

# A Comedy We Believe In: A Further Look at Sartre's Theory of Emotions

Martin Hartmann

*Abstract:* This paper discusses recent interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre's early theory of emotions, in particular his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*. Despite the great interest that Sartre's approach has generated, most interpretations assume that his approach fails because it appears to be focussed on 'malformed', 'irrational' or 'distorted' emotions. I argue that these criticisms adopt a rationalistic or epistemically biased perspective on emotions that is wrongly applied to Sartre's text. In my defence of Sartre I show that the directional fit of emotions is not towards an evaluatively loaded world which is independently given and, at best, represented by emotions, but towards a world shaped through the impact of emotions themselves. Sartre's idea of emotions 'magically transforming' reality for the subject so that the latter is better able to cope with problematic aspects of practically relevant situations encapsulates the world-shaping capacities of emotions, which are thus not reserved for a restricted class of emotions. Recognition of the transformative powers of emotions will also direct attention away from their seemingly representative elements to their normative and practical aspects and offer a new basis for delineating the criteria for judging them. The plausibility of this position is discussed with reference to some of Sartre's examples, such as fear, sadness and horror, but also with reference to Joan Didion's account of grief in *The Year of Magical Thinking*.

## 1. Introduction

Sartre's theory of emotions has recently commanded a level of attention among philosophers which it had not enjoyed in the decades before. While almost all authors praise Sartre's theory of emotions for its original and distinctive approach, a widely accepted view is that it is unsuccessful and faulty when judged by present standards of philosophical analysis of emotions. In the following, I will recapitulate some of these criticisms after first outlining Sartre's early *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*. My aim will be to show that some of the criticisms can be rebutted, or at least relativized, by a closer reading of the *Sketch*. At the same time I would like to suggest that the *Sketch* still contains undiscovered philosophical potential of a more general kind. The question I consider to be of central importance concerns the recently much-discussed notion of the appropriateness of emotions. As will become clear, many critics blame Sartre for concentrating too much on 'malformed' (Wollheim 1999: 82), 'irrational' (Solomon 2006: 109), distorted or misrepresented emotions (Richmond 2011: 155) and for having incorrectly generalized from these to the rich field of emotions as such. Sebastian Gardner, to

name a further example, chides Sartre for concentrating on a 'sub-class or particular mode of emotion' and attributes to Sartre the position that emotions are very close to 'self-deception'. Consciousness, according to Gardner's reconstruction of Sartre, must 'free itself from affective self-enchantment' in order to overcome the 'limitations to human freedom' installed by unregulated emotionality (Gardner 2009: 20–21).

I do not think that Sartre concentrates on non-standard cases of somehow deeply skewed emotions, so I think that the emotions he speaks about are not instances or tokens of a type called malformed, irrational or distorted emotion. The elements critics take to be indications of malformation, irrationality or distortion are, for Sartre, elements inherent in many if not all emotions. As to self-deception, there is no good reason to blame Sartre's *Sketch* for assuming that consciousness 'misrepresent[s] itself as passive' (ibid.: 20) in relation to emotion as if this was an error to be corrected by means of theoretical clarification. Nowhere in the text of the *Sketch* does Sartre maintain the position which seemingly predates *Being and Nothingness* that emotions limit human freedom. In the 'Conclusion' of the *Sketch* Sartre states that his aim was to show that 'a psychological fact like emotion, commonly supposed to be a lawless disorder, possesses a signification of its own' (Sartre 1962: 92) and it is this signification that the *Sketch* delineates. Of course, part of the signification of emotions may be that they help to transfigure reality and thereby help the subject to cope with otherwise unbearable situations. As I will try to show, this really *is* part of their signification. However, I do not think that Sartre treats this transfigurative power of emotion as a kind of anomaly or as something in need of self-therapeutic correction. If emotions contain powers of self-deception, the *Sketch* presents, from a phenomenological perspective, the physiological and psychological mechanisms implemented by them in doing so, but there is no suggestion that the subject is ever able to free itself from these mechanisms. The important point for me will be to identify exactly where the self-deceptive or seemingly distortive elements of emotionality actually occur in normal or standard emotions such as envy, fear, love, hatred, grief and others. One place to look for an answer to this interpretive demand is in Sartre's notion of emotionality as a kind of 'play-acting' we believe in (Sartre 1962: 65), as 'comedy' or as 'magic' (ibid.: 66). To many readers this fictional aspect of emotions has appeared unconvincing. But I will try to show that these aspects of Sartre's account make good sense.

In pointing, following Sartre, to the question of the signification of emotions we are not exactly concerned with the question of the appropriateness of emotions. However, I take this last question, which is not really Sartre's question, to be important because it seems to underlie many of the criticisms directed at Sartre. I am especially interested in a specific rationalistic reading of appropriateness that dominates much recent literature on emotion. The term rationality, of course, has taken on many different meanings in philosophy, so it might be helpful to specify what is meant by it in this paper. This will also be helpful because it is unclear whether it even makes sense to subsume Sartre's approach to emotions under

the concept of rationality as this concept is understood by most contemporary authors. Moreover, it will be helpful because I claim that many of the criticisms of Sartre's approach remain, often against the express will of their authors, intellectualistic or unduly biased towards epistemological criteria of judgement. Consequently, to my mind, recent accounts of Sartre that concentrate on the rationality of emotions get things wrong by implementing false standards of rationality.

When I speak of rationality I am not just pointing to the idea that emotions can be appropriate or inappropriate in the way a belief or a perception can be; rather, I am pointing to the further idea that the standards of appropriateness and inappropriateness are met (or not) when the emotion in question somehow *fits* the world as it (really) is. To exemplify this model of rationality – which I sometimes call the *epistemological model* – it is worthwhile to take a closer look at recent accounts of emotions that draw similarities between emotions and perceptions. The critics of Sartre I briefly mentioned above do not necessarily follow this particular model; but I nevertheless assume that it has influenced many accounts that try to delineate what makes an emotion appropriate or not, or at least that it stands paradigmatically for a powerful tendency within the growing literature on emotions. Thus, Ronald de Sousa, who has been among the most forceful advocates of the rationality of emotions (De Sousa 1987), claims that 'we tell which [emotion] is wrong much as we test the veracity of perceptual information: by appealing to corroborating evidence' (De Sousa 2003: 256). Other accounts which assimilate emotions, or at least their standards of correctness, to perceptions suggest that emotions are subject to a 'correctness condition' in that they 'represent' the world as 'being a certain way, and can thus be correct or incorrect' (Döring 2007: 377). While I have no reservations about the idea that emotions present (I shy away from saying 'represent') the world as 'being in a certain way', my uneasiness begins with the contention that this presentation aims at correctness and with the further contention that correctness means 'fitting the world' and hence, as Döring continues, 'the opposite of aiming at changing the world in such a way that it fits the emotion' (ibid.: 384; cf. Deonna 2006: 37, where it is claimed that emotions 'track' facts). No formula could be further from Sartre's understanding of emotions, because emotions on his conception always change the world, and thereby also change all possible standards we might apply in judging whether an emotion is appropriate or inappropriate, correct or incorrect.<sup>1</sup> According to the epistemological model, judging whether an emotion is appropriate requires finding out whether the emotion accords with the formal object the emotion refers to. For example, my anger about you, according to this picture of the emotions, is appropriate only if you have *really* offended me (your offensiveness being the formal object of my anger). In some sense there must be something like *real* offence in the world (in you) for my emotion to be correct. But this, I suggest, not only misses important lessons Sartre might still teach us; it also misconstrues the role that emotions play in our lives. While anger and emotionality as such may indeed have world-disclosing and, I would add, world-shaping capacities, we should, in fact still following Sartre, pay more attention to what 'world' actually means here. There is much more to emotions

than their (re)presentational powers and these further features also influence what we take to be their specific reference to the world.

Assimilating emotions to perceptions gives rise to problems of its own. Sartre, certainly in his early phenomenological writings, always tried to distinguish phenomena (for instance, perception from the image, and both from conceptual thinking) in order to study them in their own 'essence' (Sartre 2004: 4). Consequently, for Sartre it would be highly unlikely to assume that our criteria for assessing perceptions are the same as our criteria for assessing emotions. Furthermore, if there are certain conditions of normal perception (regular light, normal visual competence) which must be taken as standard for judging whether a concrete colour really is as it appears, there are, I would claim, no such conditions for emotions. Studying average emotional reactions to, say, acts of violence does not help us find out whether these reactions are appropriate 'due to difficulties,' as Mikko Salmela correctly puts it, 'in identifying normal subjects, normal conditions and even normal responses' (Salmela 2011: 21). For Sartre, then, emotions do not really have epistemological value in the narrow sense. Rather, emotions have *subjective* aspects which must be taken into consideration in passing judgement on them: they have *pragmatic* appropriateness conditions which refer to specific functions emotions serve in coping with difficult situations; furthermore, there are intersubjectively generated *ethical* or *normative* criteria we apply when judging the appropriateness of emotions. Here I also follow Salmela's critique of perceptual accounts of emotions when he suggests that the frame of reference for emotions differs from the frame of reference for perceptions, in that the emotional frame is 'constituted from normative rather than factual elements, such as individual or cultural values' (ibid.: 20). Sartre can help us to understand what this means, though what 'normative' actually means with respect to emotions cannot be dealt with in detail in this paper.

In what follows I will begin with a rough outline of Sartre's theory of emotions in the early *Sketch*, though I will also refer to relevant passages in *Being and Nothingness* when necessary. A full account of Sartre's theory of emotions would also have to take into account his literary works, and even his late *Critique of Dialectical Reason* with its brilliant study of serial emotions; however, that would take us beyond the bounds of the present paper. In the third, most extensive section of the paper I will take up some of the basic criticisms that have been directed against Sartre. In the fourth section I will corroborate my account through a brief interpretation of Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*, before ending with a short conclusion.

