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Moods in Layers

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Abstract The goal of this paper is to examine moods, mostly in comparison to emotions. Nearly all of the features that allegedly distinguish moods from emotions are disputed though. In a first section I comment on duration, intentionality, and cause in more detail, and develop intentionality as the most promising distinguishing characteristic. In a second section I will consider the huge variety of moods, ranging from shallow environmentally triggered transient moods to deep existential moods that last much longer. I will explore what their sources are, and how they impact one another, other affective processes, and our being in the world. I follow several eminent emotion researchers and try to carve out their insights, many seemingly mutually excluding each other. As it will turn out, most of them are, in fact, not excluding each other, but contribute to a layered picture of moods that fits well in between emotions and personality traits. Eventually, I will shortly discuss what we can do with our moods.

Keywords Emotion · Existential feeling · Intentionality · Mood

Ronald de Sousa once claimed, "emotions seem to overstep a threshold of messiness beyond which even the most masochistic of theoreticians tend to lose heart" (1994, 270). Moods differ from emotions, among other things, in being a bigger challenge for theoreticians—they are more diffuse and less fitting for experimental research. Anyhow.

It is the goal of this paper to examine moods, often in comparison to emotions. I will consider their huge variety, ranging from shallow environmentally triggered transient moods to deep existential moods that last much longer; and I will explore what their sources are, and how they impact one another, other affective processes, our behavior and being in the world.

I do not think it helpful to start with definitions. As the debate over the last three or four decades shows, no definition offered is in the end successful. Nor do I think old-fashioned armchair philosophy that studies our language of mood expressions will

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help. I follow several eminent emotion researchers and try to collect the gems and insights they have, many seemingly mutually excluding each other. As it will turn out, most of them are not excluding each other, but contribute to a layered picture of moods that fits well in between emotions and personality traits.

1 Moods, Emotions and their Characteristics

Emotion researchers have listed several features that allegedly distinguish moods from emotions. Nearly all of them are disputed though. I comment in the following on duration, intentionality, and cause in more detail.

1.1 Duration

When we study the work of some of the most influential emotion researchers in psychology, we may come to think that—compared to moods and other affective phenomena—emotions are a very short business. Take, for example, passages from Klaus Scherer and Paul Ekman, respectively. Put together in a collage, Scherer says:

> In the framework of the component process model, emotion is defined as an *episode of interrelated, synchronized changes in the states of all or most of the five organismic subsystems in response to the evaluation of an external or internal stimulus event as relevant to major concerns of the organism* […] (Scherer 2005, 697). In other words, it is suggested to use the term 'emotion' only for those periods of time during which many organismic subsystems are coupled or synchronized to produce an adaptive reaction to an event that is considered as central to the individual's well-being (Scherer 2001, 93). […T]heir duration must be relatively short in order not to tax the resources of the organism and to allow behavioral flexibility. (Scherer 2005, 702)

In Ekman we read:

> When we are in the grip of an emotion, a cascade of changes occurs in split seconds, without our choice or immediate awareness, in: the emotional signals in the face and voice; preset actions; learned actions; the autonomic nervous system activity that regulates our body; the regulatory patterns that continuously modify our behavior; the retrieval of relevant memories and expectations; and how we interpret what is happening within us and in the world. (Ekman 2003, 65)

No doubt, moods differ considerably from emotions as characterized by Ekman and Scherer; moods may last over hours, days, or even weeks and they show little if any response synchronization. Thus, it may come with no surprise that in a study among academics and non-academics performed by Beedie, Terry & Lane, *duration* turned out as the most salient feature to distinguish moods from emotions; it was cited by 40% of non-academics and 62% of authors in the psychology literature: "The most representative non-academic response was probably that 'An emotion is experienced for an instant, a mood can last for ages'" (Beedie et al. 2005, 864). According to the authors,

this opinion is consistent with the academic literature where most authorities share the view that moods endure much longer than emotions. Note, however, that among academics the rating rests mainly on the 'short-term-emotional-episode perspective' taken by many, though not all, psychologists. Almost exclusively Beedy and his colleagues referred to the psychological literature.[1] It is, however, an open issue whether all emotions are as short-lived as Scherer, Ekman and many other psychologists claim them to be, so it is an open issue whether moods last longer than emotions, *tout court*. In contrast, we do not know of moods that last only for a few seconds. The restrictive psychological understanding of emotions as short-lived episodes has furthered to put aside existentially important longer lasting affective phenomena such as jealousy, guilt, shame and grief that should also be considered and characterized as emotions, but seem to fall through the cracks of lab-observable affective entities.

