

Hagi Kenaan
Ilit Ferber *Editors*

Philosophy's Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking

Philosophy's Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking

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Philosophy's Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking

 Springer

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Philosophy's Moods: Biographical Notes

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Yaron Senderowicz is a senior lecturer and the former chairman of the department of philosophy, Tel-Aviv University. His main research areas include Kant and German idealism, philosophy of mind and phenomenology. His books include *The Coherence of Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (Springer, 2005), *Controversies and the Metaphysics of Mind* (Forthcoming in John Benjamin Publishing Company). He is the associated editor of *Pragmatics & Cognition*.

Daniel Strassberg studied medicine and philosophy at the University of Zurich and psychoanalysis at the Psychonanalytisches Seminar Zürich. Since 1985 he practices psychoanalysis in private practice and teaches philosophy and psychoanalysis. Among his publications is *Das poetische Subjekt. Giambattista Vicos Wissenschaft vom Singulären* (Fink, 2007).

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Part I

Introduction

Moods and Philosophy

Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber

I. Toward a Phenomenology of Moods

Jean-Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea*, presented as the journal of Antoine Roquentin, opens with the narrator's statement of an unexplained change that has pervaded his world. Roquentin's need to examine this disturbing sense of change is the explicit reason why he begins writing.

The best thing would be to write down events from day to day. Keep a diary to see clearly—let none of the nuances or small happenings escape even though they might seem to mean nothing. And above all, classify them. I must tell how I see this table, this street, the people, my packet of tobacco, since *those* are the things which have changed. I must determine the exact extent and nature of this change. (Sartre 2007: 1)

Roquentin searches for an understanding by attending to the manifestations of the ordinary. Through close attention to the ordinary, he seeks to articulate the manner in which his whole being-in-the-world has changed.

For instance, there is something new about my hands, a certain way of picking up my pipe or fork. Or else it's the fork which now has a certain way of having itself picked up, I don't know. A little while ago, just as I was coming into my room, I stopped short because I felt in my hand a cold object which held my attention through a sort of personality. I opened my hand, looked: I was simply holding the door-knob. (Sartre 2007: 4)

Roquentin is unaware of the phenomenological resonance and philosophical potential of his detailed daily descriptions. He is thus somewhat surprised when, his inspection of experience reveals to him the world itself, the world of which he is part, rather than a private mental domain. The unmistakable presence of a new quality acquired by the world – or, perhaps, the new absence of a dimension that has

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unexpectedly vanished from the world – makes it difficult for Roquentin to find the terms to pinpoint the change he has experienced.

So a change *has* taken place during these last few weeks. But where? It is an abstract change without object. Am I the one who has changed? If not, then it is this room, this city and this nature; I must choose. (Sartre 2007: 4)

Yet, despite his intentions, Roquentin is ultimately unable to choose between the internal and external, since the very opposition between the two realms cannot do justice to his experience. Roquentin's world has changed in a manner that does not lend itself to an understanding in terms of a mere subjective occurrence. At the same time, however, Roquentin is unable to frame the change in terms of the objective state of things, e.g., in terms of objects and their properties. "It is an abstract change without object," one that cannot register within the objective order of facts. Roquentin's difficulty is, in itself, revealing.

Roquentin is ultimately concerned only with the specificity of his own situation, i.e., with a mood that reveals the bare "such-ness" of the world and bears a distinctive affect of nausea. Yet, despite his focus on a specific mood, Roquentin's explorations inadvertently provide a few important insights into the more general structure of moods. His ability to identify a transformation in the quality and form of his experience of the world, together with the inability to explain this transformation in terms of the common opposition between the subjective and the objective, is indeed indicative of the unique manner in which moods are present in our lives.

As a corollary we may say, with Heidegger, that moods are world revealing. For Heidegger, a central figure in this collection and clearly the most important twentieth-century advocate for moods, Dasein always belongs to a world; but this world is neither the totality of objective facts nor a merely subjective experience. World is rather the human realm of meaningfulness that precedes the distinction between the subjective and the objective. Our embeddedness in the world, our basic attachment to meaning, finds its primary expression in the experience of the world as that which matters to us: in moods.

