

Horror, Fear, and the Sartrean Account of Emotions

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Abstract Phenomenological approaches to affectivity have long recognized the vital role that emotions occupy in our lives. In this paper, I engage with Jean-Paul Sartre’s well-known and highly influential theory of the emotions as it is advanced in his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*. I examine whether Sartre’s account offers two inconsistent explications of the nature of emotions. I argue that despite appearances there is a reading of Sartre’s theory that is free of inconsistencies. Ultimately, I highlight a novel reading of Sartre’s account of the emotions: one that is phenomenologically accurate, free of inconsistencies, and that enjoys the support of textual evidence.

Keywords: phenomenology; emotions; Sartre; horror; fear

1. Introduction

In the concluding pages of his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, Sartre introduces a distinction between two types of emotions:

Thus there are two forms of emotion, according to whether it is we who constitute the magic of the world to replace a deterministic activity which cannot be realized, or whether the world itself is unrealizable and reveals itself suddenly as a magical environment (Sartre 1939/2004, 57).¹

The distinction between the two types of emotions appears to be an afterthought on Sartre’s behalf. Two observations corroborate this judgment. First, up until that point in the *Sketch*, there was no mention of the two types of emotions. Second, the distinction is advanced only after Sartre’s own realization that his hitherto account of emotions “does not explain the immediate reactions of horror and wonder that sometimes possess us when certain objects suddenly appear to us” (STE 55). It is only by admitting of a distinction between two types of

¹ Hereinafter, all references to Sartre 1939 will be indicated by “STE” followed by the pagination of the English translation.

emotions that Sartre is able to account for certain spontaneous or immediate emotional reactions within his theory. Afterthought or not, Sartre judges this distinction to be compatible with the ideas advanced and developed up to that point (STE 56). Indeed, by Sartre's own account, the pages found between the covers of the *Sketch* contain a coherent theory of emotions.

Not all readers of the *Sketch*, however, are convinced that Sartre's account is free of inconsistency or tension. Robert Solomon, for example, calls Sartre's introduction of a second type of emotions "a disaster" (Solomon 2006, 106). He opines that it undermines Sartre's own claim that all emotional behavior is purposive. Sarah Richmond argues that the concluding pages of the *Sketch* betray Sartre's "indecisiveness" as to how to understand magic (Richmond 2010, 153). This indecisiveness is important, Richmond points out, for it is symptomatic of an underlying tension between two ways of understanding emotion. More recently, and in response to these charges, Anthony Hatzimoysis defends Sartre from accusations of inconsistency. After a consideration of Sartre's position, he concludes that "the discussion in the final pages of the *Sketch* is consistent with Sartre's main analysis of emotion" (Hatzimoysis 2014, 83).²

In this paper, I revisit this debate and evaluate Hatzimoysis' conciliatory reading. I show that there is indeed a way of articulating a reading of the *Sketch* that is free of inconsistencies. Yet, such a reading diverges significantly from the one that Hatzimoysis offers in his attempt to save Sartre's position. Ultimately, in this paper, I highlight a novel reading of Sartre's account of the emotions: one that is phenomenologically accurate and that at the same time enjoys the support of textual evidence.

2. Emotions and Magic

According to Sartre, emotions are experiential episodes that are prompted by the perception of difficulties. During these episodes the world is magically transformed, often through the use of one's body, in an attempt to overcome such difficulties. This brief summary of Sartre's account requires unpacking.

Emotional consciousness is primarily and for the most part unreflecting consciousness. Emotional episodes, in other words, are first and foremost ways through

² Other discussions of Sartre's account of the emotions include: Hatzimoysis 2010; Mazis 1983; Solomon 1975; and Weberman 1996. See also Elpidorou 2016.

which we apprehend the world, and during such episodes, one is only non-thetically conscious of oneself (STE 34, 36-8, 42; cf. Sartre 1943/1984, 435).³ Indeed, neither the self nor consciousness itself is (typically at least) the positional object of one's emotional consciousness (STE 38). For instance, the experience of boredom is not primarily (nor typically) an experience about boredom. Nor is it an experience about ourselves as bored subjects. It is rather the world, or a part of it, that is found to be boring. Above all, emotions are ways in which one apprehends, experiences, and relates to the world.⁴ As Sartre emphasizes, "emotional consciousness is [...] primarily consciousness *of* the world" (STE 34), a "mode of our conscious existence, one of the ways in which consciousness understands [...] its Being-in-the-world" (STE 61).⁵

In our everyday, concerned existence, worldly entities are presented to us already as part of a causal and instrumental nexus (STE 38-9). Entities invite or afford certain actions. In order to attain the ends that one desires, one first needs to secure the already prescribed means that lead to those ends. Quite often, however, we are either unable to achieve the desired means or the means simply cease to be available. It is when we find ourselves in such difficult and unyielding situations – situations in which normal, practical means cannot bring about the desired ends – that emotions arise.

