

Affectivity in the Young Sartre's Intersubjective Theory

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Abstract: The intersubjective theory that Sartre proposed in *Being and Nothingness* contends that human encounters are necessarily reifying. The author proposes that one of the constitutive theoretical elements of this pessimistic view of human encounters is Sartre's conception of affectivity as a degradation of consciousness. The author explores this vision of affection that Sartre initially developed in his essay *Outline of a Theory of Emotions*, and concludes that it was this mode of understanding affectivity that later decisively influenced his contention in *Being and Nothingness* that the essence of human relations is conflict.

What is the present validity and importance of Sartre's philosophical work? At least in two areas of philosophical research Sartre exerts a perceptible influence today. In the study of subjectivity his work is an inspiration for those that believe that subjectivity cannot be defined through propositions and cannot be known through observation¹. On the other hand, in social theory, the ideas elaborated in *Being and Nothingness* have served as a point of reference to certain postures that postulate that the essence of human relations is hostility and distrust. I am referring to authors grouped under the label of "postmoderns"².

It is precisely this second point, the way in which Sartre conceived the encounter between human beings in his first writings, that interests me

¹ Manfred Frank is the champion of this position inspired by Sartre. Frank says he was inspired by the Sartrean idea of the "pre-reflective cogito" to develop a conception of subjectivity that starts from a "pre-reflective familiarity" of the subject with himself. This conception, according to Frank, opposes George Herbert Mead's and Jürgen Habermas' conceptions, which see subjectivity as the result of socialization (cf. Frank, Manfred, *Against a priori Intersubjectivism*, unpublished monograph).

² This claim is also made by Axel Honneth in his *Die zerrissene Welt des Sozialen*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990, p. 166. Sartre's influence in postmodern writers is also discussed by Peter Dews in: Dews, Peter, *The Logic of Disintegration*, London: Verso, 1987.

in this essay. I want to analyze the relation between affectivity and intersubjectivity in the work of the young Sartre³ and to show that, if this work conceived human relations as always reifying, it was due to his way of understanding emotions and feelings⁴.

To achieve this objective, I will examine the intersubjective theory that is presented in that book and the view of affectivity developed in *Outline of a Theory of the Emotions*. My thesis is that if the young Sartre conceived the relations between individuals as always reifying it is because he understood affectivity as a degradation of consciousness.

In the first part of this paper (1) I will rehearse Sartre's intersubjective theory, emphasizing the role he assigned affectivity in his theory. In the second part (2) I will discuss his concept of affectivity, as he presents it in the *Outline of a Theory of the Emotions*, while criticizing the presuppositions and the conclusions of that theory, and, in the third part (3) I will present my thesis: that the emotions understood as a degradation of consciousness determined in Sartre a radically negative vision of the encounters between human beings

1. Sartre's Intersubjective Theory.

1.1 The conflict of consciousnesses

“The essence of the relation between consciousnesses is not *Mitsein*⁵, it is conflict”⁶. This is one of the expressions that Sartre uses to characterize the relation between individuals. For Sartre, the conflict consists in that

³ My analysis is centered on *Being and Nothingness*, published in France in 1942, when Sartre was 38 years old, and in *Outline of a Theory of Emotions*, published in 1938. Hence I refer to these as “the young Sartre's” works. Most commentators of Sartre agree that he changed his intersubjective theory in his later works, specifically in *Critique of Dialectic Reason*. All quotes are from *El ser y la nada (Being and Nothingness)*, translated by Juan Valmar, Buenos Aires: Losada, 1966 (henceforth: ESN); and *Bosquejo de una Teoría de las Emociones (Outline of a Theory of the Emotions)*, translated by Mónica Acheroff, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1971 (henceforth: *Bosquejo*).

