on which S bears just *one* relation of inner awareness to their *overall experience*—where the overall experience is constituted by the total sum of S's concurrent conscious states—and S is aware of each conscious state in virtue of it being part of the overall experience:

AP$_H$: For any subject S, if S is conscious at *t*, then S has an overall experience E at *t*, such that (i) E is the total sum of S's concurrent conscious states (C_1, C_2, … C_n) at *t*, (ii) S bears a relation of inner awareness R to E at *t*, and (iii) S is innerly aware of each of (C_1, C_2, … C_n) at *t* in virtue of bearing R to E at *t*.

The distinction between the atomistic and the holistic reading of AP is often ignored by contemporary AP defenders, with a few exceptions. Notably, Uriah Kriegel (2009: 179-80) explicitly draws a similar distinction, and offers some preliminary reasons in favor of (something akin to what I call here) the holistic reading.[18] The holistic reading seems indeed psychologically and phenomenologically more plausible than the atomistic reading.

So, by assuming the holistic reading of AP, it is clear that inner awareness is undetachable from the overall experience. If moods are ways of inner awareness, they inherit such a holistic undetachability.

Moreover, inner awareness being a holistic and undetachable phenomenal feature suggests that it is a *structural* aspect of consciousness—rather than an extra experiential *item* alongside other conscious states. By being ways of inner awareness, moods are themselves structural phenomenal features (as recommended by the phenomenological considerations in §2.2).

Incidentally, being inwardly oriented and being a structural phenomenal feature also explain mood's *apparent undirectedness*. First, the main reason why moods phenomenally appear undirected is that they do not phenomenally appear directed at some *specific worldly (outer) object*; if moods are *inwardly* (rather than outwardly) oriented, then, plausibly, they do not appear directed toward some outer object. Moreover, if moods are *modifications* of inner awareness, as per IA-MODIFIER, they just are not the kind of thing that can have a direction: although modifications are *of* something, they are not *directed at* anything. Second, on a holistic reading of AP, if moods are ways of inner awareness, they are oriented toward one's *overall experience*, rather than to some *specific* mental state; this explains the peculiar phenomenal diffuseness that contributes to motivating the intuition of apparent undirectedness—and that some extant representationalist theories of mood have tried to account for in terms of generalized content. Finally, if moods are undetachable structural phenomenal features, they are just not the *kind of mental phenomenon* that can be directed at some

[18] Kriegel actually explores further options, that I do not have the space to review here. The holistic reading is also adopted by Williford (2015). I have offered some preliminary motivation for the holistic reading in Giustina (2024).

specific object. A detachable intentional conscious state such as *seeing a computer screen* is (at least phenomenally) directed at a particular object (the screen). Structural phenomenal features, by contrast, are not phenomenally directed at any particular object: phenomenal unity, phenomenal temporality, and phenomenal foreground/background are just not the kind of mental feature that can be directed at something.

The following worry may be raised about the ways-of-inner-awareness approach.[19] Inner awareness is typically *peripheral*: it lies at the background of consciousness. What is typically in the foreground are the *contents* of experience: *what* we are (outwardly) aware of in experience occupies center stage and is phenomenologically prominent. When we introspect, the *experiences* themselves—what we are innerly aware *of*—may come to the foreground. But *inner awareness itself* does not seem to be the kind of mental phenomenon that can get foregrounded: we do not seem to be able to be *focally* aware of *inner awareness* itself. Moods, however, *can* be phenomenally prominent and occupy center stage in our consciousness. But—the objection goes—how can this be if moods are ways of inner awareness? If inner awareness cannot be foregrounded, how can its *ways* be?

There is no satisfactory short answer to this worry, and a complete ways-of-inner-awareness theory will have to address it. Here I can only offer the sketch of an answer. By being ways of inner awareness, moods are affective ways our experiences are phenomenally manifest to us. When our attention is focused on what we experience, the experiences themselves lie at the background of consciousness, and with them their affective way of being phenomenally present to us—our mood. When the experiences themselves come to the foreground, their way of being phenomenally present is foregrounded too: the experience and its way of appearing are obviously inseparable and get backgrounded or foregrounded together. So, a mood can become prominent by turning our attention *inward*, toward our inner experiences, that is, toward the affective way our experiences are phenomenally present to us.

To make this more vivid, consider again the colored light metaphor. There is a drawing of a dog on the wall, lit by a red light. You may attend to what the drawing represents—the dog; the dog gets foregrounded in your awareness while both the drawing itself and the way it is presented to you—under a red light—are less prominent. But if you shift your attention to the drawing, not only the drawing itself becomes prominent, but also its colored way of appearing—red. To become focally aware of the colored way the drawing appears to you, you do not need to turn your attention to the colored light that illuminates it: you just have to turn your attention to the drawing. Similarly, to become focally aware of the affective way your experience is phenomenally manifest to you, you do not need to turn your attention to your inner awareness of it (inner awareness need not be foregrounded): you just have to turn your attention to the experience.

6. Conclusion

The ways-of-inner-awareness view is an as yet unexplored approach to the nature of mood experience. And yet, it seems substantially superior to extant accounts of moods. By construing moods as (i) inwardly directed and (ii) structural phenomenal features, it does justice to three

[19] I owe this objection to Davide Bordini.

peculiar phenomenal aspects of mood experiences that have been overlooked so far: *subjective salience*, *undetachability*, and *globality*. The ways-of-inner-awareness view is a general framework that recommends a new way of thinking philosophically about moods. Several details need to be spelled out to articulate a specific *theory* in that framework. In this paper, I have only scratched the surface of such a project. This, I hope, is a first step in paving the way to a fuller exploration of the ways-of-inner-awareness approach and the articulation of a theory that is as close as possible to the heart of mood experience's phenomenology and nature.[20]

[20] For extensive comments on a previous draft, and for long and thorough conversations on this paper's topic, I am very grateful to Uriah Kriegel. I am also very grateful to Davide Bordini for his generous comments on a previous draft.

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