During an emotional episode, we confer to worldly entities or situations alternative qualities than the ones that they are perceived to have in their instrumental guise. Emotions are consequently ways of transforming the world. Yet, they do not alter the world's material constitution. Rather, emotions effectuate a *magical* transformation. That is to say, emotions change our world by changing our consciousness of it. By altering our expectations, worldviews, beliefs, or desires, we alter the world that we live in. "Emotional behaviour," Sartre writes, "seeks by itself, and without modifying the structure of the object, to confer another quality upon it" (STE 41).

³ The nature of non-thetic (or non-positional) consciousness is discussed in Sartre 1936-7/1960. See, especially, the following pages: 40-1, 44-9, and 56.

⁴ Similar claims about the nature of emotions can also be found in *The Imaginary*. There Sartre writes: "[T]he feeling of hate is not consciousness *of* hate. It is consciousness *of* Paul as hateful; love is not, primarily, consciousness of itself: it is consciousness of the charms of the loved person" (Sartre 1940/2004, 69). cf. Sartre 1936-7/1960, 63f. For a discussion of the role that Sartre assigns to emotions in aesthetic experiences, see Elpidorou 2010.

⁵ Emotions are thus not accidental modifications of consciousness: they are not superfluous features of human existence. They are instead constitutive of our human existence and are ways in which we embody our worldly and interpersonal existence.

Indeed, in emotional consciousness, the world is no longer given in its instrumental guise. Or so Sartre holds. Instead, during an emotional episode, we “live it [the world] as though the relations between things and their potentialities were not governed by deterministic processes but by magic” (STE 40; see also Sartre 1943/1984, 392, 509, 573-4). By disclosing a world in which deterministic processes no longer hold, emotions also reveal a world in which the difficulties that we previously encountered – difficulties that presuppose a deterministic and instrumental world – are now magically gone. Emotions offer us solutions to problems that we are unable to solve using ordinary, practical means.

Insofar as the transformation that emotions effectuate on the world is magical it is also in a sense ineffective: after all, emotions do not really change the world. Yet, this feature of emotions should not lead us to think that emotional episodes are insignificant, impotent, or somehow merely symbolic. The qualities that are magically projected upon the world during such episodes are taken by us to be properties of the world itself; they are not recognized as our own projections (STE 49, 51).⁶ “[T]he man who is angry sees on the face of his opponent the objective quality of asking for a punch on the nose” (Sartre 1943/1984, 228). We are absorbed by the world in which we live through our emotional consciousness. Emotional consciousness, according to Sartre, “*lives* the new world it has thereby constituted – lives it directly, commits itself to it, and suffers from the qualities that the concomitant behavior has outlined” (STE 51). During emotional episodes, consciousness is “caught in its own [emotional] snare” (STE 52).

3. The Double Role of Magic

The above description of Sartre’s account suggests that in emotional episodes the world is magically transformed *because* our consciousness of the world has changed. “I find him

⁶ Here one can discern certain similarities between Sartre’s theory of the emotions and his account of bad faith (Sartre 1943/1984). Both cases involve a type of misrepresentation of which we are not fully aware (STE 50). And in both cases, consciousness acts in a way that restricts its own freedom (STE 49-52). The “origin of emotion,” Sartre writes, “is a spontaneous debasement” (STE 52). During emotional episodes, consciousness abases itself (STE 56) and it is held “captive to itself” (STE 52). For more on the similarities between Sartre’s account of the emotions and bad faith, see Richmond 2010. By juxtaposing Sartre’s discussion of Janet’s patient (STE 45) to his example of bad faith of the woman on a date (Sartre 1943/1984), Richmond makes a convincing case that in both instances consciousness denies its own freedom (Richmond 2010, 152). For more on bad faith, see Bernasconi 2006, Ch. 4; Cox 2006, 101-4; Eshleman 2008a and 2008b; Manser 1987; Perna 2003; Santoni 1995 and 2008; and Webber 2009 and 2010.

hateful,” Sartre writes, “*because I am angry*” (STE 61). According to this reading of Sartre’s account, magic is not a feature of the world. The world is not revealed to us as magical from the very beginning; rather it is we who bring magic to a deterministic world.