⁴ In this sentence, as in the rest of this article, I use the words “emotion” and “feelings” interchangeably. “Affectivity” refers to both. Sometimes Sartre distinguishes emotion from feeling. For example, when in *Outline for a Theory of the Emotions* he distinguishes between joy-feeling (*joie sentiment*) and joy-emotion (*joie emotion*). But most of the time he does not draw the difference. For example, when he refers to fear (*la peur*) in the essay on the emotions, it is considered an emotion, but a feeling in *Being and Nothingness*.

⁵ *Mitsein* is the term that refers to the Others in Heidegger's philosophy.

⁶ ESN, p 584.

in my encounter with the other, or with my neighbor⁷, either I am an object for him⁸ or he is an object for me. Although the use of the word “object” in this context is not free of difficulties, by it Sartre meant to say that, under the gaze of my neighbor, my subjectivity is degraded, my freedom restricted and, since freedom is for Sartre the essence of subjectivity, the subtle loss of my freedom turns me into something like an object associated to other spatio-temporal entities. The reason is that the neighbor with his gaze reduces the diversity of my existential projects. Under his gaze my possibilities of acting in the world and on the world are reduced. To use another Sartrean expression, under the gaze of the neighbor I suffer “the subtle death”⁹ of my possibilities: “I experiment a subtle alienation of my possibilities, that is now associated to objects in the world”¹⁰. As we will see later on, it is “subtle” only because my possibilities continue to be my possibilities but are limited by my neighbor’s gaze.

Sartre considers it natural that I try to recover my subjectivity, that is, that I try to reinstate my practical project. But one characteristic of Sartre’s social ontology is that this impulse to recover my freedom will not take me and my neighbor to a situation of mutual recognition or understanding. On the contrary, according to *Being and Nothingness* the recovery of my subjectivity is only possible if I enslave my neighbor. Thus, I must produce a subtle death of his possibilities, I must interfere with his actions in the world and impose my freedom over his.

As is evident from this presentation, in Sartrean ontology there are two modes in which I encounter the neighbor: Neighbor, insofar as subject and neighbor insofar as object. The “truth” of the neighbor lies in his subjectivity. The neighbor as subject is the “original” neighbor and it is in the encounter with the neighbor as subject that I accede, so to speak, to “new” structures of my being and the world. But, although Sartre’s intersubjective theory revolves around my encounter with the subjectivity of another human being, to understand this encounter and these new structures it is advisable to follow the expositive path followed by Sartre, that is, to begin with the description of the Other as object.

⁷ “Neighbor” is the term that the Spanish translator of *Being and Nothingness* chose for *l’autre*, *autrui* and *prochain*.

⁸ The masculine pronoun “he” and the term “man” are those used by Sartre.

⁹ ESN, p. 369.

¹⁰ ESN, p. 370.

1.2. *The Neighbor as Object (or the Neighbor as "Not Original")*

Sartre begins his chapter on the neighbor saying that the first thing that a man produces in me, when I see him and realize that he is a man and not another thing, is a kind of "theft". With his sole presence, that man that I see sitting in the park reading the newspaper upsets my world. Sartre uses different metaphors to illustrate this disturbance that the neighbor, still in a state of "objectivity", produces in me and in my world: he steals my world; causes an orientation that escapes me; makes the world, that is my world, the world that I see, appear as "burrowed", as undergoing a slide; the neighbor determines an "internal hemorrhage" in my world. Theft, disintegration, crack, hemorrhage¹¹. All these metaphors indicate that, for Sartre, each time I see another human being, I suffer a kind of loss. The neighbor as an object is for me the irruption of something threatening and destabilizing.

The other is therefore a privileged object in my world. Differently from the other objects that I see, he produces this sort of loss in my world. When I look at a tree and a bench in a park, both objects are organized according to my distances. I am the center of that organization because it is my gaze that organizes that relation between the tree and the park. But the appearance of a human being in this scene disturbs that organization. That person is a pole towards which the rest of the objects are attracted. Thus, what the neighbor brings to my world, to bleed it, is *his own point of view*. His gaze becomes in this way a new center that struggles to displace that other center that is my own gaze. Seeing the same things that I see, the other imposes his own distances. Sartre says that now that the other is part of my visual field, a relation *without distances* is established between him and the objects that surround him and that I am looking at. The bank and the park are not organized around him, so between the other and me a kind of competition is established. Each of us being a center of his own world, a sort of collision between our gazes is produced.

