

## Two Irreducible Classes of Emotional Experiences: Affective Imaginings and Affective Perceptions

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### **Introduction: Cognitive Bases, Individuation and Emotional Attitudes**

A view of current prominence in the philosophy of emotion is that emotional experiences are not self-standing intentional experiences of, or relations to, their particular objects (i.e., persons, animals, events, or states of affairs including these things). Instead, they inherit the particular objects they have, and at least part of their intentional content, from what have been called their cognitive bases. Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni articulate what is arguably the strongest form of this view, claiming that ‘emotions have a content *because* other psychological states provide them with one’.<sup>1</sup>

On this view, consider my experience of fear when confronted with an Alsatian bounding towards me. Presumably, the intentional base is a multi-modal sense-perceptual experience, in which I can *see* the large dog, its sharp teeth, and accelerating forward movement, but also *hear* its loud barks and thundering paws, and some of that content will be taken up in the fear experience. Next, consider reading a novel and finding myself amused by the behaviour of one of the characters. My engagement with the fiction, which might involve a combination of (propositional) imagining and visualising one of the characters (the intentional bases), represents their actions as being a certain way – say as not in keeping with the norms of their society, and engaging in endeavours which are poorly planned – and some of that content will be taken up into the content of amusement. The cognitive bases of emotions presumptively cover the full range of experiential attitudes and modes, from occurrent thoughts and judgements, episodic memories, imaginations (both propositional and experiential), and sense-perceptual experiences.<sup>2</sup>

Suppose we accept Deonna and Teroni’s claim about how emotions come to have the contents that they do. One implication is that emotions whose intentional contents differ in

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<sup>1</sup> Deonna and Teroni 2015; 299 (my emphasis). See also Teroni 2007; 404 on the ‘basing thesis’; Tappolet 2016: 26-29. See Lyons 1980: 104-6 and Teroni 2007: 395-415 for the notion of a particular object in emotion theory.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘cognitive base’ is slightly misleading since it might wrongly give the impression that the relevant states are cognitive in the sense associated with judgements and thoughts, but that isn’t the case as the examples show.

terms of the modal and temporal properties of the relevant particular object – because the intentional contents on which they are based differ in these respects – nonetheless need not differ *qua* emotion-type. For example, fear in response to a currently perceived aggressive dog need not be different *qua* emotion-type, from fear in response to a ‘mental image’ of an aggressive dog. Likewise, occurrent joy in response to a visualised scene need not differ *qua* emotion-type, from occurrent joy in response to a perceived scene. They would putatively be the same emotional *attitudes*, namely fear and joy, but just directed towards particular objects which happen to instantiate different temporal and modal properties (e.g., current and actual vs future and possible). Put otherwise, they would be instances of the *fearful* or *joyful way* – whatever way precisely that is – of relating to different objects and contents.<sup>3</sup>

It is a further task, on this ‘attitudinal’ approach, to individuate emotion-types in a satisfactory way, specifying at the level of attitude rather than intentional content, what makes a particular emotional episode one of fear rather than joy, sadness rather than melancholy, and so forth.<sup>4</sup> The details of such proposals will not be my focus here. Rather I want to hone in on the following claim:

*Same-emotional attitude, different content claim:* For every emotion-attitude type E, it is possible for E to be grounded in the awareness of both sense-perceptually present objects and merely imagined objects (as provided by different cognitive bases).

If this claim holds then the fact that the cognitive base differs – say between fear towards a sense-perceptually present particular object and fear towards a visualised particular object (the relevant basing states being sense perception in the one case and imagining in the other) – does not fundamentally determine the emotional experience as the *type of emotional experience it is*. Instead, it is the fact that we are relating to those particular objects, in the relevant type-specific *emotional way* of fear (however precisely that is cashed out) that determines what *type* of emotion we are undergoing. In the case just described what we have is the *same emotional attitude*, towards *different contents*.

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the idea that the attitude-content distinction applies to emotions see Deonna and Teroni 2015. Note, the possibility of diagnosing two situations as involving the *same content* but a *different attitude* is one reason one may have to endorse the attitude-content distinction.

<sup>4</sup> See Deonna and Teroni 2012; Ch.7; 2015 for one approach (cf. Müller 2017). Deonna and Teroni think that what type-identifies different emotions are their *attendant attitudinal phenomenologies*, which is claimed to be a kind of action-ready bodily phenomenology (see section 3 for discussion of this view).

This paper argues that this claim is mistaken, at least if it is taken in an unrestricted sense as applying emotions across the board (there might be a *restricted* version of the *same emotional-attitude, different content claim* that could be upheld; my focus here will be on the *unrestricted* version). By appealing to the specific case of imagination, the *same emotional-attitude, different content* claim will be challenged. More specifically, the argument turns on showing that it is a mistake to try to account for the difference between occurrently fearing/admiring/despising (etc.) a sense-perceptually present object and occurrently fearing/admiring/despising (etc.) a visualised object in terms of the *same emotional attitude, different content* claim. This is because there is arguably a fundamental difference in emotion-type between emotions that are enjoyed in response to ‘real’ sense-perceptually present objects and ‘irreal’ objects as given in experiential imagining. Drawing on phenomenological observations made by Jean-Paul Sartre, supplemented with independently plausible considerations, I argue that there is sufficient reason to recognise a distinct class of emotion-types not acknowledged in the current literature, which I call affective imaginings. These affective imaginings contrast with emotional experiences whose cognitive bases are sense-perceptual experiences (what I call affective perceptions). The contrast, however, is not exclusively a matter of content – which would be compatible with the *same emotional-attitude, different content claim* – but turns on the way the relevantly different contents across these cases modifies the attitudinal character of the emotional experience.<sup>5</sup>

Before proceeding, let me say something about the approach that will be taken, the motivations for the paper, and how its thesis impacts on broader issues in philosophy of emotion and mind. First, my interest will be on emotional *experiences* rather than emotions *per se*; I provide a characterisation of emotional experiences in section 1. Connected to this, the kind of type-individuation that will interest me is *personal level* intentional individuation. This is a kind of individuation of experiences which is intended to capture (at least in significant part) how things seem from the subject’s perspective. As such, this kind of type-identification of emotions principally turns on the phenomenal character of the relevant experiences (where this can include *how the object seems to the subject*).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> An Attitudinalist could accept a version of this conclusion, giving up the same emotional-attitude, different content claim (at least for imagination vs perception contrast), and claim that *affective perception* vs *affective imagining* involves two distinct attitudes that are somehow related (see section 3 for discussion).

<sup>6</sup> NB: one can individuate emotional experiences in non-phenomenal and non-intentional ways. For example, in terms of their causal-functional role, or the neurophysiological state on which they are based. In addition, it should be noted that personal level intentional individuation can be individuation from the *third-person* as well

Second, what follows contributes to the ongoing project of specifying conditions for individuating emotion-types. Indeed, it is a central part of any plausible theory of emotion that it should provide a way of individuating different emotion-types. At this point, it is worth noting that the dominant view has been to do so in terms of emotions' putative evaluative content. This is the approach taken by evaluativist views such as Judgementalism and Perceptualism.<sup>7</sup> While there is much to be said about this issue, the current paper will not discuss the role of *values* in individuating emotions, and what follows concerning the differences in content and attitude between putative affective perceptions vs affective imaginings does not turn on whether either or both have evaluative content (I briefly return to this point at the end of section 2).

Connected to the above, I do not mean to suggest that individuating emotional experiences exclusively in terms of their 'content' rather than their 'attitude' has the edge over the alternative (individuating emotions exclusively in terms of 'attitude' rather than 'content') when it comes to the cases at issue (putative affective imaginings vs affective perceptions). As will be clear from the discussion in section 2, understanding the phenomena at issue requires distinctive contributions on both the 'attitude' and 'content' side. In that sense, it should be clear that an approach that would seek to individuate affective imagining solely in terms of some proprietary or *sui generis* content would fail to capture the distinctiveness of the states at issue. Finally, as should be clear from the preceding, this paper helps to clarify the complex relationship between both emotions and perceptual and imaginative experience, articulating a picture that is more complicated than is often assumed in contemporary discussions of emotions and their cognitive bases.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 1 makes distinctions between different cases in which emotion and imagination are connected, clarifying affective imaginings. Drawing on Sartre's discussion of affectivity and imagination, section 2 puts forward considerations in favour of the view that affective imaginings and affective perceptions exhibit content-based differences that modify the attitudinal character of the respective emotional experiences. It then explains why this means that the *same emotional-attitude, different content claim* cannot be upheld between these contrast cases. Section 3 then suggests ways the defender of the *same-*

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as the *first-person* perspective; the sensitivity we are attempting to capture is that of the *experiencing subject's point of view*.

