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What is This?
Emotion on Dover Beach: Feeling and Value in the Philosophy of Robert Solomon

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Abstract

Robert Solomon’s philosophy of emotion should be understood in the light of his lifelong commitment to existentialism and his advocacy of “the passionate life” as a means of creating value. Although he developed his views in the framework of the “cognitive theory” of emotions, closer examination reveals many themes in common with a socially situated, transactionalist view of emotions.

Keywords
existentialism, Robert Solomon, situated cognitive science, transactional theory

Emotions as Judgements

In the influential book The Passions (1976) Robert Solomon defended an apparently straightforward analysis of the emotions. Emotions are judgements—mental states with intentional content. The judgement that a person has slighted me constitutes anger towards that person: “my anger is that set of judgements” (Solomon, 1976, p. 185, italics in original). Many variants of this so-called “cognitive” theory of emotion were developed by Anglo-American philosophers in the 1980s in response to obvious counterexamples to the basic analysis. My own critique of the cognitive theory presented Solomon as the type-specimen—the “simple judgement theory” unadorned with protective auxiliary hypotheses (Griffiths, 1989). I emphasized Solomon’s vulnerability to all the usual objections to the view that emotions are judgements, which I will not reiterate here. At that point Solomon’s discussion of the relationship between the emotions and values did not seem to me to affect his account of the nature of emotional states (Griffiths, 1997, p. 27–28). But in reality, the underlying themes in Solomon’s work were very different from those in the main body of the philosophical literature from the 1980s. Solomon was heavily influenced by the existentialist idea that we are responsible for our emotions, and by Jean Paul Sartre’s denunciation of the passivity of emotions as a form of self-deceit (Sartre, 1962). Moreover, during his career Solomon became increasingly focused on the cultural construction of emotion and on the mutually supportive relationship between the moral order and the experience of emotion in particular societies.

Solomon later described the account of emotions he gave in the early 1970s as a polemic whose primary aim was to counter the neglect of key aspects of emotion in the philosophical literature of that period (Solomon, 2004b, p. 12). Hence, his philosophical analysis of the nature of emotions should be read as subordinate to the larger themes of his lifelong writing on emotions—responsibility for emotions and emotions as embodiments of value. It is these broader themes in Solomon’s work which are the focus of this article. I follow Solomon in suggesting that the philosophy of emotion would benefit from reorienting its focus from brief, “irruptive” episodes of emotion to extended episodes of thought and feeling. I argue that the themes of responsibility and cultural construction of value are borne out with respect to these larger emotional episodes by what I have in recent years called “transactional” (Griffiths, 2003, 2004b) or “socially situated” (Griffiths & Scarantino, 2009) perspectives on emotions. Finally, I touch on the idea that it is through the cultivation of a certain kind of emotional experience that we are able to live in a world of values (Solomon, 2002).
Changing the Exemplars

On the basis of the insistence that emotions are short-term physiological responses I have often heard love eliminated as “not really an emotion.” This, I submit, is nonsense. (Solomon, 2004b, p. 19)

Solomon famously claimed that we choose our emotions, and hence bear responsibility for them (Solomon, 1973). In later clarifications he made clear that “choice” was a polemical way to describe a much broader sense of agency (e.g., Solomon, 2004b, pp. 20–22). He also conceded that his thesis applies to emotions conceived as extended episodes of thought and feeling. He gave examples such as Othello’s love for Desdemona, or Iago’s envy (Solomon, 2003, pp. viii–ix). This is a very different conception of emotion from that used in most contemporary psychology and in affective neuroscience, where emotions are thought of as brief episodes involving measurable physiological responses. Solomon was well aware of the pragmatic value of this conception of emotion for scientific research. But he argued that it is only one acceptable explication of the pre-existing, vernacular concept of emotion. Mental processes that are clear cases of emotions in the vernacular sense can be long-lasting and need not involve physiological arousal. These are often amongst the “more morally interesting” emotions (Solomon, 2004b, p. 19). Since many philosophers of emotion investigate emotion in order to throw light on moral psychology there is no reason why they should be bound by a conception of emotion designed to facilitate the empirical investigation of psychological and neural processes. I have made similar points in work on social transactional accounts of emotion. Emotion is not a “natural kind” (Griffiths, 1997, 2004a). That is to say, the English vernacular category of emotion collects a very diverse set of mental states and processes, as do many of its subordinate categories, such as love and anger. So it is likely that there will be several ways to “explicate” these categories, that is, to stipulatively redefine them so as to capture some more natural class of objects. Different explications may be useful for different purposes.

