A New Approach to Sartre's Theory of Emotions

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The emotions continue to be casualties of ontological presumptions that legislate against appreciating their cognitive and expressive significance. When possibilities of emotional disclosure are covered over by misunderstanding, the emotions cannot be appropriated with their full potentiality. The misunderstanding of emotion is not only true of everyday preconceptions of self and world, but also of philosophical investigations and of particular interest here, even of existential phenomenological interpretations of emotions. This failure is particularly striking, since one of this tradition's founders, Jean-Paul Sartre, wrote a seminal work on the emotions which his successors have still failed to appreciate adequately.

It has been 45 years since Sartre wrote *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions* (translated as *Emotions: Outline of a Theory*),[1] and yet its potential to break ground has been continuously buried under stereotyped approaches to Sartre's philosphy that persist in seeing him as a dualist or an idealist. The striking ending of this treatise has been so consistently ignored, one almost wonders if it had been mistakenly printed without its final sections. Sartre's use of a Husserlian phenomenological analysis of varying in free play various possible presentations of the phenomenon under study has been repeatedly overlooked and misunderstood.

In this paper I will offer an interpretation of Sartre's work on the emotions which is radically different from the assessment of Fell, Solomon and Strasser, three commentators whose misunderstanding of Sartre's theory is embedded in thei rown book-length work on the subject. My interpretation will suggest that Sartre's work on the emotions points toward an articulation of a non-dualistic intertwining of consciousness and world and gives a surprising meaning to *la magie* (magic) which calls for a "transcendence of the ego" in considering human being and how this being's world is revealed to it. Sartre has given us both a broader notion of the *structures of experience* and of *what can be revealed* to consciousness about that experience. Although only an *outline* of a direction to be followed, as Sartre has warned us with his title, this direction goes beyond not only traditional categories but also the work of other phenomenologists. My suggestion will be that it is not Sartre who

is the neo-Cartesian, but that his readers have often failed to follow Sartre's thinking beyond the dominion of the Cartesian ego.[2]

I. The Problem of Emotions: A Charade and Flight from Reality?

The person trying to create stability and order may condemn the emotions as a "disturbance." A person who experiences life as stagnant and emotionless trying to break the spell of monotony hails the emotions as a savior. Both have their eyes on the most striking aspect of the world of emotion: change. When change is feared or desired, emotion will become a focus of concern, because change is the hallmark of emotion. However, it is this dynamic quality of emotion that has led to the doubt about the cognitive worth of emotion.

Discussions of emotion often focus on how dislike or love for a person seems to distort interpersonal perception, which then can alter rapidly. At one time, one looks at another with hate, and that person appears in a certain way. Later, under a loving regard, the same characteristics of this person appear in another manner. Similarly, if one looks with a distrust for the sensuousness of the world, it appears in one way, whereas with appreciation, it appears in another. The fact that emotions change so swiftly and with them the meanings they give voice to, has led to the questioning of whether such apprehensions are not merely a reflection of one's own "state", for it seems questionable that the object, event or state of affairs that is the locus of apprehension can be so changeable. Therefore, the question arises whether one is *perpetrating* some charade before the world in order to arrive at these abrupt new meanings *or* is one *suffering* from some "disturbance": either being a change *within* the subject. For the prevailing view of the world is one in which change is ordered and intelligible, that there is a determinate world when the "merely human" is subtracted from it, or what Husserl referred to as "the thesis of the natural attitude."[3]

Sartre, in *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory,* examines during the lengthy first part of the book what it means to take the emotions as a mere "subjective coloring" of the world. Looked at one way, the emotions and their change in the world's meaning can be regarded as one's "changing" the world to suit some purpose:

> Thus, through a change of intention, as in a change of behavior we apprehend a new object, or an old object in a new way.[4]

The change in the meaning of the world revealed by emotion according to this notion would be a change of meaning that would "change" the world to suit our needs, whether this was recognized explicitly or not. The fact that now one hates this woman and sees many hateful things about her, feels the hatefulness of this woman, suits whatever intentions one has, and this is the reason for the new apprehension of meaning. This view of emotion also contains within it an intimation that it is when the world of fact as apprehended by our usual reasoning is intolerable one *flees* to the plane of emotion:

> At present, we can conceive of what an emotion is. It is a transformation of the world. When the paths traced out become too difficult, or when we see no path, we can no longer live in so urgent and difficult a world. All the ways are barred. However, we must act. So we try to change the world, that is, to live as if the connection between things and their potentialities were not rules by deterministic processes but by magic (*la magie*).[5]

In this view, emotion is a flight from reality, a confusion, an appeal to a mistaken, wishful plane of meaning that is childish in its inability to face up to facts and consequences. To return to the above example one can imagine that although this woman had deserted one due to circumstances beyond her control, nevertheless one now sees her as hateful. To feel this way is a choice to understand the situation in a way that is less challenging by avoiding the anxious recognition of the limits of one's situation which are recalcitrant. Even more to the point, perhaps she is faithful, but one fears eventually failing her in some way, so now she is seen as hateful. One's love turns to hate, in order to avoid another type of challenge to oneself: to remain committed to one's free choice in the face of one's finitude, to keep choosing one's choice repeatedly.

Implied in this presentation of emotion as a charade-like flight from reality is the bankruptcy of emotion, for our Western tradition places a high value on understanding that leads to productive action. According to the view previously expressed, emotion would be the opposite of such a productive grasp of the world:

> But the emotive behavior is not on the same plane as other behaviors; it is not effective. Its end is not to act upon the object as such through the agency of particular means. It seeks by itself to confer upon the object, and without modifying it in its actual structure, another quality, a lesser existence (or a greater existence, etc.). In short, in emotion it is the body which changes its relations with the world in order that the world may change its qualities. If emotion is a joke (*un jeu*), it is a joke that we believe in.[6]

Emotion seen this way is a flight from reality, a way of concealing the truth of the situation and a way of paralyzing oneself to meaningful action: a joke that one believes in or a wishful game. In this sense emotion would be a form of "magic" (*la magie*) in the perjorative sense such as used by psychologists to refer to a client who indulges in "magical thinking," or flees from reality because of an unwillingness to adapt intention to one's situation.

