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John-Paul Sartre's Theory of Collective Action: Reconsidering Hegel and Marx

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By Adam Moeller

This study attempts a dialectical theory of collective action responsive to the philosophies of Georg Hegel and Karl Marx by leveraging the work of Jean-Paul Sartre toward an investigation of collective belief and agency, alienation and community. My primary concerns are (1) characterizing dialectical social theories, (2) tracing the historical development of dialectical social theory as the aforementioned topics of investigation manifest in the work of Hegel, Marx and Sartre and (3) describing the conditions under which interpersonal identification arises and dissipates for individual members of collectives. To these ends I examine dialectics as a method of doing social theory, articulate the unique structures of agency appropriate to various collective entities like families, economies and political states, and defend a theory of joint authorship to account for the solidarity of group beliefs. With this support I present a project-based understanding of collective action that demonstrates the transformation of projects from serial collectives to fused groups to institutions. I situate this Sartrean theory within Hegel's and Marx's independent philosophies on collective action, Sartre's early attempts at addressing the topic, and Margaret Gilbert's contemporary theory of joint commitment and joint action.

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Introduction

While no one of sound faculties would argue against clarity as a virtue of philosophical thinking, it is sobering to observe the few apologist voices for ambiguity, clarity's dialectical counterpart. Indeed, outside of occasional camps of cynics and skeptics, the lone philosophical apologists of ambiguity appear to be the existential phenomenologists of the post-Hegelian centuries who produced works like Soren Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way*, Simone de Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity* and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The World of Perception*. Collectively these works challenged that despite sophisticated methods of modern inquiry, ambiguity is as an unrelentingly aspect of experience and our awareness of it. It is no coincidence that there is a literary, occasionally surrealist, component to this group's philosophical productions: literature is rooted in an ambiguous language well suited to the description of deeply ambiguous moments of existence. The novelistic form, for example, is able to liberate transitory appearances of the self—the self's social relations or affects, for instance—in that characters possess conflicting feelings of jealousy and admiration or oscillate between oppositional social roles, the militant revolutionary who springs forth from a deep commitment to humanism.

Philosophy, conversely, in spite of the early literary form of the dialogue, has traditionally eschewed considerations of the ambiguous in search of a clear and distinct account.[1] This is not simply a product of Cartesian philosophy. The search for a secure footing has continually upset well-rooted schools of thought in epistemology and metaphysics. Kant and Husserl sought the secure basis for clear thinking and bracketed away what didn't fit, and the logical positivists attempted to banish philosophy from everything that wasn't readily apparent. Yet certain experiential phenomena don't lend themselves to clear apprehension and nonetheless are profound, real and true.

[1] To Plato's credit he entertains myth and allegory when sober accounts (*logoi*) fail.

Cognition—necessarily if the ambiguity apologists are correct—cannot find a snug conceptual fit for all particulars. This is a problem for language or cognition rather than reality.[2]

Particularly, consider what occurs when philosophy casts an eye on indiscrete historical events or the collective entities that move history. What appears before consciousness when we engage history is a deeply ambiguous process. Collectives arise out of the past, are moving toward an uncertain future, and feature a dynamic, multifarious and contradictory set of beliefs that motivate and are implied by group action. To claim that a historical event or a historical group is known is to crystallize the entity mid-stream, typically alongside the historian's behaviorist assumptions, and often by granting one account as representative of the entire group's beliefs. What I propose in this dissertation is an alternative: an open-ended, process-oriented, dialectical method to apprehend collective action, the fulcrum of history. Borrowing Jean-Paul Sartre's term, I call it a project-based approach to a theory of collective action.

The centerpiece of this theory is Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, a nearly forgotten, two-volume masterpiece. The first volume[3] appeared in 1960 and provided a theory of collective action that was to be applied in the second volume in service of a philosophy of history. The second volume was never finished, although a draft version was published posthumously in 1985. Jointly, the two volumes are in excess of 1,100 pages. The prose is stylistically dense, written with a frenetic energy that waivers between intoxicating and tedious. Paragraphs will continue over the course of 8 or 10 pages. Sentences do the microcosmic equivalent. Prepositions like "And" and "But" begin sentences mid-breath while embedded clauses extend them through the exhale.

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[2] I'm setting aside the sublation of language/cognition and reality, which differs according to idealist or materialist interpretations.

[3] The first and second volumes will hereafter be referred to as *Critique I* and *Critique II* in the footnotes.

The style would be but ornamental if it didn't interlock with the substantial theoretical undertaking that is the *Critique*. It is my contention that Sartre adapts the *Critique*'s language to the ambiguous collective subject. It is not so much that Sartre shies away from the systematic expository prose that made him famous in *Being and Nothingness*. Rather the system of the *Critique* is expressed through an ambidextrous prose that both giveth and taketh predication. Such ambiguous assertion is a touchstone of the dialectical method, which I explain in greater detail in the next section. An example is in order.

> Whether *in the machine*, as imperative expectation and as power, or *in man*, as mimicry (imitating the inert in giving orders), as action and coercive power, exigency is always both man as a practical agent and matter as a worked product in an indivisible symbiosis. More precisely, *a new being* appears as the result of a dialectical process, in which the total materialization of *praxis is* the negative humanization of matter, and whose true reality transcends the individual as an isolated agent and inorganic matter as an inert and sealed reality, that is to say, *the labourer*.[4]

For Sartre exigency is personal and yet material. But as soon as the subject of exigency is linked to its first predicate—"is personal"—the subject's autonomous movement rejects the identity between itself and the predicate. Exigency is not humans issuing imperatives, but rather matter expressing itself through humanity. And yet, the former predicate is retained. It is true, in a sense, as is the predicate that negates it. Speculative propositions allow for such contrary predicates to be held as mutually conflicting and yet independently true. In a special, dialectical respect, Sartre's prose is *speculative*. The linguistic subject moves within and without the negative space that separates predicates from one another in more conventional philosophical systems, and ultimately this movement transforms the subject into a more concrete entity. This transformative moment of sublation is one in which the two contrary predicates are allowed to find expression in a new subject. Human and yet material, exigency becomes fully realized through the form of the laborer. Labor, it

[4] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. 1*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (New York: Verso, 2004), p. 191.

turns out, requires responsiveness to both kinds of exigency. Thus the laborer is the concrete manifestation of exigency after exigency works through the conflicting identifications that are predicated of it.

A lot more ink will need to be spilled to justify rescinding the principle of non-contradiction,[5] but allow me to set aside, momentarily, the topic of the dialectic as a method and the speculative proposition as a linguistic form in order to expound on three overlapping aims of this dissertation that emerged during my study. Announcing these aims will provide an indication of how the work as a whole is schematized prior to getting bogged down with the question of method, about which I want to be quite explicit in the next section.

The first aim is to clarify the intellectual history of dialectical social theory (DST). Responding to Kantian practical philosophy in large measure, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* promoted a new, dialectical method for comprehending the admixture of interdependency and autonomy that marks free personhood in modernity. Marx famously "turn[ed] Hegel upright" in his early writings, which in the popular imagination has been taken to mean a fondness for material determination against the idealism of his predecessors—a theoretical house of cards that crumbles upon close reading. I find it more productive to view Marx as an immanent critic of Hegel who maintains the goal of freedom and the obstacle of alienation while providing a different circuitry between them. Regardless, subsequent to the "materialist" turn in DST, Marxism moved from an indefinite article dialectical social theory to *the* dialectical social theory of the twentieth century, and ultimately was consecrated as the science of DIAMAT in the USSR. Sartre participated in this Marxist milieu—which was and is more active in his native France than in the USA—but decisively cut away from its

[5] What I have attempted to show so far is how speculative propositions allow for ambiguous prose. I am setting aside for now the logical puzzles that such a system engenders.

ranks with the publication of the *Critique, Vol. 1* in 1960. The *Critique*, while neither Hegelian nor Marxian *per se*, is nonetheless a work of DST.

Nevertheless Sartre's dialectical social theory was lumped together with the Marxists after the Wall fell and Fukuyama pronounced our having reached the end of History in the West. Fukuyama was a professed Hegelian at the time, but knew nothing of Hegel's dialectic. His 'Hegel' is an interpretation of Kojeve without rejoinder to Hegel's *Science of Logic* or the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—the texts where the dialectic is rooted in cognitive and epistemological ambitions that allow for its comprehension as a method. After Fukuyama there emerged three other trends in historical scholarship of the DST tradition. Hegel was revived as a figure of interest in Anglo-American analytic social philosophy. With good reason, Robert Pippin, Michael Hardimon and others lately turned to Hegel to ponder the limits of Kantian practical philosophy and have ushered a new readership into the discourse of DST. Marxism, as well, experienced an analytic revival of interest around the work of G. A. Cohen, Jon Elster and John Roehmer for whom the dialectic was a mystifying relic of nineteenth century metaphysics. While enthusiasm has waned to a degree for these works, analytic Marxism remains a widespread introduction to the social science of capitalism. Finally, post-Fukuyama, there has been continued interest in Frankfurt School critical theory, particularly in the first and second wave figures of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas. Critical theory is a proud and venerable tradition, but also territorial about the usage of the term 'dialectic,' bordering on the xenophobic, while being mostly unhelpful in its clarification.[6]

This confluence of forces has made it difficult to discriminate DST from non-dialectical approaches. It does not help matters that structuralism, post-structuralism, and pragmatism have

[6] Adorno's *Minima Moralia* has a few meditations on the dialectic that run counter to the grain of what I've said here. I'm thinking here of §§ 44, 45 and 46 of part one. There is also Marcuse's excellent book on Hegel, *Reason and Revolution* and his once-popular *One-Dimensional Man*, which both interpret the dialectic (at times with rigor). But on the whole I find that there is a lot of barking about the dialectic in the Frankfurt kennel without much bite.

been largely antagonistic to DST and have allowed stale criticisms to linger in those circles. The result of which is that while contemporary theorizing about society has not left behind Hegel, Marx and Sartre, there is still substantial skepticism about the *dialectic*, as though it is an unessential feature of this tradition's thinking about society. Moreover, without a stable notion of the dialectic I believe we have lost our compass in understanding the relation between Hegel, Marx and Sartre. I want to set the record straight, so to speak, while being fully aware that this exercise will make Feuerbach, Jean Wahl, Gyorgy Lukács, Simone de Beauvoir and other "mediate intellectuals" appear more ancillary to the historical tradition of DST than they really are. What I am trying to say is that I do not wish to give the impression that studying Hegel, Marx and Sartre provides an exhaustive view of DST, but rather offers some rules and heuristics according to which we can gauge participation in DST for other intellectuals, including those figures that are out of focus in this dissertation.

Secondly, beyond clarifying this rich tradition of social theory, I aim to articulate a dialectical theory of collective action. I find that dialectical social theories inscribe a "circle of agency" that is their hallmark. *Collectives are both the condition for and the product of agency*. There can be no behaviorist reductionism on the one hand nor an ahistorical free will on the other. Moreover, according to the structure of agency, need and recognition that is exhibited in DSTs, emancipatory collectives must be responsive *to* the demand for personal freedom and *from* certain harmful instances of alienation. Indeed, as I attempt to show in the first chapter and echo in later chapters, a key feature of a dialectical theory of collective action is the intertwining of freedom and alienation within ensembles. Personal freedom as a primary value of modernity implies the existence of alienation, a concern we would be wise not to dismiss.

There are reasons for articulating a dialectical theory of collective action that go beyond the circle of agency and the inclusion of alienation as an epistemological and moral feature of collectives.

Full participation in certain collectives entails a loss of the principicum individuationis and the emergence of a group where solidarity, interpersonal identification and community become truly rich experiences. It is exceedingly difficult to discuss the loss of self that occurs during spontaneous group formation on the basketball court, or at live music venues, or within houses of worship, but I wish to bear witness to these moments in search of a theory of collective action that does not presume atomistic participation against the protests of the dialectical social theorists. A theory of collective action, then, inclusive of the value of freedom and the concern for alienation, that stretches varieties of collective participation: this is what is promised by my second aim.

Third, I attempt to formulate what we mean when we speak about the dialectic as a method of doing social theory. Personally, I have experienced an allergy among self-identifying Hegelians when it comes to referring to the dialectic as a method. There is some reason for self-conscious restraint. Hegel expressly denies the facile identification that the dialectic is a method on the grounds that the dialectic is not an instrument. And yet he gives credence to the opposing view by referring to the dialectic as a method at a critical juncture of the *Greater Logic*. I attempt to reconcile this conflict through an appreciation for the speculative proposition, a topic I turn to momentarily. Subsequently I proceed to refer to the dialectic as a method throughout this dissertation in the special respect that Hegel uses the term in the final section of the *Greater Logic*, which I submit provides definitive justification for my use of the expression.

These three aims are largely interwoven in the dissertation that follows, but I will index here the sections most apt to the topics at hand for those wishing to skim a particular thesis. The dissertation's division into chapters is meant to facilitate the intellectual history thesis. I begin by discussing Hegel in chapter one and Marx in chapter two to set up Sartre's immanent critique of dialectical social theory. In chapter three I look at the early work of Sartre to provide the context for

his eventual turn to the dialectic, which is covered in chapter four. Chapter five parses the unique contributions from Sartre for the discourse of dialectical social theory and demonstrates his definitive break from these predecessors. For an overview of the intellectual history thesis see the introduction to chapter five.

While the dissertation as a whole is meant to engender a dialectical theory of collective action there are a few sections that are particularly important to this thesis that I wish to highlight. I review two non-dialectical attempts at explaining collective action. The first of these appears in section III of chapter one where I encounter Margaret Gilbert's recent work and the tradition of analytic philosophy that precipitated her insights. In chapter three I look at a second non-dialectical explanation of collective action: Sartre's "early" theory, developed most acutely in *Being and Nothingness* but also present in dramatic works from the period like *No Exit* and *Dirty Hands*. While these non-dialectical theories allow us to understand authoritarian collectives and deliberative democracies I find them insufficiently perceptive of alienation, narrow in their view of personal freedom and "too external" in their appreciation of solidarity and community (to ape Sartre's later complaint). Section III of chapter four attempts to show how these theories of collective action are indicative of the analytic mindset. I am also critical of Hegel's and Marx's latent theories of collective action, which are dialectical, but they are overly optimistic in their appraisal of state and class action, respectively. For my overview of Hegel's theory of collective action see chapter one, section III, and regarding Marx see chapter two where I use Marx's early writings to criticize Hegel's position in section I and then proceed to develop his theory of class action in section II. In chapter four, section IV I demonstrate Sartre's attempt to formulate a theory of collective action by standing on the shoulders of these two giants in his *Search for a Method*. After abandoning this attempt, which sought to blend existentialism with Marxism, Sartre pens the *Critique*, a project-centric approach to

collective action. I regard this project-centric approach as the apoethesis of dialectical social theory and cover it extensively in chapter five.

Finally, for those chiefly interested in my thoughts on the dialectic as a method for doing social philosophy see the immediately following section. The insights of this section—including an attitude of deference toward concrete totalities and the speculative formulation of assertions about such objects—will be repeated often over the course of subsequent chapters. Some readers may additionally be interested in contrasting the dialectic with the progressive-regressive method employed by Sartre in *Search for a Method*. I cover this latter method in chapter 4, section IV.

Questions of Dialectic and Method:
The Organon Theory of Knowledge in Hegel's *Science of Logic*

Upon completing volume one of the *Critique* in 1960 Sartre—wearied by the torrential pace of the book's genesis but fearing a silent-and-confused reception—chose to insert an old essay for a preface rather than write one anew. The essay, "Materialism and Existentialism," penned four years earlier for the Polish journal *Twórczość*, showed Sartre's "commitment" to the Hungarian revolutionary cause but was curiously retitled to *Questions de Méthode* when it appeared as the *Critique*'s opening remarks. It should come as no surprise that Sartre felt the need to explain the *Critique*'s methodological commitments after surveying the "mountain of notes" brought forth by his years of study.[7] On what methodological basis do we detect alienation within collectives? How are the necessary and sufficient conditions for the transformation of serial collectives into fused groups made apparent? By what mechanism is Sartre able to formulate concrete prognostications about Chinese deforestation on the basis of an abstract concept of scarcity?

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[7] Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. 1*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (New York: Verso, 2004), p. 821.

Given the taxed state of Sartre's physical and mental health at the time it was likely a good idea for him to forego formulating new responses to such questions. He may not have been able to give the topic its full due. But the substitution of this essay—mostly about an unholy marriage between Marxism and existentialism—for a proper treatment of the dialectical method has come to define scholarly interpretation of the *Critique*. Most Sartre scholars observe that the architecture of the *Critique* is a demonstration of the "progressive-regressive" method outlined in *Search for a Method* (*Questions de Méthode*). The first volume moves "progressively" from abstract concepts of scarcity, need and action toward concrete scarcities, needs and actions and the second volume—again, never finished—was to "regress" from an understanding of concrete historical events to appreciating the abstract universals that conditioned them. I think this is an extremely interesting method, and one best treated as a discourse between Sartre and co-conspirator Henri Lefebvre, but I do not believe that it does justice to the philosophical tradition that Sartre tackles in the *Critique*. Hegel and Marx are not "progressive-regressive" theorists. However, they are dialectical ones, as is Sartre, and I believe that here lies the most telling unity for this disparate group of thinkers. Each adheres to a dialectical method when theorizing society.

Sartre, then, while correct in thinking his mountain of notes needed a statement of method, was wrong to think the progressive-regressive method adequately achieved this aim. Incidentally, this decision has injudiciously effaced the Hegelian-Marxian legacy that is present in the *Critique*. Rather than a marginal commentator on the tradition, Sartre, in my estimation, resolves the central conflict between Hegel and Marx. Neither state nor class action can remedy modern alienation. What we need are *projects*, temporary attempts at bringing people together to meet collective needs that ideally dissolve before social relations become institutionalized. Before turning to this topic we need some insight into the method that revealed this particularly dialectical solution to the problem

of modern alienation, some insight into the dialectical method that unites Sartre with Hegel and Marx.

* * * * *

When Hegel takes issue with Kantian critical philosophy he often alludes to the tale of Scholasticus who refused to enter the water until he knew how to swim.[8] Scholasticus was so worried about erring once he entered the water that this fear itself became the error, the impediment to his entering the medium in which the certain knowledge he strived for could be obtained. The idea here for Hegel is that Kant is mistaken to think that apodictic inscrutability could be achieved independently of engaging some specific content of thought. One must study the instrumentation of knowing alongside its result; the two tasks cannot be independently undertaken. For Hegel, thought comes to know the contributions of the object and the organon used to apprehend it by using the organon. One learns from and corrects methods of cognition in their employment, by becoming sensitive to the forms of knowing and the shape they impress on the object in one's experience of it.

It is widely held for this reason that Hegel opposes theories of knowledge that require independent explication of cognitive method. In *Knowledge and Human Interests* Jürgen Habermas contrasts Hegel's position with Kant's critical philosophy. He writes: "For Hegel the task of [Kant's] critical philosophy appears as one of ascertaining the functions of the instrument or medium in order to be able to distinguish the inevitable contributions of the subject from the authentic objective content in the judgment that is the result of the cognitive process."[9] For this reason Habermas concludes that "Hegel directs himself against the organon theory of knowledge."[10] Gillian

[8] Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, I, §10, §41. Scholasticus is the invention of the Hellenistic Stoic philosopher Hierocles.
[9] Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 11.
[10] *ibid.*, p. 10.

Rose, like Habermas, stresses Hegel's condemning remarks on method. She writes in *Hegel Contra Sociology* that: "There can be no question of changing from Kant's method to a different method, for all 'method', by definition, imposes a schema on its object, by making the assumptions that it is external to its object and not defining it."[11] Rose proceeds to use this Hegelian insight to criticize a latent Kantianism in sociology, a discipline where methodologism has become the first task in articulating some knowledge of society.

Yet these comments mostly overlook the final section of the *Science of Logic* where Hegel makes explicit reference to his "method" (*die Methode*) alongside the most thorough description of dialectics in his entire corpus. Rose attempts to explain this sudden appearance by remarking that "It is only in the final section of the *Greater Logic*, 'The Absolute Idea', that the idea of method is discussed, at which point there can be no misapprehension that the method is a form of justification."[12] What Hegel justifies here, according to Rose, is the reasoning that prevailed throughout the earlier stages of the *Logic*. On Rose's view, with the onset of the book's dusk, Hegel recollects the process that unfolded over the course of the *Greater Logic* and claims the movement as his own. This movement has been validated as a method, but only because it comes at the end and justifies what has already occurred. So here again we get the idea that method and content must be studied independently, only this time methodological awareness emerges in a valedictory sweep and not as knowledge of the organon prior to the organon's utilization.

I believe, with Rose, that Hegel is in a position to make methodological commitments only at the end of his works and as a process of recollection, but I do not think that it is at this endpoint that knowledge of method is won nor do I believe that method is for Hegel *ex post facto* justification.

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[11] Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Verso, 2009), pp. 48-9.
[12] *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 50.

Methodological knowledge, for Hegel, is nothing more than thought's self-awareness of its essential activity, and this awareness is won in stages. Moreover, I assert that dialectic is a method, but one that defers to the primacy of the object so it is not an instrument in any ordinary sense. As I will demonstrate through an exposition of the concluding section of the *Greater Logic*, I believe that Hegel holds this to be true as a speculative proposition, which means that dialectics both is and is not a method. We must uphold both sides of the speculative proposition, but affirm, in the end, the dialectic's status as a method.

I.

Dialectics as the rationality of a process reveals itself only after consciousness submits to the object's necessity and recollects this necessity as a process. Hegel formulates this claim about the priority of the object in the preface to the *Phenomenology*, referring here to his dialectical system as "scientific cognition" [*das wissenschaftliche Erkennen*]: "Scientific cognition, on the contrary, demands surrender to the life of the object, or, what amounts to the same thing, confronting and expressing its inner necessity."[13] If we attribute dialectics to the world it is because we have discovered it as the reason of our experiences. Importantly, dialectics is not wielded as an instrument that allows for the manipulation of whichever object consciousness adopts; it is, rather, a matter of confronting the object, developing its necessity out of itself and then expressing the process in full view of its rational character, that is, in the recollection and re-presentation of the process of the object's self-generated movement by a reason-giving self-consciousness. In a significant sense, then, the dialectic is not a method nor is it a constituted procedure that can be applied to whichever object consciousness adopts.

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[13] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. trans. A.V. Miller. (New York: Cambridge UP, 1977), p. 32.

Nonetheless, Hegel refers to his pattern of cognition as a method in "The Absolute Idea," the final section and summary of the *Greater Logic*, but his choice of words should not signal to us that Hegel is backtracking from the argument in the *Logic*'s introduction about the untenable nature of separations of method from their subject matter. Dialectics is fully constituted as a method only after it is revealed as the process of knowing (*Phenomenology of Spirit*) or the logic of thought (*Science of Logic*) which remain rife with subjective contributions—divisions, definitions and criteria provided by the subject—but dialectics does not stand on the side of the inquirer as the selected instrument to which cognition surrenders until it finds that its knowing activity, distilled to what it is in essence, already is dialectical. (Non-Hegelian discussions of method obscure these subjective contributions by making method out to be the medium through which knowledge of the object is received, but this thought prevents the major critical realization of German idealism: that mind is itself a medium that supplies determinations in cognition.) Dialectics is not an art or a skill like carpentry or fencing for this classical way of capturing dialectics turns it into a talent of the dialectician; Hegel ask that we instead find dialectics as the truth of the notion: the pattern thought leaves behind as it moves from an abstract understanding of things to concrete awareness. To be sure, not everyone recognizes thought as dialectical; indeed, few do. Yet Hegel argues rather convincingly that dialectics is the essence of cognition and if this is right we must draw the conclusion that the talent classically ascribed to 'dialecticians' is not that they have a skill for argumentation, but rather that they are self-conscious of their cognitive activity.

In short, dialectics is realized as a method only after self-consciousness grasps its cognitive activity as dialectical; subsequently, "it is the method proper to every subject matter because its

activity is the Notion [*der Begriff*]."[14] In that mind acts dialectically, dialectics comes before consciousness as its object at the level of self-consciousness. When the activity of dialectical cognition becomes self-conscious it is realized as a method proper, as the known medium through which knowledge surfaces. Hegel continues: "The method is this knowing itself, for which the Notion is not merely the subject matter, but knowing's own subjective act, the *instrument* and means of the cognizing activity, distinguished from that activity, but only as the activity's own essentiality."[15] Still, we must express the character of the notion, the pattern that knowing activity reflects in its essence after alternative, non-dialectical accounts of knowing have failed.

Hegel describes it in familiar language, but strays into the unfamiliar by dividing the process of the notion's movement into two, instead of his usual three, phases. The first of these takes place at the level of thought where cognition moves from abstract positing to grasping being as concrete totality; the second, at the level of speculative judgment where propositional terms pass over from the unity of the concrete totality to differentiation and back again to unity. At the first phase, in cognition, we are greeted first with an abstract universal that appears in immediacy. Whatever the content of our thinking, the activity is initially abstract and universal as we grasp and place the beings appearing before thought through concepts. Here is a coffee spoon, now is the afternoon and all around us is gravity: in the first stage of thinking we envelop and shroud the world with abstract and universal ideas. Hegel writes that "The immediate of sensuous intuition is a *manifold* and an *individual*. But cognition is thinking by means of notions, and therefore its beginning also is *only in the element of thought*—it is a *simple* and a *universal*."[16] Yet thinking is connected or 'mediated' by an ancillary faculty to thought which provides it with the being it cognizes. We can attribute this

[14] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller. (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1969), p. 826; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, *Gesammelte Werke Bd. 12* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1981), S. 238.
[15] *Science of Logic*, p. 827; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, S. 238.
[16] *Science of Logic*, p. 828; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, S. 239.

function to perception, intuition or representation, for example, and when the mediating factors of being are made evident to thought, cognition sheds its pretenses of immediacy and universality. Thought becomes aware that being is mediated for it and seeks out these concrete determinations that its initial awareness lacked.

Immanent to the activity of thought, which is tasked with justifying its assertions to itself and others, is the movement from abstraction toward the concrete. Hegel writes that "the immediate of the beginning must be *in its own self* deficient and endowed with the *urge* to carry itself farther"[17] which it does as the abstract understanding of things becomes assertorical and moves toward more discerning and concrete assertions. This movement brings the concept from abstraction to concrete totality through its relation to myself and to other thinking substances. Although the being before me is at a particular stage in thought—a moment whose mediation I might not yet grasp—it persists as a totality through its relation to myself or to the cognition of an other. Being as concrete totality is not self-sufficient: "The *sun*, for example, and in general all inanimate things, are determinate concrete existences in which real possibility remains an *inner* totality and the moments of the totality are not *posited* in subjective form in them and, in so far as they realize themselves, attain an existence by means of *other* corporeal individuals."[18] The sun's status as a concrete totality, a totality that is real and actual, is preserved and known by *mind* which thinks the immediate abstraction into its concrete state through self-awareness over cognitive activity. Accordingly, concrete totalities emerge for Hegel through cognition's discovery of the determinations that underlie an immediately available being. In other words, when we acknowledge the concreteness of some being, Hegel is arguing that we do so only at the end of the cognitive process that renders the immediate concrete through the

[17] *Science of Logic*, p. 829; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, S. 240.
[18] *Science of Logic*, p. 830; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, S. 241.

apprehension of its mediations. The concrete is thereby a totality to be understood in relation to the process leading up to it.

One must capture concreteness in view of the process to which it is bound—the unfolding of the notion—instead of thinking it as wholly present in immediacy: "The essential point is that the absolute method finds and cognizes the determination of the universal within the latter itself. The procedure of the finite cognition of the understanding here is to take up again, equally externally, what it has left out in its creation of the universal by a process of abstraction."[19] Commitment to dialectical thought entails this transition from abstraction to the concrete through the discovery of mediating elements; this is a task which analytic, divisive, exterior understanding is doomed to fail at for concretion is for it a matter of immediacy; and immediate cognition, if Hegel is right, merely posits abstractions and subsequently deludes the understanding from considering its own activity of abstraction. This process marks the first phase of the dialectic where the cognized being (the object of consciousness), through the activity of the notion, becomes a concrete totality for thought.

II.

The second phase of the Notion's movement begins with awareness of the first. Thought understands the nature of the being before it as a concrete totality, but it does not know how to present this fact to judgment in propositional language (assertions are part of thought, after all, and as such they are judged in propositional form). Judgment needs a way to apprehend and formulate *speculative* propositions.[20] Asserting a speculative proposition means that thought posits a relation of identity between subject and predicate which are divided in language (e.g. "God is eternal") while

[19] *ibid.*

[20] This is an argument that in my estimation is better worked out in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (cf. pp. 12-13), but it is better located in Hegel's systematic discussion of dialectics at the end of the *Logic* so we'll treat it here instead.

allowing the propositional terms' immanent development to dissolve this relation and show how the relation of non-identity between subject and predicate is equally justified (e.g. "God is not eternal" because it is also held that "God is omnipotent" and what is eternal is not identical with what is omnipotent). This movement toward the non-identical is unique to speculation. In other words, speculative propositions posit identity between subject and predicate and then observe the notion's self-generated movement as it unwinds this identity and claims itself as other than the predicate; the speculative moment allows the subject to negate the predicate with which it was just made identical thereby leaving a contradiction between the two propositions. Out of this contradiction arises the dialectical moment in thought's judgment over speculative propositions:

> It is shown that there belongs to some subject matter or other, for example the world, motion, point, and so on, some determination or other, for example (taking the objects in the order named), finitude in space or time, presence in *this* place, absolute negation of space; but further, that with equal necessity the opposite determination also belongs to the subject matter, for example infinity in space and time, non-presence in this place, relation to space and so spatiality.[21]

The subject of a speculative proposition is a concrete totality that judgment brings before it, but in propositional form the subject no longer exists as a totality. Rather, being unable to express the determinations by which it persists as a totality, the first proposition is an abstract universal; thus, the first proposition (e.g. "God is eternal") is immediate for judgment. When the second proposition (e.g. "God is not eternal") confronts the first, the first loses its immediacy for now it is related to (or mediated by) something other. This other is the negation of the first for it relates to the first and all relations for Hegel are forms of negation:

> Hence the second term that has thereby come into being is the *negative* of the first, and if we anticipate the subsequent progress, the *first negative*. The immediate, from this negative side, has been *extinguished* in the other, but the other is essentially not the *empty negative*, the *nothing*, that is taken to be the usual result of dialectic [in

[21] *Science of Logic*, p. 831; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, S. 242.

> antiquity]; rather is it the *other of the first*, the *negative* of the *immediate*; it is therefore determined as the *mediated—contains* in general the *determination of the first* within itself. Consequently the first is essentially *preserved* and *retained* even in the other.[22]

The second proposition (or stated more precisely: the second moment of the speculative proposition) introduces difference, which is lost to the immediacy of the first. Hegel speaks glowingly about this effect: "It is the simple point of the negative relation to self, the innermost source of all activity, of all animate and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true."[23] Yet the negative is met with a further negation: the moment of *Aufhebung*. The proposition immediately present to judgment (e.g. "God is eternal") returns to judgment having sublated its mediation and proven reunited through an encounter with difference. Doubled back on itself, the negation of the negation is a positive moment for Hegel (e.g. "God is eternal because God is not not eternal") that retains the negations of the past. The speculative proposition thus returns to the truth of the immediate judgment (now concrete) while retaining the failed assertions that proved too abstract though not without fruit.

Not merely an endpoint for Hegel's logic, with the negation of the negation, with the affirmative moment in the absolute method, these prior judgments are stowed as the proposition's abstract remainder and a space opens up for self-consciousness to not just contemplate the world with abstractions but to act in and transform a world grasped in concrete detail. A space has thus been carved out for reflective mind to genuinely pursue individuation, material realization, and ethical alteration of the social world. The movement of the notion is preparatory toward and continues into action. This is, for Hegel, the movement of freedom: "The *second* negative, the negative of the negative, at which we have arrived, is this sublating of the contradiction, but just as

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[22] *Science of Logic*, p. 834; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, S. 244-5.
[23] *Science of Logic*, p. 835; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, S. 246.

little as the contradiction is it an *act of external reflection*, but rather the *innermost*, *most objective moment* of life and spirit, through which a *subject*, a *person*, a *free being*, exists."[24]

To summarize: Hegel holds that "dialectics is a method" as a speculative proposition. In that it is thought in its essence, the act of cognition in its critical form, dialectics is the method through which the object's inner necessity becomes accessible to knowing consciousness. Yet it is no chosen medium. Not an instrument deigned for its pragmatic usefulness, fecundity or general expediency, dialectics is thought's awareness of what it has been doing all along, the self-knowledge of cognition, and the affirmation that this pattern is final, true and absolute.

[24] *Science of Logic*, pp. 835-6; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, S. 246.

Chapter 1: Collective Action in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

Collectives are often temporary social formations that rally around a common cause or interest: spontaneously sociable groups that cease to exist once their *raison d'être* has been realized. A crowd of spectators at a high school softball game, a collection of rioters that loot an electronics store or the assembly gathered at the annual shareholders meeting all display a kind of collective agency that dialectical social philosophy can illuminate. I consider such examples of collective action in later chapters, but while their temporary and interest-driven nature has its purposes, ranging from the French Revolution to free-form jazz, because the individuals that comprise these kinds of collectives do not have a lasting identification with their rapidly dissolving groups, they remain outside of Hegel's scope in the *Philosophy of Right*.[25] It is important to note that Hegel does not purport to offer an exhaustive treatment of collective action in this work or elsewhere; he remains fixed on those collectives that offer something essential to the individual's identity. Modernity provides three collectives that are central to one's identity, however, according to Hegel, and while other minor structures that organize social life are enumerated in the *Philosophy of Right* it is the family, civil society and the state that remain the central categories of his analysis of collectives and indeed, of his social philosophy as a whole.

Besides their constitutive role in the development of identity, the key reason for their pride of place is on account of the contributions they make to what Hegel identifies as the primary value of the modern world: individual freedom. In their integration the family, civil society and the state provide the objectively necessary conditions for individual freedom; it is these formative relations at various levels of intimacy, of private as well as public citizenship that, together, form the institutional

[25] It is only in Marx and, I argue, in the later work of Jean-Paul Sartre that the social form comes to be understood as a strategic historical arrangement that realizes group sovereignty out of collective seriality (isolation together).

framework needed for freedom's realization. The main reason that Hegel regards this institutional support as necessary is that, as a historically local apparatus, these institutions supply the norms by which one acts ethically. When one intentionally subverts or ignores institutional norms, one acts on the basis of inclinations; this heteronomous activity runs counter to the self-determination of an ethical life. Counterintuitively, it is through the ethical conduct of one's activity that one is free.[26] Accordingly, Hegel explicitly calls this institutional framework ethical because the institutions objectively necessary for freedom are one and the same as the institutions that supply the norms of ethical conduct. He writes that "the ethical sphere is freedom, or the will which has being in and for itself as objectivity, as a circle of necessity whose moments are the *ethical powers* which govern the lives of individuals."[27] This is to say that the family, civil society and the state, while not sufficient conditions for the realization of individual freedom, are necessary for it because it is through them that one wins the normative content of an autonomously directed life. Freedom requires institutional support from social groups that endow persons with the capacity for self-determination—this is the objective criteria of Hegel's theory of freedom—and additionally requires, subjectively, that these persons act in a self-conscious and rational manner. Freedom is the unity of these subjective and objective conditions.[28] Each of the three central social groups plays an essential role here so while

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[26] Hegel shares this in common with Kant, but where the former diverges from the Kantian line is on the view that ethical 'oughts' are supplied in experience. The central institutions of modernity offer the norms by which participants may self-legislate their activity according to Hegel whereas for Kant right conduct is determined by *a priori* intellection of the moral law.

[27] *Philosophy of Right*, §145.

[28] Frederick Neuhouser's *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory* is the best treatment that I have come across of Hegel's "bipartite account of social freedom" (p. 82). Neuhouser, like myself, divides the subjective component of freedom from the institutional framework necessary for its realization. However, our accounts are importantly different in that Neuhouser takes the subjective component of freedom to be stated completely in §257 of the *Philosophy of Right* whereas I take this passage to be a narrow statement of the citizen's reconciliation of her self-determining action with the collective action of the state. I emphasize instead §7 which states that freedom is the determination of the will that abstracts itself from its determinations—self-conscious agency, in other words—as well as §27, which relates the free individual to the rationality of spirit. Coupled together, I interpret these passages as offering that freedom is self-conscious, rational agency. Further, I believe that this perspective is illuminated best in light of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

freedom is constitutionally guaranteed to members of modern republican states, it is not political right alone that provides for its capacity. Indeed, political freedom is a small section on the canvas of the full portrait of freedom, which from a wider angle depicts self-determination in natural, social and political contexts and thereby depends on, in addition to citizen rights, the kind of person one becomes in the family and the range of activities and interests that one is exposed to as a member of civil society.

It is important that we appreciate this theory of freedom in assessing these social groups both as the institutional framework necessary for the emergence of free individual persons and as collective agents of some sort. What this "some sort" is will become clear through an engagement with Margaret Gilbert's work in the third section of this chapter after examining the family, civil society and the state as social formations that provide the necessary conditions for the emergence of free and independent persons in the second section. In other words, in the second section I will consider the family, civil society and the state as social groups from the perspective of the individual, asking what it is that they 'do' for the individual, and in the third section I will consider each as a plural subject that acts, asking what is that these collectives 'do' as collective agents. As for the first section, here I establish the subjective criteria of freedom and the dialectic of freedom and alienation that informs the role played by these social groups. Essentially in the first section I argue that Hegel's view of freedom necessarily leads to a consideration of alienation, a feature of his social philosophy implicated by the role agency plays in substantiating free existence. Freedom and alienation—the former cannot be wholly extricated from the latter in Hegel's thought—comprise

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where the emergence of self-consciousness and reason are experienced, depicted and subjected to immanent epistemic criteria. Finally, my account of Hegel's theory of freedom aligns with Robert Pippin's recent work on the topic, which has undoubtedly shaped my own thinking. See Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000); Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2008).

important elements of collective action, in the end, and reveal why the family, civil society and the state assume the prominent position that they do for Hegel, why these are the three social groups that he esteems above all others.

I. The Dialectic of Freedom and Alienation

One of the unique features of a robust self-conscious existence is the feeling of alienation. This feeling is more or less exclusive to human life. For in spite of the affective complexity that biologists attribute to animal experience today and in spite of the self-awareness futurists acknowledge in artificial intelligence, it is the combination of emotional sensitivity and reflective self-scrutiny that makes for the feeling of denied membership—the feeling that this world is not a home. Alienation appears permanently linked to humanism. Judging by the tenor of recent Continental and posthumanist thought this marriage seems to have been for the worse: both alienation and humanism are routinely regarded as relics of a not-so-distant past.[29] Yet, people still experience alienation in the remoteness and estrangement of social and professional life, and to call it a product of false consciousness or widespread self-delusion—correctable by an updated rearrangement of one's mental furniture—is a damaging invalidation of the alienated individual's active internal life.