## 2. Sartre's *Sketch*: The Central Examples and Elements

For ease of exposition I will begin by listing the examples of emotions Sartre presents in the *Sketch* (Sartre 1962: 56–91; all examples are taken from the third chapter of the book). These examples will be discussed in greater detail in the text as the need arises. In each example the relevant emotion is assumed to function as a

substitute for a behaviour or action that somehow cannot be implemented or carried out. Thus emotions respond to a world which has become problematic and they help us to cope with this world by – magically – transforming it:

- disrelish (*dégoût*): I see grapes and reach for them but they are beyond my reach; I shrug my shoulders and mutter ‘they are too green’
- passive fear: I see a dangerous animal coming towards me and fall in a faint
- active fear: I run away from the animal
- passive sadness: I am financially ruined; I seclude myself, mull over my grief and refrain from taking action
- active sadness: I am about to make a confession to a psychiatrist but I start crying and sobbing; I pretend not to be able to confess
- joy: I am about to meet a person I am fond of but haven’t seen in a long time; I am impatient, I make plans, I cannot keep still, I am joyful
- horror: I see a grimacing face appear outside my window; I react with a feeling of terror (Sartre admits that no substitution process appears to be relevant here), I am ‘frozen with terror’ (*ibid.*: 84)

So what about the details of Sartre’s account? Though these details have been discussed frequently in the recent literature on Sartre, interpreters have not reached a consensus. While some claim that Sartre only deals with emotional behaviour and not with emotions *per se* (Neu 2000: 26), others argue that he develops a full theory of emotions. Among the latter, however, some believe that Sartre extricates emotions from the ‘real world of effective action and commitment’ in a problematic way (Solomon 2006: 110; cf. Gardner 2009: 20, who speaks of an ‘abandonment of the practical perspective’), while others treat the ‘contrast between action and emotion’ (Hatzimoysis 2011: 68) they find in Sartre as proof that Sartre accords emotions a distinct phenomenological status. I will take up some of these points in what follows, but I will begin with some general remarks.

Broadly speaking Sartre’s account comprises the following elements: an emotion consists of a *bodily* reaction to a stimulus; it is a kind of *behaviour*; it creates a ‘specific state’ (77) of consciousness and intentionality in the subject undergoing the emotion (the behaviour); it is *functional* in that it serves certain pragmatic purposes of the subject (the ‘goal-orientation’ of emotions); and it has the power to magically transform our view of the world, that is, it is capable of investing (non-emotional) facts with a new meaning. As a result, the world acquires new ‘qualities,’ as Sartre repeatedly says, qualities which seem to be projected onto the world by the power of emotions, but which are still experienced as qualities *of the world*. I will return to this point.

As this enumeration of the components of emotions makes clear, an emotion, according to Sartre, is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon comprising bodily, behavioural, phenomenological and cognitive aspects. An examination of recent philosophical accounts of emotions shows that Sartre’s approach spans different schools and cross-cuts different interpretive stances that usually come in separate theoretical attire. This is probably the reason for the longstanding neglect of

Sartre's approach and is at the root of the current disputes mentioned above. Yet the main reason for the reluctance to accord Sartre's approach the respect it deserves is his idea that emotions magically transform our view of the world. What is at stake can be seen from a more detailed examination of his sour grapes example:

I lift my hand to pluck a bunch of grapes. I cannot do so; they are beyond my reach; so I shrug my shoulders, muttering: 'they are too green', and go on my way. The gestures, words and behaviour are not to be taken at face value. This little comedy that I play under the grapes, thereby conferring this quality of being 'too green' upon them, serves as a substitute for the action I cannot complete. ... I confer the required quality upon the grapes magically. (Sartre 1962: 65)

We have a desire to reach or consume a specific object, but the desire is frustrated and we react emotionally by disclaiming the desire. The emotion – in this case, contempt or disgust – helps us to cope with a world that often frustrates our desires. Through the emotion we successfully suppress the desire and adopt the behaviour of someone who is not interested in the grapes. In fact, we pretend the desire never took hold of us, that it never exerted any influence over us. In other words, the emotion not only extinguishes the present desire, it also reaches into the desire's past and attempts to erase its traces. Sartre is fully aware of the fact that the example of the grapes is not a paradigmatic case for demonstrating the success of the transformative power of emotions. The comedy, he says, 'is only half sincere' (ibid. 66). In some sense, then, we know pretty well what we are doing, which may be part of Sartre's reason for speaking of a 'comedy' in the first place. However, in more serious cases our magical behaviour convinces us completely of the reality it itself helps to create. Thus, in what Sartre calls 'passive fear' I faint in the face of a serious threat to my health or to my life as such ('a ferocious beast coming towards me', ibid.: 66). In losing consciousness, I lose knowledge and awareness of the danger and there is no more room for play-acting or semi-conscious comedy. Though the danger may not be annihilated, my consciousness of it is. If we actively flee from the danger we faint 'in action' (ibid.: 67), as Sartre says, and use another means to escape the danger.

Here we see the complexity of the phenomenon of emotion in Sartre's treatment. There is behaviour (fainting, running): it is the body that reacts; and there is functionality (trying to annihilate the danger) and magic (transforming the world), as well as some reference to the role of consciousness. The question then becomes: where exactly do we locate the emotion? Is it simply all of these components taken together? Is it only one among them? Does one among them take the lead with the others as mere accompaniments? These questions are difficult to answer given the letter of the text; but I will assume that Sartre takes emotions to have multiple components that together constitute the phenomenon in its entirety. However, it is clear why his account of emotions was assumed to be a behavioural account – 'he believes all emotions are actions' (Neu 2000: 26) – because Sartre highlights this aspect in all of his examples (shoulder shrugging, muttering words, fainting,

running, sitting motionless, crying, planning, and so forth). What must be added, though, is that not just any kind of behaviour qualifies as emotional behaviour. This is an important point: if, in response to a gift I am not really interested in, I feign an 'outward show of intense delight' (Sartre 1962: 74) I do exhibit some kind of behaviour but this behaviour does not indicate *real* or, as Sartre says in the same passage, 'genuine' emotion. If my behaviour is to qualify as real emotional behaviour, it has to be linked to *belief* in the reality of the qualities I profess to relish, and this belief cannot be produced at will (in contrast to the outward show of intense delight). As we shall see shortly, the basis for producing such beliefs must still be seen in bodily reactions, but in reactions we passively undergo rather than ones we can more or less manipulate. Real emotions are passively 'undergone': they hold us captive and 'live' the belief that is linked to them (ibid.: 80), in the sense that they confer on the subject of the emotion in question the impression that what she experiences as, say, dangerous really is dangerous, that experiencing something as horrible 'means indeed that horribleness is a substantial quality, that there is horribleness in the world' (ibid.: 82). Statements like these lead me to accept the idea that Sartre's emotions present the world as *being* in a certain way (say dangerous or horrible); at the same time, it is important to note that the central question for Sartre is not whether this world-disclosing presentation is appropriate or not, that is, whether it fits the world or not. The emoting subject never asks this question, because it takes whatever it experiences in genuine emotion to be real; and 'real' here does not mean that it fits the world in a representative fashion. Rather, it means that the subject cannot get rid of the emotion, that she experiences it as ineluctable and as being fully in its grip. Thus far this is the only criterion Sartre offers for distinguishing something from something, namely real emotion from unreal or fake emotion. Even if the representative question could always be asked – 'Does your fear reflect a *real* danger?' – it does not seem to be the crucial question for Sartre.

### 3. Unworldly, Malformed and Irrational: The Criticisms

Having said this we can take up a first criticism with which Sartre's account has been confronted. Robert Solomon claims that Sartre 'separates consciousness from the world' in his theory of emotions due to the phenomenological tendency to 'bracket' the world in analysing conscious phenomena (Solomon 2006: 95). But this claim does not withstand close reading. As we just saw, the (truly) emotional subject is fully *in* the world and thus shares in all the qualities of intentionality that Sartre already sketched in his early essay on the topic *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology*. Hatred, love, fear and sympathy are, as Sartre says in this essay, 'simply ways of discovering the world. Things are what abruptly unveil themselves to us as hateful, sympathetic, horrible, lovable' (Sartre 2002: 383). As for the *Sketch* one can add, in line with what has been said above, that what allows a belief to be 'lived' is the fact that in emotion we or, for that matter, our bodies are in a 'specific state' (Sartre 1962: 77) which somehow cannot be controlled.

