Emotional Attitudes vs. Emotional Feelings: A Separatist Framework of Emotional States

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Abstract

Most researchers agree that emotions have two core features. First, emotions have *intentionality*. That is, emotions are about something. Second, emotions have *phenomenology*. In other words, emotions are felt. It is commonly assumed that emotional intentionality and phenomenology cannot be separated into two distinct emotional states. Against this, we propose to divide emotions into (non-phenomenal) emotional attitudes and (non-intentional) emotional feelings. We argue that this proposal is theoretically fruitful and descriptively adequate. Its theoretical fruitfulness includes explaining away the challenge of merging emotional intentionality and phenomenology, and providing a straightforward account of emotional states that lack intentionality (such as moods) or phenomenology (such as unconscious and standing emotions). Its descriptive adequacy is supported by three new empirical studies, which suggest that people distinguish to some extent emotional intentionality and phenomenology by using different verbs: *to be* afraid / angry / etc. vs. *to feel* afraid / angry / etc.

Keywords: emotions; attitudes; feelings; intentionality; experimental philosophy.

1. Introduction

Although there are many different theories of emotion, most researchers agree that (1) emotions have intentionality and (2) emotions have phenomenology (Deonna et al., 2015; Goldie, 2007; Helm, 2024; Mulligan & Scherer, 2012; Scarantino & de Sousa, 2018).

First, it is generally agreed that emotions have intentionality. In other words, emotions are about something.[1] When I am afraid, there is something that is feared. When I am angry, there is something that I am angry about. This "something" is the object of the emotion. Emotions can take different things as their objects, including people, events, or state of affairs. Similarly, different emotions can take the same object. For example, I can be *angry that* you came to the party, or *happy that* you came to the party.

Second, it is widely agreed that emotions have phenomenology. In other words, emotions are felt. We feel shaken by sadness, filled with joy, and overwhelmed by fear. We can separate between emotions that feel good (e.g., joy or pride), and emotions that feel bad (e.g., sadness or fear). However, each emotion type seems to have a specific phenomenology. For example, sadness and fear are both negative, but feeling sad is different from feeling afraid.

Emotion researchers seem to assume that we cannot separate emotional intentionality and phenomenology into two distinct emotional states. Although this assumption is rarely explicitly stated (but see Mitchell, 2021; Müller & Döring, 2021), it reveals itself in the dialectic of debates in emotion theory. As we will see in the next section, theories have characterized emotions as intentional states (often accompanied by phenomenal states), as phenomenal states (often accompanied by intentional states), as blends of intentional and phenomenal states, or as intentional-phenomenal states. However, to our knowledge, no one has considered the possibility that there are two *distinct* types of emotional states—one intentional and one phenomenal—that are *separable* in the sense that one can exist without the other and require different theoretical accounts.

Here, we propose dividing emotions into two distinct states: emotional attitudes and emotional feelings. Emotional attitudes are intentional but non-phenomenal states. Emotional feelings are phenomenal but non-intentional states. In this framework, explaining emotions requires two separate theories: one theory for emotional attitudes, and another theory for emotional feelings. Our proposal should therefore be understood, not as a new theory of emotions, but as a new framework of emotional states that guides the development of emotion theories. We call this new framework a separatist framework, or "separatism" for short.

[1] It is important to note that the object of the emotion is not the same thing as the cause of the emotion (Solomon, 2003). Most times, the object of the emotion is the cause of the emotion, e.g. when my sister angers me (cause), I get angry at my sister (object). But sometimes, the object of the emotion is different from its cause.

Separatism about emotion: There are two distinct and separable types of emotional states: (non-phenomenal) emotional attitudes and (non-intentional) emotional feelings.

In this paper, we will argue that separatism is theoretically fruitful and descriptively adequate. In Section 2, we show that a separation between emotional attitudes and emotional feelings provides explanations of debated emotional phenomena (theoretical fruitfulness). In Section 3, we provide evidence that a separation between emotional attitudes and emotional feelings is in alignment with our ordinary conception of emotion (descriptive adequacy).

Theoretical fruitfulness and descriptive adequacy are both crucial in emotion research (Scarantino, 2012; Scarantino & de Sousa, 2018). While a philosophical or scientific account of emotion need not be *identical* to our ordinary understanding of emotion, it should not be completely different either. Ideally, we should find a balance between diverging from lay theories of emotion to increase explanatory power, and aligning with ordinary understanding to account for the things we refer to when we say we are afraid, angry, sad, etc. Thus, we will consider both the theoretical fruitfulness and descriptive adequacy of separatism.

2. Theoretical Fruitfulness

Separatism posits two distinct and separable types of emotional states: emotional attitudes and emotional feelings. But why should we accept such a framework, instead of a more parsimonious framework where there is only one type of emotional state? In this section, we will argue that separatism should be adopted because it is theoretically fruitful, i.e., it helps advance explanations for emotional phenomena. We will highlight two advantages. First, separatism explains away the challenge of merging emotional intentionality and phenomenology. Second, it gives a straightforward account of emotional states that lack intentionality (such as moods) or phenomenology (such as unconscious and standing emotions).

