

Do Emotions Represent?

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Abstract In this paper, I argue against a prominent view in recent philosophy of emotion which I call ‘representationalism’. On this view, emotions constitute an independent way of representing certain aspects of the world. A major motivation for the view is that emotions have intentionality. Given that emotions are directed at things in the world, they must represent these things as being a certain way. I argue that this implication does not hold, given that it is possible to find entities which are intentional without being representational. Some actions, I argue, are directed towards objects without representing them as being a certain way. Given the apparent possibility that, like these actions, emotions are intentional without being representational, the representationalist must give us positive reasons for her view. I consider some of them and show them to be insufficient to establish representationalism over an alternative non-representationalist account. According to this account, the relation between emotions and other mental states and to the facts they are responsive to is exactly analogous to the relation some actions entertain with the mental states on which they are based and to the facts they are responsive to.