<sup>7</sup> See Nussbaum 2001 and Solomon 1976 for Judgementalism; and Poellner 2016: 8-11; Döring 2007: 363-94; Johnston 2001: 181-214; Tappolet 2016; De Sousa 2002: 255; Tappolet and Rossi 2019 for Perceptualism.

*emotional attitude, different content* claim might respond, arguing that none of them is without problems.

### 1. Distinctions between cases

In what follows I provide considerations in favour of acknowledging the psychological reality of a proprietary class of emotional experiences I call affective imaginings. However, there are several states and experiences with which they may be confused, so it is helpful to begin by drawing distinctions between different states in which emotion and imagination (of some form) are related.

(a) Propositional Imagining of Emotion: I imagine that <I'll be angry if he comes home late again>.

(b) Experiential Imagining of Emotion: I visualise being reunited with a long-lost friend and also experientially imagine (whether 'from the inside' or 'from the outside) feeling joy.<sup>8</sup>

(c) Propositional/Experiential Imagining of Emotion *causing* Emotion: I am in a state of either (a) or (b) and being so causes me to undergo a *bone fide* emotional experience.

Let me first say something about (a) and (b). They are both states of what we can call *imagining affect*. In neither do I undergo an emotional experience, rather the emotion is part of the intentional content, it is part of what my mental state of imagination represents.

This contrast is, however, not particularly informative without a substantive sense of what is meant by emotions and emotional experiences. Emotions, as I will understand them here, are intentional experiences. More specifically, they are occurrent episodes, usually of

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<sup>8</sup> There is a question concerning what it would be to experientially imagine oneself 'from the inside' undergoing an emotion *without* this being an instance of an actual emotional experience. See Hopkins 2011 for a discussion of the options with particular reference to Sartre 2004.

relatively short duration, enjoyed by individuals at particular times.<sup>9</sup> As such, emotions are first-person states that have a *what-it-is-likeness*; there is something-it-is-like to be the subject of episodic fear, jealousy, love, shame, regret, or admiration, to experience feelings of fear, jealousy love, shame, regret, and admiration. Emotional experiences are, therefore, conscious intentional experiences with a phenomenology, although talk of phenomenology is merely a placeholder for a more detailed account of the *what-it-is-likeness* of emotional experience. At a minimum, emotional experiences are intentional experiences in the sense that they are directed towards *particular objects*, such as persons, animals, events, or states of affairs including these things (which are provided by the cognitive bases of the emotional experience).

Now in (a) and (b) I don't undergo an emotional experience but *merely represent* the possible occurrence of emotion. There are significant differences between (a) and (b), especially in terms of the relative complexity of the content and the way they *represent emotion* (propositional vs experiential).<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, there is a significant distinction to be drawn between states of *imagining affect* and what can be more properly called *affective imaginings*, where we undergo a *bone fide* emotional experience as characterised above. Richard Wollheim, somewhat confusingly for our purposes, labels complex imaginings of the type exemplified by (c) affective imaginings. There are interesting things to be said about imaginings of this type, in which a state of *imagining affect* (as I have called it) precipitates an emotional experience, specifically clarifying the relation between the imagined emotion and the emotional experience, and relevant constraints on emotion-types between the imagined emotions and the emotional experience it causes. However, these will not be my focus here.<sup>11</sup>

Consider the following states:

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<sup>9</sup> See Tappolet 2016: Ch.1 and Deonna and Teroni 2012: Ch.1 for a similar conception. Goldie (2000: 5; Ch.2) has a broader use of the term 'emotion' as contrasted with an emotional experience or episode. He thinks of emotions *proper* as being embedded within a more complex narrative structure which implicates a range of related states (both occurrent and dispositional), such as moods and character traits.

<sup>10</sup> One further noteworthy point is that there is arguably a constraint on how the object is represented and the relevant imagined emotional response. For example, to imagine a particular object motivating, for example, fear, one might think one has to represent it as in some way or other *fearsome or dangerous* (so one has to represent the object under a fitting evaluative aspect).

<sup>11</sup> See Wollheim 1984: 79-83.

Affective Propositional Imagining: fear/happy/sad (etc.) that P, where P is an <imagined proposition><sup>12</sup>

Affective Experiential Imagining: fear of an <imagined particular object>

Let me first say something about *affective propositional imagining*. An example would be fearing that <Margret Thatcher will rise from the grave and win another general election>. In such a case the cognitive base of my fear would be the relevant propositional imagining (or if one prefers imagined proposition), which has a content that would be taken up as the content of my fear. The precise character of propositional imagining need not occupy us here, but there are two central options for characterising these kinds of affective propositional imaginings for our purposes. The deflationary characterisation would be that at least typically in such cases there isn't an occurrent emotional experience; rather what we have is something akin to *timidly or fearfully supposing*. And there need be no occurrent emotion present when I 'fearfully suppose' *that* P (as indeed there need not be in any more general case of 'fear-that'). This kind of deflationary reading is analogous to the way that 'Mary *sees* that the answer is 7' (or 'I see what you mean'), usually has nothing much to do with actually using one's eyes. Alternatively, one might prefer to characterise such cases as at least sometimes involving occurrent emotions in the sense of emotional experiences characterised above. Whichever reading of propositional affective imaginings is preferred, however, we can pose a more cogent challenge to the *same emotional-attitude different content* claim – which is our target – if we turn to *affective experiential imaginings* proper.

First, it will be helpful to clarify in detail what *experiential imagining* consists in. Experiential imagining has a 'rich phenomenology', in a way that is analogous with sense-perceptual experience and is to be distinguished from whatever phenomenology cognitive states or experiences have (if they do); indeed, the paradigmatic example of experiential imagining is *visualising*, or the 'having of a mental image' (I take these as synonymous is what follows). Reflecting this, experiential imagining is paradigmatically *objectual*, in the sense that it involves a visualisation of a particular object (person, animal, event, or state of affairs), rather than an attitudinal relation to a proposition.<sup>13</sup> Further to this, the kind of experiential imagining I

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<sup>12</sup> One might think affective propositional imagining no different from simply *fearing that* P. If one thinks that propositional imagination is just supposition then such cases just turn out as cases of *fear-that* (see discussion below).

<sup>13</sup> Note: propositional imagining may be accompanied by a 'mental image' although it need not be.

focus on here will be experiential imaginings ‘from the inside’ or from the first-person point of view of the subject, rather than experiential imagining ‘from the outside’, that is when I visualise, for example, myself talking to someone (in which I represent *myself* in the visualised scene).<sup>14</sup> Finally, experiential imaginings, again in analogy with sense-perceptual experience, are *non-doxastic states*. That is to say, they neither are constituted by nor necessarily involve occurrent beliefs or judgements. Put somewhat crudely, just as *seeing* is not (or at least not necessarily) judging something to be the case, neither is visualising (or the having of a ‘mental image’) judging something to be the case.<sup>15</sup>

Now, in considering the states I am calling ‘affective experiential imaginings’ (hereafter just affective imaginings), it is important to be explicit that we are presumptively dealing with instances of *bone fide* emotional experiences, rather than states of *imagining affect* which happen to be instances of experiential imaginings (e.g., states of kind (b) considered above). After all, the defender of the *same emotional-attitude, different content* claim, would willingly concede that a state of *imagining affect*, which involves the representation of the occurrence of an emotion – say an experiential imagining which involves a representation of myself as angry – is a different kind of attitude (or an experience in a different mode) from an emotional experience of anger. The two cases are *not* ones across which the *same emotional-attitude, different content* claim is supposed to hold, since one is the emotional attitude of anger and the other is a state in the attitude or mode of imagination, which happens to involve a representation of its subject as angry.

