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Mixed Feelings Towards Values

Marielle Antoinette H. Zosa

University of the Philippines

e-mail: mhzosa1@up.edu.ph

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6427-586X>

In this paper, I argue for Mitchell's theory of emotions as "feelings towards value" as this applies to "genuinely" mixed feelings or emotions. In terms of Mitchell's theory, I particularly use his notions of (1) the temporal and modal aspects of an emotion's intentional object and (2) its "total environment" as these appropriately represent the object's value. Such value prompts felt valenced attitudes of favor or disfavor. In terms of genuinely mixed feelings, I employ Zaborski's definition as feelings directed at the same object, at the same time. I also use his categories of genuinely mixed feelings i.e., moods, layered feelings, and meta-emotions. Finally, I ultimately contend that other traditional theories of emotion such as judgmentalism/cognitivism, perceptualism, and attitudinalism fall short in explaining both the phenomenology of mixed feelings, and the temporal and modal elements of emotional objects needed to apprehend mixed feelings in the first place.

Keywords: mixed feelings, feeling towards value, reactivism, time, modality

Introduction

The topic of emotions has gained considerable attention in philosophy over recent decades. Traditional analytic theories of emotions have debated profusely on the metaphysical or epistemological nature of emotions and the role of value

in emotional experience. Judgmentalists (or cognitivists) view emotions as rational judgments or cognitions of value about an object of the external world.¹ Perceptualists argue that emotions are perceptual experiences of value about an object.² Attitudinalists regard emotions as evaluative attitudes or dispositions toward an object of emotion but not representing an object which has value in itself.³

However, when emotions or feelings become genuinely “mixed” (i.e., feelings directed at the same object at the same time), such emotional ambivalence poses potential problems for the theories mentioned.⁴ Feeling an emotion is not always directly causal or horizontally depthless. Emotional ambivalence is a common human experience that refutes the claim that emotions have a strict and flat one-to-one correspondence with their objects. One may feel proud and ashamed, dejected and anxious, safe and empty, or excited and regretful at the same time toward the same object or event. Whether we discover that our emotions become moods, “layered”, or even about other emotions, an adequate theory of emotion should properly account for this phenomenon of mixed feelings. Nevertheless, there exist contentions on the nature of mixed feelings as either simply being mixed judgments, mixed perceptions, or mixed attitudes.

I propose a different existing approach to assessing mixed feelings as propounded by Mitchell. I primarily argue for Mitchell’s “feeling towards value” theory which considers mixed feelings in light of their (1) temporal and modal aspects of the emotions’ shared intentional object,⁵ as well as the emotions’ (2) “total environment” which appropriately represents the object’s value.⁶ Furthermore, the definition of “genuinely” mixed feelings as directed at the same object, at the same time is borrowed from Zaborowski who also categorizes mixed feelings into moods, layered feelings, and meta-emotions.⁷ The complex nature of mixed feel-

¹ Charlie Kurth, *Emotion* (Routledge, 2022), 23–33.

² Kurth, *Emotion*, 33–48.

³ Ibid., 48–52.

⁴ For purposes of this paper, I will use “mixed emotions,” “mixed feelings,” and “emotional ambivalence” interchangeably.

⁵ Jonathan Mitchell, *Emotion as Feeling Towards Value: A Theory of Emotional Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 31.

⁶ Mitchell, *Emotion as Feeling Towards Value*, 196–197.

⁷ Robert Zaborowski, “Revisiting Mixed Feelings,” *Axiomathes* 30 no. 2 (2020): 201–226, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10516-019-09447-w>.

ings eventually reverts to fundamental discussions of the metaphysical or epistemic nature of emotions, and the relevance of value in emotions especially when mixed.

In agreement with Naar,⁸ and Müller & Döring,⁹ I specifically situate Mitchell's "feeling towards value" in the family of reactivist theories of emotions. Reactivism regards emotions as *sui generis* attitudes arising from reactions of an object's presented value.¹⁰ This is to distinguish his theory from the other popular approaches such as judgmentalism/cognitivism, perceptualism, and attitudinalism. More clearly, Mitchell's reactivist "feeling towards value" theory metaphysically and epistemically would define emotions, including mixed feelings, as *sui generis* kinds of valenced reactions or dispositions, but also recognizes the role of value in emotional objects. This settles what kind of emotions mixed feelings are, and defends that emotions are evaluative and their objects as representing value no matter how mixed they may be. Values in mixed feelings compel or move us toward what may be phenomenologically rich (mixed)¹¹ reactions toward favor or disfavor. In other words, the contribution of mixed feelings as a commonly experienced phenomenon lies in their being (1) (mixed) *reactions* from (2) actual representations of *values inherent in an emotional object* which are discoverable in terms of time, modality, and the total situation of emotionally ambivalent experiences. Ultimately, in comparison to the traditional theories of emotions, I forward that Mitchell's reactivist "feeling towards value" approach provides a more comprehensive analysis of genuinely mixed feelings through the temporal, modal, and environmental evaluation of emotional experiences.

The structure of the paper in support of my argument will proceed as follows. First, I will give a brief background of Mitchell's theory of "feeling towards value."

