

## **The Intentionality of emotions and the possibility of unconscious emotions**

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**Abstract** Two features are often assumed about emotions: they are intentional states and they are experiences. However, there are important reasons to consider some affective responses that are not experienced or only partly experienced as emotions. But the existence of these affective responses does not sit well with the intentionality of conscious emotions which are somehow geared towards their object. We therefore face a trilemma: either these latter affective responses do not have intentional objects and we should renounce intentionality as a defining feature of emotions; or we have to explain how they actually have intentional, though unconscious, objects; or after all we must deny that they are really emotions. I suggest that the second option is the correct one: we can provide an account of the intentionality of unconscious emotions and its relation to the intentionality of conscious emotions. To do this, I rely on neuropsychological studies that distinguish two kinds of attention: salience as enriched treatment, and focus as a way of turning our attention. Then, given that only salience is always present in unconscious emotional phenomena, I suggest that emotions are intentional because they involve an object being made salient. I further argue that this feature of emotions explains why unconscious and conscious emotions can be taken as organized around their object. Finally, I defend this account against several objections, showing that the account can be applied whatever the cognitive base of the emotions may be and is not falsified by the fact that attentional aspects of emotions may vary in other dimensions.