My thought is that alienation cannot be disposed with so easily unless we are ready to jettison freedom as well because on Hegel's view they make up sides of a dialectic where each is implicated by and finds its truth in the other. As such, the template for delineating varieties of

[29] While it is unclear whether any of the three would qualify as card-carrying humanists, Hegel, Marx and Sartre are perhaps the three most frequently targeted members of the philosophical humanism tradition. For two of the stronger statements against philosophical humanism see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1994); Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 109-136.

alienation ought to be in their relationship to freedom.[30] In this section I posit two varieties of alienation in Hegel using just this guide. For the clearest account of the connection between freedom and alienation is in Hegel and in spite of the numerous attempts to move beyond his thought by his earliest readers as much as by his more recent ones, it is his philosophy that continues to define the horizon against which stands these two central concerns of social philosophy. I will first attend to the subjective dimension of his theory of freedom in order to draw its connection with alienation, and then exposit estrangement's experiential and structural varieties: the former, a contributor to freedom's realization; the latter, which we find in Hegel's vision of the Roman world, a stymieing of freedom.

As Socrates insisted that reflection begin with self-knowledge, and that this self-scrutiny is what makes life worth living, Hegelian freedom upsurges in and through an identity with oneself in this lineage. For according to Hegel, philosopher and layman alike are subjectively free when in a reflective relationship to oneself—when the individual is reflective about the social relationships that constitute one's identity and the biological and material forces that determine the self. Far from a contemplative theory of solitary self-possession, to be free for Hegel is to possess self-knowledge of an ipseity drawn in myriad directions, that is, to be aware of how one is pulled in one direction by desires such as hunger or lust, in another by a personal temperament molded in familial interactions

[30] In this section I offer two varieties of alienation distinguished on the basis of their relationship to freedom, which means that my account is fundamentally different from Richard Schacht's treatment of Hegel's two varieties of alienation in his impressive and landmark work *Alienation*. Schacht, in his attentive reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, explains that *Entfremdung* refers to the separation of the particular from the whole as is commonly thought and additionally refers to the process whereby this disunion is overcome, in the reconstitution of a differentiated unity. While Schacht cites material from the *Phenomenology* that supports his two varieties of alienation, I prefer to call his second usage 'reconciliation' and expect that my use of this term, while not to the letter of Hegel, is keeping with the spirit of his thought while avoiding the confusion in having one word refer to a process of diremption and the overcoming of that diremption. Interestingly enough, Schacht does quote the section from the *Phenomenology* that comprises the basis of my reading of 'experiential alienation' but collapses Hegel's remarks here into his first variety. In stressing alienation's relationship to freedom, I want to emphasize the central role of this passage for Hegel's *Phenomenology*: alienation is endemic to experience and as such, endemic to the winning of self-consciousness and rationality. See Richard Schacht, *Alienation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 35-54.

that constitute one's work ethic or solemnness, one's idiosyncratic habits and mannerisms and, in yet another direction by one's professional standing and the behaviors cultivated by one's position in civil society (the dignity one attributes to oneself or the crudeness of speech one slips into for example—markers of class and social standing). Hegel accepts that all of these drives are operant for individuals living in the thick sociality of history with its contingent and purposeful shifts that have made the world assume the shape that it has. The better one knows these social and material causes—"determinations" in Hegel's language—the higher the level of self-consciousness, a requisite factor for self-legislating activity. For what Hegel is driving at when he celebrates modernity's realization of individual freedom is awareness of one's concrete relations, one's limits and potentialities, which offer the individual the capacity to give laws to oneself.[31] Hegelian freedom—understood as this relationally thick 'autonomy'—is not won by stoic withdrawal from drives and inclinations that motivate action but by a reflective ordering or self-legislation of the manifold drives that motivate action. Hegel writes in the *Philosophy of Right* that the "drives should become the rational system of the will's determination."[32] His is an attempt to elevate the status of drives as determinations of action from their capricious and narrow-sighted hold in nature and promote these unreflective natural impulses to a self-conscious view that would justify with reasons their relevance for the actions one wishes to be recognized as one's own. Left unattended, the will capitulates without reflection and desire moves the self along the well-worn grooves of custom or expediency, not unlike an animal or a machine, and in any case without freedom. For freedom as Hegel construes it is not a matter of denying one's basic needs or "animal" urges, but rather a matter

[31] For Hegel no less than Kant the power of autonomy lies in the individual's capacity to self-legislate the will through reason. Today autonomy is commonly thought to be synonymous with independence, but this connotation can be misleading if not checked by the term's etymological significance of self- (*auto*) legislation (*nomos*), which more accurately portrays the sense intended by Kant and Hegel in their practical philosophies.
[32] *Philosophy of Right*, §19.

of becoming aware of these needs and urges and supplying justification for acting on their basis. Action is unfree when motivated by fear, say, or terror or some external authority, but through participating in spirit, as Hegel sees it, in practices of meaning making and reason-giving justification of action in shared contexts, individuals become aware of themselves and reason through their practical engagements in a decidedly free manner.

Yet reflective self-consciousness and reasoning are not sufficient; they are but the initial components of freedom's subjective criteria. What makes Hegel's view so bold in my estimation is the very feature that opens it up to alienation as a perennial worry, and this is that freedom demands manifestation in action. The most meticulous self-examination, the most thoroughgoing understanding of the social and material drives that compel the will, and the most airtight justification of these drives to others do not constitute substantive freedom until these reflections conduct one's activity. The theoretical attitude thus informs praxis and only in the workings of praxis is one free. What I find encouraging in this conception is that it combats a common temptation in thinking freedom, one Hegel associates with youth in particular, namely, the tendency to hold oneself back from commitment so as to maintain the widest horizon of possibilities. Hegel dispels the illusory belief that one is freer when delaying the choice of a major, or the acceptance of a concrete political position, or the selection of and commitment to just one romantic partner. Hegel is well aware of this tendency to abstract oneself from the world by claiming the self as removed from and indifferent to any concrete activity that might be recognized as one's own and, further, to think of oneself as having thereby won a less restrictive existence. But this is a purely contemplative freedom, a negative freedom that annihilates itself in its indeterminacy; it is an empty freedom. He refers to it as "that indeterminate subjectivity which does not attain existence or the objective

determinacy of action, but remains *within itself* and has no actuality."[33] Through our actions we are recognized. Recognition, while binding us to identities and projects, carves out for us a determinant place in the world and a platform through which we can continue to act. It is on the condition that one chooses to act and thereby enters into recognitive relations that a subject emerges that might be predicated as free.

To summarize: I offer that on Hegel's view the subjective element of individual freedom, substantively understood as self-conscious, rational agency, requires, in three phases, first, reflection on one's natural, social and historical standing and the drives operant in this milieu; second, justification of acting on the basis of these drives through the offering of reasons for action that make sense within the norms of one's community; and, third, acting in accordance with these practical reasons, thereby transforming actuality in a self-conscious and reasoned way. Freedom is self-conscious, rational agency in an objective context that allows for self-determination.

Thus when Hegel characterizes *alienation* as a feeling that arises when one's activity is not meaningfully reflected back to oneself—when the fruits of an activity or recognition of participation in an activity are blocked or obstructed such that one's activity no longer rightfully belongs to oneself—when Hegel captures alienation in this manner he speaks to a condition that is a consequence of the individual's attempt to realize his or her freedom. One self-consciously and rationally acts so as to be self-determining and alienation is the denial that one's activity is in fact free: alienation is wound up with the pursuit of freedom.

This is not to say that alienation prevents the realization of freedom; for in some instances alienation is the impetus to a more reflective and rational activity. We must parse out two varieties of alienation in Hegel: first, what I call experiential alienation, a form of estrangement that assists in the

[33] *Philosophy of Right*, §149.

realization of individual freedom by separating the agent from the world in its immediacy so that he or she can become reconciled to it at a more reflective or better justified level; second, what can be termed structural alienation, those estrangements that deny reconciliation because they are built into the social form in which the agent participates and are debilitating toward the realization of individual freedom. The first variety calls for celebration; the second, for social change.

A. The First Variety: Experiential Alienation

Hegel uses alienation (*Entfremdung*) when defining the crucial term 'experience' in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He writes:

> And experience is the name we give to just this movement, in which the immediate, the unexperienced, i.e. the abstract, whether it be of sensuous [but still unsensed] being, or only thought of as simple, becomes alienated from itself and then returns to itself from this alienation, and is only then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth, just as it then has become a property of consciousness also.[34]

For the truth of immediate existence to appear, one must become estranged from the object of consciousness whether this object is apprehended by a vivacious sense perception or a simple idea supplied by the understanding. In both instances the representation is revealed in its truth only after consciousness is alienated from the immediate judgment it initially uses to apprehend the object of knowing. To have 'experienced' an object on Hegel's account is to break off consciousness' immediate absorption in its content and come to address the mediations that have made this content available. Such a procedure requires that one make alien what consciousness is initially immersed in.

Experience is a significant term in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. What Hegel offers in this text is a pathway that marks "the Science of the *experience* which consciousness goes through."[35] As the activity of knowing passes through various stages in the *Phenomenology*, beginning in consciousness,

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[34] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 21.
[35] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 21 (emphasis in original).

moving through the stage of self-consciousness and finally realizing itself in spirit, Hegel describes not just the final outcome of the activity of knowing but traces the *experience* of this activity. To capture the activity of knowing requires not just a description of the form of knowing in which the activity is successful, but an explanation of the very experience consciousness has in passing through its successive stages, the ultimately inadequate forms on the path to absolute knowledge. So when Hegel uses the term alienation to explain the movement of experience, he gives it a pride of place without which the activity of knowing and the whole enterprise of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* would be impossible. Alienation is written into what it means to have an experience.

It remains to be said precisely what alienation contributes to experience. The German for experience is *Erfahrung*, which refers to a process rife with missteps and errors through which maturation results. Experience is an adventure (*fahren*) which arrives at a result (*er-fahren*) as Frederick Beiser has noted.[36] In other words, conflict and estrangement are necessary features of experience. Its outcome or yield—what on occasion Hegel calls the reality of the experience—is not present at the outset, but requires instead the disruption of what immediately appears to consciousness. Alienation is this disruption. It is the estrangement that precipitates reconciliation with reality, the necessary step toward apprehending actuality, which remains elusive without this distancing.

There are two distinct ways that experiential alienation can assist the realization of individual freedom and each has to do with the subjective dimension of freedom, which I have characterized as self-conscious, rational agency. Experiential alienation can lead to, as one consequence, a more reflective relationship with oneself. There are drives that compel the will that go unchecked and unrecognized, often over the course of an entire lifetime, and the rendering conscious of these unconscious drives is achieved by experiential alienation. By becoming estranged from the

[36] Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 171.

inclinations that compel action, the agent can come to reflect on the kind of person that he or she presents to the world. Without being distanced from the immediacy of these drives, one acts on the basis of their urgency and without reflection. Experiential alienation, in other words, separates the agent from his or her will and carves out the space that is needed to reflect on it. So easily co-opted by external interests, unreflective action is not self-determined, but with the distance provided by experiential alienation the agent can deliberate among and prioritize the motivations for action that one wants to be recognized as one's own. In the *Zusätze* to §15 of the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel explains how the capricious action of arbitrariness results in the laboring toward ends supplied from outside oneself: "If we stop our enquiry at arbitrariness, at the human being's ability to will this or that, this does indeed constitute his freedom; but if we bear firmly in mind that the content of what he wills is a given one, it follows that he is determined by it and is in this very respect no longer free."[37] Without reflection one remains at the whims of interests that are not self-determined. Thus estrangement from an immediate drive opens the door to examining the given content of an inclination and the material, ideological or commercial interests that may lie behind it.

In addition to making the individual more self-conscious, experiential alienation assists the realization of freedom in that it can make activity more rational. What I may take to be a good reason for action is not, in itself, a good reason; rationality demands corroboration with other reasoning participants in a shared form of life. On Hegel's view I must, therefore, submit for approval my reasons for action and allow for arbitration of my practical reasoning in norm-governed contexts. Often enough reasons that appear pressing have an immediate urgency that Hegel thinks

[37] *Philosophy of Right*, p. 49. The passages marked as "Additions" in the Allen Wood edition of the *Philosophy of Right* traditionally have been referred to as the text's *Zusätze*. They are notes taken by Hegel's students from the lectures he gave on his *Rechtsphilosophie* from the academic years of 1822-1823 and1824-1825, several years after the *Philosophy of Right* was originally published. Eduard Gans, a student of Hegel, is responsible for their inclusion in German editions of the *Philosophy of Right* dating back to 1833 and they have stayed with most translations of the text ever since.

needs to be checked; by making these immediate reasons alien to oneself, one is separated from their persuasiveness and confronts them from the perspective of another that may deem them less urgent or perhaps entirely unsuited for action on account of an internal contradiction of which the agent was unaware. Becoming estranged from one's private reasons and reconciled to shared practical reasons is an expression of experiential alienation that supports deliberative processes and one that makes agency more rational and for this reason, more free. Importantly, Hegel believes that rationality permeates norm-governed contexts of all sorts, that there is reason in the norms of the constitutional state, for example, and that members of the state ought to be able to justify their activity in accordance with the state's explicitly stated and implicitly kept normative guidelines.[38] Citizens undergo experiential alienation when their reasons for action in governmental contexts are denied (e.g. on a tax form) or when the action itself is recognized as wrong according to legal norms. Such conflicts are to be expected in the general course of things and the alienation experienced here allows for immanent reconciliation and movement toward a more rational form of life.

B. The Second Variety: Structural Alienation

It is the inability of finding reconciliation with the social world through contemplation that is the mark of the second variety of alienation that I term here 'structural.' Reconciliation, for Hegel, is a contemplative process where the alienated individual comes to appreciate the reason in the shape of the present and thereby find resolution through adjustment to the social world rather than in an adjustment of it. That is to say, at this stage of history reconciliation for Hegel amounts to coming to grips with reality through reflection on the rationality of its forms and not in a manipulation of

[38] Hegel, in the *Zusätze* to §272, goes as far as to say that "One should expect nothing from the state except what is an expression of rationality" (*Philosophy of Right*, p. 307). The idea here is that the state's normative commitments are written into its constitution so members of the state can act with knowledge of these commitments and are held accountable to them. The state acts rationally because its norms are transparent and its agents are required to justify their actions with respect to them.

reality.[39] Here, of course, is the fertile ground on which Marx plants his protest against Hegel in his eleventh thesis: "the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, to *change* it."[40] Hegel too believed that the world needed to be changed—that new social forms needed to be ushered in—at previous historical moments, but held that any reflective person in the present could find good reasons for why the integration of familial, professional and civic spheres of social life led to the realization of individual freedom. Sure, there are senseless tragedies and recurrences of war and widespread poverty, but for Hegel these contingencies do not undermine the rational character of modernity's major social institutions. Alienation that is rooted in and dwells on these tragic features of the social world can ultimately be resolved for modern individuals by reflecting on the social forms that have allowed one to emerge as the person that one is. This suggests that all alienation in modernity is, for Hegel, of the first variety, the experiential alienation that precipitates a more reflective, rational and freer existence. Nonetheless, in other arrangements social change is not only favorable but demanded—for in these societies, reconciliation requires not just contemplation but new forms of collective action that can overcome forms of alienation embedded in the structures of the social world. Insofar as the shape of the social forms that we live in and among today have diverged from those operant in Hegel's time, the possibility remains that reconciliation demands manipulation of the world rather than reflective awareness of its reason. It may be the case

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[39] The rationality of the modern social world is something to rejoice in, for Hegel, despite the many conflicts, injustices and tragedies that modern life offers. While the many contingent harms of modern life may not allow for satisfactory explanation (how things 'ought to be' is not identical with how things 'are'), the institutions of modernity are rational and have justifications for contemplative, philosophically sophisticated members of the social world and these justifications are sufficient to warrant not only reconciliation through contemplation but outright celebration of modernity. In the *Philosophy of Right* he expresses this as follows: "To recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present and thereby to delight in the present—this rational insight is the *reconciliation* with actuality which philosophy grants to those who have received the inner call *to comprehend*," (preface, p. 22) by which he means to say that in spite of its tragedies those who grasp the present through reason understand the rosy character of its social forms and that they are indeed committed to the realization of freedom for its members. Even if the particular harms of modern life are 'senseless,' the norms of our central institutions are defensible and offer good reasons for their continued existence for practitioners.

[40] *Theses on Feuerbach*, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society,* ed. and trans. by Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), p. 402.

that the forms of the family, civil society and the state have changed such that in their integration the social world no longer realizes individual freedom, but stymies it—leaving alienated individuals with no choice but to find reconciliation through the collective reworking of institutional structures.

In the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, the litmus test for situations that demand a reworking of collective action has tended to be the resemblance that a social form shares with the master-slave relation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. We see this in that great tradition of Hegel scholarship that goes through Kojève, Derrida and Bataille, for example.[41] I find these diagnoses helpful, but ultimately misleading. The *Phenomenology* draws the path of individual consciousness as it is formed into self-consciousness and becomes aware of its participation in spirit. It marks the philosophical maturation of natural consciousness as it becomes the consciousness of absolute knowing. The form of master and slave is an important stage along this path, an experience of natural consciousness as it begins to emerge as self-consciousness; yet because neither party has become reflective about the social form that organizes their activity, it captures the structural alienation of the master-slave relation merely as it exists *for consciousness*. In other words, the desire for recognition that motivates the encounter between master and slave remains the driving force here: equality and freedom come on the scene as demands for consciousness and not as regulative ideals for the transformation of society through immanent critique, as might be possible among self-conscious, rational agents.

For these reasons I find it more helpful to attend to Hegel's writings on those historical forms of life that haven proven stages in world history's march to modernity. Namely, I want to conclude this section with the suggestion that the historical moment of the Ancient Roman world could be an analogue for structural alienation in the present. I am not trying to imply that world

[41] See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP: 1980); Georges Bataille, "Hegel, Death and Sacrifice," trans. Jonathan Strauss, *G.W.F. Critical Assessments, Vol. II* ed. Robert Stern (New York: Routledge, 1993); Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve," *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 251-277.

history has regressed or that Hegel's philosophy of history would support the view that spirit could somehow return to a previous moment along the progress of history. Rather, I take it to be the case that his image of Roman life has structurally alienating features that belong to other arrangements as well, and that the study of these features offer diagnostic criteria that are superior to those on display in the lordship and bondage section of the *Phenomenology*. In particular, I want to stress that liberty and formal equality exist in the Roman world and yet Hegel finds that this world was not a veritable home.

Hegel depicts the people of the Roman Empire as ruled by an external sovereign whose power is arbitrary and unprincipled. Roman rule is determined by imperial interest rather than by an ethics; its only saving grace for Hegel is the Christian demand for individual subjectivity, which remains in a nascent form during antiquity. The emperor is deprived of an inward life: "no prospective nor retrospective emotions, no repentance, nor hope, nor fear—not even thought."[42] He has no fixed boundaries or obstacles that arise in bringing about a state of affairs. All imperial action is for Hegel capricious, arbitrary willing. It is undeserving of the name of action: "For these [emperors] find themselves here in a position in which they cannot be said to act, since no object confronts them in opposition; they have only to will—well or ill—and it is so."[43] Individual citizens, on the other hand, assert private right over property and obtain the status of legally recognized persons. Private property owners in the Roman world are recognized as independent, but this independence pertains only in abstraction. There is no social unity underlying recognition, without which one cannot concretely grasp independence: "the political organism is here dissolved into atoms—viz., private persons." While law and private self-consciousness assert the individuality and

[42] GWF Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J Sibree. (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991), p. 315.
[43] *Philosophy of History*, p. 316.

equality of all members of the public, the political state is not substantively constituted by the collective will of the people, but rather by the unchecked power of the emperor. The result, according to Hegel, is that "all individuals sink to the level of private persons with an *equal* status and with formal rights, who are accordingly held together only by an abstract and arbitrary will of increasingly monstrous proportions."[44] The only way to upend this monstrous force and realize the substantive unity of ethical life is in the creation of new social forms that one can call a home. This, I submit, is a task for collective action that cracks the mold of inert serial relations.[45]

II. Modernity's Central Social Forms

As alluded to previously, so thick is Hegel's notion of sociality that self-determination is ultimately possible for him only with the support and enabling conditions of specific social and political institutions. The subjective criteria of freedom must be augmented by a social framework that is objectively supportive of self-determination. Such a framework had just arrived on the scene, Hegel thought, as he penned his mature philosophical writings in the wake of the French Revolution. Modernity, he argues, offers three central social forms—the family, civil society and the state—which, often through countervailing forces, are integrated together to make reality specifically *not* structurally alienating. In other words, as a whole, the modern social world is a veritable home due to the cohesive functioning of these three spheres of social life. We shall examine in this section what it is that each of these groups does to lay the objective conditions for individual freedom.

The social relationships of the family comprise an undifferentiated immediate unity,[46] in Hegel's terms, a feeling of intimacy and solidarity for individual members and a strong sense of

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[44] *Philosophy of Right*, §357.
[45] See chapter five, section 1 of the present work on Sartre's theory of serial group relations.
[46] *Philosophy of Right*, §157.

togetherness for the group as a whole. Functionally, the family offers love and care, contributing to the individual's emotional makeup, and the early psychological nourishment needed for maturation and growth. In the family one is recognized and cared for in an immediate way. No 'invisible hand' is needed to redirect the actions of others to benefit my interests, no appeals to justice or rights are needed for other family members to contribute to my growth. The family is the most basic unit of social life for Hegel, "the immediate substantiality of spirit" and "the spirit's feeling of its own unity, which is love."[47] Yet the family, for all of its contributions toward the realization of individual freedom, satisfies mostly natural and few self-consciously directed needs. In the family one does not encounter difference: the norms that check activity function reflexively and do not feel externally imposed for the family member. Without the family's attention to 'immediate' feelings a person may feel stunted or malformed, and yet Hegel would also say that a life spent in devotion to the family alone would not be one we would call free in the truest sense. Freedom, after all, is normatively ascribed to persons in the workplace and to those who have been successful in political liberations, who fulfill publicly intelligible goals through transformative encounters with difference. For Hegel, difference is not internal to the immediate unity of the family, a space from which we must be exiled to grow into our freedom. So the free individual must negate the form of the family by entering the arena of civil society while *preserving*, nonetheless, the substantial relations of daughter and wife, father and husband, or whatever familial ties make one's identity what one is. Ultimately, the individual make-up of a family need not be a husband, wife, and children for Hegel's account to make sense; although he eternalized the nuclear family, we can part ways there but agree with him broadly that one needs intimate social bonds—those that nurture us in our moments of dependency

[47] *Philosophy of Right*, §158.

(infancy, old age, illness)—and so the family, regardless of the makeup of its members, is a necessary social form.

Civil society, Hegel's name for the uniquely modern aspect of sociality where individual interests and aptitudes enter an economy of need satisfaction (based in the market and the non-political civic associations we voluntarily participate in), expands identity through the *personality* which has a heretofore unprecedented independence. The member of civil society's activity is self-directed even while the will conforms to the formal standards of property and contract. Through civil society the individual develops a particular personality: a palate of distinctive tastes, attitudes and dispositions that find satisfaction in the exchanges of bourgeois life. In the plurality of civil society each family (or representative of the family) is recognized as a particular need or a particular aptitude as commodities and services are exchanged for other commodities and services, yet the particularity of civil society is formal in the sense that the plurality of skills, aptitudes and needs are products of abstraction. The plurality of aptitudes and needs, in other words, manifests from the formal delineation of concrete productive activities into abstract specialized ones, as we witness in the division of labor and the differentiation of a concrete, natural need (say, hunger) into a plurality of abstract ones (a need for starches, salts and sweets), as occurs when humans transcend a rigidly animal existence in their pursuit of need satisfaction.[48] Civil society's plurality is necessary for the gestation of freedom but remains atomistic, formal and insubstantial; and yet persons in the fullest sense for Hegel *are* their relations as much as they *are* their formally recognized skills and needs. The individual must pass through the stage of civil society—a force of dissolution—in order to win free

[48] See *Philosophy of Right*, §§189-198.

existence, but the particularity of the personality fostered by civil society ultimately "destroys itself and its substantial concept in the act of enjoyment."[49]

The social form of the state comes on the scene to salvage the relations we take to be substantive or internal to who we are; the state unifies the disparate plurality of interests and needs fashioned in civil society by extending right universally. As *citoyen* the individual participates in a social form that serves broad public interest and Hegel for this reason finds patriotism to be a ready feature of a reflective citizenship. I consciously trust in my role of citizen "that my substantial and particular interest is preserved and contained in the interest and end of an other (in this case, the state), and in the latter's relation to me as an individual. As a result, this other immediately ceases to be an other for me, and in my consciousness of this, I am free."[50] Reconciled through contemplation, the individual feels at home in the social relations of the state. Informed, reflective, self-consciously grasped activity does not, thereby, end with the considerations that allow for excellence in civil society. The free individual comes to celebrate the state for uniting divergent interests and comes to appreciate that successes in civil society are dependent on this union. Hegel explains that: "Since the state is objective spirit, it is only through being a member of the state that the individual himself has objectivity, truth, and ethical life. *Union* as such is itself the true content and end, and the destiny of individuals is to lead a universal life; their further particular satisfaction, activity, and mode of conduct have this substantial and universally valid basis as their point of departure and result."[51]

There are elements of attraction and repulsion, alienation and reconciliation that guide the emergence of the free individual through these spheres of social life. Born into a family, one initially

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[49] *Philosophy of Right*, §185.
[50] *Philosophy of Right*, §268.
[51] *Philosophy of Right*, §258 Remarks.

belongs to the world as a member of a group and is not yet granted the ontological or legal status of personhood. Hegel agrees with the common sense view where infants are recognized as 'Julio and Susan's kid' or 'the latest addition to the Martinez family' and not independent, self-sufficient individuals. A person does not appear until the family member's immediate unity with the group dissolves and what is particular about the child rises to the surface, often through some aptitude or need displayed in the realm of civil society. In civil society's interactions the individual begins to craft a personality and respond to needs and desires of human construction instead of those supplied by brute nature. Joachim Ritter, quick to celebrate this development, writes that:

> civil society, as the ultimate liberation of man from nature and as the force of difference and diremption, is the condition for an unprecedented phenomenon of human history: man as such now enjoys the possibility of being a 'personality' and thus procuring actual and effective existence for himself and his freedom in all the wealth of historically developed humanity and ultimately against the horizon of all previous cultures.[52]

Yet Ritter undervalues that this is a moment of estrangement from the social substance that one feels connected to as a member of the family; it is a loss of solidarity. Social relations are felt to be external and contingent in the realm of civil society. One responds to the felt needs of others egoistically: their needs become opportunities for private gain and self-interest remains the driver of social interactions. The individuals repelled here, then, have lost awareness of their relational status as individuals, have lost awareness of the very fact that the economic transactions of civil society are grounded by the state. The state lays the very conditions for civil society in its protection of private property and enforcement of contracts; without the unity realized by the state, civil society could not exist at all. Moreover, the state, as Shlomo Avineri explains, "is universal altruism—a mode of relating to a universe of human beings not out of self-interest but out of solidarity, out of the will to

[52] Joachim Ritter, "Person and Property in Hegel's Philosophy of Right (§§34-81)," *Hegel on Ethics and Politics*, ed. Robert Pippin and Otfried Höffe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), p. 116.

live with other human beings in a community."[53] This is a community founded on rights, on the "utterly sacred" idea that citizens are endowed with self-conscious free wills.[54] Thus the state secures the liberating elements of civil society while uniting its divergent interests and protecting the capacity for self-determination promised to all citizens.

Each of these three social groups is essential in laying the objective conditions for freedom. Families are needed to serve the individual against the tides of nature, civil society for its empowerment of the personality, and the state is required as the guarantor of right. The fact that these institutions harmoniously co-exist, however, does not assure that modern individuals are free, but they do combine into a framework that allows for self-conscious, rational agency. They are society's basic building blocks upon which the individual can will oneself free.

III. The Family, Civil Society and the State as Collective Agents

Up until now the collectives of the family, civil society and the state have been treated as social groups that provide the conditions necessary for the emergence of certain kinds of individuals, namely, we have examined the contributions made by these groups to the formation of free and independent persons. Is it justified to speak of these groups as collective agents? It is certain that a set of activities are taking place on Hegel's view that are necessary for the formation of free and independent persons, and that this set includes activities as far-ranging as caring and emotional support, antagonistic struggle and competition amid scarcity, and contractual agreements that rely on rights-grounding formal recognition between persons. But are these activities carried out by collectives or is the formation of free individual personhood a result of the aggregation of individual

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[53] Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972), p. 134.
[54] *Philosophy of Right*, §30.

relations (this father and this sister-in-law) that we can only colloquially refer to as a family? In other words do families over and above family members act? And likewise, do markets act or is there just a cumulative effect to the many self-interested exchanges of goods and services by individual agents?

Charles Taylor has suggested that collective agency underlies ethical life for Hegel, that the institutions that lay the conditions for freedom and ethics are veritable group subjects:

> In his [Hegel's] conception of public life, as it exists in a properly established system of objective ethics (*Sittlichkeit*), the common practices or institutions that embody this life are seen as our doing. But they constitute an activity that is genuinely common to us, it is ours in a sense that cannot be analyzed into a convergence of *mines*.[55]

What is entailed here is a rejection of nominalist views of human relations, which is to say that Hegel, according to Taylor, disagrees with the idea that collective agents are nothing more than the universals affixed to the sum of individual agents. This nominalist view is generally supported by what Taylor and others have critically referred to as "political atomism," the idea that persons are fundamentally self-sufficient and do not require a communal existence to develop or exercise human capacities like rationality or moral autonomy.[56] If an atomistic view of humanity underwrites the conception of relations between persons, nominalism is an attractive characterization of agency. Clearly, though, the account I have given of the social conditions for individual freedom in my second section confirms my agreement with Taylor that Hegel is opposed to any version of social atomism. Moreover, I think Taylor is correct in attributing agency to group subjects on Hegel's view and that the latter's rejection of social atomism offers a ground on which a theory of collective agency can begin to be articulated. In developing this view it is useful to lean on Margaret Gilbert's

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[55] Charles Taylor, "Hegel and the Philosophy of Action," *Selected Essays on G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), p. 183.

[56] See Charles Taylor, "Atomism," *Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1985), pp. 187-210. Interestingly, Taylor observes that Robert Nozick and other liberal thinkers that champion individualism rarely, if ever, construe their thought as atomistic. The term 'atomism' is generally applied in opposition.

recent reflections on collective action (who is widely regarded as having made major contributions to the field over the last several decades).

To Hegel we can attribute Gilbert's position that "human social groups are plural subjects" and further that such plural subjects assume agency when individual members jointly hold a shared goal, belief or principle of action and work to realize this *telos* in concert.[57] Plural subjects, as Gilbert describes them, are the pool of individual wills that act in the name of some collective 'we.' A family is a collective agent in other words when 'we eat a meal together' or 'we take the Eucharist at Mass each Saturday' even when an observer can analytically divide the collective act into a series of actions performed by specific members. When 'acting together' my individual will is authorized by the group and its external manifestation reflects back onto the group. The meaning and culpability of my action makes sense only in the context of the whole of the group, which is to say that plural subjects have a status as wholes, a status lost when we limit our perspective to the actions of individual members. Whether we take these wholes to be ontologically real or methodologically useful is irrelevant to the present argument; what matters is that collective agents exist practically.

Gilbert offers a joint acceptance model of collective belief that is considerably more nuanced than summative approaches where a group belief in *p* is true if and only if most or all members of the group individually believe *p* to be true.[58] For Gilbert, individual modulations of a collective belief are always possible. In fact, no member of a group needs to believe *p* on one's own for *p* to be jointly held. What matters is that *p* can be ascribed to the group and that individual members are aware that the group collectively holds *p* to be the case:

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[57] Margaret Gilbert, "Walking Together," *Living Together* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), p. 187.
[58] The summative approach that Gilbert is most critical of belongs to Anthony Quinton, while variations on this position from Ernest Gellner and David Lewis are also considered and rejected in her work. See Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 257-288.

> Clearly the notion of collective preference I have in mind does not involve the notion of a group mind which is independent of the minds and wills of the people involved. It involves, rather, the notion of a meshing set of conditional commitments to accept a certain preference or ranking as a body.[59]

Joint acceptance exists where one holds a belief and in many instances is willing to act on a belief based entirely on one's institutional capacity, despite the personal beliefs interfered with by joint acceptance. I believe that most of these features of Gilbert's position coincide with the view I am attributing to Hegel. Her "meshing set of conditional commitments" is a close relative to what Hegel expresses as "an intrinsically universal self-consciousness that takes itself to be actual in another consciousness."[60] While Hegel emphasizes the independence of spirit in passages like the one I am quoting from—"this has complete independence, or is looked on as a Thing"[61]—and Gilbert explicitly avoids the self-sufficiency of anything like a collective mind, I take this difference to be an expression of Hegel's strong defense of the idea that norms do not exist merely as mental states but are written into the laws and institutions that comprise the social world. To my knowledge Gilbert remains agnostic about the status and accessibility of social norms in objectively real organizational documents such as state constitutions, group charters and neighborhood covenants.

Another major point of contrast between the positions of Gilbert and Hegel on plural subjects is the organicism that the latter attributes to social groups. In the *Philosophy of Right,* Hegel will refer to "the organism of the state" when discussing constitutionally grounded states and the kind of patriotic citizens that they engender.[62] As an organism the state is self-organizing and self-perpetuating. It reproduces the relations that constitute it, which means that a robust state will continually reproduce patriotic relations just as a healthy forest will reproduce cycles of growth and

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[59] Margaret Gilbert, "Modeling Collective Belief," *Living Together* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), p. 211.
[60] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 212.
[61] *ibid.*
[62] *Philosophy of Right*, §§267-269.

decomposition in perpetuating its existence. Hegel often thinks of wholes in organic terms and sees his phenomenological method as the appropriate technique for disclosing the contradictory relations that comprise the wholes under observation, whether this technique is in service of a science of knowing, a science of nature or a science of the state. Michael Wolff explains that:

> For him [Hegel] it was precisely the distinguishing feature and ultimate aim of every philosophical science to comprehend a 'whole' in accordance with its immanent self-organizing character, that is, as an organism, *and* simultaneously through this comprehension to unfold itself as a methodically structured and organized system. The task of a philosophical science that takes the inner and external character of the state as its object was synonymous for Hegel with the task of understanding it as an organism, that is, as a self-organizing whole.[63]

Suffice it to say that Gilbert avoids organicist language in her discussion of social groups and distances herself from the biologism that influenced not only Hegel's philosophy of nature but his thinking on the relations of wholes and parts generally.[64]

Where the view I am presenting here most importantly differs from Gilbert's and where I see resources in Hegelian social theory is in the idea that one can be unwitting of the shared principle of action or belief that bonds the plural subject together and yet still be a member of that collective. Hegel criticizes the commonplace perspective from within civil society in which individuals feel the state as an external authority whose demands restrict the range of opportunities and appear as limitations on personal freedom. This perspective loses sight of the empowerment of the individual that only the state can achieve. Important to both the health of the state and the overcoming of alienation is the individual's realization that he or she is indeed a member of the state. This realization does not change the status of one's membership, but renders it visible, framing

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[63] Michael Wolff, "Hegel's Organicist Theory of the State: On the Concept and Method of Hegel's 'Science of the State'," *Hegel on Ethics and Politics*, ed. Robert Pippin and Otfried Höffe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), p. 292.

[64] Sartre, in maintaining that groups are detotalized totalities (an idea that will need to be spelled out later), anticipates this turn away from organic models of group relations. Such models sound foreign to our twenty-first century ears and I suspect that a revival of organicism does not lie on the horizon.

commercial interactions and participation in civic groups in the greater context of rights that is the "true ground" of civil society[65] and its immanent end.[66] On the theory of collective action that I am advancing, this sort of estrangement from group participation in no way changes one's status as a member of the group or the joint acceptance of the beliefs that underlie group participation. Hegel would argue that while the alienated member of civil society may not conduct his or her activity in accordance with the norms of the state, the constitution nonetheless persists as documentation of what is jointly held by the state's members and the norms through which an ethical and free life can be had for all citizens (recall that norms are necessary for the rational self-legislation of the will, according to Hegel, through which freedom and ethical life are jointly realized). Although a citizen may be unaware of the content of the constitution or identify with its proclamations, by patterns of recognition that are not up to one's own choosing one practically exists as a citizen. Specifically, this means for Hegel that one can belong to the plural subject of the state without being aware of the joint commitments that this membership entails.

For this plural subject to count as a collective agent, however, the individuals have to "work together" in some meaningful sense of the phrase. Gilbert offers that this criterion has been reached when the participating individuals express their willingness for joint acceptance and act in a manner shaped by the jointly held position:

> A participant in a shared action acts in his capacity as the member of a plural subject of the goal of the action. He will count as the member of such a plural subject when, at a minimum, and roughly, he and others have expressed to each other their willingness jointly to accept the goal in question now. They will then count as jointly accepting it, and hence as constituting the plural subject of that goal.[67]

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[65] *Philosophy of Right*, §256 Remarks. Hegel mentions several times in these comments that the state is the "true ground" of civil society. In spite of the fact that the phenomenological path of consciousness does not pass over into awareness of the state until after it becomes aware of civil society in the *Philosophy of Right*, the state lays the foundations for civil society and has supported its functioning all along.

[66] *Philosophy of Right*, §261.

[67] *On Social Facts*, p. 164.

The problem as I see it with this baseline criterion for collective action is that there is no place for alienation among the members of a plural subject. If Hegel is correct in thinking that alienation arises immanently in free participation and that alienation does not strip one of membership but merely obstructs awareness of it, we must contest Gilbert's claim that expressed agreement with a jointly held belief, goal or principle of action is required for the constitution of plural subjects. Alienation presents an obstacle to knowing what is jointly held, but does not remove one from the plural subject. Yet Gilbert has a point here. Certainly not all persons that share in common some belief in x or some principle of action y are to be regarded as members of a plural subject, but only those that hold the position *jointly* and that do so in one's capacity as a group member. Nonetheless Gilbert's "expression condition"—that the members of a group must convey their willingness to belong to the group—excludes persons affected by alienation.[68] It is impossible on her account that one could simultaneously be a member of a group and lack awareness of group membership. One cannot be a member of a group while feeling the need to become a member of that group: "These two views cannot intelligibly be held at the same time."[69] But isn't this exactly Hegel's point about alienation? Individuals are often and everywhere denied self-awareness over their group relations and the actions through which group membership become manifest.[70] Phrased otherwise, the pervasive feeling of alienation occurs when the social relations that underlie action are not reflected

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[68] *On Social Facts*, pp. 222-223. Nowhere in the voluminous *On Social Facts* does Gilbert mention alienation. Hegel is ignored except for a passing reference in a footnote while Sartre goes entirely unmentioned. Her work on the often-overlooked Georg Simmel, however, is considerable and a welcomed inclusion for readers with a Continental philosophy bent. Still, Simmel is no theorist of alienation despite the Hegelian inflection in his work.

