

Sartre's Solution to the Antinomy of Social Reality in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*

Sebastian Gardner

Sartre's philosophical development poses a puzzle. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre treats intersubjective relations in strictly ahistorical terms, and denies the possibility of ethical sociality. Yet in the first volume of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, in 1960, Sartre asserts the reality of collectivity and undertakes a reconstructive defence of Marx, and in the second volume – not completed, but published posthumously in 1985 – he proceeds to affirm man's ethical fulfilment in the all-comprehending reality of History. Faced with the task of discerning a single intellectual narrative, commentators typically treat the two works as belonging to different projects, and concentrate instead on showing how Sartre segues from the one to the other, for which the problem of ethics – Sartre's acknowledgement of the failure of *BN* to yield an ethical outlook capable of underpinning his political commitments – provides the obvious connecting term. Typically this is approved as a move away from aprioristic abstraction, towards a recognition of concrete realities.¹

I will suggest a continuous thread from the earlier to the later work, which has not previously been noted. The standard picture is correct, I will argue, in so far as Sartre does shift to a kind of collectivism, and does put history in centre stage, and the possibility of ethics is indeed key to the change, but the *Critique* carries over the problem of intersubjectivity explicated in *BN*: the intersubjectivity which defines its starting point is inherited from *BN*, and is already inherently aporetic. What tends to obscure the continuity of the *Critique* with *BN* is that the so-called God-project, to make oneself *en-soi-pour-soi*, which in *BN* intersects with the problem of intersubjectivity, fades away in the *Critique*, inviting commentators to suppose that Sartre has made a fresh start. In fact, I will argue, the God-project is not responsible for – it merely aggravates – the problem of intersubjectivity, which remains unsolved even when *BN*'s thesis concerning the metaphysical motivation of the for-itself is abandoned.

It may be thought that, issues of Sartre scholarship aside, making the unwieldy and poorly shaped *Critique* dependent on *BN* will not help to reverse the widely shared negative verdict on Sartre's later work. I accept that, if Marxism requires turning classical German philosophy on its head, then the *Critique* fails the test: *BN* is cast in the mould of idealism, and so too is Sartre's construal of Marx; but since the antecedent is wide open to challenge, this as such is not an objection.² As regards the political significance of the *Critique*, I will suggest that Sartre offers grounds for accepting some theory of history with implications *equivalent* to those of Marxism, though vindication of Marx's specific theses – for example, that social classes exist and stand in conflict by virtue of their relation to the process of production, that capitalism involves expropriation of the product of labour – goes beyond my concerns here, which are limited to the claim that the *Critique* contains an original, intriguing proposal concerning the source of the problems of political life, which, if Sartre is right, lies in the nature of social ontology.

The philosophy of social theory is occupied largely with issues of methodology: individualism *vs.* holism, positivism *vs.* hermeneutics, rational choice theory *vs.* functionalism, etc. But social reality also poses a pure metaphysical puzzle in its own right, which consists simply in the fact that in one respect or in some sense the social world is determined by and dependent on how we conceive it, while in another it is independent of our conception; hence the familiar conundrum concerning the extent to which our conceptualization of the social world is either a reflection of social fact, or alternatively an active creation of it, if only through complicity. As Sartre puts it, all 'anthropological notions' are 'a glistening between "is" and "ought"; it makes you and you make it; it is pledge and passion at the same time' ('Black Orpheus' (1948), p. 181).

Analytic philosophical engagement with the metaphysical puzzle proceeds typically as if it can be resolved either by conceptual analysis or by attention to the proper form of social explanation. Sartre by contrast claims that ontology has priority over methodology: what it is to *explain* a social phenomenon can be determined only if we have understood what it is for something to *be* a social object. But – and here is the problem – Sartre denies that the metaphysical puzzle can be dissolved; indeed he uses the word metaphysical to refer to ontological structures which are contingent, irreducible, and aporetic.³ He allows that we can discriminate social reality from other ontological spheres, and point to the sources of the social world in pre-social consciousness, but these sources themselves have systematically limited intelligibility, which social reality reproduces in magnified form. The reason we cannot make the social world transparent is thus not that more conscientious conceptual analysis is needed, or better knowledge of causal relations, but that social objects are in a special sense, as Sartre puts it, 'irrational'.⁴

The same incoherence reappears in knowledge of the social world: because their mode of existence has only limited intelligibility, we cannot immediately form a coherent concept of what it is to know social facts. Sartre's undertaking to define 'dialectical reason' afresh is designed to shape a new methodology around this ontological problem.⁵ The 'progressive-regressive' method which he develops in the *Critique* has conscious similarity with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: social knowledge involves a kind of continual aspect-switching, whereby theoretical reflection alternates between granting and denying the independent reality of social objects, treating them on the one hand as a subsistent second nature, and on the other as a species of fiction. But while this bifocal vision allows the genesis, structure, and implications of social reality to be traced, it leaves its essentially problematic mode of being untouched. Herein lies Sartre's difference from Hegel.