⁸ Hichem Naar, "Emotion as feeling towards value: A theory of emotional experience," *Ethics* 134, no. 1 (2023): 158–164, <https://doi.org/10.1086/725822>.

⁹ Jean Moritz Müller and Sabine A. Döring, "Emotion as Feeling Towards Value: A Theory of Emotional Experience, by Jonathan Mitchell," *Mind* 133, no. 531 (2022): 842–851, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzac024>.

¹⁰ Olivier Massin, "The Reactive Theory of Emotions," *European Journal of Philosophy* 31, no. 3 (2021): 785–802, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12736>.

¹¹ I put "mixed" in parentheses as I acknowledge that mixed feelings may or may not always lead to a mixture of reactions. This will be illustrated later.

I will also locate “feeling towards value” in the so-called reactivist camp of emotions. Second, I will define Zaborowski’s genuinely mixed feelings as opposed to feelings which have no actual “mixture”. I follow Zaborowski’s classification of mixed feelings in terms of moods, layered feelings, and meta-emotions. Third, I will highlight the temporal and modal evaluations of emotions in a brief discussion of the philosophy of time and the phenomenology of emotions. Here, I will present Mitchell’s application of time and modality to moods, which I will also extend to other genuinely mixed feelings such as layered feelings and meta-emotions. Lastly, I will contend that “feeling towards value” as a reactivist theory of emotions can best account for the temporal and modal horizons evaluated by emotions including mixed ones. Judgmentalist/cognitive, perceptual, and attitudinal theories of emotions will be assessed as currently inadequate in considering the temporal and modal aspects which give rise to mixed feelings in the first place.

“Feeling towards Values” as Reactivism

According to Mitchell, emotions are best viewed as representing an intentional object that has thick evaluative properties. The properties of an emotion’s object are thick because they comprise not only of evaluative but also descriptive content. This view is what Mitchell calls the “Evaluative Content View” (ECV)¹² where all emotions possess evaluative content i.e., their intentionality or “aboutness” is values. Therefore, emotions are “feelings towards value”. Emotions as “feelings toward value” are *sui generis* or a class of their own in that the object of emotion moves or affects us in an evaluative manner through, what Mitchell calls, a felt valenced intentional attitude of favor or disfavor.¹³ Values are then conversely defined as having affective powers to intelligibly motivate a person towards either favorable or dis-favorable attitude. An object’s value, in other words, possesses a justified demand to be appropriately recognized by the subject. In the following section, I will provide an analysis of Mitchell’s theory by contrasting it with (1) perceptualism and (2) attitudinalism, while locating it as a form of (3) reactivism.

¹² Mitchell, *Emotion as Feeling Towards Value*, 42.

¹³ Ibid., 106–127.

Perceptualism

Mitchell's view aligns with the general evaluative approach to emotions, which judgmentalist/cognitivist, perceptual, and attitudinal theories are a part of. Nonetheless, Mitchell distances his theory from the perceptual and the (bodily) attitudinal theories, particularly. In perceptualism, emotions are viewed as perceptual experiences of value being presented or represented by an object. In traditional phenomenology, this concept of emotions as perceptions of value has been echoed by the earlier works of Husserl.¹⁴ For example, emotions tell us in the presence of a fearful, dangerous situation X, "I perceive fear because of X's evaluative property of being dangerous". Mitchell acknowledges the attractiveness of the view due to the analogous relationship between sense-perception and emotion through a representation of value in an object of emotion. However, Mitchell claims that perceptualism does not seem to consider the affective phenomenology of emotions. By affective phenomenology, Mitchell means that emotional experiences involve phenomenological responses which can be interpreted as being moved by an emotion's object along with its evaluative properties.¹⁵

For example, emotions do not simply tell us, in the presence of a fearful, dangerous situation, that fear as an emotion is being perceived because of X's dangerousness as an evaluative property – much in the same way we simply perceive the color red or the smell of coffee. Rather, emotions implore us non-doxastically: "I am moved or affected by fear because of X's evaluative property of being dangerous." This type of values-affecting phenomenology is not captured by the mere presentational (values-presenting) phenomenology of perceptualism. Instead, Mitchell offers that emotions move or affect an individual toward a "valenced attitude" of felt favor or disfavor regarding the emotional experience. More specifically, the affective phenomenology of emotions is one of "valenced attitude phenomenology".

¹⁴ Denis Fisette, "Emotions and moods in Husserl's phenomenology," in *The Husserlian Mind*, ed. Hanne Jacobs (Routledge, 2021), 222–225.

¹⁵ Mitchell, *Emotion as Feeling Towards Value*, 98–103.