Particularly philosophers are often attracted by emotions that unfold in much longer time frames than a few seconds. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein accordingly asked why the sentence "For a second he felt deep grief" does sound so odd to us (1958, part II, i). Peter Goldie provided a vignette of jealousy that comprises at least two days of deep emotional involvement (Goldie 2000, 14), and Robert Solomon explicitly confronted the short-term-emotional-episode perspective with an alternative interest in emotions:

> […A]n emotion is sometimes presented as if it is more or less over and done with in 120 milliseconds, the rest being mere aftermath and cerebral embellishment […]. An emotion, so understood, is a brief, preconscious, precognitive, more or less automatic excitation of an affect program. […] I am more interested in substantial processes that last a long time—lifelong love, for instance. I am interested, in other words, not in those brief 'irruptive' reactions or responses but in the long-term narratives of Othello, Iago, Lily Bart, and those of my less drama-ridden but nevertheless very emotional friends. I am interested in the meanings of life, not short-term neurological arousal. (Solomon 2004, 78–79)

Sure enough, some—*enduring*—emotions go with us through years, if not a whole life, and they are not only remembered but are manifested again and again, in one way or other. Often, they are responses to events that go beyond our capacities of successful emotion regulation. Arvid Kappas (2014) once asked, "How long does an emotion last?" and gave the answer: "Until it is regulated". For some people, the loss of a child may never be overcome such that deep grief becomes a continuous concomitant of their lives. Others may never get over something severely wrong they did and accuse themselves for it—experiencing feelings of guilt again and again, and still others are traumatized by abuse, rape or torture: incidents that were so strong and devastating that they continue to harm the subjects for ever. Only hard psychotherapeutic work might sometimes help to regulate their disordered affective life.

Other, less severe, emotions may last for a while, say hours or days, to be then settled more or less. They also can go through a sequence of modifications in both their

[1] Of almost sixty authors only four are philosophers, the others are from various fields of psychology and psychiatry.

intensity and in type, come in patterns, or as mixed feelings. Most of them fade after a while. Even exaggerated jealousy comes to an end, when a new partner is found, sadness about a missed chance disappears, when looking forward to the next challenge, pronounced anger decreases after the moment for appropriate response has come. These emotions are extended in time, though not enduring for years or a whole life.

Nico Frijda, who discusses the latter phenomena in several of his publications, suggests to calling them "emotion episodes".[2] Note, however, that these—*extended*—emotion episodes, as well as the long-lasting *enduring* emotions, do not have the characteristics of short-term emotional episodes introduced above. They allow for gaps in the synchronization of emotional subsystems and are not an affair of split seconds. For sure, Frijda knew of extended emotion episodes from his own life, but he found and discussed them also in studies where his research group asked people to report about recent emotional incidents. 50% of these events were described as having lasted for longer than one hour, and 22% for longer than 24 h (Frijda et al. 1991), so more or less extended duration appears to be the rule in the reports of emotional incidents rather than the exception. Frijda comments:

> Although the incidents were reported as exemplars of a given emotion (say, anger, fear, or joy), they were described as sequences in which one emotion followed another: annoyance followed by anger, followed by disgust, followed by upset and indignation, for instance, or the various emotions may have been present at the same time. […] *At the same time, the successive phases are not felt as independent; nor is the actual state of readiness.* […] *Subjects report the episodes as wholes, as unbroken engagements with the emotion-arousing event.* During the episodes, more acute phases and less acute phases succeed one another. During acute phases, motor readiness, physiological arousal, expressive activity, and interference with other activities are pronounced; during less acute phases, feelings and thoughts are present either as foreground or as background for other activities. (Frijda 1994, 62-63; my italics).

Although the reported affective phenomena have a time scale that obviously sets them apart from short-lived emotions as introduced above, Frijda is explicit about their status of being instantiations of the *emotion* type and not of the *mood* type: "they clearly do not represent moods, as evidenced by the fact that there is an object of focus" (Frijda 1994, 62). So, rather than duration, it is *intentionality* (or the type of intentionality) that marks the difference between moods and emotions.[3]

1.2 Intentionality

It is disputed, though, in what sense intentionality is a distinguishing feature between emotions and moods. There is wide agreement among philosophers and psychologists

[2] Bear in mind the ambiguities of the terms "emotion" and "emotion episode", though. Scherer and Ekman identify emotions with emotion episodes that last only for seconds, Frijda, in contrast, refers to emotion episodes as longer lasting processes that comprise sequences of emotions (of the Scherer-Ekman type).