2.1.Merging Emotional Intentionality and Phenomenology

The first reason to adopt a separatist taxonomy is that it explains away a recalcitrant issue in emotion theory: developing a theory that characterizes emotions as intentional-phenomenal states. It is commonly acknowledged that traditional cognitive and somatic theories of emotion have problems accounting for both emotional intentionality and phenomenology, and recent theories trying to merge them into a single emotional state face similar problems. Separatism

avoids such issues by dividing emotional intentionality and phenomenology into two distinct emotional states: (non-phenomenal) emotional attitudes, and (non-intentional) emotional feelings.

Cognitive theories of emotions posit that emotions are evaluative beliefs (Nussbaum, 2001; Solomon, 1976).[2] According to cognitive theories, to be afraid is to believe that something is dangerous, to be angry is to believe that something is offensive, and so on. Note that beliefs are always about something. Thus, cognitive theories can easily account for the intentionality of emotion. For the cognitivist, emotions are intentional because they are constituted by beliefs, and beliefs are intentional. However, beliefs are prototypically "cold" states.[3] In consequence, some proponents of cognitive theories have denied that emotions are phenomenal states. Robert Solomon, for example, claims that "an emotion is never simply a feeling, even a feeling plus anything. [...] the feelings are at most an accompaniment" (Solomon, 1976: 118-119; see also Pitcher, 1965).

Somatic theories claim that emotions are perceptions of one's bodily changes (James, 1884; Laird, 2007; Prinz, 2004).[4] To feel afraid is to feel your body trembling, and to feel angry is to feel your muscles tensing up. By understanding emotions as perceptions of one's bodily changes, somatic feeling theories explain emotions' phenomenology in terms of interoceptive perceptual phenomenology. For somatic theories, emotions are felt because they are perceptions of bodily changes, and it feels a certain way to perceive, e.g., your body trembling. However, most emotions are not directed at one's own body, like bodily perceptions are. Because of this, some authors have argued that the outward intentionality of emotion is a mere appearance caused by emotion-adjacent intentional states. Along these lines, Daniel Shargel claims that "we take emotions to be about the objects of the mental states that elicit them. We notice that spider-

[2] Solomon identifies emotions with judgments, and while he sometimes suggests that making a judgment is having a belief (e.g. In The Passions, he states that "I cannot be angry if I do not believe that someone has wronged or offended me. Accordingly, we might say that anger involves a moral judgment as well, an appeal to moral standards and not merely personal evaluations. My anger is that set of judgments", Solomon, 1976: 187), sometimes he stresses that judgments and beliefs are different (see, e.g. Solomon, 2002: 4). Thus, someone might not include him as a proponent of cognitivism as defined here.

[3] This is somewhat of an orthodoxy within the philosophy of mind. Against it, proponents of "cognitive phenomenology" claim that cognitive states such as beliefs have a proprietary phenomenology independently of the sensory and affective states that accompany them (Chudnoff, 2015; Hansen, n.d.).

[4] Prinz (2004) identifies emotions with perceptions of bodily changes, but he takes those perceptions to also represent core-relational themes (see Prinz, 2004: 67-69). Thus, one might want to categorize his theory as a cognitive-somatic hybrid. However, Prinz's theory does not qualify as a hybrid view in our taxonomy because it posits that emotions are constituted by one single state, bodily perceptions.

representations elicit fear, so we take ourselves to be afraid of spiders" (Shargel, 2015: 839, emphasis added; see also Whiting, 2011).

Cognitive and somatic theories identify emotions with states that lack intentionality or phenomenology, and thus tend to deny that emotions have both features. Recently, authors have considered this solution unsatisfactory, and modified these theories to unify intentionality and phenomenology into a single emotional state.

Neo-cognitive theories claim, as cognitive theories, that emotions are evaluations of things and events in our environment. However, they differ in the type of state that carries that evaluation.[5] Whereas cognitive theories claim that emotions are evaluative beliefs, the most popular neo-cognitive theories claim that emotions are evaluative perceptions (Döring, 2003; Tappolet, 2016). Perceptions have intentionality and phenomenology. However, as many authors have noted, important disanalogies between emotion and perception question the plausibility of this view (Brady, 2013; Salmela, 2011).

Bodily attitudinal theories (Deonna & Teroni, 2012, 2015), like somatic theories, hold that bodily changes play a central role in emotion, but also differ significantly. Whereas somatic theories identify emotions with bodily perceptions, bodily-attitudinal theories claim that emotions are felt bodily attitudes directed towards external objects and events. By characterizing emotions as "intentional bodily feelings", bodily-attitudinal theories account for both emotional intentionality and phenomenology. However, these theories face the challenge of explaining how bodily feelings, which are typically not intentional, can be intentionally directed in the case of emotion (Mitchell, 2021b).