Now then, if the neighbor, even as object, is capable of producing that partial disintegration of my world, it is because that neighbor object is a constant reference to his own subjectivity. It is as if that person that I see at a certain distance produced that drainage of which we speak in virtue of a subjectivity in potency, hidden but active. In *his gaze*, there is a reference to a reality that is in truth devastating to me: his freedom¹².

¹¹ These are the expressions one finds in: *ESN*, pp. 358 y 359.

¹² This "reference" is problematic in Sartre. It is not, as in the Husserl of the *Cartesian Meditations*, the reference of a body to a consciousness. Rather, according to Sartre, it is past experiences that make me sense that this human-being-object that

This is why, the difference between the neighbor as object and the "real" neighbor, that is, the neighbor as subject, is that the former inflicts an hemorrhage in my world that is only partial. Given the superiority of my point of view, that is, due to the fact that I, in the end, see more than he sees, this disintegration can be controlled. Sartre says: "The universe, the dripping and emptying, everything is recovered again, recaptured and fixated as object, everything is there for me as a partial structure of the world ..." ¹³.

But in the moment when the neighbor abandons his indifference and looks at me I find the Other as subject. Perhaps the most important characteristic of this being seen is that the disintegration in my world, that was partial with the neighbor as object, is now total. The "hemorrhage" becomes uncontrollable.

1.3. The Neighbor as Subject: the Gaze

Sartre's intersubjective theory is constructed around the situation in which the neighbor looks at me. This is the mode in which I find the "original" neighbor, that is, the Other as subject. To explain what it means to be seen, Sartre appeals to an analysis of the feeling of shame, a theme that is presented, as an overture, at the beginning of the chapter on being-for-the-other. Sartre's example is well known: Because of jealousy or vice, I am spying through a keyhole. I hear footsteps, someone has caught me (or I believe someone has caught me) and immediately an intense feeling of shame assaults me without "any discursive preparation". This "immediate shudder" ¹⁴ that characterizes shame is crucial to understand the emergence of my "being-for-an-other" ¹⁵.

An essential component of my "being-for-an-other" is the "I" or the "ego" that the other adjudicates to me with his gaze. Sartre, in fact, says

I see there has, so to speak, an explosive charge in his hands. It's just that I have already experienced the neighbor as a subject that produces in me this restlessness when faced to the object-Other.

¹³ ESN, p. 358.

¹⁴ ESN, p. 314.

¹⁵ The use of the word "immediate", and the fact that Sartre uses a sudden reaction such as shame to illustrate the emergence of my "being-for-an-other", is no incidental point in Sartre's theory. Because what Sartre aims to show is that the Other is an immediate presence. By immediacy, Sartre understands a presence that is not mediated by the world. The constitution of the world would be posterior to the presence of the Other. And the proof of this immediacy he finds in an answer that is not only automatic, but also, not a product of reflection. The automatism and irreflexibility of shame and the other modes in which I encounter the Other that Sartre mentions –such as fear and pride– is an indication that my being-for-the-other is essentially linked to an emotive consciousness.

that before the appearance of the neighbor looking at me there is no "I" that inhabits my irreflexive consciousness. But when the neighbor looks at me, that ego "that is the necessary condition of all thought that I attempt to form about myself" appears thanks to that gaze.¹⁶ Therefore, I have to make the point of view of the other mine to be able to think about myself. It is an ego that the other and I construct in a sort of cooperation¹⁷.