With a new friend around, the city that seemed so gloomy now appears joyful and vibrant. Indeed, the world matters to us in different ways, at different times – revealed through the changes of moods that are, concomitantly, a disclosure of moods' dynamic infrastructure. Like Roquentin, we know that moods change, but their constant flux indicates more than their plurality and transitional nature. Change is the primary manner in which moods or the spectrum of moods is revealed to us. What their constant movement signifies is that moods are always already there, operative – in this form or another – in structuring our encounter with the world. As Heidegger puts it, "We are never free of moods A state-of-mind always has its understanding ... understanding always has its mood" (Heidegger 1962: 182 [143]).

According to Heidegger, moods precede any form of cognition and, moreover, they condition it. "Mood is a primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself prior to all cognition and volition, and beyond their range of disclosure" (Heidegger 1962: 175 [136]). Or as he puts it elsewhere: "The possibilities of disclosure that belong to cognition reach far too short a way compared with the

primordial disclosure belonging to moods, in which Dasein is brought before its Being as ‘there’” (Heidegger 1962: 173 [134]). The totality in which moods allow us to experience the world is therefore more comprehensive and immediate than any form of cognitive comprehension, or even sensual perception, can ever be. Moreover, the wholeness of this totality stands in stark opposition to the traditional conception of rationality as a constant attempt to “seize” and, in some ways, confiscate what is opposite it. Mood offers an alternative approach in which absorption in, and captivation with, the world ground the possibility of thinking and the constitution of meaning. This special configuration of moods has a distinctly unintentional structure, as is famously analyzed by Heidegger in his discussion of the difference between fear and anxiety. Anxiety, for Heidegger, does not disclose a single object *in* the world that threatens us; it is rather the world as totality that comes to matter to us: “That about which anxiety is anxious is none of the inner worldly things at hand.... What anxiety is about is the world as such” (Heidegger 1962: 232, H187).

Moods are crucial for an understanding of our being-in-the-world; however, are moods also pertinent to an understanding of the distinctly philosophical openness to the world? What is it about moods that makes them specifically important to phenomenology?

Since Husserl, phenomenology has consistently singled itself out by making a point of its point of entry into reflection. Phenomenological reflection is dependent on, and cannot begin without, an essential transformation of our ordinary gaze. This transformation or alteration of the “natural attitude” is not a trivial aspect but constitutes a “moment” wherein resides much of the difficulty of practicing the phenomenological method. For Husserl, “The phenomenological *epoché* lays open ... *an infinite realm of being of a new kind*, as the sphere of a new kind of experience: transcendental experience” (Husserl 1999: 27). The question of the full significance of the Husserlian *epoché* and the transcendental field it lays open lies beyond the scope of this introduction. What is, nevertheless, important to notice is that the *epoché*’s cognitive value stems from a unique transformative experience. With the phenomenological *epoché*, “the whole concrete surrounding life-world” changes and shows itself as “only a phenomenon of being instead of something that is.” This happens through “the philosophically reflective Ego’s abstention from position-takings, his depriving them of acceptance” that thereby modifies the given into a “mere phenomenon” (Husserl 1999: 20).

What the phenomenologist acquires by “this universal depriving of “acceptance”, “inhibiting” or “putting out of play” of all positions taken toward the already given objective world is the universe of phenomena in the... phenomenological sense” (Husserl 1999: 20–21). Phenomenology, in other words, not only begins with a crucial shift away from our ordinary immersion in the world; it is, moreover, dependent on the possibility we have as humans of dodging or disconnecting ourselves from the claims of the ordinary world to which we are typically riveted. The *epoché* is a constitutive “moment” in the phenomenological response to the world, one that opens up the world as a phenomenological field by finding a new distance within our ordinary proximity to things. This distancing is of course different in many ways from the new experience, the transformation, that Sartre’s

Roquentin seeks to account for. But, at the same time, the *epoché*, read against the background of Roquentin's insights, raises the question whether the possibility of the *epoché* and thus of phenomenology in general is not couched in the very structure of mood.