Hybrid theories, or a popular version thereof,[6] posit that emotions are the result of combining bodily perceptions and cognitive evaluations (Barlassina & Newen, 2014). In this compound, the bodily perception accounts for the phenomenology of emotion, and the cognitive evaluation accounts for its intentionality. However, these theories face the so-called "problem of plenty" (Prinz, 2004), that is, the problem of explaining how two different states become integrated into a single unified emotional state. Without that integration, Hybrid theories would collapse into a separatist framework.

[5] In other words, they agree that emotions have intentional evaluative content, but disagree in the type of attitude towards that content.

[6] Constructivist theories can also be considered cognitive-somatic hybrids, given that they claim that emotions are the result of interpreting somatic responses in light of a certain situation (Lindquist & Barrett, 2008; Schachter, 1964).

The highlighted criticisms of Perceptual, Bodily-attitudinal, and Hybrid theories are not meant to show that the theories have been refuted. Instead, these criticisms are significant because they target these theories' very characterization of emotion as intentional-phenomenal states. This illustrates the difficulty of merging emotional intentionality and phenomenology into a single emotional state and, in turn, supports the fruitfulness of separating them into two distinct emotional states.

2.2. Accounting for Non-Phenomenal and Non-Intentional Emotional States

The second reason to adopt a separatist taxonomy of emotional states is that it can easily account for states that lack intentionality (such as moods) or phenomenology (such as unconscious and standing emotions).

Standing emotions and unconscious emotional episodes are intentional but non-phenomenal states. Consider standing anger. One can be angry at their partner for days, months, or even years. This anger is intentionally directed at one's partner, but it lacks angry phenomenology. One does not feel angry every single moment of the days, months, or years that they are angry at their partner. Standing emotions have intentionality but no phenomenology. The same seems to hold for unconscious emotional episodes, such as unconscious anger. An episode of anger can be obvious to observers but unfelt by the angry person. Furthermore, the behavior of the unconsciously angry person might suggest that their anger is intentionally directed at one particular person, event, or state of affairs. Unconscious emotions, like standing emotions, seem to have intentionality but no phenomenology.

The theories in Section 2.1., with the exception of Cognitive theories, have problems accounting for unconscious and standing emotions because they make phenomenology a definitional feature of emotion.[7] To account for unconscious and standing emotions, these theories rely on questionable auxiliary hypotheses or, in the worst case, deny that these states are emotions (see Díaz 2023 for criticism of such theoretical moves). In contrast, separatism offers a straightforward account of these emotional phenomena. In a separatist framework, unconscious

[7] Perceptual theories can talk about unconscious perception to account for unconscious emotional episodes. However, when it comes to standing emotions, it seems odd to talk about perceptions that persist for years, months, or years.

and standing emotions are simply (non-phenomenal) emotional attitudes that, in the case of standing emotions, might be occasionally accompanied by emotional feelings.

Accounting for standing attitudes and unconscious occurrent states is also a problem for phenomenal intentionality theories (Bourget & Mendelovici, 2019). This is relevant because phenomenal intentionality could help achieve the merging of emotional intentionality and phenomenology that other theories struggle with (Kriegel, 2014). Proponents of phenomenal intentionality argue that intentionality is grounded in phenomenology. If we accept this, emotions might be intentional in virtue of their phenomenology. However, if the intentionality of emotions is grounded in their phenomenology, it is unclear how one can be angry about something or someone without feeling angry at that moment.

Moods appear to exhibit the inverse characteristics of unconscious and standing emotions. While standing emotions have intentionality but no phenomenology, moods seem to have phenomenology but no intentionality. Moods include things like anxiety, irritability, or elation, which seem to be intentionally directed at "nothing and everything" (de Sousa, 2014: 9; see also Goldie, 2000).

Most theories in Section 2.1. define emotions as intentional states. In line with this, many consider that moods are not emotions because they lack intentionality (Bradley, 2024; Deonna et al., 2015; Frijda, 1994; Stephan, 2017, but see Kriegel, 2018). However, it is acknowledged that each mood has a corresponding emotion category and, crucially, the phenomenology of moods is similar to the phenomenology of their corresponding emotion category (Rossi, 2019): anxiety feels like fear, irritability feels like anger, and elation feels like joy. Moods are thus not completely different from typical cases of emotions. While their intentionality might be different, their phenomenology is similar. Separatism gives a straightforward explanation for why moods and emotions have a similar phenomenology but different intentionality. If we accept separatism, moods can be understood as (non-intentional) emotional feelings; the same emotional feelings that are involved in typical cases of emotion. In a separatist framework, typical cases of fear would involve a fearful attitude and a fearful feeling, while typical cases of anxiety involve just a fearful feeling.

3. Descriptive Adequacy

Arguably, the main challenge for separatism concerns its alignment with ordinary understanding of emotion, i.e., its descriptive adequacy. A separatist framework posits two categories, emotional attitudes and emotional feelings, for which we appear to lack ordinary language terms and concepts. We do not separate between anger attitudes and anger feelings, fear attitudes and fear feelings, joy attitudes and joy feelings, etc. Instead, we simply talk about anger, fear, or joy. If separating emotional attitudes and emotional feelings requires a radical revision of our ordinary understanding of emotion, this might be a good reason to reject it (see Section 1).