In a recent article Andrea Scarantino and I have argued that the social transactional perspective on emotion is as much a matter of changing the exemplars of emotion as it is of questioning existing theories of emotion. Transactionalist psychologists have drawn attention to the role of emotions in mediating social interactions between people. Like Solomon they see many emotions as actions—“non-verbal acts of relationship reconfiguration,” in the words of Brian Parkinson (1995, p. 295). This perspective is at its most compelling when applied to exemplars like anger in a marital quarrel or embarrassment while delivering a song to an audience. These are cases in which the emotion has a temporal course of development and involves an ongoing exchange of emotional signals (facial actions, tones of voice, etc.). The fact that it does not apply so well to the fear response of a man alone in the woods who sees a grizzly bear is not necessarily a criticism of the transactionalist perspective. Conversely, it is not necessarily a criticism of, say, Paul Ekman’s theory of emotions as “affect programs” that it does not address the dynamics within a marital quarrel.

Solomon sometimes made use of a distinction between the ability to have an emotion and the ability to use it. It is in our use of the emotions, or rather in our cultivation of the skills needed to use them, that Solomon finds the primary locus of our responsibility. An adult should be able to have appropriate emotions, and they are morally deficient if they cannot. However, Solomon resisted a clean separation between the emotion in itself and the ability to use the emotion: “The idea of emotions without learning, without an ‘upbringing,’ or without a context is no idea of emotions at all” (Solomon, 2003, p. ix). What Solomon has in mind can be brought out by a primate example. Rhesus macaques deprived of social contact as infants produce grossly normal facial behaviours expressive of fear (grimace), friendliness (lip smacking), and threat (threat face) (Mason, 1985). But they do not have normal abilities to utilize these facial expressions to manage their relationships with other monkeys. They are, in effect, emotionally clumsy, with catastrophic practical consequences for their lives in the group. The deficiency of these socially isolated monkeys can be explained in terms of the role of social experience in elaborating the eliciting conditions for emotions. Infant monkeys begin by producing emotional behaviours in response to relatively simple, context independent stimuli. Later on, “As a result of functional elaborations, refinements, and transformations of the schemata [of elicitors for expressive behavior] present in early infancy, experience creates new sources of social order, new possibilities for the regulation and control of social life” (Mason, 1985, p. 147). Normal monkeys, in other words, learn to produce the same emotional behaviours in response to subtler aspects of social context, and by doing so are able to manage their social interactions with other animals. Human beings, Solomon is suggesting, do the same thing, albeit to a much greater extent. Moreover, this is a key part of what it is to be a normal human being with normal emotions. That is why Solomon resists a clean separation between the emotion in itself and its skilled use.

Transactional Emotion/Socially Situated Emotion

Like Solomon, the transactional perspective in the psychology of emotion suggests that emotions are things people do. It emphasizes the effects of having an emotion, particularly its costs and benefits, rather than the situations which precede emotions. For example, it focuses on the effect of anger on the person to whom it is directed and on third parties, rather than on the nature of the transgression which is the object of that anger. It attempts to explain why people have emotions in terms of these downstream effects on other people instead of, or as well as, the situations that provoke them (Parkinson, 1995; Parkinson, Fischer, & Manstead, 2005). Another feature which the transactional perspective shares with Solomon is opposition to the “hydraulic model” in which emotions are involuntary explosions or overflows (Solomon, 1984). While this is a highly intuitive view of emotion, it makes very little biological sense.
There is no neuroscientific warrant for the idea of emotional energy reservoirs that get filled and that must find an outlet, despite the popularity of this model amongst early theorists (Darwin, 1872; Lorenz, 1950, 1966; McDougall, 1908). Contemporary behavioural ecology looks at animal behaviour in terms of its fitness benefits and expects the production of behaviour to reflect cues that indicate the availability of these benefits (Fridlund, 1997). Behaviours which were traditionally viewed as involuntary expressions of the organism’s psychological state are instead viewed as displays—signals designed to influence the behaviour of other organisms, or as strategic “moves” in an ongoing transaction between organisms.