While behaviour as such may be controllable, emotional behaviour is not. As Sartre suggests, I can stop myself from running 'but not from trembling' (ibid.). Consequently, it is the bodily reaction (trembling) *cum* behaviour (running) *cum* certain beliefs (danger) that constitute the emotion and confer evaluatively relevant qualities upon the world and not just any single component among these. Though it is true, given this account, that we *project* qualities ('affective meanings', ibid.: 78) upon the world, Sartre leaves no doubt that the subject undergoing the emotion does not take whatever it experiences to be the result of mere projection. Emotions comprise a 'specific manner of apprehending the world' (ibid.: 57); but their world-shaping character remains unreflected by the subject, that is, whatever the emotion discloses is taken at face value. If this is correct, Hatzimoyisis' claim that 'what makes the transformation of the world magical is that what changes is not the material constitution of reality but how reality appears to the agent' (Hatzimoyisis 2011: 68) is still working with a problematic distinction, namely the distinction between the material world and emotionally generated appearances (of the world). But for Sartre, being in the world does not allow such a distinction, though he does mention at one point the continuous passage from 'the non-reflective consciousness "instrumental world" (action) to the non-reflective consciousness "hateful world" (anger)' and adds that the 'latter is a transformation of the former' (Sartre 1962: 58). What this actually says, however, is that the emotional world really *can* change the instrumental world, so that the two worlds do not have to be conceived as completely separate. Of course, this cannot mean that contempt, say, can change the chemical reality of grapes. It obviously cannot. What it can change is the meaning that the grapes have for the subject – namely, from 'to be plucked' to 'better left alone' – and that is all Sartre needs in order to speak of a transformation of the instrumental world through emotions. This transformation is possible because the instrumental world is itself a meaningful world in the sense in which, say, Heidegger's *Zuhandenheit* (handiness) is embedded in 'the manifold references of the "in-order-to"' (*Verweisungsmannigfaltigkeit des 'Um-zu'*) or is part of 'referential contexts' (*Verweisungsganzheiten*) (Heidegger 1996: 65 and 106). It is this meaning that emotions change or transform, especially in contexts in which their behavioural aspect allows us to ignore instrumental demands we find problematic. If this is what Sartre actually means by 'signification' (Sartre 1962: 48), then we can say that subjects as emotional beings are involved in the production of the meanings that constitute their world. In other words, referring to something as tasty or disgusting requires reference to what subjects actually do find tasty or disgusting. Only in this sense, call it the sense of a 'sensible subjectivism' (Wiggins: 1987), do emotions make a difference; only in this way do they not only change how the world appears to us but also change the world we live in instrumental and non-instrumental ways. Interestingly, when Solomon writes that an emotion 'is a magical transformation of *the world* and not just of consciousness' (Solomon 2006: 106, emphasis by Solomon) he intends this as a criticism of Sartre; however, to my mind it is exactly what Sartre himself would want to say and actually does say. Of course, the example of the grapes might still not be the best example to



make the point. But once we move on to other more typical emotional phenomena, such as jealousy, grief or hatred, things will look different.

This is not to suggest that what Sartre means by 'specific state' or by 'signification' is perfectly clear. I certainly share some of the critic's reservation. But I think that there is at least one further way to defend Sartre against the charge of adopting an unworldly phenomenological approach to emotions. Let me return to the body. As was mentioned, Sartre distinguishes between 'genuine' or 'real' and 'false' emotions and argues that real emotions are distinguished by specific non-voluntary bodily states that seize the subject and thus 'represent the genuineness of the emotion' (Sartre 1962: 76); by contrast, the behaviour adopted in false emotions can be easily changed or dropped by the subject. Moreover, Sartre goes so far as to suggest that it is the bodily phenomena accompanying real emotions that constitute 'the phenomena of belief' (ibid.), or, we might say, create the belief that the world surrounding me really is horrible and not just an empty foil for my projections. This is not the place to discuss at length the interesting notion of bodily belief, which certainly diverges from contemporary accounts of representationality (which tend to underestimate the role of the body in emotion)<sup>2</sup>; my point is just that Sartre defends a non-voluntaristic concept of real or true emotion as something which is not dissociated from the world, because the body is certainly part of the world and helps to shape the world we live in. Remember that what prevents me from reaching the grapes is my bodily constitution, for example, my height or my physical inability to climb the tree. In fact, what seems to change consciousness in emotion is the body and its uncontrollable workings, which force certain beliefs upon us. Again, it makes no sense here to ask whether the beliefs thus created represent the world correctly or not; but this only stems from the fact that Sartre's notion of the world is non-representational. If every single emotion signifies, as Sartre says, '*in its own manner* the whole of the consciousness, or ... of the human reality' (ibid.: 27–28, emphasis by Sartre), it cannot represent the world or its properties as something which is external to human emotional reality and could be assessed by comparing the representational content revealed by emotion to the 'reality' thus revealed ('Is the joke *really* funny?'). Being in the world always implies an emotional way of being in the world; so by integrating emotionality into our account of the world we acknowledge that for us there is no reality fully independent of emotions. As we shall see, this has major implications for how we judge emotions.

It should be mentioned here that my reading of Sartre's theory of emotions stresses its non-voluntaristic aspect more than is common. Was it not Sartre who famously wrote, in *Being and Nothingness*, that 'being sad means first to make oneself sad' (Sartre 1956: 104)? Without being able to address Sartre's theory of the will in greater detail here, suffice it to say that the voluntaristic ring of 'making oneself sad' is somewhat misleading. That we make ourselves sad or adopt certain beliefs (Sartre mentions the belief that Pierre feels friendship for me, ibid.: 114) has more to do with the (ontological) fact that, qua for-itself, we *are* not sad in a substantial sense. Sadness as much as any other emotion thus has to be adopted by us on a continual basis; it is not a condition we can acquire once and for all or, as Sartre

says, 'an impulse finally achieved and put ... on file without re-creating it' (ibid.: 104). In other words, there is something about sadness which cannot be voluntaristically manipulated at all ('the being of sadness escapes me', ibid.) and that fully remains in-itself. What matters in phrases such as '*making oneself sad*', then, is not so much the (voluntaristic) idea that we adopt or abandon the stance of sadness at will as the (ontological) idea that in order for sadness to affect us we have to keep it alive through sadness-typical actions and attitudes. Sartre goes so far as to suggest that in sadness we 'receive' its being and adds that it does not really matter 'from where' we receive it (ibid.). Because we *are* not sad in a substantial sense, all we can do to become sad is, as it were, to open ourselves up to the possibility of sadness (though in a Heideggerian vein one might say we are always already open to it), which then passively affects us as all emotions tend to do.

Of course, in bad faith we can pretend to *be* sad, just as we can pretend to *be* a waiter, to *be* disinterested in love or to believe in someone's friendship. We can treat these emotions, attitudes, stances and beliefs as if they were natural facts about us independent of our voluntary involvement. However, bad faith, being a kind of *faith*, implies that we are somehow aware of the pretence, an awareness that, interestingly, does not dissolve the pretend-states. Take the example of wanting to believe that Pierre feels friendship for me. Once again, we somehow *do* the believing, we *want* to believe that Pierre feels friendship for us. At the same time, there really is no fact about Pierre's friendship which can be known or simply perceived with absolute certainty. As Sartre says, the question of Pierre's friendship cannot be settled by 'self-evident intuition' (ibid.: 114). Friendship, then, is an object that allows for beliefs that treat the existence of this friendship *as if* one was certain about it. Put differently, friendship does not yield to perceptual truth but depends on one's attitude to it, which thus constitutes it in part. In that sense one *must* somehow believe in friendship for it to become real; and this shows once again how the voluntary and non-voluntary intermingle in complex ways in phenomena of bad faith as much as in emotional phenomena. And, as in emotion, once the belief exists conduct changes accordingly: '*I believe it; that is, I allow myself to give in to all impulses to trust it; I decide to believe in it, and to maintain myself in this decision; I conduct myself, finally, as if I were certain of it*' (ibid., emphasis by Sartre).<sup>3</sup>

So we participate in the construction of sadness by attributing certain meanings to certain events or by being the self-interpreting animals we are. The question of whether we can causally bring about the onset of emotions is not at the forefront of Sartre's theory. Thus, I do not think it necessary at this point to attribute to Sartre a 'distinction within the emotions between active and passive' (Solomon 2006: 105) or between strategic and non-strategic emotions. Elements of passivity will be present even in the more active emotions that we somehow bring about through specific behaviour. And the same holds true for the more passive emotions that seem to overwhelm us, as shock or awe sometimes do. When Solomon writes that in some passive emotional reactions it is 'the world which abruptly reveals itself as being magical' while in other emotional reactions 'we constitute the magic of the world' (ibid.: 105), he underestimates, and here I repeat myself, the extent to which

seemingly active emotions really do change the world and thereby create the sense of living in a different world. Again, from the perspective of the emotional subject, such a distinction does not make sense; for the fact that I constitute the world does not prevent me from thinking (or feeling) that whatever is constituted really *is* the world; so I subtract myself from the process and take my reaction as possible only in a world which *as such* allows for strategies that annihilate certain pressing problems. In a different world my strategies would, perhaps, not work at all. Every emotion thus transcends itself (closely following the law of all intentionality) and returns to itself only by meshing with the world. Again, we do not tend to think that we project hatred onto the world; instead we think that the world *is* hateful and that our hatred is objectively justified. No *cogito* or will can define itself out of this lived context or *Umwelt*. Hence, the question whether we can voluntarily conjure up emotions or not is wrongly posed, at least if we stick to the position of the *Sketch* and ignore for the moment the much more complex account in *Being and Nothingness*. That we try to deny potentially or actually frustrated desires might just be an ineluctable feature of the kinds of beings we are. It is, as it were, part of being in the world, of having to rely on the world to satisfy one's desires. Whether we call this feature part of our psychological or anthropological make-up is open to debate and cannot be decided here. The important point is that this is not something we can abandon, so it does not seem to be up to us to fully regulate our emotionality. Emotions are part of the fabric of the world, and therefore also of our human inventory.