In *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre addresses a similar question when he criticizes Husserl for neglecting the presence of a specific mood constitutive of the *epoché*. While making extensive use of Husserl's phenomenology in developing his "theory of consciousness," Sartre is nevertheless critical of the manner in which Husserl, in his emphasis on scientific value, blurs the existential motivations pulsating in the *epoché*. He writes that

as long as one remains in the "natural" attitude, there is no reason, no motive for exercising the *epoché*. In fact, this natural attitude is perfectly coherent. There one will find none of those contradictions which, according to Plato, lead the philosopher to effect a philosophical conversion. Thus, the *epoché* appears in the phenomenology of Husserl as a miracle. (Sartre 1987: 102–103)

For Sartre, the *epoché*'s radical transformation of experience calls for a more coherent explanation—one that emerges from his analysis of the relationship between consciousness and Ego.

If the natural attitude appears wholly as an effort made by consciousness to escape from itself by projecting itself into the *me* and becoming absorbed there ... and if this effort is never completely rewarded, and if a simple act of reflection suffices to tear itself abruptly away from the *I* and be given as independent, then the *epoché* is no longer a miracle, an intellectual method, an erudite procedure: it is an anxiety which is imposed on us and which we cannot avoid: it is both pure event of transcendental origin and ever possible accident of our daily life. (Sartre 1987: 102–103)

What Husserl ultimately fails to see, according to Sartre, is the connection between the transformative possibility opened by the *epoché* and the unavoidable and everlasting presence of anxiety, a mood that reflects in the most fundamental way the self's difficulty in facing its own constitution. For our purposes, the question of the specificity of the mood motivating the *epoché* is less important. What is at stake, rather, is the more general understanding that mood grounds the reflective turn by which philosophy releases itself from the grip of the ordinary so as to return to the ordinary with a transformed way of seeing.

II. Wonder, Melancholy and Anxiety

Philosophy's Moods questions how philosophical thought operates within and through moods, exploring the different roles moods play in the history of philosophy: In what ways do moods constitute philosophy's reflective turn? What do moods teach us about philosophy's encounter with the world? Can we identify certain moods that are predominant in philosophical thinking?

Our premise in exploring these questions is that certain clusters of moods can be identified as central in and for the history of philosophy. In this book, we focus on

what we take to be three fundamental categories of moods, which reveal different dimensions of the presence of moods in philosophy's encounter with the world. We take as fundamental moods the states of wonder, melancholy, and anxiety: each opens up a complex and nuanced domain of corresponding philosophical states of mind.

The ascendancy of *wonder* in ancient philosophy poses an interesting challenge to what we take to be the traditional attempt to separate reason from affectivity. In wonder, we find not only what the Greeks understood as the beginning of philosophy or its underlying drive, but also the kind of engagement with meaning that remains open to the mystery of being, to that which resists explanation and cannot be fully conceptualized. Plato's evocation of wonder in connection with the appearance of the rainbow points at a perplexity that cannot be exhausted by physical description. The rainbow is a natural phenomenon that calls for an explanation. Its striking appearance and unexpected beauty arouse the desire to understand the underlying conditions that make this appearance possible. However, when we look at a rainbow, the availability of a physical explanation does not do away with our initial sense of an enigma, and our fascination with the rainbow seems to reveal to us a dimension of reality which escapes rational explanation. Wonder echoes the essential lack felt in the presence of the world's unreachable beauty and thus marks the beginning of philosophizing.

Wonder, consequently, is not a monolithic mood, but grounds philosophy by resonating the twofold structure of its response to the mystery of the world. It causes our fascination and captivation with the world to resonate while concomitantly responding to a fundamental discontent vis-a-vis what escapes explanation. Another way to put this is to say that wonder harbors both proximity and distance, both a passionate attraction and a resistance to the powers of fascination.

