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Paths Not Taken: Sartre, Normativity, and Language

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by

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Abstract of the Thesis

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Sartreanism appears to have hit a number of dead-ends within the philosophical discourse of modernity. Utilizing the tools of Jurgen Habermas's rational reconstruction of the discourse of modernity, this thesis attempts to resuscitate the works of Jean-Paul Sartre to solve the *a porias* of his subject-centered philosophy. *Truth and Existence*, a work published between *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, indicates a path towards a theory of the subject as being linguistically constituted. By placing these works within the philosophical discourse of modernity as envisioned by Habermas, this thesis exposes Sartre's commitment to the problems of modernity and exposes the places where Sartre could have resolved the *a porias* surrounding this discourse's search for normative structure. The linguistically constituted subject solves Sartre's lifelong pursuit of an ethics of freedom by positing consciousness as a linguistic entity in pursuit of non-pathological communication which commits itself to the non-distorted disclosure of being.

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List of Abbreviations

BN- *Being and Nothingness*

CDR- *Critique of Dialectical Reason*

LE- *Literature and Existentialism*

PDM- *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*

PMT- *Postmetaphysical Thinking*

TE- *Truth and Existence*

TP- *Theory and Practice*

i. Introduction

Sartreanism today is ever-present, but rarely ever directly engaged. Ronald Aronson chalks this up to the whole world accepting Sartreanism.¹ There is a certain malaise that is exposed by such unencumbered enthusiasm. This malaise comes from the fact that for Sartre himself a theory only lives when it is debated, when the truths it presents are not ready-made, and when the theory is not exhausted by a name. And this is precisely what is missing in Sartreanism today. Sartre's work no longer engages in the philosophical discourse of modernity. With the overabundance of philosophical theories in the wake of post-modernity, why resuscitate Sartre? The answer to this question lay not in the enthusiastic adumbration of Sartre's ideas, but in a diagnostics of the pathologies of Sartre's philosophy that Sartre was struggling with himself.

In order to re-introduce Sartreanism into the discourse of modern philosophy, it must be shown that Sartre struggles with the same problems as modernity. Taking Jurgen Habermas's model in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity and Post-Metaphysical Thinking*, we shall attempt to reconstruct the pathologies, *aporias*, and potentialities of Sartre's works within the milieu of modern philosophy. Sartre's philosophy engages in two different problems of modernity and can be demarcated along these lines. During the early period, Sartre is primarily engaged with creating a subject-centered philosophy that itself responds to the *aporias* of the philosophy of the subject and attempts to transform the philosophy of the subject from within. Sartre responds not only to the traditional theories of the subject (pre-Hegelian) but he also engages with Hegel himself. If Hegel answers the problems of modernity too well by creating an

¹ See Ronald Aronson "Introduction The Ethics of Truth" in *Truth and Existence*.

all-encompassing and eternal reason, Sartre fails to answer the problems of modernity by the subject's very embeddedness within a social context. The *aporia* of *Being and Nothingness* is that while Sartre adequately responds to the problems of subject-centered philosophy as it relates to the world, he offers no way toward a normativity between subjects. The later period of Sartre's writing engages with the problem of establishing a new reason on the basis of post-metaphysical thought. *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is an attempt to overcome the *aporias* of subject-centered philosophy through a philosophy centered around *praxis*. Sartre resolves the difficulties of normativity, but the structure of the third party and the *groupe-en-fusion* which removes this difficulty are unstable and carry within them a certain amount of idealism. For while Sartre has jettisoned the Hegelian belief in an encompassing subject that stands at the end of the dialectic, Sartre introduces the structure of the third party who acts in rounds as the author and the actor of the events.

Habermas's general mode of acting throughout these two texts is not only to indicate the *aporias* of modern philosophers, but also to indicate the openings in their philosophy where another route was possible: the route towards a theory of communicative action. Sartre's philosophy possesses a liminal period between his two well-known texts. *Truth and Existence* offers indications toward a theory of intersubjectivity which remains latent within *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Sartre's theory of truth as the act of communicating subjective reality to another indicates the possibility of a theory of intersubjectivity that can answer the demands of a post-metaphysical and post-subject-centered world.

ii. Philosophical Discourse of Modernity

Habermas's rational reconstruction of the philosophical discourse of modernity pivots upon one central point: subject-centered reason is no longer a viable wellspring of philosophy. Modernity begins with “the discovery of the 'new world,' the Renaissance, and the Reformation” (PDM 5). These three events mark modernity’s self-reflection as a new epoch. Along with this new epoch, a new significance of “new” comes into existence. These developments shed from modernity the two sources of its cohesion and normativity; the idea that the past could furnish the norms for modern society and the Christian concept of the Messianic world to come. Modern society could no longer divert to another point on the temporal spectrum for its own social cohesion; these principles had to emerge from its own soil. Modernity first emerges as an historical and social phenomenon, which gradually becomes aware of itself as temporally and historically located. For “at this time the image of history as a uniform process that generates problems is formed, and time becomes experienced as a scarce resource for the mastery of the problems that arise” (PDM 6). With the dissolution of temporal dimensions whereby society could divert its problems, modern society begins to feel the acceleration of events and the need to accelerate the solutions to its problems further. According to Habermas, the first articulate expression of this self-reflection of modernity and the thematization of history was Hegel's philosophy.

Hegel understands that modernity is saddled with the task of gathering together the disparate spheres of society that have emerged after the dissolution of the Christian conception of history-towards-the-divine-future or norms being identified on the basis of historical precedent.

Theories of subjectivity emerge in the modern era that perpetuate “individualism” or absolute particularization, “the right to criticism” or that anyone is entitled to recognize something (knowledge is the practice of all people), “autonomy of action” or being responsible for our actions, and “idealistic philosophy” or that philosophy garner the idea that is made self-conscious. The problem with the philosophy of the subject, for Hegel, is that it dirempts society into a number of determinate spheres (the sciences, the arts, philosophy, belief, etc) and it does not appear to give any cohesion or self-grounding to the society itself. The task, therefore, that stands before Hegel is that “modernity, open to the future, anxious for novelty, can only fashion its criteria out of itself. The only source of normativity that presents itself is the principle of subjectivity from which the very time-consciousness of modernity arose” (PDM 41). Hegel is the first to recognize that this is the problem of the modern era. The Enlightenment exposes the only tool that modernity has to ground its normativity from itself and that is instrumental reason as wielded by an individual subject. The problem with the principle of the subject, and subsequently subject-centered reason, is that it dirempts society into discrete fields and provides modernity with no normativity for which it can pursue towards its accelerated future. Subject-centered philosophy cannot provide a normative basis for modernity only utilizing its own tools. Hegel attempts to take up the philosophy of the subject from within and to explode its diremptive tendencies towards the historical unification of reason.

After Hegel, modernity begins to bring up the fundamental problem of its era: it must ground modernity out of modernity’s own tools. Consensus in the discourse of modernity also arises around its attitude to a reason that finds its center in the subject: “this reason denounces and undermines all unconcealed forms of suppression and exploitation, of degradation and alienation, only to set up in their place the unassailable domination of a false absolute” (PDM

56). Given these two determinations, Habermas traces the various responses to the demands of modernity. A constant theme throughout the project is the tracing of various strands of the modern discourse of modernity which indicate a route toward theories of communicative action, but which terminate before they flower to dead-ends and destructive philosophical projects. As Habermas himself states, “I marked the places where the young Hegel, the young Marx, and even the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and Derrida in his discussion with Husserl stood before alternative paths they did *not* choose” (PDM 295). It is to this that we turn to Jean-Paul Sartre's works to determine how his philosophy attempts to meet the demands of modernity and to indicate the alternate paths that could have led to a theory that would meet the demands of modernity and his own philosophical goals.

Of central importance to both Habermas and Sartre is the notion of normative structures of acting. In Habermas's writing it is clear that normativity in modernity must arise from the conditions of speech acts (intelligibility, truth, truthfulness, and rightness) and that normative structures are those structure by which modernity can interact toward an ideal speech situation. For Sartre, the question of normativity is raised obliquely but persistently. At the end of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre promises to publish an ethics, which he never performs. Throughout the rest of his writing, even his psychoanalytic texts, Sartre attempts to produce a structure whereby free individuals, in their freedom, can engage with one another on a non-pathological plane. In his life and works, Sartre is engaged and calls for engagement with this very question: how ought we to act?

Sartre's early philosophy especially that articulated in *The Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness* is particularly concerned with adumbration of subjectivity. While on the surface this appears to date Sartre's work as a pre-Hegelian philosophy that is not engaging with

the problems of modernity, we shall see that Sartre's notion of subjectivity is particularly attuned to the problems of modernity. Sartre is particularly concerned with theories of consciousness that attempt to reduce consciousness either to knowledge (the knowing-subject) or to a transcendental structuring principle of reality.

iii. Sartre's Subject-Centered Philosophy

The structure of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* is pivoted on an analytic of the three modes of being: in-itself, for-itself, and for-others. Each are co-constitutive of the world and are equiprimordial, but for the sake of clarity Sartre separates them into three different sections. For Sartre, being without consciousness is Parmenidean positivity, it admits of no negation and thus of no change, origin, temporality, spatiality, or actuality. Being, as full positivity, is singular and nothing can be said of it except that "Being is. Being is in-itself. Being is what it is" (BN 29). Consciousness is the negating power which lets "*beings* be." Any division, synthesis, temporality, or spatiality of being is only possible on the foundation of the nihilating power of consciousness. Consciousness does not *create* being, *per se*, it creates the distinction within the Parmenidean block of fully positive being. Consciousness, however, is not something that is heterogeneous to extensionality (this is not a crass Cartesianism), instead consciousness is a mode of "being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself" (BN 24). The other of consciousness *is* being-in-itself, that is, an object. It is not that being-in-itself is other than consciousness due to its property of being extended, but

by its status of being an object for consciousness.

The negation that consciousness *is*, is such that it creates a distance between consciousness and that of which it is conscious. For Sartre, consciousness is this nihilating activity; it is this distance that it creates between itself and that of which it is conscious. Grammatically we could say that consciousness is the *of* of consciousness *of* something. This achieves a theory of the subject that bypasses the problems generated from Cartesian philosophy, insofar as consciousness is what it is only because there is something for it to be in relation to. For Sartre, however, consciousness is only in relationship to being, it receives its being from a parasitic relationship of negation. Sartre is an advocate of subject-centered reason insofar as subjectivity is that which objectivates being. If Heidegger's *Being and Time* attempts to dismantle the architecture of subject-centered reason, Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* attempts to re-envision what subject-centered reason means. For throughout *Being and Nothingness* Sartre takes aim at those philosophies which find as their center a *knowing subject*, which lead to false dichotomies and *aporias* of realism and idealism. That is to say that Sartre eschews any notion into which the basic structures of consciousness have to be taken up on the foundation of *how it knows itself* in order to discern *how consciousness is itself*. Thus consciousness approaches the objects of which it is conscious not as particulate bits of datum that it knows, but as entities which are separated from consciousness by the negating activity of consciousness itself.