We can all cite examples of times we have allowed ourselves to *use* emotions to cover over our inability to deal with our situation. One can flee by focusing on one possible feeling about the exam that I "worked myself into" (as one says in that case). This was a flight from a host of other meanings. One can *use* emotions in this way, and abuse their potential as distinctive acts of consciousness. However, it is equally apparent that one can also abuse rational thought in similar ways, elaborately and logically focusing upon an aspect of a situation or one possible argument and reforming the situation in such a way as to avoid reality, and not to reveal it. In fact, we as individuals and as a tradition of thought have often been guilty of such rationalization.

Since this pattern of flight, of tailoring one's grasp of the situation to suit an intention is *not distinctive* of emotional experience, it appears to be a poor way to characterize it, and Sartre recognizes this, although his commentators usually fail to notice this later position of Sartre. He points out how implausible this characterization of emotion is when one realizes both that emotions are in fact seldom used in this way, and furthermore are less liable to this sort of manipulation than other modes of cognition:

> The purifying reflection of consciousness can perceive the emotion insofar as it constitutes the world in a magical form. 'I

> find it hateful *because* I am angry.' But this reflection is rare and necessitates special motivations. Ordinarily, we direct upon the emotive consciousness as consciousness but insofar as it is motivated by the object: 'I am angry *because* it is hateful.'[7]

It is not the case that the flight into self-deception, or at least manipulation of meaning, is distinctive of emotion. As Sartre rightly points out, this is quite rare. To make this the paradigm of what emotions are and conclude that emotions do not reveal the nature of experience is a mistake.

Emotion is not a distanced consideration which uses emotion, but rather an immediate feeling within the situation: "Emotional consciousness is, at first, unreflective, and on this plane it can *only* be conscious of itself in the nonpositional mode. Emotional consciousness is, at first, consciousness of the world."[8] The fact that emotional consciousness is at first unreflective and usually remains on the level of the unreflective and that insofar as it does, it remains *emotional,* means that the chance of the kind of reflective manipulation just described is less apt to occur with emotional consciousness than with the other modes of cognition which are more reflective. In fact, it is exactly this lack of reflective intervention in emotional consciousness that is most distinctive of this mode of cognition. It was this quality of emotional consciousness that undoubtedly struck those who have considered the emotions to be "passions", that is to say, as bombardments by the world of the passively receptive subject. This notion conveys the lack of reflective or willful intervention in the experiencing of emotions. However, in attempting to explain this characteristic of emotions, this notion overlooks that indeed a choice is made in feeling emotions, as for example — psychiatric patients demonstrate in the extreme, in their dissociation from revealing emotion, often through avoidance of painful choices, disabling emotional life. There is an intentional structure to emotions, but not one that is reflective or simply willful. As intentional, the feeling of emotions presupposes an openness on the part of the subject, and furthermore is an art which can be developed. We are faced with the paradox that may see the emotions as the product of a totally active projection of meaning by the subject and many as a totally passive reception of a movement by the world into the subject. These opposite attributions stem from a failure to rethink the ontological presuppositions that underly many traditional notions of self and world.

II. Beyond Egology to Emotion

Let us turn to Sartre's work on the nature of the ego. By 1934, Sartre had written *Transcendence of the Ego.* In that work, he argued that consciousness was a spontaneous upsurge into the world that *creates* the ego *in reflecting* upon itself.[9] In *Being and Nothingness* in 1943, Sartre detailed how the construction of the ego was part of the "project to be" of human reality *fleeing* from finitude and its ground in a situation it never chose. Sartre described how faced with this finite freedom, human consciousness for the most part was the choice of avoiding its genuine (finite) choices in order to vainly attempt to achieve a God-like freedom that would first choose its situation and then choose again on the basis of being its own source or foundation.[10] Unable to accept not being this source of itself, of its situation with its history and material dimensions, human freedom freely chooses flight from

the (limited) freedom it is. This flight takes the form of vainly pursuing the chimera of an absolute freedom, a source of this consciousness that can reflect and will, the ego. For Sartre, however, human freedom is an ungrounded upsurge, inseparable from the totality, its situation, its context. For Sartre, the flight from the situatedness of human existence, attempted through belief in an empirical ego as an absolute foundation is only reinforced by the philosopher's theorizing of a transcendental ego as agent of consciousness.[11] Such theories are more sophisticated means of flight.

The rejection of change as unreal, as untrustworthy,[12] and the rejection of the cognitive worth of emotion are forms of the same distrust, distrust of our situatedness, our finitude. Both seek to undercut experience for the sake of a stable ideal. Both are part of the history of our Western civilization and its "ill will against time" as Nietzsche called it,[13] or our "bad faith," as Sartre called it, which is equally an ongoing war with real change, emotion, embodiment, engagement, imagination and ambiguity — all of which are manifestations of a certain level of being we have adamantly tried to deny. For time, space, possibilities for action, and structures of significance can appear differently for different ways of being-in-the-world.[14] To recognize this unstable level of experience as real, perhaps primary, is to undercut the absolute division between self and world. For Sartre, this dualism is seen as one's constant reflective attempt to restructure experience so as to avoid the anxiety of responsibility for choices one must make, but still cannot control as to their outcome.