The movement from wonder to *melancholy* may suggest a historical paradigm shift that occurred, roughly, in the seventeenth century, when the philosophical desire to know, exemplified by the ancient Aristotelean wonder, gradually dissolves into an entirely different commitment. The inability to know is no longer linked with wonder and its accompanying forms of desire but with melancholy and doubt. Philosophy's confrontation with its own limits apropos the impossibility of knowing the world no longer finds its expression in passionate wonder but now takes the form of a deep melancholic recognition of what lies outside the scope of knowledge. Descartes' doubt is a paradigmatic example of this crisis, whose resolution is undertaken by a radical withdrawal into a domain of disinterested inquiry. With Descartes, doubt overshadows fascination, and thus the systematic purging of passion and the deliverance from the attractions of unjustified belief become the only way to overcome this melancholic predicament.

The gaze's turn from the enthralling world into the skeptic, dejected self is also a movement from great yearning and attraction to closure and self-sufficiency. As means of coping with melancholy, the formation of Descartes' *cogito* is thus a symptom of a withdrawal which seeks to resist the allure of the world. When melancholic scrutiny conditions the disclosure of the world, the *self* becomes formative for the appearance of meaning and the disclosure of the world. In this respect, melancholy can be said to gather a special class of moods in which detachment from the world and absorption in the self become essential.

Responding to the seventeenth century's melancholic disappointment with the world, the enlightenment sought ways to re-secure, through the power of reason, the grounds of thinking. In the nineteenth century, the affective dimension of philosophy seems to shift away from the optimism of the enlightenment into a new philosophical state of mind: the mood of anxiety. Anxiety challenges, in many senses, both ancient wonder and baroque melancholy: in it, neither the world nor the self are encountered, but we are faced with nothingness – modernity's response to the insufficiency of both wonder and melancholy. Anxiety altogether challenges the intentional structure of consciousness and the understanding of meaning in terms of "content" and opens up, rather, the possibility of philosophizing from within a void.

Anxiety is not a desire for the world (as in wonder) or the self (as in melancholy) but rather brings about a complete transformation of desire into its modern version. With its essentially non-intentional structure, the space of anxiety allows meaning to show itself in a new way that is in constant reference – not simply to that which is-not, but to radical nothingness. Anxiety might lack the attraction toward the world that echoes in wonder, but in its reverberation of nothingness it can grant access to that dimension of the meaningful which was forbidden to thought by Parmenides and to which ancient Greek wonder could not be responsive.

III. Philosophy's Moods

The articles in this volume have been divided into four thematic sections. The first three align with the aforementioned clusters of moods: Wonder, Melancholy, and Anxiety. The last section centers on what we take to be starkly missing in those clusters, namely, philosophy's relation to the other or to alterity. This last section questions the relationship between moods and morals and explores the way in which moods not only determine philosophy's relation to the world or self but also to the other.

The book's first section discusses the role of wonder in the history of philosophy and the implications of some of the complexities it entails. Lev-Kenaan discusses the phenomenon of wonder at the intersection of ancient Greek philosophy and the cosmological epic. Reading Plato and Aristotle together with Hesiod, Lev-Kenaan uncovers the underpinnings of the philosophical thematization of wonder in the mythical imagination. She shows that, for the ancients, the affect of wonder is uniquely philosophical because of its intimate correspondence with the experience of origin. Froman underscores the philosophical importance of wonder by attending to mood's undermining of the "metaphysics of presence" characteristic of the philosophical tradition from Greece to the modern age. Through a dialogue with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas, Froman offers a phenomenological account of a double movement – toward and away from the world – that is always operative in philosophy's moods. Friedlander attends to wonder through a reading of Walter Benjamin's writings on childhood and his account of the child's view of colors. Opening up the possibility of articulating the experience of color as a mood, Friedlander shows how this special

attunement can bring out the texture of experience as an interrelated totality that grounds the unity of one's being in the world.