Unlike subject-centered theories that attribute to consciousness a structuring of the world, consciousness for Sartre introduces only the relation of things to consciousness itself. It does not, *a priori*, structure being in such a way as to make being *knowable*, instead it introduces into being the possibility of a negating distance. "Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being like a worm" (BN 56). The conception of consciousness as the nihilating relation solves two problems

of traditional subject-centered reason. On the one hand, consciousness is no longer disconnected from the world. The famous mind-object problem of Descartes is preempted in that consciousness, as the parasitic negation of being, is what it is only in connection with a being of which it is conscious. Also the “hectic to and fro of between transcendental and empirical modes of dealing with issues” is not an issue for Sartre (PDM 296). Consciousness no longer gives to being its structuring principle. By emptying the contents from consciousness, Sartre has unified consciousness within itself, and as such he no longer need to differentiate between the structuring and transcendental aspects of consciousness and the empirical manifestations of this consciousness.

Consciousness is the origin of nothingness that creates distances. In order to understand this theory and its importance to the philosophical discourse of modernity, we must expose Sartre's own concept of the differentiation between his philosophy and the philosophy of Hegel. Sartre takes up Hegel's notion of non-being in the *Logic* as being the concurrent opposite of pure being. Hegel's system attempts to move from the most abstract notions to the most concrete. The most concrete for Hegel “is the Existent with its essence; it is the Totality produced by the synthetic integration of all the abstract moments which are surpassed in it by requiring their complement” (BN 45). The truth is the whole. Pure being is the most abstract of all notions as it is completely undifferentiated and removed from its essence. Without differentiation, pure being passes over into its opposite, pure non-being. Being and Non-Being without internal differentiation, without essence, have nothing to differentiate them. These two concepts are the most abstract moments towards the concrete totality of reality. At the same moment that being arises non-being necessarily arises as its counterpart. Hegel treats non-being as the opposite of being and therefore being and non-being are “two opposites” which “arise as the two limiting

terms of a logical series” (BN 47). Opposites are opposites because they are equal in their valuation. For Sartre, non-being is the contradiction of being, and as such, nothingness *is subsequent to being*. Nothingness denies being, it does not compliment it as its undifferentiated underside. More generally and for our purposes, consciousness does not arise concurrently with being, but instead it emerges from being. For Hegel this is the starting point for his idealist dialectic, that all things are mixed with being and non-being at the outset. However, nothingness is not the being of non-being, nothingness does not have being, it is not a thing. As Sartre says, “being *is* and nothingness *is not*” (BN 48). Undifferentiated being is void of all determination, because it is a full plenitude, but nothingness is devoid of all being.

The picture becomes more complicated when we take into account the relationship consciousness has to its self and to other consciousnesses. Consciousness has an essential relationship with objects. Insofar as consciousness is something it is consciousness of something that is other than it. To be self-conscious is to make its self into an object of consciousness. For Sartre there are always two modes of self-consciousness, implicit (pre-reflective) and explicit (reflective) self-consciousness. There must be “an immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself” (BN 12). This is the pre-reflective cogito that does not take consciousness itself as an object, but is aware of consciousness being conscious of an object. This implicit self-consciousness is the translucency of consciousness to itself. Consciousness also has the ability to reflectively, that is explicitly, turn its gaze towards itself. This explicit self-consciousness makes consciousness its *object*. What Sartre gains for the theory of the subject is a theory that captures the power of the existential analytic of Dasein without the additional baggage of later Heidegger's turn toward the passivity of Dasein. However, like Heidegger, Sartre does not adequately escape from the paradigm of the subject because he retains as primary the world-

constituting power of consciousness, which is now no longer geared toward *knowledge* but towards the objectivating existence of consciousness in relation to being. This process is most clearly legible in Sartre consciousnesses relating to oneself and to other consciousnesses.

This making oneself an object belies an important pathological significance, for by making ourselves an object for ourselves we make ourselves *other* than ourselves. Consciousness is other-than-objects, thus the notion of an explicit self, the self as object, is heterogeneous to the being of consciousness. In this torsion, the self that we are conscious of is other than the self which is consciousness. What is pathological about this process is not that we objectivate ourselves, but instead our relationship to the self which we have objectivated. This is Sartre's notion of bad faith. For simplicity's sake we shall take bad faith to mean that either we accept this self as the whole truth of ourself, for example, "I *am* a waiter", or we reject this self as not at all what we are, for example "I *am not* tubercular." Each of these attitudes toward the self are pathological insofar as they do not admit of the negation which is consciousness and which separates consciousness from itself. The ontological freedom of consciousness is such that it always determines its response to the factual being which we have to be. Bad faith is not recognizing our freedom and what it means. To be free for Sartre is not to be able to determine any thing's being however I want. Consciousness's freedom is intimately attached to instrumental rationalist. For consciousness is free to choose its ends and the world reveals itself as means or barriers to the ends that consciousness has chosen. The free projection of possibilities is ensconced in the milieu of instrumental reason which is the hallmark of a philosophy of the subject. Being is that material which consciousness encounters in the pursuit of its freely chosen ends.

Throughout *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre encounters Hegel with the criticism that his

idealism conflates being and knowledge, and that Hegel stands from the point of view of the totality. Sartre's subject-centered philosophy refuses to collapse being with our consciousness of being. Being is not a rational idea that unfolds in a dialectic towards its concrete totality, or towards an all-encompassing subject that is measured by knowledge. Consciousness is the origin of negation which arises on the foundation of an already existent being. Consciousness, as nothingness, is infected by this nothingness. It is not a being which shoots forth negation, but is itself its own negation. This is the meaning of the phrase consciousness "is what it is not and is not what it is" (BN 100). Sartre's subject is that which is never identical with anything, but is held separate from what it is conscious of by a determinate negation. As such, the nothingness which consciousness is is completely transparent to itself. Consciousness has an implicit, pre-reflective understanding of itself because there is nothing in consciousness except its own conscious activity. Nothingness and consciousness are not one step along the path towards being self-understanding and being is not measured by consciousness's knowledge of it. For just as consciousness is nothingness without opacity; being is plenitude without transparency. Being is always in excess of consciousness's apprehension of it. Thus while the projection of possibilities is one manifestation of instrumental reason, consciousness is not exhaustive of the potential of being.

Early in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre attempts to navigate subject-centered philosophy so as to avoid pitfalls of his predecessors. While elaborating the being of consciousness Sartre conscientiously avoids the problems that arise from envisioning the subject as the knowing-subject that structures our world, or that is but once step in the process towards a totalizing subject that reduces being to knowledge. He is attempting to carve a third path between the realism that views consciousness as simply another bit of matter among other bits of matter and

the idealism that sees consciousness as the rational and structuring feature of reality. However, these early sections do not entirely remove all difficulties of a subject-centered philosophy. Consciousness is necessarily related to the world in its very being. As a subject, it objectivates all that it encounters. It is consciousness *of an object*. Consciousness stands in relation to things as the autonomous and individual being which apprehends beings toward its own ends. Much like the Heideggerian notion of the ready-to-hand, consciousness apprehends objects instrumentally as directed toward its self-positing ends. Thus while Sartre avoids the difficulties found in pre-Hegelian concepts of the subject, he remains firmly entrenched in the ground of a subject-centered reason. However, the for-itself, by itself is an abstraction of the entire being of consciousness, for consciousness has another dimension of being: being-for-others. It is in Sartre's description of being-for-others that we will find the intransigent difficulties of maintaining a subject-centered philosophy and the cracks in Sartre's philosophy that indicate a new direction.

iv. Sartre and Habermas Contra-Hegel

Subject-centered philosophy consistently runs the risk of being stranded on the reef of solipsism. This same threat haunts the margins of the first half of *Being and Nothingness*. The for-itself is intrinsically connected to the world in its being, but this intrinsic connection does not yet extend to others. Pre-Hegelian theories of consciousness encounter the problem of how we can *know* that the other exists. The question of the other on the basis of knowledge is another

symptom of the overall condition of reducing consciousness to its capacity to know. The Kantian preoccupation “with establishing the universal laws of subjectivity which are the same for all” never encounters “the question of persons” (BN 306). The hectic to and fro of transcendental and empirical egos comes to the fore here. The other is established on the grounds of being known either as the empirical bodily mediation of consciousnesses or as the transcendental and universal ground of experience. Husserl attempts to overcome solipsism by positing the other as that without which the world would lose its objective status: “he believes he can succeed by showing that a referral to the Other is the indispensable condition for the constitution of the world” (BN 316). What this leads to, however, is that the other's existence is merely “as sure as that of the world” (BN 318). Without my being fundamentally changed by the other, by the other being merely an object of knowledge or a necessary component of my knowledge of the world, we shall never refute solipsism.

Hegel presents a view of the other that goes beyond that of transcendental idealism. For Hegel the other is essential not in the constitution of the world but in the constitution of consciousness as self-consciousness. If Husserl says that the other's existence is as sure as that of the world, Hegel says that the other's existence is as sure as that of the existence of my self, of my own self-recognition. For consciousness, before its encounter with the other, is pure self-identity, the equation I am I. Self-consciousness is not conscious of itself as an object, that is to say by making the I am I explicit as opposed to pure unity. At first the encounter with the other reveals the other as non-essential, for it is not I. I am essential to myself in my implicit relation of self-identity. The self-consciousnesses engage in a reciprocal movement of not recognizing the other due to their being as a self-identical being. Each self-consciousness, reciprocally opposed to the other, asserts the right to be an individual. The self-identity thus

encounters the non-essential other in the form of a not-I, in the form of a negation of the self. But at the same time the other is presented as “another Me, a Me-object for Me, and conversely to the extent that he reflects my Me---*i.e.*, is, in so far as I am an object for him. While the other is the non-I (the object) he also makes an object of me, he discovers my objectivity. But I can only be an object through the other, thus I must obtain recognition from the other. However, the other recognizes me as the inessential. In order to obtain recognition from the other, I must prove myself as essential, I must risk my life to show that I am not bound to the object form of the others apprehension of me. The struggle to the death exposes one party as the master, that is as the one who is willing to risk his life the most and the one who is least bound to the flesh and object form of the body. The other participant exposes that he is bound to his life, to his object-being, and he as such is the non-essential slave. Finally, it is revealed that the slave is the truth of the master, for the slave produces his life and provides for the master's. The master comes to self-consciousness of this fact only when “the master does for himself what he does as he regards the other and when the slave does as regards the other what he does for himself” (Sartre BN quoting Hegel 321). The slave and the master at this point recognize in the other a self-consciousness which is reciprocal with itself.