[69] *On Social Facts*, p. 228.

[70] Gilbert remains committed to the "expression condition" in her 2014 collection of essays *Joint Commitment: How We Make the Social World*. Here as elsewhere she chooses to sidestep an engagement with Hegel's philosophy. E.g. "the phrase 'mutual recognition' is often associated with Hegel. So it is worth saying at the outset that my discussion will not attempt to engage his work." Margaret Gilbert, "Mutual Recognition and Some Related Phenomena," *Joint Commitment: How We Make the Social World* (Oxford: Oxford UP), 2014.

back onto the agent, when one is unaware of the plural subject expressed in an action and one's identity with it.

How then are we to redeem alienated participation without rendering it applicable for all groups real or imagined? For example, who is to say that I am not alienated from the group of all persons in possession of a baseball mitt, an organization which I have no knowledge of and which plays no role in shaping my conduct, but is a group that would nonetheless recognize me as a member? Hegel provides an elegant answer here that will be criticized in subsequent chapters: the only plural subjects for which my alienation matters, ultimately, are those that figure centrally in my identity, which are one and the same as those that can be justified as rationally necessary. One quite simply does not exist as a free individual in the full sense of the term unless one participates in the major social institutions described in the *Philosophy of Right*. To modify Gilbert's position through Hegel we could say that only certain social groups like the family, civil society, and the state deserve exception to the rule that one needs to express joint acceptance to be counted as a member. The three groups discussed in section two are so constitutive of who one is that it would be nonsensical to deny membership in this arena. Thus any denial of membership in these constitutive group subjects is an expression of alienation.

Finally, having argued for the persistence of three plural subjects that do not require the expressed intention to will a jointly accepted belief or principle of action, we are in a position to describe the collective agency of the family, civil society and the state. Moreover, we are in a position to describe collective action in these spheres while accounting for alienation (a feature of Hegel's theory of collective action that we would be remiss to ignore).

A. Collective Action in the Family

In the first place, for Hegel, the family is the caring instantiation of spirit that tends to personal needs in their state of immediacy. The family shares the burden of meeting personal needs and acts collectively in response to them, requiring members to sacrifice their particular pursuit of need satisfaction for the good of the whole. That this is done in a state of immediacy means that all felt needs are regarded by the family as valid, irrespective of potential gains that could be won in satisfying them or a claim to the right for welfare on the part of the one who expresses a need.[71]

While it is true that families are founded on a marriage contract between rights-bearing persons, the flexing of rights is not the enduring attitude of spouses: "marriage cannot therefore be subsumed under the concept of contract."[72] What Hegel is saying here is not that spouses waive their rights upon marital union, but that rights do not mediate the relations between family members if the family bond is strong. The needs and interests of individual members are the concerns and obligations of the family as a unit—regardless of the members' rights to be cared for—and yet the family is, for the spouses, a freely chosen institution that neither party can be coerced into entering and whose rights protect against marriage by force. This is because "the precise nature of marriage is to begin from the point of view of contract—i.e. that of individual personality as a self-sufficient unit—in order to supersede it."[73] Michael Hardimon, in his commentary on Hegel's social philosophy, refers to this as the 'radical communalism' of the family:

> This is the point at which we encounter the communalistic aspect of Hegel's conception of the family. The 'standpoint of contract' is the standpoint from which

[71] I do not mean to suggest that the family is obligated to meet all felt needs. There is a time and place for parental disciplinary action or what Hegel more broadly refers to as "the negative determination of raising the children out of the natural immediacy in which they originally exist to self-sufficiency and freedom of personality" (*Philosophy of Right*, §175). My point is that negative determinations of this kind are still responding to a child's felt needs even if they are not addressing them in the manner that the child sees fit.

[72] *Philosophy of Right*, §75 Remarks.

[73] *Philosophy of Right*, §163 Remarks.

> people are viewed as bearers of individual rights. The sense in which men and women 'transcend' this standpoint when they contract to marry is that they agree to enter a relationship in which neither relates to the other as a bearer of individual rights. According to Hegel, this is a crucial part of what agreeing to marry involves. In his view the internal life of the family (modern as well as traditional) falls outside the realm of individual rights.[74]

Thus the family identifies as a self-sufficient collective unit, for Hegel, rather than as a set of relations between independent persons. It acts in this collective spirit of trust and love among family members—not as a group willed together by contracted independent parties.

In the second place the family acts together as an economic unit. Families pool resources, share property, and purchase goods with an eye toward collective consumption. Certainly not all economic decisions by family members are vetted through the familial unit in this manner, but often enough they are and at any rate for Hegel the important thing is to state what the family is as an idea, an idea that regulates how persons participate in the world when conscious of their familial role. While Hegel's view may appear especially antiquarian here—"the husband … is primarily responsible for external acquisition and for caring for the family's needs, as well as for the control and administration of the family's resources"[75]—I see no reason that this communitarian perspective on family resources cannot be adapted to households where an adult male is neither the primary breadwinner nor executor of financial decisions. What needs to be stressed is that participating in civil society is 'a family affair.' Drawing an income, tithing at the community church, and expending money on medical services for a loved one are all collective actions of the family as an economic unit. As a participant in civil society one acts as a representative of the family even while pursuing ends that may be products of the individual personality.

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[74] Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994), p. 178.
[75] *Philosophy of Right* §171.

Finally, to turn once again to the tensions of communalism and individualism in Hegel's theory, the family acts collectively when it dissolves into free property-owning persons according to its own immanent criteria. In contrast with the Roman world which Hegel criticizes for the unchecked power it grants paternal authority,[76] in modernity families must support the development of unique personalities in each of its members. Hegel refers to this as the "ethical dissolution" of the family.[77] Additionally, the family naturally dissolves upon the parents' death where the family's common property becomes the inheritance of individual persons.[78] We might say then that if the family is founded on a contractual act between independent parties, it dissolves in like manner when the progeny assumes independent status. Thus the family is not a partnership in the sense that its members remain independent amid family life—its collective action is communal in a deeper sense. Nonetheless, independence remains the condition and teleological end for the family as a social unit.

B. Collective Interests and Action in the Sphere of Civil Society

Whereas collective action in the family is the expression of shared need, in civil society it is the expression of shared interest. This may appear curious at first glance for Hegel describes civil society as "the system of needs" in that the voluntary organizations that comprise the intermediary institutions between the family and the state are meant to address the many needs of individual persons not satisfied in the associations of family and government. Taken as a collective, however, these intermediary groups concentrate interests, particularly under what Hegel refers to as corporations and estates, but also in a rabble that holds in common a set of interests that are not represented before the state.

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[76] *Philosophy of Right* §175.
[77] *Philosophy of Right* §177.
[78] *Philosophy of Right* §178.

Before commenting on these social forms, we should appreciate that civil society, for Hegel, has the tincture of Adam Smith's invisible hand. There is rationality in civil society's aggregate behavior even if the motive force behind it lies in wholly particular need satisfaction:

> In this dependence and reciprocity of work and the satisfaction of needs, subjective selfishness turns into a contribution towards the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else. By a dialectical movement, the particular is mediated by the universal so that each individual, in earning, producing, and enjoying on his own account, thereby earns and produces for the enjoyment of others.[79]

Inspired by early political economists Smith, David Ricardo and Jean-Baptiste Say, Hegel believes that in large part the welfare of all manifests from the private needs and aptitudes of each. Doctors, plumbers, childcare workers and teachers all contribute to the good of one another even if the self-awareness of each is narrowly fixed on the income one gains through labor. Nonetheless there is something essentially unstable about civil society as the system of needs. Commercial society continually produces more needs than it can satisfy. Moreover, the production and dissemination of needs tends to strip autonomy from those that find themselves propelled by jealousy or status:

> This liberation [from responding to exclusively natural needs] is formal, because the particularity of the ends remains the basic content. The tendency of the social condition towards indeterminate multiplication and specification of needs, means, and pleasures—i.e. luxury—a tendency which, like the distinction between natural and educated needs, has no limits, involves an equally infinite increase in dependence and want.[80]

Unable to manage the endless proliferation of needs, groups in civil society fall back on protecting their interests so as to meet as many particularly defined needs as possible.

Interests are concentrated in two large institutions of civil society in particular for Hegel that serve as intermediaries between the public at large and the state. In the first place there are what Hegel refers to as corporations, the trade guilds and associations of craftspeople and other skilled

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[79] *Philosophy of Right* §199.
[80] *Philosophy of Right* §195.

workers that establish the qualifications needed to join a profession's ranks. Corporations organize associational life in the realm of civil society, allowing for collegial and fraternal bonds between dockworkers, computer technicians or other groups of like-interested individuals—importantly, for Hegel, they do not divide the interests of wage-laborers from their employers—and the result is a shared ethic and community of persons that assist one another in times of need and vie for corporate interests in times of deliberation. Once accepted into a corporation, members have a right to relate to the group as "a second family."[81] During periods of unemployment workers can rely on the corporation for welfare; while employed, the corporation is enjoyed for the honor and prestige it confers onto members. The other institution of civil society with bridges to the state is what Hegel calls 'estates.' These are the shared forms of life that bring together the three distinct groups of agricultural workers, burghers in possession of a trade, craft or skill in manufacturing or trade, and civil servants tasked with redistributing the wealth produced in the other estates to the common good along state-sanctioned guidelines. Estates reproduce their form of life and the individuals that claim membership in them are endowed with a determinant identity.[82] From estates emerge a set of personal dispositions, political and religious beliefs and, most importantly, *interests* to which the state is responsive.

These interests drive the collective action of civil society's groups. Corporations and the first two estates are primarily interested in the accumulation of wealth, which enables corporate welfare and honor in addition to pecuniary privilege. Although Hegel has faith that civil servants are concerned with the state's universal interests above all else, it is not difficult to see today that the third estate, while not tasked with producing wealth, is nonetheless held captive by the profit

[81] *Philosophy of Right* §252.
[82] *Philosophy of Right*, §207.

mindset.[83] Regardless, Hegel's expectation is that the deputies representing the third estate hold universal concerns and are not wholly invested in their organization's private interests.[84]

En masse the organizations of civil society, in their fierce protection of private interests, create an imbalance in the persons who shoulder the burden of scarce resources. There are detrimental consequences in this for all: "civil society affords a spectacle of extravagance and misery as well as of the physical and ethical corruption common to both."[85] To speak to Hegel's point about misery, poverty is an inevitable outgrowth of civil society's collective action. Poverty, which too often is simplistically regarded as a mere quality of persons, is recognized by Hegel as the chief determining factor in the range of skills, opportunities and social groups afforded to the individuals that live it as their condition. Hegel writes that:

> In this condition [of poverty], [individuals] are left with the needs of civil society and yet—since society has at the same time taken from them the natural means of acquisition, and also dissolves the bond of the family in its wider sense as a kinship group—they are more or less deprived of all the advantages of society, such as the ability to acquire skills and education in general, as well as of the administration of justice, health care, and often even of the consolation of religion.[86]

Hegel thinks that a certain disposition against work and social and material striving will prevail in those that live amid poverty interminably. He refers to this collective as a rabble. Essentially, a rabble is that class of deskilled, structurally alienated, permanently poor persons that comprise the lumpenproletariat, but they are marked by an attitude more than their class condition. Hegel explains that: "Poverty in itself does not reduce people to a rabble; a rabble is created only by the disposition

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[83] The Internal Revenue Service, for example, more frequently audits tax returns with greater potential for revenue than those filed by low-income earners. Rather than seeking universal compliance with the tax code, auditors and collectors know to target the individuals, firms and organizations from which they have the most to gain.
[84] *Philosophy of Right*, §309.
[85] *Philosophy of Right*, §185.
[86] *Philosophy of Right* §241.

associated with poverty, by inward rebellion against the rich, against society, the government, etc."[87] The rabble is a product of and locus for civil society's collective action no less than corporations and estates are. For Hegel it is a group and disposition that cannot be remedied by social welfare no matter how much wealth civil society collectively amasses—only an enduring appreciation for hard work in the face of interminable poverty will prevent the formation of a rabble. Poverty, then, is a necessary consequence of free market systems that distribute wealth according to aptitude, skill and capital while the creation of a rabble is contingent on the attitude of the poor whom Hegel places the onus on to overcome their lot in life despite the rational basis they have in airing their structural alienation.

This is not to say that Hegel irons over the imperfections of civil society when presenting it in the *Philosophy of Right*. The intractability of poverty is a genuine problem for him that he leaves unresolved. Avineri explains of Hegel that:

> Few people around 1820 grasped in such depth the predicament of modern industrial society and the future course of nineteenth-century European history. What is conspicuous in Hegel's analysis, however, is not only his farsightedness but also a basic intellectual honesty which makes him admit time and again—completely against the grain of the integrative and mediating nature of the whole of his social philosophy—that he has no solution to the problems posed by civil society in its modern context. This is the only time in his system where Hegel raises a problem—and leaves it open. Though his theory of the state is aimed at integrating the contending interests of civil society under a common bond, on the problem of poverty he ultimately has nothing more to say than that it is one of 'the most disturbing problems which agitate modern society.' On no other occasion does Hegel leave a problem at that.[88]

As much as Hegel celebrates those groups willed together in civil society that contribute to the effectiveness of the state (estates and corporations), poverty and the collection of a rabble remain

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[87] *Philosophy of Right* §244 Addition.
[88] *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, p. 154.

sincere concerns that are neither systematically represented before the state nor able to be remedied by public policy.

I am arguing that all three of these groups—estates, corporations and a rabble—are products of civil society's collective action. The jointly accepted belief underlying the plural subject of civil society is the idea that a course of action is warranted wherever it forwards private interests without infringing on the rights of other participants in civil society to pursue their interests. This liberal belief bonds the self-interested agents of civil society together regardless of whether civil society writ large is expressly willed together at a conscious level. Indeed, it would lack etiquette and betray selfish motives better left guarded for members of the voluntary organizations between the family and the state to voice this thought at all. Alienation is a much needed explanatory tool in portraying civil society as a plural subject. Further, this jointly accepted belief can only exist in the sphere of civil society: the state and the family are more firmly united and too communalistic to offer this atomistic conception of persons primarily motivated by private interest. The collective action of civil society, in other words, manifests from the alienated conduct of participants in the system of needs. Corporations, estates and a rabble emerge as groups in civil society—social relations still form between alienated participants—but they are groups where members continue to see every other as fundamentally isolated and independent. It just so happens that some persons from which one is estranged in civil society hold interests in common with one's own, and groups are able to be formed at this level. What I am suggesting is that a rabble, corporations and estates are precisely these kinds of groups: collectives that have a meaningful say in who one is and the political, economic and temperamental outlook that enjoins participation, but groups whose relations are formed as a *consequence* of alienated self-interest rather than unities from which one is estranged. For Hegel the latter unities are exemplified in the family and the state. Thus, even while members of a

corporation have a *right* to view the group as a second family, its formation on the basis of shared interest will prevent it from ever actually becoming one.

One can identify the alienated terms of civil society's collective action by looking to the widespread lack of responsibility that individuals take in the action of the group as a whole. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of collective action in this sphere is that few persons are willing to accept responsibility for the consequences of widespread self-interested exchange. Having touched on poverty, we can point to lack of concern over the environment, indigenous populations, and native wildlife as additional devastating consequences of collective action in civil society. Such disregard for the collective consequences of production, consumption and exchange can only be explained by stymied awareness over the larger collectives individuals participate in and the action realized through their common agency. With private self-interest as the unchallenged rallying cry of this sphere's plural subject, a great deal depends on the regulations that shape and direct the realization of shared interests. These regulations, for Hegel, find their basis and justification in the political state.

C. Internal and External Expressions of Sovereignty in State Action: Economic Regulation, Alliances and War

Hegel believes that the regulatory action of the state is needed only where citizens fail to be self-conscious. For reflective individuals, he thinks, will not just pursue success in civil society and see their life's activity as essentially expressed in this sphere, but they will come to appreciate the necessity of their full participation in the collective of the state and identify with the role of citizen. Responsible citizens grasp that the state serves the universal interest of the community and that the private interests emergent from civil society ought to be subordinate to what is held in common by all. Thus self-consciousness effects the transition between the logical categories of social life: the

reflective member of civil society finds that her awareness 'passes over' into awareness of the social form of the state: "personal individuality and its particular interests … should, on the one hand, pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and on the other, knowingly and willingly acknowledge this universal interest even as their own substantial spirit, and actively pursue it as their ultimate end."[89] This rather optimistic outlook discloses an important feature of the relationship between self-consciousness, law and culture. Laws and regulations, for Hegel, will be exercised more often in times and places where citizens do not effectively conduct their own activity according to the universal interests of the state. Hence the state will more frequently have to act as a collective against the will of one of its own when a culture is deficient at promoting the virtues of citizenship or self-conscious tendencies. Customs, traditions and forms of life impress a set of virtues onto citizens and where culture promotes trust, self-sacrifice and other virtues of citizenship, action (whether checked by reflection or done out of habit) requires less regulation on the part of the state.

Nonetheless, Hegel is well aware that economic regulation is a much needed feature of the modern social world and that it is the state's most important technique of collective action in uniting civil society's plurality of interests. The reason regulation is needed is because civil society does not effectively maintain itself without state intervention. While the free market distributes resources with efficiency and is for this reason regarded as a 'system of needs,' it is not a *closed* system because the rights of particular individuals to a basic level of welfare go ignored without government protection. The problem is twofold. Civil society produces an exponential growth in needs. As individual personalities develop and mature in civil society, abstract and basic needs proliferate into a multiplicity of specific and discerned needs. And as history moves ever onward, various social and material needs not only arise with technological and medical breakthroughs, but redefine the general

[89] *Philosophy of Right* §260.

standard of wellness that a community takes to be basic. Simultaneously, the invisible hand allocates resources strictly on the basis of mutually self-interested exchange. In such a system resources are not channeled into satisfying the expanding set of basic needs for all specific private individuals. *Laissez faire* capitalism tends to concentrate wealth rather than redistribute it at a pace consistent with the expanding set of private needs. So a gap begins to yawn between the increased needs of individuals and the capacity of the economy to universally guarantee the private welfare necessary to meet personal needs. Regulation bridges this gap; it is required for the satisfaction of particular interests that get lost in the workings of the economy as a whole: "The differing interests of producers and consumers may come into collision with each other, and even if, on the whole, their correct relationship re-establishes itself automatically, its adjustment also needs to be consciously regulated by an agency which stands above both sides."[90] Thus Hegel finds economic regulation to be imperative in a social world that provides the conditions for freedom—even if people are by and large civically virtuous in or reflective of their activity.

A conception of sovereignty underlies this justification for state intervention in the economy. For Hegel, sovereign power resides in the person of the monarch, which leads to the brow-raising claim that: "This absolutely decisive moment of the whole, therefore, is not individuality in general, but one individual, the monarch."[91] The monarch's individual will rises above the many disorganized, particular wills of civil society. Yet the monarch's will is made manifest only when it conforms to an institutional separation of powers that ultimately is grounded in the constitution and a republican framework of elected officials. Thus, Hegel's monarch is essentially other than an imperial ruler or despot. He or she is the personification of the whole

[90] *Philosophy of Right* §236.
[91] *Philosophy of Right* §279.

sweep of sovereignty, which is gestated in the general will of the people and legitimated constitutionally before it becomes the domain of the monarch. Errol Harris is right, then, to argue that Hegel would not consent with Louis XIV's assertion that "*l'Etat c'est le Roi*" if we take this assertion to state that the king is the entirety of sovereignty in the form of the state.[92] Nonetheless, the monarch is clearly an important feature in Hegel's conception of the state. The head of state is the critical and final individuation of sovereignty.

Other than economic regulation, which is collective action directed internally, Hegel considers the state's external relations with other states through which sovereignty is also expressed. Particularly, he considers the state's external collective action in the matters of treaties, alliances and war. All three of these measures, Hegel thinks, should be undertaken on the basis of national interest. Treaties and alliances should be entered into only when it promotes the good of the state and war ought to be undertaken only where sincere attempts at these agreements have failed.[93] While there is an obligation to make good on treaties that a state has agreed upon, there is no obligation to enter into international relations in the first place because no duties rise above the universal interest of the state. This is why Hegel considers all external expressions of state action to be a matter of national interest: for the simple reason that the state is the social substance in its universality, no claim on the individual's duties can outrank those issued to citizens. In the realm of international relations, then, the only organizing principle for collective action is national interest for my obligations to others have already reached their highest form in the state.[94]

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[92] Errol E. Harris, "Hegel's Theory of Sovereignty, International Relations, and War," *Selected Essays on G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), pp. 104-105.
[93] *Philosophy of Right* §§333-334.
[94] A version of this argument appears in the essay by Errol Harris cited above. Cf. Harris, "Hegel's Theory of Sovereignty, International Relations, and War," pp. 109-111.

A final important feature of Hegel's view to note is that external sovereignty will on occasion require the sacrifice of individual welfare. This welfare, of course, is what the internal sovereignty of economic regulation is meant to serve, but in matters of state action such as war some individual sacrifice is expected. This is duty in its patriotic and highest form. Hegel writes that citizens have the "duty to preserve this substantial individuality—i.e. the independence and sovereignty of the state—even if their own life and property, as well as their opinions and all that naturally falls within the province of life, are endangered or sacrificed."[95] Censorship, compulsory military service and extreme taxation could therefore be included among the measures that Hegel would find justified in times of war.

As a consequence the collective action of the state harbors an unresolved contradiction. The state is the guarantor of right and the regulator of the economy and is thus tasked with formally protecting the individual and channeling the flow of material goods and services so as to provide for a basic level of welfare for all. Yet in its external orientation, the state's collective action seeks what is in the nation's interest, even where this interest comes at the expense of the individual. The collective action of the state is free to pursue either course—national interest or public welfare—depending on the whims of public opinion and the head of state. Recognizing no obligations beyond national interest, the state is empowered to supersede individual welfare while simultaneously attempting to promote it by way of regulation. This is a contradiction in which Hegel's theory of the state remains mired.

Conclusions

The main objectives of this chapter have been three in number. I argue in section I that the subjective component of freedom is self-conscious, rational agency and that this view places

[95] *Philosophy of Right* §324.

freedom in dialectical tension with alienation. Alienation can lead to, experientially, freedom's realization or, on the other hand, its structural constraint. I clarify in section II that Hegel requires an objective framework of institutional support for the realization of freedom and that these institutions are the family, civil society and the state. Building on the work done in section I, this section concludes my discussion of freedom while defending the rational necessity of these three central social groups for the ethical life of free persons. The necessity of these groups figures prominently in section III where I confront Gilbert's work on collective action and argue that alienation needs to be accounted for when considering membership in plural subjects. The plural subjects of the family, civil society and the state are collectives that we act as members of whether we consciously acknowledge this fact or not—they are three collective agents where we are justified in recognizing alienated as well as self-aware participants. I offer, then, in section III, a description of these three groups as collective agents while remaining wedded to Hegel's vision. It is time now to introduce some critical distance from this vision while maintaining the elements of freedom and alienation that have been and will continue to be decisive for this evaluation of collective action.

Chapter 2: Marx on Class Action as Reconciliation

There is no philosopher quite like Marx about whom scholastic inquiry denies academics access to grant money, professional publications and tenure-stream appointments not by virtue of his philosophy of capitalism being esoteric but rather because it is so well tailored to and adept at describing the present historical moment that it takes on the status of an unfalsifiable global critique. It is more than a bit ironic for those stuck squarely in Sir Karl Popper's crosshairs: Marx's serious readers, whether sympathetic or not, are administered a fate of academic poverty. And while Marx does not himself articulate a philosophy of poverty in his description of the proletariat class, one can work within his Hegelian, humanist early writings to achieve one. I do not set out to achieve such a theory in this chapter but were I to follow this thread I would be interested in discussing poverty as a form of structural alienation that rears itself in response to self-determined individual action. Poverty conceived in this way would not be a quality of persons predicated in the manner of universals accidentally affixed to individuals, but rather would function like race, gender or madness wherein the totalizing quality operates as a limitation on the individual's horizon of possibilities. Poverty, like other totalizing qualities, irrationally prohibits the recognition of actions otherwise worthy of assimilation into larger institutional communities.

Poverty—academic or otherwise—is not the topic of this chapter, but rather the critical insights that Marx makes into Hegel's theory of collective action, which in my opinion depict a more vivid and accurate portrait of modernity than what his predecessor achieved. I take the verity of Marx's ideas on this topic to be an empirical matter more than a logical one, which is why the interlude directly following this section sojourns from the plain of high theory. But the opening disclaimer to this chapter remains as a reminder of the irony often suffered by those that observe structural alienation: recognition is frequently withheld from persons looking to expand the

inclusivity of institutions. Attempts to reform may result in the solidification and strengthening of relations of estrangement; revolution, however, confronts alienation as an urgent demand. Reformers greets alienation with contemplation—as an interest to be mindful of—while revolutionaries demonstrate its essential fragility through their common action.

Additionally, the lesson presages a chapter that might strike the reader as an unusual interpretation of Marx's thought. My retort is that I read Marx as a scholar of his ought to, against the grain of American academics and in spite of the small community in which this places me: with sensitivity to the humor at every turn of his prose, with awareness of the political intentions motivating his best known and least philosophically interesting work, *The Communist Manifesto*, with appreciation for the profound insights into labor and value ignored by neoclassical economists, and with unwillingness to turn him into a straw man for the purposes of trumping his thought with the work of another. If Sartre is able to best Marx in the dialectical tradition of theorizing collective action (and I believe he does), we will be better served by appreciating Marx's contributions to the discourse than we would be by falsely caricaturing his thought as too many before us have.

This chapter is comprised of an interlude on the financial crisis that began in 2008 and two expository sections on Marx's critique of Hegel's theory of collective action. The interlude is meant to give us a concrete sense of how sovereign states responded to the divergent interests of citizens and commercial entities at a recent moment that was pregnant with possibility. In my opinion, the example shows how far afield Hegel's hopes are for modern states. The state is unable to unite the plurality of interests and needs that dissipate social cohesion in the sphere of civil society. Indeed, what the example illustrates is that the state today fails to satisfy either goal proposed by Hegel. Not only does it fail to support the general welfare of citizens, the state demonstrably pursues courses of action that are against its own interests.

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In 2008 international markets roiled into a global financial crisis caused by the sudden reversal of American real estate prices, which had been impressively rising for more than a decade. Domestic and international investors had recently become enamored with yield-generous derivative securities—namely, mortgage-backed bonds and the collateralized debt obligations that assimilated them—that were being spun up by major financial institutions quick to greet investor interest. The pace at which these derivative securities were being created and the level of their complexity was exponentially faster and more intricate than they had been years earlier when the Securities and Exchange Commission and other regulatory bodies began approving their exchange. Investors, who almost universally believed these financial instruments to be safe, were exposed to tremendous risk falsely appraised as safe investments by private-industry rating agencies. Responsibility for the crash lies with (a) investors who were either unwilling or unable to evaluate the opaque tranches of the derivatives that they owned as well as (b) the duplicitous financial institutions that wove them together out of thin air in the first place and coached their risk assessment and additionally, (c) the loan originators, too, who remain culpable for incentivizing the production of bad loans that were sold off firm balance sheets for quick gain, but the responsibility of these parties for the financial crisis of 2008 pales in comparison with (d) the role played by Moody's, Finch's and Standard & Poor's analysts who were and still are trusted to offload the burden of risk assessment for investors and who failed miserably in this capacity when it came to valuing American mortgages. The ratings agencies appraised pools of prime (and in many cases subprime) mortgages to be virtually riskless because of the diversity of mortgages within the bonds when such high ratings should have been reserved for derivative securities that span more than one asset class. When real estate values eroded from historically high levels in the latter part of the decade the entire asset class of mortgages soured

and investors spanning the globe felt the pain. This pain was especially acute in places where financial institutions were recently flourishing, namely, for equity investors in and employees of financial institutions headquartered in Iceland, Ireland, and the United States. When the bear market really started roaring in late 2008 global equity values from all industries were brought down alongside the financial institutions: an economic crisis was upon us.[96]

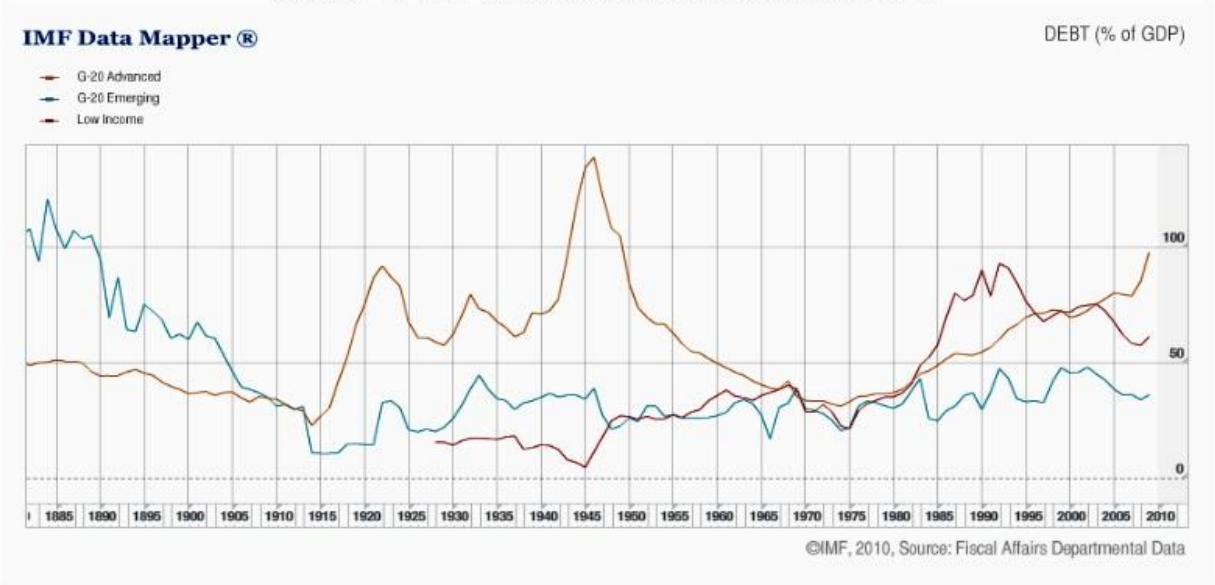
For investors that stayed in the asset class of equities, the six-year period following the '08 market crash has been tremendously profitable. Portfolios returned to pre-crash levels and experienced considerable further price appreciation. A look at the chart of the S&P 500[97] tells this story quite simply. Nimble capitalists with liquid assets and access to proprietary data were able to

[96] While I find the circle of crisis-recovery-expansion-crisis to be interesting as a whole I focus on the crisis rather than the recovery because of the tremendous possibility native to the former: priorities can be reset or established anew and the public is looking for accountability.

[97] The S&P 500 is an index of equities from five hundred firms deemed by Standard & Poor's to be the most trustworthy of borrowers. The chart embedded on this page shows the value of an Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF) pegged to the value of the index at a 1:10 split. The S&P 500 also returns a dividend at an annual rate that hovers around 2% of the price of the shares. While this chart is slightly more than a year out of date it neatly captures the 2008 crisis and subsequent recovery in equity values. As of the end of March 2, 2015 the SPY traded at $211.99 per share.

move in and out of equities at opportune times: this kind of radical volatility provides tremendous opportunities for informed traders willing to buy at points of maximum pessimism.

Figure 4. Debt-to-GDP Ratios Across Country Groups, 1880–2009
(Group PPPGDP-weighted average, in percent of GDP)

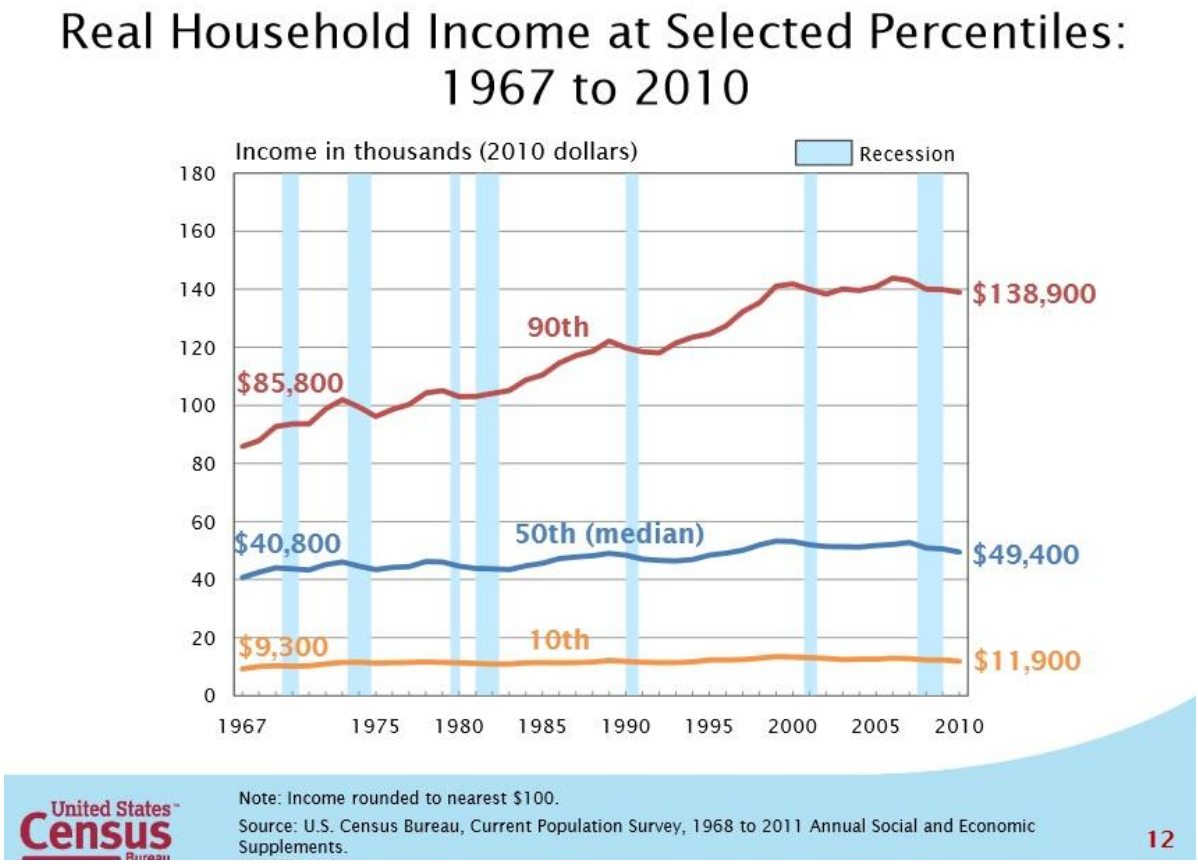


Source: HPDD.

The reversal in equity market momentum following the crash can be directly attributed to the actions of putatively "sovereign" states that stepped in to lend assistance to multinational corporations who discovered in 2008 that the value of their assets had been grossly overstated. Sovereign debt levels grew enormously following the crash as individual states chose to bolster the liquidity of international financial institutions; more often than not this state assistance was given without restrictions on the debtor's future debt levels or leverage ratios which assures future "liquidity crises" next time the market craters. Moreover, the United States Federal Reserve Bank began (1) maintaining low short-term interest rates which encouraged investors back into equity markets and (2) buying US Treasury bonds to help finance American sovereign debt (which means that American debt levels are so high that there are not enough bond buyers in the world to scoop

up the number of US Treasury bills flooding the market—the Federal Reserve has stepped in to fill that gap).

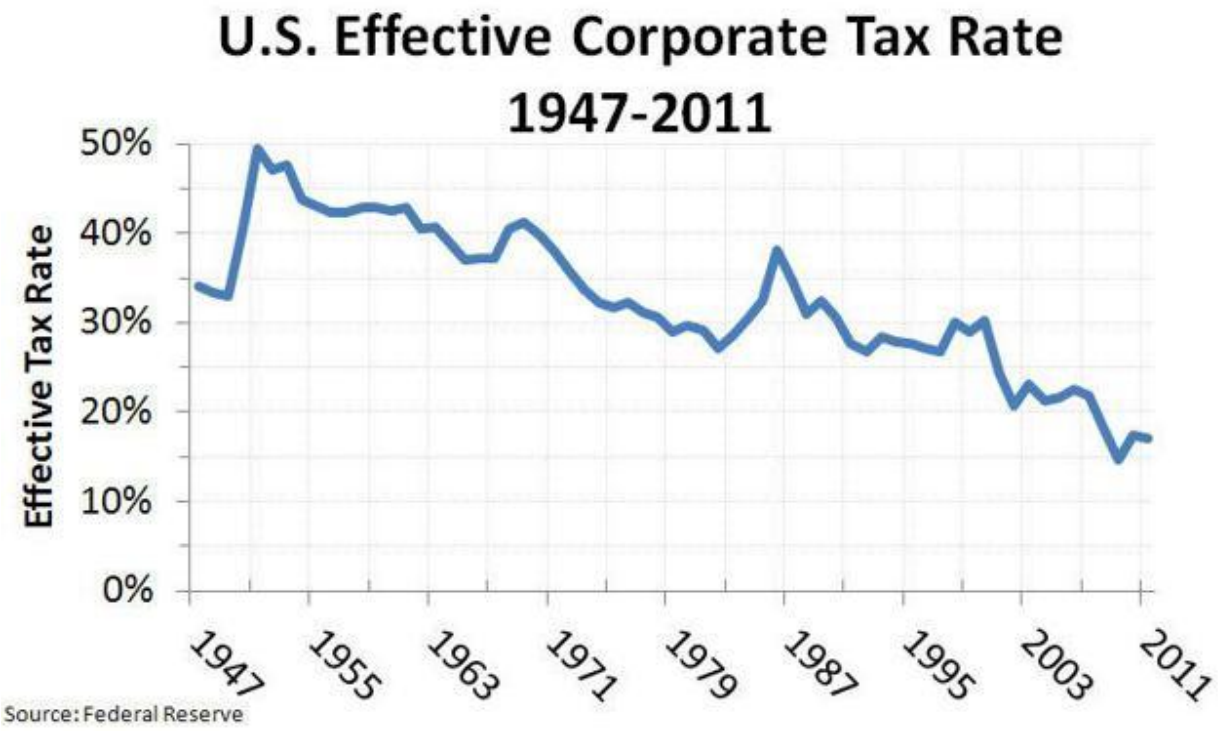
Meanwhile, American citizens—as a test case, this is happening to people around the world—are looking into a bleaker economic future than they have at any point in the last 70 years. Projected standards of living and wage levels are down while unemployment soars. Generally, market crises are accompanied by massive layoffs and work reductions that eliminate or dramatically reduce income streams for the populace's most needy and vulnerable and the present crisis is no exception. I won't bother citing the irresponsible unemployment numbers calculated by the US Department of Labor, whose awful methodology manages to sweep under the rug the growing number of lumpenproletariat under the guise of "structural unemployment" exceptions.