It is worth noting that some may be sceptical about the very existence of affective imaginings so understood, preferring to think that all putative cases of affective imaginings should be either modelled after states (a) or (b), so imagining one had an emotion, or state (c), that is where a propositional or experiential imagining of emotion *causes* an emotion. I think it is reasonably obvious that affective (experiential) imaginings are a *bone fide* phenomenon reflected in ordinary folk discourse: “I was genuinely moved by imagining her face”; “I was emotionally devastated by visualising the fate that would befall her”; “the imagined reunion filled me with joy”. In any case, I will be assuming that affective imaginings,

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<sup>14</sup> On imagining ‘from the inside’, see Williams 1973; Peacocke 1985 and Wollheim 1984: 72-4. Note, there is a case to be made that all experiential imagining (as visualizing) is ‘from the inside’ in the sense that it is from *some point of view or other*.

<sup>15</sup> See Evans 1982: 123-4 for discussion of belief-independence in the case of perception.



which minimally are emotional experiences which have experiential imaginings as their cognitive base, are a real psychological phenomenon.<sup>16</sup>

With these clarifications made we can turn to our central question. Is it the case that an emotional experience of anger, say, which has an instance of experiential imagining as its cognitive base, and so which gets (at least part of) its content from some such state – what I am calling an affective imagining – is no different *qua* emotion-type from an emotional experience of anger which has a sense-perceptual experience as its cognitive base (such that this pair is an instance of the same emotion-type). Put otherwise, does it plausibly (or not) make a difference to the very type of emotion we are enjoying that its cognitive base is a state of experiential imagining vs sensory perception. If we are tempted to answer in the affirmative, the idea would presumably be that somehow the relevant content modifies the emotional attitude, such that even though we might report or classify the different experiences using the same emotion-attitude terms – say anger in both cases – we are in fact dealing with fundamentally different kinds of emotional experience. The surface grammar of such reports or classifications would be significantly misleading in this respect (I provide further remarks on the respect in which the surface grammar of the relevant emotional reports is misleading in section 3). The next section considers observations made by Jean-Paul Sartre in *The Imaginary*, which motivate an affirmative answer to the above question.

## 2. Two Fundamental Classes of Affective Experiences

### 2.1 Preliminaries

Sartre's discussion of the nature of experiential imagining in *The Imaginary* includes several more or less contentious claims that won't be important for our purposes.<sup>17</sup> He also discusses a variety of cases, some of which might be more properly classified as cases of *imagining affects*.<sup>18</sup> Here, though is the key statement of the view that is relevant for our purposes:

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<sup>16</sup> The 'sceptical' view is discussed more often in the case of the connection between emotion and memory (see Debus 2007 and Teroni 2020).

<sup>17</sup> These include (a) the causal role of imagination (b) the specific intentional 'matter' of imagining, and what Sartre calls the 'analogon', and (c) the connection between imagination and human freedom. See Hopkins *forthcoming*, Kriegel 2015, and Casey 1981 for overviews, which include discussions of these themes. See also Poellner *forthcoming* for a discussion of a specific case of Sartrean affective imaginings, namely affective anticipations of future value.

<sup>18</sup> See Sartre 2004: 136-148.

Thus, from the very fact of the extraordinary difference that separates the object as imaged from the real, two irreducible classes of feeling can be distinguished: genuine feelings and *imaginary feelings*. By this latter adjective, I do not mean that the feelings are themselves unreal, but that they never appear except in the face of unreal objects... (Sartre 2004: 146)

Sartre is making the distinction we drew in the previous section, between *imagining affects*, in which the ‘feelings are themselves unreal’ (in his terms), and affective imaginings, where the latter are *bone fide* emotional experiences. Such affective imaginings are supposedly distinctive in virtue of being ‘feelings in the face of the unreal’ and are claimed to be of a fundamentally different kind from ‘feelings in the face of the real’, that is emotional experiences based on sense-perceptions, that is whose cognitive bases are sense-perceptions.

Now it should be clear that if something in the vicinity of Sartre’s claim can be vindicated – that there are two irreducible classes or kinds of emotional experiences, affective perceptions and affective imaginings – then the *same emotional-attitude, different intentional content* claim, which is our critical target, will be false. Here is why: that the relevant emotion has as its cognitive base either a sense-perceptual experience or an imaginative experience will not amount merely to a difference in the respective *contents*, but will somehow result in a difference in *felt attitude*. As Sartre puts the same point earlier in his discussion: ‘...there is a difference *in nature* between feelings in the face of the real and feelings in the face of the imaginary. For example, love *completely varies* accordingly to whether its object is present or absent’.<sup>19</sup> As such, and sticking with the case of love, there would not be *one* emotional attitude, namely love, which was shared across the two cases, but with different intentional contents. Rather, love ‘in the face of the real’ and love ‘in the face of unreal’, would mark out fundamentally *different types of emotional experience* – in the one case an affective perception and in the other an affective imagining. It is important to note that Sartre’s claim is fundamentally a contrastive one, such that it is only by considering, in detail, the differences between the respective cases that he thinks we will come to recognise the irreducibility of the two classes of emotional experiences.

Hopefully, this preliminary discussion has been sufficient to make clear what precisely the view is that would challenge our target claim, and why it does so. The next step is to consider whether we have good reason to accept Sartre’s view.

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<sup>19</sup> Sartre 2004: 143; both emphases mine.

There are a set of considerations which he presents in his discussion of these points which are not sufficient given that – as outlined in the introduction and so to repeat – the kind of type-individuation of emotion that is of interest here is *personal level* intentional individuation, where that intends to capture how things seem from the subject’s perspective (turning on the phenomenal character of the relevant emotional experiences). These concern what we might call the *functional profiles* of the contrasting emotion-types (putative affective perceptions vs affective imaginings), which concern the different ways the emotions motivate ‘conduct’, where we can understand that to mean actions, motivational states (e.g., desires, wishes), further feelings, beliefs and judgements etc. It should be uncontroversial that an emotional experience directed towards a sense-perceptually present aggressive individual will motivate ‘conduct’ in a significantly different way from an emotional experience directed towards an aggressive individual who I *merely* visualise. Indeed, the desires I am likely to form in the face of a ‘real’ (that is sense-perceptually present) aggressive individual and, say, a *merely visualised* aggressive individual will differ significantly.

Yet, given our interest in *personal level* intentional individuation, nothing necessarily follows in terms of differences in emotion-type from differences in the kinds of states the relevant emotion motivates, as those which are downstream of the emotional experience itself (even if those downstream states have a distinctive phenomenology). Indeed, it is not surprising that emotional experiences which have sense-perceptions as their cognitive base, contrasted with those which have experiential imaginings as their cognitive base, will have different functional profiles or roles in our mental economies.<sup>20</sup> And it is plausible that, with relevant modifications for the affective cases, these differences mirror the differences in the functional roles that sense-perceptual experience and experiential imaginings more generally play in our mental economies.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2 *Feelings in the face of the real and feelings in the face of the unreal*

So, what considerations can be marshalled in favour of positing two ‘irreducible classes’ of emotions? Let’s start by examining claims Sartre makes about ‘feelings in the face of the real’, or what I am calling affective perceptions. Here is how he describes them:

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<sup>20</sup> NB: naturally, a functionalist about attitudes may well see these differences in functional profiles as warranting a distinction between two different levels of attitudes.

<sup>21</sup> This point is familiar from the paradox of fiction literature (see Radford 1975; Walton 1978: 5-27; Cova and Teroni 2016: 930-942). I save detailed engagement with that literature and the Sartrean picture I am developing for a separate occasion.