What follows does not begin to engage with the main body of the *Critique*. It is concerned only with certain of its foundational elements. My aim is, first, to show its continuity with *BN* and, second, the originality of Sartre's diagnosis of the source of social and political ills. If the *Critique* is to be evaluated in its own terms, then we must begin by seeing what is at stake in it.

1. Sartre's critique in *Being and Nothingness* of Hegel's intersubjective optimism

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* asserts that individual self-consciousness finds its truth and achieves self-certainty in intersubjective relations *as such*: that is, not on account of their contingent content or character, but by virtue of *what it is* to be truly related-to-another: self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.⁶ Differently formulated, self-consciousness finds fulfilment in consciousness of itself as belonging to the new *whole* which supervenes when a plurality of *I*'s come to think of themselves as a *We*. Other accounts of Chapter IV of the *Phenomenology* are of course possible, but this was the reading of Kojève's that set the agenda for a generation of French philosophers.

The claim itself, and Hegel's argument for it, including his view of the historical conditions required for its *Wirklichkeit*, raise many interpretative questions, but it is generally supposed that Hegel is advancing a thesis concerning the importance of intersubjectivity which he supposes not to be found in any earlier thinker, including his post-Kantian contemporaries.

Sartre takes the thesis very seriously, but he thinks Hegel's case for it fails, and that its failure has high importance, because it leads to us to recognize, first, that intersubjectivity poses a problem without an *a priori* solution, and, second, that the absence of an *a priori* ground of intersubjective satisfaction – a *guarantee* that the Other is congruent with my self-consciousness in a way that ensures the purposiveness (for me) of intersubjective relations – is the *positive* discovery of a *negative* state of affairs.

In the most abbreviated terms, Sartre's argument is that Hegel has two routes to Intersubjectivism, one through the *Phenomenology* and the other through the *Logic*.⁷ The first fails, and the second implicitly presupposes the first, so the second fails too.

What the *Phenomenology* aims to show is that the self-relation which fails to give satisfaction in the shape of Desire and relation to Nature, comes to be fulfilled in intersubjective recognition. Sartre alleges a dilemma: either the self-relation was available to the subject beforehand, or it was not. If it was, then recognition is not needed, and re-routing the circuit of selfness through the Other, to the extent that this is possible, will simply obscure it. If instead the self-relation was unavailable to the subject beforehand, then it is impossible to understand how entering into relation with the Other – which Hegel accepts must be a movement executed by self-consciousness, not a condition imposed upon it – can produce it: the Other cannot endow the entity which enters into intersubjectivity with a selfhood it never had.

So Hegel must appeal to the *Logic*. But (Sartre's objection goes) whatever the movement of pure thought may be, it is necessary, in order for me to allow myself to be subsumed under the *Logic*, that I be reassured *in advance* that putting myself at the disposal of the pure thought does not jeopardize the purposiveness of my self-consciousness. And this reassurance, of the purposiveness of being incorporated, corresponds to the transition to intersubjective wholeness which the *Phenomenology* failed to provide. So the *Logic* yields only a conditional – *if* I identify myself as a logical moment (etc.), *then* recognition is possible & necessary (etc.) – the antecedent of which remains problematic.⁸

On Sartre's account, it is not a matter of indifference that Hegel's teleological derivation fails, for there is nothing between success and failure: relations to others

cannot be regarded as teleologically *neutral*, as if Hegel's shortfall left matters as they were before, and the value of intersubjective relations could be determined by the particular contingent relations that subjects may institute. The missing *a priori* bond with the Other becomes one of Sartre's metaphysical *négatités*: one of the nothingnesses, like the non-existence of God, that present us with a positive absence; there *ought* to be an internal teleological relation of self to other, and its *absence* gives a positive shape to intersubjective consciousness.

Sartre's claim, then, is that although Hegel articulates correctly a *commitment* of natural consciousness – inevitably we turn to the Other in pursuit of satisfaction and self-certainty – there are structural reasons why it cannot succeed, and why the project of intersubjective existence, for all that has yet been seen, must fail.

There is a deep connection of Sartre's critique of Hegel with his solution to the pure epistemological problem concerning knowledge of other minds. Spelling it out will make clearer the teleological difficulty that Sartre sees in intersubjectivity.

What allows us to cross the 'reef of solipsism' on which realism and idealism flounder, Sartre claims, is the fact that 'something like a *cogito*' applies to the Other's existence (p. 345): 'the slightly expanded *cogito* [le *cogito* un peu élargi]' reveals as a fact the Other's existence to me' (p. 384); 'the *cogito* of the Other's existence merges with [se confond avec] my own *cogito*' (p. 346). Certain particular consciousnesses, in which I am subjected to the Look of the Other, such as shame in Sartre's famous keyhole scenario, 'bear witness to the *cogito* both of themselves and of the Other's existence, indubitably' (p. 372). Awareness of the Other 'participates in the apodicticity of the *cogito* itself' (p. 344).