Among the macroeconomic forces weighing on the sector is the fact that the workforce in the United States has expanded over the last 70 years as women increasingly left the unpaid work of the home to join the labor market. This is undoubtedly a good and fair political development as women continue to show better promise than male counterparts coming out of postsecondary schools and additionally have anecdotally shown more conservative stewardship of firms that promote women to executive leadership positions. The labor market, emboldened by advances in efficiency, has responded to the additional supply of workers though by suppressing wages to such a degree that the cumulative result is a flat or downward trajectory for total household income even while households now typically send two or more family members into the public workforce. Public services have been eliminated or dramatically reduced in many municipalities as pension plans and debt repayment have taken fiscal priority over funding schools, libraries, and community infrastructure projects. The sovereign debt problem ultimately results in these kinds of local government cutbacks as federal funding dries up for state and municipal initiatives, leaving citizens without the functional roads, sewers and other public services to which they have become accustomed.

To put it bluntly the economic outlook for United States' laborers is bleak and the government—at both federal and local levels, hamstrung by debt—has frequently been unwilling to support the citizenry's general welfare during the crisis and in perpetuity. Meanwhile, states around the world have assumed tremendous financial burdens in repairing the balance sheets of multinational corporations while neglecting measures that would support the personal finances of the debt-burdened, often jobless citizenry. What can one conclude from the present facts but that the modern state functions at the beck and call of the capital profit motive? Minimally, the evidence shows that Hegel's aims for the state are no longer being met: the state, as is evident in the response

to the 2008 financial crisis, serves neither general welfare nor even its own interests: the state serves the effective deployment of capital.



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I. Social Cohesion and the State

Marx's critique of Hegel in the early writings amounts to this claim. The state is unable to unite the plurality of interests emergent from the commercial sphere of social life such that it is not a collective entity capable of resolving personal feelings of estrangement. Left to its own devices capitalism de-politicizes power away from legislative bodies and political leaders by consolidating and redistributing authority and wealth into the hands of individual firms seeking what is in those firms' best interests.[98] Capitalist production and exchange is global in nature: firms are able to uproot

[98] For the record this is not an ideologically Marxist claim. Milton Friedman, for example, touts the de-politicization of power as an important achievement of capitalism: "Viewed as a means to the end of political freedom, economic arrangements are important because of their effect on the concentration or dispersion of power. The kind of economic

headquarters, production facilities, and customer service centers whenever new geographic or political climes allow for better returns on capital. States are placed in the difficult position of needing to keep low tax rates and what firms take to be favorable wage levels to attract and maintain profitable businesses while simultaneously serving the general welfare of the citizens who grant states the sovereignty to negotiate such terms. This is the role of the state as Marx sees it immanently arising out of capitalism. Hegel, according to Marx, was able to disguise the state's true function by mystifying the concrete lived reality of persons through which spirit generates a state ideal to itself. On Marx's ledger the state arises as an external *deus ex machina* in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* instead of as the collective entity immanently capable of uniting civil society's disparate interests.

In the later sections of the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel makes it seem as though the individual's commerce with the material and social world as a family member and as a participant in civil society is but the appearance of the real agent of those actions, the collective entity of the state. This is the mystification at work in Hegel. Lived reality in the *Philosophy of Right*, for Marx, has become an accidental expression of the state's essential activity such that persons appear to act out of caprice, choice or circumstantial need when actually the state "lends to these spheres the material of its finite actuality."[99]

A dialectical approach requires the exposition of the life of the object as it develops according to its own inner necessity, and Marx here challenges that Hegel has abandoned this demand by determining the object of spirit according to an abstract logic of the idea of spirit. Hegel's speculative language has confused the subject: "there can be no political state without the

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organization that provides economic freedom directly, namely, competitive capitalism, also promotes political freedom because it separates economic power from political power and in this way enables the one to offset the other." (Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, University of Chicago Press 1982, p. 9).

[99] *Philosophy of Right* section 262.

natural basis of the family and the created basis of civil society; they are a conditio sine qua non for the state. But the conditioning factor is presented as the conditioned, the determining is presented as the determined, and the producing is presented as the product of its product."[100] Lived reality does not determine the necessary form of the state in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: "*necessity* is not derived from [the essence of the family and civil society] and still less established critically. Their fate is predestined through the 'nature of the concept' sealed in the sacred files of the Santa Casa (of logic)."[101] Hence the object of the state is mystified by Hegel's abstract logical determinations: conceptual knowledge of spirit takes priority over the being of spirit when it comes to determining the essence of the state. In other words "Hegel gives *his logic a political body*; he does not give the *logic of the body politic*."[102]

To do better justice to lived reality under the social form of capitalism Marx develops what he takes to be a non-idealized notion of the state. Importantly, it does not genuinely realize the immanent demand for social cohesion emergent from Hegel's theory of participation in civil society, but I suppose that for Marx that is the rub. The collective action of the citizenry does not meaningfully draw together persons into a social whole in which one feels a sense of belonging and solidarity. The diremptive force of civil society is too strong; voluntary organizations cross national boundaries in determining membership and as they grow in size their interests become more concentrated as well as more diverse. Marx appreciates that capitalism needs to continue expanding, needs to continue opening up new markets to sustain itself, and that the world stage would be the future site for collective tensions. Thus the demystified state is revealed to be the grounds for action

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[100] Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State," *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat (Hackett: Indianapolis, IN, 1997), p. 157.
[101] "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State," p. 164, emphasis in original.
[102] "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State," p. 187, emphasis in original.

in civil society as Hegel had surmised—certain rule of law conditions must exist for the appearance of a free market—but for Marx no longer is it fit to be called civil society's immanent end.

Marx's essay on the Jewish Question does a better job of proving this claim than the Feuerbachian notes assembled on Hegel's philosophy of the state. While the two manuscripts were assembled around the same time—both were largely written in 1843—and together offer a consistent image of civil society and the state there is the matter of one being a critique of Hegel and the other of a work by Bruno Bauer. In tandem, however, the two present Marx's unified theory of collective action in response to the problem of Hegel's state.

The Jewish Question, the animating inquiry of this essay, is the question of how European Jews ought to go about seeking emancipation and equality in a 19th century milieu that has made Jewish persons marginal members of society. Bruno Bauer, of whom Marx is critical of in this essay, adopts a Hegelian position to remedy the problem. German Jews should seek emancipation as equal members of a secular Prussian state. Only by abandoning particularly Jewish interests—developed and expressed in the realm of civil society—and by embracing the secular, political identity of Prussian citizenship do German Jews stand a chance of obtaining emancipation. Freedom amounts to political freedom over and against the individual's uniquely developed personality thus the road to freedom for Bauer is political integration at the expense of maintaining particularly Jewish causes and concerns.

Bauer's argument supports the type of mystification of lived reality that Marx was so critical of in his notes on Hegel's philosophy of the state. In the thought of Hegel or Bauer, participation in the political state is idealized and abstracted from the true conflicts of material existence. Marx writes:

> By its nature the perfected political state is man's *species-life* in *opposition* to his material life. All the presuppositions of this egoistic life remain in *civil society outside* the state, but as qualities of civil society. Where the political state has achieved its full development, man leads a double life, a heavenly and an earthly life, not only in thought or consciousness but in *actuality*. In the *political* community he regards himself as a *communal being*; but in *civil society* he is active as a *private individual*, treats other men as means, reduces himself to a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers. The political state is as spiritual in relation to civil society as heaven is in relation to earth. … In his innermost actuality, in civil society, man is a profane being. … In the state where he counts as a species-being, on the other hand, he is an imaginary member of an imagined sovereignty, divested of his actual individual life and endowed with an unactual universality.[103]

Yet in response Marx does not merely protest the masking of Jewish lived reality so much as he tries to show a genuine path to freedom for the demystified subject. In my view "the Jew" thus becomes Marx's name for all participants in civil society whose personalities estrange them from the broader social nexus.

Entangled in the conflicts of commercial and religious life, the Jew must confront the alienated characteristics of lived reality to realize true freedom. Marx refers to this as the pursuit of "human emancipation," which differs from Bauer's ambition for political emancipation, that is, the equal distribution of rights under a secular state. Compellingly, when Marx draws together civil society and the Jew, he shows the shortcomings of political emancipation: freedom of religion or speech cannot change the alienation and disunion of civil society, in which, much like the trope of the Jew in exile from the homeland, the actors of civil society too are always outsiders, even in their own communities. So freedom must be addressed not simply on the universal and abstract plane of citizenship, in which we are all included in the wishfully thought organic whole, but on the concrete and particular, desirous plane of civil society where the individual is denied reconciliation. Marx claims: "The social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism," meaning

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[103] Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat (Hackett: Indianapolis, IN, 1997), pp. 225-226, emphasis in original.

that not only the literal Jew but all individuals must be emancipated to find membership in a broader community more immediate and actual than citizenship; likewise, society itself will be liberated from the egoism of practices and institutions running on self-interest, accumulation of wealth, and exploitation of cheap labor when individuals themselves are able to democratically and communally create fulfilling lives.

What is needed is *human* emancipation, the extension and refinement of Hegelian reconciliation in Marx's critical social theory. Marx's stated purpose in "On the Jewish Question" is to advocate for this realization of what humans might join together to create, and thereby also what they might join together to become:

> Only when the actual, individual man has taken back into himself the abstract citizen and in his everyday life, his individual work, and his individual relationships has become a *species-being*, only when he has recognized and organized his own powers as *social* powers so that social force is no longer separated from him as *political* power, only then is human emancipation complete.[104]

In part, human emancipation has been limited by the centrality of private property for political rights. With man's political emancipation from private property came the freedom to vote without needing to first own property, a modern-day achievement; yet, man in his material conditions, practically engaged with a social world that includes participation in civil society, cannot be said to be free from property. Property, for Marx, divides persons from one another and drives persons to objects for pure enjoyment, whatever the cost to his or her fellows. But human emancipation, for Marx, extends beyond the abolition of private property and reorganization of production and distribution for the needs of all. The Hegelian resonances in Marx should reinforce the importance of social bonds and forms of mutual recognition for a substantive understanding of freedom. In

[104] "On the Jewish Question," p. 241.

criticizing Hegel, Marx follows the immanent demands of Hegel's social philosophy so that other people can be the *realization* rather than *limitation* of one's own freedom.[105]

II. Class Action as Reconciliation

It is with this aspiration in mind that Marx looks to the collective of class as a site for community, solidarity and interpersonal identification.

Since the state enforces contracts, designates private property and legally protects the capital profit motive according to law, it remains necessary for the activity that occurs in civil society. As Hegel wrote, the state provides the grounds for civil society's robust activity. But since it doesn't satisfy the alienated individual's demands for social cohesion, Marx turns to the sphere of civil society to arrive at a more concrete understanding of solidarity and in doing so he identifies the proletariat class as the collective agent through which persons might achieve reconciliation. Previous commentators have pointed out that Marx emphasizes the individual in these early writings to a degree that is not achieved in his capstone magnum opus, *Capital*, where the particularity of the individual is submerged by the roles of capitalist and proletariat. This may be true, and yet this commentary misses that there is a collective species being for the individual in the early writings that individual action generally satisfies. The "species being" of man is man's general disposition to work in social commerce with others. Concrete "lived reality" in the manuscripts, in the essay on the Jewish Question and in the rest of the early writings—however particularized for the individual—still entails the collective expression of humanity's essence. There is never a point at which Marx eschews collectives in favor of the individual and that should be evident by observing the prominence of the concept of species-being prior to the development of a theory of the proletariat.

[105] "On the Jewish Question," p. 236.

More importantly, in specifying man as a laboring animal Marx is able to turn his attention to the structurally alienating features of modernity by investigating the estrangements that belong to the modern incarnation of work. The commodity as the preeminent form of wealth, private property, the exchange of labor power for wage: historically contingent forms of labor and exchange produce alienation. In observing the modern practice of man's species being, Marx finds only diremption, disunity:

> It is no longer the spirit of the *state* where man—although in a limited way, under a particular form, and in a particular sphere—associates in community with other men as a species-being. It has become the spirit of *civil society*, of the sphere of egoism, of the *bellum omnium contra omnes*. It is no longer the essence of *community* but the essence of *division*. It has become what it was *originally*, an expression of the *separation* of man from his *community*, from himself and from other men.[106]

Personalities are formed in the voluntary interactions of civil society, which bestow onto individuals a concrete identity, but these personalities and identities become so pronounced that the differences between them are unable to be reconciled through political participation. One does not sublate the demands of being Jewish or Christian or bourgeoisie when one acts as a citizen. Thus under Marx if it is community that one seeks, analysis must remain in the sphere of civil society where the social character of the individual is on display. Yet Marx finds strife and misery in civil society without genuine solidarity or collective belonging so he attempts to locate a collective subject immanently capable of challenging the structural alienation unique to modernity. In doing so he presses the limits of Hegel's contemplative theory of reconciliation. Since modernity is host to the alienating forms of capitalist production and exchange, modern alienation cannot be contemplated away. For Marx some collective must produce new social forms to organize the essential activity of humanity.

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[106] "On the Jewish Question," p. 227.

Workers are uniquely situated to be this collective in that their activity expresses humanity's essential activity. Support for this claim within Marx's early writings is sparse, but the claim has been widely accepted among Marxists including, notably, Lukács. It is there in the *Communist Manifesto* as well, co-authored alongside Frederick Engels, where the authors attempt to foment the worker's movement, but the *Manifesto* betrays motives that do not coincide with the philosophical pursuit of truth in this commentator's judgment. It is unsuitable for this attempt at getting to the core of what Marx thought about collective action. But the worker's thesis juts up on occasion even outside of the *Manifesto*:

> From the relation of alienated labor to private property it follows further that the emancipation of society from private property, etc., from servitude, is expressed in its *political* form as the *emancipation of workers*, not as though it is only a question of their emancipation but because in their emancipation is contained universal human emancipation.[107]

It follows for Marx that overcoming the alienation of the workplace will liberate not only workers but capitalists as well who either do not understand or are not concerned by the forms of estrangement inherent in the production processes that they initiate. Worker emancipation leads to broader human emancipation.

Further, workers realize an epistemic demand for Marx. Praxis, as opposed to contemplation, entails responsiveness on the part of the agent to the materiality with which he or she works. Through labor the agent experiences personal formation (*die Bildung*) in giving form to the material world. This education is a product of the agent's acquaintance with what is real, with the material's real plasticity in the agent's attempt to re-form it. Reality thus comes to serve as a check on the ideas we have about the material world, the ideas we have about the material world's plasticity

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[107] Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat (Hackett: Indianapolis, IN, 1997), p. 229.

as well as its true nature, and Marx comes to look at it, reality, as the ultimate arbiter for epistemic claims. The second thesis on Feuerbach posits:

> The question whether human thinking can reach objective truth—is not a question of theory but a *practical* question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, actuality and power, this-sidedness of his thinking. The dispute about the actuality or non-actuality of thinking—thinking isolated from practice—is a purely *scholastic* question.[108]

There is a pragmatic, proto-Peirceian undercurrent to the epistemic privilege that Marx grants workers. Reality proves to be the testing ground for ideas independently of whether these ideas are clear and distinct for a contemplating intellect. Thus workers—who act, who manifest their ideas through material praxis—are in constant intercourse with a world that rejects or accepts the fitfulness of their beliefs. They comprehend the world that the bourgeoisie contemplate.

Situated as the active embodiment of humanity and endowed with epistemic privilege, workers are identified as the collective agent that can work on and revitalize the shape of society, possibly realizing the goal of human emancipation. On this score Lukács raises an important point about worker self-consciousness that arises from the dual structure of labor. Under capitalism the dynamic, form-giving activity of labor is divorced from the commodity form that houses it, called labor-power, which posits an exchange value for the valorizing activity of labor. Since labor-power is a commodity, the laborer comes to know him- or herself as a commodity. Thus a world that is organized by the commodity form—Lukács submits that not only "economic" but all modern realities are subject to the commodity form—gives birth to a collective subject able to apprehend itself in the alienating relations of production. Lukács writes:

> Above all the worker can only become conscious of his existence in society when he becomes aware of himself as a commodity. As we have seen, his immediate existence

[108] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat (Hackett: Indianapolis, IN, 1997), p. 401, emphasis in original.

> integrates him as a pure, naked object into the production process. Once this immediacy turns out to be the consequence of a multiplicity of mediations, once it becomes evident how much it presupposes, then the fetishistic forms of the commodity system begin to dissolve: in the commodity the worker recognizes himself and his own relations with capital. Inasmuch as he is incapable in practice of raising himself above the role of object his consciousness is the *self-consciousness of the commodity*; or in other words it is the self-knowledge, the self-revelation of the capitalist society founded upon the production and exchange of commodities.[109]

Lukács continues: "when the worker knows himself as a commodity his knowledge is practical. *That is to say, this knowledge brings about an objective structural change in the object of knowledge*."[110] The idea here is that workers come to acknowledge in themselves the social distortions of the commodity form, and sense the powerlessness of their position as a commodity. Yet since this knowledge is practical, since workers do not remain "hands off" in their comprehension of the commodity form, the act of learning is an act of transformation. Self-consciously alienated workers find that their labor power has been commodified and yet their ability to overturn the commodity form with their praxis remains. It is a fact of history that capitalism produces new technological, social and aesthetic forms at a dizzying pace and it is the worker's labor that creates them. Self-consciously directing this form-giving activity of labor toward challenging and upsetting the commodity form of labor power is thus the immanent task of worker action. Since reconciliation to the modern world cannot be found through contemplation, collective action is called on to introduce new forms of sociality. For Marx and the Marxists, by necessity, the agent of history is the working class.

Historian of Marxism Leszek Kołakowski relays an important biographical note about Marx on becoming wed to the working class:

> the proletariat's special mission as a class which cannot liberate itself without thereby liberating society as a whole makes its first appearance in Marx's thought as a

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[109] Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 168.
[110] "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," p. 169.

> philosophical deduction rather than a product of observation. When Marx wrote his *Introduction* [*to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*] he had seen very little of the actual workers' movement; yet the principle he formulated at this time remained the foundation of his social philosophy.[111]

Kołakowski's assertion casts a mystifying pallor over the early Marx's theory of collective action. The solidarity of action that Marx attributes to the working class does not immanently arise out of civil society, but is instead an intellectual solution to the logical problem of modern alienation. It is purported that workers are drawn together under capitalism according to their mutual interest in opposing the commodification of labor, but a study of civil society does not reveal an emergent community of workers. This was true in Marx's time, as it was during Lukács' and is in our own. The life of the object remains mystified in Marx's analysis of collective action; we have yet to discover the solidarity, community and sense of interpersonal belonging that characterizes collective attempts at reforming the institutions of modernity so that they might genuinely realize personal freedom.

[111] Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P. S. Falla, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), p. 107.

Chapter 3: The Us and the We in Sartre's Early Writings

> *the Other is first the being for whom I am an object; that is, the being through whom I gain my objectness*[112]

> *Jessica: For nineteen years now I've been in your man's world, with signs everywhere saying: "Do not touch," made to believe that everything was going very well, that there was nothing for me to do except to arrange flowers in vases. Why did you lie to me? Why did you leave me in ignorance if it was only to confess to me one fine day that the world is falling to pieces and that you're not up to your responsibilities, forcing me to choose between a suicide and an assassination. … I don't understand this whole business and I wash my hands of it. I am neither an oppressor nor a class traitor nor a revolutionary. I've done nothing. I am innocent of everything.*[113]

Sartre wrote and wrote and wrote and wrote. He wrote five hours every day. He wrote philosophy, he wrote plays and novels, and he wrote commentary on European, American and Caribbean writers. He wrote so prolifically that he forgot what he had previously written. He handed out manuscripts to friends as though they were party favors and he left countless journals and notebooks at the homes of acquaintances, friends and lovers. When Sartre finally set the pen down on his first magnum opus, *Being and Nothingness*, he did so with the proviso that a future work would be required to flesh out the ethics suggested in his existential ontology. So he filled up ten notebooks in an attempt to write an ethics before determining that the project would need to be set aside interminably. The man *wrote*—and with fidelity to exhausting the ideas expressed rather than to their appearance as complete and unified wholes. After writing 1200+ pages of his second magnum opus, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre deemed the work unfinished and took up a new project on Gustave Flaubert. Whereupon this work, *The Family Idiot*, ballooned to four published volumes at

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[112] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), p. 361.
[113] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Dirty Hands," *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. Lionel Abel, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), Act V, p. 215.

which point Sartre, nearly fully blind, having sacrificed his health to the craft, was not able to realize the planned fifth volume. Only a few of his philosophical works were finished to a degree of Sartre's liking and many of these were full of never-redeemed promissory notes. He felt, perhaps idiosyncratically, that philosophical efforts must always remain subject to further revision and reframing and, despite the many consistencies throughout his corpus, Sartre never did settle once and for all with a school of thought—be it phenomenology, existentialism or Marxism.

Any theory proposed in the name of Sartre must come to terms with his voluminous, seemingly incomplete, and perhaps even contradictory writings. I view the matter of incompleteness as a minor issue. With the demands on his time as the most widely recognizable French public intellectual of the postwar period, the ambitions that come with holding such a post, and a deeply entrenched ethical and political conscience, new projects were always around the corner that required his engagement. Not that Sartre was easily distracted or lacked the resolve to see a text through to its completion; these common-sense tropes ought to be abandoned when it comes to analyzing Sartre who was never lacking in issues or political causes that revved his motor and to which he felt a deep responsibility to act on and promote.

All told Sartre had a peculiar relation to totalities, which for him signified a whole whose parts were interdependent and essential to the whole's existence. "The mainspring of all dialectics is the idea of totality. In it, phenomena are never isolated appearances. When they occur together, it is always within the high unity of a whole, and they are bound together by inner relationships, that is, the presence of one modifies the other in its inner nature."[114] Works of art, products of labor and machine technologies are all totalities in that every musical note or mechanical cog finds its meaning

[114] Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," trans. Annette Michelson, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), p. 191. Cf. the present work's introduction, "Dialectic and Method," for a statement on dialectical approaches to social theory and their movement from abstraction to concrete totality.

only in the composition or machine as a whole. A common and favorite expression of Sartre's found in *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* both (there is less of a shared vocabulary between these works than readers not familiar with the latter may imagine) is detotalized totalities. If a whole of finely integrated parts is a totality, it becomes detotalized when the parts begin to resist their seamless integration. Human societies are detotalized totalities in that every individual enjoys the free capacity to deviate from norms or scripts shared by the group. The parts resist while still participating in the whole. While I am not willing to stake the claim that Sartre's philosophical works were detotalized totalities, I do think that his reluctance to "finish" works is partially a product of the idea that the parts of a whole can resist participating in a seamless integration. Leaving long, systematic treatises incomplete may be a form of resisting the genre's tendency toward the authorial appointment of all textual meaning. This is true in effect if not in intention.[115]

As for Sartre's prolific output as an author I find it necessary to excise his chronological output before 1943 and after 1960, and remove several popular texts within these boundaries that are less relevant to the topic at hand in order to make the present study a manageable one. These removed texts include *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, the transcript from a lecture Sartre gave in 1946 *without notes* that he later regretted publishing, and two works of literary theory, *Saint Genet* and *Black Orpheus*, neither of which are terribly helpful to the social theory constructed here. While collective action is a feature of his thought from *Being and Nothingness* through volume two of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, there is really no questioning the fact that the most serious and complete engagement with the concept is in the *Critique*'s first volume. Volume two of the *Critique*, which

[115] This is merely a plausible suggestion for how to view the incompleteness of his works—one that would need to be confirmed by those Sartre scholars more familiar with the personal reasons he had for abandoning texts than I am.

demonstrates the dialectical intelligibility of History, builds on and employs the theory of collective action offered in volume one.[116]

The *Critique of Dialectical Reason* will be the sole focus of chapter five where I spell out the heart of Sartre's theory of collective action. What I aim to do in this chapter and the next is provide the context for the *Critique*, a work that has been rather unfortunately ignored by many serious scholars of social and political philosophy (including by more than a few Sartreans).[117] In particular, I want to set the stage for the *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. 1* (1960) by examining collective action in the most philosophically robust texts from *Being and Nothingness* (1943) to *Search for a Method* (1957). It becomes evident that the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* was severely limited by the account of interpersonal relations in that work, which were personified in the phenomenological conception of "the look" and dramatized in *Dirty Hands* and *No Exit*, two plays that premiered in the years after the publication of *Being and Nothingness*.[118] It is these three works that will be explicated in this chapter and we will see in the next how their inadequate explanatory value on the theme of collective action precipitates a self-conscious turn.

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[116] As for the third matter, contradictions, see chapter four where I attend to the inconsistencies in Sartre's body of writings and offer my interpretation of Sartre's self-conscious turn.

[117] See David Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007) for an example of a deep engagement of Sartre's social theory that chooses to neglect the modifications proposed in the *Critique*.

[118] Sartre claims that the method and principal conclusions of *Being and Nothingness* were reached during the years of 1939-1940. So while this early theory of collective action didn't reach the public until the mid-40s, it reflects the thought of Sartre from a half-decade earlier, before Germany's military occupation of France and his participation in the intellectual resistance group *Socialisme et Liberté* among other noteworthy historical and biographical events.

I. Collective Action for-Others in *Being and Nothingness*

> *We should hope in vain for a human 'we' in which the intersubjective totality would obtain consciousness of itself as a unified subjectivity.*[119]

Before his schooling in Hegelian-Marxist dialectical social theory, Sartre offers a working idea of collective action that is compatible with his early monosubstance existential ontology. All substance *is* for the early Sartre; it exists as a being in-itself. Irreducible to the necessary and underivable from the possible, substance is the modality of unjustifiable, contingent existence. All that is quite simply *is*, for Sartre, and this being in-itself is an existence that is always superfluous (*de trop*), beyond justification. A stone, a riverbed or a mountain do not inherently supply a reason for their existence. What provides meaning is contributed by negating consciousness: being is meaningful only when it is delimited from what it is not, and this nothingness, this not-being is at the core of what is. A hammer, for example, is a hammer insofar as it is *not* a screw—just as it is equally not a hairpin or a trade agreement between nations. Hence Sartre's famous dictum from *Being and Nothingness*: "Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being—like a worm."[120] Being does not and cannot announce the nothingness at its center. It is negating consciousness that supplies meaning for being in-itself. Conscious inquiry surpasses immanent existence toward future possibilities for contingent being, a pathway opened by a transcendent consciousness that negates the world as it is. This transcendent consciousness is *for-itself*, a negation of the in-itself upon which it ultimately depends:

> The for-itself is not the in-itself and can not be it. But it is a relation to the in-itself. It is even the sole relation possible to the in-itself. Cut off on every side by the in-itself, the for-itself can not escape it because the for-itself is *nothing* and it is separated from the in-itself by *nothing*. The for-itself is the foundation of all negativity and of all relation. *The for-itself is relation*.[121]

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[119] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 553.
[120] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 56.
[121] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 472.

All relation is negation for Sartre. Spinoza thought so as well, as did Hegel. Relations do not exist in themselves while being positively does; being is given; yet relations between what exists are contributed by meaning-making and laboring consciousnesses that posit these relations through the negation of what has been immediately given. The existence of real relations between things requires the negating power of the for-itself for only the for-itself transcends given conditions toward the creation and acknowledgment of new totalities that preserve these relations.

Human reality—Sartre's rendering of Heidegger's *Dasein* (the being whose being is a problem for itself)—is uniquely ambiguous in that it is a superfluous substance, a substance without justification, an *in-itself* while simultaneously being a *for-itself*, a conscious and meaning-supplying negation of sheer immanence. It is humanity's ambiguous fate to be what one is (as an in-itself) in the manner of not-being (as a for-itself). The for-itself is lived as an internal negation. In other words, in a phrase, human reality exists as the non-identical "being which is what it is not and which is not what it is."[122]

For Sartre this ambiguity is not to be worn without care: individuals frequently act in bad faith, that is, self-deception, by denying their paradoxical existence as an in-itself, for-itself. Bad faith, as this flight from authenticity, can move in either direction. Wishing to be a thing among things, persons can deny their capacity for negation and exist for-oneself as an in-itself. Sartre's imagination is powerfully deployed in *Being and Nothingness* with examples of the individual's submersion of his freedom to the thingness of an in-itself. Consider the situation of the waiter who lives his profession in the manner that a stone is a stone or an inkwell is an inkwell.[123] On the other hand, human reality

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[122]*Being and Nothingness*, p. 100.

[123]*Being and Nothingness*, pp. 101-103. Sartre's problem with the pomp and ceremony that the overzealous waiter puts into playing his role is not a matter of the lack of identity that the waiter has with his facticity (in one sense of the term this is a truly *authentic* café waiter). Rather, it is authenticity to one's ambiguity that is the goal of the early Sartre, the ambiguity of one's existence as both for-itself and in-itself. The waiter fails to understand that "I am a waiter in the mode of *being*

has the equally bad faith tendency to flee into the for-itself. Denying one's existence as a thing among things, an in-itself, can lead one to the inauthentic flight of escapism. Sartre depicts such an occurrence with the young woman that deludes herself into thinking that she is just her intellect, that she can detach herself from her body and relate to her suitor only as a thinking and speaking thing, meanwhile allowing the seductive clasping of her hand between his on the park bench. Such examples drive to the core of human reality's existence as an ambiguous thinking thing that perpetually fails to meet its paradoxical demands. Bad faith is this flight into one aspect of human reality's being and movement away from the other.

Sartre adds a third category to the existential ontology of *Being and Nothingness* in addition to being in-itself (*en-soi*) and for-itself (*pour-soi*) that is imperative to his early theory of collective action. As an equiprimordial category of human reality, man exists for-others (*pour-autrui*). Deducing the presence of others—other minds—does not require an argument by analogy for Sartre. Rather, his phenomenological method attempts to lay bare that we intuit with certainty the presence of other independent freedoms without an extraordinary effort of reasoning. It is here that Sartre's reliance on the foundational concept of the look (*le regard*) most firmly impresses itself on his ontology. That one can be looked at as a concrete and differentiated *this* for a consciousness is testimony to the fact that one is always for-others. The look is the primary relation expressed in my being for others; each look confirms concretely that one exists for all living persons as an outside, as something that can be looked at. Certainly the look is a phenomena more widespread than holding an individual in one's line of vision—indeed the presence of light and ocular globes directed at an other is not required for the occurrence of the look; in Sartre's examples it is realized by creaking floorboards, a rustle in the

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what I am not" (p. 103). He fails to maintain his ambiguity for others. Authenticity has been badly mangled in post-Sartrean French philosophy and few members of the post-structuralist camp appreciate the nuance of this position.

hedges, the farmhouse on top of the hill. In whatever its form of appearance, the look originates my existence as an object for a perceived other, annihilates my self-appointed possibilities as a subject, and fixes me as a utilizable thing for this other. One can apprehend the look through shame, guilt or anguish. The sudden awareness of one's state of objectness for an other: this is what Sartre refers to as the look.

Sartre proposes that in my existence for-others I am an object, but an object with the unique capacity to return the look to this other and transform her into an object for me. I can look at the other or be self-conscious of my being looked at, but not both at the same time.[124] Hence early Sartre's dyad of interpersonal relations: one objectifies the other through the look or is looked at and thereby becomes an object. I exist for others as an object, and they are, for me, objects. Oddly, it is my grasping that the other can return the look at me that humanizes the other. When I look at another person I view a fleshy, human-sized object that can return the look.[125] Moreover, this other that returns the look organizes for me the field of objects around her. The sidewalk, front door and garden hose appear to be organized around her and in any case refer to her centrality in this world:

> The Other's body as flesh is immediately given as the center of reference in a situation which is synthetically organized around it, and it is inseparable from this situation. Therefore we should not ask how the Other's body can be first body for me and subsequently enter into a situation. The Other is originally given to me as a *body in situation*.[126]

Through the look one relates to the other as a totalized object, a body, given in a situation, and in returning the look the other transcends this transcended state. Thus we reach Sartre's third

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[124] Cf. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 347: "we can not perceive the world and at the same time apprehend a look fastened upon us; it must be either one or the other. This is because to perceive is to *look at*, and to apprehend a look is not to apprehend a look-as-object in the world (unless the look is not directed upon us); it is to be conscious of *being looked at*."
[125] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 345.
[126] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 451.

ontological dimension of the body: living my body as a body known by the other.[127] Perpetually for-others, my "body as alienated escapes me toward a being-a-tool-among-tools, toward a being-a-sense-organ-apprehended-by-sense-organs."[128] I am embodied in a world built for bodies like my own. A world that issues scripts and exigencies for the body with which I act; a world full of physicians, coaches, social workers, dieticians, urban planners and shop foremen that know the limits and good health of bodies. Thus one's body is a body for-others and one lives this corporeality as it is understood and manipulated by others in spite of the fact that no global perspective on the body can ever be obtained (my body remains *my* body no matter how alienated my inquiry into it becomes—no matter the degree to which I live it as it is known by others).

This conception of one's embodied existence for others sharply underwrites Sartre's early understanding of what it means to act together. If we are to understand collective action in *Being and Nothingness* we must appreciate Sartre's belief that one's body is always for-others. Sartre writes that the "being-for-others precedes and founds the *being-with-others*."[129] Hence the look remains the foundational relation of the 'us' and the 'we.' This being-with—an allusion to Heidegger's *Mitsein*—offers collective action under two guises. First, as an "us-object" I am captured together with the other by a third. The other and I are a totalized object for the third; we are together a group of alienated transcendence-transcendeds, an ontologically distinct thing. Our ontological status as an 'us' is given by the third's look that captures our acting together: two boxers exchanging jabs in the

[127] Additionally, the body is for-itself in that one lives his or her body. In an upsurge of desire I offer my hand in a gesture of amicability. I do not reflect on where to position my hand and how, the speed of the handshake or the firmness of my grip. I experience my body as an extension of willing consciousness. In its second dimension, the body is for-others in the manner of being a facticity for others prior to the conscious manipulation of my body as a body for-others. The difference between the second and the third ontological dimension of the body, which are both for-others, is that in the second situation I may not be conscious of my corporeal existence. One always presents an exterior—one is always embodied—which means that in the second ontological dimension of the body that my handshake may be an item of interest to this other even if it is, for me, an extension of my conscious desire that I do not experience as a body known by the other.

[128] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 462.

[129] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 537.

center of the ring have been turned into an us-object by the look of spectators. The third alienates the boxers by turning her look onto them. She transforms their common action into the totality of an us-object that collectively acts.

Notably, concerning the interpretation of Marx offered in the previous chapter, Sartre applies this model of collective action to the proletariat class. The capitalist is the third for whom the community of oppressed persons exist as a collective us-object; the oppressed are not a self-constituting we:

> They [the bourgeoisie] cause it [the oppressed class] to be born by their look. It is to them and through them that there is revealed the identity of my condition and that of the others who are oppressed; it is for them that I exist in a situation organized with others and that my possibles as dead-possibles are strictly equivalent with the possibles of others; it is for them that I am a worker and it is through and in their revelation as the Other-as-a-look that I experience myself as one among others. This means that I discover the 'Us' in which I am integrated or 'the class' *outside*, in the look of the Third, and it is this collective alienation which I assume when saying 'Us.' … Thus the oppressed class finds its class unity in the knowledge which the oppressing class has of it, and the appearance among the oppressed of class consciousness corresponds to the assumption in shame of an Us-object.[130]

The basis of class unity, Sartre remarks here, is in the alienating gaze of the bourgeoisie. This unity is external—cast onto the oppressed by a third that holds one in common with other members identified as part of a collective object. The 'us' dissolves "as soon as the for-itself reclaims its selfness in the face of the Third and looks at him in turn."[131] Thus the individual—as someone that looks—is the stalwart disintegrator of the us-object, an externally constituted and unstable collective agent. One is a member of the proletariat insofar as one refuses to transcend this condition.

The second type of collective action that Sartre outlines in *Being and Nothingness* is that undergone by a we-subject in which I psychologize my association with the other and assume the

[130] *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 544-545.
[131] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 545.

other's project as identical with my own. The other and I are at that point "an ephemeral particularization" of a common transcendence toward an end.[132] Insofar as we are to remain a we-subject, neither he nor I are to pursue personal ends over the common end mutually aimed at; if and when the other follows a personal pursuit I find myself mistaken in our existence as a 'we.' The we-subject, like the us-object, perpetually teeters on the brink of dissolution. Moreover, it has no ontological status: "the experience of the We-subject is a pure psychological, subjective event in a single consciousness; it corresponds to an inner modification of the structure of this consciousness but does not appear on the foundation of a concrete ontological relation with others and does not realize any *Mitsein*. It is a question only of a way of feeling myself in the midst of others."[133] The look is once again determinant for Sartre. While a collective can be looked at and be an 'us,' no plural subject looks as a unified thing. Hence the 'we' is a psychological projection. A plural subject that looks is a 'they,' a collection of independent lookers. The members of a we-subject are undifferentiated, on the other hand, and indeed the 'we' collapses as soon as a for-itself among the group transcends the common transcendence and thereby breaks the spell of the 'we.'

The early Sartre, who stands in contrast to Hegel and Marx on this issue, finds that the 'we' is not primary. It is founded on the ontological relation of being for-others—an alienating relation disclosed in the worked matter that the 'we' collectively transcends (the subway reveals that I am for-others in that it has been shaped for my action as a generic action: I exist as a 'we' with other riders on the basis of the shared experience of being for-others when I lean on the pole that supports the balance of any rider or when I vie for the available seats desired by others).[134] Being for-others, in its objectification of individuals, remains the formative relation experienced in the 'we.'

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[132] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 549.
[133] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 550.
[134] In passing through the turnstile at the subway station my body is *any* body—I experience my body in its third ontological dimension. 'We the subway riders' engage in an identical transcendence of the turnstile.

Nonetheless the members of a 'we' are not an 'us,' for Sartre, in that the members of the collective exceed the status of a common object:

> the 'we' subject does not appear even conceivable unless it refers at least to the thought of a plurality of subjects, which would simultaneously apprehend one another as subjectivities, that is, as transcendences-transcending and not as transcendence-transcended. … In the 'we,' nobody is the object. The 'we' includes a plurality of subjectivities which recognize one another as subjectivities. Nevertheless this recognition is not the object of an explicit thesis; what is explicitly posited is a common action or the object of a common perception.[135]

In the end, for the early Sartre, the 'we' is a spurious phenomenon. It begins with the psychological identification of oneself with others that may not share the sentiment and it dissolves either with the assertion of a for-itself's aims in the face of the common pursuit or with the return of the look, which alienates a member of the we if turned on another or, if turned on me, forms a they I stand against.

Collective action thus assumes the shape of the us-object or the we-subject for Sartre in the years following the war.[136] The former is a consequence of being looked-at; the latter is an inexact matter of the individual looking at and identifying with an other. Neither model is terribly productive for imagining how political or moral ideals like justice or equality could be realized among a social group and both are fairly inept at capturing how concrete collectives act. I am in agreement with Thomas R. Flynn who has indicated that the appearance of truly social phenomena in *Being and Nothingness* is incapacitated by the looking/looked-at dyad of sociality:

> Now such dyadic relations, while ideal for grounding the psychological contrasts and interpersonal conflicts characteristic of Sartre's existentialist writings generally, are quite incapable of supporting the qualitatively richer relations which Durkheim denotes by the expression, 'social fact.' Such phenomena as institutions with their statuses and roles, languages with their impersonal rules and structures, and

[135] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 535.