Clinging to this dualism, we avoid recognition of this lived level of experience by being caught up in the world of things and techniques. With this stance, egos remain intact, and our philosophical theories bolster this allegiance to the illusion of the transcendental nature of ego as agent. Logic remains the way to grasp experience on the level of technique. However, this flight cannot obliterate other ways in which the world can appear, and other ways in which it is revealed. Primary among other avenues of revelation are emotions:

> This aspect of the world is entirely coherent; it is the magical world. We shall call emotion an abrupt drop into the magical (*magique*). Or if one prefers, there is emotion when the world of instruments abruptly vanishes and the magical world appears in its place. Therefore, it is not necessary to see emotion as a passive disorder of the organism and mind which comes *from* the outside to disturb the psychic life. On the contrary, it is the *return* of consciousness to the magical attitude, one of the great attitudes which are essential to it, with the appearance of the correlative world, the magical world. Emotion is not an accident. It is a mode of existence of consciousness, one of the ways in which it understands (in the Heideggerian sense of *'verstehen'*) its 'being-in-the-world.'[15]

There is this world of the magical — the world of emotion. It is not accidental, but rather an essential dimension of existence. Here, the world appears differently, all things are in a different way, the person exists differently, and intersubjectivity takes on a new meaning:

> There is, in effect, a world of emotion. All emotions have this in common, that they make a same world appear, a world which is cruel, terrible, gloomy, joyful, etc., but one in which the relationship of things to consciousness is always

> and exclusively magical. It is necessary to speak of a world of emotions as one speaks of a world of dreams or of worlds of madness, that is, a world of individual syntheses maintaining connections among themselves and possessing qualities.[16]

The world as revealed by emotion is a certain level of significance. We have frequently covered over this aspect of the world in the way we conceive our experience, and then used this conception for projects of bad faith. We have often given a unitary map of the knowable and intelligible world, when to be truthful one would have to cast forth an image of a beehive world of many levels and faces, as Sartre suggests here.

The world in which we commonly dwell as egos involved in projects to achieve some measure of being is the world of certain daily tasks where everything is grasped essentially as something to be used. This world is arrayed around us such that each being lies at a certain distance proper to its place in our projects. This is the world described by Heidegger in *Being and Time* in the mode of existing he called "concern" (*besorgen*) — a concern for our daily tasks[17] When we stop to reflectively take stock of this world, which usually occurs when we are thwarted in our projects, we place this world at a remove where our fellow beings are objects over and against us with certain properties to be reckoned with. This is the world as objective, what Heidegger called *vorhanden* — the present-at-hand. The means of intercourse between the person and the world in this daily mode of task orientation is the one so aptly described by science in its chains of cause and effect, where one object influences another as beings in a determinate space of predictable relations.

Man is the greater effecter — as the doer — uses this world to set in motion these chains of relations to do his bidding. Here all beings, whether a table, a tree, the waters of the globe, its wildlife or the energy of the atom, are captives for doing one's bidding, and are reckoned upon and calculated. This common Heideggerian theme is also explicated by Sartre by way of contrast to the world revealed by emotion:

> Thus consciousness can 'be-in-the-world' in two different ways. The world can appear to be as a complex of instruments so organized that if one wished to produce a determined effect it would be necessary to act upon the determined elements of the complex. In this case, each instrument refers to other instruments and to the totality of instruments.[18]

In this mode of secure immersion in tasks or detached objectifying reflection the fiction of ego as separate and self-determining and objective world is maintained. However, the well-ordered plan of this dominated world is unstable and easily disintegrates:

> But the world can also appear to it as a non-instrumental totality, that is, modifiable by large masses and without intermediary. In this case, the categories of the world will act upon consciousness immediately. They are present to it *without distance* . . . it is the magical world.[19]

There is always present next to the skin, *tugging* at the *body,* moving through us, these imperatives we call feelings or emotions. When we allow ourselves to be immersed in them, we experience the world within a spatialization which undercuts the usual distances of objective space. This spatialization of immediate interconnection is

the essence of "the magical," according to Sartre. This is not the same closeness as the taken-for-granted-everything-is-in-its-place of our familiarity with things taken as tools as detailed by Heidegger. Far from being tranquilized as one often is in everyday doings in taking the role of anyone attempting such and such task, in emotional consciousness one is alerted to the uniqueness of one's situation. This apprehension is achieved in the moment of experienced interconnection: what it means to feel sad about something or to feel happy about something else is to be flooded by the significance of a part of the world: one *is* happy or sad. Instead of casting out the net of thought or vision of the eyes at something, *for the moment one lives* the meaning of *some* aspect of the world. As in Sartre's example of being terrified at the face in the window, one does not apprehend the face in the world of instruments where it would have to go through the steps of the world of instruments, opening the window, stepping on the floor, etc., in order to feel frightened. The face is immediately lived as terrifying, experienced as this terror, which pierces distances and the ordered relations of the instrumental world.[20]

This is the magical: the apprehension that comes alive in us, in our being, while keeping brilliant and strange the spark of otherness, *an immediate acting at a distance that, contra-logically, is not at all distant.* In order to allow this kind of magic to appear, one has to forsake the control, the distance, and the self-aggrandizement of other ways of understanding and being. The world of emotion is uniquely magical, because in this realm the distinctions between activity and passivity, the sensical and the non-sensical, are superceded by a meaning outside such dichotomies. A means of interceding in alternate unfoldings of the world's meaning is born, or rather rediscovered. This is a medium of significance laced as a spiderweb between differences, and as delicate. We are struck by the magical as fantastical, because our civilization is based on man's claimed priority as the rational animal, the being graced with the gift of speech, and therefore the one given the responsibility for articulating a fundamental logos of reason and category. In the magical world of emotion, our pride in that role, the ego fortified by that pride, and even the world constructed as support for that ego, are challenged by other voices. Suddenly, one discovers that merely because man speaks this does not indicate that his words are the source for the world's eloquence, but rather "indirect voices" of the world speak through the silences of language.[21] Rather than giving original voice to meaning, one finds that in many ways man is non-discursive meaning's child, already having forgotten his birthplace and the nourishing gift of the world as magical, as speaking through emotion of areas of the world where man is not at the center, but is decentered.

One must be careful to caution that what is magical is not a coincidence with the world. To be coincident is to be unaware, unmoved, and we are not even coincident with ourselves as aware beings.[22] The dream of coincidence presupposes the distance of alienation that longs for a return on its own terms of either/or mentality: opposed or coincident. In the world of magic one dwells prior to this separation invoked by reflection, the distance of the ego confronting its objectifiable world.