Attitudinalism

It would seem then that Mitchell's theory gravitates towards a sort of attitudinal theory. Attitudinalism views emotions as evaluative attitudes whose evaluations are *sui generis* and not to be compared to beliefs, judgments, and sense-perceptions. Value is appended by the attitude to be taken after experiencing an object of emotion. The object itself does not represent a value which brings about an attitude. Whatever value (or disvalue) is attributed by an emotion as an attitude. For instance, situation X does not have the property of being dangerous in, of, and by itself. When experiencing situation X, however, the emotion of fear kicks in because of an attitude to treat X as a danger to be avoided. Furthermore, a more contemporary view of attitudinal theory includes a bodily aspect. Earlier writings by Merleau-Ponty had already suggested the embodied components of emotions.¹⁶ Apart from defining emotions as evaluative attitudes, the bodily-attitudinal theory specifically deems evaluative attitudes as forms of action-readiness of the body to comport itself accordingly in the world. Therefore, in the previous example, fear is an evaluative attitude to have the body actively evade a situation X as being experienced through X's non-evaluative property.

Mitchell, however, is clear in insisting that the intentional object of emotion indeed represents evaluative properties as well as non-evaluative ones. To recall, the ECV states that an emotion is induced by an evaluative property of an object that is fitting or appropriate of the emotion itself. There must be some evaluative property of danger in situation X that warrants that fear is fitting or appropriate to the situation as an intentional object. Moreover, adding a bodily component to the attitudinal theory runs contrary to the possibilities that calm and collective emotions may not entail the body to be "action-ready", and to the general situation of paralysis of the body unable to take any action in an emotional experience.¹⁷ In other words, not all emotions require a kind of bodily phenomenology or even bodily awareness (although emotions can be enriched by such physical dimensions despite its non-necessity).

¹⁶ Joel Krueger, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Phenomenology of Emotions*, ed. Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer (Routledge, 2020), 197–200.

¹⁷ Mitchell, *Emotion as Feeling Towards Value*, 137–149.

Reactivism

What can be inferred from “feeling towards value” is the aim to find a middle ground between evaluative accounts of emotions, specifically, perceptual and attitudinal ones. On the one hand, it may appear that Mitchell’s theory is close to some form of attitudinal theory due to the view of emotions as evoking attitudes of favor or disfavor. However, Mitchell does not disregard the role of evaluative properties as the intentional object of emotions in a way that attitudinal theorists do. “Feeling towards value” acknowledges that emotions have evaluative content and are simply about values as constituting the intentional object – akin to the perceptual theory of emotions. Nevertheless, perceptualism is insufficient due to its lack of explanatory power in terms of the affective phenomenology to move an individual as also being moved by an emotion.

I similarly view this middle ground in “feeling towards value” as a kind of reactive theory of emotion. Massin recently formalized the alternative “reactive” approach in which “emotions are *sui generis* attitudes which arise in reaction to this object being presented as valuable.”¹⁸ Earlier phenomenologists such as Scheler and von Hildebrand have been sources for current reactivist literature.¹⁹ For a reactivist, emotions as evaluative attitudes (taking from the attitudinal tradition) are evaluative reactions and (re)presentations of value from an intentional object (taking from the perceptual tradition) which give rise to these reactions. In Mitchell’s theory, emotions have evaluative content from the intentional object’s thick properties or values. At the same time, values from an object have affective powers that demand attitudes of favor or disfavor. The reactivist account is thus evident in the assertion that an object’s value has the capacity to affect, move, or motivate a person to either positively or negatively react through valenced attitudes of favor or disfavor. If we return to situation X, one fears fear because of the evaluative property of X as dangerous. Hence, one feels the emotion of fear as an evaluative attitude to perhaps disfavor situation X as a reaction or response to X’s evaluative property of danger.

¹⁸ Massin, “The Reactive Theory of Emotions,” 792.

¹⁹ Ibid., 791.

It is clear then that Mitchell's "feeling towards value" is a reactivist theory of emotions which is related to but still distinct from other approaches such as perceptualism or (bodily) attitudinalism.

Genuinely Mixed Feelings and Challenges to Theories of Emotions

In order to relate "feeling towards value" with genuinely mixed feelings, an adequate definition must be first offered. For this paper, I take Zaborowski's definition of genuinely mixed feelings as the clearest illustration of mixed or ambivalent feelings or emotions. This particular section will also enumerate types of mixed feelings and forward the need to elaborate on mixed feelings based on existing traditional philosophical approaches to emotions.

Genuinely mixed feelings are defined as a combination of emotions that refer to the same object of emotion at the same time. Therefore, two conditions comprise genuinely mixed feelings: (1) they are about the same object and (2) they occur at the same time.²⁰ Genuinely mixed feelings are defined to distinguish these from seemingly mixed feelings but have no "mixture" of emotions intended at the same object and/or do not happen at the same time. For example, having a love and hate relationship with someone might appear to demonstrate mixed feelings. However, it is doubtful that this case is actually one of genuinely mixed emotions if love and hate do not, firstly, coincide at the same time. Secondly, if the object of love (e.g., the person's trait of being adorable) is different from the object of hate (e.g., the person's trait of being lazy), then love together with hate cannot be classified as a genuinely mixed feeling.

Moods, Layered Feelings, and Meta-emotions

Zaborowski identifies three categories of genuinely mixed feelings: moods, layered feelings, and meta-emotions. In the discussion that follows, I will define each category then give illustrations of each type of mixed feeling to be analyzed later.

²⁰ Zaborowski, "Revisiting Mixed Feelings," 205–218.