Scarnantino and I have argued that the transactionalist perspective constitutes a parallel in affective science to the “situated” perspective in cognitive science (Robbins & Aydede, 2007). Situated cognitive science is the study of how minds coupled to environments are able to collectively produce effective behaviour. It argues that the mind is designed to function in an environmental context and that aspects of the environment may in fact be part of what are usually taken to be strictly mental processes, such as planning or choosing. Research on situated cognition has emphasized the reliable physical properties of the environment, properties which can be exploited to accomplish cognitive tasks. In a similar way, a situated perspective on emotion would emphasize the role of social context in the production and management of an emotion, and the reciprocal influence of emotion on the evolving social context.

We identified four key themes in a situated approach to emotions (Griffiths & Scarnantino, 2009, p. 437).

1. Emotions are designed to function in a social context: an emotion is often an act of relationship reconfiguration brought about by delivering a social signal.
2. Emotions are forms of skilful engagement with the world which need not be mediated by conceptual thought.
3. Emotions are scaffolded by the environment, both synchronically in the unfolding of a particular emotional performance and diachronically, in the acquisition of an emotional repertoire.
4. Emotions are dynamically coupled to an environment which both influences and is influenced by the unfolding of the emotion.

In the next four sections I will relate each of these themes in more detail to Solomon’s work. I suggest that he would have found all four of them sympathetic.

Social Situatedness

If we were those perennial fantasy figures of the philosophical literature, marooned and miraculously living alone on a desert island, we would have no need for and no opportunity to learn most complex emotions (Solomon, 2003, p. ix)

The situated perspective draws attention to the fact that many emotions make no sense except in relation to other people and our interaction with them. Sulking is normally thought of as a manifestation of emotion, but traditional theories of emotion do little to illuminate it. This is perhaps why there has been so little research on a phenomenon of such obvious importance to human relationship dynamics. Sulking sabotages mutually rewarding social transactions and rejects attempts at reconciliation. Traditional appraisal theory can identify sulking as a manifestation of anger, but does nothing to explain the specifics of sulking, which must be handed off to a separate theory of emotion management or emotion coping. It is also implausible that all (or even most) people who sulk sincerely judge themselves to have been wronged, so an ancillary theory of self-deceit is needed as well. In contrast, viewing an emotion as a strategy of relationship reconfiguration (Parkinson, 1995, p. 295) provides a compelling perspective on sulking. Sulking is a behavioural strategy for seeking a better deal in a relationship—an emotional game of “chicken” in which someone threatens a mutually beneficial relationship in order to obtain concessions from the other person. The question confronting an agent deciding whether to become upset in this way is not whether they have been slighted simpliciter, but whether taking what has happened as a slight and withdrawing cooperation will give them leverage.

Embarrassment is another emotion which wears its social situatedness on its face (Parkinson et al., 2005, pp. 188–192). It has been shown that observers evaluate people who behave in a socially inappropriate manner more highly if they show embarrassment. This suggests that one function of embarrassment may be to indicate knowledge of a violated norm and acceptance of its validity. In a study in which subjects were asked to record a karaoke-style performance of an embarrassing love song, the singer’s subsequent level of embarrassment was reduced if they were given reason to believe that the experimenter knew they were embarrassed by their own performance (Leary, Landel, & Patton, 1996). Leary et al. took this result to suggest that embarrassment functioned as a signal: the singer needed to convey to the audience that they had a low opinion of the song, thus confirming the singer’s knowledge of, and desire to conform to, community standards.

There is an important sense in which emotions can be socially situated even when there is no physical audience present for the subject to interact with. Solitary subjects who mentally picture taking part in a social interaction produce more emotional facial signals than subjects who focus on the emotional stimulus without an imagined audience. Alan Fridlund has described this as “implicit sociality” and remarked that his experimental subjects display to the “audience in their heads” (Fridlund, 1994; Fridlund et al., 1990).

These examples support Solomon’s contention that by redirecting attention to those emotions which are most plausibly seen as involving some form of agency, we thereby redirect it to the more “morally interesting” emotions (Solomon, 2004b, p. 19). Rather than taking the meeting between a man and a bear in a lonely wood as a paradigm of emotion, attention is focused on displays of fear produced by a child when her caregiver is at
hand, or the development of anger in a marital confrontation. Emotion in this sense has more to offer to moral psychology than emotion as brief states of physiological arousal.

**Emotional Content and Emotional Action**

All emotions presuppose or have as their preconditions, certain sorts of cognitions—an awareness of danger in fear, recognition of an offense in anger, appreciation of someone or something as lovable in love. Even the most hard-headed neurological or behavioral theory must take account of this fact. (Solomon, 1993, p. 11)

Solomon’s emphasis on the intentionality of emotion would appear diametrically opposed to the marginalization of conceptual thought in situationist cognitive science. While not denying that conceptual thought exists, situationists see it as only the icing on the cognitive cake. Other forms of cognition explain most of the practical ability of organisms. Skillful activities, such as navigating an environment, can be conducted without full-blown conceptual thought, and these abilities are at least as important a part of cognition as those abilities that require conceptual thought.