I want to add one more comment. Sartre writes that emotion 'has its own essence, its peculiar structures, its laws of appearance, its meaning' (Sartre 1962: 28). While this correctly suggests that emotions are ontologically distinct from, say, beliefs or desires, even though they might be and, as we now know, are related to them in complex ways, Sartre says surprisingly little about what nowadays would be called the specific phenomenological 'feel' of emotions or the specific 'feeling towards the world' of emotions (Goldie 2000: 58). What is meant by these expressions is that emotions relate us differently to the world than beliefs or desires, even though the latter play a role in generating emotions and constitute part of their structure. As was just mentioned, this is certainly what Sartre has in mind, so his approach is compatible with more recent approaches. But what is missing from his account is the 'feeling' aspect and this is precisely what matters to me here. Goldie, whose formulation 'feeling towards the world' I just quoted, explains that this feeling amounts to a difference in content compared to the content of a mere belief. In other words, to think of ice as dangerous and to feel the danger are two disparate and irreducible states or attitudes. In feeling the danger, ice is, as it were, revealed differently to me than in the case of a feelingless thought. In Goldie's words: 'Coming to think of it in this new way [as emotionally dangerous] is not to be understood as consisting of thinking of it in the old way, plus some added-on phenomenal ingredient – feeling perhaps' (ibid.: 59). Rather, in emotion the whole world is experienced anew which means that my reactions, my thoughts, my behaviour will take on a different shape than if I were merely to think of something as dangerous. Goldie readily admits that this difference 'cannot

be captured in words' (ibid.: 60). But this does not prevent him and others from suggesting that the real specificity of emotions lies not in behavioural or cognitive components but in a feeling component. While Sartre's theory is open to such a component, it is not one he chooses to mention or spend much time on. 'Apprehending' the world, as in the formula of emotion as 'a specific manner of apprehending the world' (Sartre 1962: 57), may possibly imply a feeling component; but as such it seems to have a more cognitive ring. The lack of such a phenomenological feeling-component does, to my mind, constitute a weakness in Sartre's account. For it may be just this component that has its own causal impact on the emoting subject and would also help to dispel the tendency in Sartre to reduce emotions to action or behaviour. I will come back to the relevance of this thought in a moment.

It may be obvious why many of Sartre's examples have called for discussion and why he was accused of mistaking special emotions for emotions as such. In fact, in talking of fear, sadness, joy or horror, Sartre may simply be wrong as far as their interpretation is concerned. Does it really make sense to treat joy as 'symbolic possession' of the object that gives us joy but is currently absent (Sartre 1962: 72–73)? When I am happy about a woman who positively responds to my love and announces her coming, do I really replace 'absolute possession' of the woman, being practically and perhaps even normatively wrong, with symbolic possession through joy? Does this kind of joy that somehow retains traces of dissatisfaction serve as a substitute for a kind of action that is practically impossible given the (intersubjective) world as it is? How plausible is the claim that we strive for absolute possession of a person, if not in general, then at least in relationships of love? This is not the place to discuss these questions at length. But it is important to recognize that some of the seemingly objective obstacles to the fulfilment of our desires acquire their plausibility only if we accept various deep desires as humanly given, and thus as the default condition for further analysis. In other words, Sartre's account of emotions embeds them within a larger theoretical framework that frequently contains existentialist tenets which are open to question. Thus, in the treatment of love in *Being and Nothingness*, some of the background knowledge missing in the *Sketch* is supplied, such as Sartre's idea that the lover 'wishes to capture a "consciousness"' or to get hold of the 'Other's freedom as such' (Sartre 1956: 478). Joy, then, in Sartre has as much an anticipatory character as it serves as a substitute for the real possession of the loved person. It seems clear that there is much room for controversy here for the desire for absolute possession may not be as stringent as Sartre claims it is (or it may be considered to be a socially and culturally entrenched male phantasy). If we change our existentialist premises, the joy over a love which is reciprocated can assume a different character and may appear instead as the imaginatively anticipated happiness of spending time with a person of whom one is fond.

On the other hand, there is room in Sartre's account for a less theory-driven approach to emotions. This possibility is often overlooked but will play a prominent role in my interpretation of how Sartre proceeds in developing his theory of emotions. After all, Sartre admits that a full analysis of the phenomenon of

emotionality cannot be developed exclusively at an abstract level: 'To grasp the signification and finality [of emotions], one would have to know and analyse each particular situation. ... For example, if the fear of a timid person changes suddenly into anger (change of conduct motivated by a change in the situation), this anger is not of the ordinary type: it is *fear surpassed*' (Sartre 1962: 74, emphasis by Sartre). In other words, even if every emotion contains magical elements that turn a sometimes unbearable reality into a bearable one, and even if every emotion thereby helps to magically extinguish the unbearable reality, every emotion still has its unique way of doing so. Sartre thus separates specific historicities of emotions from their generally given transformative powers. The particular desire that is thwarted by the world should therefore be seen as having its own particular and irreplaceable history, a history that must be fully understood if the correct meaning of individual emotion tokens is to be adequately grasped. I will try to take this aspect of Sartre's theory more seriously than usual in what follows.

A good starting point is Richard Wollheim's critique of Sartre in *On the Emotions*. Wollheim, to be sure, is probably the closest to Sartre among the interpreters listed above but he is still severely critical of various aspects of Sartre's approach. First of all, Wollheim leaves no doubt that Sartre, as he says, 'talks only about malformed emotion' and explains malformed emotion by referring to the 'person's inability to tolerate [the] satisfaction or frustration' of desires (Wollheim 1999: 83). It is important to stress that Wollheim introduces the category of malformation as a historical category. Malformation takes place, as it were, at some point in the development of the emotion, namely when a person's perception of the world is 'willfully adjusted' (ibid.: 87). Malformed emotions are psychologically real phenomena and reflect an inability of the person experiencing the emotion to accept the world as it is. Their counterpart is simply 'the standard process by which the emotions form' (ibid.: 83), or what Wollheim later classifies as 'appropriate' responses to the world (ibid.: 87).

If we think of Sartre's examples it should be obvious why Wollheim thinks his interpretation is correct, though we need to take into account the differences between these examples. Thus, in Sartre's first example I cannot tolerate the disappointment of not eating the grapes (given my desire for them), so I transform the situation by entertaining, say, disdain (Sartre's expression is 'dégout') for the grapes which I then consider to be 'too green' (to mark one difference from Sartre's other examples: here there is no talk of 'symbolic consummation', in contrast to the talk of 'symbolic possession' in the case of joy). What matters for Sartre is a certain behaviour that serves as a 'substitute for the action I cannot complete,' namely shrugging my shoulders and muttering certain words ('too green'). We can only infer that this behaviour constitutes what we might call disdain; but we need to keep in mind that what substitutes for the action of eating the grapes is not an emotion *per se*, but an emotion expressed in a certain kind of behaviour. Given this additional information, it certainly appears correct to describe this phenomenon as an 'inability to tolerate frustration', though it should be clear that this is manifestly not what the subject who experiences the emotion thinks. I mention this because Wollheim, probably in response to Sartre's professed functionalism, tends to rationalize the subject of Sartre's examples by assuming that she responds to the

experienced disappointment with more or less determinate thought processes. She does not. She simply reacts, that is, she overtly changes her behaviour and that is the basis for what Sartre calls the 'transformation' of the world. Thought processes accompany this change in behaviour but they are not causally responsible for it. Consequently, as mentioned in the second section of this paper, in emotionally denying the difficulty of the world, I do *actually* believe that the world is as my emotion suggests it is; and I do not entertain conscious thoughts of playing tricks on the world or deceiving myself about the real nature of the world. Thus, the category of malformed emotion is an interpretive category or, as we might also say, the category of an observer judging my behaviour. Wollheim does think that Sartre shares his interpretive view of the examples (ibid.: 84); but he parts company with Sartre when it comes to assessing the generality of the phenomenon.

According to Wollheim, two of the examples adduced by Sartre to prove his point exemplify actual frustrations of desires. One concerns situations of danger, the other a situation of loss. In the situation of danger, to recall, a 'ferocious beast' is coming towards me and I react by falling in a faint (Sartre 1962: 66). For Sartre, this is another example of literally denying the existence of a danger through 'magical behaviour'. The pertinent emotion here he calls 'passive fear'; but, again, the emotion *per se* does not seem to be what allows for the magical transformation of the world, but instead the behaviour (called 'magical behaviour', ibid.). In 'passive sadness' (say after being informed about my financial ruin) I withdraw from the world, thereby pretending that it no longer requires anything from me; while 'sadness' is Sartre's general term for such reclusive behaviour, he also mentions grief and melancholia as possible emotional accompaniments of the behaviour (ibid.: 68). In 'active sadness' (for example, in beginning to cry in a situation calling for some confession from me) I try to make certain expected ways of reacting in a given situation impossible by feigning a behaviour that does not allow for the expected reaction: as Sartre puts it, I exaggerate 'the difficulty of the world' and 'use' the emotion of sadness as 'a magical play-acting of impotence' (ibid.: 70). What these situations of frustrated desire show is that the behavioural component is the most important component of Sartre's account of emotion. It is (emotional) behaviour that substitutes for behaviour: instead of eating the grapes I turn away from them shrugging my shoulders; instead of actively coping with the difficulties of financial ruin I withdraw; instead of confessing I cry out loud suggesting that confession is impossible.

We will have to return to this point. For the moment it should be reiterated that the emotional behaviour Sartre talks about (fear, sadness, grief, or melancholia) is not analysed in its own phenomenological 'feel', because Sartre seems to be more interested in discussing what behaviour is actually replaced by the emotional behaviour. This neglect of the phenomenological qualities of emotions creates some problems for Sartre's approach and for Wollheim's interpretation of his approach. Emphasizing the inability to tolerate frustration in these situations misses somehow that the new (emotional) behaviour replacing the old or desired behaviour may generate its own psychic costs. After all, falling unconscious, running away from a danger, being full of grief and depressed or pretending to be sad by

forcing oneself to cry – these should not be regarded as happy states. While these emotionally loaded behavioural mechanisms may allow me to efface certain difficulties with the world, there is no guarantee that they will not give rise to problems of their own; in fact, as such, they will have negative hedonic valences which I must be able to bear. In other words, any attempt to get rid of real or anticipated frustrations is likely to resort to means which can create frustrations of their own that I had better be able to cope with. It is not that the world as such is completely annihilated in emotion; it is just that, as Wollheim himself admits at one point, ‘a different kind of world’ (Wollheim 1999: 89) is created which lacks the traces of some of the aforementioned difficulties, but which may present new difficulties. To my mind, Sartre and Wollheim underestimate the extent to which solving certain problems may create different problems, which simply means that tolerance of some difficulties or problems is a precondition for annihilating others.