When feeling is directed on at a real thing, currently perceived, the thing sends back to it, like a screen, the light that it receives from it. And so, by a game of back and forth, the feeling is constantly enriched, at the same time that the object imbibes affective qualities. There follows, for the feeling, a particular depth and richness. The affective state follows the course of attention, it develops with each new discovery of perception, it assimilates all the aspects of the object; as a result, its development remains unpredictable because, while remaining spontaneous, it is subordinated to the development of the real correlate. (Sartre 2004: 139)

I want to draw out the following two claims from the above passage. (1) ‘Feelings in the face of the real’ enjoy a particular kind of ‘depth and richness’ (2) The ‘depth and richness’ of those feelings is a reflection of the ‘depth and richness’ of the ‘real correlate’, that is the sense-perceptually given particular object – as such, the feelings are ‘enriched’ by the ‘real correlate’.<sup>22</sup>

Before analysing these claims in detail, it will be helpful to introduce some terminology to translate Sartre’s claims into the terms of contemporary philosophy of emotion. The ‘feelings’ we are going to be referring to in the following discussion are what characterise the *attitudinal* side of the experience (or the ‘subject-side’), as contrasted with the *content* of the experience, (or the ‘object-side’). In the case of emotions, which involve phenomenologically salient ‘feelings’ that are not to be cashed out exclusively in terms of being presented with an object (an object making itself manifest), but involve ‘responding’ ‘reacting’ or ‘being moved’ by the relevant object, it is plausible that there is what we can call an *attendant attitudinal phenomenology* (as what has often been characterised as a kind of ‘felt aboutness’ or ‘feeling towards’).<sup>23</sup> It is the relation between the *content* of the relevant emotional experience – say the ‘real object which is perceptually present’ – and its attendant attitudinal phenomenology, the supposed ‘feelings involved’, that is in contention. That Sartre himself is operating with this distinction is clear from the above passages.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Sartre also connects the ‘depth’ to what he calls ‘affective qualities’; these look to be evaluative characteristics – see the end of section for discussion.

<sup>23</sup> See Goldie 2000: ch.3 on ‘feelings towards’; see also Kriegel 2014: 424; Poellner 2016; Müller 2019; see Deonna and Teorni 2015: 308 for this notion of attendant attitudinal phenomenology.

<sup>24</sup> The distinction between attitude and content roughly mirrors the distinction between ‘noesis’ and ‘noema’ in classical phenomenology with which Sartre was familiar from the work of Husserl.

With these important distinctions in check, what is this supposed ‘depth’ to the sense-perceptual object that Sartre evocatively refers to? Getting clear on this is essential to understanding claims (1) and (2) above – and doing so will require a detour into the philosophy of perception. Sartre does not spell out this notion of ‘depth’ as clearly as one might like. Still, on a plausible reconstruction, the thought in the non-affective case can initially be framed as follows: the objects of sense-perceptual experience are experienced as in some sense ‘inexhaustible’, presenting in experience in such a way that there always seems to be *more* to the particular object that can be given in one sense-perceptual encounter – this is presumably at least partly why Sartre talks of ‘richness’. In this sense, sense-perceptual experience, for Sartre at least, always involves the possibility of *learning* more about the relevant object through sustained and attentive observation (and crucially further perceptual experience).<sup>25</sup>

Consider the following example. Standing in front of a house, we are visually presented with its front-side, given in terms of a particular array of colour and spatial properties from our perspectival location. Nonetheless, our visual experience is as of a *full three-dimensional entity* (or often purports to be). We enjoy a visual experience as of a *façade of a house*, not as of a *mere façade* (e.g., a stage-prop). How is it that we enjoy a visual experience as of the relevant full three-dimensional entity despite the fact that we are limited in any given instance – that is, any token visual experience – to being experientially presented with the side(s) facing us from a specific spatial perspective or point of view. The following appeal to the idea of ‘depth’ provides an answer. For a subject to enjoy a visual experience as of a full three-dimensional spatial object that visual experience must somehow ‘go beyond itself’ – as we put it above, there must *seem to be more* to the particular object than what is given in that token visual experience. More clearly, it must in some sense involve or refer to those occluded or presently unseen back-sides (and voluminous insides) which (i) are not sense-perceptually given (which are strictly *not* visually experienced), and (ii) which cannot be sense-perceptually given while the subject is occupying the spatial perspective or ‘vantage point’ on the object that they currently are. Borrowing a term from classical phenomenology, we can refer to the above idea, generalised across cases, as the *horizontal depth of perceptual experience*.<sup>26</sup> More could be said on this complex topic, but this will suffice to frame the following claim:

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<sup>25</sup> See Sartre 2004: 8.

<sup>26</sup> For discussion of this idea in classical phenomenology see Husserl 1973 §8; 1982; §41 and §44; 1977 §19; 1997 §16, §24 (for an overview of Husserl’s views on these issues see Drummond 1990: Ch.8); Gurwitsch 2010

Depth claim: sense-perceptual experience has a horizontal depth – there always *seems to be* ‘more’ to the particular object that is given in any token perceptual experience.<sup>27</sup>

The second aspect of sense-perceptual experience that will be relevant for our purposes concerns its purported ‘passivity’ (the ‘subordination’ of the subject to ‘the real correlate’ in Sartre’s terms). In at least paradigmatic sense-perceptual experience (that is which does not concern the experience of phosphenes or after-images), the particular object seems to enjoy a kind of *subject-independence* manifest in the myriad of different ways it exhibits a kind of ‘resistance’ to the subject and their intentions. As such, the subject’s relation to the relevant object has a somewhat passive character (which as we shall see for Sartre starkly contrasts with our relation to the ‘irreal object’ as given in experiential imagining). For example, as much as I might desire it, I cannot simply *at will* (or by sheer will) make the brown table located in front of me change colour to be fluorescent purple, any more than I can simply *at will* alter its size or location (the objects various properties seem independent from me). Further to this, at least at the phenomenological level, the objects of sense-perception do not appear to be sustained in existence by my own activity. We can frame this aspect as follows:

Passivity claim: sense-perceptual experience exhibits a kind of ‘resistance’: its particular object (and its properties) is not subject to my ‘will’ and manifests a kind of subject-independence.

These claims about the ‘depth’ and ‘passivity’ of sense-perception, while warranting further detailed independent explication, are *prima facie* plausible. Indeed, that sense-perceptual experience manifests this kind of phenomenological passivity is fairly widely accepted.<sup>28</sup> And the point about the *horizontal depth of perceptual experience*, seems importantly connected to a fundamental staple of contemporary philosophy of perception, namely that perception is one

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Part 4; Merleau-Ponty 2002 (1945): 6. For discussion of this theme in contemporary philosophy of mind see Schellenberg 2007: 604, 613; Kelly 2004: 98; Noë 2004: 60; Church 2011: 36; Nanay 2009: 307-9.

<sup>27</sup> See Sartre (2004: 8): ‘One must *learn* objects, which is to say, multiply the possible points of view on them. The object itself is the synthesis of all these appearances. The perception of an object is therefore a phenomenon of an infinity of aspects. What does this signify for us? The necessity of *making a tour* of objects’.

<sup>28</sup> See Siegel 2011: Ch.7, for a discussion of this point.

of the (if not the) fundamental way we have of learning about ‘the world’.<sup>29</sup> Let us now return to the main thread of the discussion.

The reconstructed Sartrean claim then concerning ‘feelings in the face of the real’ (putative affective perceptions) is that the ‘feelings involved’ – what we above called the attendant attitudinal phenomenology – somehow come to ‘reflect’ these content-based features exhibited in the ‘Depth claim’ and ‘Passivity claim’, and so come to have what we can call ‘depth-character’ and ‘passive-character’. Sartre illustrates this point, capturing both the relevant depth and the passivity involved, in the case of *love for Annie* when she is sense-perceptually present. He says: ‘My love-passion was subordinated to its object: as such, I was constantly *informed* by it, it constantly surprised me, at each moment I have to remake it, readapt to it...’<sup>30</sup> The idea is that the attendant attitudinal phenomenology (the ‘feelings’) have inherited, and now reflect, the ‘depth’ of the object. The feelings, therefore, will seem to the subject to have (will be phenomenologically manifest as having) an ‘inexhaustible’ depth, also exhibiting a fundamentally ‘subordinate’ or ‘passive’ relation to object (being ‘drawn along’ with the object as it were).