Near the end of the *Sketch*, Sartre introduces a different account of the role of magic in emotional experiences. Consider Sartre’s example of experiencing horror after suddenly seeing a grimacing face pressing against the window:

In the state of horror, we are suddenly made aware that the deterministic barriers have given way. That face which appears at the window, for instance – we do not at first take it as that of a man, who might push the door open and take thirty paces to where we are standing. On the contrary, it is presented, motionless though it is, as acting at a distance (STE 57).

What this passage shows, I wish to argue, is that in the case of horror the world *itself* is apprehended as magical. And it is apprehended as such without requiring a transformation. As a result, horror cannot be accounted for by the analysis of emotions offered by Sartre up until that point in the *Sketch*. Unlike fear, joy, and anger, horror does not involve the transformation of a deterministic world into one that is governed by magic.

The above passage is crucial, for if I am right, it points to a tension in Sartre’s account of emotions. Unfortunately, it is also a challenging passage in that it resists a straightforward interpretation. In fact, the passage admits of at least two interpretations.⁷ According to the first one, Sartre’s claim that “we are suddenly made aware that the deterministic barriers have given way” should be understood to mean that even in the case of horror, consciousness still brings about a magical transformation of the world. What differentiates horror from others emotions is the speed by which such a transformation takes place. Horror is immediate: the world is swiftly transformed by emotional consciousness. In contrast, the second interpretation reverses the order of interaction between consciousness and world. It is not emotional consciousness that transforms the world; it is the world -- which already appears as magical -- that affects consciousness in an emotional way. The horrible or horrifying is not in any way conferred or projected onto the world. It is encountered as already a part of the world. If the first interpretation can be captured by the motto “I find the world to be

⁷ I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to address this ambiguity.

horrifying because I am horrified,” the second one is captured by the motto “I am horrified because I find the world to be horrifying.”

Despite the availability of both interpretations, there is only strong textual support in favor of the latter. First, the discussion of horror takes place in the context of Sartre’s own realization that the theory of emotions that is presented in the first 20 or so pages of part III of the *Sketch* fails to account for certain immediate emotional reactions such as that of horror. Indeed, the quoted passage immediately follows Sartre’s admission that there are two types of emotions. Context thus makes it clear that horror is used by Sartre as an example of the second type of emotions, namely, emotions during which the world is itself revealed to consciousness as already magical and which do not require a transformation by consciousness (STE 57).

Second, there are additional passages in the surrounding pages that support the contention that during horror the world is presented to us as already magical. Consider, for example, the following passages:

We have seen how, during an emotion, the consciousness abases itself and abruptly transmutes the deterministic world in which we live, into a magical world. But, conversely, sometimes it is this world that reveals itself to consciousness as magical just when we expect it to be deterministic. It must not, indeed, be supposed that magic is an ephemeral quality that we impose upon the world according to our humour. *There is an existential structure of world which is magical* (STE 56; emphasis added).

Here again [i.e., in the case of horror] then, we find the same elements and the same structure as we were describing a little while ago, *except that in the former case the magic and the meaning of the emotions came from the world and not from ourselves. Naturally, magic, as a real quality of the world, is not strictly limited to the human* (STE 58; emphasis added).