As essential element of this change of apprehension, of access, is the abdication of the stance of doing. At the

moment one feels, allowing oneself to be given over to emotion, one no longer acts in the usual sense of that word. One is not the perpetrator, but rather is the partaker, and one becomes the particular locus in which the significance of an emotion comes to be. One is not "merely passive" — for to feel takes great energy, resolve, a movement of the self to openness, and yet it is an act of opening in order to be receptive, in order to become a place of emergence. It is this which so clearly saturates the world of emotion: the transcendence of the distinction between activity and passivity. It is at this surpassing of this traditional distinction that we find the gate to genuine change, a transformation of the ego, and a different source of significance and truth. The compulsion to produce is an imperative to bolster the self as an ego apart, yet influencing the world and causing the person to swing between activity and passivity in a constant struggle with the world as resistant, as object.

The realm of experience which continuously breaks through the rigidly ordered and dichotomous explanations of a detached reason is the interpersonal. Although the interpersonal is the most compelling and meaning-laden strata of existence in everyday existence, it has been the region of experience that philosophy has most consistently avoided exploring or taking account of when describing modes of cognition. Sartre realizes that this lack of comprehensiveness avoids a challenge to our usual ways of understanding:

> Thus man is always a wizard to man, and the social world is at first magical. It is not impossible to take a deterministic view of the interpsychological world nor to build rational superstructures upon this magical world. But this time it is they which are ephemeral and without equilibrium; it is they which cave in when the magical aspects of faces, of gestures, and of human situations is too strong. What happens, then, when the superstructures laboriously built by reason cave in and man finds himself once again plunged into the original magic? It is easy to guess: consciousness seizes upon the magical as magical; it forcibly lives it as such.[23]

Sartre has rightly claimed here that one cannot discover the reality of one's personal situation through a purely logical understanding that overlooks the emotions, since one's situation is interpersonal, and the interpersonal is the magical that is uncovered in emotion. Similarly, *as philosophers* we cannot comprehensively understand the nature of existence, which is indissolubly interpersonal, through a merely intellectual reason.[24] As Sartre has pointed out, the weight of the interpersonal alone is enough to make any understanding that does not include our emotional apprehensions collapse from its lack of ground in the situation.

However, it is meaning in general, including the meaning of facts, even the general meaning of "fact" as a mere fact, that is part of a larger context which is comprehended through emotion. As Merleau-Ponty articulated this point:

> A meaning develops, a meaning which is neither a thing nor an idea, in spite of this famous dichotomy, because it is a modulation of our coexistence.[25]

For Merleau-Ponty, these significations "are in a social, cultural or symbolic space which is no less real than physical space . . ."[26] This context of meanings and its spatiality is the setting in which there can be facts at all that claim us, that are significant:

> Our experience of the true, when it is not immediately reducible to that of the thing we see, is at first not distinct from the tensions that arise between others and ourselves, and from their resolution. As the thing, as the other, the true dawns through an emotional and almost carnal experience, where the 'ideas' — the other's and our own — are rather traits of his physiognomy and of our own, are less understood than welcomed or spurned in love or hatred.[27]

The experience of the true is discovered in its significance as an upsurge that *affects* us, that is welcomed or spurned, that confronts us as a *face,* a face of the world or of another, which is Sartre's paradigm of *la magie,* of action at a distance. Given this intertwining of fact and meaning, and the original allowing to emerge in significance afforded by emotion, Merleau-Ponty elsewhere concludes: "In sum, the intellectual elaboration of our experience of the world is constantly supported by the affective elaboration of our inter-human relations."[28] Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are in agreement on this point. The objectifiable, determinate discriminations of world, although having validity, do not exhaust the situation of human being and world: they occur within a context of pre-egological or non-egological life in which the magical structuring of emotion first situates them.

Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, in his similar (and scattered comments), are elaborating themes that Heidegger had encountered. Sartre, of the three, has developed a phenomenology of the emotions most completely. Heidegger had similarly criticized the dismissal of emotions as either active, willful projection or passive "disturbance":

> Our 'feelings' as we call them, are not just the fleeting concomitant of our mental or volitional behavior, nor are they simply the cause and occasion of such behavior, not yet a state that is merely 'there' and in which we are to come to some kind of understanding with ourselves.[29]

Heidegger understood that emotions in their distinctive possibility for revealing undercut these oppositions between mind and will, and between activity and passivity. Heidegger saw that emotions were one's way of comprehending the world as that totality, that more embracing context than the objective, in which the world first comes to mean anything for us:

> Because of these moods in which, as we say, we 'are' this or that (i.e., bored, happy, etc.) we find ourselves in the midst of what-is-in-totality, wholly pervaded by it. The affective state in which we find ourselves, not only discloses, according to the mood we are in, what-is-in-totality, but this disclosure is at the same time far from being a mere chance occurrence and is the ground phenomenon of our *Dasein.*[30]

Heidegger's understanding of *Befindlichkeit,* of mood, disposition, attunement, which is revealed in emotion, is given its role as revealing what-is-in-totality, as a ground phenomenon of human being in *Being and Time* when he inquires into "fundamental ontology." Note that in the passage cited previously in which Sartre first introduces "the magical attitude" of consciousness and "the correlative world, the magical world" he refers to Heidegger and to *Being and Time.* In calling *la magique* an essential mode of consciousness and "one of the ways it understands," Sartre states it is "in the Heideggerian sense of *'verstehen'* and its object is (the Heideggerian) "its 'being-in-the-world.' "[31]

Heidegger had made it possible to

speak of both understanding in a more comprehensive sense than intellection of objective relations, and of "the world" and Being as not exhausted by any objective sense of "Reality." Heidegger had painstakingly elaborated the context of involvement and significance, of pre-reflective meaning, that made it possible for Sartre and Merleau-Ponty to speak of more primordial apprehension of meaning and manifestations of the world than reflective knowing and objective relations. Heidegger had concluded:

> According to this analytic, knowing is a *founded* mode of access to the Real, the Real is essentially accessible only as entities within-the-world. All access to such entities is founded ontologically upon the basic state of Dasein, Being-in-the-world, and this in turn has care as its even more primordial state of Being . . .[32]

Traditional notions of knowing, as a grasp of the "objective Reality" of existence, were situated by Heidegger, as retaining validity but not exhausting possibilities of a wider sense of understanding, and " 'consciousness of Realitey' is itself a way of Being-in-the-World."[33] Seen in this larger context, entities, human being and world appear in other ways than as objective, and are understood as such; therefore, Reality does not exhaust Being:

> From this there arises the insight that among the modes of Being of entities with-the-world, Reality has no priority, and that Reality is a kind of Being which cannot even characterize anything like the world or Dasein in a way which is ontologically appropriate.[34]

These initial statements about the lack of priority both of Reality considered as the objective and of its ego-centered knowing rationality started Heidegger on his path of exploring other modes of thought and understanding embodied in poetry, art, philosophy and other areas where what he termed a "letting-be" (*gelassenheit*) could be achieved — an understanding "beyond the distinction beyond activity and passivity"[35] — a thinking that was more than the intellection of objective relations.

What is important for us to see here, however, is that Sartre, struggling like Heidegger to expand Husserl's original phenomenology toward new ontological horizons, develops an outline of the emotions that takes us also beyond the traditional ego of the cogito into a decentered ontology, one that overcomes Cartesian dualism. It is revealing and helpful to consider Sartre's *Outline of a Theory of Emotions* and his break with Cartesianism in terms of his important philosophical work which preceeded it, *Transcendence of the Ego*. Written in 1934 (although not published until 1936), summing up his year in Berlin studying Husserl, Sartre sets forth a new direction for his interpretation of phenomenology, one which breaks with Husserl and opens the ground for exploring a non-egological dimension of understanding, expression and Being. Sartre denies the self-possession of experience, its apparent reappropriation in knowing and its original ground in categorization, and places consciousness in the world, as dispersed and temporal, situated, and as undermining all traditional dualisms:

> But, in addition, we must bear in mind that from this point of view my emotions and my states, my ego, itself, cease to be my exclusive property. To be precise: up to now a radical distinction has been made between the objectivity of a spatio-temporal thing or of an external truth, and the subjectivity of psysical 'states'.[36]

In giving credence to an overcoming of these traditional dichotomies, Sartre appeals pointedly *to the emotions* not only in the passage cited but repeatedly throughout, as particularly exemplifying human beings apprehension of self and world in a unitary, decentered upsurge. It would appear to be more than fortuitous, that this work is folfollowed by that on the emotions.

Sartre labors to give us a picture of human being that is radical, that goes beyond the clinging to an "I" or agency of consciousness as foundational:

> The ego is not the owner of consciousness; it is the object of consciousness. To be sure, we constitute spontaneously our states and actions as productions of the ego. But our states and actions are also objects. We never have a direct intuition of the spontaneity of an instantaneous consciousness as produced by the ego . . . on this level the ego and the consciousness are indicated emptily . . .[37]

At the level of initiator, our intentionality is projected emptily, as the openness to this upsurge or unfolding.[38] Sartre recognizes the primacy of this situatedness of human being, but he also realizes the meaning of this condition to the being who can never escape this upsurge and become its source:

> There is something distressing for each of us to catch in the act of tireless creation of existence of which *we* are not the creators. At this level man has the impression of ceaselessly escaping from himself, of overflowing himself, of being surprised by riches which are always unexpected.[39]

This constant overflow which means man and world are equally implicated, intertwined, Sartre realizes, is distressing, as being irremediably ambiguous to a being capable of clear and distinct categorizations in some areas of experience, and Sartre spends much energy detailing this being's attempted escape from this distress into an egoism of idealism or a self-objectification of realism (in *Being and Nothingness,* his literary work and elsewhere). This does not mean that Sartre loses sight of his initial insights, merely that he is engaged in other projects of phenomenology: the phenomenology of various states of alienation.

Sartre's celebrated emphasis on freedom is usually mistaken, because it is taken as the freedom of the ego, whereas for Sartre, this freedom is situated in a more primordial context. The freedom of the ego is that cited by Sartre in the study of emotions as that which attempts to *use* the emotions to carry forth its projects. Sartre describes how this life of the ego is circumscribed in the emotions by a more primordial basis in the world revealed as magical. For Sartre, there is *a more primordial sense of freedom* which is bound up with *allowing* the world to be revealed in *new significance* by the emotions, which appears to the egoistic standpoint as nonfreedom, because in it, the ego is decentered, not the agent:

> Consciousness is frightened by its own spontaneity because it senses this spontaneity as *beyond* freedom. This is clearly seen in an example from Janet. A young bride was in terror, when her husband left her alone, of sitting at the window and summoning the passers-by like a prostitute. Nothing in her education, in her past, nor in her character could serve as an explanation of such a fear. It seems to us simply that a negligible circumstance (reading, conversation, etc.) had determined in her what one might call "a vertigo of possibility." She found herself monstrously free and this vertiginous freedom appeared to her *at the oppor-*

> *tunity* for this action which she was afraid of doing. But this vertigo is comprehensible only if consciousness suddenly appeared to itself as infinitely overflowing in its possibilities the *I* which ordinarily serves as its unity.[40]

The emotion cited, fear[41] suddenly reveals the world in a new way, as being constituted by other possibilities, which could be *then* reflectively and objectively elaborated, both about one's environment and about other possibilities of one's own psyche. This initial freedom to discover new meaning, to have the world manifest (in new ways), is for Sartre the most fundamental level of freedom — one intimately bound up with the emotion's power to reveal. In this context, one might think ahead to the passages in *Being and Nothingness* in which love's emotional and bodily absorption in desire suddenly reveals the world in startling new ways — even on the level of perception.[42] Whether in that "world of desire" or here in the bride's "world of sudden dizzying fear" or (in the work on the emotions) the sudden "world of terror" (at the face in the window) there is an upsurge, a spontaneity, that is both an original manifestation of what is, and a new revealing or comprehension.