Now, and remaining at the level of phenomenological description, Sartre is explicit that there is important phenomenal contrast to be made in the case of ‘feelings in the face of the unreal’ – putative *sui generis* affective imaginings. Let’s stick with the example of love, specifically experiential ‘love for Annie’ (I consider a further example in 2.3). Sartre tells us that the relevant ‘positive element (the impulses towards Annie)’, the ‘feelings towards’ – what we have called its attendant attitudinal phenomenology of the episode – is ‘profoundly modified’,<sup>31</sup> further claiming that ‘...Annie as imaged is incomparable to the Annie delivered to perception. She has undergone the modification of unreality and *our feeling* has undergone a *correlative modification*.’<sup>32</sup> But what more precisely in this modification? In an informative passage, Sartre seeks to answer this question and further clarifies the contrast:

...the feeling is *degraded* in its richness, its inexhaustible depth came from the object: there is always more to love in the object than I in fact love...the idea that Annie as individual reality is inexhaustible and that, correlatively, my love

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, the discussion of perception in Evans 1984; McDowell 1994; Siegel 2011; Peacocke 2001; Martin 1992.

<sup>30</sup> Sartre 2004: 134-4.

<sup>31</sup> Sartre 2004: 143.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid: 144; both emphases mine.

for her is inexhaustible. So, the feeling that at each moment surpasses itself was surrounded by a *vast halo of possibilities*. But these possibilities have disappeared just like the real object...It follows that the feeling is *never more than what it is*. It now has a deep poverty. (Sartre 2004: 143)

There is much in the above passage that confirms our analysis of the case of ‘feelings in the face of the real’, but let’s focus on the ‘modification’ described by Sartre.

According to Sartre when we consider a case where we move from an emotional experience in which the cognitive base is a sense-perceptual experience, to an affective imagining, where the cognitive base is an experiential imagining, we do not merely get a change in content (which of course we do in relevant respects specified by the ‘Depth claim’ and the ‘Passivity claim’), but rather the ‘feelings involved’ – the attendant attitudinal phenomenology – is modified. What though, more precisely, is the character of this supposed modified affective phenomenology? Sartre says the feelings are *degraded* and have a ‘deep poverty, but it would be helpful to have a more substantive, less metaphorical characterisation.

We can say more on this score by emphasising that the ‘feelings’ involved in affective imagining, due to the way its object is experienced, lack the kind of ‘depth-character’ that is claimed to be critical for Sartre in the sense-perceptual case – that is in the case of affective perception. Sartre provides a nice gloss on the contrast when he writes that ‘in every person that we love, for the very reason of their *inexhaustible* richness, there is something that surpasses us, an independence, an impenetrability, that requires perpetually renewed efforts of approximation. The irreal object conserves nothing of this impenetrability: it is never more than what we know of it’.<sup>33</sup> The consequence is that the attendant attitudinal phenomenology of such affective imaginings ‘takes up’ or is ‘informed’ by the ‘impoverished’ character of the object, such that just as the irreal object is ‘never more than what we know of it’ (the Depth-claim no longer holding), so too the feelings towards that irreal object is, as Sartre puts it in the above quote, ‘never more than what it is’; that is what it would be for the attitudinal phenomenology in the case of affective imaginings to lack depth-character. On this basis, it makes sense why Sartre considers the following phenomenological description of the relevant attendant attitudinal phenomenology of affective imagining to be accurate: such ‘feelings’ in affective imaginings are ‘degraded, poor, jerky, spasmodic, schematic’<sup>34</sup> insofar

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid: 145.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid: 145.



as they do not have the ‘inexhaustible richness’ of the ‘real’ perceived object as given in sense-perception to ‘feed off’.<sup>35</sup>

Buttressing this analysis somewhat though we can also say more about what has changed in terms of the Passivity-claim. For Sartre, the Passivity-claim while true of (paradigmatic) sense-perceptual experience is definitively *not* applicable to experiential imagining. Such that the subject’s relation to the object is fundamentally *active* rather than *passive*: the irreal object, as Sartre puts it, is sustained ‘by means of a kind of continuous autocreations, a kind of restless tension’.<sup>36</sup> The idea that *all imagining* is ‘spontaneous’ in this sense – as Sartre sometimes claims – is problematic (think for example of unbidden images),<sup>37</sup> but there is a more plausible phenomenological claim in the vicinity which is suitable for our purposes. Namely, that experiential imagining which has a reasonable duration, will typically involve a phenomenology of actively maintaining the image.<sup>38</sup> This is an important phenomenological contrast with sense-perceptual experience, but we might wonder how it manifests itself more concretely in the case of ‘feelings in the face of the irreal’, and the contrast between affective imaginings vs affective perceptions. One plausible thought is that the ‘feelings involved’ (the attendant attitudinal phenomenology) will feel to be somehow *dependent* on our maintaining of the ‘image’; such that if for whatever reason I was to cease to be able to maintain the image the feelings would ‘dry up’. And while it would be a mistake to characterise the feelings themselves as ‘chosen’ in any strong sense,<sup>39</sup> the ‘restless tension’ which reflects the way in which subject has to actively maintain the image (by ‘continuous autocreations’), is also part of what gives the attendant attitudinal phenomenology that ‘degraded, poor, jerky, spasmodic, schematic’ character Sartre describes. It is no doubt controversial whether Sartre’s description rings true for *all* cases of affective imagining. Indeed, cases on the more ‘passive end’ so to speak, such as the feelings involved a compulsive unbidden visualisation of one’s loved one being maimed in a car accident, may not have exactly this character. The Sartrean view might, nonetheless respond to such examples by limiting the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid: 141.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid: 140.

<sup>37</sup> See Ibid: 8-14.

<sup>38</sup> Poellner *forthcoming* makes this point in his discussion of affective anticipations of future value.

<sup>39</sup> Although Sartre does in a separate work (1994) construe certain types of illusory emotions as in a sense chosen in virtue of involving a ‘magical’ transformation of the world, akin to wishful thinking. See Poellner 2016 for a sympathetic reconstruction of Sartre’s view of emotional experience which aligns it more closely to contemporary forms of Perceptualism.

phenomenological analysis and claims to putative ‘spontaneous’ instances of affective imaginings.

### 2.3 Implications and Further Issues

Now, given we find the phenomenological considerations just provided, and the contrasts described, plausible, then Sartre has arguably provided grounds for positing ‘two irreducible classes of feeling’ – affective perceptions and affective imaginings. Both are, on his view, instances of *bone fide* emotional experience, yet given the stark differences in the way relevant different contents modify the respective attendant attitudinal phenomenologies we may be led to think that such feelings are mutually exclusive. In Sartre’s terms ‘feelings in the face of the unreal’ never appear except in the face of unreal objects, they ‘need non-being in order to exist’<sup>40</sup>, and likewise ‘feelings in the face of the real’, never appear except in the face of real objects, they need being in order to exist (to modify the Sartrean jargon here). And as we considered at the start of this section, if this Sartrean view holds, it should be clear that the *same emotional-attitude, different content* claim cannot be correct. Affective-imaginings and affective-perceptions would mark out fundamentally different *attitudinal* relations to their respective objects; they would be fundamentally *different ways* of emotionally relating to their particular objects as reflected in their different attendant attitudinal phenomenologies. In the next section, I consider what responses are open to the emotion theorist who wants to maintain the *same emotional-attitude, different content* claim. In doing so, I also provide support for a critical claim which Sartre seems to assume rather than argue for (namely, that in these cases the content can and does modify the attitude).