There is, however, an obvious candidate to linguistically separate between emotional intentionality and phenomenology: the verb that accompanies emotion terms: *to be* (e.g. "I am angry") or *to feel* (e.g. "I feel angry").

There are various plausible hypotheses about the meaning of "to be [emotion]" vs. "to feel [emotion]." First, it could be that "to be [emotion]" refers to an emotional disposition and "to feel [emotion]" refers to an emotional episode. Second, "to be [emotion]" might refer to the emotion as a whole, and "to feel [emotion]" to the emotional phenomenology (Bedford, 1957).[8] Third, both expressions refer to the same thing (Hacker, 2004). Some have even suggested that sameness in meaning between "to be x" and "to feel x" is a criterion to classify something as an emotion (Clore et al., 1987).[9] For example, "being angry" and "feeling angry" both refer to the same emotion, while "being abandoned" and "feeling abandoned" respectively refer to an objective state of affairs and the appearance of it. Fourth, Reuter (2011) and Sytsma & Reuter (2017) have argued that "having pain" refers to an objective bodily state and "feeling pain" refers to an appearance or feeling of pain. Thus, one could posit that the contrast between "to be [emotion]" and "to feel [emotion]" also tracks a reality/appearance distinction.

In this section, we will test the idea that "to be [emotion]" refers to emotional intentionality and "to feel [emotion]" refers to emotional phenomenology. More specifically, we will test the following two hypotheses:

> (H1) When people specify the intentional element of their emotions, they tend to express themselves by saying that they *are* afraid/angry/etc.

[8] Bedford (1957) considers both options and rejects the latter.

[9] See also the recent work by Syrett & Becker (2024) who investigate children's learning of emotion and mental states adjectives.

(H2) When people specify the phenomenal element of their emotions, they tend to express themselves by stating that they *feel* afraid/angry/etc.

H1 and H2 are relevant to assessing the descriptive adequacy of separatism. If there is a difference between "being x" and "feeling x" when it comes to expressing emotions, and this difference tracks the difference between intentionality and phenomenology, this would mean that a separatist framework does not radically depart from our ordinary understanding of emotion. Crucially, separatism can be vindicated even if our current concepts do not make a *clear-cut* distinction between emotional attitudes and emotional feelings. As long as the proposal does not radically depart from our ordinary understanding of emotion, it can be defended as a desirable conceptual revision (Schupbach, 2017; Shepherd & Justus, 2015).

3.1.Study 1: Researchers' language

We have hypothesized that the expression "to be [emotion]" is used to refer to the intentional element of emotions (H1), whereas the expression "to feel [emotion]" is used to refer to their phenomenal element (H2). If, as we argued in Section 1, cognitive theories focus on the intentionality of emotion, and somatic theories focus on the phenomenology of emotion, we can derive the following hypotheses about researchers' use of emotion terms:

(H3) Proponents of cognitive theories, who focus on the intentionality of emotion, preferentially use the expression "to be afraid/angry/etc."

(H4) Proponents of somatic theories, who focus on the phenomenology of emotion, tend to use the expression "to feel afraid/angry/etc."

To test these hypotheses, we selected books defending cognitive and somatic theories of emotion[10] based on our knowledge of the literature and their citation counts on Google Scholar.[11] We chose four books for each theory. Within this corpus, we searched for the words "afraid",

[10] Our classification is not as strict as one might want. For example, some might want to categorize Roberts' theory as a neo-cognitive or perceptual theory, which differs in important aspects from classic cognitive theories such as Nussbaums'. Similarly, one might want to classify Prinz's theory as a cognitive-somatic hybrid (see footnote 4). We opted for a less strict classification to have a bigger sample size.

[11] Citations according to Google Scholar as of March 2025: Nussbaum 2001 (10,000), Roberts 2003 (1,259), Solomon 2003 (594), Neu 2000 (276), Damasio 1994 (39,541), Prinz 2004 (2830), Colombetti 2014 (1,351), Laird 2007 (359). We believe we didn't leave out any major works defending cognitive or somatic Theories. The only absence might be Robert Solomon's 1976 title "The Passions," which we left out for his more recent 2003 book "Not Passions' Slave." The preference for the verb *to be* over *to feel* before emotion words in "The Passions" (122 vs. 6, Be:Feel Ratio of 20.3) is even higher than in "Not Passions' Slave" (204 vs. 17, Be:Feel ratio of 12).

"angry", "sad", "disgusted", and "happy"—commonly considered terms referring to basic emotions (Ekman, 1999)—and manually coded whether they were preceded by a form of the verb *to be* or the verb *to feel*. Results are depicted in Table 1.