In looking at *la magie* in *Outline of a Theory,* we saw that a key to understanding what is distinctive about emotion is the transcendence of the distinction between activity and passivity. I claimed that implicit in Sartre's descriptions of this power of *la magie* was the abandonment of the stance of the ego, an aspect of Sartre's work that many of his commentators fail to appreciate, such as those cited earlier. For a philosophy that can look beyond egology to a notion of spontaneous unfolding of what is, dimensions of meaning such as *la magie* and emotion become significant, and conversely for a philosophy that takes the most distinctive possibilities of emotion seriously, an ontology that overcomes the priority of the ego and other subject/object dichotomies becomes imperative:

> But perhaps the essential role of the ego is to mask from consciousness its very spontaniety. A phenomenological description of spontaneity would show, indeed, that spontaneity renders impossible any distinction between action and passion, or any conception of an autonomy of the will.[43]

This locus of evolving being and meaning is the ground Sartre opened, working through similar problems as Heidegger (and Merleau-Ponty), and forms the background for his work (even through the *Critique*[44]), and particularly for his work on the emotions. It is true that Sartre soon abandons this area of research, to investigate phenomena in which human being does assume adamantly an identification with ego, for reasons Sartre will detail, of various psychological, social, political and economic alienations.[45] These latter modes of existing and knowing, however, assume possibilities already explored in Sartre's early work on the status of the ego:

> Everything happens, therefore, as if consciousness constituted the ego as a false representation of itself, as if consciousness hypnotized itself before this ego which it has constituted, absorbing itself in the ego as if to make this ego its guardian and its law. It is thanks to the ego, indeed, that a distinction can be made between the possible and the real, between appearance and being, between the willed and the undergone.[46]

The categorizations of the reflective stance of the ego then are one possible stance that allow the world to be mani-

fest in its deterministic aspect, whose distinctions such as active/passive, cause/effect, possible/real, can be applied, both as a defense that *uses* the intentionality of consciousness to remain at the alienated distance of bad faith, and as a means of truly coming to know the world and be transformed by that knowledge. Similarly, to return to emotion, one can *use* emotion to maintain a distance of charade that preserves the ego intact in bad faith or it can become an allowing of the world to become manifest in new significance:

> Thus, there are two forms of emotion, according to whether it is we who constitute the magic of the world to replace a deterministic activity which cannot be realized, or whether it is the world itself which abruptly reveals itself as being magical.[47]

It is when this revelation occurs that we allow emotion its due and return to "The behavior which gives its meaning as no longer *ours*; it is the expression of the face, the movements of the body of the other person which come to form a synthetic whole . . . The first magic and the signification of the emotion come from the world, not from oneself."[48] In emotion, we have the paradoxical opening out onto, intending (emptily in part), that which reveals itself to us.

It is here in emotion, then, that we find a privileged avenue of apprehension that Sartre (Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty) sought beyond the idealist/realist, active/passive opposition, the legacy of Husserl's attempt to give meaning to the "passive genesis" of intentionality. Structuring, meaning projecting consciousness is overwhelmed or rather reciprocally acted upon in the non-categorical play of the totality of its *sens* revealed in emotion:

> But there is a reciprocal action: this world itself sometimes reveals itself to consciousness as magical instead of determined. Indeed, we need not believe that the magical is an ephemeral quality which we impose upon the world as our moods dictate. Here is an existential structure of the world which is magical . . . The magical, as Alain says, is 'the mind dragging among things,' that is, an irrational synthesis of spontaneity and passivity, it is inert activity, a consciousness rendered passive.[49]

For Sartre, in its most distinctive possibility, emotion is an unfolding, where meaning emerges outside of habitual acquisitions, where the world speaks through consciousness in a parallel manner to that which Merleau-Ponty attempted to discover in Cézanna's descriptions of how the landscape painted itself through him through an auto-organization.[50] Also, *similar to Merleau-Ponty,* is *Sartre's recognition* in the work on emotion that it is not "consciousness" which is being alluded to here by emotion, but the human being as a *comprehending "lived body"*: "He (the face) is in immediate connection on the other side of the window, with our body, we live and undergo his signification, and it is with our own flesh that we establish it. But at the same time it obtrudes itself, it denies the distance and enters into us. Consciousness, plunged into this magical world draws the body along with it . . ."[51] Immersed in situation, and one might say drawn to another level of existing the situation as Sartre says of the effect of desire on the embodied consciousness in *Being and Nothingness,* new significances organize themselves through the lived body. Comprehension as emotional is bodily, not as psycho-physiological, but as *an inhabiting* of a situation. What clearly emerges is that for Sartre,

there are possibilities of existence, and emotion is distinctive among them, in which the being of human being and the manifestation of being in a larger sense, are intertwined, ongoing, decentered, beyond the grasp of the organization of the ego or the determinacy of the objective world: "the behavior which gives emotion its meaning is no longer ours; it is the expression of the face, the movements of the body of the other person which come to form a synthetic whole with the disturbance of our organism."[52] Through these disturbances, these gaps in intention, new meanings emerge which form themselves into new significations that transform the possibilities of the person to whom they are manifest.