So, even if Sartre’s “grimacing face at the window” example is ambiguous, his description of the role and character of magic in the experience of horror is not. If in the case of horror, magic is understood as a real quality or structure of the world, as something that is not imposed upon the world by us, and as something that is not limited to the human, then it must be concluded that during horror, the world is given to us as already magical. In other words, it must be concluded that the experience of horror does not require a magical

transformation. The horrible or horrifying, as Sartre himself insists, is not possible in a deterministic world. As he states, it can “appear only in a world which is such that all the things existing in it are magical by nature” (STE 59). Or even more tellingly, “to experience any object as horrible, is to see it against the background of a world which reveals itself as *already* horrible” (ibid.). The horrible is thus found, not projected.⁸

Consequently, Sartre’s account of the emotions ends up making use of a double understanding of magic. On the one hand, during emotional experiences such as fear (STE 42-3), sadness (STE 43-5), and joy (STE 46-7), we transform both our consciousness and our experience of the world - the instrumental, deterministic world disappears and in its place a magical world is ushered in. Emotions, Sartre writes, “are ... reducible to the constitution of a magic world, by making use of our bodies as instruments of incantation” (STE 47; cf. 57). On the other hand, during certain other emotional episodes such as in horror, terror, or wonder, we apprehend the world magically from the very beginning. Magic, according to this latter analysis of the emotions, is not a quality that we assign to the world. Rather, in its very existential structure the world is magical. The tension between the two accounts offered by Sartre is palpable (see also Richmond 2010). Is it our emotional consciousness that constitutes a magical world or is a magical world that which surrenders us in an emotional consciousness? Can emotions be both?

4. Looking for Consistency

Hatzimoysis has recently argued that despite appearances, Sartre’s account of horror is consistent with his main analysis of the emotions as magical transformations of the world. Hatzimoysis’ ingenious strategy is to show that even in the immediate emotional reaction of horror there is a behavior that not only bestows finality and purpose to the emotion of horror, but which is also indicative of a magical transformation. Let us return to Sartre’s example. Upon seeing the grimacing face, one is frozen with terror. Hatzimoysis claims that by standing still “the subject might wish that the whole scene, including the threatening presence outside the window, ‘freezes’ with himself” (Hatzimoysis 2014, 82). He continues: “He [the subject

⁸ Lest I be misunderstood, I should make clear that the second interpretation of horror is neutral with regard to whether the experience of horror is capable of bringing about a *further* magical transformation – that is, whether during an episode of horror it is possible to magically transforming a world that is already encountered as magical. I shall consider this possibility in Section 5. What the second interpretation insists on is simply this: horror differs from the emotions considered so far in the *Sketch* insofar as magic does not originate from the subject but from the world.

who experiences horror or terror] aims to cancel the threat by cancelling its acting at a distance: what is ‘frozen’ is not only oneself in terror, but also the apparently imminent threat” (ibid.). Freezing, Hatzimoysis holds, is an appropriate behavior to the experience of seeing the grimacing face, for by freezing the subject freezes (or at least, aims to freeze) *with* him/her the world and thereby to “cancel the threat” (ibid.). Hence, freezing offers (or attempts to offer) a magical solution to the difficulty or threat that the subject encounters.

At first glance, Hatzimoysis’ response appears to solve the problem. Hatzimoysis maintains that in the emotional experience of horror, the agent still brings about a magical transformation of the world (ibid., 83). In other words, there is a way of reading the emotion of horror that fits within Sartre’s account of emotions as magical transformations of the world.

Yet upon further examination, the above reading of horror proves to be incapable of saving Sartre’s account. Recall that the significance of emotions lies in the fact that emotional consciousness allows us to effectuate a certain transformation of the world. When things get too difficult, when we can no longer find a solution via ordinary means, consciousness is transformed into emotional consciousness and with it the instrumental world disappears. But if with certain emotions the world is given to us as already magical, it is unclear in what sense emotions are escapes from, or solutions to, perceived difficulties.

Emotions are solutions to problems – problems, notice, that arise within a deterministic and instrumental world – only because emotional consciousness changes the manner in which we relate to and experience the world. During emotional episodes, the world ceases to be “governed by deterministic processes” (STE 40); it is instead governed by magic. However, if there are emotions in which the world is given as magical, as I argued is indeed the case for horror, then those emotions are neither *transformations* of the world nor in any evident way *solutions* to experienced difficulties. They are neither of these because we have not changed our mode of relating to the world – we have not moved from an instrumental mode of relating to the world to a magical one. We do not experience the horrifying first in an instrumental world and only then, in an attempt to escape from it, we experience the world as magical. The perceived difficulty in the case of horror – i.e., the horrifying – from which we seek an escape is not a difficulty or problem that arises within, and depends on the presence, of the deterministic and instrumental world. We experience the horrible (or that which is horrifying) in a world that is already magical (STE 58). Return to Sartre’s example of seeing

the grimacing face. Why is the experience of seeing the face one of horror and not one of fear? If there is a distinction between fear and horror – as Sartre clearly thinks that there is – then there must be a reason why the experience of seeing the face is of the former emotional type and not of the latter. The reason, I believe, is clear: such an experience is horrible because the face is already experienced as magical; it is presented as an entity that is immune to our deterministic expectations.⁹