We found a significant association between the authors' theoretical view on emotions and the total number of uses of the verb *to be* and *to feel* when talking about specific emotions, χ^2 (1) = 52.438, $p < .001$, Odds Ratio = 4.05. Overall, the expression "to be [emotion]" was more common than "to feel [emotion]". However, the preference for the verb *to be* over the verb *to feel* was much more pronounced in books by authors that defend a cognitivist approach to emotion (Be:Feel ratio of 7.3) than in books by authors that defend somatic theories of emotion (Be:Feel ratio of 1.8). The full pattern of results is depicted in Table 1.

	afraid		***angry***		***sad***		***disgusted***		***happy***		***TOTAL***		
	be	*feel*	*be*	*feel*	*be*	*feel*	*be*	*feel*	*be*	*feel*	*be*	*feel*	*Ratio*
Nussbaum 2001	4	0	21	0	1	2	1	0	8	0	35	2	17.5
Roberts 2003	21	10	87	22	16	2	8	2	11	1	143	37	3.9
Solomon 2003	4	0	190	13	3	0	0	0	7	4	204	17	12.0
Neu 2000	14	0	12	1	20	0	2	0	15	4	63	5	12.6
Cognitivists Subtotal	**43**	**10**	**310**	**36**	**40**	**4**	**11**	**2**	**41**	**9**	**445**	**61**	**7.3**
Damasio 1994	2	0	1	1	1	4	0	1	2	4	6	10	0.6
Prinz 2004	30	2	17	2	13	4	6	1	7	2	73	11	6.6
Colombetti 2014	1	0	5	2	5	5	0	0	4	2	15	9	1.7
Laird 2007	7	4	9	18	3	9	0	0	15	10	34	41	0.8
Somaticists Subtotal	**40**	**6**	**32**	**23**	**22**	**22**	**6**	**2**	**28**	**18**	**128**	**71**	**1.8**

Table 1. Uses of the verb "to be" or "to feel" together with various emotion terms across different books.

3.2.Study 2: Ordinary Language

In Study 1, we compared uses of the verb "to be" and the verb "to feel" taking advantage of philosophers' focus on either the intentionality or phenomenology of emotion. Although there

are good reasons to think that proponents of different theories indeed have such differential focus (see Section 1), the results of Study 1 only tentatively support our main hypotheses (H1 and H2, see Section 3). In Study 2, we want to try a different approach and test ordinary language use.

In everyday talk, we can focus on the intentionality of emotions by using "that-" or "about-clauses" ("I am angry that [intentional object]", "I am angry about [intentional object]"), whereas "when" or "because" focus on the cause of emotions (e.g. "I am happy when [cause]" or "I am happy because [cause]"). If the expression "to be [emotion]" is used to refer to the intentional element of emotions (H1), we can derive the following hypotheses about ordinary language use:

> (H5) People should prefer "being afraid/angry/etc." over "feeling afraid/angry/etc." when they specify the intentional object of their emotion (by using that- and about-clauses) more than when they report the cause of their emotion (by using "when" or "because").

To test H5, we ran a series of searches in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)[12] and compared the frequency of use of the verb *to be* vs. *to feel* in two different types of phrases:

> Intentional phrases: "I * [emotion] that / about"
>
> Causal phrases: "I * [emotion] when / because"

There was a significant association between the type of phrase (Intentional vs. Causal) and the total number of uses of the verb *to be* and *to feel* when talking about specific emotions (happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust), χ^2 (1) = 28.284, $p < .001$. Once again, the expression "to be [emotion]" was more common than "to feel [emotion]." However, people seem to prefer the verb *to be* over *to feel* when they specify the intentional object of their emotion (Be:Feel ratio of 5.3) more than they do when they specify the cause of their emotion (Be:Feel ratio of 1.5). The full pattern of responses is depicted in Table 2.

Intentional phrase	***be***	***feel***	***Ratio***	***Causal phrase***	***be***	***feel***	***Ratio***
*I * happy that*	142	7	20.0	*I * happy when*	8	3	2.66
*I * sad that*	42	21	2.0	*I * sad when*	8	14	0.6

[12] Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in philosophical studies employing corpus-linguistic methods (e.g., Fischer et al. 2015; Hansen et al. 2021; Meylan et al. 2025; Sytsma et al. 2019). For a comprehensive overview, see Reuter & Baumgartner (2024).

*I * scared that*	24	2	12.0	*I * scared when*	2	1	2.0
*I * angry that*	36	4	9.0	*I * angry when*	0	2	0.0
*I * disgusted that*	17	0	n/a	*I * disgusted when*	1	1	1.0
*I * happy about*	21	5	4.2	*I * happy because*	9	4	2.2
*I * sad about*	19	14	1.4	*I * sad because*	7	9	0.8
*I * scared about*	2	2	1.0	*I * scared because*	5	0	n/a
*I * angry about*	11	3	3.7	*I * angry because*	10	0	n/a
*I * disgusted about*	1	1	1	*I * disgusted because*	0	0	n/a
Intentional Subtotal	**315**	**59**	**5.3**	***Causal Subtotal***	**50**	**34**	**1.5**

Table 2. Being-talk vs. feeling-talk on COCA for intentional phrases vs. causal phrases across different emotions.