But while insisting on the intentionality of emotion, Solomon also recognized that a theory of emotion must make room for continuity between the emotions of adult humans and those of human infants and of animals, neither of whom are generally regarded as having the capacity for full-blown conceptual thought, especially not if the concepts involved are as rich as those used in specifying the content of complex emotions such as guilt, envy, and shame. If the claim that emotions are intentional is overstated, it leads to the absurd conclusion that animals are never afraid, or at least that what we call fear in animals has little in common with fear in humans, when it is patently obvious that the two have a great deal in common. Recognizing this dilemma, many philosophers of emotion have suggested that there are various “grades” of intentionality. For example, Martha Nussbaum responds to the problem of infant and animal emotion by suggesting

a multifaceted notion of cognitive interpretation or seeing-as, accompanied by a flexible notion of intentionality that allows us to ascribe to a creature more or less precise, vaguer or more demarcated, ways of intending an object and marking it as salient. (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 129)

However, it is one thing to identify the need for such a “notion” and another to actually provide it.

In our development of a situated perspective on emotion, Scarantino and I have argued that doing justice to the intentionality of emotion requires the resource of a theory of nonconceptual content (Griffiths, 2004a, 2004b; Scarantino, 2005). In particular, we suggest that when ascribing emotional content to an organism we are entitled to use concepts not possessed by the organism having the emotion, a standard condition for labelling a form of mental content as nonconceptual (Bermúdez & Cahen, 2003). Although there is no room here to defend our account of nonconceptual emotional representation, the basic suggestion is that it is an action-oriented form of representation. The environment is represented in terms of the possibilities for action which it affords to the subject (Scarantino, 2004).

Given that Solomon’s best known works defend the view that emotions are intentional judgements which often involve rich moral concepts, it might seem that our suggestion could not be more directly opposed to his view. If Solomon were a typical advocate of the “cognitive theory of emotions” this would be so.

But, as I argued in the introduction to this article, Solomon’s views on the ontology of emotions are subordinate to his existentialist-derived commitments to emotions as active responses to the world, responses for which we must bear responsibility. Given Solomon’s frequent endorsement of Nico Frijda’s idea that emotions involve “action tendencies” (Frijda, 1986), and his own view that emotions are “engagements with the world” (Solomon, 2004a), we believe that Solomon would have been sympathetic to a theory of action-oriented, nonconceptual emotional content.

**Social Scaffolding and Cultural Construction**

Throughout his writings, Solomon laid great emphasis on the education of the emotions through a person’s upbringing and their life within a particular cultural milieu. Scarantino and I have used the work of social transactionalist psychologists to show how the social environment “scaffolds” effective emotional behaviour—the social environment is part of the explanation of how healthy human adults are able to have the right emotions at the right time.

The social environment “scaffolds” emotion in two ways. Synchronously, the environment supports particular emotional performances—particular episodes of, say, anger or sadness. Diachronically, the environment supports the development of an “emotional phenotype” or repertoire of emotional abilities. Thus, the provision of confessionals in churches enables certain kinds of emotional performance (synchronic scaffolding), and the broader Catholic culture supports the development of the ability to engage in the emotional engagements of confession (diachronic scaffolding).

Parkinson et al. (2005) give a detailed account of both diachronic and synchronic scaffolding. They discuss the potential social influences on emotion under the two broad headings of ideational factors and material factors. Ideational factors include normative standards about when emotions should be experienced or expressed (e.g., American wedding guests are normatively required to be happy and to convey their happiness), emotion scripts (shared internalized understandings of the standard unfolding of an emotional episode), and ethnotheories (culture-specific belief systems about the nature and value of emotions). Material factors include emotional capital (the emotional resources associated with having a specific social status, gender, etc.), venues in which certain emotional performances are favoured (a confessional, a stadium, a temple, etc.), and a range of emotional technologies for the management of emotions, from prayer beads to Prozac. They draw on existing work on emotional development to construct a model of the development of a culturally-situated emotional phenotype (2005, pp. 235–248). This involves three main ontogenetic stages: primary intersubjectivity, secondary intersubjectivity, and cultural articulation.
Primary intersubjectivity emerges in the first few months of a child’s life, when patterns of attraction and aversion are established with objects and relevant others, most prominently caregivers. One form of emotional engagement emerging at this stage involves struggling in response to a tight embrace. Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead identify this as the ontogenetically earliest form of anger, despite the fact that the concepts which make up the intentional content of anger are not available at this point. This identification is made possible by thinking of anger as a type of social transaction, rather than as a conceptual thought. The primary anger reaction in infants is developmentally continuous with episodes of adult anger in which the conceptual themes that we usually take to define anger are absent, such as anger elicited by repeated failure to open a jammed door.