In so far as the Other is known in this pre-reflective mode, it is grasped as a bare 'other subject', and as such, it is simply that which stands in a *negative* relation to my freedom in symmetry with the way in which a thing in space stands in a negative relation to my apperceptive consciousness (*viz.*, as simply Not-I, possessing an independent reality which must somehow cohere my own). Now, whereas in the context of perception I must have already situated myself within a unitary spatial matrix (as a geometrical point if not as a body) in order to cognize an external object as 'over there', on Sartre's account there is no *analogous* background space within which my freedom, and that of the Other, are given as co-located and coordinated. (The mere *physical* space that contains our respective bodies cannot of course play this role.) Thus when I cognize the Other, I do not know *what it is* for my self-consciousness to be 'with' or 'alongside' another – the right preposition is missing – or what defines the *nature* of the 'space' that contains us both.⁹ Charles Taylor puts this well by saying that social space needs to be (in Kant's sense) *schematized* in order that we be able to orientate ourselves within it.¹⁰

Sartre thus reinstates the distinction that Hegel's dialectic overruns, between the second person and collective We-consciousness: the encounter with the singular Other is privileged; and because it is not sublated, the second person never gets to be absorbed into a comprehensive 'We'. Sartre accordingly treats collective consciousness in *BN* as a subsidiary and incomplete formation, *contra* Hegel: there is a *plurality*, but no *totality* of self-consciousnesses. The absence of totality is another *metaphysical* fact, a positively experienced absence – a 'detotalized totality'.¹¹ Sartre admits the 'We' as an

ontological structure, as opposed to a mere psychological content, but only in its accusative, *object* form, and therefore once again as an irreality, formed by synthesizing the 'outsides' of various for-itselfs. The presence of a witness is what makes the We-as-object possible: the third person allows 'I am fighting him *and* he is fighting me' to be converted into the single reciprocal project, 'We are engaged in combat [*with one another*]' (*BN*, p. 551). Because the object-We presupposes another portion of humanity able to collect the I and the Other(s) into a single compound object, it cannot be extended to humanity as such:

We are only *we* in the eyes of the others, and it is on the basis of our being looked at by others that we can affirm ourselves as *we*. But this implies that an abstract and unrealizable project of the for-itself might exist, aiming at an absolute totalization of himself and *all* others. This attempt to recuperate the human totality cannot take place without the existence of a third party – distinct, by definition, from humanity – in whose eyes humanity is in its entirety an object [...] This concept is none other than that of the looking-being who can never be looked at, i.e. the idea of God [...]his humanist 'we' remains an empty concept [...]Whenever we use the term *we* in this sense (to refer to a suffering humanity, a transgressing humanity, or to establish an objective meaning of History) [...] we are confined to pointing towards a particular experience to be undergone *in the presence* of the absolute third person [...] The limiting concept of humanity (as the totality of the we-object) and the limiting concept of God each imply and are correlative to the other. (*BN*, pp. 556–557)

The idea of humanity as a We which Sartre rejects here is, we will see, reinstated in the *Critique*.

2. Irrealizing consciousness and the formation of the psyche

Critics have objected that Sartre misunderstands Hegel, or begs the question, and that his critique in any case overshoots the mark, for if Sartre is right, then there cannot be a social world in any sense that goes beyond the contingent empirical distribution of causal powers that Sartre brings under the category of 'facticity' – which suffices only for sociality in the sense of a system of instrumental paths through the world, a mere equivalent in the realm of human beings of physical geography.

Sartre does have in *BN* an account of how there comes to be a social world in a stronger sense, though it is indeed one which hovers between being and seeming. To see what underpins it, it is necessary to go back to his earlier writings.

In *L'Imaginaire* (1940), Sartre describes imagination as unanalysable, non-explicable, irreducible, *sui generis*.¹² This does not, however, save it from paradox. The paradox arises because, though we can distinguish imagining from other forms of consciousness, it can be understood only in terms of its neighbours, from which it borrows incompatible features: namely perception on the one side, and thought on the other. Imagination needs to be both, and to the extent that it is the one, it cannot be the

other. The combination is not a confusion on the part of the mind, as if consciousness did not know what it is doing. Rather it is how consciousness understands itself in so far as it engages in imaginative activity (in conformity with Sartre's general requirement that the mind be theorized as as it is-for-itself). This leads directly to the paradox, which can be stated preliminarily in several ways: an object which is absent must be taken as present; a nothingness, a no-thing, must be taken as a something, and vice versa; and the very same thing which is posited as outer must be apprehended as also inner, such that consciousness looks out onto the imagined object, as if onto the world, while also retaining the immunity to error distinctive of self-consciousness.¹³ The synthesis which imagination presupposes of representational purport with absolute self-evidence 'results in the paradoxical consequence that the object is present for us externally and internally at the same time' (*IM*, p. 11): imagination *means* to 'deliver' the object at the level of intuition, in a way that a sign or linguistic item cannot, but without the hazard of exposure to the real.¹⁴