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<sup>40</sup> Sartre 2004: 146. Sartre’s irreducibility claim is importantly connected to another claim he holds, namely that perceptual and imaginative experience are *fundamentally different* (thus irreducible) and in virtue of this cannot be combined in a single experience; they are mutually exclusive experiential modes (see Ibid: 8-16). One can accept Sartre’s irreducibility claim *qua* affective-imaginings and affective-perceptions without accepting this broader irreducibility claim about imagination and perception *per se*. Indeed, there remains the question, one which for reasons of space I don’t pursue here, of how the supposedly irreducible affective experiences are related. On this issue, one might draw on the idea, familiar from phenomenology, that imaginative attitudes (whether suppositional or experiential) are in some sense *modifications* of other attitudes or modes. In the cases at hand, one might say that *visualising* is in some sense *imagining seeing*. However, what would have to be guarded against – on the Sartrean view – is categorising affective imaginings as mere ‘imagined affects/feelings’ (on the models described in section 1). So perhaps one would have to say that while *visualising*, as ‘imagining seeing’ is a *modification* of perception, and while affective imaginings have such ‘imagining seeing’ as their cognitive bases, they are nonetheless *not* modifications of emotional experiences but *sui generis* emotional experiences. More needs to be said on these complex issues.

Before moving on, however, let me briefly say something on four issues concerning the previous discussion. First, it might be argued that it is problematic to use *love*, as Sartre does, as a paradigmatic example, since at least according to some emotion theorists love is best construed as an enduring sentiment rather than an episodic emotion.<sup>41</sup> On this issue one may simply replace ‘love’ with *amorous feeling*, or some such term that makes it clear we are dealing with an episodic emotion (and then re-apply the analysis).<sup>42</sup> However, to support Sartre’s view, it would also be good to see the considerations borne out in a more obvious case of a short-lived emotional experience. Take the case of what is often used as the paradigm emotion, namely *fear*. The contrast would then be ‘fear in the face of the real’ vs ‘fear in the face of the unreal’ (to repeat Sartre’s way of framing the matter).

Consider the following detailed example. One dark night while I am sat alone in my living room, I see a *ghoulish face* at the window and am overcome with fear. In keeping with Sartre’s phenomenological observations, we might reflect on the way the ‘real correlate’, the *ghoulish face*, does indeed seem to have that ‘inexhaustible depth’ to it connected to the ‘vast halo of possibilities’ that surround it: *whom could it be, what do they want, why are they here*. In addition to this, the very *presence* of the ghoulish face is something which I am *passive* in relation to; as much as I might like it to, it will not disappear, but remains present, with its gaze fixed upon me. On the Sartrean picture these features of the ‘real correlate’ determine those ‘feelings’ I have toward the *ghoulish face*, they inherit that depth, ‘feeding off’ the object, and are passive or ‘subordinated’ to the object.

Contrastingly, consider that I am sat in bed, having earlier in the night heard on the news of a recent spike in house robberies. I then find myself visualising a *ghoulish face* stood at my window, and feel afraid. Yet the ‘unreal object’ in this case, according to Sartre, lacks that depth described above, it is ‘impoverished’, such that there is no more to it than what I put into it; there is no sense of unpredictability – I might choose to develop the visualisation in such a way that the *ghoulish face* becomes an ‘intruder’, but I need not. And as an image I maintain through ‘continuous autocreation’, the visualisation has a somewhat ‘active’ character to it (it quickly ‘disappears’ as my attention is directed elsewhere, say to the

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<sup>41</sup> See Lyons 1980, 55, who claims that ‘love’ only has a dispositional usage. One may think that the pressure to introduce a distinction between two kinds of attitudes is particularly strong in the case of sentiments. One could even be drawn to the view that it is wrong to speak of love if the object does not exist (or more aptly if the subject does not take the object to exist), because of the ostensible lack of actual relation.

<sup>42</sup> Note one might also think ‘love’ in the sense of an enduring sentiment is odd to spell out in terms of having a perceptual state as a cognitive base (again, *amorous feeling* would be more appropriate in this respect).

chattering of voices on the street below). Now, for Sartre, such ‘fear in the face of the unreal’, would plausibly involve feelings that were ‘degraded, poor, jerky, spasmodic, schematic’ as reflecting those content-based aspects. So, in this case, we have an example of a more paradigmatic episodic emotion that appears, at least in some respects, to bear out the Sartrean picture.<sup>43</sup>

Second, let me comment on issues of evaluative content in relation to the previous discussion in 2.2. As noted in the introduction, according to prominent Evaluativist views, emotional experiences represent their objects under evaluative aspects and this is taken as central to individuating different emotion types on those views (e.g., fear is individuated, at least in part as the emotion which represents the *fearsome*, admiration as the emotion which represents the *admirable*, and so on). Now if one were tempted by this view, and there are considerations in favour of it,<sup>44</sup> one might think that affective imaginings would likewise have evaluative content; in different terms, one would in some sense enjoy an *evaluative (mental) image* (say visualising the vista as *astounding*, the lover as *loveable*, the ghoulish face as *terrifying*). Sartre himself is drawn to this view, and a reasonably extreme version of it – namely, that affective imagining can involve the representation of evaluative features of the ‘image’ without at the same time representing any lower-level non-evaluative features.<sup>45</sup> However, regardless of the problems with that view, it is simply not clear that the question of whether we do best to think of emotional experiences as having evaluative content bears on the question of the supposed irreducibility of affective perceptions vs affective imaginings as accounted for thus far. What is more, Sartre doesn’t rest the case for the relevant phenomenal contrasts on, for example, differences between perceptually representing value in the one case vs imaginatively representing value in the other. As such, the case can be made, as it has been, for positing two irreducible classes of emotional experience without taking a definitive stand on whether emotional experiences necessarily have evaluative content.

Third, there is an important further contrast between sense-perceptual and experiential imagining which I have not emphasised here, namely that of phenomenal-presence vs

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<sup>43</sup> A critic might note that while *some* cases can be described in these ways, we have not been shown that *all* must be, such that we have not yet been given sufficient reason to think that what we are describing here captures essential features of the relevant phenomena. To show this a fuller range of cases would have to be considered. I encourage the reader to, however, consider whether similar considerations do not also plausibly apply to a range of other instances of *affective imagining* vs *affective perceptions* (e.g., admiration, disgust, indignation, anger etc).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Deonna and Teroni 2012: Ch.6 and Müller 2017.

<sup>45</sup> See Sartre 2004: 70; 139 (cf. Scheler 1973: 17, 195, 253-64; see Poellner 2016: 1-28 for discussion).

phenomenal absence. Phenomenal presence is, broadly, to be understood as the object and its properties seeming to be spatiotemporally ‘before one’, in a sense that contrasts with the way the particular object of experiential imagining is ‘absent’ at least in the sense that involves the negation of phenomenal presence. No doubt there are important connections to be drawn between this feature and the ‘Depth claim’ and ‘Passivity claim’ (and their negations in the imagination case). It is worth briefly noting that this contrast is not to be confused with the idea that sense-perception ‘posits its object’ as *existing*, whereas imagination necessarily does not. Since the latter is false; while imagination concerned with fiction, for example, may take this character (and so this is a possible way imagination posits its object, namely as not-existing),<sup>46</sup> it need not. Sartre documents three other ways imagination posits its objects; ‘as absent’ (say in the case of visualising Annie who is away on holiday) ‘as existing elsewhere’ (say in the case of visualising the Eiffel Tower in Paris), and as ‘neutral’ (see Sartre 2004: 13), which is best construed as simply not ‘taking a stand’ on whether the object exists.<sup>47</sup> In any case, we can set these issues aside for our discussion here.

Finally, somewhat connected to the above, it should be noted that the fundamental contrast we have discussed is that between affective imagining and affective perception. Now, it might be said that this distinction isn’t obviously exhaustive. For example, consider an emotion felt in response to a particular object which is absent but is represented as such *via* the cognitive base of a judgement, say propositional remembering. For example, a felt sadness in response to a judgement where one propositionally remembers that a loved one is no more. In such a case the particular object (the loved one) is not present or at least not given as such, just as the object isn’t in affective imagining. Now on this issue it appears the defender of the Sartrean view we have been considering has two main options. The first is a *weaker* and more profligate position. Namely, that there may well be a further class, perhaps *affective judgements*, that while sharing certain features with affective imaginings (or at least in the case where the object is posited as ‘absent’) nonetheless might have their own proprietary phenomenology which will clearly not exhibit the ‘depth’ or ‘passivity’ of sense-perception and related affective perception. Although more phenomenological analysis of the specific

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<sup>46</sup> See Teroni 2019: 113–128, for discussion of the fictional case, and the respective contributions of attitude and content on correctness conditions for the relevant states.