3.3.Study 3: Vignettes

One limitation of our previous study is that, although it is uncontroversial that intentional phrases (using "that" and "about") refer to the intentional element of emotions, it is not so clear that causal phrases (using "when" and "because") refer to their phenomenal element. Remember that our main hypotheses are:

> (H1) When people specify the intentional element of their emotions, they tend to express themselves by saying that they *are* afraid/angry/etc.
>
> (H2) When people specify the phenomenal element of their emotions, they tend to express themselves by stating that they *feel* afraid/angry/etc.

To *directly* test both H1 and H2, we designed a survey study. In this study, we used vignettes in which a person faces an emotionally relevant situation and manipulated the intentional and phenomenal elements of their reaction. If our hypothesis is correct, people will be more willing to use the "to be [emotion]" form when the vignette focuses on the intentional elements, and more willing to use the "to feel [emotion]" when the vignette focuses on the phenomenal elements. Data and materials for this study are openly available at https://osf.io/vtuqw/?view_only=b5a8716a4f9747a89e3a4dd8b5c0fff2.

241 participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk and completed the survey for a monetary payment. 93 participants answered one of our two control questions incorrectly

(see below) and were excluded from the analysis. The final sample consisted of 148 participants (82 male, 66 female, M_{age} = 36.62, SD = 12.24, age range 18-70). Sensitivity analyses using G*Power showed the study had enough power to detect a medium effect (w = .03) using chi-square tests.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions in the experiment: Intentionality (with no phenomenology), or Phenomenology (with no intentionality). For each condition, we used two different emotions: Fear and Anger. Our description of the study will focus on the Fear case for ease of exposition.[13] The Fear vignette read as follows:

> A few weeks ago, Tom and his friend Robert bought tickets for a concert of their favorite band in a nearby city. Tom doesn't drive, so Robert gives Tom a lift on his motorbike. They have a few drinks and enjoy a great show. When the concert is over, they take Robert's motorbike to get back home. The street is wet because it has rained, and Robert is a little drunk, but they ride home anyway.

In the Intentionality condition, the story continues as follows:

> Tom thinks the situation is dangerous and they may have an accident before arriving home. However, his heart doesn't accelerate and he is not uneasy.

In the Phenomenology condition, the story continues as follows:

> Tom does not think the situation is dangerous, and is sure that they will arrive home safely. However, his heart accelerates and he is uneasy.

After reading the corresponding vignette, participants answered "yes/no" to two control questions: (1) Does Tom think that there is any danger in what they are doing?" and (2) "Does Tom experience any physiological reactions to the situation?". Participants whose responses didn't match what was written in the vignette were excluded from the analysis to preserve the

[13] The anger case was: "A few weeks ago, Tom and his friend Robert bought tickets for a concert of their favorite band in a nearby city. Tom doesn't drive, so Robert gives Tom a lift on his motorbike. Robert tells Tom he is only drinking sodas so he is able to drive back home after the concert. When the concert is over, Robert is clearly drunk. Tom refuses to get on Robert's motorbike. Robert calls Tom "coward" and leaves fast on his bike. (Intentionality condition) Tom thinks that what Robert did was offensive and insulting. However, his muscles don't get tight and he is not uneasy. (Phenomenology condition) Tom thinks that what Robert did was not offensive or insulting. However, his muscles get tight and he is uneasy." The control questions were "Does Tom think that there is offence in what Robert did?" and "Does Tom experience any physiological reactions to the situation?." The main question was "Which statement do you believe describes Tom's situation best? Tom is angry. (1) Tom feels angry. (2) Both of the above. (3) Neither. / Other. (4)"

validity of our results. As the main dependent variable of our study, participants responded to the following question:

> Which statement do you believe describes Tom's situation best?
>
> - Tom is afraid.
> - Tom feels afraid.
> - Both of the above.
> - Neither. / Other.

There was a significant association between the experimental condition (Intentionality, Phenomenology) and participants' choices about the most accurate description of Tom's situation, χ^2 (3) = 24.01, $p < .001$. Participants tended to choose the phrase "Tom is afraid/angry" as the best description in the Intentionality condition (Be:Feel ratio of 1.6). Conversely, participants tended to choose the phrase "Tom feels afraid/angry" in the Phenomenology condition (Be:Feel ratio of 0.2).

A roughly equal number of participants across conditions thought that neither "Tom is afraid/angry" nor "Tom feels afraid/angry" was a good description of Tom's situation. This is rather unsurprising, as paradigmatic instances of emotion involve both intentional and phenomenal elements. Furthermore, many participants thought that both "Tom is afraid/angry" and "Tom feels afraid/angry" were good descriptions of Tom's situation in the Intentionality case. This might be because the intentional elements of emotions are more central in people's understanding of emotion (Díaz, 2022, 2023b), or because our manipulation did not rule out all possible phenomenal elements. The full pattern of responses is depicted in Table 4.

	be	***feel***	***both***	***neither/other***	***Be:Feel ratio***
Intentionality Condition	30	19	23	21	**1.6**
Phenomenology Condition	5	29	5	16	**0.2**

Table 4. Responses to the question "Which statement do you believe describes Tom's situation best?" by condition in Study 3.