The problem with the account offered by Hatzimoysis can now be clearly stated: Hatzimoysis' account still operates under the assumption that during horror the instrumental world is transformed into an emotional – i.e. magical – one. He says so clearly in the following passage:

Sartre asserts that 'in the very act of catching sight of [the face], window and distance are emptied of their necessary character as tools. They are grasped in another way'; and *that way is explicated in terms of his main account of the transformation of the instrumental into the emotional world* (Hatzimoysis 2014, 83; emphasis mine).

As I argued in the previous section, however, we should take seriously Sartre's comments regarding the two types of emotions. What is more, we should also follow Sartre in maintaining that horror is an example of the second type of emotions and consequently, during horror, the world is already given to us as magical. Indeed, unlike emotions that fall within the first category, the horrifying is not the product of the use of *our* body. "The behaviour which gives its meaning to the emotion is no longer *our* behaviour; it is the expression of the body of the other being" (STE 58). No transformation is needed in order to experience that which is horrifying. Once again, the horrific is not projected or conferred onto the world; it is instead encountered in it. Thus, Hatzimoysis' proposed reading cannot be accepted. As it is clear from the above passage, his view is premised on the claim that freezing involves a move from an instrumental world to one governed by magic. Such a claim, however, runs contrary to Sartre's understanding of horror.

⁹ The distinction between horror and fear strongly suggests that emotions, according to Sartre, cannot be individuated *solely* in terms of their behavioral manifestations. Both horror and fear can agree in their behavioral manifestations – e.g., during both horror and fear the subject freezes – yet they are still distinct emotions. Stated otherwise, emotions for Sartre are not individuated solely in terms of the solutions that they offer; they are also partly individuated in terms of the problems that give rise or motivate such solutions.

5. Horror in the Light of Fear

I hold that during horror the world itself is experienced as horrifying. The horrific (or horrible) is not a quality conferred to the world by consciousness; it is not the result of a move from experiencing the world as deterministic to experiencing it as being governed by magic. There is no need for such a transformation, for that which horrifies us is already experienced as magical. Still, couldn't one make the case that the emotional experience of horror brings about *some* kind of transformation? That is, even if we accept Sartre's insistence that during horror the world is given to us as magical, one could still insist that freezing during horror changes the way the magical world is experienced. Such a change in the way that one experiences the world will be a transformation of the world, albeit of a world that is already experienced as magical. What is more, such a transformation could somehow suffice to solve the experienced difficulty. In this section, I consider this interpretative move. I argue that even if freezing is somehow capable of magically transforming a world that is already experienced as magical, the transformation effectuated by freezing is incapable of offering a solution to the experienced difficulty.

Sartre's own remarks concerning passive fear could be read as lending support to the view that freezing during horror is a type of escapist behavior and consequently pregnant with the possibility of providing the subject with a solution to a difficulty. In a rich passage that is worth quoting, Sartre writes the following:

Take, for example, passive fear. I see a ferocious beast coming towards me: my legs give way under me, my heart beats more feebly, I turn pale, fall down and faint away. No conduct could seem worse adapted to the danger than this, which leaves me defenceless. And nevertheless it is a behaviour of *escape*; the fainting away is a refuge. But let no one suppose that it is a refuge *for me*, that I am trying to save *myself* or to *see no more* of the ferocious beast. I have not come out of the non-reflective plane: but, being unable to escape the danger by normal means and deterministic procedures, I have denied existence to it. I have tried to annihilate it. ... And, in the event, I have annihilated it so far as was in my power. Such are the limitations of my magical power over the world: I can suppress it as an object of consciousness, but only by suppressing consciousness itself (STE 42).