[3] Though duration is not the mark to distinguish between emotions and moods, in general, it can be one of the criteria for distinguishing quality-related exemplars of the two. Thus, being in an irascible mood typically lasts longer than responding angrily or annoyingly in a given situation.

that both long-lasting and short-lived emotions (or emotional episodes) are directed at *particular* events, situations, persons and objects in a twofold way: Whenever manifested, they present us our specific encounters with others (or other things) as being *appraised* in a certain way (e.g., as dangerous, offensive, disgusting, sad, or joyful), and simultaneously they provide us with a corresponding *readiness to act* in particular ways (e.g., to flee, attack, avoid, mourn, or approach). Thus, emotions are mental processes that combine, as Andrea Scarantino stated, "descriptive an imperative roles into a unified whole" (Scarantino 2014, 177). In their intentionality, or so I claim, emotions have both a mind-to-world direction of fit—they present how things are or seem to be—and a world-to-mind direction of fit—they present how things should be and, hence, motivate to act.[4] In case emotionally motivated actions succeed, emotions often are regulated, that is, they fade or give way to corresponding follow up emotions (e.g., after successfully escaping a dangerous situation, fear gives way to relief).[5]

Moreover, in their appraisals emotionally affected persons do not merely relate to the world but always also to themselves:[6] While afraid, for example, we appraise something as a threat (the feature of world relatedness) and at the same time we feel threatened, that is to say, we are aware of being vulnerable in a certain way (the feature of self-relatedness). Feeling grief and despair about the loss of a beloved one (world relatedness) goes hand in hand with the painful feeling of loneliness and deprivation (self-relatedness). Each emotional feeling, thus, comprises feeling oneself (in relation) towards something, where the two poles of *feeling oneself* and *feeling towards* are inextricably bound together. The descriptive role of emotions comprises both world relatedness and self-relatedness.

There is also wide agreement among psychologists and philosophers that, in contrast to emotions, moods do not present *particular* worldly events, situations, persons and objects. If moods have any descriptive role at all, it is not about specific encounters we have with the world; and if moods have any imperative role at all, it is neither with a focus on specific situations. Even if one knows "that one's bad mood has been precipitated by a slight one received during the day", as Frijda stated, "this does not preclude one's feeling irritable or depressed 'in general,' and doubtful about one's merits in ways that have nothing to do with the received slight" (Frijda 1994, 60). Opinions differ, however, on whether moods have intentionality at all, and if so, in what sense. Among philosophers and psychologists, three positions are prominent: the view that moods are nonintentional states; the view that they are intentional states, though not relating to particular entities; and the view that they are pre-intentional states.

[4] Whether emotions have both directions of fit is controversial, though. While some claim emotions have no direction of fit at all (e.g., Searle 1994, 382) others admit, at best, a mind-to-world direction of fit (e.g. Döring 2007, 384).

[5] There are exceptions, though. The success of emotionally motivated actions does not necessarily mean that emotions are regulated and that they fade away. In love, for example, it is often the opposite. Successful actions do not imply that love fades—on the contrary, they enhance love. (I owe this observation to an anonymous referee.)

[6] For more details, see Slaby and Stephan 2008. Though, when discussing fear, Heidegger (1927, § 30) distinguished between what we are afraid of (das *Wovor der Furcht*), being in an attitude of fear (das *Fürchten*), and who we are afraid for (das *Worum der Furcht*). —Referring to Heidegger here, and in Footnote 12, has nothing to do with his antisemitism, especially the view that is manifested in the *Schwarze Hefte*.

According to the first position, moods have no intentionality at all. This idea is credited to Franz Brentano by some authors who themselves regard moods as nonintentional states, for example Frijda (1994, 60) and Bollnow: "Moods […] are conditions, colorings of the whole human Being, in which the Self directly becomes aware of herself in a specific way, but they do not refer to anything beyond themselves" ([3]1956; 1995, 34–35).[7] Although Brentano clearly stressed that emotions have intentionality—in love somebody is loved, in hatred somebody is hated (Brentano 1874; 1973, 125; cf. also 126)—he did not explicitly comment on moods. Thus, we better leave it open whether he would have preferred to categorize moods as nonintentional physical phenomena, rather than to attribute an inner object to them, say, how we experience ourselves overall.