Hegel has made considerable progress beyond the traditional theories of the subject. Self-consciousness relies upon the other to discover the truth (the idea) of his being. However, Hegel still remains on the plane of idealistic philosophy which measures being with knowledge. For it is a question of my consciousness knowing itself as consciousness that the other appears as necessary. Sartre finds that this error of equating being and knowledge is at operation throughout the entirety of Hegel's work, but most specifically in his investigation of the being of others. Sartre breaks down the errors that arise from this conception into two different “optimisms”:

epistemological and ontological. Hegel's epistemological optimism is that “the truth of self-consciousness can appear; that is, that an objective agreement can be realized between consciousnesses---by authority of the Other's recognition of me and my recognition of the Other” (BN 324). Hegel assumes the solution to the problem of others before he even begins to solve the problem. For in order for this “truth of self-consciousness” to appear in the recognition of the other is to assume that somewhere there is a “common measure” between what we are for each other. The reciprocation of the two consciousnesses, that they are able to reciprocate, is already a solution to the problem of others. Furthermore, consciousness itself is that which is radically different than an object for itself. It is that which is consciousness of something. Thus even when it takes itself as an object for itself, it is not coincident with the self that it posits. This is precisely why Hegel states that the other is necessary for me to be an object of myself. The other apprehending me, however, cannot know me as a for-itself, my interiority, just as I cannot know the other's interiority. I cannot apprehend the other as the other apprehends himself, as a for-itself. What this means is that there is a radical lack of reciprocity between the other and myself, for the other can only apprehend me as an object to him and I can only apprehend the other as an object to me. Furthermore, to assume that I am able to access my object form in the other assumes that I am able to access the subjectivity of the other to make myself an object in his eyes. Both subjects cannot apprehend each other as objects at the same time as they can apprehend each other as subjects. For Sartre, Hegel's epistemological optimism is such that consciousness can meet an other on the basis of knowledge and be equal in measure to the other and himself. However, according to Sartre, consciousness can only be a subject to the other or an object to the other, and never at the same time. We will return to this in a later section, but it is important now to recognize that Hegel's solution to the problem of others fails

on one hand because it assumes that the problem is not a problem at all, that it is decided in advance in the dialectic that the individuals encountering each other are congruent on all fronts.

Hegel's ontological optimism is more pervasive and more perverse. Sartre claims that Hegel places himself outside of the dialectic which he unravels from the position of truth at the end of the dialectic. Since for Hegel the whole is the truth, he stands above both parties, from without. "Although the whole is to be realized, it is already there as the truth of all which is true" (BN 328). The problem of the other is the plurality of consciousnesses encounter each other. Hegel, however, speaks from the standpoint of the already resolved dialectic; he speaks from the vantage of the already synthesized dialectic, from the point of view of the absolute. The problem of others is already a non-problem, for Hegel "has forgotten himself" and speaks of consciousnesses as "a particular type of object---the subject-object" that has already been overcome. The equivalency of the others being and my own is established upon this vantage point. It is exactly this vantage, the vantage of the absolute idea, of the totality, that modernity can no longer hold onto. Habermas claims that Hegel's great innovation was that he was the first to understand modernity as a problem for itself and "he put the eternal in touch with the transitory, the atemporal with what is actually going on" (PDM 51). However, Hegel went too far and, "with his emphatic concept of reality as the unity of essence and existence, shoved aside just that element which had to matter most to the modern consciousness---the transitory aspect of the moment, pregnant with meaning, in which problems of an onrushing future are tangled in knots" (PDM 53). For Sartre this manifests in Hegel's insistence of equating knowledge and being and standing from the point of view of the eternal looking down on the procedural. For modernity's time-consciousness is such that it can receive its normativity only from its own time, *within that time*, not as the final and eternal moment.

v. Sartre and Being-for-others

From the above we can see what Sartre's criteria for a being-for-others would be. The other cannot be established on the basis of the transcendental foundation of the world, the other must be encountered within the world, and consciousness must be changed, in its very being, by the encounter with the other. Up to this point, Sartre's philosophical foundation upon the subject has been more or less unproblematic as a theory of modernity. For consciousness, emptied of its contents, does not lay claim to the transcendental and structuring principle of pre-Hegelian theories of the subject. However, what will be exposed in the analysis of Sartre's being-for-others is the perniciousness of this theory as it relates to the problems of modernity's self-grounding. In order for a theory of others to be successful, for Sartre, it is necessary that my being be modified in a way that is impossible for it to be modified alone. Shame becomes Sartre's proof of the existence of others. It is impossible for one to feel shame without implicating another.

The world orients itself towards a for-itself. An aspect of the being of consciousness's negating power is to organize a world toward itself. However, the introduction of another on the scene is not just one object among others, but a new "orientation which flees from me" (BN 342). The existence of others to our worldly being is not "an additive relation" but a heterogeneous transformation of our world toward another entity (BN 341). While this is not our original relationship to the other, it does indicate that the existence of others is constitutive of the

world, such that our relationship with others creates an inter-subjective space. For Heidegger this space, being-with-others, “is not that of conflict but rather a crew. The original relation of the Other and my consciousness is not the *you* and *me*; it is the *we*” (BN 332). Consciousness’s translucency to itself forecloses this possibility for Sartre. As consciousness’s contours are bound only through its nihilating relationship to the world, to posit as our original relationship to others in the unity of the co-constituted world would destroy all boundaries between this consciousness and that consciousness and subsequently would only bespeak of a single consciousness that encounters different objectifications of itself. That is to say that the possibility of intersubjective communication would be impossible. There would be no gulf that divided me from you traversed by expressive acts. In order to retain the structures of subjectivity, Sartre must reject the Heideggerian notion of *mit-sein*. Thus his strongest polemic against the early Heidegger is Heidegger’s notion of death as individuating us. Sartre does not need a relationship to our limits to individuate consciousness, he needs a medium upon which the other’s existence can encroach and contact our own. This medium is language.

The *for* of being-for-others indicates a relationship between a subject and an object. I am the object *for* the other's gaze. Sartre's famous keyhole example exposes our most primordial relationship with the other as a being which is an object for a subjectivity which is beyond our grasp. The other's gaze objectifies our subjectivity. The “look” provides Sartre with a unique way “to leave the level on which the Other is an object” (BN 344). The other does not enter the picture on the foundation of knowledge and determining their existence is not such that we can ask how we can *know* the other, but as to how the other can know us. For Sartre “the Other is on principle the one who looks at me” (BN 345). Thus while the Other is co-constitutive of the for-itself in-the-world, it is not primarily discovered through our encounter with the world that it co-

constitutes. Instead the other constitutes a part of our being that is not founded upon our own subjectivity: that of being-an-object-for-the-other. It is important to note that “my object-ness for myself is in no way a specification of Hegel's *Ich bin Ich*. The shame that the peeper experiences in the famous keyhole example is telling of this relationship. The peeper cannot deny his existence *as the object-in-the-look-of-the-other*, for otherwise he would not feel shame. Shame “is the *recognition* of the fact that I *am* indeed that object which the Other is looking at” (BN 350). Being an object-for-the-Other is heterogeneous to the object-for-itself, because the object of the other *is* my subjectivity itself. The other is the extrinsic limit of our freedom, that is to say that the other is that which can enrapture me. The for-itself is radically alienated by the look of the other as that object which the other sees. This is why bad faith does not apply strictly to my being-for-others, bad faith is a relationship that is taken up towards oneself that may be influenced by the existence of others, it is fundamentally my relationship to myself.

Until this point we have provided very little by way of exposing aporias *within* Sartre's philosophy. That is because, insofar as we focus on the points of Sartre's philosophy that deal solely with the nature of the for-itself and the world, Sartre remains completely consistent. It is our contention, however, that Sartre's description of the other escapes so thoroughly from the latent transcendentalism within his text and attempts to remain commensurate with the claims of the text itself that Sartre's theory of others cannot, in itself, offer a grounding for a normativity. The for-itself that is girded by the subjectivity of the other is accorded two possible responses or escapes: sadism or masochism. As a masochist, the subject can accept the limitation upon their freedom and become enraptured by it. That is to say the subject can allow the other to define their being and become solicitous to this definition. The radical limit of this is Regina in Simone de Beauvoir's *All Men are Mortal*. Regina, a burgeoning actress, discovers a man Fosca who is

immortal. Regina becomes *possessed* by this man's gaze of her on stage as being definitive of her eternal image as a great actress. Fosca steals "her being from" her and is the one "who causes 'there to be' a being which is my being" (BN 475). As consciousness is the nothingness that temporalizes being, an entity which can make us *be* who we are offers a certain amount of stability to our identity. However, as Regina discovers, we cannot "thereby cease to assert the Other---that is, to deny concerning myself that I am the Other" (BN 476). Being-an-object-for-the-Other is not a position that one can hold indefinitely: "precisely because I exist by means of the Other's freedom, I have no security; I am in danger by this freedom" (BN 477). Regina's being, as caught in the gaze of the other, is conditioned by Fosca's ability at anytime to deny her the possibility of conferring the identity she desires. Sartre places love under the heading of masochism, but as is exegeted in his text, love is a meta-stable relationship that turns into its opposite. The only reason that one desires to *possess* the other is to be in turn *possessed* in the way that the other desires. The contradiction that arises in the heart of masochism leads one to take up the role of the sadist.

Being-caught-in-the-gaze-of-the-Other can be radically transformed by returning the gaze. Both attitudes, sadism and masochism, are "a fundamental reaction to being-for-others as an original situation" (BN 494). To return the look at the other means to become the constituting subject of the situation. I thus retain some semblance of my originary freedom as a for-itself. Indifference as a response to the gaze of the other is a sort of blindness to this gaze. I constitute the other's gaze as not pertaining to me. The sadist, however, reduces the need to appropriate the other into the for-itself by the very act of looking at the gaze. That is to say that the very desire to turn the other into an object for-me belies the necessity of retaining the other's freedom. By turning the other into an object "the Other's freedom...and the look of the Other collapse" (BN

511). Sartre's character Mathieu, in *The Age of Reason*, turns his gaze upon his lover Marcelle in the form of desire. However, he quickly becomes disenchanted with this look, because by reducing Marcelle to the level of an object in the world (a body as an object) Mathieu destroys the entire impetus for this transformation. The sadist, in his desire to overcome the subjectivity that ensnares him, always moves beyond the object of desire to the desiring subject. “It is necessary that he be 'caught' in it as the cream is caught up by a person skimming milk” (BN 511). The sadist, therefore, can only be the sadist by subordinating himself to the position of a masochist.