One might object[14] that our vignettes contain a possible confound in that we simply negate the cognitive element ("Tom does not think the situation is dangerous") in the phenomenological condition and negate the phenomenal element ("his heart doesn't accelerate and he is not uneasy.") in the intentionality condition. This might have biased people into giving responses that align with our predictions. Instead, we should have specified that "Tom thinks the situation is safe, and they won't have an accident before arriving home" in the phenomenological condition and "his heartbeat remains steady and he is calm" in the intentionality condition. To address this concern, we conducted a follow-up study focusing on the emotion of fear. The results closely mirrored those of the original study. Once again, we found a significant association between the experimental condition (Intentionality, Phenomenology) and participants' choices, χ^2 (3) = 8.11, p = .004. Participants tended to choose the phrase "Tom is afraid" as the best description in the Intentionality condition (Be:Feel ratio of 1.22) and tended to choose the phrase "Tom feels afraid" in the Phenomenology condition (Be:Feel ratio of 0.12). While negating somatic experiences may have had a minor influence, the overall pattern of results remained consistent, further supporting our main claims (the design and the datafile of this follow-up study can be accessed here: https://osf.io/vtuqw/?view_only=b5a8716a4f9747a89e3a4dd8b5c0fff2).[15]

4. **Discussion**

In this paper, we argued for the theoretical fruitfulness and descriptive adequacy of separatism, which posits two distinct and separable emotional states: (non-phenomenal) emotional attitudes and (non-intentional) emotional feelings.

In Section 2, we argued for separatism's theoretical fruitfulness. In particular, we argued that separatism has two advantages over anti-separatist views. First, it provides a new solution to the challenge of merging emotional intentionality and phenomenology. In a separatist framework, these are accounted for by two distinct and separable emotional states: emotional attitudes account for emotional intentionality, and emotional feelings account for emotional phenomenology. Second, separatism accounts for emotional states that lack intentionality or

[14] We would like to thank a reviewer for raising this objection and for suggesting a different formulation of the vignettes.

[15] Similar to the Main Study 3, we had to exclude several participants (N=19) for failing one or both of the control questions. The exact distribution in the phenomenology condition was: Tom is afraid (N=2), Tom feels afraid (N=16), Both (N=8), Neither (N=0). In the intentionality condition the distribution was: Tom is afraid (N=11), Tom feels afraid (N=9), Both (N=8), Neither (N=8).

phenomenology. Unconscious and standing emotions, which have intentionality but lack phenomenology, are explained as isolated emotional attitudes. In the case of standing emotions, these emotional attitudes can sometimes be accompanied by emotional feelings. Moods, which have phenomenology but lack intentionality, are explained as isolated emotional feelings. This, in turn, explains why moods have a similar phenomenology but different intentionality than typical cases of emotion.

In Section 3, we presented three studies testing separatism's descriptive adequacy. In Study 1, we examined the use of emotional language by emotion researchers. Our results suggest that proponents of cognitive theories tend to prefer the phrase "to be [emotion]" over "to feel [emotion]" more than proponents of somatic theories. In Study 2, we investigated the language that laypeople use when describing their emotional states. Our corpus analyses revealed that ordinary people tend to prefer the phrase "to be [emotion]" over "to feel [emotion]" when specifying the intentional object of their emotions, more so than when specifying their cause. In Study 3, we conducted a vignette study in which we manipulated the intentional and phenomenal elements of an emotional reaction. Participants in our study tended to prefer the phrase "to be [emotion]" to describe cases that focus on intentional elements, and "to feel [emotion]" to describe cases that focus on phenomenal elements.

Altogether, the results of Studies 1-3 provide converging evidence that people can distinguish between emotional intentionality and phenomenology by using the verb *to be* and *to feel*, respectively. These results support H1 and H2 and, in turn, the descriptive adequacy of separatism. However, two objections arise. First, one can question whether our results support H1-H2. Second, one can question whether H1-H2 support separatism. We tackle these objections in turn.

First, one might argue that H1-H2 are not the only possible hypotheses in line with our results. In Section 3, we mentioned four alternative hypotheses about the meaning of "to be [emotion]" vs. "to feel [emotion]." We can now assess whether those hypotheses explain the results of Studies 1-3 (see Table 5). The hypothesis that "to be [emotion]" and "to feel [emotion]" have the same meaning cannot explain the patterns found in any of our studies. The idea that "to be [emotion]" refers to an emotional disposition and "to feel [emotion]" refers to an emotional episode cannot explain the results of Study 3, as our vignettes describe emotional episodes; nor can it account for the results of Study 2, as many uses of "to be [emotion]" refer to emotional episodes. The idea that "to be [emotion]" refers to the emotion as a whole and "to feel [emotion]"

refers to the phenomenology of emotion might explain the results of Study 3, if we accept a cognitivist theory of emotion. However, it cannot explain why people prefer "to be [emotion]" when specifying the intentional object of their emotions more than when specifying its cause, as shown by Study 2.[16] The same is true for the idea that "to be [emotion]" refers to the emotional state and "to feel [emotion]" refers to its appearance. Furthermore, for this hypothesis to explain the results of Study 1, we would have to endorse the implausible claim that somatic theories focus on the appearance of emotion and cognitivist theories focus on its reality.