For Sartre, fainting furnishes the subject with an escape from a difficult situation. By fainting the subject becomes oblivious to the danger; the subject loses consciousness of the danger. Indeed, by fainting and thereby losing consciousness, one magically transforms the world into one in which the threat is no longer present. Sartre is, of course, quick to point out that fainting during the experience of passive fear is neither an effective solution nor a strategy that is adopted by the subject in an attempt to save himself or herself. It is not the former, for fainting, as a magical transformation of the world, is severely limited: it fails to take away the danger. And it is not the latter because experiencing fear is unreflective: when one experiences fear, one remains conscious of one's world – one is not conscious of oneself nor of one's emotional states. Still, the emotional experience of fear along with its behavioral manifestations is a type of escape. Even if the danger does not disappear, the threat ceases to be present to the subject.

It is both surprising and somewhat irritating that Sartre's discussion on passive fear focuses exclusively on fainting and fails to mention what is the most common behavioral manifestation of passive fear, namely, freezing (Marks 1987). Still, one can speculate as to how Sartre would explain freezing in the sight of a threatening situation. In summarizing his view on fear, he writes: "The real meaning of fear is now becoming apparent to us. It is a consciousness whose aim is to negate something in the external world by means of magical behaviour, and will go so far as to annihilate itself in order to annihilate the object also" (STE 43). This passage is suggestive. If fear is an attempt to magically negate a threat, then under the assumption that freezing is a behavioral manifestation (or an expression) of fear, then freezing should also be understood as an attempt to negate the threat. When one cannot outrun, hide from, or fight a predator, one finds refuge in freezing. By freezing oneself, one freezes (or better one attempts to freeze) magically the perceived threat.

Consequently, if one takes seriously Sartre's view that fear is a solution to a perceived difficulty, then one could argue that freezing is a transformation of the world. But if freezing behavior in fear constitutes a transformation of the world, then freezing behavior in horror ought to do the same. Thus, the case of freezing allows one to argue for a parallel or analogous treatment of the emotions of horror and fear.

The analogy with fear, however, does not work. That is for at least two reasons. First, it is rather unclear whether freezing even in the case of fear succeeds in transforming the

world. The world does not change when the subject freezes herself; nor does the subject's perception of the world change in an obvious way. Fainting has a clear effect on one's consciousness of the world; freezing does not. Here, I am not precluding the possibility that freezing could have certain effects on how one perceives the world. For example, it has been shown that in a state of boredom one's experience of the passage of time becomes altered: time seems to be moving more slowly (Conrad 1997; Fenichel 1953; Hartocollis 1972; Martin et al. 2006; O'Connor 1967). Perhaps freezing has a similar effect. Thus, I am not objecting to the claim that freezing *might* have an effect on one's perception of the world. Rather, what I am objecting to is the use of unsubstantiated claims about the nature of the psychological effects of freezing in an attempt to bolster or support an interpretative position. In other words, whether freezing – during fear or horror -- has certain effects on one's perception of the world is a matter that ought to be investigated empirically. It is not an issue that should be settled, or even speculated, from the armchair. Hence, until the presumed effects of freezing are both clearly articulated and supported by findings in the relevant sciences, it remains unclear, to say the least, that freezing in the case of fear constitutes a transformation of the world.

But there is another, stronger reason why the analogy with fear does not help. This reason persists even if one were to show that freezing in the case of passive fear changes the way that one experiences the world. The experience of horror is quite unlike that of fear. To fail to see this difference is to fail to take seriously both the phenomenology of horror and Sartre's own position.

Horror is a more encompassing or enveloping emotion than fear. In fear there is a possibility of escape. This is a premise of Sartre's reading of active fear. Fleeing away from the threat in active fear is an appropriate response because we can, by using our own bodies, transform the world in such a way that the difficulty has disappeared (STE 43). However, in the case of horror, the whole world is magical. To repeat a line that I quoted above: "the horrible can appear only in a world which is such *that all* the things existing in it are magical by nature" (STE 59; emphasis added). Even if turning our backs on the fearful somehow negates the threat, turning our backs on the horrible does not make the horrible disappear. Similarly, even if we assume that freezing is somehow successful in negating the fearful, it cannot be assumed that freezing would be equally successful in the case of horror.