This is the fundamental aporia of the latter half of Sartre's analysis relating to normative relationships with others. Insofar as the look is the ground for any relating to other people, the only responses can be these metastable, pathological relations to others. It is important to note that in *Being and Nothingness*, these structures are not based upon a particular historical mode of alienation, but instead they are written into the invariant structures of consciousness itself. Ontologically we are condemned to be in pathological relationships with other people. Sartre explores these relationships in his play *No Exit*. His famous line, “hell is other people,” is meant to indicate this circle of relating to others where we are at once the sadist and the masochist. This unique ontology of pathologies is important, however, because it is the direct result of Sartre attempting at once to break free from the constraints of the philosophy of the subject while remaining indelibly attached to it.

We are not dealing with formal identity, and my being-as-object or being-for-others is profoundly different from my being-for-myself” (BN 365). For the encounter with the other creates a new aspect of my being that would not have been possible before the encounter. This new aspect of being, however, is itself problematic for modernity. Normative relations with

others appears to be precluded on the basis of this theory of subjectivity. Being-for-others precludes our ability to approach others as subjects *while remaining ourselves subjects*. Man is a pathological creature.

By releasing us from the grip of pre-Hegelian errors, and by removing consciousness from under the yoke of an all-encompassing dialectic of knowledge and being, Sartre has made a great leap forward. The impasse of being-for-others is the impasse that is implicit in any philosophy of subjectivity: “the problem of intersubjectivity cannot be solved within the limits of the philosophy of the subject; instead it arises ever more intractably from Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation through Sartre's construction of being-for-another” (PMT 161). Sartre himself recognizes the impasse. In fact, at the end of *Being and Nothingness* he promises a forthcoming text that will deal with the ethical plane.

vi. *CDR* and Post-metaphysical Thinking

It is not until 20 years later that he produces a text that indicates a solution to the malaise of being-for-others, and it is in the guise of a philosophical anthropology. *Critique of Dialectical Reason* takes up again our being-for-others, however it does so not as an ontology, but as an social manifestation of different modes of being within history. As such, the language of the text changes to meet the context. Unlike *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre is not attempting to make a new phenomenological ontology; instead he is attempting to appropriate an already existing philosophical complex to describe individual and social existence. Sartre is a liminal figure in

the philosophical discourse of modernity because his texts struggle asymmetrically with the issues at hand. For while the philosophical discourse was pursuing a type of thought that went beyond subject-centered reason, Sartre remains resolute within the domain of the subject, though he is engaged with the modernity. At the same time, Sartre's *CDR* shifts him into an engagement with post-metaphysical thinking.

The philosophical discourse of modernity, owing to the demands of modernity's time consciousness, has radically changed the philosophical enterprise. For while Hegel "intended anything but a break with the philosophical tradition" the break occurs immediately after his writing with the young Hegelians (PDM 51). With the recognition of modernity's time-consciousness and the problems posed by modernity to modern philosophy, Hegel exposes the need to radically change course in philosophy. Hegel marks the end of philosophy only insofar as he marks the end of the traditional philosophical systems and metaphysics. Modernity in philosophy is marked by "the break with tradition that occurred when the spirit of the age gained ascendancy over philosophy, when the modern consciousness of time exploded *the form* of philosophical thought" (PDM 52). After Hegel, philosophical practice bifurcates into an academic department with specific aims and a worldly philosophy that is not demarcated within any particular discipline. Sartre's writing in particular shows this bleeding of disciplines, whereby his "literary" work at times seems more philosophically oriented than his "philosophical" texts. By this is a symptom of a greater cause, philosophy after Hegel is no longer authorized to establish a metaphysics, insofar as by metaphysics we mean an exaggerated and totalitarian reason that structures the entirety of the world.

What is post-metaphysical thinking? Philosophy after Hegel realizes itself as being dead. The death of philosophy refers, in one respect, to the death of its privileged place among

disciplines. Since, an anti-metaphysical activity, has taken over the role of determining the truth of any statement. The death of philosophy also refers to the death of the great systems of philosophy, from Descartes to Hegel, which presented the promise of a unified world view under the umbrella of subject-centered reason and instrumental rationality. Post-metaphysical thinking is the state of philosophy after it has been humbled by the developments of the modern world.

The need of post-metaphysical thinking arises on the grounds of a philosophical consciousness of departing from traditional philosophical tendencies. The linguistic turn of philosophy has enabled philosophers to go beyond the traditional categories of subject-centered philosophy toward a philosophy of linguistically mediated intersubjectivity. While modern philosophy has been moving toward a theory of intersubjective communication, it still possesses the residuum of subject-centered reason. As William Mark Hohengarten, the translator of *PMT*, aptly puts it, “The linguistic turn in philosophy paved the way for postmetaphysical thinking; yet, in many of its manifestations, the philosophy of language is still wedded to the very metaphysical figures of thought it sought to overcome” (*PDM* vii). Furthermore, the discourse of modernity that envisages at every turn the end of philosophy envisions modernity as a post-philosophical era, however, much of the philosophy remains firmly ensconced in the categories of pre-modern thought. Habermas posits four themes that interpenetrate (post)modern philosophy and that are borrowed from the post-Aristotelian thought of the last century: post-metaphysical thinking, the primacy of practice over theory, situating reason, and the linguistic turn. Sartre’s *CDR* engages directly with these (post)modern themes at varying degrees.

Post-metaphysical thinking is most profoundly realized in modern philosophy’s dialogue with the sciences. For the sciences in modern society have gained a certain amount of rational autonomy that removes from its discourse a discussion of its implicit metaphysical grounds. The

sciences usurp the role of metaphysics in determining “whether or not the sentence has a truth-value in the first place” (PMT 6). Science gains ascendancy in modern philosophy as that which has validity and an in-road to the truth of the world. The sciences have established themselves firmly as the only route to truth. The sciences are that, however, which are specifically without the capability of reflecting upon their own metaphysical ground. Philosophy thus has been relegated to a type of discourse which has lost its earlier primary function: discerning the truth through metaphysical procedures. While this has had the benefit of humbling philosophy in its pursuits, it has also placed philosophy in a compromised position:

The reorientation of knowledge from material to procedural rationality was an embarrassment for metaphysical thinking. From the middle of the nineteenth century, the authority of the empirical sciences forced philosophy to assimilate. Since that time, the idea of the return to metaphysics...has been stigmatized as something purely reactionary. Yet, attempts at assimilating philosophy to the natural or human sciences, or to logic and mathematics, have only created new problems...with each of these reactions, philosophical thinking seemed to surrender what is specific to it---namely the emphatic knowledge of the whole---without really being able to compete with the sciences (PMT 37).

CDR does not surrender itself to the sciences and allots the sciences a certain space of autonomy. Sartre is far from attempting to dialecticize nature in the ridiculous fashion that many Soviet scientists attempted. However, he does claim that the sciences are a derivative knowledge of the world. For Sartre the dialectic begins with *praxis* and all human affairs are relegated primarily to dialectical rationality. Sartre claims that the underlying assumptions of the sciences his Hegel’s “the real is the rational” (*CDR* 19). The sciences are a particular form of social *praxis* which take as their latent principle the belief that whatever presents itself by investigation and observation is reality. Thus the fruits of scientific research are not denied by an irrationalist rejection of empiricism, but they are also not the model of a philosophical discourse. The natural

sciences are “an assertion of unity conceived as the perpetual unification of an increasingly real diversity...It is action asserting itself within the undertaking in the explanation of a field and the unification of the means by an end” (CDR 20). Instrumental rationality is a particular and historical form of praxis which can yield real results. However, it is a field which “can in fact be unaware of its own principle features. Dialectical knowledge, in contrast, is knowledge of the dialectic” (CDR 20). This gesture, therefore, grants the sciences the fruits of their research, but denies them knowledge of the totalization of history. Science is one way of relating to the world, a certain set of instrumental skills that can explain natural phenomenon on the basis of an assumed metaphysics.

Dialectical reason for Sartre has two different dialectical strands coursing through it. On the one hand, dialectical reason is “the process of knowledge” or the method whereby history makes itself comprehensible (CDR 20). On the other hand, dialectical reason is “the movement of the object” or the actual adumbration of society as human’s relating to themselves, each other, the world, and their own history (CDR 20). Both of these dialectics, according to Sartre, are the same dialectic expressed in different terms. The origin of the dialectic is *praxis* or humans interacting with a social world. On the one hand side, theory is a form of praxis; it is a determinate way whereby humans materially condition the world and relations. The primacy of practice over theory is the assumed basis for any Marxist philosophy and at root this tendency is “the honing of a Marxian idea” (PMT 7). The coming to knowledge of social relations and history, at bottom, is for Sartre a form of *praxis*. *CDR* appears to posit a metaphysics of its own:

Dialectical Reason is neither constituent nor constituted reason; it is Reason constituting itself in and through the world, dissolving in itself all constituted Reasons in order to constitute new ones which it transcends and dissolves in turn. It is, therefore, both a type of rationality and the transcendence of all types of rationality (CDR 21).

However, this totalizing function of dialectical reason is always an on-going totalization developed at the level of praxis. It is not a constitutive, transcendental reason that is placed eternally and *a priori* above all experiences. Instead dialectical reason is “the permanent necessity for man of totalizing and being totalized, and for the world of being an ever broader, developing totalization” (CDR 21). Thus the dialectic is the process not of a despotic or Messianic reason that will attain absolute knowledge knowing itself, but the on-going process of history rendering itself intelligible to itself. Theory is relegated to a lower status than praxis insofar as we envision theory as the crystallization of the always on-going process of totalization by human society.

