

EMOTION AS A MENTAL MODE

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What is an Emotion ?

**An emotion is a general mode (or style)
of the mental system**

Mental level of discussion

Characterization rather than definition

A Mental Model

A general mental mode includes various mental elements and expresses a dynamic functioning arrangement of the mental system.

The kinds of elements involved in a certain mode and the particular arrangement of these elements constitute the uniqueness of each mode.

Possible mental modes: perceptual mode, emotional mode, intellectual mode.

The Emotional Mode

The emotional mode involves the activation of certain dispositions and the presence of some actualized states. It also includes the operation of various mental capacities and the use of different kinds of intentional references. The emotional mode involves cognition, evaluation, motivation, and feeling.

The Perceptual Mode

The perceptual mode is the most basic mental mode. It involves being aware of our immediate environment.

Perception is the major capacity used in the perceptual mode; other capacities involved in this mode are memory and imagination.

The Intellectual Mode

The basic capacity in this mode is thinking and then memory.

The use of imagination is more extensive than the use in the perceptual mode.

The most extensive use of memory is in the intellectual and then in the emotional mode.

The use of imagination is most obvious in the emotional and then the intellectual mode.

Mental Modes

A given mental mode is not necessarily the complete opposite of another mode.

Perception is found in all modes—although in different forms.

Feelings are intense in the emotional mode, they are not essential for the perceptual and intellectual modes.

Thinking dominates the intellectual mode, but is also present in the emotional mode.

The dominance of each mode depends on personal and evolutionary development.

Mental Modes

Mental modes are not isolated entities, but prototypes of various mental phenomena.

In between these, there are many types of phenomena that do not fit perfectly into any of the three prototypes.

Some of the features constituting a mental mode admit of degrees and hence no precise borderline is possible between the various modes.

The precise division is of little significance

The importance of division

When Yogi Berra was asked if he wanted his pizza cut into four or eight slices he replied:

Better make it four; I don't think I can eat eight.

Mental Modes

A mental mode may be more comprehensive in the sense that it involves more mental elements.

There are elements that are constitutive of a certain mode and those that are frequently associated with it.

A mental mode is typically complex, structured, episodic, and dynamic.

Mental Modes

Mental modes can be distinguished on the basis of a few categories:

- (a) Basic *psychological features*;
- (b) Basic types of *information-processing mechanisms*;
- (c) Basic *logical principles* of information processing.

Psychological Features

Typical characteristics:

Complexity, instability, intensity, partiality, and duration.

Basic components:

cognition, evaluation, motivation, and feeling.

Complexity

Different levels of discussion

Highly structured nature related to diverse kinds of mental elements

Comprehensiveness: activation of all mental capacities

The intellectual and perceptual modes are less complex, structured, and comprehensive than the emotional mode.

Instability

Emotions typically occur when we perceive positive or negative significant changes in our situation.

Novelty is exciting

Between two evils, I always pick the one I never tried before. (Mae West)

Emotions indicate a transition, during which the preceding context has changed, but no new context has yet stabilized.

Instability

*I feel the earth move under my feet,
I feel the sky tumbling down,
I feel my heart start to trembling,
Whenever you're around.*

Carole King

The perceptual and intellectual modes are much more stable as changes are less significant to them.

Intensity

Emotions are intense experiences

The personal change associated with the emotional experience requires mobilizing many capacities and resources.

Emotions are perceived as associated with urgency and heat.

The other modes are, generally speaking, of lesser intensity.

Partiality

Emotions are partial in two basic senses:

They are focused on a *narrow* target

They express a *personal* and interested perspective.

Other modes are less partial

Duration

Typical emotions are essentially transient states.

Other modes are less transient

Basic Components

Cognition, evaluation, motivation, feeling

The central place of the evaluative component

Other mental modes may not include all four
basic components

Information-Processing Mechanisms

Mental modes may rely upon different information-processing mechanisms.

One possible distinction: schematic mechanism and deliberative mechanism.

A schematic mechanism is most typical of the perceptual mode, and a deliberative mechanism is most typical of the intellectual mode.

The emotional mode consists of both types but the schematic one is more dominant at the initial stages.

Information-Processing Mechanisms

A dispositional mechanism typically involves spontaneous responses depending on a more tacit and elementary evaluative system.

Schematic activity is typically fast, automatic, and is accompanied by little awareness.

A deliberative mechanism typically involves slow and conscious processes, which are largely under voluntary control.

The two mechanisms may conflict.

The Logic of the Emotional Mode

Formal and transcendental logic

The logical principles underlying the information processing of each mode are different

These principles are used by the majority of people in most circumstances, but not in all of them.

In the emotional mode these types refer to (a) the nature of reality, (b) the impact of the given event upon the agent, and (c) the background circumstances of the agent.

The Nature of Reality

The emotional mode

1. The emotional world consists of the environment I actually perceive or in which I imagine myself to be;
2. Changes are more significant than stability;
3. A personal event is more significant than a non-personal event.

The intellectual mode

1. The environment that I actually perceive or in which I imagine myself to be constitutes a small portion of the intellectual world;
2. Changes are not more significant than stability; on the contrary, we should assume that there are stable regularities in the world;
3. A personal event is not necessarily more meaningful than a non-personal event.

B. The Impact of the Given Event

The emotional mode

4. The perceived strength of an event is most significant in determining its impact;
5. The more real an event is perceived to be, the more significant it is;
6. Those who are relevant and close are more significant than Those who are irrelevant and remote.

The intellectual mode

4. The objective strength of an event is what is most significant;
5. The significance of an event is not always connected to its perceived reality;
6. My psychological distance from a certain person is of no relevance in evaluating this person.

C. Background Circumstances of the Agent

The emotional mode

7. The more responsible I am for a certain event, the more significant the event is;
8. The less prepared I am for a certain event, the more significant the event is;
9. The issue of whether the agent deserves a certain event is greatly significant in evaluating this event.

The intellectual mode

7. My responsibility for a certain event is in many cases not relevant to its present significance;
8. My preparedness for a certain event is in many cases not relevant to its present significance;
9. The issue of whether the agent deserves a certain event is not always significant in evaluating this event.

Implications

Characterizing emotions as a mental mode may change some of the traditional disputes concerning the nature of emotions.

The dichotomy between emotions and thinking

The essence of emotions

Basic and nonbasic emotions

Thank you