This "being-for-an-other" and the ego (which, consequently, breaks into my irreflexive consciousness) are the manifestations of that imprisonment that, according to our author, is the essence of social life. The imprisonment consists in that now that the neighbor looks at me, my being acquires an "exterior" –an "I" or an "ego"– about which it is possible to make a judgment. Thus, only from the appearance of a neighbor, or just with his collaboration, can I assess myself as "brave", "cowardly", "generous", etc., judgments that impose categories on my subjectivity that degrade it. It does not matter that it is the concrete neighbor or myself that confers those qualities or vices on me. What matters, according to Sartre, is that through those judgments my being has been transformed into an object.

One can better understand this reification that I suffer through the other's gaze if one analyzes it from two theoretical viewpoints. From Husserl's spatial scheme, which Sartre appropriates¹⁸, and from the point of view of the intentionality of the person that is looked at. Using Husserl's scheme, from *his* perspective, the neighbor, in looking at me also looks at the things I am seeing. His point of view is superior to mine, he sees more than what I see and for that reason he is able to observe my possible actions. At the same time that I do this or that operation, my freedom appears before him as a *given* and for that reason my subjectivity passes to form part of an assemblage of instruments that form his world. When my transcendence is transcended by the other –by the other's transcendence– Sartre concludes that the neighbor confers on my freedom the quality of a spa-

¹⁶ ESN, p. 378. In a previous work, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre postulated that the ego was a creation in the world –and, therefore, neither personal nor individual. In ESN, however, this constitution of the ego has an intersubjective character (cf. Sartre, Jean Paul, *The transcendence of the ego*, translated by Miguel García-Baró, Madrid: Síntesis, 1988).

¹⁷ However, on the issue of the appropriation of the other's point of view as a condition of self-consciousness, Sartre will try to distance himself from the classical theories, especially Husserl's.

¹⁸ Michael Theunissen, on whom I have based my interpretation, has noted that Sartre does not discuss or elaborate this appropriation of Husserl's model (cf. Theunissen, Michael, *Der Andere: Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart*, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977).

tio-temporal entity. "for the other, *I am he who is seated like the inkpot is on the table*; for the other, I am one bends towards the keyhole as this tree is *bent* by the wind. Thus I am divested, for the other, of my transcendence"¹⁹.

From the perspective of the intentionality of the observed person, my transcended transcendence is not a piece of knowledge that I acquire. It is not in the realm of reflection that I live the mutilation of my subjectivity at the hands of the other. This means that I do not see myself as an object nor do I compare what the other does with me with some idea or image that I may have of myself. On the contrary, the irruption of the other in my consciousness is an irreflexive and emotive experience. There are two types of feeling that emerge before the neighbor's gaze, that are the sign of the "slavery" with which Sartre characterizes my being-for-an-other. On the one hand, I "live" or feel the degradation to which the neighbor condemns me through caution, anxious expectation or fear. Under the neighbor's gaze, I experiment what is possible for me with feelings of "ambivalence"²⁰ and unease. An alien freedom, a transcendence that is not my transcendence, imposes its powers on my being. Power that consists in that my possibilities of acting in the world are lived by me now through the stalking of the other, though the neighbor's gaze

The possibility of hiding in a corner, now becomes the possibility of hiding in order to be discovered and illuminated by the other with his lantern. That is why Sartre talks about alienation, because my possibilities of acting in the world are now possibilities sanctioned and configured by the neighbor's gaze.

We could characterize the emotive reactions of the second type as "more complex". They possess a meaning in which lies the key to Sartre's intersubjective theory. We are talking of feelings like the above mentioned shame, pride²¹ and fear. That exterior that the neighbor confers on me is, as we have already said, my ego and my reactions to the other, as for instance, shame; these [reactions] are considered by Sartre an admission or *acknowledgment*, that I am that object that the neighbor can place in the world and can, therefore, judge, admire or criticize²². This concept of recog-

¹⁹ ESN, p, 367.

²⁰ ESN, p. 370.

²¹ On pride, Sartre says that it is a feeling "in bad faith". According to this, in pride I try to affect the freedom of the other without abandoning my state of "objectivity".