Much of the concern of *CDR* is that of situating reason within the historical adumbration of human society. As opposed to the “abstractly exalted reason” of modern metaphysics, Sartre is developing a reason situated only from the interiority of historical circumstances. As in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre critiques the Hegelian dialectic for speaking from the standpoint of the end of history. While Hegel provides a leap forward in philosophy for his historicization of history, he remains idealistically located within the metaphysics that are no longer possible in modernity. For Sartre the “dialectic reveals itself only to an observer situated in interiority, that is to say, to an investigator who lives his investigation both as a possible contribution to the ideology of the entire epoch and as the particular *praxis* of an individual defined by his historical and personal career within the wider history which conditions it” (CDR 38). Reason is situated within the lifeworld of individuals experiencing history as their own *praxis* and historicizing their own praxis. As in *Being and Nothingness* there is no reason beyond the individual consciousness that relates to other consciousness, no “bird’s eye view” by which one can create a totality of history. Perhaps one of Sartre’s greatest contributions to dialectical materialism is his

insistence on the connecting lifeworld occurrences with the societal dialectics of history.

Reason's embeddedness within the historical dialectic of individual praxis adds to the *aporias* of the for-others. For Sartre, as a post-metaphysical thinker, does not have recourse to a transcendental reason that will unify man at the end of history. Normative relations between individuals must be embedded within the lifeworld relations of the individuals involved. Being-for-others is a constitutive aspect of our being, and though it is historically conditioned in its manifestations, it constitutes our starting point for engaging in others at all. The *CDR* exposes this primacy of conflictual being-for-others through an analysis of need. Need is the fundamental condition of human kind and it is the first form of praxis. While in *Being and Nothingness* man created his projects on the basis of lack, primarily exposed through desire, in the *CDR* scarcity becomes the natural condition than man must overcome in order to survive. Need is the first organization of the ensemble of material nature into a projected end. In hunger, man "is an organic totality perpetually making itself into its own tool in the milieu of exteriority" (*CDR* 82). Hunger is only possible on the ground of a partial totalization. For the recognition that one lacks food requires that one recognizes what is lacking. Lack is only possible on the foundation of a totality, for if where not we would not know that something was missing, instead the world would appear as it is, a teeming positivity. In this recognition of lack, man must use his material body to produce sustenance. *Praxis* begins with a determinate lack and it negates that negation by utilizing its material labor to produce that which would satiate the need. The process of need and the overcoming of need constitutes a basis dimension of *praxis* throughout *CDR*: *praxis* totalizes any given collective, individual, or group only on the basis of a action directed toward an end. Once the end is achieved, the hunger satiated, the totalized process does not remain ontologically totalized. Totalization requires an on-going process of totalizing and is

never rendered complete or ontologically unified. With the goal achieved the instrumental complex that determined the goal dissolves with the end itself.

Nature, as the milieu of scarcity, presents other people as dangerous. Not only is the other dangerous on the ground that he may kill me to maintain his own life, but he is consuming what I need to consume. While this is not the originary relationship of shame explored above, it is the primordial relation of men to each other. The other is that entity by which I am threatened on the very basis of his own need.

Sartre has ontologically established the interdependence of consciousness upon other consciousness. While being-for-others is an antagonistic relationship, it is a necessary relationship that consciousness exists alongside. However, Sartre only explores being-for-others in *Being and Nothingness* as a relationship between two parties. In the *CDR* Sartre introduces another type manifestation of being-for-others: the third party. Sartre uses the example of the bourgeois who looks out of his window to see two workers, a road-mender and a gardener, separated by a wall but working alongside each other (CDR 100). The bourgeois sees the men as his negation, they do not do the type of work he does, they do not share the same performative knowledge as himself, etc. They are unified with the bourgeois, however, by “an undifferentiated background consisting of synthetic relations which support [him] together with them in an *actual* immanence: [he] could not contrast their ends with [his] without recognizing them as ends” (CDR 101). That is to say that they are unified in the abstract belonging of a cultural understanding. The third party, however, effectuates a unity beyond this bare understanding, the workers are unified together as against him. That is to say that they appear as the other who has ends that are not aligned with the bourgeois'. Both men possess a “mutual ignorance” of each other, but this mutual ignorance belies their unification through the

bourgeois: “They are ignorant of one another *through me* to the extent that I become what I am *through them*” (CDR 103). What this indicates is that the third party is the exterior unification of the interiority of both men. There is no absolute subject for Sartre, no subject that can completely totalize everything including itself. Instead the bourgeois totalizes *them* into a relationship of interiority (in this case common ignorance) while at the same time exteriorizing himself from them. Notice the same structure of being-for-others appears in this example, but this time it comprises a new shift, the other is now the unification of *others* but they still hold the fundamental pathologies of the for-others towards me. They are in a certain accord with each other (again mutual ignorance) but this complicity does not dissolve itself in linguistic expressions about things. Instead the bourgeois becomes the exterior, unifying pole of their complicity in ignorance. Thus Sartre is able to preserve the standpoint of the third person without ontologizing this standpoint as a meta-ontological term. Habermas claims “everything gets frozen into an object under the gaze of the third person, whether directed inwardly or outwardly” (CDR 297). And this is true, as the Sartrean analysis of being-for-others shows, however, it misses the role of the third party as exterior to the interiorization that it effects. That is to say that the third party does ossify subjects into objects, however, it still retains its first person view as this third person.

The third party does not overcome the *a porias* of being-for-others by itself. From the standpoint of the third party, the two men are actively unified as the subject of an interpersonal interaction. Simply because there are two of them, does not mean that the relationship is fundamentally changed between them and the third party who overlooks them. Reason is immanent and any subject that reasons can only stand on the outside of a practical process by being internalized into another greater process. The two workers, however, are unified in a

passive relationship with one another. Ignorant of each other's totalization, they are unified from the outside. Their relationship with one another is not one of mutual and direct understanding but of mutual ignorance. They are unified passively *through another*. The third party reveals itself as the writing-subject. Author of the totalization of passive characters, the writing subject holds a unique position within Sartre's philosophy and belies a certain amount of idealism throughout his oeuvre. In the words, Sartre expresses as his particular draw towards idealism always came from a sense into which to be is to be written. The third party acts as the engaged author who unifies his readership passively and through the mediation of their own mutual ignorance. Most important for our investigation here is that the third party is the third party by extracting itself from direct interaction and for passively synthesizing a others into a totalization which alludes it. As he says in *Literature and Existentialism*, "the operation of writing involves an implicit quasi-reading which makes real reading impossible" (41) and in *Nausea*, "then I felt violently that I was having an adventure. But Erna came back and sat down beside me...and I hated her without knowing why. I understand now: one had to begin living again and the adventure was fading out" (39). The author of the adventure cannot himself be involved in the adventure, just as the author of the book cannot be the reader.

In order to understand the tentative overcoming of Sartre's project towards a normative relationship between others in the milieu of modern society, we must understand seriality and alterity as basic modes of operating within human society. While being-for-others is the primordial relationship between consciousness, on an average everyday basis we do not find ourselves involved with people in the metaphysical possession of our identity. Seriality is a sub-category of collectivity. Collectives are un-organized, exterior relations among people. An apartment complex is a collective, for the people in the building share certain features of life and

certain similarities, but no internal relationship is established that binds them together. Seriality is my mode of isolation from others through a process of alterity. When one sits at a restaurant, the other diners are not necessarily giving the gaze, instead there is a process of turning away, of reciprocally not being-with one another. Seriality is the reciprocal turning away from the other. Alterity is the structure of our encounter with the other such that it could be any other. Restaurant diners qua restaurant diners have no distinguishing characteristics, so that each apprehends the other as just any other diner while at the same being apprehended as being any other diner. Serialized alterity is a mode of coexisting with others while actively and reciprocally not engaging with the other.

The ground upon which group praxis is possible is exemplified in our relationship with others as collectives. Sartre uses the particularly illuminating example of people waiting for a bus at a bus stop. The collective is unified by a “*common interest*” in the bus and they all share the same basic norms of bus riding “signaling the bus, getting on,” etc. (CDR 259). The individual's unification with the collective is unified from the outside, in the material object of the bus. Each individual is in a reciprocal relationship with every other individual insofar as they are, to the collective, indifferently the same. That is to say that although this individual is going to work and that individual is going to see his sick grandmother, from the point of view of the collective they are both merely bus riders. The act of riding the bus carries with it an entirety of social interactions and norms that are understood by the bus riders themselves. It is this abstract synthesis that makes up the community of bus riders. The language of the bus riders to each other is one of common interest and mutual accord, for while disagreements may arise, they arise on the basis of a unified object of need for all of the bus riders. This is further exemplified when a crisis occurs within the social milieu of riding the bus: there are not enough seats. No one

individual has, from the point of view of the collective alone, any more right to a seat on the bus than any other. Insofar as they are defined solely by the collective each individual is interchangeable with every other individual. The process of forming a queue reveals further this homogeneity of seriality. A political appropriation of this example would be the process of voting in modern bourgeois democracies. Individuals are unified around a common interest, that is the democratic party appears to best support each individual's needs. Each voter casts his/her vote in separation from other voters and "counts" just as much as the other voters do. The group of democratic voters are unified solely by their interest in the party and as such there is a fundamental accord in their activities. A collective is the most bare form of unification of any socio-historic structure because it only admits of the unification through an indirect, or exterior, object. That is to say that the undifferentiation of the members of a collective, as the binding principle, is a unified structure of mutual understanding through the exteriorization of the unity. The object is what the collective is organized around, but not internally *with* each other, only externally *through* the object. Democratic organization, even deliberatively democratic unification, admits only of an exterior relationship between indifferent individuals that relate to the multiplicity of subjects through the factual occurrence of an object of need within the world. To belong to a culture, to need objects in the milieu of others, is the barest form of sociological *praxis* because it does not admit of anything beyond the mutual understanding of belonging to a culture.

This "mutual understanding" however, arises upon the basis of an external synthesis. The bus riders are unified passively by the coming of the bus. They do not relate to each other internal as part of a unified *praxis* for each other. Each bus rider remains as separated from the other bus riders as do the two work men who are unified through the gaze of a third party.

Alterity does not admit solidarity. Alterity is a mode of alienation from others. For the other is reciprocally what I am for another, part of the material milieu. The others represent the danger of scarcity that *I may not achieve my goal*. The mutual understanding of the rules and concerns of other passengers occurs not on the intersubjective level, but instead on the level of the for-itself. The others, as alternating numbers, are exteriorized, they are that which constitutes a threat and which constitutes the conditions of my existence around the bus terminal. The conversations that arise at bus terminals admit of this phenomenon. When a conversation is sparked by one who wants to add the human touch to the rationalized processing of waiting for the bus, the conversation appears tense and revolves around the item of common existence. For the alterity of the other emerges in this instance as the being-for-others of being-seen. Alterity and seriality do not get us beyond the relationship of the for-others, it simply sidesteps the process.