Part II fleshes out the distinguishing traits of melancholy's special inverted structure and contemplates the implications of the structure of an inward-turned gaze for the kinds of openness facilitated by mood. Ferber explores the senses in which the structure of Leibniz's fundamental metaphysical entity, the Monad, should be understood as melancholic. In challenging the basic contradiction between utter closure and expression, Ferber shows how the Monad exemplifies the productive relationship between melancholia's essential closure and its philosophical openness to the world. Strassberg discusses the history of shame in philosophical thought, describing shame as a gateway to philosophical truth. The paper regards Plato, Rousseau, and Nietzsche as offering three different paradigms to articulate the intimate relationship between truth and shame, models based on the different ways that shame structures selfhood. Nostalgia is the center of Malpas's essay, which discusses the uniqueness of this mood in the context of the disclosive character of moods in general. Nostalgia, for Malpas, is not merely the desire to return to the past. Following its Greek etymology, it is a longing for the return home whose philosophical implication is a new understanding of homesickness as a form of disorientation, forcing us to question our own being in the world.

The articles in the third part of the book discuss the distinctive structure of anxiety and its implications for an understanding of the modern condition of philosophy's reflexivity. Bergo explores the emergence of the Kierkegaardian notion of "anxiety" by tracing its origins in Schelling's conception of *Sehnsucht* – an objectless yearning. Bergo shows that the concept of anxiety develops as an outcome of Kierkegaard's repositioning of Schelling's philosophy of freedom within an existentialist framework and underscores the importance of the physicality and corporeality of mood over and against its psychological essence. Mulhall revisits Heidegger's analysis of moods in order to evaluate its significance to the philosophical understanding achieved in the phenomenological tradition. By focusing on perplexity, anxiety and shame, Mulhall argues that Heidegger's texts are informed throughout by moods and explores their implications to the phenomenological tradition. Concentrating on the role of anxiety in *Being and Time*, Mulhall shows how this mood determines the very structure of Heidegger's text and its implications on the movement from the book's first division to the second. Senderowicz focuses on Heidegger's conception of anxiety in the context of Heidegger's understanding of subjectivity and selfhood. Showing how Heidegger's treatment of anxiety responds to a fundamental problem in Husserl's conception of the transcendental "I," Senderowicz points to a blind spot in the Heideggerian understanding of the relationship between self-awareness and selfhood.

In the last section, both Geiger's and Cohen's articles discuss the crucial relation between moods and moral sentiments. Geiger reconsiders Kant's moral theory, arguing for the central presence of feeling and emotion in it, thereby challenging what is usually conceived of as Kant's conviction regarding the separation of feeling and passion from reason. He thus shows that according to Kant, reason is not itself sufficient for grounding the moral act which necessarily depends on the possibility

of turning to our affective inner life. Cohen focuses on a dimension of mood he calls the “Proto-Ethical,” which he understands as constitutive of the possibility of morals. He argues that the intelligibility of ethics is necessarily dependent on this aspect of mood. Gordon offers a re-evaluation of the impact of racism on philosophical reasoning through a reading of Fanon as a philosopher of mood. Gordon argues that Fanon’s thinking emerges from a constant confrontation with the moral foundations of philosophy which, in turn, is intrinsically related to Fanon’s preoccupation with the mood of his own thinking. The book’s closing article by Scharfstein offers a personal evaluation of the manner in which the philosopher’s thought is influenced by the imminent presence of death. Against the background of an autobiographical reflection, Scharfstein gives a reading of the affect of death in the writings of Hume and Kant.

This volume aspires to open up a prism through which the continuous and unremitting presence of moods in the history of philosophy can be traced and explored. We hope that the intertwining perspectives offered here can create a stepping stone for further philosophical explorations of the crucial role moods play in philosophical thought.

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