

## *Preface*

Emotion experience permeates our conscious life. Whether subtle or overwhelming, expressed and shared, or hidden and suffocated, feelings render consciousness personally relevant. It is thus surprising that emotion experience has not occupied a more central place in the study of consciousness, and that it is discussed only in specialized journals and books, as if it were a peculiar aspect of consciousness.

This volume highlights the breadth and relevance of emotion experience, and discusses a number of issues pertaining to its investigation in science and philosophy.

What *is* an emotion experience? How does such an experience feel? It is often taken for granted that feelings are bounded experiences, like episodes of feeling fear or anger. But what exactly does such feel consist in? How does it unfold in time? In what ways do emotion experiences differ? A recurring question in the papers collected here is whether it is possible to demarcate emotion experience from other experiences. Interestingly, the replies vary considerably.

Related questions concern the possibility of unfeelt emotions, the way in which they 'become' felt, the alleged 'valenced' character of feelings (do they always feel either good or bad?), and the relationship between emotion experience and imagination. Do imagined emotions feel like real ones? Are they emotions themselves? Or, when we imagine a possible course of action, do we somehow feel it? Do such feelings impinge on our decisions, and if so, how?

This volume also presents accounts of physiological mechanisms supposed to underlie emotion experience. Which neural systems are necessary for emotion experience? How do they relate to what we know about the mechanisms for bodily changes, attachment, sympathy, empathy, and decision making?

We decided to present a selection of papers addressing both emotion experience itself on its own terms and the neurophysiology of emotion experience, because we believe that phenomenological and philosophical analyses should be compared with hypotheses and research in neuroscience — and vice-versa. Both fields are important and interesting in themselves, but we also think that comparisons and cross-investigations can only benefit all researchers. This conviction is reflected in the inclusion, within the volume, of several papers that explicitly

link phenomenological considerations and accounts of underlying neurophysiology. Some of these accounts are explicitly ‘isomorphic’ in their approach; in other words, they look for structural parallels between how emotion feels and how it is implemented and regulated in the organism. Other accounts do not draw such a direct link, yet still aim to explain the character of emotion experience and its temporal unfolding by referring to neuroscience.

The collection spans various issues and disciplines, and may look diverse at first glance. Nevertheless, there are several common threads running through what are only superficially unrelated papers. This commonality gives us hope that emotion experience will be given more attention in the future, not simply as a peculiar ‘hot’ instance of consciousness, but as a complex, comprehensive, and far-reaching phenomenon whose study is relevant for every other aspect of our embodied lives.

*Giovanna Colombetti*

*Evan Thompson*