<sup>47</sup> For further discussion see Sartre 2004: 13-14. It is further question of how the ‘irreal’ relates to the varieties of ‘positing as nothingness’ mentioned here. For sake of space I bracket discussion of this issue for a separate occasion.

case of judgement would be required to spell out in detail precisely what the character of such *affective judgements* (note as experiential emotions), if there are such, amount to.

The second, arguably stronger position, and more in keeping with Sartre's own analysis is as follows. All emotional experiences in which the particular object is *not* given by way of perception, that is in which the cognitive base is not a perceptual experience, should be classified as *affective imaginings*. Such a position would allow the Sartrean in this instance to maintain the idea of two fundamental classes of emotional experience, namely affective perceptions and affective imaginings. What can be said in favour of this option? One might insist that in the case of *bone fide* emotional experiences there is the necessity of *some experiential content* being in play, and that in absence of sense-perception (as the cognitive base) providing such content, some form of experiential imagining is required. Cases in which there is strictly neither sense-perception *nor* some form of experiential imagining as the cognitive base of the emotion, would, therefore, have to be analysed as something akin to cases of *fearing that* which don't report episodic emotional experiences, but perhaps only dispositions to undergo such emotions. Contrastingly, in the case of a *bone fide* emotional experience in which the cognitive base is say, a verbally entertained belief or a judgement, there will *also* be some experiential imagining or 'simulating' of relevant features of the particular object, 'visualised' in some way or other (this could of course be relatively indeterminate). While there is certainly something to be said for this second option, more explication of these options would be required in a full-dress defence of the Sartrean picture on this issue.

### 3. Responses to the Sartrean View

The main pattern of argument of the previous section was that of moving from phenomenological reflections concerning contrasting features of sense-perceptual experience vs experiential imagining to then suggesting that in the relevant contrasting emotional cases these features lead to a modification of the relevant attendant attitudinal phenomenologies. If accepted, this motivates the positing of two distinct affective-attitudinal relations depending on whether the object is 'real' or 'irreal'. And as noted if this holds then the *same emotional-attitude, different content* claim is mistaken: such a claim cannot be upheld as a way of capturing those cases and individuating emotion types at the level of attitude without reference to content (or more specifically now, without reference to the way the respective contents *modify* the felt attitudes involved).

What possible responses are open to the defender of the *same-emotional attitude, different content* claim? One route might be to take issue with Sartre's characterisations of sense-

perceptual experience and experiential imagining. However, the claims that were presented in the previous section are reasonably plausible. Broadly, the idea that sense-perceptual experience has a ‘depth’ to it in terms of its objects and their properties, which is connected to how we learn about the *objects* of such experience, that experiential imagining doesn’t, is along the right lines. And further to this, Sartre’s claim that the subject’s relation is at least *more* passive in the sense-perceptual case, and at least *more* active in experiential imagining likewise seems on the right track. No doubt there are further contrasts to be made, but the features Sartre draws on in his characterisations are relatively uncontroversial and provide basic criteria for distinguishing those experiential modes. The danger in rejecting these characterisations would be in providing suitable alternatives which would likely have to bring sense-perceptual experience and experiential imagining much closer in terms of their respective phenomenologies, while still maintaining enough difference to allow for (reasonably easy) recognition of them as distinct experiential modes. Note though, this is not to claim that the Sartrean view would be committed to *infallibility* for our recognitional capacity for differentiating sense-perception vs imagination, such that we never make errors in this respect (as perhaps demonstrated in the ‘Perky experiments’).<sup>48</sup>

A second response might be to insist that in fact, we can still describe the contrast cases as instances of the *same attitude*. After all, is it not the case that *experiential love for Annie* when she is present and *experiential love for Annie* when she is absent are still both categorised as instances of love, putative phenomenal contrasts notwithstanding (ditto for the *fear* cases)? It is certainly true that if correct, the phenomenological reflections provided by Sartre require us to deny that the attitude terms featuring in the surface grammar of reports of the respective emotions serve as an accurate guide to the actual type (or perhaps better: *phenomenal type*) of emotion we are dealing with at the fundamental level (which for Sartre is the phenomenological level). In this sense, the Sartrean view need not deny that insofar as what we are doing is analysing the surface grammar of *reports of emotion*, and using the way emotion-attitude terms figure therein as our guide to individuate emotion-types, then we can describe such cases as exhibiting the same emotional-attitude towards different contents.

The problem is that Sartre has given us grounds for thinking that the surface grammar of such reports (at least if they purport to report *episodic emotional experiences*) as displaying the same attitude is misleading when it comes to understanding the nature and complexity of the relevant experiences, insofar as such reports potentially conceal deeper level

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<sup>48</sup> Although see Segal 1971 concerning problems of replicability with these experiments.

phenomenological contrasts (naturally they may also in different respects reveal phenomenal commonalities). This rejoinder also taps into a broader issue about the relevant criteria appealed to in type-individuation of emotion-types. If what such individuation aims at is something which is supposed to, at least in part, reflect the nuanced phenomenology of these emotional episodes (their relatively experienced similarities and differences), such that individuating emotional experiences is a personal level first-person phenomenologically informed project – as most contemporary emotion theorists maintain it is<sup>49</sup> – then the above response of baldly appealing to the terms which figure in reports of emotion arguably fails to sufficiently engage with the manifest phenomenological complexity of the episodes in question.

Consider, however, the following response from a defender of an ‘attitudinal theory’, who we have said has difficulties accounting for the differences brought to light by Sartre. They might acknowledge that there are two fundamental classes of emotional experiences, namely affective perceptions and imaginings, but seek to explain this exclusively in *attitudinal* terms. How might this response be developed? First, the defender of such an approach might willingly concede that there is a manifest phenomenological difference between being sad about a particular object *presented directly* (perceptually) and one that is affective imagined (for example, the anticipated death of a friend). The phenomenological difference is a fairly substantive one, so the appeal exclusively to attitudes to explain this difference will require a ‘rich phenomenology’ in the attitude component of the respective emotions. Given this, it might be said that we can explain this phenomenal contrast in terms of the different *bodily attitudes* involved in such a case, perhaps along the lines of Deonna and Teroni’s specification of emotions as attitudes of felt action readiness (so with action-ready bodily phenomenology).<sup>50</sup> If we require a further explanation of the difference in bodily attitudes, we could then appeal to the idea that subject has different beliefs or knowledge concerning the relevant temporal and or modal properties of the particular objects.

First, it should be noted that this marks a significant concession to the Sartrean view, namely that there are *two fundamentally classes of emotional experiences*, a concession, it should be noted, which is not in keeping with the idea that emotions are just *so many* different attitudes towards a range of contents provided by their cognitive bases. Remember, we said at the outset that for an attitudinalist who accepts the *same-emotional attitude/different content* claim,

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<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Deonna and Teroni provide their own account of the suppose attendant attitudinal phenomenology (see 2012: Ch.7; 2015)

<sup>50</sup> See Deonna and Teroni 2012; Ch.7; 2015.



the fact that the cognitive base differs – say between fear towards a sense-perceptually present particular object and fear towards a visualised particular object (the relevant basing states being sense perception in the one case and experiential imagining in the other) – should not fundamentally determine the emotional experience as the type of emotional experience it is. Insofar as the attitudinalist now concedes that there are *fundamental classes of emotional experiences*, namely affective perceptions and imaginings, then it appears that claim, at least without significant qualification, cannot stand.