The second position acknowledges that moods have genuine intentionality, though in a different way than emotions. Instead of relating to some specific event, person or object, moods are supposed to relate to anything, or to the world as a whole. Lazarus, for example, claims that moods are "products of appraisals of the *existential background* of our lives. This background has to do with who we are, now and in the long run, and how we are doing in life overall" (Lazarus 1994, 84; his emphasis). And Robert Solomon characterizes moods as *generalized emotions*: "an emotion focuses its attention on more-or-less particular objects and situations, whereas a mood enlarges its grasp to attend to the world as a whole, typically without focusing on any particular situation" (Solomon 1976, 133). The claims of Lazarus and Solomon are also in accordance with the findings of Beedy et al.;[8] they state:

> Non-academic responses included 'Emotion is usually aimed at something such as love/hate for a particular person, whereas mood is simply a general background state of mind, which is not wholly rationally explained and it is not aimed at anything in particular' and 'Moods are general, background feeling states, with no specific cause or direction. Emotions have a specific cause and are directed at a specific object'. These responses are consistent with the literature, where it has been proposed that emotions are always about, or directed at, something (i.e., they are intentional) whilst moods may not be. (Beedie et al. 2005, 867)

There is, however, an important difference between Lazarus and Solomon. While Lazarus emphasizes that the descriptive role of moods is about general affaires—how we are doing in life overall—Solomon seems to comment on the role moods play in our encounters with the world: "Euphoria, melancholy, and depression are not about anything in particular (though some particular incident might well set them off); they are about the whole of our world, casting happy glows or somber shadows on every object and incident of our experience" (Solomon 1976, 173).

[7] The original text reads: "Die Stimmungen [...] sind Zuständlichkeiten, Färbungen des gesamten menschlichen Daseins, in denen das Ich seiner selbst in einer bestimmten Weise unmittelbar inne wird, die aber nicht auf etwas außer ihnen Liegendes hinausverweisen."

[8] According to Beedy et al. "intentionality" ranks at the third place as a distinguishing feature between moods and emotions (though second among academics): "13% of respondents cited the object-relatedness of emotion compared to the lack of relatedness of mood. This compares with 41% of contributors to the psychology literature" (Beedie et al. 2005, 867; see also ib., 864). Another distinguishing feature firms under the heading "cause"; I discuss it in the next section.

The third position, mainly developed by Matthew Ratcliffe, shares with the first one the view that moods are not intentional states. However, in lieu of claiming that they are nonintentional states, Ratcliffe takes at least some moods to be pre-intentional states. They contribute to the background structure that makes the object-relatedness of emotions possible in the first place. Referring to Solomon, he says, "[n]ot all moods are generalized emotions. Some may indeed take this form but those that are responsible for the 'meaning of life' are not intentional states at all. Instead, they are part of the background structure of intentionality and are presupposed by the possibility of intentionally directed emotions" (Ratcliffe 2010, 350). In extreme cases, as observed again and again in severe psychiatric disorders, the world appears entirely unreal and bereft of any significance to the suffering persons (for major depression, see Jacobs et al. 2014, 95–100). For those who are in such moods, the structure in which particular events gain significance is lost, or as Ratcliffe states, "*worrying* about whether a project will succeed and *hoping* that it will succeed would not be possible"; they are "unintelligible without a presupposed set of mood-constituted concerns" (Ratcliffe 2010, 353). To distinguish moods that contribute to the background structure of intentionality from rather shallow moods, Ratcliffe recommends to use the term "existential feeling" as the more appropriate notion for the former ones: "Whether sporadic, longer term or operative over a whole life, a feeling is 'existential' insofar as it constitutes a sense of belonging to a significant world" (Ratcliffe 2010, 367). Thus, as other moods, existential feelings are not directed towards anything specific in the world; rather, they are background orientations through which everything we perceive, feel, think, and act upon is structured. They constitute, to use Ratcliffe's words, "how we find ourselves in the world," in general (2008, 36); accordingly

> [t]he world as a whole can sometimes appear unfamiliar, unreal, distant or close. It can be something that one feels apart from or at one with. One can feel in control of one's overall situation or overwhelmed by it. One can feel like a participant in the world or like a detached, estranged observer staring at objects that do not feel quite 'there.' Such relationships structure all experience (Ratcliffe 2008, 37).[9]