The object of my imagining is consequently open only to what Sartre calls 'quasi-observation':¹⁵ it stands midway between objects of thought, which cannot be observed, and perceptual objects, which allow of observation because they possess an infinity of features constantly overflowing consciousness. The image exhibits an 'essential poverty' (*IM*, p. 9), for I can never discover in it more than I put into it. What sets on it the final seal of paradox is that, while presenting itself to itself as 'a spontaneity which produces and holds on to the object as an image', and therefore knowing itself to be creative, it fails to thematize this 'creative character' (*IM*, p. 14). The act of imagination is consequently 'magical', an 'incantation destined to make the object of one's thought' present to me (*IM*, p. 125). And yet, though it presupposes magic, which is impossible, imagination itself is a reality, for there are truths and falsehoods concerning what one imagines.¹⁶

These paradoxes can be avoided by assimilating imagination to either an act of conceiving, or an act of perception – reducing it either to an indistinct thought, or to a literal picture in the mind. But these rationalist and empiricist accounts are self-defeating, since they erase the opposition of the real and the unreal which imaginative consciousness employs to define itself.

The paradoxical doubling-up of irrealizing consciousness mirrors the metaphysical problem of social reality. To draw the connection closer, two sub-forms of imagining must be considered.

Under discussion so far has been imagination in its everyday voluntary form – deliberate imaging of visual objects in wakeful consciousness – but it of course more often takes a multitude of involuntary forms, including the hypnagogic imagery that precedes sleep, dream, and hallucination. Here we need to speak of consciousness as at a minimum subject to *fascination* and, at the maximum, as self-imprisoning.¹⁷ Sartre notes that, even in the weaker hypnagogic case, a kind of complicity or collusion of reflection is discovered: 'to maintain the integrity of the primary consciousnesses, the reflective consciousnesses must [...] partake of their illusions, posit the objects they posit, follow them into captivity [...] a certain indulgence is necessary on my part' (*IM*, pp. 44–45). And in dream or full-strength hallucination the power of reflection to shake

off the captivation vanishes: 'here thought is chained, and cannot move back on itself' (*IM*, p. 46). This, then, is an intensified form of the earlier paradox of imagination's disavowal of its own creativity: though involuntary, it remains essentially a work of intention and spontaneity.¹⁸ If it is asked how dreams gain the power of conviction – how the mode and object of consciousness can be (as it were) believed to be both real and unreal – Sartre's answer is that an entire *sub-structure of selfhood* forms around the imagined: unreal objects are posited in a space and time which is not that of reality, an *analogue* of the real world. And *belief* is incorporated within this structure, in which I also, therefore, irrealize *myself*.¹⁹

This last point takes us to the second sub-form of imagination, which is a special case of the first. Sartre locates imagination at the level of intuition, but he breaks the connection with the sensory on which classical theories concentrate; hence it is properly defined as the irrealizing mode of consciousness.²⁰ Now equally open to irrealization is *consciousness itself*, and his claim is that the entire realm of (as it is ordinarily called) the mental or the psychological presupposes this operation. Sartre reserves the term *psychique* for mental states and psychological qualities – dispositions, tendencies, personal characteristics, and so on – in so far as they have been derived from consciousness by irrealization.²¹ It is by this means, which is no more voluntary than it is a matter of theoretical inference, that we come to *take ourselves* as possessing a 'psychology' or *psyché*. The idea is put most clearly in *The Transcendence of the Ego*:

[T]he Ego is [...] a virtual locus of unity, and consciousness constitutes it as going in *the reverse direction* from that of real production: what is *really* first is consciousnesses, through which are constituted states [états], then, through these, the Ego. But, as the order is reversed by a consciousness that imprisons itself in the World in order to flee from itself, consciousnesses are given as emanating from states, and states as produced by the Ego. As a consequence, consciousness projects its own spontaneity into the object Ego so as to confer on it the creative power that is absolutely necessary to it. However, this spontaneity, *represented and hypostatized* in an object, becomes a bastard, degenerate spontaneity, which magically preserves its creative potentiality while becoming passive. [...] We are thus surrounded by magical objects which retain, as it were, a memory of the spontaneity of consciousness, while still being objects of the world. That is why man is always a sorcerer for man. Indeed, this poetic link between two passivities, one of which creates the other spontaneously, is the very basis of sorcery: it is the deep sense of 'participation'. That is also why we are sorcerers for ourselves, each time that we consider our Me [Moi].²²

Psychic states conserve the original paradoxicality of imagination – again, they seek to make an absence present, for consciousness as *néant* is an absence – but raise it to a yet higher level.²³ Whereas the use of imagination in representing real things – hallucinating, dreaming, and so on – yields an object with a double, contradictory claim to reality and irreality, its objects do not pretend to *also* be instances of consciousness: but in the psychic there is a positing (once again, in a single act) of consciousness as

unreal, and consequently a positing of the unreal object as *invested with consciousness*.²⁴

Since this is of course a radical, revisionary claim, it may be asked whether it is credible on any but the most dogmatically Cartesian assumptions that consciousness *exhausts* psychological reality and personhood. We have not however yet seen Sartre's full account. Although the projection of self-consciousness into personality – the degradation of the *Je* into a *Moi*, as it is put in *TE* – is formed through irrealization, it is not necessarily a dead-end in the manner of images and dreams, for psychic states, unlike dreams, can be understood as *claims* to be *redeemed*: they *purport* to have the reality of consciousness, so it *remains to be seen* whether, and under what conditions, they may be taken as having *Wirklichkeit*, i.e., as *bearing out* the consciousness which they objectify. The elements of my personality (my 'courage', 'cowardice', etc.) are things that I have to *live up to* (or live down).