²² The idea that the ego is an object in the world was presented by Sartre in his prior work *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Here, in ESN, the intersubjective constitution of the self is described in more detail.

inition or acknowledgment (that is, of admission or confession) just barely elaborated by our author seems to be his alternative to the model of his master Husserl. Because for Sartre I do not learn who I am through analogy or through empathy, that is, through seeing myself as the other would see me. It is not, therefore, that I come out of myself to reach the other's point of view and reach self-consciousness. That is a model that Sartre rejects because it presupposes a certain activity on my part. Our author wants, rather, to construct a social ontology about that idea that I, acting in the realm of a prereflexive or irreflexive consciousness, passively suffer the sudden irruption of the other and that, therefore, I acquire self-understanding in a state of passivity. Sartre needs, hence, in order to consolidate the coherence of his intersubjective theory, a type of consciousness that informs me in face of the other's gaze, without the mediation of reflection, about my exteriority; exteriority that the other confers on me, but that is an inextricable part of my being to which I cannot renounce. Thus, this consciousness that informs me of a radical change of my being has suffered at the hands of the other, must be a passive, irreflexive and immediate consciousness. It is in feelings that Sartre finds this type of consciousness. Because the emotions or feelings are, according to Sartre, immediate reactions that import a measure of information about the world and my relation with it.

For that reason, in order to further delve into Sartre's intersubjective theory, it is necessary to ask oneself about the content of those emotions. What am I ashamed of? What do I fear? Why the uneasiness? Sartre says that it has to do with subjective reactions that reveal my vulnerability. But not my vulnerability before this or that danger, nor my shame due to this or that conduct on my part. It has to do with "pure" shame and fear, essential elements of the human condition. What these emotions capture and inform me of is that I am at the mercy of the other who is not the master of my situation. The other possesses me, Sartre would say. To put it differently, what is possible for me depends on a freedom that is not mine. There is an alien freedom that is inlaid in my world and governs my possibilities of acting in my environment. Shame and fear, therefore, and also pride, are the reaction in which I grasp myself in the midst of a world that is not mine. And in this description of my place in the world, Sartre seems to see the sense of Kafka's *The Castle* and *The Process*: a transcendence over which I exert no control and which possesses the "secret of my being".

But the mentioned feelings are not just the subjective reactions that inform me about my situation. These feelings are for Sartre, at the same

time, the motivation that takes me to recover my practical project enslaving the other. That is, Sartre assumes that I will try not to last in fear or in shame. This is a point that Sartre unfortunately does not develop either. My being for others, which I experience through the mentioned feelings is for our author "an unbearable contingency"²³. So being seen by another is also a sign for me to attempt to "recover" my being, and by recovery Sartre understands trying to be the foundation of myself. And if our author gives no explanation about the motivating force of those feelings it is because, if he had done so he would have been unable to prevent the conclusion that if I try to overcome the fear or shame that the other imposes on me, it is not just because of an abstract impulse to be the foundation of my own being, but also because this "motivation" is revealing an aspiration on my part to be seen or treated in another way. And that normative expectation in the interactions does not have a place in a social ontology like Sartre's, constructed around basic impulses. When analyzing his essay on the emotions, we will see how he discards those kinds of normative expectations, calling them "rational superstructures". For Sartre, any moral aspiration that could coexist with those emotive reactions that take place in my encounter with the neighbor are "ephemeral and lacking in balance ... they crumble as soon as the magical aspect of the countenances acquires too much strength"²⁴.

As is evident from this description of Sartrean ontology, my being for others is a "degraded" consciousness. My subjectivity appears as an instrument for the neighbor while I suffer his presence through those affects in which I see myself as unprotected and subject to an alien freedom. And this degradation will last until I can subject the freedom of the other and make him my object.