The pinnacle of Sartre's *CDR* is the structure of the *groupe-en-fusion*. The *groupe-en-fusion* is the movement between seriality and collectivity toward a pledged group as a unified *praxis*. The *groupe-en-fusion* is the dissolution of the external bonds of seriality and collectivity. It is conditioned by an object which stands outside of the collective in question and which presents an immediate threat to the entirety of the group. Sartre's example is the storming of the Bastille after the surrounding of Paris by the king's troops. At first the crisis appears on the level of individual self-preservation. The serial society, experiencing the same threat of their own annihilation, begins to search for arms. Each member of the collective realizes the other members of the collective as potential enemies to their posited goals not only in that they could be the king's men, but also in that they have the possibility of drying up the scarce store of arms required for each other's survival. The city is passively unified in the same project just as the bus riders are unified by the exterior object. The serializing of the group is particularly

conditioned by the hodological space of Paris. The Bastille at once represents the greatest threat to each individual involved, as it acted as the king's armory, and as the possibility of salvation of the entire group. As the siege continues the group begins "negating itself in the re-interiorizing of exterior negations" (CDR 358). In other words, the collective begins to realize its own counter finality to the king's totalization of their structure. They realize that as much as the Bastille remains a threat to them, it could be turned against the king and be used as a threat against him. This re-interiorization of the King's passive unification of the serial society creates an external goal for the group to pursue. This is not done on the level of an organizing militia or a *praxis* from above, but as a spontaneous gathering toward an object of common interest. The common interest of protecting oneself was re-interiorized by the Parisian population as a common *praxis* that is already past but may come again. The dissolution of the serial unity is the the *groupe-en-fusion* or to quote Sartre "there is not distinction between the positive itself (the group in formation) and this self-negating negation (the series in dissolution)" (CDR 358). More importantly, Sartre maintains that the *groupe-en-fusion* "would congeal into a collective if it were not structured in a temporal development" (CDR 358). The group in formation would not form without the temporal necessity of the surrounding army. The futural project that the arms could again be used by the group to threatened or negate the exterior forces required that the forces could still destroy the city. External to the group, the group appears as a concerted for-itself. The material conditions of the group's existence unifies the group toward a unified object or goal. The group is organized around the instrumental materiality of the city which hodologically point towards the projected end. Consciousness finds its unification in its nihilating activity and its transparency to self. The group, however, while rolling towards its end, has no guarantee of its own totalization except the absolute immediacy of its own self-preservation. Once the goal is

achieved and the threat neutralized, the group has no certainty as to its continued existence as a group. It is entirely depended upon the practical activity toward its projected end.

The process of the dissolution of the external bonds of seriality into the interiorizing process of the *groupe-en-fusion*, when view from within the group, presents us with two different dialectical matrices. Sartre introduces a schism or contradiction between two modes of being for the individual in the serial and fused modes of being. The individual acts as third party to the serial relations of the bus riders by transcending them towards his own possibilities, that is by calculating how many there are and relating that to the time of his wait. He is totalizing the gathering, but he is not part of the totality in his practical field as he totalizes it. However, in his lived relation with the bus riders, he lives within the totality without totalizing (without going beyond it to his own ends). To quote Sartre “he actually totalizes the district insofar as he is not part of the totality, and the district serializes him in so far as he lives in it” (CDR 368). Thus he can only act as the third party totalizer insofar as he stands outside of it. Following the logic of the dialectic, Sartre claims that this is an internal contradiction in the instance of the *groupe-en-fusion*. The man *is* threatened by the field which he totalizes. In order for the contradiction to remain comprehensible, it must be mediated by something else. It must be remembered that this contradiction is realized in everyone that is threatened by the negating *praxis* of the king's troops. Each individual totalized the serial group in his practical field (they are in danger of death), thus leaving themselves out of the totalization. However, they “uneasily discovered [their] own absence in it as the risk of death” (that is I can be killed just like the totality from which I am absent). Thus the contradiction moves the Parisians to action, to the streets, to the totality from which they themselves were absent. This is not a unified *praxis* as it was only “quasi-intentional” (CDR 369). Each individual entered the streets not knowing what they were going to

do; they only intended to flee their absence.

Seriality and third party relations stand directly opposed to each other because of the third party's relationship to the totality in both circumstances. While a third party individual, he “can no longer grasp the serial structure” of, say, a flight from a group confrontation. Again this is because he totalizes it from the outside. To him it is not Others (in a strictly binary relationship) who flee, but instead he conceives it as “a flight” or “a common praxis reacting to a common threat” (CDR 370). However, the contradiction between seriality and third party relations returns. As he realizes the flight as a totality, “[s]he lives it through [her]self, in serial imitation and as alterity” (CDR 370). Thus the individuals are given a statute such that they cannot unify the group and belong to it, insofar as it is a serial group. The totalizing tendency of third party relations thus turns back on the individual and reveals to him a task to be done, namely the unifying of the group's activity with a common *praxis* (as a totalized unit). The individual, as a third party, “will seek in himself the dissolution into free common activity of his serial being” (CDR 370). However, this dissolution would be the negation of the serial unity itself into the *groupe-en-fusion*. That is it would make the third party's *praxis* into a common *praxis*, as opposed to a common interest, with a common objective and means.

Sartre is not describing a relationship of knowledge or perception here. The transformation that occurs within the individual is not one of a mere wish or whim, it is a relationship of being, so to speak. The man “*becomes*, through the change of *praxis*, the organiser of a common *praxis*” (CDR 370). By the individual's own activity “he realizes the practical unity of all *in him*,” in the sense that he makes it real (CDR 371). He dissolves his seriality by his unification in the practical field of himself and the series in flight. This dissolution is transcendent and immanent. It is transcendent in that the act of unification “does

not end by his real integration into the totality,” it therefore escapes the given totality in a perpetual totalizing movement (CDR 371). It is immanent in that the dissolution can only “occur in favour of the whole” (CDR 371). The serial group in dissolution is the mediating factor between the contradictory terms of seriality and third party relations in that the individual discovers his own *praxis* as his own only through the dissolution of the serial group itself. It is his activity, as a third party totalizer, which unifies the group through the dissolution of the group as a series. The group is in formation as the dissolution of the bond of seriality, and as such it is unified in the individual *praxes* of each third party (everyone) as forming its laws together. Each third party realizes the unified *praxis* of the group through the dissolution of the bonds of seriality. Each individual unifies the group by being a third party realizing the unified *praxis* in themselves. The law of their activity is laid down in the very act of doing it, as a development. One runs because everyone else runs. Everyone is a potential leader of the group, because each individual unifies the group. Thus if someone yells, “look over there,” the group will attempt to quell the threat over there because every individual, as sovereign third party, defines the group *praxis* as it forms.

Every third party stands on the edge of totalization as a transcendence-immanence. Each one totalizes the group and lives the relation. Each person acts as a third party to everyone else. One individual is totalized into the group by the other third party member and he stands outside of the group as the reciprocal totalizer of the other. It would be a mistake to liken the *groupe-en-fusion* to an organism where each individual was an organ performing a specific task for the organism as a whole. Instead it resembles an organic chemical compound, where a molecule binds itself to others through every other bind with it. Third party individuals totalize every other third party through the mediation of the homogenous medium of the group. If it were just the two

individuals, their relationship would slip into the binary relations of sado-masochism, but by introducing the group as a mediating factor, these binary relations give way to a mediated reciprocal process. I see the other through the group insofar as the group has already totalized us as part of the group. To say this another way, the group for each third party acts as that impractical synthesis of myself with the totality that I create, which is to say as a task to be done. In turn each member of the group totalizes the other third party and myself as already being part of the group, and each of us is a constituent and a constituter of the group. I see the other approach and recognize my group involvement through him. A third party re-entering the gathering after a skirmish represents my power (of density), insofar as I stand on the edge of the totality as a transcendent-immanence. I transcend his immanence (group membership) and integrate him into the group and in so doing I realize my own immanence in him as being the same. I am not identical or serial with him, I am reciprocally, through the group, the same as him. The group acts as the homogeneous medium into which we act as both transcendent subjects and immanent objects (group members). This does not dissolve the tension of the individual as outside of the group attempting to integrate his *praxis* with the group, instead it dissolves the competitive serial relations of a binary opposition. Since the group mediates between us, as the homogeneous medium in which we already belong, we are able to recognize ourselves in the third party other as transcendent-immanent subjects.

After the achievement of the goal, however, the *groupe-en-fusion* loses its cohesiveness. The unification of the group was a unification from outside that reinforced itself with the immediate threat of its own negation. The group has two paths in front of it. Either the group dissolves into the dustbin of history as a serial community or it attempts to rigidify its structure into a group that maintains itself with a pledge to allegiance. The pledged group retains within it

some of the structures of the *groupe-en-fusion* in that the group mediates between every member as the bond of solidarity. However, this mediation is formed out of rules imposed from within the group and maintains itself through a legislating process that finds its grounds in an ossified project.² The pledged group only maintains its non-pathological relating to one another in the totalitarian form of loyalty oaths and requires the absolute mediation of the group to establish its rigid and artificial norms.

The problem with which we started, that of a normativity within Sartre's project, has been overcome by the structure of the *groupe-en-fusion*. However, at what cost has Sartre been able to maintain the basic precepts of subject-centered philosophy to maintain this structure? Sartre's *groupe-en-fusion* is unsatisfying as a self-grounding of modernity's norms for two reasons. The first is the highly questionable role of the third party-serial for-itself which is instrumental in the formation of the group. The second is that the *groupe-en-fusion* is a highly unstable structure which amounts to a fetishization of revolution as the only force capable of rendering modern normative structures.