I will begin with the discussion of moods first even if it is the last category described by Zaborowski. This is to reflect Mitchell's brief but already existing analysis of moods through time and modality. First, mood is a kind of mixed feelings which is comprised of a concurrent collection of emotions about an intentional object which may be a situation or environment.²¹ Research in Anglo-American psychology and philosophy would define mood as globally pervasive, thematically focused, and non-specifically intentional.²² Moods are globally pervasive due to its involvement of "bodily feelings, motivational states, evaluative thoughts, and evaluative perceptions."²³ They are also thematically focused because of their emphasis on particular concerns (e.g., irritable moods are focused on offensive things). Lastly, moods are directed towards more general intentional scopes rather than specific intentional objects (e.g., anxiety can be about everything and nothing in general).

As an example to be analyzed later, a depressed mood may comprise of the emotion of dejection and anxiety at the same time. While the object of a mood is not as specifically identifiable as the object of an emotion, we can take the intentional concern of a mood like depression to be the "total environment" or general situation in Mitchell's terms. For instance, the general situation or object of mishaps transpiring after mishaps can cause both sadness and anxiety in person A for things that have gone, are going, and will go wrong. Still, the condition of an intentional state of affairs and the condition of simultaneity are satisfied, thereby making moods as some type of mixed feelings.

Second, layered feelings refer to emotions that are simultaneously superimposed on one another depending on the level of depth with reference to the object of emotion.²⁴ Even in recent literature, Mendonça forwarded a layered theory of emotions which encapsulates emotional depth and intensity lacking in "horizontal" views on emotions as merely causal or intentional.²⁵ In a layered theory of

²¹ Zaborowski, "Revisiting Mixed Feelings," 223.

²² Francisco Gallegos, "Moods Are Not Colored Lenses: Perceptualism and the Phenomenology of Moods," *Philosophia* 45, no. 4 (2017): 1497–1513, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-017-9820-5>.

²³ Gallegos, "Moods Are Not Colored Lenses," 1500.

²⁴ Zaborowski, "Revisiting Mixed Feelings," 220–222.

²⁵ Dina Mendonça, *A Deweyan Philosophical Take: A Layered Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 6–8.

emotions, it would be incumbent to assess the rich and complex landscape of emotional phenomena through interactive layers or levels of affect that properly distinguish feelings, sentiments, emotions (including meta-emotions), and moods from one another.

To introduce another example similar to Zaborowski's original illustration of layered feelings to be used later, say that the object of person B's emotion is B's wealth. At the same time, B may feel a sense or emotion of surface-level security or safety because of B's riches. However, B can also feel an emotion of void or emptiness because of the same wealth—as many wealthy individuals do feel discontent despite their luxuries. This example satisfies the conditions of mixed feelings as having the same object of emotions, such as one's wealth, and as exhibiting simultaneity in feeling both safety and emptiness at the same time.

Finally, meta-emotions as another kind of mixed feeling are defined as instantaneously arising from the same object in which one emotion is a first-order feeling while the other is a second-order one.²⁶ Also a kind of layered emotion for Mendonça, meta-emotions are a topic which Mitchell himself engages with. In Mitchell's view, meta-emotions are just basically emotions directed towards other emotions. In terms of intentionality, the intentional object of meta-emotions are necessarily other emotions. Phenomenologically, one may have negative meta-emotions towards a negative or positive emotion. Conversely, one may also have positive meta-emotions towards negative or positive emotions.²⁷ For instance, one may feel ashamed of feeling ashamed, ashamed of feeling proud, proud of feeling ashamed, or proud of feeling proud for various reasons in different contexts.

To use one last example that will be referred to and discussed later, say that an object of emotion is the reconciliation event with a loved one who passed away. Person C may feel excitement at the thought of reuniting with C's loved one as a first-order feeling. However, C may, at the same time, feel a second-order feeling of regret at both the reunion and the feeling of excitement because such an event will never actually happen. Again, the condition of the emotions being about the same object of reunion and the condition of feeling both excitement and regret at the same time are met.

²⁶ Zaborowski, "Revisiting Mixed Feelings," 222–223.

²⁷ Jonathan Mitchell, "Understanding Meta-Emotions: Prospects for a Perceptualist Account," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 50, no. 4 (2020): 505–523, <https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2019.47>.

The Problem with Mixed Feelings

Before proceeding to the next section on time, modality, and emotions, I must remark on why it is important to discuss mixed feelings to begin with. With respect to the traditional approaches to emotions, the discussion on mixed feelings or emotions may pose a challenge. For instance, judgmentalism/cognitivism states that emotions are cognitions, beliefs, or judgments of an object's value. As one of the earlier contemporary theories of emotions, judgmentalism has been lauded for viewing emotions as, in fact, rational appraisals instead of capricious whims.²⁸ In terms of mixed feelings, however, it is puzzling to say that one may have different or even conflicting emotions as judgments, over the same thing at the same time. Given that emotions as cognitive judgments assume rational propositional content or mind-to-world direction of fit, having mixed emotions in this theory would not seem to be in line with rational judgment.²⁹ For example, situation X as dangerous, to be judged as both feared and attractive at the same time, would not accord with rational cognition. Furthermore, what makes judgmentalism questionable is that one may judge situation X as fearsome but feel that X is also attractive—rendering emotions as non-identical to judgments in the first place.