The inability to tolerate frustration, therefore, cannot be the whole story if we are to understand Sartre’s account of fear or scorn. However, as I mentioned before, this dimension of hedonic valence linked to the feeling-aspect of emotions is not at the forefront of Sartre’s theory (nor of Wollheim’s) but is crucial to understanding my interpretation. Seen in a functional light, one might simply say that a problem has been solved through behaviour that may indeed create its own problems; but one must then add that these new problems can be seen as a lesser evil or that they don’t require another round of world-annihilating behaviour. From a functional point of view, some worlds just have to be accepted if chaos or psychic breakdown is to be avoided. However, I think that the purely functional perspective needs to be supplemented with a phenomenological perspective which is able to question the seeming plausibility of the functional perspective.

Wollheim’s concept of the inability to tolerate the satisfaction of desires is more difficult to assess, but I think that a similar point can be made about it. What Wollheim has in mind is the typical Kleinian example of the mother’s breast that delivers satisfaction, but at the same time reminds the infant of its total dependency on the mother, a dependency painfully discovered as an *external* source of satisfaction not under its full control (Wollheim 1999: 92). If Wollheim’s account is correct, a certain amount of frustration is already inherent in the satisfaction experienced, given the desire for continuous satisfaction or for total control over the source of pleasure. One could ameliorate Wollheim’s position somewhat, therefore, by suggesting that breast envy does not literally reflect an inability to tolerate satisfaction, but rather exhibits an inability to tolerate the frustration of being dependent on others for the satisfaction of one’s deep desires. But be this as it may, it is this deeper frustration that leads us again, in Wollheim’s terms, to want to ‘abolish the world’ we inhabit and to replace it with a world of ‘immediate and total’ gratification (ibid.: 87).

Can we apply this Kleinian model to Sartre, as Wollheim suggests? At first sight, this seems to be unproblematic. Let us go back to the lover waiting joyfully for his beloved. For Sartre, as we saw, the joy of meeting or expecting to meet one’s beloved symbolically expresses or substitutes for the total and immediate possession of the person. In beginning to dance or to sing or to hyperventilate, I behave as if

all the difficulties of real hard-won love had been surmounted. In that sense, then, I prove not to be able to tolerate certain frustrations inherent in real-world love. Apparently, I am unable to tolerate the frustration of having to work on a daily basis to deserve this love or simply do not accept having to wait for a positive event to materialize. Does this also show that I cannot tolerate the *satisfaction* of my desires? Here the answer may be a bit more difficult, for if joy symbolically satisfies a deep desire of mine, there appears to be no sign that I cannot tolerate *this* sort of satisfaction. Quite the contrary, this symbolic satisfaction is my response to the inability to tolerate real frustration, even if the category of real frustration includes the deep frustration of having to depend for many of my satisfactions on the incalculable whims of others (in Sartre's terms: their freedom). This aspect of the world is, as it were, also annihilated in symbolic joy, which thus amounts to tolerated or tolerable, but nevertheless real, satisfaction. Again, the hedonic qualities of the state of joy itself relativize Wollheim's claim about the inability to tolerate the satisfaction or frustration of desires.

One might add here that the emotion of joy may even have a self-fulfilling character, in that feeling joy may be sufficient for being in a state of joy regardless of any other elements joy may entail. Richard Moran claims that if one 'sees' one's marriage as a failure, one 'may well feel that in virtue of that fact alone the marriage is indeed, to that extent, some kind of failure' (Moran 2001: 44). Interestingly, Moran (hovering somewhat uneasily between 'seeing' and 'feeling') adds that if feeling a marriage to be a failure 'is, for logical reasons, a *constituent* of its failure', then certain possibilities 'of *simply* being wrong, just mistaken in the apprehension of the case, are not available' (ibid., emphasis by Moran). I spoke above somewhat enigmatically about the hedonic quality of emotions having a *causal* impact on the emoting subject, and this is the place to elaborate on that point. If feeling joy is as constitutive of joy as 'seeing' oneself as unhappy in a marriage is constitutive of an unhappy marriage (at least of one's own unhappiness in the marriage), this would seem to make it difficult to be wrong about this subjective dimension of one's emotion. I assume that what Moran has in mind is that others cannot really doubt my unhappiness if I feel unhappy; similarly, we might say that others cannot really question my joy in the case at hand. We must, of course, distinguish between feeling joy and the question of the appropriateness of joy, just as we must distinguish feeling unhappy from the question of whether this unhappiness is adequate or justified. While Moran assumes that feeling unhappy in a marriage amounts to *being* unhappy in the marriage, so that the feeling is self-justifying (regardless of what the other person thinks or feels), I am not sure whether the same can be said about Sartre's example of joy.<sup>4</sup> What is the joy about? Well, about imagined possession taking the place of the impossibility of real possession. Is that something one can be correct about? This seems to me to be the wrong question in this context (as I will clarify below). It certainly seems something to be happy or joyful about. And, as far as it goes, this is all that matters to me, for if that is true, there is an element of tolerable satisfaction given with the joy.

Perhaps in order to clarify that the joy he has in mind is not just some kind of hedonic joy but, say, possessive joy, Sartre makes a strange distinction between a



'joyful feeling' and 'emotional joy' (Sartre 1962: 71), suggesting that only the latter is an expression of impatient behaviour (such as making and abandoning plans) and relies on imaginatively possessing what one does not yet possess. But even if this distinction between different kinds of joy made sense, emotional joy remains joy in that it satisfies, albeit only symbolically, a deep possessive desire. Consequently, it can only exhibit our inability to tolerate certain potential frustrations of desires that are inevitable in a world in which most of our satisfactions depend on others, but not the inability to tolerate certain satisfactions of our desires.

Wollheim, to be sure, would not accept this interpretation. For, given his psychoanalytic approach, he thinks that what Sartre labels 'joy' should in fact be labelled 'envy' (Wollheim 1999: 90), so that joy (say about a satisfied desire) really is the emotion that is replaced by another emotion, and not the emotion that is itself the *result* of a replacement process. In fact, calling the resulting state 'joy' is just another psychological (and not at all metaphysical) defence mechanism that prevents me from grasping my inability to cope with the real frustrations and satisfactions of my desires. According to Wollheim, therefore, I am just in the grip of a phantasy (ibid.: 89) that cannot be falsified by any facts about the world; but in pretending that this is a joyful state, I only exacerbate the various deeply rooted denials from which I actually suffer. Put differently, the emotion of (misnamed) joy is malformed, because it is based on an imagined world that has lost all contact to the real world.

Obviously, if our acceptance of Sartre's claims depends on the plausibility of his existentialist tenets, the same holds true for the psychoanalytic assumptions Wollheim applies in his reconstruction of Sartre. To illustrate this, I will concentrate for a moment on Wollheim's notion of malformation. Several questions arise at this point. What would a well-formed emotion look like? Why does the inability to tolerate frustration and satisfaction generate malformed emotions? Again, what exactly defines malformation here? As I already pointed out, an emotion is malformed if it reflects an inability. Yet, as humans exhibit all kinds of incapacities, one might wonder how these incapacities are responsible for the malformation of emotions. Let us say, anticipating the fourth section of this paper, I turn out to be incapable of accepting the loss of a close relative. I imagine the person to be alive and behave accordingly. Let us say a certain amount of joy is created through this pretence. Let us say further that this kind of behaviour is not as rare as one might think. Is the emotion of joy still malformed? What standards do we use in making that judgement?

Wollheim more or less openly addresses these standards in just one place. Here is what he says:

the most neutral, the most basic, way of understanding malformed emotion is as emotion that is an oblique, or an inapposite, response to the circumstances in which the person is, or believes himself to be. [...] There is one deceptive element in Sartre's account of emotion which might prevent the unwary reader from recognizing how starkly emotion, as Sartre conceives it, opposes itself to an appropriate response to the world. (Ibid.: 87)

To return to the example of the grapes: my scorn for the grapes does not seem to be well formed because it only hides my real desire for the grapes. My emotion thus reveals my inability to accept the frustration of my desire. Well-formed emotions, by contrast, do not serve to obfuscate real desires. They reveal or manifest satisfied desire (e.g. happiness) or frustrated desire (e.g. sadness), and they assume the guise of a persisting attitude rather than serving as a replacement for a desired but thwarted course of action or behaviour. Malformed emotions deny desire; well-formed emotions preserve and memorialize experiences of satisfied or frustrated desire, which is precisely the role Wollheim attributes to emotional attitudes which, as attitudes, colour the world (ibid.: 74). An emotion is thus an 'adequate' response to the world if its world-colouring attitudinal aspect correctly encapsulates something about the world, namely its capacity to satisfy or frustrate desires. This is something which Sartre's emotions, apparently, cannot do. Even though they manifest satisfactions or frustrations of desires (after all, in not reaching the grapes, a desire of mine *is* frustrated), these satisfactions or frustrations do not correctly reveal an aspect of the world, but only something about the desiring subject.