We can see how Sartre's earlier work, *The Transcendence of the Ego,* is vital to understanding his work on the emotions. In this earlier work, Sartre had promised us that:

> The phenomenologists have plunged man back into the world; they have given full measure to man's agonies and sufferings, and also to his rebellions. Unfortunately, as long as the *I* remains a structure of absolute consciousness, one will still be able to reproach phenomenology for being an escapist doctrine, for again pulling a part of man out of the world and, in that way, turning our attention from the real problems. It seems to us that this reproach no longer has any justification if one makes the *me* an existent, strictly contemporaneous with the world, whose existence has the same essential characteristics of the world.[53]

Sartre's initial philosophical work stated that phenomenology would, in bringing the human into the world, back from its transcendental isolation, reveal the full measure of "man's agonies and sufferings" suggesting that emotion would be an essential theme. However, for Sartre this is only possible when the construct of the ego is surpassed, and a phenomenology emerges which captures the contemporaneity of man and world, undercutting traditional dichotomies. This phenomenology uncovers a "historical materialism" — an ongoing emergence of meaning and freedom through the lived body in which there are no atemporal structures affording the possibility of experience, nor an objective reality that stands as foundational and all-emcompassing. Sartre's commentators on his theory of emotions have largely failed to realize this, and instead have clung to what Sartre would see as a "myth of the ego." More importantly, phenomenology has not articulated the rich field of inquiry a phenomenology of the emotions would provide, once an ego-centered standpoint was transcended. Such an inquiry, outlined by Sartre, is founded upon a decentered or nonlogocentric ontology, and also further articulates what is meant by this ontology by its descriptions. Rather than Sartre being an idealist, a dogmatic materialist, or a dualist, charges that all have been levelled at him, he has written a philosophy that articulates a temporal, historical and nondualistic becoming, which *also* describes various possibilities of self-denial, distraction, alienation, in addition to genuine comprehension. Sartre's sensitivities to the various tortuous possibilities of existing, doing and knowing should not blind us to his original inspiration:

> It is enough that the me be contemporaneous with the World, and that the subject-object duality, which is purely logical disappear from philosophical preoccupations. The World has not created the *me*: the *me* has not created the world.[54]

REFERENCES

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory,* trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel, 1948), p. 60; first published as *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions* in the collection of *Actualités scientifiques et industrielles,* December, 1938.
2. I choose to refer to Fell, Solomon and Strasser from among Sartre's many commentators and critics, since each has written a book-length work on the phenomenology of emotions which starts from a (similar) critique of Sartre's work. Fell, *Emotions in the Thought of Sartre* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1965) in his work clings to the notion that the presentation of emotions which Sartre details in the first part of the work we're considering adequately represents Sartre's final assessment of emotion in this outline: "Imagination and emotion are, for the early Sartre, the bridge between the subjective and the objective. This bridge is, of course, deceptive and ineffective . . . Sartre is only able to see emotion as fictive idealism because he has identified emotion with thought." (pp. 234, 6). Similarly Strasser, *Phenomenology of Feeling,* trans. Robert Wood (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1977), first published as *Das Gemut,* 1956, states of Sartre's theory of emotion: "More precisely: emotion is for him nothing but a way to a goal, means to an end, instrument of a private conation." (p. 83). Lastly, Solomon, *The Passions: The Myths and Nature of Human Emotion* (Garden City: Anchor, 1976) does expound a theory of emotions very like the one mistakenly attributed to Sartre. In Solomon's work he mistakenly commends Sartre for seeing: "the power of the emotions, this 'magical' power referred to by Sartre, is the ability to alter our surreality and constitute and reconstitute it according to our personal needs." (p. 230). All three of these commentators take Sartre's preliminary phenomenology of a possibility of how emotions can be *used* in the flight of bad faith to be Sartre's final word on the subject. They ignore his eventual analysis of what is the most distinctive and revealing possibility of emotion.
3. As Husserl so cogently articulates: "For each, again, the different fields of perception and memory actually present are different, quite apart from the fact that even that which is here intersubjectively known in common is known in different ways, is differently apprehended, shows different grades of clearness, and so forth. Despite all this, we came to understanding with our neighbors, and set up in common an objective spatio-temporal fact-world as *the world about us that is there for us all, and to which we ourselves none the less belong.* . . . I find continually present and standing over against me the one spatio-temporal fact-world to which I myself, as do all other men found in it and related in the same way to it. This "fact-world," as the world already tells us, I find to be *out there,* and also *take it just as it gives itself to me as something that exists out there.* All doubting and rejecting of the data of the natural world leaves standing the *general thesis of the natural standpoint.*" *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology,* trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (Macmillan: New York, 1962 ed.), pp. 94-6. (first published 1913, *Ideen au einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie.*)
4. Sartre, p. 60.
5. *Ibid.,* pp. 58-9.
6. *Ibid.,* pp. 60-1. Perhaps, a better translation for *"jeu"* might be "game", given its current usage in the literature of psychology.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 91.
8. *Ibid.,* pp. 50-1.
9. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego,* Trans. Forest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Farrer, Straus and Giroux, 1957), pp. 80-2, 92-3. ("La Transcendance de L'Ego: Esquisse d'une déscription phénomenologique," *Recherches Philosophiques,* VI, 1936-37).
10. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Humanities Press, 1953), pp. 127, 129-31, 152-3 (especially).
11. *Ibid.,* p. 19.
12. The most famous statement of this undoubtedly being: "What, then, was it that I knew in this piece of wax with such distinctness. Certainly it could be nothing of all the things which I perceive by means of the senses, for everything which fell under taste, sight, touch, or hearing, is changed . . . No, indeed, it is not that, for I conceive of it as undergoing an infinity of similar changes . . .," Rene DesCartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations* (Middlesex: Penguir, 1968, p. 108.
13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Munich: Goldman, 1972), p. 116.
14. As William Sadler expresses this thought in perhaps the most promising work that contains an initial phenomenology of (certain)

emotions: "What I am advocating is a kind of pluralism within an existential phenomenological approach which sees man essentially as a historical being whose worldly existence is constituted by divergent basic structures of meaning. . . . Our being in the world assumes different forms of transcendence, opens up diverse possibilities of meaning, is characteerized by essentially different intentional structures. Yet these worlds, though distinct, usually interpenetrate within the fundamental world of existence." (p. 242, *Existence and Love: A New Approach in Existential Phenomenology,* New York: Scribners, 1969). One might think of this as providing the intentional correlate to Edward S. Casey's call for a recognition of the "multiplicity of the mental" (p. 19) which allows "the existence of eidetic differences between various kinds of mental acts" but disputs "the hierarchical model, which has dominated Western theories of mind, . . . that same single faculty is superior to all others and rules over them unremittingly." (pp. 177-8, *Imagining: A Phenological Study,* Bloomington: Indiana University, 1976). To provide the correlate, we might call for a "multiplicity of experienced worlds." In doing this, philosophers would begin to heed Ludwig Binswanger's warning: "It is nothing but mental inertness to assume the existence of a single objective world." (p. 196, "The Existential Analysis School of Thought," *Existence,* New York: Touchstone, 1958, Rollo May ed., quoting Von Uexkull).