Thus, the main problem with trying to understand horror in light of fear is this: in the case of fear a solution to the perceived difficulty is possible. That is because fear, according to Sartre, arises out of our engagement with a deterministic and instrumental world. Consequently, the possibility of magically transforming the world and thereby alleviating the difficulty remains open. In the case of the horror, however, the world is already experienced as magical. As a result, the difficulty that gives rise to horror appears to be persistent; it is immune to attempts to transform the world.

To be clear, what militates against the claim that freezing during horror can offer the subject a solution to the perceived difficulty is not the claim that freezing cannot magically transform a world that is already magical. The issue is not whether another magical transformation is possible. Rather, the issue is that any such transformation has to take place within the context of an already magical world. As Sartre points out, during horror, everything is magical and “the only defences against them are magical” (STE 59). But in all of the examples that Sartre offers, emotions can provide solutions to experienced difficulties only if the following claims both hold true: (a) the encountered difficulties are ones that arise out of our concerned and practical engagement with the world; and (b) consciousness can transform the deterministic world into a magical one. But in the case of horror, all bets are off. The world is given to us as magical. The horrible does not arise out of our embodied engagement with a deterministic world; it is already there. Consequently, it is a mistake to hold that the difficulty associated with the horrible can be solved or alleviated by a magical transformation. Freezing would have been capable of offering the subject with a solution *only under the assumption that the world is first given to us as deterministic*. Freezing already presupposes that something can be frozen. It presupposes that what we wish to freeze (or what we aim to freeze) is something that *can* (even in principle) be frozen. But the perceived threat or horrifying entity is not the type of entity that can be frozen. After all, how can one freeze the magical, i.e., that which does not behave in accordance to deterministic principles?

Sartre himself is skeptical that magical transformations are capable of alleviating difficulties that arise within a magical context. Magic seems to offer no relief from magic and Sartre makes this point rather clearly, I believe, in his brief discussion of dreams in the *Sketch*. In dreams, both the dangers (or difficulties) that we encounter and the various possible solutions to them that are afforded to us are of the same nature: they are both magical. But

precisely because they are both magical, the latter prove to be ineffective against the former. Sartre writes:

The horrible can appear only in a world which is such that all the things existing in it are magical by nature, and the only defences against them are magical. This is what we experience often enough in the universe of dreams, where doors, locks and walls are no protection against the threats of robbers or wild animals for they are all grasped in one and the same act of horror. And since the act which is to disarm them is the same as that which is creating them, we see the assassins passing through doors and walls; we press the trigger of our revolver in vain, no shot goes off. In a word, to experience any object as horrible, is to see it against the background of a world which reveals itself as *already* horrible (STE 59-60).

What I am urging, therefore, is the realization that the magical does not play by the same rules as the deterministic. The difficulties that arise within a magical context are immune to solutions that are effective in a deterministic context. As Sartre writes, “[t]o reduce a distance is still to be thinking in terms of distance” (STE 59). Similarly to freeze the magical or the horrifying is still to be thinking in terms of what can be frozen; it is still to be thinking in deterministic terms – terms which are not applicable in a magical world. Thus, to treat the horrifying as something that can be frozen is to negate both the distinctive character of horror and the fact that the horrifying arises in a magical world.

6. An Alternative Reading

The scope of my position should be made clear. I have argued that since the world in the experience of horror is given to us as already magical, freezing is incapable of offering a solution to what we find horrifying. Such a claim suffices to raise problems for Hatzimoysis’s conciliatory reading of the *Sketch*. It also, I believe, brings to the fore a problem with Sartre’s account as commonly understood. If all emotions are ways of transforming the world into something that is no longer governed by deterministic processes, then, by Sartre’s account, horror is not an emotion. That is because during an episode of horror, no such transformation takes place. Rather, and as Sartre himself makes clear, during the experience of horror, the world is already presented to us as magical (STE 56, 58-9). If, on the contrary, horror is

assumed to be an emotion, then not all emotions can be assumed to be transformations of the world and, consequently, not all emotions are solutions to difficulties that we encounter in the *instrumental* world. Hence, either Sartre has to give up his insistence that horror is an emotion or give up the claim that all emotions are magical transformations of the world. He cannot have both.

I think that readers of Sartre should embrace the latter option. But by embracing this latter option, one does not have to give up the contention that there is a unified account of emotions in the *Sketch*. One only has to alter slightly that in which this account consists.