Although *prima facie* the three stances towards the intentionality of moods are incompatible, they all appear to entail a grain of truth, too—though for different types of mood. So we should acknowledge that moods demonstrate a much richer variety than envisioned thus far. While some moods are genuine intentional states, though with a much broader focus than emotions, others provide the background structure of intentionality Ratcliffe tries to unfold; and still others may be plainly nonintentional states. The upshot is that we should characterize and study moods more fine grained, and not less—as, for example, Craig DeLancey suggests when he argues for "the most parsimonious theory of moods", his "mood-emotion identity theory" (DeLancey 2006,

[9] If we consider the examples Ratcliffe provides for existential feelings, we may come to think that in addition to existential feelings that provide the background structure of intentionality we find others that are intentionally directed towards many or all encounters we have with the world, e.g., feeling at home, feeling welcome, disrespected, etc. (for further clarification, see Stephan 2012, 158–159 and Jacobs et al. 2014, 94–95).

527, 528). Being too parsimonious at the wrong place does not make things cheaper in the long run.[10]

To move towards a more fine-grained picture of moods I introduce and comment on a third distinguishing feature between moods and emotions, namely their cause.

1.3 Cause

The causal setting that gives rise to emotions or moods, respectively, is a further feature frequently mentioned to distinguish between both of them. Whereas the causes of emotions seem to be specific recognizable events, the causes of moods are often less traceable. Many overlapping factors contribute to the moods we are manifestly in. Accordingly, Beedy and his colleagues report that

> Cause was the distinguishing feature most frequently cited by non-academics and the second most frequently cited in the psychology literature. Perhaps the most representative non-academic response was 'Moods are general, background feeling states, with no specific cause or direction. Emotions have a specific cause and are directed at a specific object.' […] Responses were generally consistent with opinions expressed in the literature, such as the definition provided by Parkinson et al. (1996) that 'Emotions are caused by specific events localized in time, whereas moods build up as a consequence of either a concatenation of minor incidents, persistent conditions in the environment, and/or internal metabolic or cognitive processes' (p. 6). (Beedie et al. 2005, 863-864)

I doubt, however, that this distinction between moods and emotions works under pressure. Emotions only *appear* to have specific causes, whereas moods don't. The diagnosis is sustainable with regard to moods. Mood states are blended states. Various factors come together to combine to one and only one manifest mood that is the background feeling at a given time. The appearance that emotions are different in this respect is grounded in the observation that often there is one salient event that triggers corresponding emotional responses: offenses trigger anger, losses trigger sadness or grief, flirting partners trigger jealousy, gratifications of desires trigger joy, etc. These are the salient connections many people point towards in making the claim that emotions have specific causes. Things change however, if we consider, say, the fittingness of an emotional response, its intensity or its duration, or the expressive behavior that goes along with it. In his book *What emotions really are*, Griffiths raises an interesting issue: What if someone's emotional response to a certain event does not fulfill common expectations, for example, what if a student who wins a prestigious scholarship does fail to experience positive emotions. Griffiths says, "the folk psychologist responds to the discrepancy by attributing a new, more general kind of mental state. The successful person did not enjoy their success because they were *depressed*. In folk psychology,

[10] DeLancey scrutinizes the proposed distinguishing features between moods and emotions such as duration and intentionality, claims to have found instances of emotions that are not distinct from moods in these respects, and concludes that moods and emotions do not differ. This is a misunderstanding of the issue. We are not looking for definitions that include all and only moods; we are looking for features that are typical for moods. A few exceptions, if so at all, do not show that moods are emotions.

ascribing moods serves to account for systematic deviations from a central model of mental activity" (Griffiths 1997, 249). So what holds true for strong deviations is ubiquitous in all emotional responses in a milder form. Each emotional response is colored by the mood we are in. Each emotional response takes into consideration the social setting in which we are. Thus, if we are interested in the causal setting that gives rise to a particular emotional response, things get nearly as tricky as with moods. Only if we are satisfied with more general answers that more or less relate instances of broad emotion types to their typical formal objects it might suffice to refer to the salient features of the triggering events.

Although trying to trace *the* cause of a manifest mood seems hopeless, it is more promising to elucidate salient mood changes. Several factors are known to contribute to mood states or to be possible modifiers of them. In the next section, I will outline the most common factors and how they relate to each other in shaping our moods.