Perceptualism, on the other hand, which states that emotions are perceptual experiences of an object's value, may actually be more tenable in explaining mixed feelings than judgmentalism. For instance, the condition of mixed feelings being about the same intentional object may be satisfied if situation X's evaluative property of danger can be perceptually experienced as both fearsome and attractive. However, some like Kristjánsson still find it also equally confounding to think that one may have different or conflicting perceptions of the same object representing a value, *exactly* at the same time.³⁰ This is likened to how one cannot perceive both a rabbit and duck simultaneously in the rabbit-duck image. Nevertheless, in line with a reactive approach, I view that the phenomenological experience of mixed feelings is not just a matter of perceptual ambiguity like in deciphering the Müller-Lyer illusion. There is more to mixed emotions which affectively motivate or stir

²⁸ Kurth, *Emotion*, 23–33.

²⁹ Kristján Kristjánsson, "The Trouble with Ambivalent Emotions," *Philosophy* 85, no. 4 (2010): 485–510, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0031819110000434>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 486.

something within a subject toward a certain disposition or attitude given their ambivalence. If, for instance, one does experience both fear and attraction at the same time and directed at the same situation X, to be moved by corresponding or emergent feelings apart from fear and attraction, such as intrigue or unpleasantness, arise apart and not directly from mere perception of these emotions.

Lastly, attitudinalism, stating that emotions are attitudes or action-readiness but not with respect to an intentional object's value, would seem to be the sensible contender in demystifying mixed feelings. Studies in psychology, in fact, refer to emotional ambivalence as related to attitudinal ambivalence.³¹ It may be acceptable to suppose that mixed feelings are a sort of mixed evaluative attitude but wherein there is a "simultaneous holding of negative and positive evaluations toward the same object".³² In the traditional attitudinal view, the representational value of an object has no direct relevance to emotional experiences. Cecchini, however, considers attitude as not just possessing an affective and behavioral component, but also a cognitive or representational element.³³ In other words, being affected by fear or attraction and behaving as someone with fear or attraction must emerge from situation X's actual and existing evaluative property of danger. Therefore, it is difficult to believe the attitudinalist claim that emotions, including mixed ones, are not about any particular value of an object at all, let alone should these emotions occur at the same time as well.

What is then clear from the criticisms of these theories is that we need an adequate account of emotions that properly explains the phenomenon of mixed feelings as a common experience for the human condition. However, one must first determine some basic components in identifying the evaluative content of emotions for mixed feelings to be comprehensible. Time and modality are identified to be two crucial aspects in appraising the evaluative content of emotions as well as mixed emotions.

³¹ Dario Cecchini, "Experiencing the Conflict: The Rationality of Ambivalence," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 58 (2024): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-021-09859-1>.

³² Ibid., 1.

³³ Ibid., 4–6.

Time and Modality in Emotions

Discussions on time and modality, or temporality and possibilities, are not new in the philosophy of time and the phenomenology of emotions. For instance, in terms of time, literature in the analytic philosophy of time has discussed the connection between the language of tense and emotions.³⁴ The relationship between time or tense and emotions is explored in the relationship between tense and language. When language is used to express, convey, or describe certain emotions, one can make another connection between language and emotions. On the other hand, time or tense is unsurprisingly used in both formal and everyday language. Therefore, the implication from time or tense which is couched in language and language which may represent some emotion means that we can also speak of time or tense in relation to emotions.

The metaphysical relationship between emotions and time was stimulated in Prior's article entitled "Thank Goodness It's Over".³⁵ To feel an emotion of relief that event Y is over would have to entail that there is an event Y that happened in the past and is no longer happening in the present as a fact (i.e., a tensed fact). Therefore, emotions are appropriate or justified because of tensed facts which pertain to what transpired, transpires, and will transpire in the past, present, and future. In like manner, Y was true in the past but is no longer true in the present, thereby causing relief. An argument can then be made that there must be some transition or flow in time for such relief to happen.

On the other hand, modality through the notion of possibilities has been explored in the phenomenology of emotions. Ratcliffe wrote extensively on existential feelings as primarily about the experience of possibility.³⁶ Husserl has been a profound phenomenological source for the sense of possibility in emotions. In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl traditionally distinguished between non-intentional feelings such as pleasure and pain and intentional feelings such as joy and

³⁴ Olley Pearson, *Rationality, Time, and Self* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 13–16.

³⁵ Olley Pearson, "Appropriate emotions and the metaphysics of time," *Philosophical Studies* 175 (2018): 1945–1961, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-017-0944-z>.