One might wonder, of course, why a theory of emotions which relies so heavily on subjective desire as the starting point for its entire analysis, and which openly emphasizes how much the satisfaction- or frustration-precipitating factor depends on merely subjective and thus non-generalizable factors (ibid.: 69–74), claims that emotion really involves an 'adequate' response to the world. Obviously, *any* emotional response to the world depends to some extent on the concrete structure of the emotion and on its subject's individual history or idiosyncratic predilections. But then it becomes a lot more difficult to specify what exactly is meant by calling a response malformed or inadequate. Why not react with scorn to the grapes? Because the subject does not really believe they are sour, so her response misses or misrepresents something about them (that they remain tasty)? Well, if emotions are the result of transformed experience (which is, incidentally, also Wollheim's position, ibid.: 75), the subject may well believe that the grapes are sour and her emotion reflects the transformation from 'tasty, therefore I want them' to 'untasty, therefore I don't want them'. But, one might object, that's wrong – they *are* still tasty! Granted, but why should we assume that emotions represent the world or something about the world? And why should we believe that the colours with which they tinge the world represent *real* colours out there? To some extent we have to accept that all emotions reflect the subject who undergoes the emotion and that what the world is depends on that subject and its emotions. There is no standard independent of these emotions that enables us to assess them in an objective way.

Other interpreters, such as Sarah Richmond, concur with Wollheim in claiming that Sartre relies too heavily on emotions that 'distort or misrepresent' the world and search the *Sketch* for examples of an 'appropriate' emotional response to the world (Richmond 2011: 155). For Richmond, Sartre's example of a face suddenly appearing at a window and causing horror is such an example: 'The emotion elicited by the grimacing face at the window is an appropriate response to it [the world]' (ibid.). Horror thus discloses the world as it is and does not distort it. If

magic is involved in this example, it is the magic of the world I get a glimpse of, not magic I somehow project onto the world. The world, as Sartre admits, presents itself with no 'deterministic barriers, so in horror I tend to forget that the face is at a distance or that there is a window between me and the face and experience the face as if it had already entered my body in all its immediacy' (Sartre 1962: 86–87). Although this does sound like a new phenomenon with respect to the aforementioned examples, Sartre does not treat it as new and some interpreters follow him here (see the discussion in Hatzimoyssis 2011: 75–77). As we saw above, this might be the case because *every* emotion has a revelatory aspect and discloses the world to us. If I ignore for a moment my play-acting, I really do believe that *the grapes* are 'too green', so my contempt for them seems to disclose this much about them. Of course, the critics here claim that this is not a revelation about the world because it is plainly false or is merely a reflection of a personal inability. Consequently, my contempt for the grapes misrepresents the world. The appropriate reaction, given this example, might be disappointment ('too bad I can't get hold of them') or some other way of coming to terms with the inability to fetch the grapes. The face at the window, on the other hand, really is horrible and my emotion correctly captures this worldly horror. In the end, then, it is an aspect of the world that determines the appropriateness or inappropriateness of emotional reactions.

Yet is this view plausible? At first sight, it appears to be; for what other standard should we apply? Jealousy *is* justified if my partner really does respond positively to seductive looks by others; hatred really *is* justified if the person hated has committed heinous crimes, and so on. If I am not mistaken, most authors in the growing camp of emotion theorists defend a position along these lines; and if this is the line taken, Sartre's approach falters in not doing full justice to an objectivist notion of appropriateness. Even if we admit that emotions sometimes function creatively to enable us to recognize certain evaluative aspects of the world for the first time, say in the often cited case of Huckleberry Finn (Bennett 1974), there is no good reason to deny that the appropriateness of emotions hinges on emotion-independent facts about the world.

The problem with this argument is that, as many emotions theorists admit, emotions create their own evaluative standards which must be kept separate from the commonly accepted standards or correctness conditions of beliefs and desires. As pointed out above, I take this to mean that in judging the appropriateness of an emotion we cannot apply the standards developed in the context of perception and desire; instead we should rely on standards that take into account how emotions disclose an evaluatively loaded reality and how emotional subjects access or understand the reality thus disclosed. Sartre's claim that emotions magically transform reality points to the fact that some emotions constitute the reality that must be taken into account in judging, evaluating or assessing the emotion. If this is a plausible interpretive step, we might say that, even if it still makes sense to speak of a subject-independent reality or of non-emotional objectivity to go beyond merely subjective criteria of the correctness of an emotion, in a Sartrean context this reality has no importance for the question of whether a particular emotion is

appropriate or not. In other words, emotions have the power to make it the case that something is as the emotion suggests it is, and this must be reflected in assessing them. One might add that this does not imply that we cannot critically assess such emotions at all; it is only that the standards which are often invoked in this context are the wrong ones, namely epistemological standards of rationality taken from the field of perception. The standards we ought to apply here can be called, for want of a better term, ethical standards that refer to a person's self-understanding.

If this still does not sound convincing, one more thought might be of help. Let us assume that it was possible to clearly determine emotionally relevant facts about the world. Then the question is: Why should, say, scorn not be an appropriate reaction to grapes that are out of reach? Why must our emotional reactions to the world necessarily be governed by what is the case? Do emotions aim at the truth as beliefs do? If scorn helps me to master a difficult situation – what is inappropriate about that? From my own personal perspective, my reaction makes sense because it helps me to abandon a desire I could not satisfy. What's wrong about that? These questions may seem somewhat half-hearted or artificial, and hence the implied answers not yet very convincing. However, it should be clear that the desire to be a person who is in touch with reality, or to be always emotionally truthful to reality, or to be always willing to stick to the content of one's desires, is just another deep-seated desire that is by no means uncontroversial or ontologically guaranteed. In other words, there is no fact of the matter which determines that humans must behave like that. Moreover, most emotions occur in situations that do not come equipped with an index of appropriateness which can be read off the situation, as one might read off the colour from a shirt. Even if I was willing to be someone who follows emotional facts, it is not clear that this is so easily done. In coping with a difficult world, it may sometimes help to transform potentially negative situations or experiences and make them appear better than they 'really' are. Thus, Jon Elster, in his *Alchemies of the Mind*, writes that the 'turning of lead into gold – of being content with what one has, even if it isn't what one had hoped for – can indeed be a healthy form of adjustment' (Elster 1999: 342), and goes on to describe various psychological mechanisms which 'transmute' interest into reason, passion into reason, interest into passion, passion into interest, reason into interest and passion into passion. A jealous person may feel ashamed of the jealousy and transmute it into reason by explaining certain measures ('you better not leave the house today') using seemingly non-jealous reasons ('it's too cold' – an example of transmuting passion into reason, *ibid.*: 350). What is decisive here is what Elster sometimes calls the image of oneself one has (*ibid.*: 358). Someone who is fond of being regarded as aggressive or self-assertive may be embarrassed at appearing too warm-hearted or as a do-gooder, so he will explain a certain, say, charitable action by referring to reasons of interest (thus people may claim that their 'charitable and philanthropic contributions are tax-exempt', *ibid.*: 359). A more common case is, of course, one in which we try to make ourselves appear better than we really are; for, as Elster claims, '*most people do not like to think of themselves as motivated only by self-interest. They will, therefore, gravitate*

spontaneously towards a world-view that suggests a coincidence between their special interest and the public interest' (ibid.: 333; emphasis in original).

It may, of course, sometimes still make sense to analyse this coincidence as just that, a pure coincidence, and insist on blaming someone for *really* being only self-interested. In fact, with respect to the example of the sour grapes also cited by Sartre, Elster explicitly states that turning gold into lead 'can be far from healthy' (ibid.: 342). The important point, however, is that 'health' in this context is less an epistemological category resting on the idea of an adequate response to the world than an ethical category resting on one's socially inflected self-understanding. In other words, wanting to accept gold as gold even if it cannot be grasped or appropriated places an ethical demand on the subject, namely the demand to be someone who more or less closely adheres to the truth or the facts, but it is not a demand mysteriously linked to emotions as such. To judge the adequacy or the inadequacy of an emotional response to a situation thus requires knowledge of personal histories or self-images, not so much knowledge of an emotion-independent world. Hence, my reluctance to accept certain satisfactions or frustrations of desire is just another fact to be taken into consideration when trying to figure out what constitutes an appropriate reaction to an emotionally relevant situation. Wollheim himself, to be sure, is quite willing to admit that the inability to tolerate the satisfaction or frustration of one's desires is a widespread phenomenon. After all, that is what his Kleinianism is all about and what drew him to Sartre in the first place. I think the same holds for Elster's description of transmutation processes, which has not found much resonance in the recent literature on emotion.

#### 4. The Case of Grief: Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*

In the foregoing, I have called a number of times for a dynamic temporal understanding of emotions. Because Sartre's various examples do not really supply us with such an understanding, I will try to develop one by making use of Joan Didion's narrative of grief in her book *The Year of Magical Thinking*. In this book, Didion describes the year following the unexpected death (caused by a heart attack) of her husband, John Gregory Dunne. Her moving account ranges from her immediate experience following his death, through the reactions of the outside world, to the new familial situation, and covers many further aspects. Didion's immediate reaction was shock and utter incomprehension, because the death occurred unexpectedly and was not preceded, at least not in Didion's perception, by conspicuous symptoms or indicators of illness. As the title of the book suggests, the resulting grief was not a passing phenomenon. It penetrated her whole life, remained heavy and steady and could scarcely be blocked out by more mundane matters – by what she calls the 'dailiness of life' (Didion 2005: 27). She mentions physiological reactions – tightness in the throat, choking, the need to sigh (ibid.: 28) – and also, in more phenomenal terms, a 'leaden feeling' (ibid.: 31). Behavioural changes occurred, such as a change in her manner of eating. Furthermore, early in the book she raises the question of the adequacy of grief, contained in the question

of self-pity: 'People in grief think a great deal about self-pity. We worry it, dread it, scourge our thinking for signs of it. ... We remind ourselves repeatedly that our own loss is nothing compared to the loss experienced (or, the even worse thought, not experienced) by he or she who died' (ibid.: 192–193). So the bodily, phenomenal and behavioural aspects of grief are accompanied by the pressing question of how to deal with these aspects of grief, given the specific self-understanding of the person in grief. Didion does mention being somewhat startled about the realization that she had long entertained the thought that the death of her husband had happened to her and not to him (ibid.: 77), but she also mentions her attempts to resist the strong social ostracism directed at self-pity.