How might this be done? Finally we arrive at the connection with social ontology. We cannot *comport ourselves* towards mental images and dreams as if they were real, because they are formed precisely by *extracting* our consciousness from the world. But the psychic travels in the opposite direction: it is *consciousness making itself worldly*, rather than consciousness retreating from it. In the doubling-up of the self which results from the redirection of the power of irrealization towards oneself, a nascent intersubjectivity is introduced: 'we are sorcerers for ourselves'. But this result is not stable. For as long as I remain the sole witness of my psyche, the purported reality of my psychic states and qualities will perpetually collapse back into my self-consciousness: my every attempt to count them into my facticity, to make them part of my 'situation', will dissolve on scrutiny into a question of freedom. ('Do I *really* love Albertine?', will become: 'Shall I love Albertine?'. Or: 'Shall I comport myself towards Albertine in accordance with the *Idea* of love?')²⁵

And now we see how the problem of imagination in its reflexive form, and the problem of intersubjectivity, promise to solve one another. What is needed in order to relate intelligibly to the Other, is a shared plane or common world; and what I need in order to relate intelligibly to my self, is an assurance that my self-consciousness has objective reality. Neither provides the basis for a solution to the *theoretical*, metaphysical, problem posed by the other; but jointly they make possible a new *project*, based on the anticipation that the nascent doubling of the self in the psychic can be rationalized by mapping it onto the duality of self and Other. That is: if the I cannot succeed in being real for itself, then perhaps it may do so by being real-for-the-Other. Sartre concludes the chapter on the psyche as follows:

This world, a virtual presence, is the psychological world, or *psychē*. In one sense, its existence is purely ideal; in another, it *is* – since it *is-been*, since it is disclosed in consciousness; it is 'my shadow', what is disclosed to me when I want *to see myself* [...] Here we find the first draft of an 'outside'; the for-itself sees itself almost conferring an 'outside' on itself, in its own eyes; but this 'outside' is purely virtual. Later on we will see how being-for-the-Other *actualizes* the first draft of this 'outside'. (*BN*, p. 243)

3. The antinomy of social reality: Sartre, Rousseau, and Jamesian indeterminacy

Man's first attempt to confer an outside on himself – his only attempt to date – has succeeded in actualizing a common objective sphere, but it has not yielded real relations between free self-consciousnesses. Intersubjective space has been schematized, in so far as it is populated by objects whose ontological status is defined by the intersection of my self-relation with my relation-to-the-Other. The notion of an item that is real-for-me-and-real-for-you, is of course not contradictory. But the social world is a teleological failure, and this is attributable to the fact that the materials out of which it has been fabricated – the psychic, elements of would-be enduring personality put into intersubjective circulation – continue to bear the stamp of the imaginary, whence the necessary tendency of social reality to extrude freedom, and of social causality to exhibit a magical character ('man is a sorcerer for man').²⁶

The antinomy of social reality consists, therefore, in an opposition of (1) what is posited as real (the thesis of the antinomy, which defines social objects in terms of their *telos*), to (2) the inherent irreality of what is posited (the antithesis, which defines social objects by their genesis). My aim in this section is to make clear the reasons why candidates for social reality fall short of the mark, meaning that the social world will tend to a victory for the antithesis, and why resolving the antinomy therefore requires the origins of social objects in irreality to be shaken off, allowing the thesis to prevail.

Sartre's conception of political action in the immediate post-war years can fairly be described as moralistic: it asserts freedom *against* social reality as a whole, but not *within* it, and as such it cannot raise up one (dominated, oppressed) portion of the social world against another. What is immediately problematic – and precipitates Sartre's change of outlook – is Sartre's realization that not even the solitary good will is possible: in the first place because the dispersal of power, the instrumental organization of the social world, affords no standpoint from which freedom as such, the universal, can be willed (I have no access to a practical field that does not privilege one freedom at the expense of another); and more profoundly, because the for-itself, which draws the materials of its self-thinking from the social world, cannot fail to internalize the inverse ratios of one freedom to another which the social world has reified. Sartre describes the impasse in *What is Literature?* (1948):