15. Sartre, *The Emotions,* pp. 90-1.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 80.
17. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 134-44.
18. Sartre, *The Emotions,* p. 89.
19. *Ibid.,* p. 90.
20. *Iibd.,* pp. 87-90.
21. As Merleau-Ponty suggests in the essay of that title that "As far as language is concerned . . . meaning appears only at the intersection of and as it were in the interval between words. . . . In short, we must consider speech before it is spoken, the background of silence which does not cease to surround it and without which it would say nothing." (pp. 42, 46, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," *Signs,* Evanston: Northwestern University, 1964, trans. Richard C. McCleary).
22. As Sartre states this point in his earlier work: "Thus it seems that there is not one of my consciousnesses which I do not apprehend as provided with an *I* . . . Such a *Cogito* is performed by a consciousness directed upon consciousness, a consciousness which takes consciousness as an object . . . the fact remains that we are in the presence of a synthesis of two consciousnesses, one of which is *of* the other." (*Transcendence of the Ego,* p. 44).
23. Sartre, *The Emotions,* pp. 84-5.
24. A fact, of course, recognized to some degree even by Leibnitz in that most elegant attempt to rationally schematize existence, the *Monadology*: "It is true that appetition may not always entirely attain the whole perception towards which it tends, but it always obtains something and arrives at new perception" (Par. 15). With his break from Spinoza's view that emotion was ultimately reducible to conation, Leibnitz's scattered references "contains, indeed, the germs of the later doctrine of feeling as a distinct faculty" (Gardiner, Metcalf and Beebe-Center, *Feeling and Emotion: A History of Theories,* New York American, 1937, p. 256). Certainly, this current has remained in our tradition, but as an *underside,* whose rightful place cannot be established without the epistemological hierarchy and its correlative ontology being surpassed as outlined here.
25. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy,* trans. John Wild and James Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1963), p. 56.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1968), p. 12.
28. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 113.
29. Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics," *Existence and Being,* ed. Werner Brock (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1970), p. 334.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Sartre, *The Emotions,* pp. 90-1.
32. Heidegger, *Being and Time,* p. 246.
33. *Ibid.,* p. 254.
34. *Ibid.,* pp. 254-5.
35. Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking,* trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 61.
36. Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego,* p. 94.
37. *Ibid.,* p. 97.
38. For a remarkable development of this pregnant topic, see Robert Sokolowski, *Presence and Absence* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1978).
39. Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego,* p. 99.
40. *Ibid.,* p. 100.
41. Again, note that Sartre points *to an emotion*

as his example of the transcendence of the ego and as revealing the world as manifest in a new way.

42. The parallel is striking in Sartre's description of the appearance of "the world of desire" in *Being and Nothingness*: "Correlatively the world must come into being for the For-itself in a new way. There is a world of desire . . . Objects then become the transcendent ensemble which reveals my incarnation to me. . . . in my desiring perception I discover something like a flesh of objects. . . . What is ordinarily for me an object most remote becomes immediately sensible; the warmth of the air, the breath of the wind, the ray of sunshine, etc.; all are present to me in a certain way, a posited without distance, and revealing my flesh by means of their flesh. From this point of view desire is not only the clogging of consciousness by its facticity, it is correlatively the ensnarement of the body by the world." (p. 509). World becomes manifest in a new way, outside the active/passive distinction.
43. Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego,* pp. 100-1.
44. One can see an ongoing elaboration of Sartre's appreciation of the reciprocity of human relations in a prereflective openness that is neither active nor passive, not egoistic, but rather an embodied upsurge of the meaning of authentic community that is akin to the understandings elaborated in his early work on the emotions. See my "The Third: Development in Sartre's Characterization of the Self's Relation to Others," *Philosophy Today,* Fall 1980, pp. 249-61.
45. Whereas Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger continue to articulate an ontology which would do justice to these initial insights they shared.
46. Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego,* p. 101.
47. Sartre, *The Emotions,* p. 85.
48. *Ibid.,* p. 86.
49. *Ibid.,* pp. 83-4.
50. As Merleau-Ponty understood Cezanne's project: "He did not want to separate the stable things which we see and the shifting way in which they appear; he wanted to depict matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organization . . . The picture took on fullness and density; it grew in structure and balance; it came to maturity all at once. "The landscape thinks itself in me," he said, "and I am its consciousness." ("Cezanne's Doubt," *Sense and Non-Sense,* trans. Hubert and Patricia Dreyfus [Evanston: Northwestern, 1964], pp. 13, 17.) Merleau-Ponty, too, is attempting to give a phenomenology of those experiences which revealed a dimension of ontological unfolding prior to the activity/passivity distinction.
51. Sartre, *The Emotions,* p. 86.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego,* p. 105.
54. *Ibid.,* pp. 105-6. A recent article which appears on the surface to be taken the same position as this paper is L. Richard Barrett's "The Rational and the Emotional: A Defence of Sartre's Theory of the Emotions," *J. Brit. Soc. Phenom.* 13, 35-44, ja. 82. However, Barrett follows earlier commentators by considering only the first sense of "magic" employed by Sartre in the *Outline,* and therefore considers Sartre's theory of emotion to be limited to considering emotions as a flight in the face of difficulty to a "non-rational world", where such difficulties are avoided. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this paper, this is not Sartre's final position on the emotions, nor does such an interpretation of Sartre do justice to the nonegological description of experience Sartre articulates.

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