When the child is about one year old, Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead envisage the emergence of secondary intersubjectivity, characterized by the recognition not only of people and objects, but of the relations existing between them. A classic example of emotional engagement emerging at this stage is social referencing. Infants learn to engage objects emotionally in light of the emotional responses other people have to them. For example, if toddlers observe a disgusted expression on their mother’s face when they are handling a toy, they are less inclined to play with it.

Finally, infants “articulate” their emotions with the help of their emerging conceptual resources (cultural articulation). Drawing on symbolic resources in the surrounding culture, most importantly those afforded by language, the child organizes its experience of emotional transactions in conceptual form. It is at this stage that ideational factors such as emotion scripts and display rules, and material factors such as emotional capital and emotional technologies have their greatest impact on emotional development.

In their understanding of cultural articulation Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead depart in a very productive way from traditional “social constructionism.” Articulation does not simply cause emotions to take on the form suggested by the local affective culture. While the articulated, concept-mediated emotion is a real component of the emotion system, it is superimposed on the existing emotional repertoire grounded in primary and secondary intersubjectivity: “We don’t learn to get angry in the first place by following cultural rules, even if those rules are applied to our anger after the fact” (Parkinson et al., 2005, p. 247). The conceptual articulation of the emotion allows for the emergence of tensions between emotional engagements reflecting different ontogenetic stages (e.g., some episodes of anger may not fit normative rules for their appropriate elicitation, as in the case of the jammed door). In such cases the subject will often struggle to interpret a spontaneous emotional response so as to fit the cultural articulation of an appropriate emotion.

**Dynamic Coupling**

Solomon described the kinds of morally rich emotions with which he thought philosophy should be primarily concerned as “processes” (Solomon, 2003). Rather than simply occurring in response to a stimulus, they evolve over time. In our own work, Scarantino and I have used the idea of “dynamic coupling” from situationist cognitive science to flesh out this idea. Emotion, we suggest, involves a dynamic process of negotiation mediated by reciprocal feedback between a person and their interactants. This feedback is provided by reciprocal emotional signals.

It is a truism that the initial occurrence of an emotion does not determine whether the emitter will actually manifest the action tendency associated with that emotion. Consider, for example, an episode of anger in the context of a marital confrontation, and assume that an action tendency of retribution is associated with anger. There are many ways in which the retributive action tendency could be manifested: sulking, insulting, leaving the house, asking for a divorce, and so on. Conversely, the retributive tendency could be inhibited. Anger can be diffused by emotion management techniques, or redirected at another object (e.g., the poverty that is the external driver of marital discord), or the aroused state of either party could facilitate the emergence of another emotion (e.g., fear of losing one’s partner).

What determines how a particular episode of anger unfolds is a feedback mechanism which involves the reciprocal exchange of signals delivered by expressions and other behaviour in the course of time. The currency of this communication includes fixed stares, loud and high pitched tones, brisk gestures, a confrontational demeanour, tears, firm declarations, forceful movements, and their strategic opposites (amicable stares, low pitched tones, smiles, etc.), which will determine if and how anger will be manifested. This is where the metaphor of negotiation is helpful, as the anger episode is not exhausted by the interactant’s reception of a one-shot message, but is dynamically shaped by how the interactant responds to the initial message, by how the emitter responds to the interactant’s response, and so on.

An emotional expression may also be open-ended in a more radical way: in some cases the identity of the initial emotion is shaped by the ongoing process of negotiation. We are accustomed to think of anger as brought about by the appraisal of being slighted, and this is certainly what happens in many cases of anger. But on occasion this appraisal is best understood as the outcome of negotiation in an episode which already has the marks of the emotional (e.g., physiological arousal, focused attention, an urgent tendency to realign one’s role in a relationship). What is left partially undetermined and in need of context-dependent disambiguation is what emotion exactly one is experiencing. Many marital quarrels begin from small matters of contention, which engage the partners emotionally, but where that general “emotionality” can develop into a variety of distinct emotions. The appraisal which type-identifies the emotion does not occur at the beginning of the emotional episode but in the course of it, depending on whether or not the interaction affords the advantageous manifestation of one emotion rather than the other.