If the city of ends remains an insipid abstraction, it is because it is not realizable without an objective modification of the historical situation. Kant, I believe, saw this very well: but sometimes he counted on a purely subjective transformation of the moral subject and at other times he despaired of ever meeting a good will on this earth. [T]he purely formal intention of treating men as ends [...] reveal[s] itself to be futile in practice since the fundamental structures of our society are still oppressive. Such is the present paradox of ethics: if I am absorbed in treating a few chosen persons as absolute ends – my wife, my son, my friends, the needy person I happen to come across – if I am bent on fulfilling all my duties towards them, I will spend my life doing so; I will be led *to pass over in*

silence the injustices of the age, the class struggle, colonialism, Anti-Semitism, etc., and, finally, *to take advantage of oppression in order to do good*. As elsewhere, the former will be rediscovered in person to person relationships and, more subtly, in my very intentions; the good that I try to do will be vitiated at the roots, it will be turned into radical evil.²⁷

Intersubjectivity would therefore seem as much of a blind alley as imagination: the social world is merely the psyche writ large, with an additional shell of alienation formed around it, in so far as my 'first draft' of an outside has been repeatedly redrafted by Others, and become the outside of an outside.

The conclusion that intersubjectivity is impossible and social reality an evil – again a strange, revisionary thought – is foreshadowed in Rousseau. His *Second Discourse* poses the question: 'Must we destroy societies and return to live in the forests with bears?'²⁸ That we must was not, in 1754, Rousseau's own conclusion, but rather that which, he maintains, his *opponents* are obliged in all consistency to draw. His own conviction that man is naturally good, he supposes, allows him to avoid it.²⁹

It is not easy to identify the exact nub of Rousseau's case against society, nor the basis on which he supposes social evil to be avoidable in principle by means of the social contract, but it is clear that he locates the source of the problem somehow in ill-formed relations of dependence in civil society, where these are a function of (i) the very logic of collective existence, in alliance with (ii) the corruption of social objects by political and civic institutions (including the arts and sciences, the target of his *First Discourse*). Rousseau seems to say that the one runs into the other: competing claims of self-interest interact with axiological illusions, converting conflict over material resources into an inherently self-defeating competition for non-material markers of value (honour, prestige, etc.).

This assertion of a necessary connection of the bulk of non-natural evils suffered by human beings with the logic of intersubjectivity, such that the very structure of social life expels the Good and requires one to exile oneself, makes the challenge posed by Rousseau's *amour propre* more than a restatement of the outlook of the ancient Cynics or an exercise in French moralizing. And a quarter-century later, in the *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, Rousseau reports the destruction of society as having proved exactly necessary in his own case:

Alone for the rest of my life, since it is only in myself that I find consolation, hope and peace of mind, my only remaining duty is towards myself and this is all I desire [...] No longer able to do good which does not turn to evil, no longer able to act without harming others or myself, my only duty now is to abstain, and this I do with all my heart [...] These hours of solitude and meditation are the only ones in the day when I am completely myself and my own master.³⁰

Rousseau's self-justification in terms of the impossibility of doing good which does not turn to evil is also, as we saw, a crux for Sartre.

As noted, Rousseau's diagnosis has two aspects. One aspect identifies the threat posed by sociality in its aggravation of the preference for self-interest over the Good.³¹ The other concerns illusion: 'It now became the interest of men to appear what they really were not. To be and to seem became two totally different things.'³² Sartre takes this other aspect a step further: he supposes that, though *amour propre* may begin in egoism, in the end individuals do not *know what constitutes* self-interest. They cannot do so, because the medium in which they pursue their interests, the currency they employ, is as Rousseau says inherently illusory: sorcery may enable me to act on the Other by magical means, but it also entails that what counts as *truly* 'me', and therefore what counts as (in) *my interest*, slips out of my grasp. To repeat, 'we are sorcerers for ourselves'.

That this is properly also an issue for Hegelians has been argued convincingly by Robert Pippin. The problem, as Pippin conceives it, concerns the insufficient axiological or normative determinacy of interpersonal relationships in late modern intersubjectivity.³³ Whether or not Sartre's diagnosis of the problem as having an 'ontological' source is Hegelian, his characterization of the problem matches well enough what Hegelians may consider a distinctive late modern social pathology: the formation of a novel species of Unhappy Consciousness, where confrontation with the Other casts us into a directionless floating world, the eerily elevated, self-perplexing world of Henry James' figures, caught in their unending reflective interrogations of themselves and one another.

Combining James with Rousseau yields a recognizably Sartrean product. The problem for James' characters is the converse of Rousseau's – too little rather than too much determinacy. On Sartre's account, these are two sides of the same coin: the attribution of characteristics to persons and their actions behaves like a see-saw, for every attempt to fill in the blank (what is she really *like*? what did he really *mean* by that?) overshoots the mark, while the attempt to correct what reveals itself to be exaggerated determinacy leads back to something insufficiently determinate. Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau* is the preeminent portrayal of this condition of mind and social life, in which Rousseauian fake determinacy and Jamesian indefiniteness constitute the two poles between which self- and other-consciousness, self- and other-ascription, oscillate at high speed.