³⁶ Matthew Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," in *Feelings of Being Alive*, ed. J. Fingerhut and S. Marienberg (De Gruyter, 2012), 23–54, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110246599.23>.

love.³⁷ Ratcliffe, however, adds that there also exist existential feelings which are *pre-intentional* in that these feelings are experienced as they extend towards a “horizon” of possible perceptions of value.³⁸

This horizon of possible perceptions of value leads to the well-known conceptions of moods in terms of fear, anxiety, and boredom by Heidegger. *Stimmung* or mood are modes of *Befindlichkeit* or “attunements” or “dispositions” of the Dasein as beings-in-the-world.³⁹ To be in a certain mood means that we may be afraid, anxious, or bored of our inability to authentically project ourselves in the realm of possibilities or potentialities. Because the Dasein is Being nested in time within the world, a future rife with possibility induces existential moods of fear, anxiety, and/or boredom of what may or may not be actualized.

More recent discussions on time and emotions include the unification of different components in emotions (bodily sensations, judgment, and behavior) through temporal and causal unity.⁴⁰ Furthermore, research on a “modal account” of mood involves moods as representing contrasting evaluations of the possible and the actual.⁴¹ While both time and possibility are two engaging topics worth pursuing separately in relation to emotions, I look to Mitchell’s reactive “feeling towards value” theory as one which innovatively describes the evaluative content of emotions based on both categories.

Time and Modality through Reactivism

Time and modality are crucial components in the ECV which Mitchell defends. To reiterate, this view simply defines emotional experiences as possessing

³⁷ James Jardine, “Edmund Husserl,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, 53–55.

³⁸ Ratcliffe, “The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling,” 33.

³⁹ Lauren Freeman and Andreas Elpidorou, “Fear, anxiety and boredom,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, 393–394.

⁴⁰ Kris Goffin and Gerardo Viera, “Emotions in time: The temporal unity of emotion phenomenology,” *Mind & Language* 39, no. 4 (2023): 349–350, <https://doi.org/v10.1111/mila.12489>.

⁴¹ Christine Tappolet, “The Metaphysics of Moods,” in *The Ontology of Emotions*, ed. Hichem Naar and Fabrice Teroni (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 181–186.

thick evaluative properties of an intentional object. In particular, Mitchell describes the evaluative content of emotions in this way:

Emotional experiences are *modally liberal* with respect to their particular objects: they can be about *actual*, *possible*, *impossible* and *fictitious* physical particulars, persons and animals, events and states of affairs involving these things.

Emotional experiences are *temporally liberal* with respect to their particular objects: they can be about, *past*, *present*, and *future* physical particulars, persons and animals, events and states of affairs involving these things.⁴²

It is evident in these passages that modality of emotions represents notions of actuality, possibility, impossibility, and even fiction. The temporality of emotions refers to concepts of the past, present, and future. Both time and modality are bound by intentionality – emotions are about particular tangible entities, or even general events or states of affairs in the world. Furthermore, apart from these two aspects of the evaluative content of emotions, Mitchell briefly discusses the idea of a “total environment”. He defines a total environment in terms of not just “the perceptual environment of spatio-temporal particulars, but also encompasses both present and modal relations, and one’s current projects, values, and aims”.⁴³ In fact, one’s total environment need not be a specific object or a definite event, but it can be “the broadest set of relations (and potential relations) between self and world”.⁴⁴

A preliminary example of how the temporal, modal, and environmental aspects of emotional experience apply to the phenomenon of emotional ambivalence may be the mixed feelings of pride and shame. For instance, if person Z cheats on an exam and gets a high grade, Z may feel proud of this achievement because the chances of graduating with honors become more possible. On the other hand, if Z is moved by moral conscience, Z may also feel ashamed that Z feels pride with the memory that the means to attaining good academic marks was through intellectual dishonesty. If pride and shame exist at the same time and if their ultimate emotional object was the event of cheating on an exam, then this is a case of genuinely mixed feelings. Therefore, the total environment concerned

⁴² Mitchell, *Emotion as Feeling Towards Value*, 31.

⁴³ Ibid., 196.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

with the mixed feeling of pride and shame may be the cheating incident as well as post-cheating reflections. Furthermore, pride arises from this total environment due to the *modal possibility* of graduating with flying colors after receiving high marks. Shame emerges due to moral considerations from being proud about intellectual dishonesty which was recollected in the *temporal past*. Consequently, it is clear that time, modality, and the total environment play a vital role in the phenomenology of experiencing mixed feelings.

The concepts of time, modality, and total environment were also briefly introduced by Mitchell to analyze future directions of “feeling towards value” as it applies to moods. One of Mitchell’s own brief examples dealt with the depressed and anxious mood whose temporal, modal, and environmental elements are globally rather than locally or specifically felt.⁴⁵ To illustrate with a more concrete example, let us go back to the previous feeling of depression through dejection and anxiety due to the intentional event of things going wrong. Person A may experience a depressed mood having a mixture of both an emotion of dejection about their situation or event of things going wrong thereby triggering memories of a wrongful past (temporal), and anxiety as another emotion of what can go wrong in a possible (modal) future. The total environment or, in this example, the current event of mishaps is the mood’s intentional object. Aspects of the total environment through time include an understanding of a past that is wrong and a future that may be wrong. Aspects through modality include an understanding of a possible state of affairs in some future. Time through the past that was evaluated as wrong evokes dejection, and modality through possible wrongs leads to anxiety at the same time. Nevertheless, the depressed mood is affectively demanded by some value of wishing to being in ideal, non-depressing situations. This value results in a reaction or attitude of favoring non-depression and disfavoring depression, for example. It may also simultaneously result in a reaction of favoring non-anxiety and disfavoring anxiety. Multiple reactions in this case of mixed feelings may also be, at the same time, mixed depending on the affect of the same intentional total environment.