Second, and in more critical response to the substance of the alternative proposal, it might be said that an explanation of the relevant phenomenological differences across the cases in terms of different *bodily attitudes* overlooks the fact that there are cases in which affective perception and affective imagining are *on a parallel* with respect to any putative bodily phenomenology (action ready or otherwise). For example, consider the case of *feeling moved* by a piece of music I am currently listening to, and *feeling moved* by a piece of music I, in experiential imagining, recall hearing. While the episodes evince an obvious phenomenal contrast (as per Sartre’s argument), is it really plausible to think that we are to explain such differences by appeal solely to some attendant bodily attitudinal difference? In both cases it seems plausible to think that any bodily phenomenology in these cases is muted, absent, or indeed sufficient similar, such that it seems implausible to appeal to a difference in *bodily attitude* to explain the more dramatic phenomenal contrasts between affective perception and affective imagining which Sartre highlights. Indeed, it is a broader problem for *bodily-attitudinal* theories of emotion that there seem to be a range of certain ‘cool’ or ‘calm’ emotional experiences, such as admiration, reverence, and regret, which can occur without any distinctive attendant bodily phenomenology.<sup>51</sup> If that is so, then such *bodily attitudes* can hardly be recruited to explain phenomenal contrasts across relevant ‘non-bodily’ cases of affective perception vs affective imagining.

And remember, it is uncontroversial that an emotional experience directed towards a sense-perceptually present object will *motivate conduct* in a significantly different way from an emotional experience directed towards a particular object given in experiential imagining. But these kinds of motivations to act in specific ways (and the kinds of bodily attitudes they involve), are plausibly *motivational attitudes* downstream of the emotional experience itself, which the latter motivates (and indeed it may be said to be these *downstream* motivational attitudes which are typically dependent on certain beliefs or knowledge about the relevant

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<sup>51</sup> For authors who make this kind of claim, see Lambie 2009: 272-280; Poellner 2016: 13; Prinz 2004: 57, 72; James 1884: 191, cf. Ibid: 201-2.

temporal and or modal properties of the particular object, which are surely not often explicit in the emotional experience itself). As such they cannot be appealed to in a putatively exclusively attitudinal explanation of the relevant phenomenal differences between the emotional experiences of affective perception and affective imaginings *in and of themselves* (as we might put it). So, while more would need to be said to completely rule out this response from the attitudinalist, the above considerations should give pause for thought about the plausibility of this strategy.

The final response to the Sartrean picture advocated here, and by far the most substantive, is to put pressure on what is the central unargued assumption or move in the Sartrean considerations presented in the previous section, and which I flagged near the end of the preceding section as a lacuna in Sartre's account. Namely, that content-based features, taken up from the relevant cognitive bases, in cases of putative affective perception and affective imagination, *modify* the 'feelings' involved, that is modify the attendant attitudinal phenomenologies (and do so with different results). If it can be shown that this is simply not the case, then the Sartrean view that we need to posit two irreducible classes of emotional experiences, will lose its motivation.

First, it bears noting that Sartre himself doesn't provide anything by way of an argument for what we might call this *feeling modification claim*. Rather he just seems to take it as obviously true, as manifest from a detailed phenomenological reflection on the contrasts between the objects and feelings involved in the relevant cases. While we might be tempted to likewise re-emphasise what Sartre would insist are manifest phenomenological differences, undoubtedly it would be preferable if Sartre's view could be supplemented with additional independently plausible considerations (although what follows will certainly not be an exhaustive defence of this claim).

Let me first note that the Sartrean view under consideration should not be confused with and is not equivalent to the simpler uncontroversial one that the overall phenomenology of putative affective imaginings and affective perceptions differ. After all, insofar as we accept that intentional content is a significant determinant of overall phenomenal character – how the object seems to me partly determines the *what-it-is-like-ness* of the experience – we could explain such differences in phenomenology solely in terms of the 'object-side', as it were (in terms of differences in intentional content). The Sartrean *feeling modification claim* is more distinctive than that: remember the idea is that the way those content-based differences affect the 'feelings themselves', that is the attitudinal character of the emotion, is sufficiently different across the cases we are considering in a way which renders them mutually exclusive:

on the Sartrean view I simply couldn't have those 'spasmodic, schematic, degraded' feelings in response to a sense-perceptually present object any more than I could have these 'deep, rich, inexhaustive' feelings in response to a 'irreal' object.

So, under pressure to provide more of a defence of the *feeling modification claim*, or at least considerations which go beyond just accepting as correct Sartre's phenomenological descriptions and the inferences he draws from them, the following can be said. In the first instance, one might think the *feeling modification claim* is connected to an arguably less contentious point about emotional experience whose credence is in better standing, or at least is easier to understand. Stepping away from the technical detail, it is little more than a truism to say the 'feelings' involved in any given emotional experience, as *responses or reactions* to their particular object, will to more or less extent reflect manifest aspects of the object. Consider the following examples. The object which provokes *intense feelings of fear* (however precisely characterised), will typically be one which the subject experiences as having 'intense' aspects or characteristics (perhaps loudness, speed, aggression etc.);<sup>52</sup> alternatively, the particular object which motivates *calm feelings of serenity* (however precisely characterised), will typically be one which the subject experiences as exhibiting 'serene' characteristics (slowness, pale colours, flow, etc.). Call this the *reflecting feeling claim*. The broad idea is that the 'feelings' we enjoy in emotional experiences, the affective dimension of our experience, to more or less extent, will reflect relevant characteristics or aspects of the object which are manifest to us. Put otherwise, there is an undeniably close link (some might say inseparability) in emotional experience between *how the object seems* and *how it makes us feel*.

Yet, once something in the region of the *reflecting feeling claim* is conceded, and we also admit of Sartre's characterisations of the manifest content-based differences between the 'real' and the 'irreal' object (which as we saw above we might think relatively uncontentious), then the *feeling modification claim* and the positing of two mutually exclusive types of emotions in terms of affective-perceptions and affective-imaginings looks difficult to resist. The Sartrean view under consideration seems to have uncovered manifest aspects or characteristics of the 'real' vs 'irreal' object' in general, which are sufficiently different and are reflected in the 'feelings they provoke', such that we are drawn to posit a difference in type.<sup>53</sup> Note importantly, the Sartrean claim is not that *any difference in emotional feeling*, demands

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<sup>52</sup> Naturally one might seek to cash this out further in terms of an *evaluative property*, such that the 'intensity' of fear for example correlates to how acute the *threat* is to which I respond with fear.

<sup>53</sup> Perhaps one might insist that the strong conclusion that there can be no common fundamental type (such as love or fear) to instances of these classes does not follow. However, on the Sartrean picture at least, such a

a recognition of a difference in type. Take the case of fear: we can allow that low-level fear and intense fear are both instances of the same type. After all, it is surely common-sense that we can have the *same emotion* at various levels of intensity, which as such ‘feel different’. Rather, the claim is that the kinds of differences in emotional feeling which we have come to recognise in *specifically* the case of ‘feelings in the face of the real’ vs ‘feelings in the face of the unreal’ are sufficient in that particular contrast case to motivate a distinction in type. No doubt, more needs to be said in justification of the *feeling modification claim*. However, in the cases discussed and the phenomenological descriptions provided by Sartre, it certainly enjoys plausibility, especially when we see it as connected to a broader point about the close link in emotional experience between *how the object seems* and *how it makes us feel*.

## Conclusion

I conclude this paper by reflecting, briefly, on how the discussion bears more broadly on the theory of emotion. One consequence for the theory of emotion, and specifically the central project of individuating emotional experiences, is that there is a need for closer attention to relations between content-based and attitude-based (or affective) aspects of emotional experiences. Even if one remains unconvinced by the Sartrean view in terms of the positing of two fundamental classes of emotional experiences, it should be clear that we should avoid trying to carve off either the ‘attitudinal-side’ or the ‘content-side’ as the key to individuating emotion types, and rather examine in more detail the way attitude and content may combine and influence each other.

Naturally, if Sartre’s view is on the right track, that relation between attitude and content can be manifest in a modification of the very type of emotion we are undergoing. Further to this, while more needs to be done to flesh out the details of affective-imaginings in particular, the hope is that by recognising them as a distinctive class of emotional experiences, rather than merely emotional experiences which happen to have experiential imaginings as their cognitive bases, we can further characterise them in a way which reflects their unique characteristics and the important ways they differ from affective perceptions.

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‘fundamental type’ would be little more than a convention-driven non-phenomenal classification, unreflective of manifest *kind or type* differences at the level of the experiences themselves.

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