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Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality. BY MATTHEW RATCLIFFE. (Oxford UP, 2008. Pp. ix + 309. Price £35.00.)

This is an extremely interesting book, relevant to a wide variety of philosophical concerns. I think also that most philosophers will find many passages they disagree with or disapprove of. I take this to be a good sign, though I am one such. Ratcliffe's core idea is that moods, although for reasons I which discuss below he prefers to call them 'feelings', are profound and pervasive things. One way of getting at the concept of a mood is to take an emotion with a propositional content, such as fear that a particular spider may attack one now, and replace the proposition with a very general one, to get the mood of apprehension that something bad will happen to one at some moment. Similarly, joy at some event generalizes to the mood of joyfulness – it is as if something fine is in the offing – and sadness about some failure or mishap generalizes to a depressed attitude, that it is as if nothing is worth doing ever. The very general object of the mood is like an attitude to the world as a whole, though saying this can be taken as just an evocative metaphor. Ratcliffe suggests that everyone has such an attitude to their world, that it can vary from person to person as well as from time to time, and that it captures a lot about what it is like for people to be the people they are. Psychiatric conditions will often result in a pervasive mood that is not just a symptom or by-product of the condition, but in fact gives something essential about it. This is certainly a very plausible thing to say about depression.

These states are attitudes to the world as a whole, but they are not directed at The World as a particular thing. They are directed at existence as a feature of everything. In a way, it is as if we treat the reality of a thing, person or event as an attribute of it, and then have an attitude to this attribute – such as the feelings that everything is an illusion, or that what one experiences is not really happening, or that one's encounter with another is for once real. Ratcliffe here naturally draws on existential philosophers, particularly Jaspers and Heidegger. He takes Heidegger to have given an evocative account of some of the most pervasive existential feelings and their relations to one another, and Jaspers to have made the connection with abnormal or unusual psychological states. I am not competent to say how well he has interpreted the writings of these philosophers. My guess is that phenomenological-existential philosophers will both welcome and resent Ratcliffe's discussion. On the one hand they will welcome Ratcliffe's making explicit connections that are intrinsic to the appeal of their topic. On the other hand they will fear that he is watering down the ontological content of these philosophies, making them more expressions of the states that human bodies happen to have than accounts of what it actually is to be a person in the world. His reply would be that his analysis of feelings links them to basic bodily ways of interacting with the world.

It is important to Ratcliffe to be able to describe what it is to be in such a pervasive state, and to describe the experience of being in one, in a way which both connects them with emotions, beliefs and other states, and distinguishes them from these. To do this he adapts the James–Lange theory of the experience of an

emotion, understanding the experience of a state in terms of sensations of one's body which result from being in the state. Ratcliffe interprets, defends and extends the James–Lange account in general, and argues that it fits the states that he is interested in particularly well. He is especially interested in ways in which an experience can be at once of the world and of one's body. As a result, he takes existential feelings to be centred on one's own body and its interaction with the world, and he gives in these terms evocative accounts of transient feelings of unreality and of pervasively different psychopathological states.

The details of these accounts will appeal to some more than others. Those who doubt that Husserlian phenomenology is a good tool for studying what it is like to be a person in a situation will be sceptical about many of the arguments and descriptions, and those who doubt that the felt aspect of a state tells one much about its causal nature will have a related set of worries. It is worth debating these issues more carefully than I can do in a short review. It does seem, though, that Ratcliffe is onto something. People at different times react to the world as if it were as a whole threatening or benign or funny; they see social life in terms dominated by love or loyalty or competition. These are affected by one's psychological state and one's culture. There are useful things to say here about religious experience, social life, and being stoned. These are all topics which innocent people expect philosophers to discuss, and are usually disappointed. Perhaps Ratcliffe is pointing to a way of giving them the analyses they deserve.

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