In like manner, I further extend Mitchell’s evaluative analysis of moods in terms of time, modality, and total environment to both layered feelings and meta-emotion. For layered feelings, let us return to the example of the mixed feeling of

⁴⁵ Ibid., 197.

safety and emptiness due to person B's riches. The total environment or situation of wealth possesses an evaluative property which moves B to a superficial sense of security in the present (temporal). However, this same total environment may also affect B on a deeper level or layer of discontentment from an actual (modal) feeling of emptiness despite the riches. The aspect of time deals with the present where B feels safe whereas the aspect of modality concerns the actual state of affairs where one feels empty. The temporal security in the present and the modal emptiness in actuality converge at the same time. Such reveals the motivating value of not wanting to feel an existential void. Therefore, the reaction or attitude is to disfavor, for example, the feeling of discontentment and favor contentment. If another simultaneous reaction may be to favor security and disfavor insecurity based on the same intentional situation, this leads to a possible mixed reaction.

Lastly, we return to the example of meta-emotions through the mixed emotions of regret and excitement directed at the reunion with person C's deceased loved one. There is a second-order feeling of regret to be anticipated in the future (temporal) as it concerns a first-order feeling of excitement at the impossibility or even fiction (modal) of a deceased loved one from returning to life. The total environment of a reunion is the intentional object that evokes regret expected in the temporal future due to the excitement at the modal impossibility or fiction of reuniting with the departed loved one. Such total environment, along with its temporal and modal aspects, represents the affective value of not wanting to be disappointed by the situation concerned. The reaction or attitude to this situation or total environment, for instance, would be to favor level-headedness and disfavor disappointment. With another reaction like favoring excitement and disfavoring regret regarding the same total environment, a potential mixed reaction may ensue.

What one can surmise from the components of time and modality, along with the total environment found in the evaluative content of emotions, as these apply to the phenomenon of mixed feelings is that reactions or responses of favor or disfavor arise from the mixed emotional experience. A reactivist "feeling towards value" approach best describes the complexity and depth of mixed feelings as not just representations of value from an intentional object (as per the perceptualist approach). Mitchell's *sui generis* view on emotions considers the affective phenomenology of mixed feelings as a form of emotional ambivalence. Mixed feelings move or affect us in such a way that makes us experience emotionally

ambivalent or undecided states. In like manner, mixed feelings can bring about (mixed) attitudes of favor or disfavor about an intentional object (according to the attitudinalist approach). However, this ambivalent attitude can only occur due to the actual evaluative content of emotions which comprise of temporal, modal, and environmental elements.

In summary, in the reactivist theory of emotions, mixed feelings can be about perceptions of values from an intentional object as they further produce (mixed) attitudes or, more accurately, (mixed) reactions about these values.

Notes for Non-Reactivists on Time and Modality

Before concluding, some considerations on the temporal and modal aspects of emotions may be accounted for in light of non-reactivist approaches to emotions. While this is not an exhaustive discussion, I argue that mixed feelings can be best apprehended through analyzing their temporal, modal, and situational components. A “feeling towards value” approach has been shown to accommodate these aspects. I near my conclusion with further points that may be explored for the judgmentalist/cognitivist, perceptual, and attitudinal theories of emotions should these attempt to incorporate time and modality in the landscape of emotional experiences.

For judgment/cognitive theorists, the thesis of mind-to-world direction of fit in emotions is important when describing the propositional state of affairs of the intentional object of emotion. If the propositional state of affairs of an emotion’s object pertains to past and present times or temporalities, and actual modalities, emotional judgmentalism/cognitivism may be feasible. However, cognitivism operates more clearly on what is or was actually the case in the past or present. The evaluative content of an emotion’s object through other temporal conditions such as the future, and the modal conditions such as the possible, impossible, and even fictitious are still up for question in a cognitivist theory of emotion. Future contingent or possible propositions which have yet to acquire a truth value should be clarified in judgmentalism. Furthermore, modal notions of impossibility or even fiction may contradict the goal of judgmentalist/cognitive theorists for emotions to be *rational* judgments or appraisals of the world.

For perceptual theorists, apart from the argument that emotions do not seem to operate the same way as sensory perceptions do, it is unclear how emotions as perceptual experiences can account for temporality and modality. Like with cognitivism, let us grant that emotions may be directed towards present and/or actual states of affairs. Therefore, the present temporality, along with the actual modality, may also count as and for perceptual emotional experiences. However, the past and future temporal aspects, and the possible, impossible, and fictitious modal aspects of an emotional experience have yet to be threshed out in a perceptual theory. Perceptual theorist Tappolet herself has noted that if emotions are perceptions and perceptions are causally constrained by their intentional object, so should emotions be causally constrained by their object. However, abstract entities, past events, and even fictitious things which are distinctively imperceptible can be the object of emotions but have no causal power over these emotions whatsoever.⁴⁶

Finally, attitudinal theorists may have to concede to the reactivist camp if they attempt to incorporate the temporal and modal character of a total environment. While emotions indeed lead to attitudes of either favor or disfavor, attitudes as emotional reactions are attitudes towards the value of an object or are reactions about the value of an object. The value of these emotional objects is revealed through time, modality, and their total environment. In the case of emotional ambivalence, values found in an emotion's object or total environment give rise to the complex but rich temporal and modal horizons of an emotional experience like mixed feelings. Therefore, attitudinal theorists might then have to commit to the role of an emotional object (re)presenting evaluative content for attitudes or reactions to arise in the first place.