I would like to question Sartre's line of argument by taking as premises his two postulates. The first refers to the preeminence of feeling in the relations between individuals. The second is that the neighbor generates, in fact, *in a first moment*, a sort of dispute. Each human being is the center of his own world and the appearance of another in that world can be, in fact, a source of conflict. What we need to ask is why in *Being and Nothingness* it is not possible that human beings overcome that initial situation of conflict²⁵. Since, as I mentioned a few lines before, it is in the Sartrean concep-

²³ ESN, p. 499.

²⁴ *Bosquejo*, p. 118.

²⁵ Various commentators have criticized these conclusions. Michael Theunissen, for example, through a methodological critique, has pointed out that Sartre assumes in a radical way the concept of "negation of innerness" (*negation de interi-*

tion of feeling that we can find the explanation of this impossibility. My critique of Sartre's theory will be preceded by a brief examination of his essay on the emotions that –even if written before– seems to have significantly influenced *Being and Nothingness*.

2. *Emotion and Conflict in Sartre*

One of the initial impulses in Sartre's work, as much in "*The Transcendence of the Ego*" as in "*Outline of a Theory of the Emotions*", was to show that consciousness is always a consciousness of something. Therefore, for Sartre, to deny that a transcendental ego exists after the phenomenological reduction has taken place, forces us to demonstrate that emotion is not an occurrence within my consciousness as much as an occurrence in the world.

In order to argue for this, Sartre starts by saying that the emotion is not a disorder without law and order. For him, the subject of the emotion has a finality, which is to change the relation of the subject with the world. What the subject pursues in the emotion is to transform a relation that presents itself to him as "very difficult" into a situation that Sartre calls "magical". At the prereflexive or non-thetic level where emotion takes place, what it seeks is to establish a magical relation between the subject and the objects that surround him. Magic in the sense that the world ceases to be an assemblage of objects that need to be managed according to deterministic procedures. "We try to change the world, that is, to live as if the connections between things and their potentialities were not governed by deterministic procedures but by magic"²⁶. Distances, time and the necessary procedures to manipulate objects, are transformed in emotion. Time, distances and instruments lose, in a sort of enchantment, their "difficulty". Suppose a fierce animal attacks me, I am afraid and, in a first moment, I

orité), in virtue of which the other is defined as the not-I, which makes it impossible to dodge this situation of conflict. Axel Honneth, on his part, has preferred an immanent critique and questions the fact that Sartre has not been able to distinguish between those looks that in fact judge and limit, and those that approve or stimulate. It has been said that the young Sartre saw the interactions between humans a necessarily marked by conflict, due to one of the most important premises of his existential ontology. That is that the subjects live in a permanent state of transcendence, incapable of obtaining for themselves a state of monadic unity. Since for Sartre consciousness is what is not and not what is, subjects cannot attain a lasting state of self-understanding. In both cases we are before the same question: Why is a continuance that is free of conflict, of the interaction which begins with being seen, categorically impossible for Sartre?

²⁶ *Bosquejo*, p. 86.

cover my eyes. In doing so, what I am doing is transforming my relation with the world at that moment. The finality or end of the reaction of covering my eyes is to magically "disappear" that fierce animal from my visual field. I am happy, I arrive at my house after seeing a woman with whom I am in love. And in the solitude of my room I dance thinking of her. The dance is a way, magical again, to possess that woman. "The dance is the mimicry of possession". With that dance, in my happiness, a sort of bewitchment makes the distances disappear. In the emotion, Sartre says, we use the body to change our relationship to the world. The change is produced precisely through a "bewitchment".

The consciousness of an emotion is, according to our author, a "degraded consciousness". "Thus, the origin of an emotion is a degradation of spontaneous and vivid consciousness before the face of the world"²⁷. Overwhelmed by certain demands of the world, consciousness chooses to degrade itself and live magically, that is, to look like dream and reverie. Consciousness chooses to fall asleep. Emotion is, therefore, an inferior manifestation of consciousness.