2 Mood Varieties and Mood Structures

A mood state is a blended state. At a given time, we always are in one, and only one, mood although we can have various emotions, say, feel contempt and anger towards one person and compassion towards another. But we cannot be in different manifest moods at the same time. So besides being in a stoic or neutral mood, we can find ourselves in either a positive or a negative mood, respectively. Among the negative moods are irritable, angry, depressed, desperate, anxious, and hopeless moods. Among the positive moods are happy, merry, solemn, elated, hopeful, euthymic, euphoric, and exuberant moods, although the latter two may also be present within bipolar mood disorders and, hence, not be considered as thoroughly positive. Being a blend, we should not ask for *the* elicitor of a mood, rather we should ask for what has contributed to the blend and what is able to modify it in the near future.

2.1 Mood Modifiers

Possible modifiers of moods range from rather shallow elicitors such as changing weather conditions (Davidson 1994, 53) to profound existential lifespan affairs (Lazarus 1994, 82). Frijda distinguishes three categories of influences: (a) general environmental conditions, (b) organismic conditions, and (c) aftereffects of emotions (1986, 289). However, these factors account only for the more transient 'colors' of many moods. To also grasp more enduring factors or even sort of the 'basso continuo' in affective life, I propose to add (d) social group effects and (e) the existential issue of taking stock of one's life as a whole, respectively.

General environmental conditions comprise, among other things, nice versus awful weather; heat, dust and noise versus calmness; barren land versus scenic beauties, or buildings and places with a particular aura. Mostly, the influence of these conditions is of a transient character. It endures, however, if the conditions are features of, say, someone's working place (e.g., the heat, dust and noise for miners and steelworkers). Another important factor for modifying moods is the social environment, for example, the atmosphere at one's workplace.

Organismic conditions comprise, among other things, good health, transient illness, allergies, fatigue due to lack of sleep, previous exercise and sports, or hunger. All of the organismic conditions seem to have counterparts in neurohormonal or biochemical processes, if not mainly specified by neurohormonal changes as, for example, the menstrual cycle (Ekman 1994, 57–58). In chronic disease, the otherwise transient organismic condition merges with existential lifespan issues.

Many authors stress that mood changes occur sometimes as *aftereffects of emotions*—in case of (a) one very strong emotion, or (b) a series of mild emotions, or (c) of so-called 'dense' emotions, in which according to Ekman "a specific emotion is called forth at very high intensity, again and again, with little time between each evocation" (Ekman 1994, 58). However, "moods can also be produced in a cumulative fashion over time. For example, a series of mild negative interactions (each of which might initially elicit a negative emotion) might cumulatively produce a negative mood over the course of time" (Davidson 1994, 53).

Social group effects on moods are transiently visible as contagion effects even in accidentally combining groups as, for example, in a crowd watching a soccer game. Deliberate membership in particular social groups may account, however, for certain chronic moods (Kagan 1994, 75), particularly in peer groups cultivating a certain mood repertoire that is self-sustaining through looping effects among the members (think of hippies versus members of the goth subculture, or of so-called Wutbürger [angry citizens] who confirm themselves by social media). In addition, certain societal atmospheres—such as atmospheres of departure versus those of intimidation—find often resonance in individuals as prolonged or enduring moods.

Existential lifespan issues contribute in rather enduring ways to our moods. According to Lazarus, moods essentially entail "appraisals of the existential background of our lives. This background has to do with who we are, now and in the long run, and how we are doing in life overall" (Lazarus 1994, 84). Kagan also touches on this issue when he says that persisting moods can result for example from "a decade of academic failure, or repeated social rejection" (Kagan 1994, 75). In philosophy, we find the topic in the work of Bollnow, termed "beständige Lebensstimmungen"—steady moods of life ([3]1941; 1995, 59 ff.), and more recently in the work of Ratcliffe (2008) under the heading of existential feelings, although Ratcliffe sometimes seems to refer more to a background structure than to an experienced mood.

So what we see is that extremely diverse factors can contribute to and modify our moods. To better understand how they do this, I propose a layered model of moods, many of which being merely virtual most of the time. It is meant to explain how different elicitors contribute to a mood blend that is manifest within a certain period of time.