As we indicated above, the third party acts as the author of events and the external unification of a given group. While Sartre avoids the pitfalls of Hegelian philosophy's stance from totality, he has not departed from the basic structure of an external unification of subjects in a reciprocal field. The unification of the third party and the serial participant is such that the individual takes turn within the interiority and exteriority of the group to be at once a for-itself-for-others, a subject and an object. The mediating activity of the group unifies two subjects as at

² A fascinating future study would be to take up Sartre's notion of the pledged group and Benjamin's notion of mythic and divine violence in *Critique of Violence*. For Benjamin, typical revolutionary violence is a sub-species of mythic violence and leads to the establishment of a new state of mythic violence. Divine violence, much like the *groupe-en-fusion*, is a violence that destroys absolutely. Sartre at one point calls the *groupe-en-fusion* the apocalypse and there are similarities in the construction of this idea.

once object of the others gaze and as others gazing at each other. Sartre has replaced the subject-object dichotomy of being-for-others not with intersubjectivity, but with an alterity of subject and object. Furthermore Sartre has not escaped the idealism which he posits as his particular bent. For the third party that is traded off throughout the group is the author of the groups existence, it is that moment of repose into which the third party exteriorizes himself from the adventure to totalize it as an adventure. This totalizing writing-subject is at odds with the lived adventure of the participants of the group. The writing-subject is the subject that stands outside of the developing movement as the end of history, or as the absolute subject of Hegel, however momentarily. The structure of the *groupe-en-fusion* such that it becomes a particular manifestation of the for-itself's desire to be for-itself-in-itself under the gaze of the other. In short, the *groupe-en-fusion* allows the subject to become author and the actor of the same event. As Sartre says in *The War Dairies*, "To have an adventure is not to visualize oneself having an adventure, but to be-in the adventure---which...is impossible...I think that half of men's actions aim at realizing the unrealizable" (199). The *groupe-en-fusion* is a dream of realizing the unrealizable of modernity, that is the concerted group activity which at once writes itself in the reading of itself.

If it were only a utopian dream, the *groupe-en-fusion* would not possess such a danger to modern philosophy. However, the utopian dream exposes a fetishistic feature of Sartre's later writing that remains latent in his oeuvre. For the *groupe-en-fusion* is the apogee of ecstasy of the modern subject within the entirety of Sartre's writing. History as the dialectic to nowhere, to no ultimate end, is the bane of modern Marxism. The end must be procured from within the activity of the participants itself. This lends itself to an appropriation of the tools of Marxism as though they were the aim and the goal. Trotsky's claim against Nietzsche's philosophy bears this out

particularly well. Nietzsche is a “parasitenproletariat” not owing to his material means of self-subsistence, but owing to the fact that he makes the role of the social revolutionary an end in-itself. Regardless of Trotsky’s accuracy in his reading of Nietzsche in particular, he is pinpointing a problem within the radical left. Once modernity loses the promise of a Messianic end of history, it must begin to disinter from its own soil the treasure of its self-rendered normativity. Revolution is and ought to be the tool towards a greater end, and not an end in-itself.

vii. Paths not Taken

We have traced the paths of Sartre’s struggle with grounding a normative structure within modernity and post-metaphysics and reached a dead-end. However, our analysis of Sartre’s philosophy has not been in vain. There are indications within his writing of paths that he could have taken to render an intelligible normativity. We must retrace our route through the Sartrean landscape to disinter the skeletal bones of an intersubjectivity that reaches deeper than the structures of the for-itself and the for-others. In order to pick up the scent of these paths, it is important that we revisit Habermas’s reading of Hegel. *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* both take as their counter-point the Hegelian notion of absolute spirit. Habermas, in reading Hegel’s early work, discovers an alternative reading of Hegel that can indicate the alternative path within Sartre’s thinking.

The early Hegel is faced with the problem of the diremptive force of Enlightenment

reason and its faith in self-consciousness and self-reflection. With the Enlightenment former structures of cohesion that existed in Christian Europe begin to break down and are transformed into “sheer mechanisms, into a clockwork, into a machine” (PDM 27). Enlightenment reason and the creation of the autonomous will renders modern society into a number of distinct disciplines without any overarching ethical totality to guide modernity. For this reason Hegel projects “reason, in an a priori fashion, as a force that not only differentiates and breaks apart the system of life conditions, but also reunites them again” (PDM 27). The early Hegel, however, does not immediately take up spirit as the a priori cohesive reason that dirempts itself in order to discover its own concrete being. Instead he is moved to diagnose modernity with a destructive notion of reflective self-consciousness as the authoritarian oppression of man and nature. He therefore posits an ethical totality that precedes the diremptions of the modern self-conscious individual:

Hegel now calls a social condition in which all members receive their due and satisfy their needs without injuring the interests of others ‘ethical’ in contrast to ‘moral’...Hegel summons the unifying power of an intersubjectivity that appears under the titles of ‘love’ and ‘life’ (PDM 30).

The ethical totality of an intersubjectively constituted lifeworld that is founded upon the act of mutual recognition is transgressed by the criminal who removes himself from the sphere of intersubjectivity. The criminal is that individual who, in his crime, puts himself in place of the ethical totality and thus disrupts the balance of the communicative lifeworld. The contrapasso of the crime is that the individual becomes alienated from the lifeworld, and subsequently himself, as the sphere of intersubjectivity is what constituted himself as such. There comes a point whereby the individual longs “for what has been lost” and “necessitates identifying one’s own denied identity in the alien existence one fights against” (TP 148). After this transgression and

recognition of guilt, the parties that have been separated from each other, “in the dialogic relationship of recognizing oneself in the other...experience the common basis of their existence,” that is mutual recognition (TP 148). For the early Hegel, human society is founded, at a practical level, upon the communication between individuals, that subsequently has diremptions and perversions, but which ultimate has its moral basis in the mutual recognition of subjects. Hegel is responding to the Kantian subject. For the Kantian subject has an assumed autonomous will and with this will the individual is given the mandate of the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is “*the abstract form of universal validity which is bound a priori to general agreement*” (TP 150). What this creates is a number of self-sufficient subjects who relate to others through the universal law, with the understanding that all others should be relating through this law as well. In order to act ethically, subjects need not enter into communicative debate, for it is supposed *a priori* that all ethical subjects are subsumed under the same rational umbrella. This is why Habermas attributes to the Kantian subject the title of *strategic action* (TP 151). Ethical acts become a question of the correct application of the rule and the assumption that any other ethical subject would deploy it in a similar way. No agreement needs to be made between subjects regarding ethical action, for the subjects all have the same tool belt and the same imperative which can be decided by one subject for all subjects. The categorical imperative becomes a monological approach to ethical problems.

Hegel’s early writing envisions a new type of reason that approaches ethical action: *communicative action*. Habermas poses the theory that for Hegel “it is not the spirit in the absolute movement of reflecting on itself in, among other things, language, labor, and moral relationships, but rather, it is the dialectical interconnections between linguistic symbolization, labor, and interaction which determine the concept of spirit” (TP 143). Labor and interaction

are undergirded by the structure of linguistic interactions. Linguistic interactions, here envisioned as symbolic mediations, provide consciousness with its constitutive features: memory and representation. Thus language functions to draw to consciousness “something which is not immediately given through something else which is immediately given” (TP 153). Language creates distance and distinction into the objects of consciousness. Language functions as the pre-reflective cogito in that it temporalizes and distantiates consciousness from that of which it is conscious. As the symbolic mediation of objects is produced by ourselves, we become an implicit object to our representations. Language acts to distance “consciousness from its object, in which the ‘I,’ by means of symbols it has produced itself, is simultaneously with the thing and with itself. Thus language is the first category in which spirit is not conceived as something internal, but as a medium which is neither internal nor external” (TP 153). Just as the pre-reflective cogito is absolutely drained of its internality and is an action towards the world, language is the medium between internal and external. Furthermore, language arises only in a determinate cultural milieu and is particular to that milieu:

Language exists as the language of a people...It is something universal, something granted recognition of itself, something that resounds in the consciousness of all; within it every speaking consciousness immediately becomes another consciousness (Habermas quoting Hegel, TP 158).

While Sartre claims that the three structures of being (in-itself, for-itself, and for-others) are equiprimordial, our existence for-others appears as a derivation of being-for-itself. It is true that for-others introduces something new to consciousness that cannot be provided by the for-itself, it still relies upon the instrumental rationality of the for-itself. The for-itself and its freedom is determined by its implicit logic of projecting an end and organizing the world

instrumentally around that end. The structure of the for-others is subordinated to the same logic: others are that by which I become an object. The other subordinates me to the instrumental projects of their own or who are subordinate to my projects. The space of the being-for-others is not a space of intersubjectivity, but a space of inter-objectivity, whereby each is to the other the permanent possibility of being-a-subject. By transitioning into a view where the pre-reflective cogito is itself constitutive by the linguistic communities that socialize us, we solve two problems at once. On the one hand, we close the gap between the being-for-others and being-for-itself. Being-for-itself becomes a specialized and derivative mode of being-for-others in that consciousness is now constituted as the nihilating temporalization of the world only in and through its relationship with others. On the other hand, we provide a basis whereby consciousnesses can create a normativity from their intersubjective constitution. Consciousness as linguistically mediated no longer finds its origin in a purely instrumental relationship. Deeper than the instrumental relationship that consciousness has with the world is a communicative relationship between others. This is not a radical departure from Sartre's works.

In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre explains that linguistic interactions are integral to our relating with others. "Language," explains Sartre, "is not a phenomenon added on to being-for-others. It *is* originally being-for-others; that is, it is in fact that a subjectivity experiences itself as an object for the Other" (BN 485). Language is implicit in the very encounter with the other as my being-an-object for the other. Sartre goes so far as to say "I *am* language" (BN 485). However, Sartre fails to draw further conclusions from our linguistic constitution. Being-for-others is a linguistic being, but the linguistic aspect of this being does not fundamentally change the instrumental reason of subject-centered reason. Sartre makes the same error as does Fichte in that "he peers right through language as though it were a glassy medium without properties"

(PMT 161). Being-for-others *is* the being of language, however the demands of particular language and of the norms that underlie a particular linguistic community are derivative and secondary. Language is an ontological structure of being appropriated to the other's vision of me and the permanent possibility that my meanings may be stolen from me. Thus my coincidence with language is such that *my linguistic community* lays no particular normative structures on me that are beyond the ontological existence of others-looking-at-me. Sartre's turn toward *praxis* in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* helps to fill out this conception of language and progresses considerably beyond the comments made in *Being and Nothingness*.

Sartre's turn to *praxis* philosophy in the *CDR* advances Sartre's earlier position by making them concretely tied to the historical instantiation of subjects that remained implicit within *Being and Nothingness*. There is a tension throughout all of Sartre's discussions of language where he will make very large statements regarding its place in human existence (*I am language*) and its structural place in the argument as a whole where it will take a liminal space. In the *CDR* language is a mere example of a more general phenomenon of *praxis*. Sartre criticizes the view that language is purely inert materiality, that the original linguistic relationship was the communication of exteriority. He criticizes further the view that language is the imperfect manifestation of incommunicable thoughts of the individual subject. It is important that we quote Sartre at length:

But this communicability---in so far as it exists---can have meaning only in terms of its more fundamental communication, that is to say when based on mutual recognition and on a permanent project to communicate; or rather, on the permanent, collective, institutional communication of, for example, all French people, through the constant mediation of verbal materiality, even in silence; and on people's actual projects of particularizing this general communication...language as the practical relation of one man to another is *praxis*, and *praxis* is always language (whether truthful or deceptive) because it cannot take place without

signifying itself (CDR 98-99).