Conclusion

I have argued the case for Mitchell's "feeling towards value" reactivist approach to emotions as this theory applies to mixed feelings such as moods, layered feelings, and meta-emotions. Particularly, aspects of time and modality along with

⁴⁶ Christine Tappolet, "The Receptive Theory: A New Theory of Emotions," *Philosophies* 8 (2023): 117, <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies8060117>.

an emotion's total environment are necessary features of Mitchell's reactivism which best explain the phenomenon of mixed feelings and the phenomenological experience of emotional ambivalence. I have also engaged with other non-reactivist theories of emotions such as judgmentalism/cognitivism, perceptualism, and attitudinalism in how each approach attempts to account for mixed feelings, and time and modality. More importantly, the metaphysics and epistemology of mixed feelings are attributed to its being *sui generis* (mixed) attitudes or reactions and brought about by representations of value/s of the emotional object. Values inherent in emotional objects are also indispensable due to their capacity to affect and motivate us toward reactions of favor or disfavor, thereby reaffirming the role of values in emotions. I do not wish to discount the possible directions of other approaches on these topics, and I welcome more fruitful discussions and research that match or surpass the comprehensive explanatory power of reactive theories of emotions such as "feeling towards values".⁴⁷

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Streszczenie

Mieszane uczucia wobec wartości

W niniejszym artykule argumentuję na rzecz teorii emocji Mitchella jako „uczuć skierowanych ku wartości” oraz pokazuję jej zastosowanie do wyjaśnienia „rzeczywiście” mieszanych uczuć lub emocji. W ramach teorii Mitchella szczególną uwagę poświęcam (1) czasowym

i modalnym aspektem intencjonalnego przedmiotu emocji oraz (2) jego „całościowemu środowisku”, ponieważ te elementy właściwie ujmują wartość tego przedmiotu. Wartość ta wywołuje odczuwane, wartościujące postawy przychylności lub nieprzychylności. W odniesieniu do rzeczywiście mieszanych uczuć wykorzystuję definicję Zaborowskiego, zgodnie z którą są to uczucia skierowane ku temu samemu przedmiotowi w tym samym czasie. Posługuję się również jego klasyfikacją rzeczywiście mieszanych uczuć, która obejmuje nastroje, uczucia uwarstwione oraz metaemocje. Wreszcie, twierdzę ostatecznie, że inne tradycyjne teorie emocji, takie jak judgmentalism/kognitywizm, percepcjonizm i atudynalizm, nie są w stanie wyjaśnić w pełni ani fenomenologii uczuć mieszanych, ani elementów czasowych i modalnych obiektów emocjonalnych, które są niezbędne do ich uchwycenia.

Słowa kluczowe: mieszane uczucia, uczucia skierowane ku wartościom, reaktywizm, czas, modalność

Zusammenfassung

Gemischte Gefühle gegenüber Werten

In diesem Artikel plädiere ich für Mitchells Emotionstheorie als Theorie der „wertorientierten Gefühle“ und zeige, wie sie zur Erklärung „wirklich“ gemischter Gefühle oder Emotionen herangezogen werden kann. Im Rahmen von Mitchells Theorie widme ich (1) den zeitlichen und modalen Aspekten des intentionalen Objekts der Emotion sowie (2) dessen „Gesamtumfeld“ besondere Aufmerksamkeit, da diese Elemente den Wert dieses Objekts angemessen erfassen. Dieser Wert ruft empfundene, wertende Haltungen der Zustimmung oder Ablehnung hervor. In Bezug auf wirklich gemischte Gefühle verwende ich die Definition von Zaborowski, wonach es sich um Gefühle handelt, die gleichzeitig auf dasselbe Objekt gerichtet sind. Ich stütze mich zudem auf seine Klassifizierung wirklich gemischter Gefühle, die Stimmungen, geschichtete Gefühle und Metaemotionen umfasst. Schließlich argumentiere ich, dass andere traditionelle Emotionstheorien, wie die Urteilstheorie der Emotionen/der Kognitivismus, der Perzeptualismus und das Einstellungsmodell, weder die Phänomenologie gemischter Gefühle noch die zeitlichen und modalen Aspekte der Emotionsobjekte angemessen erklären können, die für deren Erfassung notwendig sind.

Schlüsselwörter: gemischte Gefühle, wertorientierte Gefühle, Reaktivität, Zeit, Modalität

Ins Deutsche übersetzt von Anna Pastuszka