2.2 Layers of Moods

The most basic layer of our affective life—let us call it the *existential layer*—is formed by what Ratcliffe has dubbed "deep moods" or "existential feelings". They constitute a tacit pre-intentional sense of belonging to a meaningful world (Ratcliffe 2010, 367) and are—as he claims— "presupposed by the possibility of intentionally directed emotions" (Ratcliffe 2010, 350). Under normal life circumstances, deep moods remain unnoticed in the background of our affective lives, as there is no need to monitor states that stay stable all along. They move to the foreground the moment they alter significantly as, for

example, in severe psychopathologies. For persons whose deep mood changes in such a way that it does not provide a sense of belonging any more—like in existential despair—the normal and pervasive significance of life evaporates and appraisals of particular events fade to make any sense. Exemplarily, we find reports of such changes in the experiential background structure in the autobiographic work of Elizabeth Wurtzel:[11]

> In the course of life, there is sadness and pain and sorrow, all of which, in their right time and season, are normal — unpleasant, but normal. Depression is in an altogether different zone because it involves a complete absence: absence of affect, absence of feeling, absence of response, absence of interest (Wurtzel 1995, 19).

In such extreme cases, when the world appears void of any significance to the sufferer, an emotionally directed interest in particular projects disappears, affective numbness prevails.

So-called deep moods or existential feelings play a double role, however. Besides pre-intentionally providing (or withholding) a sense of belonging to a meaningful world, they also intentionally represent appraisals of how we are doing in life overall—the theme of Lazarus, Bollnow and Kagan.[12] Enduring feelings of security, familiarity, and of recognition (or their opposites) are always also the condensed result of our life experiences. Bollnow (1941; 1995, 59) refers to such feelings as the "bedrock of life" (Lebensuntergrund). They develop from childhood onwards through adolescence and subsequent life stages and are the *basso continuo* of human affectivity. We may think of them as always present in our manifest moods, though hardly ever experienceable in their pure form. In this respect they resemble what is known as character traits or temperaments.

Another layer of considerable durability—call it the *socially imbued layer*—concerns moods, which are socially scaffolded. Some of them sustain through looping effects among a peer group and provide an affective stance towards life and society, in general; recall as examples, the hippy or goth subcultures. Usually, these moods are embraced and endure as long as someone affiliates with the corresponding group; often, they resonate with the deep moods of the person. In contrast, another kind of socially driven moods is primarily the result of dominant public atmospheres that can permeate societies as, for example, the atmosphere of intimidation created by a totalitarian regime. The corresponding moods, here of anxiety and trepidation, co-vary with the persistence of the political atmospheres.

A third layer—call it the *emotion aftereffect layer*—comprises moods that result from emotional entanglements which are too strong or too persistent to be regulated in good time. Such emotions are able to modify the affective background of a person in various time frames depending on the strength of the emotional aftereffect. A

[11] For further examples, see Jacobs et al. (2014).

[12] In addition, examinations of the *conditio humana* in existentialism have pointed towards moods—such as *anxiety* in Heidegger's work or *nausea* in Sartre's—which may be claimed to deserve the label "existential" in a philosophically even more substantial sense than the moods discussed above. In that context, certain existential moods are not considered to be individual affective responses to a, say, particular miserable life full of traumatic experiences; rather, they are introduced to reveal a general existential condition of humankind, namely the vertigo, horror, anguish or joy we feel while becoming aware that we are free and responsible beings, that "we constitute *ourselves* through our own choices" (Varga and Guignon 2016, 23).

paradigmatic case is the employee coming home in an irritable mood after a quarrel with his boss about his job performance. Another example is the much longer lasting gloom that may follow the sorrow at a deep personal loss.

Eventually, let me introduce the *shallow layer*, which primarily comprises moods elicited by organismic and/or environmental conditions. It accounts for the more transient mood changes, as when hot weather puts people straightaway in an irascible mood or when gym exercises generate a pleasant mood, though some particular changes elicited by organismic and environmental conditions may last longer. Since we are better in recognizing changing states than steady states we often identify the shallow mood changes, along with those associated with emotion aftereffects, with our manifest moods proper, thereby overlooking the additional contributions from the deeper layers.

Manifest moods are always the amalgam of all effective moods, albeit some of the layers may supply nothing for certain periods of time. Hardly ever one single factor dominates so strongly that the mood it elicits is experienced in an unmixed way. Effective moods have, as we have seen, different inertia. While those that belong to the deep existential layer are enduring, those of the shallow layers are more momentary. There exists, however, a mutual influence between moods of different layers.