Meaning of "to be [emotion]" vs. "to feel [emotion]"	***Study 1 Results***	***Study 2 Results***	***Study 3 Results***
No Difference	No	No	No
Disposition vs. Episode	?	No	No
Emotion vs. Phenomenology	?	No	?
Reality vs. Appearance	No	No	?
Intentionality vs. Phenomenology	To some extent	To some extent	To some extent

Table 5. Hypotheses about the meaning of "to be [emotion]" vs. "to feel [emotion]" and their capacity to explain the results of Studies 1-3.

Second, one might accept that our results support H1-H2 but reject that H1-H2 support the descriptive adequacy of separatism. Admittedly, the numbers show that people do not make a clear-cut distinction between "to be [emotion]" and "to feel [emotion]", and some cross-over effects occur on both sides. For example, people sometimes use the verb *to feel* when specifying the intentional object of their emotions (see Study 2), and some people think that "being afraid" describes a case with phenomenal elements but no intentional elements (see Study 3). Thus, even if people distinguish between emotional intentionality and phenomenology, the distinction is rather fuzzy. This fuzziness contrasts with the sharp distinction between (non-phenomenal) emotional attitudes and (non-intentional) emotional feelings posited by separatism. However, descriptive adequacy does not require a *perfect* overlap, but a *sufficient* overlap. The idea is not that theories must perfectly match ordinary understanding, but that

[16] An anonymous reviewer proposed a way in which this hypothesis can explain the results of Study 1. The idea is that Cognitivists use "to feel [emotion]" less often than Somaticists because, given their theoretical commitments, this expression implies that subject is not in fact in an emotion state, and there are few opportunities to talk about mere appearances of emotion. Meanwhile, for Somaticist, the expression "to feel [emotion]" is equivalent to "to be [emotion]." Even if this is the case, the hypothesis still cannot explain the results of Study 2 nor Study 3.

they must not completely derive from it (see Section 1). Results suggesting that people distinguish to some extent between emotional intentionality and phenomenology suffice to justify the use of emotional attitudes and emotional feelings as theoretical concepts.

A related worry is that, even if the results of H1-H2 support the descriptive adequacy of separatism, they are also compatible with anti-separatist accounts. Here, it is important to note that the results of Studies 1-3 do not necessarily support separatism *over every competing view*. When comparing separatism and anti-separatism, we need to consider separatism's theoretical fruitfulness (see Section 2).

Separatism has important implications for emotion research. Adopting a separatist framework would require research on emotions to clearly state the object of study: emotional attitudes or emotional feelings. Theories like the ones reviewed in Section 2.1. should state whether they try to explain emotional attitudes, emotional feelings, or the relation between the two. Similarly, empirical studies should decide whether they target emotional attitudes or emotional feelings, and make efforts to isolate them in their measurements. This would allow us to discern emotional attitudes' and emotional feelings' respective neural underpinnings, effects on behavior and cognition, etc. This way, a separatist framework could help advance emotion research.

A separatist framework could also be helpful outside emotion research. We have seen that ordinary language makes a somewhat fuzzy distinction between emotional intentionality and phenomenology. But we could prescribe a clear-cut distinction. In recent years, various philosophical projects have emerged to address conceptual deficiencies—whether to combat forms of injustice (amelioration), to develop more theoretically fruitful conceptual frameworks (explication), or for any other purposes (conceptual engineering) (see, e.g., Belleri, 2019; Isaac et al., 2022; Thomasson, 2021). Our results in Section 3 can serve as a starting point for conceptually engineering the terms "emotional attitudes" and "emotional feelings" for use in everyday conversations. A clearer distinction between these concepts could help reduce misunderstandings in daily communication. Consider a simple case. People often express emotional attitudes without necessarily experiencing emotional feelings, for example, someone might say, "I am glad you are back in the office" without actually feeling happy about it, or "I am angry that you didn't call me" without experiencing any pangs of anger. A greater awareness that such expressions often convey attitudes rather than experiential states could thus improve interpersonal communication and avoid misunderstandings.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have shown that a framework that separates emotions into (non-phenomenal) emotional attitudes and (non-intentional) emotional feelings is not only theoretically fruitful (Section 2) but also descriptively adequate (Section 3). With this, we hope to open a new way of understanding the emotional domain. We leave open issues regarding which theories best account for emotional attitudes and emotional feelings, respectively. In this paper, we just want to show that separatism is a valid alternative to mainstream contemporary ways of theorizing about emotions.

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