[136] The 'they' isn't a proper collective for Sartre. It is more or less equivalent to Nietzsche's the last man and Heidegger's *das Mann*—a way of being as an individual where I eschew my particularity in order to exist as a common man through a generic praxis.

> collective actions such as wars, treaties, and the rest, are scarcely reducible to functions of the looking/looked-at relationship.[137]

Sartre eventually reworks his idea of collective action and gives a social theory proper in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. 1*. Before then, while ensnared in the looking/looked-at dyad, Sartre offers a startling portrait of social relations in his philosophical works and plays. And while one can see the constitutive role of the look and the primary ontological category of being for-others expressed in his analysis of love and desire—to name two of Sartre's further considerations in *Being and Nothingness*—their expression is more concrete in the dramatic works from this period that were informed by these views. Sartre's plays, which undoubtedly lack the conceptual rigor and systematic tendencies of the philosophical opuses, are superior at indicating the centrality of his various philosophical conceptions for an audience of non-specialists. A second-order concept like the look may fade into the background during a casual read of *Being and Nothingness*, but in the plays it is a much more difficult *motif* to ignore. Two of his plays in particular are worthy of our consideration. *No Exit*, which premiered the year after the publication of *Being and Nothingness*, offers a tragic portrayal of desire and solidarity through the reifying relation of the look. The second, an equally tragic play by the name of *Dirty Hands*, premiered four years later and thematizes the impossibility of meaningful collective action on the part of a 'we' and the inauthenticity born of social relations founded on the look.

II. The Alienating Looking of *No Exit*

No Exit (*Huis Clos*) is Sartre's most successful play by most measures. While none of his dramatic works were received as unqualified successes, *No Exit* captured a wide audience and provoked lively interpretations upon its first production and has remained a mainstay of French and Anglo-

[137] Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 21-22.

American theatre ever since.[138] It premiered in May of 1944 at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in Nazi-occupied Paris and the original production ran for several years. Translated into English for a London production in July 1946, the play gained stateside notoriety among theater-goers in 1947. Its austere decorum and brevity—the events unfold in one act—have made it especially hospitable for small-scale reproductions. Moreover, the play works in its libretto form, read as a script. No set changes are required and the stage actors are few. Indeed, it is easy for readers to keep a mental inventory of the play's characters and unchanging setting: three vain young adults find themselves in a drawing room decorated in the Second Empire style; the room is Spartan with only three couches, a bronze statue, a single letter opener, a fireplace and no windows; the door opens only from the outside—true to the English title, there is literally no exiting the room.

The setting is a private hell, created for the play's three condemned souls: Joseph Garcin, a womanizing and cowardly journalist who wrote for a pacifist newspaper; Inez Serrano, a former post-office clerk with a personality well suited for bureaucratic administration; and Estelle Rigault, who arrives in the afterlife after being a trophy wife to a man of means twice her age. The room is without torture equipment and a designated torturer. In a cleverly efficient allocation of "devil-labor," the torment to be endured here must arise from one of the room's inhabitants. The realization first dawns on Inez: "each of us will act as torturer of the two others."[139] Torture, in Sartre's work, cannot be committed unless one relates to the other as a transcended object, unless the other is the object of the look rather than the looker. Thus each character takes turns looking and being looked-at and in order to inflict maximum punishment, no character's gaze is maintained

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[138] For an expert overview of the mixed reception of Sartre's plays in anglo- and francophone communities see Benedict O'Donahoe, "Dramatically Different: The Reception of Sartre's Theatre in London and New York," *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 2001), pp. 1-18.

[139] Jean-Paul Sartre, "No Exit," *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. Stuart Gilbert, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 18.

for too long. Even the sadistic pleasure enjoyed by the gazing torturer is cut short by the fact that one's being for-others allows each looker to be looked at. *No Exit* is often interpreted through its most famous line, which is delivered by Garcin in the play's waning moments. Having realized his fate he exclaims "*l'enfre, c'est les autres*"("Hell is—other people!"[140]). More accurately it might be said that hell is—a perpetually revolving ensemble of lookers.

We should consider this famous line in its context:

> G: This bronze. [*Strokes it thoughtfully*.] Yes, now's the moment; I'm looking at this thing on the mantelpiece, and I understand that I'm in hell. I tell you, everything's been thought out beforehand. They knew I'd stand at the fireplace stroking this thing of bronze, with all those eyes intent on me. Devouring me. [*He swings around abruptly*.] What? Only two of you? I thought there were more; many more. [*Laughs*.] So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the 'burning marl.' Old wives' tales! There's no need for red-hot pokers. Hell is—other people![141]

Garcin is situated in the drawing room—stroking the bronze statue, standing before the fireplace and otherwise organizing the small field of objects around him. He presents for-others a body in situation. Yet it is not simple awareness that he is for-others that has led him to exclaim that he is in hell. Garcin and Inez are astute enough to recognize early on in the play that they are forever fated to be for-others. Rather, Garcin becomes aware that he is in hell when he realizes that he must live his body as it is known by the other and proceed in this manner always and forever.[142] Everything is already known—not least of all Garcin's facticity—and he feels transcended ("devoured") by the look. Estelle responds differently to the same realization. She has learned to love her body as it is known by the other. "When I talked to people I always made sure there was [a mirror] near by in

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[140]*No Exit*, p. 47.
[141]*No Exit*, pp. 46-47.
[142] If further support is needed for the idea that *No Exit* is an expression of Sartre's third ontological dimension in *Being and Nothingness* one need not look further than Sartre's original title for the play: *The Others*. Cf. Marie-Denise Boros Azzi, "Representation of Character in Sartre's Drama, Fiction, and Biography," *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981), pp, 438-476.

which I could see myself. I watched myself talking. And somehow it kept me alert, seeing myself as the others saw me."[143] More so than the two others Estelle prefers the self-denial of bad faith. Her state of objectness is a release from the unending maintenance of ambiguous existence, but the gratification she finds in her play-acting should not avert our vision from seeing that what makes this setting hell—in lieu of fire and brimstone and in addition to eternal damnation—is the impossibility of winning back authenticity while existing as a body known by the look of the other.

Every obstacle to looking has been removed in hell. Among the plays curiosities is that the characters have no eyelids. The condemned cannot prevent themselves from looking or being looked-at. Garcin notices this during a discussion with the valet:

> G: Ah, I see; it's life without a break.
> V: What do you mean by that?
> G: What do I mean? [*Eyes the valet suspiciously.*] I thought as much. That's why there's something so beastly, so damn bad-mannered, in the way you stare at me. They're paralyzed.
> V: What are you talking about?
> G: Your eyelids. We move ours up and down. Blinking, we call it. It's like a small black shutter that clicks down and makes a break. Everything goes black; one's eyes are moistened. You can't imagine how restful, refreshing, it is. Four thousand little rests per hour. Four thousand little respites—just think![144]

Garcin could experience no greater joy here than to stop looking. Immediately following Inez's pronouncement that they are to be the torturers of one another, Garcin folds his head into his hands and attempts to achieve such a respite. The technique does not help him find an inner peace. Garcin does not and cannot escape his existence for others. This is a major theme of *Being and Nothingness* echoed here by *No Exit*: One cannot not be for-others. Better then to look than to be on the other end of the dyad. Inez, whose cynicism makes her the wisest of the characters, affirms the part of the looker: "To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I *feel* you there, in every pore. Your silence

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[143]*No Exit*, p. 20.
[144]*No Exit*, pp. 5-6.

clamors in my ears. You can nail up your mouth, cut your tongue out—but you can't prevent your *being there*. … I prefer to choose my hell; I prefer to look you in the eyes and fight it out face to face."[145]

Romantic love is among the first casualties in a social world defined by the look. The characters, all romantically involved on Earth, are utterly unredeemable on this score. Estelle narrates her several failed relationships in the play, including one that ends with her committing infanticide on an illegitimate offspring. Inez, whose romantic life in the land of the living ends with "A dead men's tale. With three corpses to it,"[146] is enamored with Estelle in hell but never manages to seduce her into reciprocating. Garcin's failed relationship with his wife is perhaps most revealing in its dismal account of love. His wife's disappointment in his infidelities are communicated by the look: "my wife … Those big tragic eyes of hers—with that martyred look they always had. Oh, how she got on my nerves!"[147]And later: "Night after night I came home blind drunk, stinking of wine and women. She'd sat up for me, of course. But she never cried, never uttered a word of reproach. Only her eyes spoke. Big, tragic eyes."[148] It is difficult (and perhaps impossible) to determine what a healthy and loving relationship between two persons would appear like if modeled on Sartre's early account of interpersonal relations.[149] Certainly, *No Exit* provides us with no assistance here.

The possibility for salvation is hinted at during a moment of dialogue between Garcin and Inez. Garcin announces: "Alone, none of us can save himself or herself; we're linked together

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[145]*No Exit*, p. 23.
[146]*No Exit*, p. 26
[147]*No Exit*, p. 12.
[148]*No Exit*, p. 25.
[149] Sartre has an extended discussion of love in *Being and Nothingness* and more than a few readers have turned to Sartre in articulating a philosophy of romantic love, but it is useful to remind ourselves that love in *Being and Nothingness*, like all interpersonal relations, is a reciprocity of objectification between two individuals caught in the looking/looked-at dyad. Sartre, with good reason, would later come to regret holding this view.

inextricably. So you can take your choice."[150] And choose Inez does. She chooses her solitary wickedness over affirming their community:

> I: What were you saying? Something about helping me, wasn't it?
> G: Yes.
> I: Helping me to do what?
> G: To defeat their devilish tricks.
> I: And what do you expect me to do in return?
> G: To help *me*. It only needs a little effort, Inez; just a spark of human feeling.
> I: Human feeling. That's beyond my range. I'm rotten to the core.

The impossibility of mutually benefitting relations of reciprocity remains the refrain of interpersonal relations in *No Exit*. The path to salvation is stopped short by the look. The only reciprocity achieved in Sartre's hell is the trading of positions on either end of the looking/looked-at dyad.

III. The Heteronymous and Authoritarian Collectives of *Dirty Hands*

While *No Exit* drives to the heart of interpersonal relations modeled on the look and provides a harrowing portrait of one's embodied existence in its third ontological dimension—a portrait that Sartre later in life insisted came out the way it did because *No Exit* was set in hell—*Dirty Hands* takes up the lessons of *Being and Nothingness* in a political space, dramatizing a collective movement in the fictitious East European country of Illyria. The play comments on and ultimately takes to task revolutionary Communist parties, which won Sartre an unfavorable review in the official journal of the *Parti Communiste Français*: "*Philosophe hermétique, écrivain nauséeux, dramaturge à scandale, demagogue de troisième force, tells sont les étapes de la carrier de M. Sartre*."[151] While Sartre identified as a fellow traveler with Communist movements in the years 1951-1954, his view of them in *Dirty Hands* is undeniably less enthusiastic and yet more complicated than the polemical response of the *Parti Communiste*

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[150] *No Exit*, p. 29.
[151] "Hermetic philosopher, nauseating writer, scandalizing playwright, and third-rate demagogue. These are the stages in M. Sartre's career." See Guy Leclerc, *L'Humanité*, (Paris: April 7, 1948).

Français suggests.[152] This view is informed by the theory of collective action worked out in *Being and Nothingness*.

The revolutionary party in *Dirty Hands* alternately exists as an us-object and as a we-subject. The us—constituted from the outside by an alienating third—is accepted and claimed as an identity by party members that come from the proletariat class. When portrayed as an us the group resembles Sartre's view of the oppressed class writ large in *Being and Nothingess* and indeed for non-intellectual workers like Ivan, party participation is continuous with life under circumstances of exploitation:

> Ivan: You been in the party long?
> Hugo: Since 1942; that makes a year. I joined when the Regent declared war on the Soviet Union. How about you?
> Ivan: I don't remember any more. I sometimes think I've always been in the party. [*A pause*.] You put out the paper, don't you?
> Hugo: Myself and some others.
> Ivan: I often get hold of it, but I seldom read it. It's not your fault of course, but your news is always a week behind the BBC or the Soviet radio.[153]

Throughout the play a crass division exists between the party's intellectual sympathizers and those that choose the party as a means of survival. Hugo throughout the play represents the former and Ivan in this scene reveals his identification with the party as an us-object, the political representation of a condition that he and others have lived with over the course of their lives. The non-intellectual party members view their group as an us, a threatened us—one that could fail if subjected to a government plot or international pressure. They are aware that their existence as a collective is a threat and they identify with this externally constituted view. Ivan's paranoia, in Sartre's drama, lends itself to self-preservation when the us-object that one participates in is looked at as threatening.

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[152] On Sartre's years as a fellow traveler with the communist movement see Jean-Paul Sartre and Benny Lévy, *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews*, trans. Adrian van den Hoven, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 64.
[153] *Dirty Hands*, Act II, p. 144.

The alternative conception of the party's collective agency occurs when portrayed as a we; in the we the collective is defined by individuals that project an individual maxim onto the group as a whole. Only a handful of the group's leaders and intellectuals grasp the we constitution of the party in which every individual has personal motivations and beliefs informing membership that they take to be general. Hoederer, the politically ascending intellectual leader of the party, offers a view of collective belief whereby members identify with one another by attributing personal beliefs to the group as a whole. This thought is provoked by Slick and George, the brutish bodyguards for Hoederer, who object to Hugo's principled and overly cognitive motivations for group participation:

> George: We're not in the same party.
> Hoederer [to Hugo]: Aren't you one of us?
> Hugo: Of course.
> Hoderer: Well, then.
> Slick: We might belong to the same party, but we didn't get in for the same reasons.
> Hoederer: Everyone joins for the same reason. … you wanted your mouth full and a little something else besides. He calls that something else self-respect. Nothing objectionable in that. Everybody can use the words he likes.
> Slick: That's not self-respect. That makes me sick to call that self-respect. He uses the words he finds in his head; he thinks with his head.
> Hugo: What do you want me to think with?
> Slick: When your belly's growling, pal, it's not with your head that you think.[154]

When beliefs conflict among the party's intellectuals, the instability of the we is clear. The dramatic action of *Dirty Hands* centers around an assassination plot carried out by Hugo against Hoederer that is organized by fellow party members Louis and Olga. In-fighting, backstabbing and secret plots such as this one erode the group's solidarity. Hugo's motives for carrying out the plan, and he does in the end assassinate Hoederer, are deeply ambiguous. His intellectual honesty resists the easy categorization of his motivation as collective or personal. In the end it cannot be determined

[154] *Dirty Hands*, Act III, pp. 169-170.

whether the assassination is inspired by jealousy, principle, or party allegiance. Self-knowledge remains ambiguous.

While a window of opportunity emerges in the fourth act for the party to take political power in Illyria, the achievement of this end would require a major compromise and an abandonment of core beliefs for some of the group's dissenting intellectuals. Hugo, Louis and Olga are among these dissenters and while the latter two ultimately regret the plot after a shift in the party's popular opinion, Hugo alone is wracked by the paradoxical urge to end Hoederer's life and love him as the group's new authoritarian commander while the plot unfolds.

Indeed, a major tension depicted in the play is Hugo's anxiety in committing to a concrete program of action. While desperately feeling the urgent need to act in the name of the collective, Hugo is paralyzed by indecision whenever a moment of truth presents itself. Intellectual apathy is in part a product of self-examination in Sartre's analysis; Hugo seeks out an authoritarian leader whom he can trust to fix his beliefs in order to practically act without an internal dialogue of self-doubt:

> Hoederer: The Central Committee gave me to understand that you've never taken part in any direct action. Is that true?
> Hugo: Yes, it's true.
> Hoederer: That must have driven you mad. All intellectuals dream of doing something. […]
> Hugo [*wearily*]: There are too many ideas in my head. I must get rid of them.
> Hoederer: What sort of ideas?
> Hugo: "What am I doing here? Am I right to want what I want? Am I really just kidding myself?" Ideas like that. […] I have to protect myself. By installing other thoughts in my head. Assignments: "Do this. Go. Stop. Say such and such." I need to obey. To obey, just like that. To eat, sleep, obey.[155]

Meanwhile there remain practical limitations for agency among intellectuals. Several years before Hugo's introduction to and employment under Hoederer he meets his party mentor in Louis. Upon Hugo pledging his devotion to Louis' cause they immediately stumble upon these limits:

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[155]*Dirty Hands*, Act III, pp. 176-177.

> Louis: […] It seems you want to *act*?
> Hugo: Yes.
> Louis: Why?
> Hugo: Just because.
> Louis: Excellent. Only you can't do anything with your hands.
> Hugo: That's true. I don't know how to do anything.[156]

Stuck between his lack of practical know-how and his insistent self-scrutiny, Hugo fails to act. This draws the ire of Hoederer after an exchange between the two on the best means of achieving the Communist party's goals:

> Hoederer: […] How you cling to your purity, young man! How afraid you are to soil your hands! All right, stay pure! What good will it do? Why did you join us? Purity is an idea for a yogi or a monk. You intellectuals and bourgeois anarchists use it as a pretext for doing nothing. To do nothing, to remain motionless, arms at your sides, wearing kid gloves. Well, I have dirty hands. Right up to the elbows. I've plunged them in filth and blood. But what do you hope? Do you think you can govern innocently?[157]

Dirty Hands, concretely portraying the theory worked out in *Being and Nothingness*, shows the limitations of Sartre's early view of collective action. Both as an us and as a we, collective action collapses on itself. As an us, the collective exists only in opposition; it is externally constituted; its existence depends on a third that looks at the group as an us. The us is able to act without the complications of the we in *Dirty Hands*. The party's workers commit to action reflexively. Yet in eschewing reflection—in thinking with one's belly—the us lacks self-determination in its collective action. Identity remains dependent on a sworn enemy and the members of the us are forever mistrusting of bourgeois intellectuals and other sympathizers that cross the battle lines of class struggle. The proletariat cannot envision the group as other than it appears to the third. However, self-determination is achieved by the collective in the form of the we, and yet it occurs at the expense of action. In lacking the tangible skills gained by praxis and through paralysis by analysis,

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[156] *Dirty Hands*, Act II, p. 147.
[157] *Dirty Hands*, Act V, pp. 223-224.

those that grasp the party's existence as a we are stuck in the skeptical attitude. Moreover, the we fails to create sustainable jointly accepted beliefs. The action of the we is informed by a belief ascribed to the group, but the belief is gestated by an individual who may not deliberate over it or otherwise subject it to the criticism of others. The we can act effectively if a powerful cult of personality is able to project his or her beliefs onto the collective, but authoritarian tactics aside the collective we collapses under the weight of dissent. This is the view of collective action that we are left with in Sartre's early work.

Chapter 4: Sartre's Awakening to "Synthetic" Reason[158] and the Self-Conscious Turn

> *When the rising class becomes conscious of itself, this self-consciousness acts at a distance upon intellectuals and makes the ideas in their heads disintegrate. … This Proletariat, far off, invisible, inaccessible, but conscious and acting, furnished the proof—obscurely for most of us—that not* all *conflicts had been resolved.*[159]
>
> *Our comprehension of the Other is never contemplative; it is only a moment of our praxis; a way of living—in struggle or in complicity—the concrete, human relation which unites us to him.*[160]

The inadequacy of Sartre's early theory of collective action—evident in *Being and Nothingness*, *No Exit* and *Dirty Hands*—should now be apparent. Solidarity is elusive; it exists in the us, but only through the collective's Schmidtian assumption of the externally constituted view of the group. The us for this reason goes without self-determination. The we, which has self-determination, lacks a democratic model of collective belief to underlie collective acts. Upon proving effective it lapses into authoritarianism. Moreover, the explanatory power of this theory and its lack of fecundity poses a major challenge for Sartre as he begins his serious study of economics, colonialism, ecological politics, and history in preparing the manuscript of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. A movement toward a new theory of collective action is underway.

Coinciding with this movement is a serious engagement with Hegel and Marx. Despite the fact that Sartre periodically comments on the former in *Being and Nothingness*, his systematic understanding of Hegel's philosophy is not spurred until after his study of Jean Hyppolite's translation of the *Phenomenology* and the interpretations collected under the names of *Genesis and*

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[158] I hazard the term "synthetic" with scare quotes to placate the widespread anxiety among readers of Hegel when it comes to using the term. There's something sophomoric in this refusal and it should be recalled that Hegel himself did not shy away from the concept of synthesis, but in the end it is right to ward off the bad interpretation of his work that characterizes every triadic movement in his thought as thesis-antithesis-synthesis.

[159] Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 18-19.

[160] *Search for a Method*, p. 156.

Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and *Studies in Marx and Hegel*. (Hyppolite's translation began to appear in 1939 and his first major commentary on the *Phenomenology* was released in 1946.)[161] Beginning with the debut of *Les Temps modernes*, the organ Sartre created and for which he wrote an introduction in 1945, Sartre becomes increasingly committed to understanding human groups through "synthetic reason." By this expression he is not trying to convey the triadic movement of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, which is, to be sure, an inadequate caricature of Hegel's dialectics and one that more accurately can be attributed to Fichte. Rather, synthetic reason stands in for Sartre's composite, Hegelian-Marxist epistemology that is slowly refined before the expression is dropped entirely in the *Critique*. It will become evident that there is more to it than the haphazard assimilation of contrary ideas as one may imagine when they hear the term "synthesis" as a construal of Hegelian philosophy. We must understand Sartre's discontent with his early theory of collective action in the context of this sincere struggle with Hegel and Marx that lasts through his authoring of the *Critique*.

Additionally, in the dramas of the period between *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique*, the limits of Sartre's early theory of collective action become evident. Marie-Denise Boros Azzi even concludes from the dramatic works what is never baldly stated about collectives in Sartre's theoretical efforts, viz. that "the absolute loneliness which characterizes most of Sartre's characters

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[161] On the relationship between Hyppolite and Sartre, who were student colleagues at the *École Normale Supérieure*, as well as a discussion of Sartre's prior discovery of Alexandre Kojève and Jean Wahl see Gary Gutting's tremendous *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2001), pp. 105-113. Sartre was familiar with Kojève's lectures on Hegel during the 1930s and James Schmidt has even contended that Sartre had a rigorous interpretation and critique of Kojève's position in *Nausea* and *Being and Nothingness*, but these early works suggest to me an author that can slip into Hegel's jargon without committing to its inner logic (see James Schmidt, "Lordship and Bondage in Merleau-Ponty and Sartre," *Political Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 2, May 1979, pp. 201-227). Wahl, the other major French Hegelian that Sartre encountered before finishing *Being and Nothingness*, was like Kojève an inspiration to Sartre's early read on Hegel. Wahl's work merits special attention in that his existential interpretation of Hegel centers on the unhappy consciousness section of the *Phenomenology*, which inspired Sartre's ontology in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre, however, took Wahl's Hegelian demand to move *vers le concret* in a decidedly Husserlian direction, which Gutting details quite well. Finally Christopher M. Fry's discovery that Sartre's citations of Hegel in *Being and Nothingness* all came from a short anthology by the name of *Morceaux choisis d'Hegel* rather than the original text ought to be mentioned in this discussion about the time of Sartre's "real" discovery of Hegel. See Fry, *Sartre and Hegel: The Variations of an Enigma in* L'être et le néant, (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1988).

derives from their common perception of the impossibility of penetrating someone else's consciousness. Hence their total alienation."[162] In the dramas meaningful and enduring romantic partnerships appear impossible; bad faith appears unavoidable; in-fighting among groups appears inevitable.[163] Some of these features will remain in and after the *Critique*, but Sartre senses that a new theory of collective action is needed to address solidarity and collective alienation, which in turn will require the revision of central components of the existential ontology in *Being and Nothingness*. The look can no longer be the *de facto* interpersonal relation. A mediating, rather than alienating, relation will find its place alongside it. One's being-for-others will blend with a more fundamental being-with. A constitutive 'we' may in the end precede one's status as a for-itself. In short, a transformation of the early philosophy is needed to more adequately address collective action.

How are we to read this transformation? Sartre scholar Robert Cumming in 1979 spoke about the politics of philosophical breaks. The most highly esteemed philosophers of the twentieth century—especially Wittgenstein and Heidegger—are commonly granted a break between the early thought and the later.[164] Others, and Sartre among them are often thought to be merely inconsistent when such revisions occur over time. Cumming interprets Sartre's later work as a literary dialectical engagement with Stalinist Marxism: not methodologically different in kind from the early work, but simply in content. Frederic Jameson from *Marxism and Form* (1971) on through the recent collection of essays entitled *Valences of the Dialectic* (2009) has maintained that Sartre's early work is commensurate with and fits inside the later. The *Critique* concretizes those interpersonal relations

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[162] "Representation of Character in Sartre's Drama, Fiction, and Biography," p. 462.
[163] The expression "play-acting" is never far from the lips of certain romantically involved characters in the dramatic works (among them: Hugo, Jessica, Garcin, Inez). One could read both plays discussed in the previous chapter as extended meditations on bad faith and the role it necessarily plays in the failure of romantic relationships.
[164] Robert Denoon Cumming, "This Place of Violence, Obscurity and Witchcraft," *Political Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Sage Publications, May 1979), pp. 181-200.

that were grasped in immediate abstraction through the category of being for-others, but the existential and Marxist tendencies were present all along.[165]

I subscribe to a version of Jameson's thesis. The early ontology is not rejected so much as circumscribed by newly defined social and historical structures. But there is a decided re-focusing on social mediations in the wake of Merleau-Ponty's criticism of Sartre that simply isn't there in *Being and Nothingness*.[166] Indeed, I submit that the relation between *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is akin to the relation between consciousness and self-consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. *Being and Nothingness* is an attempt to lay bare the ontological structure of an embodied, solitary consciousness. Social relations are undeniably an important aspect of this work, but they are apprehended by a subject that views them as external to itself. Human reality is necessarily for-others in *Being and Nothingness*, yet this awareness does not arouse consciousness' turn back onto itself as it does in Hegel's struggle for recognition. But just as Hegel's *Phenomenology* depicts consciousness coming to find itself operating "behind the curtain"[167] in its movement from

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[165] Cf. Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1971), pp. 206-305; *Valences of the Dialectic*, (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2009), pp. 223-253. Point of clarification: Jameson doesn't think that there is a reconciliation of existentialism and Marxism in the later work as other commentators have suggested based on a common reading of *Search for a Method*. For Jameson the two philosophies grow alongside one another in Sartre's development and by the publication of the *Critique* it is clear that Marxism has a more pronounced say in determining their co-existence than it did in *Being and Nothingness*.

[166] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. Joseph Bien, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1973).

[167] The passage in the *Phenomenology* to which I refer is the final paragraph of the section on consciousness where Hegel describes the movement toward self-consciousness. For Hegel the activity of knowing consciousness is essentially to reconcile appearances with the reality underlying them. In this attempt, at each stage of the *Phenomenology* up to this point, consciousness found itself embroiled in contradictions that required the utilization of new epistemic criteria. A nominalist account of reality as sense-certainty led to its redefinition in the terms of perception, which in turn gave way to an account of reality as a set of law-bound forces. Recollecting this series, consciousness discovers that it itself was the reason for this movement from less to more adequate accounts of knowing. Consciousness is essential to the process. This "unity" of consciousness and world draws back the curtain of appearances one more time to discover the self as the real. Hegel writes:

> The two extremes of this syllogism, the one of the pure inner world, the other, that of the inner being gazing into this pure inner world, have now coincided, and just as they, *qua* extremes, have vanished, so too the middle term, as something other than these extremes, has also vanished. This curtain of appearance hanging before the inner world is therefore drawn away, and we have the inner being (the 'I') gazing into the inner world—the vision of the undifferentiated selfsame being, which repels itself from itself, posits itself as an inner being containing different moments, but for which equally these

sense certainty to understanding and beyond—a revelation spurred by interpersonal conflict—so does Sartre begin to contextualize individual projects within a framework of collective agency. The tension between the for-itself and the in-itself remains true to human reality—his phenomenological method is not entirely abandoned—but in the later work this transcendent consciousness is embedded in social relations that are constitutive of who one is. Self-consciousness amounts to awareness of this constitutive character, and the refusal to paint the presence of others as necessarily alienating.[168]

Sartre's self-conscious turn is marked by frequent reference to synthetic reason in the texts of the period between 1945-1957. The expression connotes his growing acquaintance with Hegelian philosophy and his budding allegiance to the social movement of Marxism. Sartre had read Hegel and Marx well before this self-conscious turn began—engaging the latter even prior to reading *Being and Time*, the work often credited as the catalyst for Sartre's existentialism—yet neither altered his thinking about sociality in the way that they would during the two decades after the war.[169] The self-conscious turn, while a sustained reflection on the early work, is also a turn back to Hegel and Marx. The capstone to this study is reached in the first volume of the *Critique* where he adopts a more

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> moments are immediately *not* different—*self-consciousness*. It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless *we* go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 103).

In the subsequent section Hegel argues that this movement from consciousness to self-consciousness is only possible when epistemological inquiry finds a social dimension. That is, no matter how certain consciousness may be in its claims on reality it must be able to find agreement with other thinking things for these beliefs to be regarded as knowledge.

[168] There is a shift of emphasis in other aspects of Sartre's philosophy as well, to be sure, but nowhere is the turn or break more evident than it is with the individual's new-found self-awareness of her sociality. Further, I should note that Sartre never abandons the existential emphasis on choice—one's decisions maintain a constitutive role alongside sociality.

[169] In *Search for a Method* Sartre remarks that he read *Capital* and *The German Ideology* in his early 20s, but that this engagement with Marx did not have the transformative effect on him that his texts later would. See *Search for a Method*, pp. 17-18.

critical tone, but in the interim we find Sartre moving past the limits of his early work by taking up the resources of Hegel and Marx.

In referring to this period of transition as a "turn" I aim to show that there is no decisive moment at which the early "existential" Sartre ends and the new "Marxian" Sartre begins. The pivot is gradual and non-unidirectional, undeserving of the label of a break. Elements of the early and later works are evident throughout this period and what we are left with in its final analysis are the inconsistencies of a voracious mind looking back on a body of thought that would always cast a shadow on new interests and toward the rough outlines of an uncertain future project that had yet to be born. To clarify this thirteen-year period of rich and suggestive (but also inconsistent) writings I throw into relief the four topics that best evidence his turn: self-consciousness, synthetic collectives and synthetic action, the dangers of analytic rationality (Sartre's new answer to "the Jewish question"), and the existentialist-Marxist thesis on collective action presented in *Search for a Method*.

I. Self-Consciousness

Sartre initially struggles to articulate this self-conscious turn on account of the theoretical commitments he made in *Transcendence of the Ego* and *Being and Nothingness*.[170] In the 1948 lecture "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self" the social element is left wanting in his description

[170] Following Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl, Sartre determines in these early works that consciousness necessarily has an intentional structure. It is always *consciousness of* the object before it. Hence reflection or self-consciousness is nothing more than consciousness fixed on something taken to be a self—an act which can be social but is not necessarily. Reidar Due has indicated three manners in which the self is an object in *Being and Nothingness*: as a *soi*, consciousness projects ipseity as an ideal image of itself; the *psyché* is the self abstracted from the body, a mind "constructed out of disparate mental acts by a process which Sartre calls 'impure reflection'" (p. 66); finally, the self that I apprehend through the look of the other is the *moi-objet*, the self that consciousness negates and transcends as a for-itself. For a thorough treatment of self-knowledge in *Being and Nothingness* and a lucid discussion of the problem of knowledge in this work see Reidar Due, "Self-knowledge and Moral Properties in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*," *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 2000), pp. 61-94. Cf. also Phyllis Berdt Kenevan, "Self-Consciousness and the Ego in the Philosophy of Sartre," *The Philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981), pp. 197-210.

of self-consciousness. He is wedded to his early vocabulary in this work and his audience at the *Société française de philosophie* was certainly expecting the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* during the session, but one nonetheless detects Sartre modifying his earlier position. Consistent with his previous works he denies the existence of an unconscious while affirming prereflective thought as the condition for reflective self-consciousness: "Only the prereflective *cogito* establishes the rights of the reflective *cogito* and of reflection. It is from this starting point that one is able to formulate the ontological problem of the appearance of reflective consciousness and the logical problem of its right to be held as apodictic."[171] Hence self-consciousness is present even during Cartestian hyperbolic doubt, but at a level of self-awareness that is not anointed as certain. There are myriad ways to apprehend the self (doubting, willing, anxiety) that are nonetheless conscious. Sartre's point is that we should not conflate consciousness and knowledge. Reflection is not the essence of self-consciousness nor is a knowing relation the only possible way to grasp the self. While a contribution to the discourse of phenomenology, this argument for a wider appreciation of self-consciousness leaves underdeveloped its foundation in sociality. In this lecture Sartre has taken to Hegel's dialectic, to the idea of a truth that "becomes,"[172] to a more "synthetic" interpretation of consciousness than Husserl laid out,[173] and yet a Hegelian social element in self-consciousness is absent. He remains wedded to the early framework in this instance.

Nonetheless, his interest in history and collective action in this lecture is apparent. On the one hand, Sartre remarks, to achieve anything at all as historical agents we collectively act without full understanding, we operate on the principle that true moral judgments about our participation in history are always yet to come. On the other hand he exclaims "an absolute need for criteria both

[171] Sartre, "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self," trans. Stern *Readings in Existential Phenomenology*, ed. Nathaniel Lawrence and David O'Connor (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967), p. 114.
[172] "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self," p. 113.
[173] "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self," p. 132.

for action and for life in general. We need a starting point: this is true, that is false; we need certitudes. … I believe we have need of both: a becoming truth and, nevertheless, a certitude such that one can judge it."[174] Sartre will not settle this tension on the apodicticity of collective action until the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. 1. Therein he demonstrates the dialectical intelligibility of praxis on a collective scale. Despite the absence of a proper epistemological framework for this issue, Sartre in "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self" expresses the responsibility man has in collectively determining society's fate, a primary motivation in Sartre's ongoing interest in collective action: "it depends on man that he should build the city of ends or the immediate society of ants. It depends on him and no one else. There is no law, *a priori*, which determines it. And our destiny is, as always, in our hands."[175] Sartre occupies a liminal space in "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self." Still defending the views of the work to which he owes his public renown, Sartre here in 1948 is sensing problems of sociality that will lead him away from the apprehension of collectives through the ontological category of being for-others.

In the same year Sartre offers a tentative alternative to this view of self-consciousness in the excellent aesthetics essay "What Is Literature?" The essay draws on a novel distinction between the literary forms of poetry and prose. While recognizing their interpenetration Sartre separates the two on the basis that poetry is an exterior, God-like relation to words (from above the poet ponders the word as an image of reality that never does it justice) while prose is a function of communicative utility where the speaker is interior to language (the word is not regarded as a foreign thing; the prose-writer is immersed in a situation and uses the communicative tools at hand). The writer of prose speaks, communicates; language is for her part and parcel of the human condition. "We are

[174] "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self," pp. 135-136.
[175] "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self," p. 137.

within language as within our body. We *feel* it spontaneously while going beyond it towards other ends … The word is a certain particular moment of action and has no meaning outside it."[176]

In prose, Sartre argues, one is committed. Actions follow from beliefs and beliefs are disclosed in the language of prose. Writers must bear the responsibility of the words they choose. Sartre's position on prose is not entirely focused on content, that is, the discursive message conveyed by words through an arbitrarily chosen form.[177] While we can find common themes in Sartre's plays and theoretical works, as I have attempted to demonstrate above, we must insist that it is not an identical message that is shared across these forms, but rather a family of ideas that changes when organized as literature, poetry, drama or philosophical treatise. Along with literary form, original techniques, styles and usage (or even conventional or atavistic techniques, styles and usage) all work in the service of a prose-writer's agenda. This isn't to say that the author's intention is the sole or even primary consideration in figuring his commitment. One is committed in prose even to what is involuntary. The surrealists, for example, while ostensibly producing literature meant to incite class revolution, are for Sartre—by way of barriers to accessibility—dependent on their bourgeois benefactors:

> The agreement on principle between surrealism and the C.P. against the bourgeoisie does not go beyond formalism; it is the formal idea of negativity which unites them. In fact, the negativity of the Communist Party is temporary; it is a necessary, historical moment in its great enterprise of social reorganization; surrealist negativity,

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176 "What Is Literature?" *"What Is Literature?" and Other Essays*, ed. Steven Ungar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988), p. 35.

177 I believe Adorno misreads Sartre when he keys in on committed writing as an aesthetic theory that is ignorant of form in his essay on Samuel Beckett. It is clear from the opening lines of "What Is Literature? that Sartre is unwilling to offer a general aesthetic theory, but rather a theory of the prose form. Later in the work he writes "it is a matter of knowing what one wants to write about, whether butterflies or the condition of the Jews. And when one knows, then it remains to decide how one will write about it. Often the two choices are only one, but among good writers the second choice never precedes the first. … the always new requirements of the social and the metaphysical involve the artist in finding a new language and new techniques" ("What Is Literature?" p. 40). Cf. Theodor Adorno, "Trying to Understand *Endgame*," trans. Michael J. Jones, *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 319-352.

> whatever one may say about it, remains outside history, in the moment and in the eternal simultaneously; it is the absolute end of life and art.[178]

Commitment, then, if not the *telos* of the prose-writer is her enduring responsibility. And the crucial first component of committed writing is answering the question "for whom does one write?" Ultimately, this is a matter of self-consciousness.[179] A writer, for Sartre, is a free individual addressing a free readership: "For, since the one who writes recognizes, by the very fact that he takes the trouble to write, the freedom of his readers, and since the one who reads, by the mere fact of his opening the book, recognizes the freedom of the writer, the work of art, from whichever side you approach it, is an act of confidence in the freedom of men."[180] And the substantive content of freedom, for Sartre, in this essay, is a willingness to act self-consciously and rationally. Freedom entails a reckoning with the forces that have formed oneself, a willingness to deliberate over courses of action with others, and the courage to act as a social and historical agent in this self-governed way. In a thoroughly Hegelian passage[181] Sartre writes: "There is no given freedom. One must win an inner victory over one's passions, one's race, one's class, and one's nation and must conquer other men along with oneself."[182] How is a prose writer to achieve this freedom? They realize it in their communication with a concrete public whose norms reflect the writer's own. A writer achieves

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178 "What Is Literature?" p. 160.

179 I wish to discuss the issue of commitment in this beautiful essay in greater depth but resist so as to stay on point save for two quotations I tuck away here in the footnotes without further comment: "an argument that masks a tear—that's what we're after. The argument removes the obscenity from the tears; the tears, by revealing their origin in the passions, remove the aggressiveness from the argument" ("What Is Literature?" p. 45). "However bad and hopeless the humanity which it paints may be, the work must have an air of generosity. Not, of course, that this generosity is to be expressed by means of edifying discourses and virtuous characters; it must not even be premeditated, and it is quite true that fine sentiments do not make fine books. But it must be the very warp and woof of the book, the stuff out of which the people and things are cut; whatever the subject, a sort of essential lightness must appear everywhere and remind us that the work is never a natural datum, but an *exigence* and a *gift*. And if I am given this world with its injustices, it is not so that I may contemplate them coldly, but that I may animate them with my indignation, that I may disclose them and create them with their nature as injustices, that is, as abuses to be suppressed" ("What Is Literature?" pp. 66-67).