Deep moods provide the basis on which the more ephemeral modifications of mood arise, sometimes to the better, sometimes to the worse. What we experience as an occurrent mood is the blend of these modifications and the underlying deeper moods. Deep moods also account for the likelihood of certain mood modifications under specific conditions: While emotions provide an action readiness for coping with the eliciting event, and while manifest moods lower the threshold for mood-fitting emotional responses, deep moods affect to what extent possible elicitors are likely to modify a current mood. If we are, all in all considered, content with our life, and equipped with a deep sense of belonging to a meaningful world, then even grave challenges such as a chronic illness, unemployment, or the loss of capacities in the declining years might not worsen our mood to the negative in the long run, though they can. But little discomforts might not affect us at all: a dreary rainy day might just prompt us to get the right clothes, and being hungry might result in looking for some food, etc. The converse, though, holds for somebody who feels deeply detached from the world and overwhelmed by any task he or she is supposed to fulfill.

In adulthood and under normal life circumstances, no radical change of deep mood structures is to be expected. They can change dramatically, however, as a result of disasters and miseries that put into question values that seemed to be invulnerable in the past. When human beings are thrown into fatal social violence, as we currently observe, for example, in Syria, the affective background structure of even those who have had a sheltered and safe life thus far might collapse and give way to feelings of deep despair, insecurity and hopelessness, though not necessarily so. We know of some persons who stand out even under unbearable barbarous circumstances. One example—and a lighthouse of humanity—is Janusz Korczak who did not pause to be a source of shelter and reliance for the orphans he cared for, even in the most horrendous moments of Nazi terror—their last journey to Treblinka.[13]

[13] See, for example, the film Korczak, directed by Andrzej Wajda (1990) and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janusz_Korczak.

Inversely, to develop enduring feelings of security and belonging from an initially insecure background structure is a demanding issue. Many confidence-building experiences are necessary, often with the support of psychotherapy.

After having provided a sketch of how manifest moods are a blend of mostly tacit, though effective moods from various layers, I eventually turn to some features manifest moods have in common. First of all, they color all our experiences and actions, and facilitate some of them over others; manifest moods provide a sort of *emotion readiness*: "They lower the threshold for arousing the emotions, which occur most frequently during a particular mood. […] In an irritable mood people construe the world around them in a way that permits, if not calls for, an angry response" (Ekman 1994, 57). In that respect they are world-directed in a general way, though not towards specific situations or events. In addition, they seem to share with emotions a relatedness to ourselves in the sense that they present how we are doing overall and in the current situation—whether we are irascible, relaxed or anxious. In contrast to emotions, they do not present any worldly affaires. Thus, moods indeed exhibit a very special sort of intentionality.

3 Coda—Living with Moods

We are always in some mood. There is no period of time, in which we are not mooded. Prima facie it seems that moods, particularly deep moods, are states we cannot chose but have to live with. Being in a mood does not make it fading. While acting out of an emotion is the most powerful means to regulate the corresponding emotion, emoting (and eventually acting) out of a mood is not a means to regulate the corresponding mood, quite the contrary. In an irritable mood persons easily find opportunities to become angry and to act accordingly, whereupon the social encounter they herewith provoke might increase their irritability; analogous mood-cycles hold true for depressed persons, but also for persons who are in a positive mood. Moods seem to self-stabilize, unless stronger counteracting influences become influential. Nevertheless, we can develop a stance towards our moods and also mold them to a certain degree.

Examples where we actively structure the environment—as sort of an "affective scaffold"—in order to influence our moods are not hard to find.[14] Some attempts aim at positive moods, others at negative moods; some attempts are successful, others are failures. Many people shape their gardens to provide calming and comfortable atmospheres, others deliberately undergo psychotherapy in order to get over their anxieties, and again others try to counteract with ataractics their depressed mood after a severe personal loss, although a few weeks of mourning might be the natural response. And there are some individuals who maneuver themselves into the "right mood" for a brawl by getting alcoholized, gathering in groups of like-minded people, and provoking potential antagonists. However, most of these attempts influence more or less the surface level of our moods; they provide the soil for facilitating certain emotions and actions. Only few of them, and they are quite effortful, reach the deeper background level of existential issues. But sometimes, adjusting the deeper level is the best thing we can do for us.

[14] See, for example Griffiths and Scarantino (2009) and Stephan et al. (2014)

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