First, we should follow Sartre in accepting that there are two *types* of emotions depending on whether it is we who bring magic to the world or the world is given to us as magical. Importantly, however, both experiences should be categorized as *emotional*, for in both cases consciousness experiences a magical world. As Sartre emphasizes, “[e]motion may be called a sudden fall of consciousness into magic; or if you will, emotion arises when the world of the utilizable vanishes abruptly and the world of magic appears in its place” (STE 60-1). Hence, regardless of the etiology of the appearance of magic – be it due to our own doing or not – emotional consciousness is a magical consciousness.

Second, we should not hold that emotions are transformations of the world. Rather, we should hold that emotions are ways of experiencing the world *as* magical. Some emotions (fear, joy, anger, etc.) do indeed transform our world magically by transforming the way that we experience and relate to it. In active fear, for instance, one often flees from the threat. Fleeing is not a calculated attempt to protect or hide oneself but a “magical behaviour which negates the dangerous object with one’s whole body, by reversing the vectorial structure of the space we live in and suddenly creating a potential direction on the *other side*” (STE 43). In the case of active fear, the world is transformed *by* our embodied actions. And this transformation takes place after the perception of a threat or danger. Still, there are emotions during which the world is disclosed to us immediately as magical. During horror, for example, there is no time for one to transform the world: the world is not first experienced in its instrumental guise and only then it is transformed into a magical one. The very experience of horror is the experience of a horrifying and thus magical world.

Finally, emotions should not be understood as *solutions* to perceived difficulties that arise *solely* within a deterministic context. Rather emotions should be understood as *attempted* solutions to difficulties that are made present to us *either within a deterministic world* (e.g., in the

case of fear, sadness, and anger) *or within a magical world* (e.g., in the case of horror and wonder). In some cases, emotional consciousness will succeed in solving the perceived difficulties. Passive sadness, for instance, changes the manner in which we perceive the world so that we no longer assign any value to items that we previously cherished. As such, we are spared the trouble of trying to acquire those ends. Or, in an episode of anger, one raises the volume of one's voice and in so doing, avoids hearing what others might have to say. In other cases, however, the difficulty is so urgent, pressing, or ubiquitous that no matter what we do, we cannot escape it. The experience of the horrific, for instance, seems to be precisely such a case.¹⁰

The suggestion that emotions are attempted solutions (sometimes successful, other times not) to encountered difficulties is meant to safeguard Sartre's contention that emotions are purposeful. Emotions can be invested with a purpose and finality even if their purpose is not met, and, indeed, even if such a purpose can never be met. This point is often overlooked, I believe, by readers of Sartre who, in an attempt to render his account consistent, hold that all emotions are solutions to perceived difficulties. In my view, a conciliatory reading of Sartre's account is possible only if one gives up that assumption. Indeed, the reading that I am offering compels us to realize that some difficulties are irresolvable. The existence of a solution to an experienced difficulty is predicated on the assumption that one can move from an instrumental world to a magical world. However, as Sartre himself admits, there are emotions – e.g., horror, terror, wonder – for which such a move is not an option. Still, the impossibility of solving a difficulty emotionally (or magically) does not militate against the claim that such states are emotional (i.e., states through which the world is experienced as magical). Freezing is still an *attempt* – hopeless, it seems, for it cannot change the manner in which we relate to and experience the world -- to solve the difficulty. As such, horror is not bereft of purpose or meaning. Horror, at least as the emotion is embodied and lived through freezing, is an attempt to escape what seems to be inescapable. Stated otherwise: during the emotion of horror, freezing is an unreflective attempt to solve a problem that appears to be unsolvable.

¹⁰ Perhaps one could maintain that the only way to escape (i.e., negate or forget) a horrifying world is to faint and thereby to lose consciousness. There are two problems however with insisting that fainting is an appropriate behavior during the experience of horror. First, Sartre fails to mention fainting as a possible behavioral manifestation of horror. He instead considers only freezing. Second, fainting is not a *unique* solution to the experience of something horrifying: every perceived difficulty can be (at least temporarily) negated or forgotten by fainting.

The *Sketch*, I conclude, does offer a unified account of emotions. Emotions are ways of experiencing a magical world, i.e., a world that is no longer governed by deterministic principles. As such, they are attempted solutions to perceived difficulties. Since, however, there are two ways of experiencing a magical world, there are also two types of emotions.¹¹

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