180 "What Is Literature?" p. 67.

181 On Hegel's view of the subjective element of freedom see chapter 1, section I: The Dialectic of Freedom and Alienation.

182 "What Is Literature?" p. 70.

freedom through the self-conscious apprehension of a social self and in an engagement with others that share in this sociality. "Whether he wants to or not, and even if he has his eyes on eternal laurels, the writer is speaking to his contemporaries and brothers of his class and race."[183] For whom does the self-conscious author write? For readers like the author.

The importance of self-consciousness for the prose writer and the collective dimension that it assumes in this essay bears reiteration. As representatives of their class and race, prose writers provide their readers with a social conscience. Readers are not acted upon by writers so much as provoked to become self-aware. "But in a collectivity which constantly corrects, judges, and metamorphoses itself, the written work can be an essential condition of action, that is, the moment of reflective consciousness."[184] Such a reflective attitude is enabled by the writer's communication of her self-conscious position with those that share in her collective lot. The writer's agency is realized in this commitment to speaking the truth about one's self to one's fellows: "a writer is committed when he tries to achieve the most lucid and the most complete consciousness of being embarked, that is, when he causes the commitment of immediate spontaneity to advance, for himself and others, to the reflective."[185] In this description of self-consciousness there's a disagreement with the early asocial view defended in "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self." The more Hegelian view offered in *What Is Literature?* apparently comes to fruition alongside Sartre's defense of his earlier position. No attempt is made to reconcile the two alternatives.

[183] "What Is Literature?" p. 70.
[184] "What Is Literature?" p. 140.
[185] "What Is Literature?" p. 77.

II. Synthetic Collectives and Synthetic Action

Three years earlier, upon the debut of *Les Temps modernes* (a journal Sartre named in honor of the Charlie Chaplin film of the same title), Sartre shows his commitment to a Hegelian-Marxian vision of collective action and personhood formation. Authoring the journal's introduction, Sartre (in the form of the 'we') fixes the contributors on a central task: "We would like our journal to contribute in a modest way to the elaboration of a synthetic anthropology."[186] This aim is practically oriented. Rather than the production and dissemination of knowledge about man in society, the journal is to be committed to man's liberation. In calling it a "synthetic anthropology" he shows his allegiance to a Hegelian notion of freedom where the presence of others are not burdensomely restrictive on activity, but rather the enabling condition for it. The texts selected for publication in *Les Temps modernes*, Sartre writes, must "clearly demonstrate the interrelation of the collective and the individual."[187]

Synthetic reason is to be contrasted with analytic rationality, a mode of reasoning that sees no substantive difference between the whole and the aggregation of parts into a composite reality. Analytic thinking is the rationality of Descartes,[188] and while Descartes was no social theorist his mechanistic model of thought captures the bourgeois mindset:

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[186] Sartre, "Introducing *Les Temps modernes,*" trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, *"What Is Literature?" and Other Essays* ed. Steven Ungar, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988), p. 261.
[187] "Introducing *Les Temps modernes,*" p. 266.
[188] Specifically, I'm thinking of the second and third of Descartes' methodological rules, which baldly state the position Sartre wishes to attribute to analytic rationality. Here are all four *in toto*: "I thought, in place of the large number of rules that make up logic, I would find the following four to be sufficient, provided that I made a strong and unswerving resolution never to fail to observe them. The first was never to accept anything as true if I did not have evident knowledge of its truth: that is, carefully to avoid precipitate conclusions and preconceptions, and to include nothing more in my judgements than what presented itself to my mind so clearly and so distinctly that I had no occasion to call it into doubt. The second, to divide each of the difficulties I examined into as many parts as possible and as may be required in order to resolve them better. The third, to direct my thoughts in an orderly manner, by beginning with the simplest and most easily known objects in order to ascend little by little, step by step, to knowledge of the most complex, and by supposing some order even among objects that have no natural order of precedence. And the last, throughout to make enumerations so complete, and reviews so comprehensive, that I could be sure of leaving nothing

> In society as conceived by the analytic cast of mind, the individual, a solid and indivisible participle, the vehicle of human nature, resides like a pea in a can of peas: he is round, closed in on himself, uncommunicative. All men are *equal*, by which it should be understood that they all participate equally in the essence of man. All men are *brothers*: fraternity is a passive bond among distinct molecules, which takes the place of an active or class-bound solidarity that the analytic cast of mind cannot even imagine. It is an entirely extrinsic and purely sentimental relation which masks the simple juxtaposition of individuals in analytic society.[189]

During this period I am referring to as the self-conscious turn Sartre doesn't champion specific social values so much as how to approach them. Fraternity and equality in this passage (a coupling to which we may add *liberty*) must be understood synthetically, through a dialectical comportment to the relation between part and whole. Only a dialectical approach apprehends that, for society, the whole is *the condition for* individuals as well as *the result of* the synthetic combination of them. It is only through the synthetic alternative to analytic reason that collectives become truly apparent. For Sartre then, analytic reason aligns with the interests of the bourgeoisie. By viewing social classes as fictions—abstract conceptual groupings of concrete, lived, individual realities—the analytic mindset is pragmatically and politically useful for members of the bourgeoisie. It is the latter's reasoning that leads bourgeois man to deny the claim that the worker is who he is because of his membership in a class of persons forced to exchange their labor-power for wages. Such "collective realities" cannot be reasoned analytically:

> A certain polemical tradition has too often presented the bourgeois as a calculating drone whose sole concern is to defend his privileges. In fact, though, one *constitutes* oneself as a bourgeois by choosing, once and for all, a certain analytic perspective on the world which one attempts to foist on all men and which excludes the perception of collective realities.[190]

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out." René Descartes, *The Discourse on the Method*, Part 2, trans. Robert Stoothoff, *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1998), p. 29. In Descartes' mechanistic universe a whole can be broken down into parts, analyzed, and re-combined into an analyzable composite whole without undergoing any qualitative transformation.

[189] "Introducing *Les Temps modernes*," pp. 256-257.

[190] "Introducing *Les Temps modernes*," p. 257.

In championing synthetic reason for its capacity to reveal collectives, and in labeling analytic reason *bourgeois*, Sartre here, in 1945 already, is effectively beginning to transition away from his early theory of collective action. Of course, as demonstrated above, we find the residues of this early theory in *Dirty Hands* and "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self," which do not debut for another three years, but Sartre is nonetheless in mid-turn by the time the war ends. His sympathy for Hegelian-Marxian dialectical collectives is even more apparent a year after the initial distribution of *Les Temps modernes* in the work "Materialism and Revolution," but there remains a final thought in need of explication from this introduction that is missing in subsequent work.

This sociology of reason is complicated by a further dialectical interpenetration. Sartre argues that there is a synthetic aspect to bourgeois liberal charity: one that comes from an intuition of collective realities, which remain obscure in analytic reasoning. On the other hand workers who are employed in the age of automation, who are subject to the principles of "scientific management" i.e. Taylorism, who labor with and repair machine technology, are privy to the analytic rationality of bourgeois liberal humanists. The forms of reason—analytic and synthetic—are not finally distributed to the members of each social class. Bourgeois thought is not wholly analytic nor is proletariat thought wholly synthetic. Here as ever for Sartre, behind the one that an individual values lurks an agent's choice, a choice of socio-political reasoning among two options mutually exclusively and independently verifiable:

> Thus does the contemporary mind appear divided by an antinomy. Those who value above all the dignity of the human being, his freedom, his inalienable rights, are as a result inclined to think in accordance with the analytic cast of mind, which conceives of individuals outside their actual conditions of existence, which endows them with an unchanging, abstract nature, and which isolates them and blinds itself to their solidarity. Those who have profoundly understood that man is rooted in the collectivity and who want to affirm the importance of historical, technical, and economic factors are inclined toward the synthetic mode, which, blind to individuals, has eyes only for groups. … Thus, those holding fast to the autonomy of the

> individual would be trapped in a capitalist liberalism whose nefarious consequences are clear; those calling for a socialist organization of the economy would be requesting it of an unspecified totalitarian authoritarianism. The current malaise springs from the fact that no one can accept the extreme consequences of these principles; there is a 'synthetic' component to be found in democrats of good will, and there is an 'analytic' component in socialists.[191]

While Sartre does not reconcile the antinomy of individual freedom and collective determinism in this introduction, he does lay it bare as a problem that will haunt him up until and even after the solution he provides for it in *Search for a Method*.

"Materialism and Revolution," a lengthy article published by *Les Temps modernes* in 1946, is Sartre's most aggressive confrontation with Marxism during the self-conscious turn and the first work where his interest in an epistemology of material praxis is disclosed.[192] In this essay Sartre argues for a revolutionary philosophy that doesn't depend on what he takes to be a widely accepted and incoherent doctrine of naïve materialism.[193] Dissatisfied with the deterministic bent given to thinking by many Marxists—who were inspired by the *German Ideology*'s oversimplified claim that matter begets the content of thought—Sartre turns to Marx's remarks on action as the basis for a revolutionary epistemology. Work becomes the cornerstone of understanding and all synthetic knowledge contains an element of action. Comprehending the object entails the active manipulation of it:

> This means that man transcends the world toward a future state from which he can contemplate it. It is in changing the world that we can come to know it. Neither the detached consciousness that would soar over the universe without being able to get a standpoint on it, nor the material object which reflects a condition without understanding it can ever grasp the totality of existence in a synthesis, even a purely conceptual one. Only a man situated in the universe and completely crushed by the forces of Nature and transcending them completely through his design to master them can do this.[194]

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[191] "Introducing *Les Temps modernes,*" p. 262.
[192] This epistemology will be more rigorously worked out in the opening sections of *Critique, Vol. 1*.
[193] Cf. Chapter 2, section 1 for my statement on Marx's "practical materialism."
[194] "Materialism and Revolution," p. 236.

Beyond the synthetic understanding provided in this transcendence of nature, in this transcendence of facticity, action realizes freedom. I take this to be a Hegelian point about the concrete determinacy of committing oneself to the world through one's action. Sartre echoes the reading of Hegel I provided in chapter one. "Thus freedom is to be discovered only in the act, and is one with the act; it forms the basis of the relations and interrelations that constitute the act's internal structures."[195] Here as in the introduction to *Les Temps modernes* one can see Sartre shifting to a view of freedom as self-conscious, rational agency. Freedom of thought or even the freedom to express oneself in public are not sufficient expressions of the concept unless one is permitted to act on the basis of these beliefs; for Sartre, as for Hegel and Marx, only through action is freedom realized.

Additionally, action provides a synthetic kind of knowledge that contemplation cannot reach. And here again we find Sartre in this essay equating synthetic reasoning with the revolutionary consciousness of workers. For Sartre as for Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*, workers are befitted with a kind of epistemic privilege. Because they manipulate the world they understand it more profoundly. Action provides the synthetic knowledge that contemplative occupations never can. The oppressing class, like Hegel's lord, enjoys the fruits of privilege in exchange for a non-laboring (and therefore shallow) understanding of things. Their consciousness remains in the immediate understanding of reification—what Sartre castigates under the banner of the analytic. Conversely, those that work are not only in a position to change the world, but through their activity understand the very world that they modify. While lauded for its synthetic character, action in "Materialism and Revolution" remains on the level of the individual.

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[195] "Materialism and Revolution," p. 227.

No suggestion is given in this essay that the oppressing class intuits synthetically and that workers have a suppressed analytic hold on things as we saw in the introduction to *Les Temps modernes*. In fact, the analytic-synthetic divide holds rather severely when Sartre turns to the natural sciences, which Sartre takes to be wholly analytic, bourgeois disciplines:

> But the universe of science is quantitative, and quantity is the very opposite of the dialectical unit. A sum is a unit only in appearance. Actually, the elements which compose it maintain only relations of contiguity and simultaneity; they are there together, and that is all. A numerical unit is in no way influenced by the co-presence of another unity; it remains inert and separated within the number it helps to form. And this state of things is indeed necessary in order for us to be able to count; for were two phenomena to occur in intimate union and modify one another reciprocally, we should be unable to decide whether we were dealing with two separate terms or with only one. Thus, as scientific matter represents, in a way, the realization of quantity, science is, by reason of its inmost concerns, its principles and its methods, the opposite of dialectics.[196]

It may be remarked that the last century of theoretical physics challenges the paradigm that Sartre defines as analytic. The turn-of-the-century revelation that light possesses the qualities of a particle as well as a wave suggests the existence of a whole that reconciles and unites contrasting parts—parts with intense interior relations to one another. And yet Sartre is committed to the idea that neither Einstein nor practitioners of quantum mechanics are synthetic thinkers: the parts are still only contiguously related and the focus on general concepts denies the concrete specificity of particular objects.

> It will perhaps be objected that certain modern theories—like that of Einstein—are synthetic. … I shall confine myself to observing that there is no question of a synthesis, for the relations which can be established among the various structures of a synthesis are *internal* and *qualitative*, whereas the relations which, in Einstein's theory, enable us to define a position or a mass remain *quantitative* and *external*. Moreover, the question lies elsewhere. Whether the scientist be Newton, Archimedes, Laplace or Einstein, he studies not the concrete totality, but the general and abstract conditions of the universe. Not the *particular* event which catches and absorbs into itself light, heat and life and which we call the 'glistening of the sun

[196] "Materialism and Revolution," p. 191.

> through leaves on a summer's day,' but light in general, heat phenomena, the general conditions of life. There is never any question of examining *this particular* refraction through *this particular* piece of glass which has its history and which, from a certain point of view, is regarded as the concrete synthesis of the universe, but the conditions of possibility of refraction *in general*.[197]

In passages such as this one it becomes remarkably evident that Sartre stands on the side against a science of dialectical materialism. Scientific method, for Sartre, was too imperiled by an analytic commitment to understanding wholes as a co-presencing of parts that retain self-identical qualities in spite of their unity. Scientific wholes, for him, are concatenations of universal properties—unfit to be called dialectical.

III. Dangers of Analytic Rationality and A New Answer to the Jewish Question

Analytic thinking is a danger for Sartre in that it masks the existence of class, confuses collective virtues of community and friendship, and promotes a tolerant pluralism that tacitly forwards racist, classist and anti-Semitist agendas. The autocratic, atomized individual is deeply, originally and permanently isolated on the analytic view. Bourgeois humanists, no doubt, can have a charitable disposition and a deep feeling of obligation toward others, but insofar as analysis remains the only form of rational thinking available, the social whole fails to be adequately addressed. Community and fraternity become the loose and external ties between isolated individuals for analytic thinking rather than the conditions for personhood formation. All social relations become those that Hegel and Marx reserved for civil society: diremption becomes the assumed starting point of sociality, the default beginning of lived human existence. Sartre finds that analysis fails to properly contest morally inappropriate attitudes. In the tolerance it holds toward malicious opinions of ill will—accepting them as matters of taste—analytic thought shows a steadfast commitment to a certain irrationality.

[197] "Materialism and Revolution," p. 195.

Members of a group aren't forced to submit their beliefs to peer evaluation in reason-giving contexts, but are allowed to fence them off as belonging to an unchallengeable and inalienable personal bent. Or when deliberative processes do take place no general will formation occurs; rather, a token appreciation for diversity, a clearing of liberal conscience, and inevitably the uninterrupted forwarding of vested interests.

In answering the Jewish question, that is, the question of emancipation from conditions of oppression, Sartre deems such pluralisms insufficient and the product of analytic thought. *Anti-Semite and Jew* (*Réflexions sur la question juive*) is a stunning critique of French anti-Semitism and the liberal pluralists that propagate it. But it is a work that is commonly misread. Without a sensitivity to the philosophical context of the Jewish question and the broader criticism of analytic rationality in this text, readers of Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive* are sure to misunderstand his attack on the liberal democrat. Consider Jonathan Judaken's *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, which posits the bold thesis that "at each defining moment of his intellectual agenda Sartre turned to the image of 'the Jew' to either clarify, reassess, or redefine his ideas."[198] Judaken expertly contextualizes Sartre's book in the anti-Semitic milieu of post-Enlightenment Europe and the collective amnesia over French collaboration in the Holocaust that characterizes post-War France, but he is misled when he accuses Sartre of "a dogmatic historical materialism"[199] for claiming that there is less anti-Semitism among members of the working class. Judaken does not appreciate the synthetic character of praxis and the alternative epistemology that Sartre describes in this text, in "Materialism and Revolution" and in others during the self-conscious turn. Not surprisingly, this deafness to the character of Sartre's dialectical project results in a myopic view of this book as though it were wholly

[198] Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), p. 3.
[199] *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, p. 130.

independent of Bauer's and Marx's responses to the same question that I covered in chapter two. Notably this myopia results in the bad conclusion that Sartre supports an untenable "universalist politics of emancipation."[200] This universalist thesis can be predicated of Bauer's Hegelian answer and Marx's classist answer, but it is Sartre's original contribution that the Jew possesses no royal road to emancipation. Liberation from conditions of oppression is a collective project begun anew by each generation in an attempt to overthrow those social structures that alienate and brutalize. The emancipation of the Jew is the self-determined collective action of Jewish persons.

To tackle the first of Judaken's contentions one must appreciate the tensions in *Anti-Semite and Jew* between analysis and synthesis, and understanding and reason. Sartre admits, against the grain of a lot of his work during this period that unilaterally praises synthetic thought, that the anti-Semite understands the world through the spirit of *synthesis*, an irrational synthetic comprehension of collectives. Anti-Semitism, in other words, is a passion and not a reason for loathing the synthetic collective of the Jew. Sartre makes his claim about the working class—"We find scarcely any anti-Semitism among workers"[201]—in opposition to this one. Workers also think synthetically, but they are fixed on economic groups rather than social ones: "The bourgeoisie, the peasant class, the proletariat—those are the synthetic realities with which it [the working class] is concerned, and in those complexes it distinguishes secondary synthetic structures—labor unions, employers' associations, trusts, cartels, parties."[202] Conversely, anti-Semites tend to hail from the middle class; they are the peitite bourgeois functionaries of capital. In other words, the anti-Semetic middle class does not produce. Synthesis is for them a passionate comprehension of collectives, an unsubstantiated grasp on wholes, and not the rationality of action. Praxis offers a direct material

[200] *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, p. 145.
[201] Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p. 35.
[202] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, pp. 35-6.

knowledge, Sartre suggests, that allows for the justified application of synthetic thought, that is, synthesis supported by practical reason. Whereas the contemplative occupations taken up by the middle class—that still entail activity of a sort, "a constant commerce with men"[203]—end up misconstruing the workings of collectives. Collectives are animated by wills for the analytic understanding and the initiative and charisma of particular wills are what direct them. Thus the synthetic thought that characterizes the anti-Semite is injudiciously disposed with at the moment where one reasons historically, where one attempts a rational explanation of history. Synthesis is the anti-Semite's passion, but not his reason. In its stead we get historical events explained in conspiratorial tones: it is the cabal of Jewish bankers and manufacturers that explain the average European's predicament, the wills of particular persons of the Jewish race (and not commercial interests in general) that have the politicians locked in a vice grip.

Which brings us to the liberal democrat's protests against the anti-Semite—the attitude that more properly can be claimed a "universalist politics of emancipation" in Judaken's phrase—and Sartre's criticism of this position. The democrat, for Sartre, is the analytic protector of the Jew:

> In the eighteenth century, once and for all, [the democrat] made his choice: the analytic spirit. He has no eyes for the concrete syntheses with which history confronts him. He recognizes neither Jew, nor Arab, nor Negro, nor bourgeois, nor worker, but only man—man always the same in all times and all places. He resolves all collectivities into individual elements. To him a physical body is a collection of molecules; a social body, a collection of individuals. And by individual he means the incarnation in a single example of the universal traits which make up human nature.[204]

In the analytic mind collectives are not determinant. The qualities that inhere in a person of Jewish descent could equally hold for a Gentile: individuals are bundles of universal properties and there is no particularly Jewish manner of intellectualism, for example, that couldn't equally be predicated of

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[203] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 36.
[204] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 55.

numerous Christians. Collectives are to the democrat what wholes are to the nominalist: the derived result of an accumulation of particulars. Thus the synthetic spirit of the anti-Semite clashes with the analytic spirit of the democrat without the occurrence of a genuine intercourse of ideas. Anti-Semites are true Frenchmen, the rightful inheritors of the land, in their unreflective synthesis of groups while the Jews are those avaricious outsiders. On the other hand, the democrat (who may be of Jewish birth) strives:

> to persuade individuals that they exist in an isolated state. 'There are no Jews,' he says, 'there is no Jewish question.' This means that he wants to separate the Jew from his religion, from his family, from his ethnic community, in order to plunge him into the democratic crucible whence he will emerge naked and alone, an individual and solitary particle like all the other particles. … For a Jew, conscious and proud of being Jewish, asserting his claim to be a member of the Jewish community without ignoring on that account the bonds which unite him to the national community, there may not be so much difference between the anti-Semite and the democrat. The former wishes to destroy him as a man and leave nothing in him but the Jew, the pariah, the untouchable; the latter wishes to destroy him as a Jew and leave nothing in him but the man, the abstract and universal subject of the rights of man and the rights of the citizen.[205]

Between the two alternatives a society that fosters the attitude of the democrat appears a far more livable option. Tolerance undeniably has its benefits. Nonetheless Sartre is equally tough on the democrat, in this essay, for whom collectives have no say in the possibilities offered in the individual's situation.

Sartre asks: Are we to understand the Jew as a religious attitude, a race, the expression of phenotype, a cultural representation, one that pledges fidelity to Jewish law? He advises that "the Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew."[206] We see in this formulation the residues of the look. It is as an object for another that the Jew lives her being for-others. It is the look that renders one's

[205] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 57.
[206] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 69.

existence as a concrete social being. When the look renders one a Jew it places one in the common situation of the Jew—that is all Sartre is willing to say about the substantive content of "Jewishness."

The customary complaint with *Anti-Semite and Jew* is that it lacks an engagement with the particularity of anti-Semitism against other forms of racial and ethnic oppression—a reasonable position to take. For Sartre writes that "The Jew only serves him [the anti-Semite] as a pretext; elsewhere his counterpart will make use of the Negro or the man of yellow skin. The existence of the Jew merely permits the anti-Semite to stifle his anxieties at their inception by persuading himself that his place in the world has been marked out in advance, that it awaits him, and that tradition gives him the right to occupy it."[207] It is worth recalling in this context that Sartre is tackling the same topic that Marx addressed in his seminal essay "On the Jewish Question," which similarly leaves a rather undeveloped portrait of the Jew. I submit that for Marx and Sartre both the Jewish question is really a question of how any group of oppressed persons should go about emancipating themselves from their situation of bondage. The problem of oppression speaks louder to both than does the issue of Jewish identity. Their arguments, which do apply to Jewish persons in anti-Semitic contexts, are better received as general theories of emancipation.

It is unfortunate that Sartre's unique answer to this question has yet to draw more attention and among Anglophone readers this is in part a consequence of the poor title translation of *Réflexions sur la question juive* as *Anti-Semite and Jew*, which effaces the legacy of the work within the tradition of dialectical social theory. His answer is also troubled by the admission that his remarks "make no pretense at providing a solution to the Jewish problem. But perhaps they do give us a basis for stating the conditions on which a solution might be envisaged."[208] What Sartre does offer,

[207] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 54.
[208] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 143.

and I think he is selling himself short by claiming that he provides no solution to the question, is that emancipation is a matter of self-determined action as part of a collective. Bestowed with this identity from outside, the Jew must come to authentically live that situation by acting in concert with other Jewish persons and collectively presiding over Jewish identity and addressing the needs born of that situation. Emancipation does not entail the dissolving of Jewish identity in the state or proletariat class, but rather taking ownership over the identity and the collective re-inscription of what that identity means. "To be a Jew is to be thrown into—to be *abandoned to*—the situation of a Jew; and at the same time it is to be responsible in and through one's own person for the destiny and the very nature of the Jewish people."[209] "The sole tie that binds them [Jewish persons] is the hostility and disdain of the societies which surround them. Thus the authentic Jew is the one who asserts his claim in the face of the disdain shown toward him."[210]

Sartre retains elements of both replies—Bauer's Hegelian reply as well as Marx's—to the Jewish question: he abandons neither the nation-state nor class unity in his recommendations for the collective overcoming of oppression. In one instance, and as a variation on Bauer's position, Sartre proposes a "concrete liberalism" where citizens' rights are extended to all who act as members of the state (by paying taxes, voting, observing the regulations of various ministries and bureaucracies, etc.), but in such a way that synthetic collective identities are preserved. It is this latter aspect that Bauer thought needed to be done away with to achieve state unity and Jewish emancipation. But for Sartre:

> What we propose here is a concrete liberalism. By that we mean that all persons who through their work collaborate toward the greatness of a country have the full rights of citizens of that country. What gives them this right is not the possession of a problematical and abstract 'human nature,' but their active participation in the life of

[209] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 89.
[210] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 91.

> the society. This means, then, that the Jews—and likewise the Arabs and the Negroes—from the moment that they are participants in the national enterprise, have a right in that enterprise; they are citizens. But they have these rights *as* Jews, Negroes or Arabs—that is, as concrete persons.[211]

And likewise Sartre suggests that anti-Semitism "could not exist in a classless society."[212] For social divisions such as Jew and non-Jew exist only in deeply alienated societies, market-directed societies among them, that stress differences of class through commodity fetishism or "conspicuous consumption" in Veblen's phrase. Such marked distinctions between persons sharing in one and the city, one in the same society, corrode the sense of collective belonging that attracts divergent people into a community. According to Sartre the social divisions that mark our society are what the anti-Semite really wishes to target, but they misdirect their hostility toward the Jew:

> Anti-Semitism manifests the separation of men and their isolation in the midst of the community, the conflict of interests and the crosscurrents of passions: it can exist only in a society where a rather loose solidarity unites strongly structured pluralities; it is a phenomenon of social pluralism. In a society whose members feel mutual bonds of solidarity, because they are all engaged in the same enterprise, there would be no place for it.[213]

Ultimately, embracing Jewish identity is a temporary measure for Sartre—not unlike Marx's feelings toward the proletariat. The idea is that through self-determined collective action on the part of an oppressed group that the real social causes of the underlying divisions between oppressed and non-oppressed groups could be done away with. The angry passion of anti-Semitism will be dissolved, ultimately, when the Jew/Gentile distinction no longer holds, when a deep sense of solidarity underlies what in the end will be a superficial distinction. So the self-determined collective action of Jewish persons—be it through Zionism or some mass-assimilation or some alternative future

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[211] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 146.
[212] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 149.
[213] *Anti-Semite and Jew*, pp. 149-150.

action—is a movement whose point of termination ought to coincide with the end of Jewish oppression.

Sartre's essay on the Jewish question outlines a handful of dangers and gestures toward the importance of collective action in thinking freedom. Anti-Semitism presents a major worry for Sartre whom otherwise generally champions the synthetic spirit. This disclaimer allows for an important emphasis on the role of reason and yet a fastidious commitment to analytic reason presents the danger of collective alienation. The democrat's trust in analytic reason fosters a society free of solidarity and where collective identities are rendered meaningless: in the attempt to remove the anti-Semite's footing, the democrat does away with all synthetic realities. Thus Sartre draws the conclusion that collectives are to be the locus for emancipatory movements so long as they exercise synthetic reason toward the achievement of self-determined ends. This rich suggestion remains vague, but offers direction for his subsequent struggles to reconcile freedom and collective identity, a socialism that promotes liberty.

IV. The Existential-Marxist Thesis on Collective Action

> *And since I am to speak of existentialism, let it be understood that I take it to be an 'ideology.'* [214]

Search for a Method (*Questions de méthode*), the last philosophical work written before the *Critique*, is similar to "Materialism and Revolution" in that in it we find Sartre siding with Marx against Marxism. In both texts he dwells on action or praxis as the fulfillment of epistemology and looks to Marx to explain praxis as a dynamic interaction between man and world that changes agent and material. And in both works he accuses contemporary Marxism of dogmatisms: the naïve materialism of Engels in "Materialism and Revolution" and a formalist, a priori historicism in *Search*

[214] *Search for a Method*, p. 8.

for a Method. *Search for a Method* is of interest for other reasons as well. Many of the concepts in the *Critique* are anticipated in it, but they appear without the neologisms that Sartre later provides. Among these, Sartre develops a nascent version of the practico-inert—a mediating relation between men and history—begins to articulate his thoughts on projects as collective action *par excellence*, and anticipates his sustained interest in scarcity as the necessary condition for all of human history up through the present. The similarities between these works were one of the reasons that Sartre chose to print it as a prefatory essay to the French edition of the *Critique*. *Search for a Method* is certainly more accessible than the intimidating *Critique* and Sartre worried that readers of the latter would ultimately find in the long work a re-statement of the earlier one: "I was afraid that this mountain of notes might seem to have brought forth a mouse."[215] This anxiety is unwarranted in my estimation and the two works should be read as independent attempts at responding to a common set of concerns. *Search for a Method*, in fact, was originally written for a Polish audience and first appeared in a Polish-language journal in 1957. Sartre was responding to a prompt from the journal's editor who asked that he discuss the situation of existentialism at that moment of history. Such historical details color *Search for a Method* in a hue not shared by the *Critique*. What we find in the former is an interesting initial attempt at explaining collective action through a meeting of existentialism and Marxism.

Periodically in this work Sartre insults both schools of thought. With respect to Marxism there are three lines of attack: its bad faith, its a priori philosophy of history and its failure to grasp individual persons in their concrete fullness. The bad faith of Marxism is that it leaves the end of action undetermined for the agent in its explanations by claiming that he or she is ideologically

[215] Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. 1*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (New York: Verso, 2004), p. 821. In the French this quote is printed in the preface to *Critique de la Raison Dialectique, precede de Questions de Méthode, Tome I, Théorie des Ensembles Pratiques*, which was published in 1960. The quote is not re-printed in the English-language edition of the preface to *Search for a Method*, but does appear in the "annexe" to the English translation of the *Critique, Vol. 1*.

unaware of and not responsible for the actions he/she performs. Marxism explains the continual renewal of the capitalist system through a rampant instrumental reasoning that informs the beliefs on which agents act. For Sartre this explanation allows for a flight from the responsibility attendant to the irreducibly free nature of action. "If we look at things from this angle, human action is reduced to that of a physical force whose effect evidently depends upon the system in which it is exercised. But *for this very reason* one can no longer speak of *doing*. It is men who *do*, not avalanches."[216] Agency is lost entirely on this dogmatic Marxist view. Sartre warns that we must not accept this bad faith as the embodiment of a contradiction of capitalism: "A contradiction? No. Bad faith. One must not confuse the scintillation of ideas with dialectic."[217] Applied as a philosophy of history this Marxist thesis condones a mechanistic interpretation of human behavior outside of which no one can get. The whole practice of history thus results in a formalist exercise where all occurrences confirm what Marxist historians already knew to be the case. Something of Karl Popper's argument that Marxism doesn't allow for falsifiability is echoed here by Sartre. Marxist history indulges a rampant a priorism. It has lost the dialectician's commitment to the priority of the object: for Sartre one cannot study the world of today and exclusively find confirmation of Engels' laws, the foreboding contradictions of capitalism's demise. Marxism has become a self-satisfied discipline where no unique occurrence can offer it something it doesn't already know. Finally, and most enthusiastically Sartre declares the obfuscation of concrete material man in the Marxist tradition. Marx himself in the early writings held the individual as the starting point, but by the time of *Capital* man is identical with his class existence. Most of Marxism has followed this later trajectory. Sartre quips: "Marxism ought to study real men in depth, not dissolve them in a bath of

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[216] *Search for a Method*, pp. 47-8.
[217] *Search for a Method*, p. 48.

sulphuric acid."[218] To arrive at the nature of action one must be willing to look to the individual—her beliefs and intentions—along with the social and material content that are mutually determinant of praxis. It is this first element that contemporary Marxist analysis lacks. It does not look to the family or one's childhood in understanding personhood; all non-class collectives become epiphenomenal. And thus it has made of man an abstraction and misapprehended action.

Existentialism, on the other hand, for Sartre, has become a toxic school of thought by the mid-50s in that it provides a doctrinal program for authentic existence and thereby abandons the original ambitions of leaving behind already-constituted bodies of knowledge for lived experience. A new method—one inflected by Marxism—is required to get to the concrete for existentialism has morphed into yet another abstraction that disguises one's existence. Moreover, existentialism has made enemies with praxis. Sartre proves especially hostile to Karl Jaspers on this count. Jaspers, the twentieth-century German incarnation of Kierkegaard for Sartre, directs lived experience against action rather than the original foe of conceptual abstraction. He writes of Jaspers:

> This ideology of withdrawal expressed quite well only yesterday the attitude of a certain Germany fixed on its two defeats and that of a certain European bourgeoisie which wants to justify its privileges by an aristocracy of the soul, to find refuge from its objectivity in an exquisite subjectivity, and to let itself be fascinated by an ineffable present so as not to see its future. Philosophically this soft, devious thought is only a survival; it holds no great interest.[219]

By the mid-1950s existentialism has failed to renew its commitment to action and thus it gave way to a contemplative quietism. In Heidegger this quietist attitude lead to a tacit acceptance of National Socialism's rise to power (or even an enthusiastic acceptance depending on how you view Victor Farias' *Heidegger and Nazism*). While Sartre lauds Jaspers for not colluding with Nazism he

[218] *Search for a Method*, pp. 43-44.
[219] *Search for a Method*, pp. 16-17.

nevertheless faults him and the rest of the German self-avowed existentialists for not sufficiently standing up to it either.

And yet Sartre finds promise in the synthetic combination of the two schools of thought, the reciprocal addressing of deficiencies that arise in the ideological commitment to either. Kierkegaard for one tradition and Marx for the other successfully demonstrate, against the backdrop of Hegel, "the incommensurability of the real and knowledge."[220] Action and the individual lives of the agents that commit themselves to it are scarcely reducible to the scientific or anthropological knowledge we may have of humanity, say, or the logic of being or the consciousness of absolute knowing in Hegel's system. Both schools attempt a bottom-up approach to the real existence of human life and share a commitment to accepting material and practical existence as real in itself and not a mere appearance in need of purification in the domain of knowledge. In a sense Sartre is reworking the protest he made against the cogito in "Consciousness of Self and Knowledge of Self." Only now, after the self-conscious turn, Sartre's former target of Descartes and his solipsistic portrait of the individual as a thinking thing is replaced by the more formidable opponent of Hegel's *Geist*. Both essays seek to dispel the illusion that conscious action is essentially an activity of knowing. It's telling that in this response to Hegel and in the integration of existential and Marxian philosophy that Sartre sides with Marx over Kierkegaard:

> When Marx writes: 'Just as we do not judge an individual by his own idea of himself, so we cannot judge a … period of revolutionary upheaval by its own self-consciousness,' he is indicating the priority of action (work and social *praxis*) over *knowledge* as well as their heterogeneity. He too asserts that the human fact is irreducible to knowing, that it must *be lived* and *produced*; but he is not going to confuse it with the empty subjectivity of a puritanical and mystified petite bourgeoisie. He makes of it the immediate theme of the philosophical totalization, and it is the concrete man whom he puts at the center of his research, that man who is defined simultaneously by his needs, by the material conditions of his existence,

[220] *Search for a Method*, p. 12.

> and by the nature of his work—that is, by his struggle against things and against men. Thus Marx, rather than Kierkegaard or Hegel, is right, since he asserts with Kierkegaard the specificity of human *existence* and, along with Hegel, takes the concrete man in his objective reality. Under these circumstances, it would seem natural if existentialism, this idealist protest against idealism, had lost all usefulness and had not survived the decline of Hegelianism.[221]

Sartre's enthusiasm for a new philosophy of Marx reveals the alternate persuasion of his next attempt at a theory of collectives and the bright prospects he holds for this research. The period of the self-conscious turn has come into maturation; now it is evident that Sartre is committed to a dialectical social theory in the tradition of Hegel and Marx rather than the phenomenological conception of being for-others that colored his earlier thoughts on sociality. No longer held together by the look, collective action for Sartre will become—in one and the same praxis—the very movement of history and our struggle to understand it.

His first mature theory of collectives takes on the character of the synthetic agreement between existentialism and Marxism that Sartre deems appropriate in *Search for a Method*. In the preface to the French edition of the text where Sartre explains the Polish origins of this work he tells his French audience what he had earlier announced to the Polish communist public: "I consider Marxism the one philosophy of our time which we cannot go beyond and … I hold the ideology of existence and its 'comprehensive' method to be an enclave inside Marxism, which simultaneously engenders it and rejects it."[222] This synthesis of existentialism and Marxism is not as important to the theory of collective action presented in the *Critique*, but in *Search for a Method* it becomes the basis for a view of collectives codified as the "progressive-regressive method."

Originally described by the Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre and significantly modified by Sartre, the progressive-regressive method reconciles the antinomy of individual freedom and

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[221] *Search for a Method*, p. 14.
[222] *Search for a Method*, p. xxxiv.

collective determinism, which Sartre had announced as a critical problem in the introduction to *Les Temps modernes*. Since action is the very stuff of freedom and it is only through the free projects of persons that action can be said to exist at all ("It is men who do, not avalanches"), Sartre's solution to this antinomy is required for the emergence of a theory of collective action. For if Sartre were to side with the Marxist determinism that he castigates in this work he would abandon the basis for action and yet an existential phenomenology would obscure collectives as he himself had done in *Being and Nothingness*. Thus the progressive-regressive method must synthesize the determinacy of collectives with the individual that defines herself in contrast with collective belonging.

So a Marxism sensitive to the lived experience of the individual—this is the task of the progressive-regressive method.[223] To achieve an existential enclave within Marxism:

> Valéry is a petite bourgeois intellectual, no doubt about it. But not every petite bourgeois intellectual is Valéry. The heuristic inadequacy of contemporary Marxism is contained in these two sentences. Marxism lacks any hierarchy of mediations which would permit it to grasp the process which produces the person and his product inside a class and within a given society and a given historical moment.[224]

Deferring to the priority of the object, the method begins with the identification of a product shared in the consciousness of a collective: a text, a building, the central tenets of a faith. One then "regresses" from this concrete existence through the abstract categories that determine it where each in the series encompasses the abstraction that comes prior but where no category is reducible to the category that encompasses it. Sartre begins with a single text and extrapolates the regressive biographical and historical categories that contain it, moving ever away from the concrete: "*Madame Bovary*, Flaubert's 'femininity,' his childhood in a hospital building, existing contradictions in the

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[223] I concur with Bill McBride that regressive-progressive is "a more felicitous label" than progressive-regressive. For the method, as I demonstrate, precipitates the "synthetic" movement toward totality at the end of an initial "regressive" series of abstractions. Cf. William L. McBride, "Sartre and Marxism," *Existentialist Politics and Political Theory*, ed. William L. McBride, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), p. 29.