Why should there be this slack between action and being – why are persons short of qualities? Sartre's answer is that the wrong sort of thing is being asked for. This has plausibility: if determinacy always comes in the wrong quantity – there is either too much of it or too little – then there must be something wrong with the unit of measure, something amiss with the conception of what *counts* as determinacy, a flaw in the currency which cyclically undermines the confidence of depositors. And yet this is the material out of which social reality is constructed – we have no concept of an alternative 'stuff' out of which it might be made.

That the problem presents itself also in a Hegelian perspective, as Pippin argues, counts in favour of Sartre's diagnosis.

4. The Critique of Dialectical Reason: Sartre's Idea for a universal history

The task, then, is to find a basis for thinking Kant's good will, Rousseau's *volonté générale*, and determinate Hegelian recognition, possible; these being in Sartre's terms different ways of specifying the task of establishing free human relations as 'constellations of reciprocity' (*CDRI*, p. 134). And this will require philosophical assumptions which have not been provided in *BN*, whether or not they are consistent with it.

Needed in the first instance is a theory of the constitution of the social world, which will explain how the historical situation comes to be such as to require an 'objective modification', and what sort of modification is required. The *Critique* attempts accordingly to show how the social world is built up layer by layer. At its base now stands what Sartre calls the 'practico-inert': synthetic unities of matter and practice, consisting of tools, signs, means of communication, and other objects defined by their impersonal significance, that is, their value for anyone-and-everyone occupied in the relevant praxis. This allows the for-itself to be thought of as having deposited or *invested* itself in the thinghood of being-in-itself and the praxes correlated with it. This investment, Sartre asserts, must be understood realistically, as a genuine *externalization* of being-for-itself, and not as a mere imaginary endowment, a mere projected meaning. This constitutes a potentially far-reaching advance beyond the social realm of *BN*: if the practico-inert constitutes the objective reality of *collective* being-for-itself, then a fundamental necessary (albeit insufficient) condition for the notion of objective historical development has been secured.³⁴

What is the basis of this new outlook? Sartre cannot of course allow it to rest on either absolute idealism or dialectical materialism. The argument of the *Critique* begins accordingly with a *transcendental* account of the conditions of a social world, intended to provide the basis for a reaffirmation, on new grounds and in modified form, of Hegel's claim that human history achieves teleological totality ('History'), and of Marx's claim that it consists in a process of material production. Three transcendental claims hold the key to Sartre's argument. The first inserts individual subjectivity into the 'We', the second into matter, and the third into History. Jointly, therefore, they install the for-itself in a practico-inert exhibiting purposive historical development.

(1) The first is an argument beginning with a concrete scenario of a kind with *BN*'s keyhole/shame *cogito*-of-the-Other, but which concludes instead with my discovery of the reality of the 'We':³⁵

From my window, I can see a road-mender on the road and a gardener working in a garden. Between them there is a wall with bits of broken glass on top protecting the bourgeois property where the gardener is working. Thus they have no knowledge at all of each other's presence; absorbed as they are in their work, neither of them even bothers to wonder whether there is anybody on the other side. Meanwhile, I can see them without being seen. (*CDRI*, p. 100)

In my capacity as the Third I set the two workers in reciprocity; more exactly, I see that they *are already* set in reciprocity. The 'objective envelopes' which define their practices, and in which they objectify themselves, are different aspects of a single practico-inert, to which they, and I, are related in manifold ways. Thus a unity is revealed *to me*, in which I am *included*, and which therefore cannot merely exist *for me*. Although it is indeed I who, as Sartre puts it, constitute the workers in their 'reciprocity of ignorance' – they are 'ignorant of one another *through me*' – this is true only on the condition 'that I become what I am *through them*': the relation of reciprocity which has been established in my perceptual field 'transcends my perception', and makes me 'a real and objective mediation' between the workers. I comprehend myself accordingly as given within a non-egocentric unity (*CDRI*, p. 103). This 'We' is of course, so far, relatively minimal – it does not have the overtly collective character of a *group* – but it is not given as a mere natural fact, since the plane on which the workers are set is also that of my freedom. Nor does it rest on the quasi-logical necessity envisaged (Sartre supposes) in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Hence its transcendentalism.

To clarify the point, we may compare the window scenario in the *Critique* with an example Sartre uses in *BN* to explain his grounds for denying the reality of the We-as-subject. As a theatregoer, I am engrossed by an imaginary object, the performance on stage. Sartre grants that I have a 'lateral' consciousness of my fellow members of the audience, but maintains that this involves no more positive consciousness of a 'We' than I have in my anonymous capacity as the user of a tool.³⁶ In the *Critique's* window scenario, by contrast, the world which I spectate is also *my own* world: though at the moment I am engaged in mere contemplation, I belong on the same plane as the workers; they define me, for example, as of another social class, a bourgeois intellectual. It is therefore as if, in terms of *BN's* theatre scenario, the drama had come to embrace the theatre's auditorium: through my being a spectator, I discover myself numbered among the cast on stage.