The subject, insofar as he belongs to a community, is constituted with a deep and permanent project to communicate which is based upon *an originary mutual understanding between speaking subjects*. However, still here, there is a certain transparency to language. The mutual understanding of language and the mediation of verbal materiality which is ever present in a society does not lay down any specific norms or qualifications on the individual subject. Language is *praxis* but *praxis* follows the dialectical instrumentalization of all things toward a projected end. Sartre fails to view the linguistic community and language itself as placing specific demands upon the lifeworld context in which it arises. Instead it becomes an appendage whereby *praxis* can pursue specific and demanding ends. Where *Being and Nothingness* fails to see in language and our linguistic relationship to others as being founded upon a primordial of mutual understanding, *CDR* fails to take into account the demands of a linguistically constituted society. Sartre identifies *praxis* and language, but allows *praxis* to completely set the rational demands upon any social situation. Thus when individuals interact, they still interact along the same pathological lines of *Being and Nothingness*, that is to say, as being completely confined to understanding each other as an object or as that which objectifies.

Truth and Existence, Sartre's fragment written between *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, provides us with another reading of Sartre's attempts to ground modernity. *Truth and Existence* takes up the question of "truth" as a response to Heidegger's publication of *Essence of Truth*, however unlike Heidegger Sartre's discussion of truth rapidly transforms itself to a reflection on ethics, history and our relations with others.³ He presents truth as occupying the space between the for-itself, in-itself, and for-others. He begins the book

³ See Ronald Aronson's "Introduction to *Truth and Existence*."

with his usual faith in a sort of intuitionism: “appearance is *always true* if we confine ourselves to it” (TE 3). Truth, in its intuitive form, emerges from the for-itself temporalizing the being. Appearance is the manifestation and revelation of being of the for-itself. However, this revelation is only one moment of the truth becoming true. We could call this form of truth “the true.” Sartre begins with the postulate that there exists three types of things, being-in-itself as revealed by being-for-itself, being-for-itself, and other being-for-itself. The manifestation and revelation of being is not exhausted in a single apprehension of being, nor from the singular revelation of being from a singular for-itself. Truth “cannot be for just *a single* absolute subject” (TE 5). The true of the unveiling of being by a singular consciousness is denuded of its richness of being. It remains within the subjectivity of the consciousness apprehending it. Sartre marks this as *seeing* the object. Just as the other becomes object under my gaze, the object remains merely an object, but an object invested with my subjectivity alone. Just like the painter, who when completing his painting, he discovers that he “cannot reveal and produce at the same time” and that the painting possesses too much of his subjectivity to remain objective, so the object revealed without the relationship of others remains within the subjectivity of the revealer (LE 40). The revelation of being must also “want to discover it *for others*” (TE 6). A joke is funny only when communicated to another, for the other takes it and judges it.

Sight has no reason to judge. The in-itself is in-itself to the the for-itself that reveals it. Alone all judgment dissolves in the consciousness that it is *my* judgment that may change without resistance. By gifting the other the unveiling of an object, subjectivity transforms for itself the for-itself into an in-itself for-another. The other receives the unveiling as an in-itself-for-itself, or as an already unveiled existent, as an objectivity haunted by the subjectivity of another. There is reciprocity in the gift of the unveiled object. The unveiling subject gifts the

appearance to the other as an aspect of itself and the other gives to the unveiling subject the object back in its objectivity. A concrete example of this is the author who gives his book to others to read in order that they will be able to judge what he can only see. The other judges that which is seen and that which is seen is only to be given over to the other to judge. Thus Sartre's definition of truth is: "the in-itself as it has appeared to a for-itself when its appearance, as subjective, unveils itself for another for-itself as in-itself" (TE 7). By taking truth as a gift, Sartre gives over to modernity's demand to create a truth out of itself. Truth emerges only in a determinate historical time as the act of unveiling something as true and only through the communicative act of judging it. For Sartre truth

is true for me in the absolute and I give it to others as absolute. And *it is* indeed absolute. Simply, I determine the period when it will be alive. It will be alive as long as it is illumination, revelation, commitment for the other...to judge is to will, to risk oneself, to commit our lives to the revelation...an eternal truth is a dead truth that has returned to the in-itself. A truth has not *become*, it is *becoming* (TE 12).

The structure of truth, as an act of communication between subjects and as a commitment to a determinate ideal does not arise from instrumental action. There can be no ethics of instrumental action, for it determines all things on the basis of arbitrarily chosen goals. The place of ethics and normativity takes place upon the ground of deciding upon a goal. The monological Kantian ideal is regulative in advance of conversation and commitment. For Sartre truth exists only within the milieu of dialogism, only as a living idea coming into being in a determinate period of time. Truth requires the communication of subjective interpretations to another and the continual process of revelation with others. Just as the written text acts as the third party between the author and his readers, language is the third party between communicative subjects. For the pursuit of truth through the gift of the in-itself is only possible

on the foundation of a mutual understanding and recognition between subjects as subjects. Sartre spends much of *Truth and Existence* demarcating barriers to proper communication between subjects. Bad faith and willful ignorance are unethical, not only because they do violence to the type of being which we are, but because they distort communicative practice of coming-to-truth. Bad faith is a way of relating to the world that infects every aspect of the consciousness. It does not isolate itself to the one moment of bad faith, but it is a project of distortion. Truthfulness in communication precedes “truth” as a commitment with others. As communication with others always take place within a material and cultural milieu, society itself places demands upon the subjects as to how the subjects interact with each other. A black man in 1860 is foreclosed from communicating truth by the very fact that he was an object among subjects. For the communication of truth has a practical and interworldly meaning beyond the lofty ideals of philosophy as a pursuit for truth. Truth as a living dialogue means that it is always an ethical dialogue. The society who willfully remains ignorant of the oppressed, that willingly distorts communication, willfully is complicit with the crimes of that era.

How does the subject communicate with another subject non-pathologically if it is equally being-for-others? The impasse of *Being and Nothingness* must be overcome if Sartre’s militant notion of truth is to have any validity. *Truth and Existence* passes over in silence the pathological structure of being-for-others as it appears in *Being and Nothingness*. This is because underlying the argument in *Truth and Existence* and *Literature and Existentialism* (both written in the same period) is a subtle shift in Sartre’s understanding of consciousness and others. Consciousness is a communicative entity. It is constituted within a linguistic milieu. In order for a subject to communicate, to another subject, the in-itself and to allow the other to co-judge that entity or idea requires the concept of language as it appears in the *CDR* as the “permanent project

to communicate.” It is only by considering the subject as being constituted linguistically, that is through a project of mutual understanding that Sartre’s notion of truth as a gift makes sense.

At the end of the unfinished 2nd volume of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre begins an explication of language that supports this reading. Language is “a serialized third party” (426). Language is the institution that grounds the interaction of two individuals as subjects. It intervenes, in its utterance, between two individuals as a totalizing third party. The unity that Sartre found in a totalizing subject that stood outside of the group is now that which is permanently immanent within the speech of any two actors. The *groupe-en-fusion* is constituted the serialized group members alternately being the third party to others and by being the object of a third party gaze. If language intervenes, at the level of speech, as the serial third party, it unifies two speakers as subjects which are totalized by their internal speech acts. Language (the word) acts as “inertia, it marks my inertia to recall inertia in the other” (426). It is true that in this section, Sartre gives to the word a similar meaning as he does the tool of the workshop. The tool of the workshop is that inertia by which man makes himself inert in order to act upon his inertia. However, the word is only that by which utilizes the communicative institution which conditions it: “Thus communication is effected not through the word, but by reference to the word: at once as an institution, as a direct relation to the context, and as a serialized third party” (426). Consciousness, by utilizing the linguistic expression, unifies subjects toward a mutual understanding of an object by utilizing the inert substance of words to direct consciousness toward something of direct interest. Truth is a subjective phenomenon that arises from the capacity of subjects to interact with each other, *as subjects*, through the medium of language which at once constitutes itself as serial (public property of just anyone) and as speaking the whole (as the ground for the possibility of the group).

Throughout Sartre's career, he has stood on the border of the linguistic turn in philosophy. While he never fully takes this path in his works, he provides us with clear indications of the direction that this path might take. The pre-reflective cogito is constituted linguistically, as the subject which speaks and which, through this speech, is able to create a temporalizing distance between itself and being. The speaking subject is first and foremost constituted on the basis of its relationship in the community of language users. As a socialized entity, consciousness is able to effectuate a reflective self-consciousness that is a named consciousness. Naming acts as the original act of nihilation, of separating and objectifying entities in the world. The act of naming, however, is always-already conditioned by the others which consciousness shares this world with. Being-for-others is a particular form of being which arises on the foundation of already being in a linguistic community. It is a social pathology that arises on the basis of consciousness's instrumental reason. Underlying the instrumental reason of consciousness, that is, through the projection of possibilities as goals, is the communicative reason that created the *individual* subject. *Praxis* retains its structure with the modification that interactions between others, while serialized, are mediated by a third party, language. Language unifies and serializes intersubjective communication. This communication can fail in a number of ways (bad faith, willful ignorance, the subjugation of members to the will of others, etc) but these failures are conditioned by the ontological and social foundation of communicative mutual understanding. The quest for truth and the ethics of *Truth and Existence* answer the quest of modernity: what is a normativity for modernity that is birthed in the soil of its own time. The ethical is an open commitment towards truth, not as the mere unveiling of a truth, but as communicative acts that allows truth to progress. Truthfulness and good faith precede truth because truth is that which emerges from the truthful commitment of speakers. The unethical is the pathological modes of

communication that arise out of psychosis, reification, alienation, and pathologies of the social structure. The ethical is the pursuit of non-pathological communication which commits itself to the non-distorted disclosure of being.

Sartre's writing and life is a reflection of the linguistic subject. Sartre himself was known for his incessant capacity for speech, so much so that he would speak through the restroom door to his interlocutors to avoid missing an opportunity to talk. He collaborated with a number of individuals and used his words for the exposition of the pathological and the bad faith of the powers that perpetuate the oppression and degradation of humanity. He is famous for phrases like "man is a useless passion" and "hell is other people." However his actions belie a deeper normative structure. He worked tirelessly, almost to his death, to produce his prodigious output in the name of the humanity with which he surrounded himself. Sartre, the man of words, did not take the linguistic turn within his own philosophy; however, he left indications of where the paths may lead, not only in his prose but in his life.

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