[224] *Search for a Method*, p. 56.

contemporary petite bourgeoisie, the evolution of the family, of property, etc."[225] Despite his once having claimed "Madame Bovary, c'est moi," the novel *Madame Bovary* cannot be reduced to Flaubert's femininity nor can the evolution of the family be understood singularly as a manifestation of private property and yet this regression sheds light on the origin of the collective object. Each abstraction mediates and forms what precedes it in the series; this contemplative, analytic process locates the general conditions that weigh on the particular.[226]

But no collective object can be comprehended if grasped abstractly. One must progress back toward the concrete action that was the creation of *Madame Bovary* if one wishes to understand it as anything more than a modern novel among others written by a petite bourgeois author among others. It is the author's self-determined objectification that the progressive moment seeks:

> In a word, [after the regressive method], we have only the outline for the dialectical movement, not the movement itself. It is then and only then that we must employ the progressive method. The problem is to recover the totalizing movement of enrichment which engenders each moment in terms of the prior moment, the impulse which starts from lived obscurities in order to arrive at the final objectification—in short, the *project* by which Flaubert, in order to escape from the petite bourgeoisie, will launch himself across the various fields of possibles toward the alienated objectification of himself and will constitute himself inevitably and indissolubly as the author of *Madame Bovary* and as that petite bourgeois which he refused to be. This project has *a meaning*, it is not the simple negativity of flight; by it a man aims at the production of himself in the world as a certain objective totality.[227]

In regression, then, analysis reaches the objective social and historical structures that generally condition the creative act. It uncovers the given to which the agent responds. But the given does not

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[225] *Search for a Method*, p. 146.

[226] This method is synthetic-analytic at the same time that it is progressive-regressive. By the time of *Search for a Method* Sartre has moved away from his hardline stance in *Anti-Semite and Jew* against analytic rationality, claiming an essential role for analysis in the progressive-regressive method. But while Sartre finds a place for the analytic in his method, it is clear that he still sides with the synthetic, the progressive movement toward the concrete, as the more imperative of the two. All action, Sartre argues, possesses the unity of a synthetic agreement between the parts in a situation. My companion's sudden movement toward the window has meaning for me in the context of a stuffy room, a lot of belabored discussion, the heat I feel under my collar. He does not need to make this intention known nor do I intuit it nor do I inductively reason it. It is the synthetic act itself that discloses meaning, the act that simultaneously *does* and *makes known*. Cf. *Search for a Method*, pp. 152-153.

[227] *Search for a Method*, pp. 146-147.

reveal the existential reality of a concrete action. This disclosure requires the progressive and synthetic movement from a general situation to a freely chosen negation of it. *Madame Bovary* was Flaubert's *project*: his meaningful attempt at determinately negating a set of collective conditions.

The work, while still the author's (Sartre maintains the theory of personal responsibility that animates his moral writings from the beginning), has a collective status that exceeds the individual. The group demands the product and the product reflects back onto the group. Collective objects are always part and parcel of the collective praxis that generates them:

> Then we must ask ourselves *what kind of realism* this public demanded or, if you prefer, what kind of literature it demanded under that name and why. This last moment is of primary importance; it is quite simply the moment of alienation. Flaubert sees his work stolen away from him by the very success which the period bestows on it; he no longer recognizes his book, it is foreign to him. Suddenly he loses his own objective existence. But at the same time his work throws a new light upon the period; it enables us to pose a new question to History: Just what must that period have been in order that it should demand *this* book and mendaciously find there its own image.[228]

Thus for Sartre the progressive-regressive method obtains awareness of the collective mediations that condition the individual while coming to appreciate the concrete action as the realization of a particular freedom. In the analytic unpacking of the general concepts expressed by a particular act and in the synthetic comprehension of how these abstractions are made concrete, there is a symbiosis of Marxism and existentialism: the collectives that inscribe every action, abstractly determining it and making it meaningful, on the one hand, and the collision of choice and material, on the other, that defines situated, lived existence.

What limits the analysis of *Search for a Method* and what is redressed in the *Critique* is Sartre's insistence that we view collectives as objects rather than agents. He has come to appreciate the existence of collectives as objects and the material culture of collective objects, but he lacks the

[228] *Search for a Method*, p. 150.

language to talk about their rise and fall, the waxing and waning of the agents that produce them. Collectives in this work have the appearance of what Sartre will later refer to as the practico-inert: they are sedimentations of praxis, allowing for modification, but they are not themselves capable of free action.

> [T]he reality of the market, no matter how inexorable its laws may be, and even in its concrete appearance, rests on the reality of alienated individuals and their separation. It is necessary to take up the study of collectives again from the beginning and to demonstrate that these objects, far from being characterized by the direct unity of a *consensus*, represent perspectives of flight. … For us the reality of the collective object rests on *recurrence*. It demonstrates that the totalization is never achieved and that the totality exists at best only in the form of a *detotalized totality*. As such these collectives exist. They are revealed immediately in action and in perception. In each one of them we shall always find a concrete materiality (a movement, the head office, a building, a word, etc.) which supports and manifests a flight which eats it away. I need only open my window: I see a church, a bank, a café—three collectives. This thousand-franc bill is another; still another is the newspaper I have just bought.[229]

Collectives do act, in a sense, for Sartre, in this essay, through a spirited incarnation of the collective in a particular individual. The French bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century collectively wrote *Madame Bovary*, in a sense, Sartre is ready to admit, and the bank acts as an institution when a loan officer extends credit to a local shopowner, but in both scenarios an individual remains the locus of the action. Flaubert has a unique way of standing out against this group and his horizon. It is truly and finally *his* novel when we understand *Madame Bovary* concretely. The collective, that is, this *abstraction* from which a methodical progression is required to arrive at the truth of the act, is an agent only in a serial form, which in the *Critique* is but one form of collectives among others. The *principium individuationis* is too strong of a determinant on action in *Search for a Method* and the relations among persons are estranged. The collective is an objective set of conditions or an object, in this essay—at times not terribly different from that unstable projection of the group's existence as

[229] *Search for a Method*, p. 78.

an 'us' or a 'we' in the early writings. Such is the result of the shotgun marriage between existentialism and Marxism in this essay: a dazzling attempt at a dialectical theory of collective action from which his next great work will ultimately stray.

We will see in the next chapter how collectives form and bond over projects that satisfy–for a temporary period of time—a common set of needs. And we will harken back to *Search for a Method* in explaining the features of the project, an important concept without which we will not understand Sartre's theory of collective action in the *Critique*. Despite the difference of focus, but because of the explanation of the project, *Search for a Method* is indeed a fitting and probably even essential introduction to the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

Conclusions

It is toward the first volume of this grand work which we now direct our sight. In the interim period between *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique* the self-conscious turn takes place: the transcendent consciousness of the early writings has been placed in a more robust context of sociality. This turn allots a certain faith in Hegel and Marx. Synthetic reason becomes an operative force in the social and epistemological writings of the period, Sartre offers his thoughts on the Jewish question, and Hegelian freedom begins to eclipse the version that appears in *Being and Nothingness*. Subsequent writings, including the *Critique*, show a determinant negation of their position. Having asserted their truth against his early thought, Sartre is now in a position to immanently move beyond Hegel and Marx in the direction of a novel and yet dialectical social theory. No longer enamored with synthesis, Sartre takes up the reason of dialectics, gives it an epistemological grounding in material praxis, and develops a philosophy of history on the basis of a theory of collective action. The site of his protest against Hegel and Marx is the collectives to which they remain wedded: the state and the proletariat

class. Sartre embraces, in response, a theory of collective action that looks to the project as the temporary and interest-driven formation of groups where solidarity can authentically arise, individual freedom can be achieved, and in which the detotalized totality of community inevitably dissipates. The project, as this moving and somewhat fleeting locus of identity, will dethrone state and class as the dialectical forms of collective action *par excellence*.

Chapter 5: The Collective Action Orbit in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: A Project-Centric Approach

> *"But if it is to be able to ally these two complementary aspects of freedom, it is not enough to accord the writer freedom to say everything; he must write for a public which has the freedom of changing everything; which means* … constant renewal of frameworks, and the continuous overthrowing of order once it tends to congeal*." ("What Is Literature?" p. 139, emphasis added)*[230]

> *"Oreste Pucciani: You go beyond Marxism with the idea of seriality, of the practico-inert, through new ideas that have never been used.*
> *Sartre: Those are notions that seem to me to have come out of Marxism but which are different from it." ("An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," p. 21)*[231]

Let's summarize the view of collective action diagrammed in the first two chapters and sketch the provisional outline of Sartre's response to it that I aim to cover in this chapter. Naturally, as a sketch this introduction contains underdeveloped and omitted elements, many of which are explained in fuller detail in subsequent sections I, II and III.

If one were to search for the point of origin of dialectical theories of collective action, the place to look would be the series of lectures that came to be known as the *Philosophy of Right*. In reflecting on the modern world and reasoning through the necessity of the social forms that gestate individual freedom, Hegel resolves in this work that the family, civil society and the state act as groups rather than collections of isolated individuals. These groups act in distinct, but highly complementary ways. So complementary are these three collectives, in fact, that Hegel purports that reflective persons can remedy the alienations of the modern world by simply contemplating the essential nature of modern social institutions. Collective action that attempts the resolution of

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[230] "What Is Literature?" *"What Is Literature?" and Other Essays*, ed. Steven Ungar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988).
[231] Sartre, Rybalka, et al., "An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre" (1975), *The Philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981).

alienation through the transformation of these major institutions is dangerous or wrongheaded, for Hegel, if not entirely futile.

Hegel's mature works, as I have attempted to show in chapter one, do not offer a theory of revolutionary praxis. Instead, what we are given in the *Philosophy of Right* is a depiction of the varying forms of collective action as Hegel saw them contributing to modern personal identity, and a mandate to act so as to maintain their robust existence. To a degree that few others have, Hegel grasped collective action on a spectrum that included those moments of pre-reflective agency alongside self-conscious moments, and which registered alienated participation alongside those moments of community and solidarity. How persons attend to and care for family members, display public aptitudes, skills and needs in civil society, and maintain civic rights within the state—which is to say how persons act within central social institutions in myriad petty and often unconsidered moments—produces, according to a self-conscious view of such matters, forces of attraction and diremption on the whole of sociality that transforms corporate bodies between states of unity and differentiated plurality. To Hegel's way of thinking what results is a view of persons as deeply dependent and yet autonomous, autonomous because of their dependence, even, for where else but in relations of interdependency is one to receive the norms by which one self-legislates the will, Hegel wisely asks, by which one can be free?

This depiction of human sociality is provocative, nuanced, and worthy of our attention but also flawed, ultimately, which one is able to see through the writings of the young Marx and in the mature thought of Sartre, corrected by the mature Sartre, in the by-and-large ignored but novel and penetrating *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Yet we see in both of these later thinkers, in the interpretations I offer of these later thinkers, the continuation of Hegel's dialectical vision of collective action alongside the critique. The criticisms of Hegel's theory of collective action by Marx

and Sartre remain immanent by which I mean that these later thinkers maintain Hegel's core values and ends (individual freedom, autonomy, solidarity), and proceed in the manner of determinate negation (rejecting the appearance of truth in order for it to be reconciled with the underlying reality of what is true) while alternatively tracing the movement and interaction of collective concepts such as civil society and the state.

Marx—who realized that the state could not unite civil society's plurality of interests, who understood the global dimensions of capitalism in its industrial stage, and presaged the global monster that it was destined to become in today's late financial stage—claims that collective action that revitalizes and transforms the social forms of modernity is the only adequate response to alienation.[232] Furthermore, in Sartre's expression Marx demonstrates "that Being is irreducible to Knowledge"[233] for the concrete totality that is emergent from the life of the object— in the dialectician's argot, the totality that unfolds according to the object's inner necessity—has a material remainder that escapes consciousness. For Marx, in the domain of knowledge, practical action outstrips contemplative intellection so the mere contemplation of History is a sub-grade facsimile to our collective participation in it; collective action is the condition for the group's comprehension of history. With Marx the dialectical social theory tradition moves away from contemplative appreciation of the play of forces that constitutes free personhood and towards the transformative potential of collective action in overcoming modernity's contradictions, which Hegel senses but ultimately accepts as necessary.[234] Among these contradictions the young Marx is especially keen on the relationship between state interest and globalized civil society, and he determines that the

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[232] Social unity has yet to be achieved for Marx. It is the purpose of some future collective action rather than the state from which modern individual's contemplate. Cf. Sartre's distinction between totality and totalization.
[233] *Critique I*, p. 23.
[234] Recall here Hegel's views on the unshakeable tendency of modern societies toward poverty and luxury, for example, both of which he regards as morally degrading to the virtue of citizens.

plurality of interests driving civil society refuse to be united by the state. The uniting hope Marx offers in the state's stead he finds in the collective of class.

But does class unity achieve the immanent aims Marx assumes from Hegel? It is true that Marx identifies class as the locus of collective action as an impermanent measure, a collective unity to fill the lacunae left by Hegel's failed state until the transition to the classless society of the future would make worker-specific solidarity superfluous. Yet so long as the contradictions of capitalism remain Marx operates under the belief that the logic of the dialectic demands transformative collective action on the basis of class. While Sartre readily admits the existence of these contradictions he rebukes the unity of class as panacea and thus he denies that workers should organize as *the* collective to remedy modernity's contradictions. And this because of the kind of collective action that class unity offers, the action of those united by a common interest. Members of a class are part of a serial collective—in Sartre's phrase—a kind of isolation together that can reify existent social forms but cannot direct their transformation. We'll see how class sets the conditions for solidarity, for the group-in-fusion, with its incipient potential for danger as well as emancipation, but I wish to mark out in advance Sartre's view of class as a collective unworthy of acting in the name of. We should additionally recognize at the outset, but we do not need to delve into the depth of the matter because of our discussion on *Réflexions sur la question juive*, that neither can the state occupy this function; Sartre does not revert to a neo-Hegelianism.

What Sartre offers in this late theory of collective action is the organization of groups through *projects*, which he defines as "real and active totalizations aimed at changing the world."[235] Projects are important sources of identity and solidarity while being impermanent measures. Projects always allow some future collective praxis to modify the form they assume. They are totalizing

[235] *Critique I*, p. 182 (amended to accommodate subject-verb agreement).

attempts to meet human needs—in Sartre's words—while never achieving the permanence and rigidity of the totality. We will see in Sartre's notion of the *practico-inert* that products of action (processes as well as material things) always have this open-ended quality to them, are always subject to further modification, and it is this enduring plasticity that I wish to trumpet. One reason I find this theory of collective action promising in this and future moments is its demand that we work with and change the institutions that have become stale, lifeless and unresponsive to the modern demands of individual freedom and togetherness. His challenge is that we be unwilling to let projects congeal into a frozen form that protects a set of interests whether these be the interests of a state, a class, or one or more multi-national corporations or NGOs. For with "securitization," as we might term it, with the protection of interests above personal freedoms comes the very loss of autonomy and the return to alienation that marks the collective's pre-fused-group state. No longer propelling History, transforming historical forms, collective action that has become securitized assumes the contours of the institution by protecting interests rather than responding to collective needs.

While not necessarily critical of the state *qua* institution, Marx grasped the fluidity of all forms and the dynamic potential of collective praxis to modify it; make no mistake that Sartre is sincere when he claims his adherence to a kind of Marxism in *Search for a Method.* And as a thinker of determinant negation, a dialectical thinker, as discussed above in chapter two, Marx left his theory of communist societies underdeveloped[236]—with good reason less well-meaning political leaders thought they had in his work a roadmap to utopia—and thereby avoids the guilty conscience of leading workers onto the slaughterbench of history and the attendant *Weltschmerz* that accompanies such utopian endeavors. But where Marx abandons his fidelity to negativity is in prescribing a

[236] The *Communist Manifesto* is all but void of philosophical worth (though it is a rhetorical masterpiece).

solitary collective adequate to the reconciliation of modernity's contradictions. Sartre neither restricts nor prescribes the collectives under which emancipatory groups are to unite. Rather, more productively, he describes the formal arc that such groups follow. In contrast with Hegel and Marx, having benefited from writing on the other side of the twentieth century's nationalist conflicts and Communist arrangements, Sartre is keenly concerned with the harms of institutionalization. When successful, emancipatory projects—group action seeking the realization of just social arrangements, e.g. the republican state and the proletariat class—inevitably congeal into hierarchically ordered institutions that maintain the collective's interests; this shift of emphasis away from the project's unifying purpose—often emancipatory—toward the protection of the project's self-interest inevitably is accompanied by the reintroduction of alienation, the erosion of group solidarity and the obfuscation of meaningful collective identity. With securitization the project's collective action lapses into seriality.

Organized in the name of projects, collectives pass through stages of action: from seriality to the fused group to institutional seriality. They can be of grand or unimposing scales; they can seek oppression or freedom, the latter of which interests me. A free-form jazz trio is a kind of project as are pick-up basketball teams and the practitioners of a religious sect; so too are Monsanto and NATO. What might allow distinction of the former groups from the latter, and this would depend on the case, is the circular arc of collective action that the former permits. Once groups begin to enjoy their economies of scale and become content as institutions their primary responsibility inevitably becomes the protection and advancement of institutional interests.[237] Thus projects that

[237] It is not an accident of history that Monsanto was the target of major antitrust litigation in the early 1980s, in 2002, from 2007-2008 and again from 2009-2012. We infer from this fierce protection of market share that Monsanto understands its status as an institution quite well. Indeed, the very structure of ensembles as institutions has been codified into the letter of business ethics where Milton Friedman's famous proclamation is widely thought to summarize the entirety of the capitalist's deontic commitments: "Few trends could so thoroughly undermine the foundations of our

form with the circumstantial coming together of persons around a common object, that overcome the *principium individuationis*, that are able to meet human needs *en masse*, these projects will ultimately congeal into the serial collective of the institution. From seriality to fused-group to serial institution: this is the collective action circle demonstrated in volume one of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

The project is a term Sartre makes use of in *Being and Nothingness* and *Search for a Method* as well as the *Critique* (more frequently even in the early work), but in the *Critique* it more strongly connotes a collective endeavor. Often, projects are signified by the term 'praxis' in this later work—perhaps to distance the project from its individualistic heritage in the more existential-phenomenological writings. For the sake of continuity I choose to use the term 'praxis' to refer to action, which Sartre does as well,[238] but in order to avoid a problematic equivocation I reserve the word 'project' for the whole arc of a collective endeavor that may assume a variety of forms, a variety of ensemble structures, instead of the particular action within this arc. The project is always potentially other than the way it is currently organized; action or praxis always belongs to the ensemble's structure. Three further notes on the project:

1. As suggested above the project is circular at a formal level. It begins with the serial arrangement of the ensemble, passes over into the group and eventually returns to seriality. The necessary and sufficient conditions for these transitions will be explored in the sections to follow, but let us note in advance that the project's progressive realization of these forms of collective

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free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their shareholders as possible" (Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 133. For the institution "the public" and "the general interest" are hollow expressions.

[238] N.b. action also signifies a moment of praxis for Sartre, but we need not follow this hair-splitting definition to the letter: "*Within praxis*, therefore, there is a dialectical movement and a dialectical relation between action as the negation of matter (in its present organization and on the basis of a future re-organization), and matter, as the real, *docile* support of the developing re-organization, as the negation of action (*Critique I*, p. 159, first emphasis added).

action is not logically required for a project to be a project. Serial conditions can be present without the ensemble ever turning into a group (the obverse movement appears inevitable though Sartre shies away from the language of necessity). Sartre is unwilling to commit to an Engelsian set of dialectical laws that dictate group identity independently of the practical actions of free individuals. Yet if we make the regressive movement from a concrete collective project to the abstract forms that this ensemble assumes (using the method outlined in *Search for a Method*) we witness a circularity to the group's formation and dissolution. Sartre indicates this point in the *Critique* alongside a second kind of circle that we have explored as a central tenet of dialectical social theories.

> Indeed, whether we consider the relations between group and series formally, in so far as each of these ensembles may produce the other, or whether we grasp the individual, within our investigation, as the practical ground of an ensemble and the ensemble as producing the individual in his reality as historical agent, this formal procedure will lead us to a dialectical circularity. This circularity exists; it is even (for Engels as much as for Hegel) characteristic of the dialectical order and of its intelligibility.[239]

2. Projects arise out of history; they are made possible by the ideas, materials, techniques and methods revealed and realized by prior action. Concurrently, they are purposively directed into an unknown future. This is the project's temporal structure: the legacy of a past negated and surpassed toward an uncertain future. "The most rudimentary behavior must be determined both in relation to the real and present factors which condition it and in relation to a certain object, still to come, which it is trying to bring into being. This is what we call *the project*."[240] The project, as Sartre employs the term, is essentially a dialectical concept. It entails the negation of the given and in one in the same movement, the creation of a positive object that retains elements from the given. Responding to some felt need, projects negate the lack, negate this negativity:

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[239] *Critique I*, p. 68.
[240] *Search for a Method*, p. 91.

> Starting with the project, we define a double simultaneous relationship. In relation to the given, the *praxis* is negativity; but what is always involved is the negation of a negation. In relation to the object aimed at, *praxis* is positivity, but this positivity opens onto the 'non-existent,' to what *has not yet* been. A flight and a leap ahead, at once a refusal and a realization, the project retains and unveils the surpassed reality which is refused by the very movement which surpassed it.[241]

Sartre places due emphasis on the project's temporal comportment toward the future and it is here that we find the justification for distinguishing the project, which has this dimension, from the act, which Sartre tends to associate with a material responsiveness of agents that is purposive but purposive only when the act fits into a chain of actions. Nonetheless Sartre readily associates futural comportment with the project's or action's transcendence of the past: "the teleological structure of the activity can only be grasped within a project which defines itself by its goal, that is to say, by its future, and which returns from this future in order to elucidate the present as the negation of the transcended past."[242]

3. According to a widespread interpretation of Sartre's intellectual development he mostly abandons the term 'project' in the *Critique* because of the individualistic connotations it has in *Being and Nothingness* from which Sartre wishes to distance himself.[243] There is something to this interpretation. Sartre scales back his usage of the term when compared to his earlier masterwork, but there is no outright substitution of 'historical totalization' or 'group praxis' for the expression. In my reading of the *Critique*, projects take on a collective dimension such that they are fitting characterizations of the Soviet Union's efforts to realize a socialist order or the eighteenth-century French public's endeavor to realize a democratic republic. I submit that this usage of 'project' is

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[241] *Search for a Method*, p. 92.
[242] *Critique I*, p. 74.
[243] See William L. McBride, *Sartre's Political Theory*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1991), p. 104; Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1971), pp. 206-305.

consistent not only with Sartre's handling of the term in the *Critique* but with its treatment in the English *de nos jours*.

Drawing this prelude to a close let us outline the three sections to follow: each of which explicates a kind of collective action described at length in the *Critique*. Section I is on the serial formation, which is the de facto ensemble for practico-inert relations. It describes the alienated relations of persons inscribed by a milieu of scarcity. We find here the basis for Sartre's criticism of Hegel and Marx on the topic of collective action. In section II I cover the group-in-fusion, which is the site for solidarity in the most meaningful sense of the term. Here I offer plausible examples from contemporary American culture to supplement Sartre's discussion on the transition from seriality to the group. In section III I describe the collective action of institutions. In this section I am particularly concerned with how institutions arise on Sartre's account and how they usher in a return to serial beliefs and conduct. Such as is the case with dialectical philosophies, the rich transitions between categorial forms are of key importance and accordingly, I will focus on the institution as a shift from the fused group to seriality.

I. Seriality in Practico-Inert Relations: Sartre's Criticism of State and Class Action

On a certain reading of the youthful Marx, a reading I have tried to dispel, the classless society of the future is a place without conflict or alienation. Not just structural, but experiential alienation is removed; all needs are met by the great mass of property-less, laboring humankind. Certainly, Sartre is not this kind of Marxist and not simply because of his refusal to substantively describe utopian life. Where the contrast between the *Critique* and this portrait of Marx proves strongest is in the pride of place Sartre gives material scarcity. For while Sartre considers it logically possible to envision social relations without scarcity, he maintains that it has been a permanent feature of

humanity as we know it. "The fact is that after thousands of years of history, three quarters of the world's population are undernourished. Thus, in spite of its contingency, scarcity is a very basic human relation, both to nature and to men."[244]

Scarcity takes on a generative role in Sartre's mature social theory. Society must cope with the aggregate felt needs of a people that always outweighs the people's capacity to fulfill their needs.[245] This thought leads to one of the most dismal lessons of the *Critique*. Sartre writes that every society, in how it chooses to handle resource distribution in the face of material scarcity, "selects its dead."[246] For access to healthcare, basic nutrition, leisure time and other resources required for healthy living and human flourishing are dependent on the laws, persons and institutions that distribute opportunities in a time and place. Thus while scarcity was attributed to the state of nature that was the object of consideration for Hobbes and Rousseau in modern philosophy, for Sartre it is more productively thought as the product of historically local practico-inert relations.

The practico-inert. A vexing and pivotal turn of phrase in the *Critique*, the practico-inert ought to be handled dialectically; it is most ably described via contradictory formulations. It is a kind of inhumane humanity, the practico-inert. Sartre often refers to it as "worked matter," from which we can infer that it belongs to man and nature in shared portions. It describes, for Sartre, the tools and machines man has fabricated as well as the tool and machine that man has become. The practico-inert is the realization of praxis, the product of purposive activity, while also the historical condition for practical action. We covered in the introduction how the "circle of agency" is a hallmark of dialectical social theory. The historical structures inscribing agency today are the

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[244] *Critique I*, p. 123.
[245] See chapter 1, section II for my discussion of Hegel's thoughts on history's gradual production of a plurality of concrete specialized needs that manifest from abstract general ones. History produces increasingly specialized needs alongside the increasingly specialized techniques for satisfying them.
[246] *Critique I*, p. 783.

reverberations of our predecessors' acts, *viz.* the discourses, worked material and social structures previously created by mankind, and the practico-inert is the concept by which Sartre attempts to house this produced-producing dynamic of free actions that boomerang back as future conditions. Machines, tools, and consumer goods exemplify the practico-inert for Sartre;[247] Flynn advises "natural languages, rituals of exchange, or physical artifacts" as fluid extensions of the concept;[248] Jameson adds the concrete entities of the "subway, policeman's uniform, checkbook, sidewalk, calendar" to this list.[249] The practico-inert field, Sartre writes, perpetually exists within and around us:

> The field exists: in short, it is what surrounds and conditions us. I need only glance out of the window: I will be able to see cars which are men and drivers who are cars, a policeman who is directing the traffic at the corner of the street and, a little further on, the same traffic being controlled by red and green lights: *hundreds of exigencies* rise up towards me: pedestrian crossings, notices, and prohibitions; collectives (a branch of the Crédit Lyonnais, a café, a church, blocks of flats, and also a visible seriality: people queueing in front of a shop); and instruments (pavements, a thoroughfare, a taxi rank, a bus stop, etc., proclaiming with their frozen voices how they are to be used). These beings—neither thing nor man, but practical unities made up of man and inert things—these appeals, and these exigencies.[250]

This neologism, practico-inertia, gives Sartre a way to speak about exigency, scarcity and various other Marxian themes in a manner that Marx never quite articulated, but which are, as Sartre suggests in one of this chapter's epigraphs, nonetheless immanent to his early thought. And while the concept figures into a deeper criticism of Marx's theory of collective action, the practico-inert is true to Sartre's purpose of explaining a certain Marxian humanism: "Man is 'mediated' by things to the same extent as things are 'mediated' by man"[251] he claims in the *Critique* and it is the practico-

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[247] *Critique I*, p. 45.
[248] Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 94.
[249] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 245.
[250] *Critique I*, p. 324.
[251] *Critique I*, p. 79.

inert that occupies this middle territory between person and thing, that allows for this dialectical equivalence.

Consider the fact of scarcity, which was a first principle for the political economists of Hegel's and Marx's generations. For these classical thinkers as well as the Neoclassical economists of today (which is to say practically all economists today) it is a given that markets appear because there is not enough fresh water, oil or other commodities to go around. We may ask the metaeconomic question, the why of scarcity, in terms of human need versus material abundance as many before us have: do we attribute scarcity to man or to material things? Is it a matter of finite minerals or a lack of human ingenuity? Are the mining, refining and conservation technologies to blame or is it the absence of resources that causes scarcity? In the idea of the practico-inert one may unsettle the grounds for such questions. For the notion of the practico-inert proposes that such bifurcations leave the entities of man and material analytically distinct when in reality they are inextricably intertwined. Matter, man, humanized material, cultured humanity: there is a dialectic, a set of unfolding relations, Sartre holds, that unite persons to one another and to their shared world that blurs the boundaries of nature/man/machine/society. On Sartre's view it is these historically and culturally specific fields or milieus—the unified material world of practico-inertia—from which the fact of scarcity arises. Is the metaeconomic question not more fruitfully proposed when parsed in the terms of the practico-inert? What role is played by the commodification of nature, government regulations, the tendency of personal consumption independent of considerations of collective well-being? Static practices, static thoughts, habits of material consumption, inherited forms of life: these practico-inert realities, rather than man on one side and world on the other, engender material scarcity.

What we have here in Sartre's theory is dialectical materialism—the worked matter and social practices that delimit a social world are producers/products of human agency—but a dialectical materialism that emphasizes the intractability of scarcity and the role of personal freedom. Scarcity emerges as a negative feature of humanity's practico-inert milieu and shapes, in warp and weft, the collective action of a historical moment. Collective action, as the purposive transcendence of this felt lack, is for Sartre the negation of an original negation: scarcity.

> Thus the human labour of the individual, and, consequently, of the group, is conditioned in its aim, and therefore in its movement, by man's fundamental project, for himself or for the group, of transcending scarcity, not only as the threat of death, but also as immediate suffering, and as the primitive relation which *both* constitutes Nature through man *and* constitutes man through Nature.[252]

This double negation works indirectly; human agents most often respond to the exigencies of the situation rather than to the felt need ipso facto. The production-line worker in the Taylorist factory responds to the exigencies of the station, the demands of the assembly line.[253] But even in production facilities that yield greater autonomy to workers, the exigencies of the practico-inert continue to dictate the terms of action. The social form of production, managerial strategies, order tickets, emails, a sudden rush of customers, a client's phone call, the software's prompt for a password: the practico-inert, in both abstract and concrete ways, places demands on the worker, but these exigencies originate with the felt need of one that has freely chosen to exchange labor power for wage. Responding to this original negative structure, the felt human lack that is need, persons situated in a practico-inert milieu of scarcity amid a cacophony of demands come to act and act in concert with one another.

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[252] *Critique I*, p. 137 (emphasis in original).

[253] Let it be recalled that Sartre was so fond of the Charlie Chaplin film *Modern Times*, which sensationally lampooned the exigencies of the assembly line and humanized the working everyman, that he named the journal *Les temps modernes* in honor of it.

Collective action, in other words, is originally a response to some common need for Sartre. Generally, we can say that some practico-inert feature of the world is valued for its potential to satisfy human needs. A geographically desirable location or access to some precious resource brings persons into a common field. Particularly, a woman of middle age and I independently eye the newsstand's sole remaining copy of the morning edition. The parties are initially estranged. Her very presence threatens whether the common object will be at my disposal and my presence hers. The two of us, her and I, maintain distinct needs and intentions, a few of which overlap. We are—from the vantage of the newsstand's purveyor—a collective of customers, but a collective in the manner of isolated particulars. We act serially. She moves first, feigning interest in an adjacent item. I respond by approaching the newsstand too; out of courtesy for personal space I leave the paper just out of my right arm's reach, yet the rapidity of my movement has betrayed to her my intention. She sidles closer to my starboard. Her body has become an obstacle to the satiating of my needs: my need to be well-informed of today's politics, my need for reading material at the café to which I'm ultimately headed, my need to carry out the morning routine to which I have become habituated. I am, in this serial pose, powerless. And she, too, is powerless to control our circumstantial collective in spite of the temporary privilege that her position affords. Our steps appear to the newsstand purveyor as a syncopated waltz, a totality existing as a veritable collective, but neither her nor I lead. Our shared intention is to stymie the other's personal intention. With calm she fetches the necessary funds from her bag and exchanges money for paper. Our serial collective thus dissipates. No longer united by a commonly desired object, my actions cease to be responses to hers. We are still a totality in the newsstand purveyor's eyes as well as in the lens of the security camera that captures the

pedestrians on this block, but I cease to be responsive to her intentions. And she, too, in briskly moving away from the newsstand has proven herself unresponsive to the needs of the other.[254]

In this manner we relate to a common interest in alterity when acting amid scarcity.[255] Interests arise as the same, for Sartre, because of the shared equipment, techniques and skills that populate our practico-inert world.[256] We develop the same interest *qua* other. This is a crucial point for Sartre. Thus the middle-aged woman and I may possess a common interest—the IMF's new currency exchange policy, broadcasted on the paper's masthead, will trigger a common investment decision—but according to the logic of interests our commonality denies any deep sense of solidarity. Interests are shared, yes, but for Sartre they repulse persons from one another as much as they attract them. They force persons to assume the condition of their alienation; through the prism of interests, all social groups are serialities.

Let's ruminate on this thought in the context of earlier chapters. Class interests, party interests, state interests: these are, for Sartre, strictly serial ways of understanding collectives. Collective action that rallies around a specified interest is one that arrests the dynamism of the project, halts potential transformations of the ensemble by accepting certain practico-inert relations as inevitable, and acts to maintain a serial arrangement of isolation together. It will be to our benefit to look more closely at the prominent features of the concept of seriality, which we will turn to shortly, but we can intuit already Sartre's definitive break, his immanent break, from the philosophy of Hegel and Marx that so thoroughly shaped his self-conscious turn. The tendency of the state in general and voting blocs in democratic states in particular to act in the name of national interest reifies the practico-inert relations—good and ill—that mediate citizens. And while Hegel leaves his

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[254] Cf. Sartre's writings on markets, from which this illustration is imaginatively derived: *Critique I*, pp. 277-293.
[255] Such a scene is representative of the social form of seriality, about which there is more below.
[256] See *Critique I*, p. 205.

philosophy of the state in the contradictory position of serving national interests as well as general social welfare, insofar as the state tends toward the former the emancipatory project of political action promotes a serial social arrangement. State action is well suited to the proliferation of rights but as Foucault, Fukuyama et al. have recognized, with the expansion of rights comes the deterioration of informal communal belonging.[257] Similarly, the class action of proletariat struggle no less than the more subtle class action of neoliberal capitalism dually share in the collective's diremption into isolated units. While Marx undoubtedly intended class action as a self-annihilating means toward the erasure of all distinctions of social class, Sartre wisely concludes that *the very organization of collective action on the basis of proletariat interests hinders the transformation of proletariat life*. Structural alienation is endemic to proletariat existence through social forms of production and exchange but in working to overcome it, alienation is reintroduced by the very collectives that organize on the basis of working class interests. Marxism may be emancipatory in intent, but for Sartre the machinations of collective action through shared interests denies the transformative collective relations it seeks. We will come to see in the next section Sartre's antidote to the perpetual collective relations of seriality, how the alienated relations of collective isolation together can move toward emancipatory results, but in one and the same argumentative sweep here Sartre demonstrates how the action of Hegel and Marx's ensembles is destined to miss the telos that each purports to achieve. And this misfire is necessitated not by a lack of awareness of common interests, but by the very awakening of a collective's self-consciousness over their interests. It isn't ideology that holds back today's working class; in a sardonic twist of fate what stymies the worker's movement for Sartre is the very antidote Marxism proposed: the shaping of collective consciousness in terms of

[257] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003); Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1996).

interests. The proletariat class, bonded together with the loose ties of common preference, cannot challenge the enduring alienation of "class being as a status of seriality imposed on the multiplicity which composes it."[258]

In such circumstances, for Sartre, when we assume interests as the mediating element of communal belonging, the practico-inert manages to gain the upper hand. For interests (as alluded to *supra*) are a testament to the way that human behavior has been shaped by a common set of techniques, aptitudes and skills. It is the material practico-inert, for Sartre, rather than deliberation or some authoritative intellection that produces a collective interest. The practico-inert field is host to the shared alienation that mars the ensemble. When we look to common interests, we find shared estrangements, shared perversions. Troublingly, for Sartre, the practico-inert responsible for the multiplicity's alterity is consecrated and made desirable by the interested collective. Their common interest is a togetherness, a loose solidarity, that assumes no less than confirms the otherness at the core of material exigencies.

Pivotal to Sartre's argument, then, in determining the logic of solidarity are alternatives to interests as the organizing principle of group cohesion. To foreshadow a bit, the group-in-fusion is remarkable in that it is not just any alternative to the interested collective, but one that is hostile to the very nature of interests. But before embarking on our discovery of this concept in the next section, I wish to demonstrate more fully Sartre's linking of interests to seriality and the nature of serial collectives. A word, first, on seriality as a kind of reified participation.

Beliefs and actions in a serial context are characteristic of what Marx, Lukács and Adorno have called reification. On occasion Sartre will use the expression as well:

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[258] *Critique I*, pp. 306-307.

> We can also observe here, in this elementary form, the nature of reification. It is not a metamorphosis of the individual into a thing, as is often supposed, but the necessity imposed by the structures of society on members of a social group, that they should live the fact that they belong to the group and, thereby, to society as a whole, as a molecular status. What they experience or do *as individuals* is still, immediately, real *praxis* or human labour. But a sort of mechanical rigidity haunts them in the concrete undertaking of living and subjects the results of their actions to the alien laws of totalizing addition. Their objectification is modified externally by the inert power of the objectification of others.[259]

Sartre generalizes the concept of reification as a law of serialization. Previously thought of as a product of labor power, the culture industry, the commodity form, Sartre strips reification of its limited association with particular historical forms. Reification occurs whenever practical action in its rich and differentiated fullness is reduced to a material transaction between objects. This occurrence can be predicated of all serial collective action. *Seriality can thus be thought of as a kind of collective belonging among estranged and impotent participants whose mental and physical praxis appears in a reified form*.

Interested collectives generate seriality both internally and externally. Internally, as a reflexive operation, interested collective action reifies the shared practico-inert estrangement that led to the identification of an interest; externally, interested collectives determine the destiny (*destin*) of foreign collectives. In either case, for the collective that takes ownership of an interest, certain malleable practico-inert realities are crystallized. And make no mistake that this crystallization is in service of an unfreedom that Sartre had only recently come to appreciate: "It would be quite wrong to interpret me as saying that man is free in all situations, as the Stoics claimed. I mean the exact opposite: all men are slaves in so far as their life unfolds in the practico-inert field and in so far as this field is always conditioned by scarcity."[260] When the collective congeals and becomes self-conscious of its putative interests, its actions serve to maintain certain practico-inert structures (and

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[259] *Critique I*, p. 176.
[260] *Critique I*, p. 332.

we can think of various forms of exploitation, abuse, slave morality, etc. as practico-inert structures condoned by interested parties). For the interest's beneficiaries, a static practice is there to be continued or further exploited. It is identified because it is a "profit center," so to speak, a practice or set of practices that yields some demonstrable gain. So it is in the party's interests to maintain or exacerbate the status quo practico-inert according to this tone-deaf reasoning.[261] I say "tone deaf" because this sort of thinking unintentionally distributes the serial form—along with its attendant alienations—internally among the interested group. For the preservation of practico-inert structures—if Sartre is right—is accompanied by serialization, the atomization of the collective.