One might surmise that the physiological, phenomenal and behavioural aspects of grief pertain to grief as such, so that Didion's case only presents the particular colourings of more generally valid phenomena that can be discovered by studies in basic emotions. But this is not the case. Didion herself suggests that her grief was not just the grief over the death of a close partner. It was the grief over the death of a husband who died unexpectedly (which, again, does not imply that there had not been any medical indications, but only that they had been largely ignored), and this particular grief was not just the instantiation of some more general grief-type. Her grief obviously had specific characteristics, a fact Didion realizes when she compares it to the death of her parents: 'Grief, when it comes, is nothing we expect it to be. It was not what I felt when my parents died. ... I had been expecting (fearing, dreading, anticipating) those deaths all my life. They remained, when they did occur, distanced, at a remove from the ongoing dailiness of life' (ibid.: 26–27). The death of her husband, in contrast, obliterated this dailiness and also made it impossible for her to remain at a remove. The relevant point for my purposes is that fully understanding Didion's grief requires taking into consideration the specific circumstances of this death, and this can only be done if the story is told as Didion tells it. In other words, we cannot understand the particular emotion in question unless we understand how Didion experienced this death (namely, as the unexpected disruption of the everyday) and why it hit her so hard, harder at least than the death of her parents.

Another relevant point is the following: Didion repeatedly mentions that she could not accept the death of her husband, that she could not accept it as irrevocable and final. The decisive passage is this: 'Of course I knew John was dead. ... The *New York Times* knew. The *Los Angeles Times* knew. Yet I was myself in no way prepared to accept this news as final: there was a level on which I believed that what had happened remained reversible. That was the beginning of my year of magical thinking' (ibid.: 32–33). Grief here leads to a reaction that denies what grief supposedly recognizes, namely, the loss of another person. It is magical because it manages to displace, to disfigure or, speaking with Sartre, to transform reality given one's knowledge about it. It is important in this context to realize how grief is able to subvert knowledge. Classical theories of emotions such as Anthony Kenny's assume that grief has an intentional object just like any other emotion, where the intentional object delineates the possible range of objects grief can cover (cf. Kenny 2003). In this sense it cannot be part of grief to deny the death of a person. Yet why

should grief not express itself by denying the seemingly irrevocable death of a close intimate? Why should that not be grief? Perhaps it would be strange to say things like 'I am sad (in grief) because I won the tournament'; but it isn't impossible to think of contexts in which such a statement is comprehensible ('I guess I have just shattered my smooth and calm lifestyle'). We cannot stretch concepts *ad libitum* but there does not appear to be a rule-based grammar laying down unmistakable rules governing the correct or incorrect use of concepts, certainly not as far as the range of possible objects of reference is concerned.

The question is whether there are justified reasons for assuming that grief must always be linked to the recognized loss of a person. Obviously, a rift between the more epistemic and the more practical–emotional aspects of recognition is possible, as Didion's narrative reveals. The person in grief who knows that a close intimate has died, but nevertheless acts differently, has, it appears, stopped halfway in recognizing the loss of the person or doesn't know, in Cavellian terms, how to *express* her knowledge (Cavell 1976). In extreme, but not at all rare, cases epistemic knowledge is simply ignored for practical purposes (Cavell might say 'avoided', see Cavell 2003a). But in doing so the grieving person should not be seen as straightforwardly irrational; on the contrary, her behaviour serves as evidence for the relevance that the deceased person had for her and for the importance she still attributes to this person. Many complex emotions involve evaluative relevancies that do not aim primarily at correspondence with reality, but instead at articulating patterns of valuation. These can be articulated even if parts of reality are being ignored, and the emotions in question do not become irrational as a result. As a consequence, one can continue to speak of grief even if the death of the deceased person is denied on a practical level, because it is this denial that reveals the importance the dead person had for the person in grief. Strictly speaking, the dead person is not yet dead, if death does not just cover what we acknowledge on an epistemic level. This then is the central point of recognition inherent in complex emotions: someone who reacts with grief to the epistemically recognized loss of another person (again, Didion *knows* her husband is dead) will not be able to deny that this person means something to her. Whether grief acknowledges the loss of the person on a practical–emotional level is another matter. Put differently, I can articulate or express whether a person means something to me by refusing to let him go even if he is gone.

What turns this into irrational or inappropriate behaviour? Would it not be absurd to simply correct Didion? This is not to say that it cannot be helpful to confront magical thinking with reality every now and then ('he is dead!'); but the important point is that Didion's unwillingness to acknowledge this death is part of her grief and cannot simply be pushed aside as obscure or crazy. The point at which this kind of magical behaviour really becomes problematic, or should no longer be accepted by Didion or by her friends and relatives, is difficult to determine. It is not even clear whether it is even necessary to determine it. Why not let somebody believe a loved one is still there?

What Didion's story tells us is that it would be premature to assume that the intentional object of mourning must be someone dead. John *is* dead, to be sure, but

Didion's mourning expresses itself in her waiting for him to return. She magically keeps him alive, as it were, and that is her way of mourning and expressing his utmost value to her. And, again, what would it mean to say that her behaviour is irrational or does not capture what is the case? What *is* the case? Other complex emotions, I think, prove the point. Take the case of jealousy. In Stanley Cavell's interpretation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, the jealousy of the protagonist, Leontes, King of Sicily, is, it seems, clearly recognized as unjustified, for Hermione, Leontes' wife, is not having an affair with Polixenes, King of Bohemia (Cavell 2003b). Yet, at the same time, Cavell leaves no doubt that the 'fact' of Hermione's faithfulness is not a fact that can be simply known by, say, close observation. After all, what would a behaviour look like that would provide unmistakable evidence of someone's faithfulness? Many performances of *The Winter's Tale* do play with the ambiguities possible here. What about this smile of Hermione in Polixenes' presence? That jealous Leontes 'sees' evidence of unfaithfulness all over the place does not mean that he is wrong or that he is distorting reality. Remember Moran's claim, mentioned above, that if feeling a marriage to be a failure is a constituent of its failure certain possibilities 'of *simply* being wrong, just mistaken in the apprehension of the case, are not available' (Moran 2001: 44, emphasis by Moran). How about the possibilities for proving that Leontes is simply wrong? Is a kiss the only evidence of unfaithfulness? Or secretly caressing the other's hand? As we know, jealousy thrives on this absence of clear criteria of faithfulness (or unfaithfulness) and fills the void with its own phantasies. As should be clear by now, simply retorting: 'Look, there is nothing!' will not help, for jealousy is unable to see this 'nothing', which is part of its potential insanity, but at the same time part of its normal emotional make-up. To be sure, Leontes' jealousy has disastrous effects on others as much as on Leontes himself. In questioning the more or less commonly accepted criteria for faithfulness, he isolates himself and gets lost in his private scepticism. But, as Cavell has shown in many of his writings, this possibility is open to all of us, because the criteria for applying concepts are not as clearly or firmly demarcated as analytically oriented philosophers sometimes suggest (Cavell 1999). In other words, our common practices of, say, love or grief have no basis beyond the mostly implicit standards and criteria we accept (but who are 'we?'), and this fact leaves them open to doubt or continuous contestation.<sup>5</sup> Again, Leontes is an unhappy character and would certainly lead a happier life if he could acknowledge (another central concept for Cavell) Hermione's love and faithfulness instead of wanting to know the unknowable. Happiness belongs more to the realm of ethics than to of epistemology, however, which means that possible judgements as to the appropriateness of emotions such as jealousy or grief will have to follow other norms than those suggested by the paradigm of perception mentioned above.

Admittedly, I do not want to claim that we have no means of judging or evaluating behaviour such as Didion's. But I believe that our standards of judgement concerning such cases are much less representational or epistemological and much more normative than is often assumed. Leontes' jealousy and even Didion's grief may not be *simply* wrong; but they may be ethically problematic given whatever