Sartre, however, after asserting the teleological and intentional character of emotion, seems to correct himself in the last pages of this essay when he discovers a second type of affectivity that is not produced by a consciousness giving in to magic. They are feelings that are not generated from any demand from the world, but that rather take people by storm, so to speak. He refers in this way to those emotions produced "by the world itself, which reveals itself as magical around us"²⁸. They are, in short, those emotions that other human beings produce in us: "At this point we can establish that the category of the magical governs intersubjective relations of men in society and, more precisely, our perception of others ... Thus, man is always a magician to man and the social world is first of all magical"²⁹.

Thus, the social world is a world where the affective prevails. And the affective is always for Sartre an impoverishment of consciousness. The argument of this article rests on the fact that this *insight* was alive when Sartre wrote *Being and Nothingness*, and that this perception of the affective is one of the reasons for the negative character of his intersubjective theory.

Sartre's intersubjective theory starts from a realization that is difficult to refute: human beings are the center of their own world, reason for which a moment of some kind of dispute or competition in their interactions is

²⁷ *Bosquejo*, p. 108.

²⁸ *Bosquejo*, p. 118.

²⁹ *Bosquejo*, p. 116.

inevitable. Sartre is also right in granting feelings the privileged place he grants them in his intersubjective theory. But why did our author think that this struggle is the only thing that can happen between individuals? Sartre's well known argument is that any other attitude that is not confrontational is an illusion. Said differently, the attitudes that are not consciously lived as conflict, as would be friendship, love, sympathy, etc., hide their conflicting nature. If I speak of respecting the neighbor, for example, that professed intention makes the other's freedom the end of my own conduct, making that freedom of the neighbor a kind of object.

The thesis of this article is that if Sartre considered human relations as essentially conflicting, it was due to his conception of feelings and emotions as an inferior mode of consciousness. We grant our author that affectivity is not something that takes place or exists "inside" the person. Sartre, and before him the American pragmatists³⁰, say that emotions and feelings are essentially –that is, internally– linked to the situation of the person that experiences them and, specifically, to the success or failure of his actions. But it does not follow from that, as Sartre says, that the affective is always that mutilated consciousness that he called "magical". For our author affectivity is a type of consciousness that makes evident and brings to the surface human nature as a flaw. For this reason, in his ontology, feelings and emotions are exclusively associated with defensive reactions or with the recognition of a certain type of inferiority before the other. Since his point of departure to explain an emotion is a frustration that the world inflicts on the person, our author has difficulties to admit the possibility of feelings that don't have a defensive character. In other words, Sartre cannot accept feelings whose end is not an illusory restitution, but rather a non-magical transformation of the world, as is suggested, for example, by the psychoanalytical concept of sublimation.

If in the theory presented in *Being and Nothingness* the neighbor is by necessity an oppressive presence, it is because, according to that theory, feelings that inevitably come out of the encounter between persons are negative. In this negative affective atmosphere it is very difficult, if not impossible, for attitudes such as respect, empathy, care, to prosper, attitudes

³⁰ Sartre's theory of emotions is similar to that which the northamerican philosopher and psychologist John Dewey proposed some years earlier. Of course, Dewey did not consider the emotions as a magical form of consciousness. An idea, which I think demands much more defense than that offered by Sartre (Cf. Dewey, John, "The Theory of an Emotion", in: Ratner, Joseph (ed.), *Philosophy, Psychology and Social Practice*, New York: Putnam, 1963).

that are inseparable from the ideal of communicative freedom³¹. If these considerations that I have presented here are correct, one can ask oneself what would have happened if Sartre had not conceived the affective in the way he did, or if he would have been more receptive to the creative aspect of our feelings. Perhaps the possibility of communication and understanding would not have been ejected from the universe of his better known philosophical work.

(Translated from Spanish by Victor J. Krebs)

³¹ In this sense, Habermas says that the cognitive operations required from the participants of a discourse are internally linked to emotional and attitudinal dispositions such as empathy (*cf.* Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).