These ideas seem entirely in line with Solomon’s conception of emotions as processes. I believe he would have been particularly sympathetic to the idea that the identity of an emotional
episode may not be determinate at any single instant, but might require that instant to be interpreted in terms of what came before and what will come after.

**Emotions and Value—Solomon on Spirituality**

But with context and learning and, most important, with reflection, we do have an impressive amount of choice as to what our emotions will be. (Solomon, 2003, p. ix)

The existentialist problem of finding value in a world that is, metaphysically, entirely devoid of value was at the heart of Solomon’s work on the emotions. It is this theme in his work that gives this essay its title. Like Matthew Arnold on Dover beach, Solomon saw the solution to the existential problem as the cultivation of a certain kind of emotional integrity. In books such as *Spirituality for the Skeptic: The Thoughtful Love of Life* (2002) and *The Joy of Philosophy: Thinking Thin Versus the Passionate Life* (1999) Solomon argued that through the cultivation of the right kind of emotional engagements with the world we can find values in a world in which they are metaphysically absent. I will not attempt to do justice here to Solomon’s practical prescription for the passionate life. This is described at length and with considerable rhetorical skill in the two books just cited and elsewhere. Instead, I will explore some of the relationships between Solomon’s existentialist project and aspects of his theory of emotion.

Solomon’s emphasis on the intentionality of the emotions is at least partly explained by his concern with emotional integrity. Finding meaning in the world by coming to respond to it emotionally would collapse into self deceit (“sentimentality” in one of its pejorative senses) unless those emotional responses were justified by their objects. Emotions must therefore be subject to rational evaluation as to their appropriateness. I have suggested that the intentionality of emotion is fundamentally action-oriented. This idea may be quite sympathetic to Solomon’s project, since it would suggest that emotional appropriateness is at least partly a matter of whether the emotion will lead to successful action. Solomon frequently cited the maxim that a person who does not get angry when anger is appropriate is a fool, a maxim he attributed to Aristotle. The situated perspective would suggest that this is because appropriate anger is the best way to manage our relationships and, in the long run, will produce more functional human relationships than would never getting angry.

While Solomon emphasized the cultivation of appropriate emotion through enculturation, his existentialist emphasis on personal responsibility would have made him uneasy with any theory in which the emotions—or at least the normative standards governing them—are inscribed into the psychology of the individual by the cultural milieu. Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead’s account of the ontogeny of emotion would seem to avoid this threat. Even when cultural articulation has had its full effect on the development of the emotional repertoire, a gap remains which allows emotions to occur in the absence of the conceptual conditions taken to define them. The individual needs to make sense of this gap, which they can do in a number of ways. For example, they can reinterpret the world so as to bring their emotional response into line with the normative standard of appropriateness that governs it. This, however, would be just the kind of emotional self-deceit condemned by the existentialists—my enemy is hateful because I hate him (Sartre, 1962). Another possibility is to use emotional management strategies to avoid the recurrence of emotional responses that one cannot endorse. Solomon frequently discusses emotion management of this kind, suggesting that this is an approach he would regard as consistent with personal integrity. Finally, an intriguing possibility is that the frequent experience of an emotion in violation of the normative standards that govern it might provoke an individual to question those standards. For example, in contemporary western societies shame and pride are conceptually tied to personal causal, and thus moral, responsibility. It is quite hard to bring the experience of pride and shame into line with this norm. Despite extensive normative work during their upbringing, people continue to take pride in their natural abilities and in their affiliation to a family or a nation with admirable qualities, for neither of which they can take causal or moral responsibility. One response to this mismatch might be to adopt a normative ideal for feeling pride and shame closer to that of Aristotle’s magnanimous man than to the contemporary ideal.

**Conclusion**

Robert Solomon’s philosophy of emotion should be understood in the light of his underlying concern with “the passionate life.” Although he developed his views in the framework of the “cognitive theory” of emotions, closer examination reveals many themes in common with a socially situated, transactionalist view of emotions. Both Solomon and the transactionalist see emotions as actions, both focus on emotions as extended episodes of thought and feeling, both see emotions as dynamic processes. Most importantly, however, both locate the primary significance of emotion in our interactions with other human beings.

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