standards we apply to judge a person's psychological 'health' (Elster) or well-being. If emotions are forms of behaviour and not just perceptions, we should take a look at how we judge behaviour in cases of jealousy or grief. Under given circumstances, playing a comedy may, accordingly, be taken as a valuational response to the world or as an attempt to express fundamental valuational attitudes which are, as Elizabeth Anderson puts it, 'bearers of meaning and subject to interpretation' (Anderson 1993: 3). Given her specific history, it may make sense for a subject to magically transform the world in order to be able to express the attitudes that constitute her deepest concerns, even though a disinterested observer may only be able to see a ludicrous comedy revolving around a glaring discrepancy between the world as such and the subject's reaction to it. For the subject involved, there just is no world as such, which may be part of the reason why even non-fictional real lives may contain fictional elements.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to defend Sartre's early account of emotions against several recent criticisms. My central concern was to show that the judgemental basis of many of these criticisms misses important elements in Sartre's theory, and thus underestimates its innovative potential. The claim that Sartre concentrates on exceptional emotions or only highlights 'malformed' or 'irrational' emotions was shown to be unjustified on the grounds that calling the emotions discussed by Sartre 'malformed' or 'irrational' reflects a narrowly rationalistic view or one unhelpfully geared towards epistemological questions. On Sartre's treatment, it is not the central aim of emotions to be appropriate in the sense that their representative content tracks an evaluatively loaded reality that is independently given. Emotions, I claimed, *present* the world more than they *represent* it; so if they have a specific direction of fit at all it is towards a world which they themselves help to shape in the attempt to cope with it.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, they have a subjective index, in that they often express deep evaluations of their bearers. This subjective dimension is often overlooked by attempts to categorize their specific epistemic or representational powers in explicit contrast to those of desires and beliefs. If one takes this dimension into account, the central question will not be: 'Is the emotion correct?' or 'Is it appropriate?' but 'Does it make sense given his or her deeper aims?' These aims, in turn, do not reside in a fully developed form within the subject waiting to be expressed in order to enter the world of intersubjective communication; rather, they have to be shaped and understood through articulation and expression and in constant processes of exchange with significant others. 'Emotions have', as Talbot Brewer says, 'a dual relation to the self. They give expression to the self's pre-reflective evaluative posture towards the world, and they provide crucial raw material for the lifelong task of working up this initial posture into a mature and discerning outlook upon the values in play in our changing circumstances' (Brewer 2011: 275). I acknowledged that Sartre does not say enough about this dynamic aspect of emotions in theorizing their signification, and that he also neglects the

phenomenal aspect of emotions, their particular 'feel'. If he had paid more attention to these aspects some of his functionally neat emotional solutions to problematic situations would take on a different character. Thus, my point is not that Sartre's approach is flawless. But I attempted to shift the basis for critique to different questions from those which are usually addressed to Sartre's text.

I realize that I have not said enough about the perspective called 'normative' or 'ethical' in this paper. However, that would open up a whole new debate which cannot be conducted here. Ideally, I should also have said more about the fictional aspects of one's self-understanding which are often transported by the workings of our emotions. This would also require taking a much closer look at, say, narrative models of personal identity than can be offered in the present context. The relevant point is that if these perspectives were taken more seriously than they actually are, debates could be directed away from the narrow focus on epistemologically biased models of emotional adequacy or appropriateness. This, I take it, would also enable us to take a new look at the question of how emotions relate us to the world we live in. Again, I do not deny that it can be a serious matter for a person to live out of sync with the main evaluational judgements of her social surroundings. I do not want to defend a radical form of subjectivism which suggests that all emotional reactions are acceptable as long as they express some deeper aims and values of the person. As I mentioned in the introductory section, even Sartre, in his late and virtually unread *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, brakes with his earlier individualism and introduces a socialized model of emotionality. At the same time, the reference to self remains central and should not be denied in judging an emotion. For the question remains: At what point would we or should we help someone in deep grief to stop magically imagining that the deceased is still alive, is still to return? Some of Sartre's examples in the *Sketch* would, I assume, lose their aura of weirdness if we admitted that there is no clear answer to this question or that clear answers are not the best ones to give. There *are* weird, or, for that matter, insane, persons whose emotional isolation or fanaticism we have every reason to resist or to correct (if possible). But then there are also persons who are not so weird but are fully justified in their seemingly unusual emotional reactions to events in the world. Only we have to find out what has led them to their specific reactions and that means, summarizing Brewer's statement quoted above, helping them to work up their emotional posture in order to develop a mature and discerning outlook on their emotionally regulated lives.

Martin Hartmann  
 Department of Philosophy, University of Lucerne  
 Switzerland  
 Martin.Hartmann@unilu.ch

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> De Sousa (2003: 260) seems to have something similar in mind when he states that 'the values apprehended by emotions depend in part on who we are' and adds that the

norms according to which we judge an emotion (as true or appropriate) are 'determined' by the requisite emotion (*ibid.*).

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Richmond does mention the role of the body in Sartre's theory of emotions but attributes to Sartre the position that the 'purposive use of one's body in emotional episodes *debases* and *obscures* consciousness' (Richmond 2011: 152, emphasis by Richmond). She adds that Sartre's account follows the 'western philosophical tradition in regarding it [the bodily aspect of emotion] as an inferior mental capacity' (*ibid.*). Although the language of 'debasement' is Sartre's, I think this is only half the story. As I try to show in the main text, the body is relevant for producing genuine emotions which are, viewed positively, functional for solving seemingly unsolvable practical problems. Furthermore, the language of 'debasement' ('*dégradation*' is translated by Mairet variously as 'debasement', 'abasing' and 'degradation') does not, as many critics assume, indicate Sartre's critical stance towards the emotions. In fact, it is not really consciousness that is debased and obscured, but the world; Sartre explicitly mentions the 'positional consciousness of the degradation of the world' (Sartre 1962: 79) in emotion. The only literal sense in which emotion debases consciousness is by making the subject fall asleep or lose consciousness. True, Sartre says the following: in emotion, 'consciousness has nothetic consciousness of self as abasing itself to escape the pressures of the world'. And he adds: 'Still, a non-thetic consciousness of itself remains. It is to the degree that it does so, and to that degree only, that we can say of an emotion that it is not sincere' (*ibid.*). I understand this to mean that in emotion we are not consciously aware of escaping or transforming the world, since that is not the (thetic) content of what we are aware of. We are, as it were, busy debasing the world (getting rid of the danger) and have no room for being thetically conscious of that consciousness. Still, we seem to be non-thetically aware of what we are doing which is why we appear to be insincere. But what does this mean? Where exactly does Sartre locate insincerity here? The typical examples for non-thetic consciousness refer to phenomena such as counting cigarettes which are normatively neutral (Sartre 1956: 13). When we count cigarettes we are thetically aware of the cigarettes and non-thetically aware of our counting: 'If anyone questioned me, indeed, if anyone should ask, "What are you doing there?" I should reply at once, "I am counting"' (*ibid.*). The only reason for calling the non-thetic consciousness of emotion insincere is that it is somehow aware of its magical powers; so at some level (but at what level exactly?) we are aware of the fact that the world is not as we pretend it to be in emotion. This strikes me as a lot of epistemic baggage for pre-reflective consciousness to have to carry, and I guess (and also suggest in the text) that Sartre's theory of bad faith will clarify some (though not all) of these troubling questions. In other words, if someone were to ask us 'What are you doing?' could we reply 'I am using emotions to deny some unbearable aspect of reality, but I somehow know that I am fooling myself'? Is that what we are non-thetically aware of? The more complex actions become, the more absurd such a position would be. So, while simple answers of the form 'I am fleeing', 'I am fainting' (though that already sounds problematic), 'I am turning away from the grapes' seem possible, those aspects of one's actions that express one's insincerity will be, I assume, difficult to be put into non-thetic awareness. But, be this as it may, what is relevant for my argument is that the insincerity of emotional consciousness is not an accident to be avoided, but is instead emotion's regular mechanism.

<sup>3</sup> Some authors draw a more or less clear distinction between belief and knowledge or self-consciousness of belief, and suggest that awareness of one's beliefs *as* beliefs 'involves a distancing of oneself from the perspective of the declaration or endorsement of one's beliefs' (Moran 2001: 78). The problem with this description is that it suggests two mental states – namely, belief and knowledge of belief – which appear to be psychologically

separable. However, for Sartre, 'to believe is to know that one believes' (Sartre 1962: 114); to believe that Pierre feels friendship for me is thus to know that I only believe it. Put differently, *any* belief involves a distancing of oneself from the content of the belief. Furthermore, one might add that this psychological fact does not induce us to believe less powerfully. Knowledge of belief does not destroy belief; in a certain sense it is just this distance that draws us closer to the belief. For if it is true that we cannot know that Pierre feels friendship for us, then we realise that we must adopt belief in his friendship for the friendship to be possible at all.

<sup>4</sup> As indicated, Moran does not really distinguish between *feeling* unhappy in a marriage and *seeing* (or conceiving) oneself as unhappy. Whether I feel unhappy in a marriage or conceive myself as unhappy – I *am* unhappy, feeling and thinking make it so. One may wonder whether just about any thought of one's unhappiness constitutes unhappiness, if one accepts that feelings of unhappiness seem to be a somewhat stronger indicator of real unhappiness. Moran himself suggests that, if any 'passing thought' compromises the psychic or social state defined by the absence of doubts or particular thoughts, the 'total' state thus defined (say, happiness or wholeheartedness) may have been rather 'shallow' in the first place (Moran 2001: 47). Yet a feeling of happiness, if it is genuine in Sartre's sense, will not be compromised so easily by 'passing thoughts'; so feelings as such indicate stronger forms of commitment. In contrast to feelings of unhappiness that really turn a marriage unhappy, however, even strong feelings of happiness do not guarantee that the marriage *is* happy. Neglecting once again possible distinctions between feelings and thoughts, Moran says that a person will not be happy in his marriage 'just in virtue of his interpretive say-so'; similarly, one is not wholehearted about a project 'just in virtue of his conceiving of himself that way'. Moran adds that the 'possibilities for self-deception and plain deception are all too familiar here' (ibid.: 46). Anticipating some of Cavell's ideas mentioned towards the end of the main text, one might ask whether something like self-deception is not involved in unhappiness as well; but, regardless of that question, I assume that Moran's central point is correct, namely, the idea that feeling happy about one's marriage, as much as conceiving oneself to be happily married, is not sufficient for leading a happy marriage. In this case, it really takes two. One might just add that in the case of marriage, self-deception implies deceiving oneself (and perhaps the other) about the true psychic state of the other, and not deceiving oneself about one's own feelings or thoughts.

<sup>5</sup> See Hartmann 2007 for a longer discussion of Cavell, and Hartmann 2009 for a longer discussion of Didion.

<sup>6</sup> See the discussion in Döring 2009: 24–29.

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