Seriality naturalizes isolated, impotent and passive participation and indeed, any kind of "naturally occurring" or "spontaneously sociable" group has the quality of seriality for Sartre. Serial formations are everyday occurrences. Before the common object of the radio program, the listening audience is a seriality. So too, for Sartre, are the riders queued at the bus stop. The radio broadcast and the municipal bus—items of interest—dictate the impotent and estranged form of the collective.

A seriality's members have little or no input in collective ambitions. Jointly accepted beliefs are dictated to participants, though participants remain free to reject these beliefs and leave the practice at any time. The listener maintains the basic freedom to terminate his reception of the broadcast feed, thereby rejecting the top-down decision to alter the radio program's format in a decision made by the station's brass in consultation with the FCC. But importantly, each member is identical, in a sense, when viewed from the perspective of the common interest. The passive listeners of a radio program are interchangeable before the interested parties. Grasped through the

[261] Often it is the case that the collective's true interests lie in the transcendence of the estrangement-interest pairing, that is, the collective's negation of needing to seek out a specified interest within a serial social milieu. Patriarchy may appear favorable to the property-owning men of a community, but the love and equal recognition of a community that transcends the patriarchal form is to the benefit of every member of that society—men as well as women.

prism of demographic or market research, each listener fits within general categories and is fully interchangeable for other listeners insofar as there is a shared categorical quality. The formatting decision that loses dozens of listeners but gains hundreds more is an outright success for the decision makers and precisely so to the extent that the listeners are substitutable.[262] Seriality is a powerful conceptual tool in understanding demographic research and mediation. For Jameson, "the notion of seriality developed here is the only philosophically satisfactory theory of public opinion, the only genuine philosophy of the media, that anyone has proposed to date: something that can be judged by its evasion of the conceptual traps of collective consciousness on the one hand, and of behaviorism or manipulation on the other."[263]

Interested collective action imposes seriality onto external groups as well. Its consequences are not just reflexive. The opening of an interest, in Sartre's expression, is the opening of another collective's destiny. That is, as destiny, the future of an ensemble is determined outside itself (heteronomously) by practico-inert realities supported by interested parties. The US national interest in the world's most heavily trafficked canal, for example, became the destiny of the Panamanian public who were modernized and bankrupted by the former's actions irrespective of the wishes of Panama's working-class citizens. The serial form need not follow a strict ordinal reasoning: the poverty created by US involvement in Panama serves to isolate and enervate the dispersed public even if it does not individually identify each citizen. The conditions of seriality are immanently practical in that seriality depends on the ensemble's members *acting* as participants in non-present

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[262] Cf. *Critique I*, p. 259: "However, to the extent that the bus designates the present commuters, it constitutes them in their *interchangeability*: each of them is effectively produced by the social ensemble as united with his neighbours, in so far as he is strictly identical with them. In other words, their being-outside (that is to say, their interest as regular users of the bus service) is unified, in that it is a pure and indivisible abstraction, rather than a rich, differentiated synthesis; it is a simple identity, designating the commuter as an abstract generality by means of a particular *praxis* (signaling the bus, getting on it, finding a seat, paying the fare), in the development of a broad, synthetic *praxis*."

[263] Frederic Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, p. 236.

groups (the family, the workplace) while occupying the present ensemble inertly, in the manner of an interested member that is "being-in-the-inert."[264] *Thus the serial unity of the ensemble is a practical matter*; it functions through the shared isolation, impotence and interests of members who are otherwise able to act in concert regardless of whether there is some external observer present to enumerate their collective as a series.

It is this practical element required to meet the criteria of the series—the shared impotence of the members—that provides the conditions for the ensemble's transformation into a veritable group.

> This material, but still abstract, determination of the variable content of alterity (in other words, of a synthetic alterity which by itself creates a practico-inert world of alterity) leads us logically to the investigation of impotence as a real bond between members of a series [l'expérience de l'impuissance comme liaison réelle entre les membres de la série]. A series reveals itself to everyone when they perceive in themselves and Others their common inability to eliminate their material differences. We shall see how in certain special conditions, a *group* constitutes itself as the negation of this impotence, that is to say, of seriality [La série se révèle à chacun, en effet, dans le moment où il saisit en lui et dans les Autres leur impuissance commune à supprimer leurs differences matérielles. Nous verrons comment, sur la base de conditions définies, le *groupe* se constitue comme négation de cette impuissance, c'est-à-dire de la sérialité].[265]

The structural alienation endemic to seriality is generally inessential. Collectives demonstrate an array of qualities and some are able to resolve individual feelings of isolation and loneliness. The group, one successor to seriality, actively forms in opposition to it. It emerges, spontaneously and genuinely, in collective praxis as a targeted negation of alienation. Yet this negation is determinant and dialectical. The seriality overcome is retained as the group's foundation and, ultimately, its terminus. The group is a brief, volatile and unstable collective, but it is also richly capable of

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[264] *Critique I*, p. 256.
[265] Alan Sheridan-Smith's translation: *Critique I*, p. 277; *Critique de la raison dialectique, tome 1*, p. 325.

adapting collective praxis to new historical realities. Its importance is tethered to the serial formation transcended if not, also, absorbed.

II. Joint Authorship and Solidarity in the Group-in-Fusion

In remarking on the group as an "evolutionary successor," I should clarify that Sartre is not interested in positing the historical anteriority of seriality. Whether serial formations or groups are more true of human sociality in the state of nature remains an open question. But Sartre does defend the claim that serial gatherings are categorically prior to groups according to dialectical rationality:

> Our reason for positing the logical anteriority of collectives is simply that according to what History teaches us, groups constitute themselves as determinations and negations of collectives. In other words, they transcend and preserve them. Collectives, on the other hand, even when they result from the disintegration of active groups, preserve nothing of themselves *as collectives*, except for dead, ossified structures which scarcely conceal the flight of seriality. Similarly, the group, whatever it may be, *contains in itself* its reasons for relapsing into the inert being of the gathering.[266]

The future dissolution of the group is woven into the serial base supporting it. In the project's, as it were, obverse movement from group to seriality what is retained of the group becomes lifeless or stale. The group's beliefs, for instance, arising through the spontaneous identification of self with other, become the practico-inert patterns of thought for newfound seriality. The orbit of the Sartrean project is practically achieved in the passing of a serial formation into a group that reverts back to seriality. That the circle does not return to the group, instead, is a product of the qualitative transformation witnessed in group dissolution. The values, rationale and beliefs of groups are rendered into practico-inert exigencies when the group splits apart. Self-determined group imperatives are not retained as one's own when the collective passes into seriality—they now appear foreign and external.

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[266] *Critique I*, pp. 348-9, emphasis in original.

For it to be practically achieved, the group, for Sartre, must be grasped by a "mediating third party" temporally oriented to the past or the future.[267] One does not identify with the group in the present—to do so would make one external to the totality the project renders; the group exists, practically, for its members, as a past formation—*we descended upon the Bastille!*—or a future yet to come—*we must take up arms against the king's men!* The group-in-fusion is Sartre's name for the latter, the group that becomes, and it is this transitory collective that helps us understand the immanent preservation of seriality in the group.

In an important passage on the group-in-fusion, Sartre claims that his concept is synonymous with André Malraux's notion of apocalypse from the latter's 1937 work *L'Espoir* (translated as *Man's Hope* and *Days of Hope* in major English-language editions). It is unfortunate that Sartre employs Malraux's term instead of his own at such a crucial juncture, yet the passage deserves to be quoted at length for its substantive illustration of the group-in-fusion. The selection begins with commentary on the fateful decision of Jacques de Flesselles, a representative of the *ancien régime* and one of the first victims of the French Revolution's violence.

> When rags were found in the boxes of arms promised by Flesselles, the crowd felt that it had been *tricked*—in other words, it interiorized Flesselles' actions and saw them, *not in seriality*, but in opposition to seriality as a sort of passive synthesis. … In tricking the crowd, Flesselles gave a sort of *personal* unity to the flight into alterity; and this personal unity was a necessary characteristic of the anger which expressed and, for the gathering itself, revealed it. Everyone reacted in a new way: not as an individual, nor as an Other, but as an individual incarnation of the common person. … From this moment on, there is something which is neither group nor series, but what Malraux, in *Days of Hope*, called the Apocalypse—that is to say, the dissolution of the series into a fused group. And this group, though still unstructured, that is to say, entirely *amorphous*, is characterised by being the direct opposite of alterity. In a serial relation, in fact, unity as the formula [*Raison*] of the series is always *elsewhere*, whereas in the Apocalypse, though seriality still exists at least as a process which is

[267] *Critique I*, p. 358.

> about to disappear, and although it always may reappear, synthetic unity is always *here*.[268]

The catalyst whereby a collective begins the process of group-formation is often an antagonistic threat from outside that group. Flesselles and his militia are an exemplary case: an external threat attempts to impose a destiny on a dispersed, alienated and at the individual level, *impotent* public. And the collective responds through the machinations of self-determination whereby the emerging group dissolves the yoke of seriality. For Sartre, again, this is a practical transformation.[269] Recognizing the unity of the French people underlying the public's present dispersal, the group of demonstrators, in this natal and delicate state, begins to actively confront the practical characteristics of their seriality. They *march*, in unison, in order to negate the practical fact of serial isolation. They *own* the identity that has been externally bestowed on them: "synthetic self-determination is frequently the practical reinteriorisation, as the negation of the negation, of the unity constituted by the other *praxis*."[270] No longer the Parisian rabble—an honorific that could only come from an external third party—the group is reconstituted in collective thought and deed as revolutionaries, as resisters of oppression.

This marks the beginning, for Sartre, of a more authentic collective will formation. In seriality, collective beliefs are always the beliefs of the other. There is no sense of authorship for participants. But in the group, passively held ideas—those that traffic in the alien world of practico-inertia—lose their traction and are supplanted by the ideas of the other with whom I identify. *We are the ninety-nine percent!* rings out at Zuccati Park—first by a lone protestor and almost immediately echoed by a chorus. And through a rather mechanical process the group members find themselves spontaneously and simultaneously the authors of a jointly accepted belief. While the slogan will in

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[268] *Critique I*, p. 357 (emphasis in original).
[269] *N.b.* Sartre's subtitle to volume one of the *Critique*: theory of practical ensembles.
[270] *Critique I*, p. 362.

the days ahead lose its disruptive power and eventually recede into the very practico-inert world of passivity that it was attempting to confront, in the here and now its invocation serves to commune and empower.

> In the extreme case, no regulatory third party even appears: orders circulate. Of course, they originated in some individual third party, or sometimes in several third parties at once. But distance, and the impossibility of *grasping* the group when one is *inside* it, and many other reasons all mean that it is only the word which reaches my ears and that I hear it *in so far as it comes from afar* (in so far as my neighbor *repeats* it without changing it). The words circulate from mouth to mouth, it might be said, like a coin from hand to hand. And, in fact, discourse is a sound-object, a materiality. Furthermore, as they 'circulate', the words take on an inorganic hardness, and become a worked Thing. But this is far from meaning that we are going back to collectives. This thing is the vehicle of sovereignty: in short, it *does not circulate*. Even if it 'comes from afar', it is produced here as new, in so far as wherever it is, every place in the group is the same *here*.[271]

It is interesting that Sartre does not predicate fundamentally different techniques of communication for seriality and the group-in-fusion. In both serial and group contexts, language entails the repetition of the other's discursive formulations. What is unique to the group is the unalienated production of linguistic utterances where even a repeated thought is produced anew.

In chapter one I attempted to show how Gilbert's theory of jointly accepted ideas is more convincing than the summative approach to understanding collective belief and yet unable to account for the fact of alienation. For Sartre, there are collective beliefs experienced in alienation. They are material in the serial interactions of citizens for whom a constitution and way of life are preserved as practico-inert institutions. And the laws of the marketplace—even if sparingly conceptualized in bare honesty—are passively present wherever goods and personal services are exchanged. Participants in such central social institutions tacitly assent to the belief in property rights, in fiat currency, in the inalienable dignity of man. Whether participants are able to fully

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[271] *Critique I*, p. 357 (emphasis in original).

articulate these beliefs or not, joint acceptance can be inferred from observation of conduct, and even where conduct is unruly within such institutions there are prominent norms against which participation can be judged. This is to say that ideas emerge from the practico-inert field and animate the action of serial collectives even where participants are alienated from their activity such that they cannot articulate their joint acceptance of the very foundational beliefs that the action expresses. Sartre shows that not only are alien jointly accepted beliefs possible, but commonplace amid serial collectives.

But secondly, and chiefly in distinguishing Sartre's view from prominent theories today, Sartre illustrates the process of collective will formation for the group-in-fusion as a *non-deliberative practice*. Practico-inert ideas are not discarded by the group-in-fusion because a participant contemplates them in isolation and proposes reasons for their inadequacy—reasons to be contemplated by other isolated participants. Rather, for Sartre, a common action precipitates the change in collective belief.

> And this transformation would not be a change in knowledge or perception; it would be a real change, in himself, of inert activity into collective action. At this moment, he is *sovereign*, that is to say, he becomes, through the change of *praxis*, the organizer of common *praxis*. It is not that he wishes it; he simply *becomes it*; his own flight, in effect, realizes the practical unity of all *in him*. … It is on this basis that his own action as sovereign (simultaneously unique and shared) lays down its laws in him and in everyone merely by its development. Just now, he was fleeing because *everyone else* was fleeing. Now he shouts, 'Stop!', because he is stopping and because stopping and giving the order to stop are identical in that the action develops in him and in everyone through the imperative organization of its moments.[272]

In the material and practical engagements of group action, inert beliefs—operant in the serial formation being dissolved—are proven to be inanimate toward the realization of collective ends. So the group spontaneously, through a mimetic chain, assumes the beliefs required to achieve its

[272] *Critique I*, pp. 370-1.

practical goal. The group praxis is primary here. Will formation does not precipitate group action; rather, the group's collective will becomes manifest in and through group action.

It is likely that proponents of deliberative processes of collective will formation will find that Sartre has put the cart before the horse. Any meaningfully emancipatory project, such thinking goes, needs to respect the individual's right to lend assent or disagreement with a belief prior to the group taking action based on that belief. More troubling for such theorists, perhaps, is the fact that in the *Critique*'s examples collective beliefs are passed between group members in an imperative form. *To the Bastille!* a neighbor shouts, and overhead, a moment later, another voice rings out in confirmation and I sense the group's repurposing of our marching without an opportunity to voice my practical concerns with this new direction. How could collective will formation under such circumstances be anything but manipulative and inconsiderate of the unique personal situation that has led to each individual's participation in the larger group?

There are three considerations that may mitigate such concerns from entrenched believers in deliberative processes. First, deliberation, it strikes me, from a Sartrean perspective, assumes a serial form of collective participation. Participants are asked to consider how their particular interests align with the collective belief up for joint acceptance, which indicates, as we recall, the imperatives of practico-inertia. Such interests, for Sartre, are always the interests of the other as experienced in estrangement. Deliberation, as a result, amounts to the exchange of imperatives between persons motivated by the exigencies of worked matter. Second, and as an extension of the first consideration, the intensity of interpersonal identification in the group exceeds whatever sympathetic impulse arises during deliberation. The other's beliefs become my beliefs, as a group member, because *this other is me*. Mimetic transference of ideas between persons is profligate in the group precisely because other group members are more relatable for me than my own interests are.

For Sartre, participants are authentically "at home" in a group in a manner that is not replicated by the way in which persons are "at home" with their personal, material interests. I adopt the praxis of my fellow group members because I have freely chosen to trust their praxis over the conduct prescribed to me by the interests that have become my own. Third, in one of his more severe claims, Sartre argues for the sovereign authorship of each group member over jointly accepted ideas. In contrast with seriality, which is elsewhere, the group is always here and so too are its beliefs. For presence to co-exist where each group member is, those on the margins as well as those in the center must author the group and its beliefs *as here*. "The circularity of the group comes from everywhere into *this* here-and-now so as to constitute it as the same everywhere, and, at the same time, as free, real activity. My *praxis* is in itself the *praxis* of the group totalized here by me in so far as every other myself totalizes it in another here, which is the same, in the course of the development of its free ubiquity." In that each group member totalizes the whole of the group as here, the whole of the group's beliefs as here, each emerges as a leader of the group and one of the sovereign authors of the group's beliefs. There is a distinction at which Sartre gestures between joint acceptance of collective beliefs and joint authorship over them. The group demands joint ownership, joint authorship, where seriality requests only passive acceptance of collective beliefs that one plays no part in creating.

As this section has hopefully shown, the group-in-fusion is a site for solidarity for the group as a whole and for personal identification as an individual member. As much as one may be swept up in the rush of a rapidly fusing group, Sartre maintains that participation is free, which is to say chosen by individual participants. The group often fuses against the situation of a perceived threat and in doing so actively negates the identity bestowed on them by the external third party. And in realizing the particular ends of their action, the group assumes a new identity and the attendant

beliefs of their newfound practice. That the jointly accepted beliefs are not present before the action, that these beliefs are discursively realized *post hoc*, is a testament to the genuine struggle for authenticity evident in the group-in-fusion.

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In section I *supra*, I make the case for Sartre's dismal outlook on worker's movements when these collectives are bonded together by working-class interests. Now that I've further explicated his view of the group-in-fusion, I want to briefly return to this idea—important as it is in determining the identity or variance of Sartre's ideas with the tradition of dialectical social theory discussed in chapters one and two (not to mention with his own work in the immediate post-War years which, as discussed in chapter four, exhibits fettered enthusiasm for the proletariat cause)—in order to add some needed nuance to the position.

Sartre views all matters of the marketplace as serial endeavors. The exchange of labor-power for wage is no exception to the rule. Thus the traditional Marxian analysis of wage negotiation vis-à-vis the pool of unemployed laborers receives a humanistic or Hegelian or existential bent—depending on the philosophical school one views alienation as belonging to. What I mean to say is that the capitalist's preference for high unemployment—the Marxian observation that unskilled laborers are powerless to demand higher wages when a standing reserve of unemployed laborers are "at the ready" to step into those positions—is illuminated when we grasp the collective of workers and the marketplace generally as serial entities. For Sartre claims that every buyer and seller of a commodity is impotent before the series of buyers and sellers,[273] the commodity of labor-power withstanding.

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[273] *Critique I*, p. 288.

What this means for Sartre is something along the lines of what Marx tries to articulate in "On the Jewish Question." Alienation will remain the condition of the working class so long as the exchange dynamic of labour-power and wage remains. Products of proletariat class struggle—e.g. more humane working conditions, better compensation, etc.—will nonetheless continue to foster a serial milieu because the principle conditions of the free market are not addressed by such reformative measures. The product-condition dialectic again pertains: "class being as a status of seriality imposed on the multiplicity which composes it."[274] Collective serial action begets further seriality.

However improbable, there is a slight hope that Sartre maintains for the proletariat movement. Workers can emerge from their serial alienation and take on the qualities of the group if they negate the social form of the commodity, and with it the equivalence of commodified labor and wage. These passages on work represent the *Critique* at its most Marxist. "The worker will be saved from his destiny only if the human multiplicity as a whole is *permanently* changed into a group *praxis*. The group of workers arises as a negation of their destiny as wage earners *and* the negation of the multiplicity as seriality."[275] The worker's movement survives for Sartre albeit with an ulterior motive. Rather than bettering worker interests, proletariat class action ought to strive for those qualities exhibited by the group: concrete interpersonal identification, self-determined collective identity and authorship over jointly accepted beliefs. I have my doubts as to whether such a transformation could exist permanently and I take Sartre to be in agreement with me on this view in spite of this suggestive claim, but here, alas, is some direction for the worker's struggle and a regulative ideal against which their efforts can be measured. It is worth noting, finally, that passage out of serial

[274] *Critique I*, pp. 306-7.
[275] *Critique I*, p. 310 (first emphasis added).

impotence for workers—as for all collectives—can be achieved only where seriality is subordinated through the emergence of the group. Such a group would alter the meaning of what it means to be a worker through the negation of work's serial qualities.

III. The Project as Institution

As is the case with seriality and the group in fusion, the collective project's formal existence as an institution is realized once certain practical conditions are satisfied. For the institution, these conditions are the same as the practical situation of seriality: alienated, isolated and (at the level of the individual) impotent participation in a collective that one may not recognize as one's own. What distinguishes the institution from seriality (and the two are identical/other in the sense of a categorial form twice negated)[276] are the unique determinants that lead to the separate formations. For seriality in the form Sartre originally depicted, persons are isolated by the practico-inert milieu in which they act. In the institution, however, serial impotence and isolation become a product of the collective's commitment to group preservation.

Sartre refers to this commitment, namely, as the pledge. Wanting to preserve the group's solidarity, and having found the group's ambitions worthy, participants institutionalize the dynamic relations of the group by pledging to serve the group's common interests. Sartre again takes recourse to the French Revolution to exemplify his terms: the revolutionaries take their pledge, that is, fix their regime when swearing to the Tennis Court Oath. The shared and revolving sovereignty of the group-in-fusion gives way to a calcified hierarchy in the process, among the important consequences of which is the mutation of collective beliefs that the group jointly authored. Spoken now by institutional functionaries guided by prudence and security, collective beliefs, having formed in the

[276] The institution is the determinate negation of the group, which is the negation of seriality.

fluid relations of the group, operate as high commandments, edicts, or heteronymous imperatives. Chosen participants are often allowed to deliberate over collective beliefs, which makes the epistemic commitments of institutions more consistent and better reasoned if not also better able to capitalize on institutional interests. But for the serial majority of participants—those excluded from deliberation by dislocations of time, place, background and pedigree—the institution governs beliefs independently of their volition. Additionally, fraternity no longer spontaneously arises through the liquidation of the *principicum individuationis* as it did for the group: it is now imposed by terror. For there are stakes accepted when taking the pledge. It asks that the group be served to the risk of individual banishment: in the institution, "fraternity has to be imposed by violence. This means that everyone must risk being radically destroyed."[277] This pistol-to-the-temple approach to common identity, while perhaps conducive to fealty, does little to engender organic fraternity

As the group degrades and this fraternity-terror dialectic emerges in the wake of the pledge, Sartre observes the inessentiality of persons in relation to the institutional functions they serve. Function takes priority over the individual, and individuals become instruments for the realization of institutional aims. Fidelity to the group is gauged by the instrumentality of institutional participants. In upholding the pledge by executing institutional directives, group members find that they have bargained away the very solidarity and identity that the group created:

> No individual is essential to a group which is coherent, well integrated, and smoothly organised ... The individual agent has not transcended or betrayed his pledge; he has executed his mission, performed his function; and yet, in a way, he has created a new isolation for himself as beyond the pledge. ... In short, through the powers and responsibilities which have actually transformed him, through the instrumentality which increases his power, he ... can realise his fidelity in the group only through a transcendence which removes him from the common status and projects him into the object outside. However it is lived, this contradiction will be objectively expressed as a permanent danger of exile, or even as real exile. And the fear of being

[277] *Critique I*, pp. 595-6.

> exiled, in reciprocity, gives rise to the fear that the group may be dissolved, as inessential, in the essentiality of individual actions. This is not the fear which, in the fused group, occasioned the pledge: the fear then was that the group might be dissolved *by default* (negative behaviour, rout, abandonment of post, etc.). What is feared now is dissolution *through excess*, and a pledge has no power against this new danger, since it arises precisely *from* pledged fidelity.[278]

The phenomenological observations of bad faith have returned here (role playing, taking on the qualities of an object for the other, etc.), and are even transformed by Sartre's appreciation for collective arrangements that transcend the us-object, we-subject archetypes of *Being and Nothingness*, but in the main the focus on collective relations has shifted from the alienation of being for others to the possibilities for individual empowerment within various forms of collective action. Alienation remains an important moment of individual experience in the *Critique*. Sartre does not retreat from the grounds set in *Being and Nothingness*. But there's a certain augmentation done to alienation in passages like this one and in the work as a whole that I aim to cover in the conclusion. More immediately important, however, is the fate of the group as it passes into seriality, which is really the heart of Sartre's lament in this passage about the reduction of praxis to an institutional function. Institutions are masterful at consolidating power and investing it in an agent or agents. A sole fact-checker can delay the copyediting of a feature for a major news organ, perhaps pushing the deadline to the next issue, perhaps imperiling this week's prospective newstand revenue, but she is permitted to do so insofar as her praxis fits the precise demands of the institution. The need to corroborate the story with another source, however necessary according to the reflections of our dear fact-checker, are ultimately insignificant though if the inert regulations of the institution deem otherwise. Within institutions, free praxis comes to fit the confines of practico-inert demands. These demands are not identical with the inert beliefs of common sense, and indeed the legacy of group beliefs are retained

[278] *Critique I*, pp. 584-5, emphasis in original, translation slightly amended.

in the institutional practico-inert, but the pledge has wedged a distance between collective ideas and the institutional participants that act on behalf of them that is practically similar to the seriality of section I. To be certain, members of the institution are not impotent or isolated in the manner that they were in first seriality, but they are powerless and atomized nonetheless: impotent because action must obey predetermined criteria, isolated because individual roles and responsibilities are distributed across the institutional series. And as Sartre remarks, the forcefulness of collective identity wanes as the group gives way to the institution. Only, no pledge can recover the insitution's former unity since it is the pledge that created the institution, that forced the return to seriality.

Sartre, who was a prominent atheist, may have had the Roman Catholic Church in mind when writing about the harms of institutions. Certainly, few institutions in the West have wielded the authority of the RCC over the last millenium, or its wide domain. It is, minimally, a worthy example of an institution on which we would be well served to ruminate: notable for its tremendous consolidation of power into higher offices, its preservation and calcification of beliefs, its global Diaspora of participants. Yet using the terms of Sartre's theory we can see how even such pronounced institutional seriality sets the conditions for immanent group action as is evident in the liberation theology movement. And while Sartre never became a committed writer for the movement, the situation of many Latin American citizens from the sixties through the present strikes me as particularly well-suited to Sartrean analysis.[279]

For the sake of brevity and consistency I wish to focus on the Latin-American aspect of liberation theology thrown into relief by Blasé Bonpane's seminal *Guerrilas of Peace*.[280] While this account of liberation theology differs in ethnographic scope from the scholastic liberation theology

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[279] (and synthesis).
[280] Blasé Bonpane, *Guerillas of Peace: Liberation Theology and the Central American Revolution, Third Edition*, (San Jose, CA: toExcel, 2000).

of Cone, Hennely and others, I expect that the Sartrean themes teased out in Bonpane's work are equally pregnant for black American and non-Catholic liberation theologies as well. Bonpane is an American, a priest and an activist; he currently resides in Los Angeles. As a Maryknoll priest he took a mission to Guatemala during the 1960s, a time of deep US intervention in Guatemalan politics. Bonpane came to identify with the indigenous poor of Latin America while serving there—especially with Guatemalans, Nicaraguans and El Salvadorians—and communicated their struggle to a global audience of *Washing Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* readers.

Liberation theology, practiced by Bonpane, emphasizes the passages of Catholic Scripture—particularly in the Synoptic Gospels—where Jesus works on behalf of and among the poor. For reasons too thorny and nuanced to examine here, liberation theologians accept the charitable, magnanimous acts illustrated in those passages as the heart of Christianity. They were not the first theologians to distill Christianity down to this message of moral humanism nor the first to focus on the weak and vulnerable as the parties most in need of Christian charity and empowerment, but they did uniquely situate these demands in the context of imperial Christianity:

> As the institutional Church began to coexist with imperial power, it developed the following characteristics: (1) Formalism, a focus on worship with ritual correctness and the *ex opera operato* concept of the sacraments acting—in contrast to the *ex opero operantis* view of the subject acting. Such religious passivity can coexsist nicely with repression, injustice, and fascism. ... (2) Legalism, a legalistic emphasis on sin, where guilt is wholesaled, types and severity of sin are defined, and forgiveness is individually retailed. In a repressive regime it is opportune for the Church to remind the faithful of their guilt. (3) Triumphalism, absolute confidence in the perfection of one's position. Triumphalism combines with stylized worship and guilt to complete the formula for nonaction which suits precisely the needs of a repressive regime.[281]

Bonpane characterizes the imperial Catholic community of believers as passive and impotent, satisfying what he calls the formula for nonaction. Sartre, for whom "collective nonaction" is a

[281] *Guerillas*, p. 1.

contradiction of terms, would call such worshippers serialized. At any rate, for liberation theologists and Sartre alike the problem is a widely dispersed, alienated and individually impotent public that does not participate in the authoring of jointly accepted beliefs. These are consequences of empire, which we can think of as an institutional configuration of the state or, in this case, of a time-honored religion.

This brings us to a second contradiction of Latin American Catholicism indicated by liberation theology. In addition to the tension between the New Testament message of humanism and a Church that places secondary status on the poor, liberation theologians identify a political contradiction. As a political organization the Church more closely resembles the Roman Empire than the first Christian communities that challenged Roman authority. This was especially troubling for the impoverished and working class people of Latin America, who make up a vast majority of the region's total population. The Church of the motherland is often aligned with the interests of the United States, and the sentiment among the Latin American poor in the sixties was that US intervention sought to exploit local oligarchies by propping up political leaders that were favorable to US commercial interests independently of whether their sovereignty was arrived at democratically.[282] Bonpane, living in Guatemala as an ex-pat, found himself in agreement with local political revolutionaries attempting to halt US state intervention including one revolutionary he affectionately refers to as Comandante Juan: "In speaking of the institutional Church, Comandante Juan expressed himself with great reverence. He said, 'We are going to be very hard on the institution of the Church because we want a Church that is more pure, a Church that represents the

[282] The institutional Church certainly did not rush to Bonpane's defense, which in a sense confirms the public's suspicions about the odd bedfellows of US commercial interests and the Catholic Church.

teachings of Jesus in all their simplicity.'"[283] The idea here, in alternative terms, is to examine jointly accepted beliefs in the context of local practico-inertia. The situation may no longer be suited to the prognostications of those holding higher office, the dogmas of the Church. New possibilities are opened up when an institutional series gives way to a group: "Dogmatists often make the mistake of trying to identify the one way of political action. There is not one way; there are many ways."[284]

The particular content of group beliefs is less important to me than the nature of their authorship. Moral concepts of justice and equality tend to be bandied by oppressive and emancipatory organizations alike. While this does not make competing views on moral concepts equally meaningful, it does hopelessly muddle the picture for people who exclusively consider collective participation through the prism of seriality. Justice is cashed out quite differently when I identify with my interests more strongly than I identify with the other. But when we look to collective authorship we find a way to gauge the practical consequences of realizing one vision of justice over another. A group belief about the nature of justice arises as a complement to local actions that are taken to be just. By contrast, a serial or institutional belief about justice will appeal to the collective's most common, most estranged relations. The reified thought that the now three-decade-old War on Drugs is just, for example, fails to meaningfully identify with the subjects that the war deems expendable. These victims include the criminals and law enforcement brought down by the War's violence, as well as the victims of crime whose cases are de-prioritized by a diverted and distracted police force. Faith in the War on Drugs's status as a just war is the product of epistemic complacency that refuses to confront a collective's alienated characteristics, a problem expressed and further compounded by the tendency to leave the agents out of the conversation

[283] *Guerillas*, p. 56.
[284] *Guerillas*, pp. 123-4.

whom are most directly involved.[285] A city of persons deeply alienated from one another will import intellection of moral concepts: thoughts on justice become the domain of authorities that are figuratively or literally elsewhere. In a group on the other hand, the collective activity of joint authorship arrives at a notion of justice that responds to the practico-inert realities of the moment. The group's notion of justice will be a response to the collective's shared estrangements, which means it will be locally prescient. Moreover, since the belief arises out of free group praxis it tends to be more actionable than strategies devised *a priori* of material and collective considerations.

To Plato's lament Sartre's approach will not help us achieve a unified theory of justice. But the question should be turned back on the Platonists: do we need one? The idea I'm presenting here is that it is preferable to have jointly authored moral concepts over those that are jointly accepted, that it is preferable for a collective to encounter its interpersonal estrangement rather than to ignore it, and that it is preferable to have a pragmatically useful moral concept than an inactionable one. These preferences do not jive with imperial philosophy just as they did not jive with the imperial Church.[286]

"Previously, it was considered important to define membership, to define creed, to think of religion as a scientific formula which could be memorized and recited. But liberation theology defines members by their conduct, as Jesus did. Liberation theology defines creed with scriptural universality and expansive acceptance."[287]Scriptural universality aside, Bonpane stresses particularly Sartrean points here: practical considerations determine collective identity, group beliefs arise out of

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[285] Anecdotal evidence suggests that the War on Drugs is regarded as a failure by rank-and-file law enforcement, which is to say nothing of the sentiment among the purveyors of illicit substances.

[286] It is worth noting that the residing papal authority Pope Francis is amenable to the claims of liberation theology. While recent remarks about the unnaturalness of transgender ways of life are discouraging for many members of the progressive Catholic community his ongoing efforts to improve the living conditions of historically marginalized groups and his encouragement of the beatification of Óscar Romero, a Salvadorian Archbishop who was slain in 1980, are signs of an ongoing commitment to liberation theology.

[287] *Guerillas*, p. 109.

group actions, and interpersonal identification reaches across familiar alienations to create an atmosphere of acceptance and belonging. That we can model the liberation theology movement on Sartre's concepts is a testament to the explanatory value of the *Critique*. That we see the liberation theology movement alive and well today is a testament to the enduring capacity for group formation within institutional contexts. No matter the age or fixity of an institution, no matter its prominence or unscalable hierarchy, the group remains immanently within.

Conclusion: Collective Action and Responsibility

> *Dostoievsky asserted, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." Today's believers use this formula for their own advantage. To re-establish man at the heart of his destiny is, they claim, to repudiate all ethics. However, far from God's absence authorizing all license, the contrary is the case, because man is abandoned on the earth, because his acts are definitive, absolute engagements. He bears the responsibility for a world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his defeats are inscribed, and his victories as well. A God can pardon, efface, and compensate. But if God does not exist, man's faults are inexpiable.* (Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, pp. 15-16)[288]

The problem of collective responsibility within liberal societies lies at the root of all thinking about modern sociality. Hardin labeled it the tragedy of the commons. Readers of Pareto called it the free-rider problem. Beauvoir dwelled on collective failures of responsibility as a product of what she called the antinomies of action, which are conflicts between independent projects and interests that necessarily arise when working together.[289] Adam Smith, who could not imagine 21st-century man's dominion over nature, divined a provident solution to the problem in his musings about an invisible hand.[290] It is implicit in our conversations about overpopulation, nonrenewable fuels and the outsourcing of domestic jobs. The problem can be framed conditionally: if personal freedom is the preeminent social value of modernity then who is responsible for the collective consequences of personal-need satisfaction?

Aristotle demonstrates in the *Ethics* that agency is coextensive with culpability for individuals when the agent knows what he or she is doing. Presently, moral and political reasoning has failed to assert a similarly firm rubric for groups. To be clear I do not believe that we need one. The ambiguity of collective participation deserves nuanced treatment by moral or legal judgment—when

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[288] *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, (New York, NY: Citadel Press, 1976).
[289] See *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, pp. 96-115.
[290] Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, chapter IV, section 1.10.

legal entities assess criminal acts, for example. Central to this dissertation is the idea that the distribution of agency differs materially when we compare serial collectives with groups. A one-size-fits-all approach to collective culpability would efface these differences. Moreover, the self-awareness that Aristotle mandates for individuals appears onerous when applied to estranged collective agents where particular members may not identify with the jointly accepted beliefs of the whole. As much as the problem of collective responsibility nags at us today, we have yet to codify a theory of culpability attendant to the varieties of collective action that are here on display. Such an endeavor is too great of a task for this conclusion. I offer only a suggestion.

While researching the themes of this dissertation I came across a poignant idea from Genevieve Lloyd that claws at the problem of collective responsibility. It appears in a volume of feminist essays called Relational Autonomy curated by Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar. The essay is scholastically titled "Individuals, Responsibility and the Philosophical Imagination," which obscures the novel interpretation of Spinoza's ethics contained therein. For Lloyd the issue of collective responsibility turns on the sense of ownership an individual feels for the collectives he or she participates among. While the common urge is to *hold* people responsible for their participation in collective undertakings Lloyd posits that there is an imaginative act that underwrites the sense in which the individual's participation belongs to the group's agency. When this imaginative grouping of the collective is done from the perspective of an exterior understanding, alienated as well as self-aware participants are asked to reconcile the beliefs that motivated their limited, self-interested activity with the beliefs of the collective. Insofar as collective beliefs are identical with those privately held, from this external perspective the individual is thus obligated to assume partial culpability for the collective consequences of group action. Holding people responsible means imaginatively grasping the collective from the outside.

For Lloyd the individual's deontic commitments to the group can be parsed only after the imagination mediates claims about an individual's participation in a collective. The imagination, though, is an inexact cognitive function unfit to act as the ultimate arbiter in political or legal contexts. What we are left with, then, is a will to hold individuals responsible for their participation in collectives without the apodictic backing of a method that can reliably appoint individuals as truly and finally befitting members of the group. Lloyd thus supports the socially interior deployment of the imagination. Rather than looking to hold persons responsible for their part in the action of a collective Lloyd emphasizes the need for participants to *take* responsibility, leveraging the sense of ownership and command people feel toward their families, businesses and other collectives toward the end of responsibility. Since an imaginative act must underlie the identification of an individual with his or her membership in a group, far better for this imagination to arise immanently within the collective where interpersonal identification and solidarity may persist. Lloyd's approach to the problem is a fit response in that the immanent development of collective responsibility fosters more thoughtful and better considered action, action that attempts to be aligned with the moral concepts that govern right conduct.

Utilizing the idea of the project we can extend Lloyd's analysis beyond the holding/taking distinction and propose an alternative to the imagination as the collective's unifying force. An alienated ensemble will need to be held responsible for their actions. There are no prospects for taking responsibility when the free actions of persons are not meaningfully reflected back onto the agents. Some measure of identification with the collective action—imagined, so it seems—is required for a person to take responsibility for their action. But what if we were to root this identification not in imagination, but in practice? Would the agent not only be forced to imaginatively take responsibility, but rather actively make it? Projects, in that they pass from seriality

to the status of a group, don't damn us to self-interested isolation such that we would need to be held responsible for collective actions nor do they leave the agent in a reflective relationship to the group such that one could only take responsibility for it. Rather, the project presents an opportunity for not taking but rather *making* responsibility.

What I mean to say is that unalienated making encourages responsibility in that through practical action the individual identifies with the work of the group. From a reflective standpoint we can hold or take responsibility, but in group action we make it.

Sartre's *Critique* shows that we can become joint authors of group beliefs when interests are not the primary exigencies for action. When groups form—whether they originate as practico-inert ensembles or institutional ones—they generate solidarity, community and interpersonal identification, but also, finally, responsibility.

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