Now it is true that, watching from the window, I am not *logically* required to conceptualize what I see in terms of triadic reciprocity, since I have the *option* of describing what is given to me simply as my perception of a plurality-of-workers, i.e., of constituting the Others as merely a compound *object-for-me*. But I am not compelled to accept this thinner conceptualization, and if I do decline the richer, then I can be regarded as having *elected* to avert my gaze from the reality of the collective, that is, as having *decided* to reduce the social world to a mere spectacle from which I have, à la Rousseau, *chosen* to exile myself.³⁷

This argument, far from being discontinuous with *BN*, pursues to the limit its logic of failure, for it can now be seen is that from the very my project of being-for-the-Other has been vitiated with error. When I employed the Other to solve my problem of unifying my transcendence with my facticity, I made implicit use of the assumption that the Other's self-relation is not similarly problematic; since a witness who is in doubt of their own reality cannot be adduced to attest in favour of *my* reality. But this assumption was groundless, since the Other was not given to me as unified with their facticity; in fact I knew them to lack such unity. And this elision of the true symmetry of self and other – my motivated 'forgetting' that the Other shares my own predicament –

recapitulated another, even more basic, erroneous assumption: in order for my *cogito* of the Other to originally open up for me the realm of intersubjectivity, I needed to assume that the Other is able to cognize me as a *subject*, i.e., that she possesses *antecedently* the capacity of cognition of other minds that I was unable, before I experienced her Look, to have of her.

The social world constructed in *BN* rested, therefore, on incoherent assumptions: in order to accede to intersubjectivity, and embark on the project of being-for-the-Other, I needed to credit the Other with an asymmetrical cognitive power and ontological status. Exposure of the incoherence of this asymmetry is the logical basis for the advance to the 'We' in the *Critique*.³⁸

(2) The basis of the materiality of the 'I' which Sartre now affirms in the *Critique* categorically cannot be that he has now decided that human subjects are fundamentally natural beings, and only secondarily being-for-itself.³⁹ The change of outlook is more complex. In *BN*, the for-itself's original self-apprehension was simply the pure metaphysical event ('surgissement') of finding oneself as a for-itself confronted by the in-itself. Sartre's claim in the *Critique* is that the subject, while continuing to understand itself *a priori* as an upsurge of freedom, *also* understands itself *a priori* as materially necessitated by scarcity to engage in production, and thus to occupy a position in collective praxis.⁴⁰ The second necessity is subordinated to the first: scarcity operates exclusively through *consciousness* of need,⁴¹ hence human production falls under no natural *law* or *compulsion*. In *BN*, facticity consisted merely in imposing contingent meanings on the *tabula rasa* of the in-itself, but in the *Critique* the in-itself has an *a priori* form: Nature is encountered as 'worked' in one way or another, and this working-on-Nature has its source in being-for-itself's having-to-serve its material existence in the face of scarcity.⁴² Human reality has therefore not been naturalized.

The ontological and ethical problems of *BN* are not as yet disposed of, and no natural law guarantees that they will be, but the possibility of a solution has become discernible. The exterior of the for-itself, which in *BN* could not get beyond a kind of fictionality, has acquired an objective anchor:⁴³ if I am committed *a priori* to occupy some-or-other determinate position in the productive process, then, although I may relate practically to this position in different ways – I may embrace it or contest it – the determinacy is not *inherently alien* to my freedom. In this sense I now find myself pre-committed to taking responsibility for my socio-historical embedding.⁴⁴

(3) The third transcendental necessity is that the practico-inert should have a historical meaning.⁴⁵ Sartre's thesis here is that a targeting of human totality is *implicit* in collective practice. Praxis encounters limits to its power, but it cannot cease striving to push these back, and this *Trieb* (as Fichte would call it) within each human act – which projects an end-point at which all natural frontiers have been overcome, and all social antagonisms resolved – is immanent in praxis: it 'qualifies praxis-process within its very interiority' (*CDR2*, p. 308).⁴⁶ History is totalizing, for 'there is a totalization of struggle as such', and its dialectical comprehensibility is guaranteed by the necessity that it be 'possible through investigation to grasp the individuals or groups in struggle as *de facto*

collaborating in a common task', which is perpetually given (*CDR2*, p. 12). The task is of course not known by historical agents under this description,⁴⁷ but it is *necessitated* by the dynamic of the One and Many implied by the relation of the I to the We.⁴⁸ Thus even if historical study reveals some struggle as 'refractory' to totalization – i.e., any given attempt to write the history of such-and-such may fail to disclose a purpose within it – it remains true that every struggle 'is the incarnation of all others', and as such it implies the necessity of their *all* being overcome (*CDR2*, p. 50).

The *Critique's* revision of Marx – which Sartre reports as an amplification, though really it is a correction – demonstrates that features which Marx takes to be specific to capitalism derive from sociality *per se*: social existence contains the possibility of the irrationality and inhumanity which Marx regards as distinctive of capitalist society.

Marx explained the material conditions for the appearance of *capital*, a social force which ultimately imposes itself on individuals as anti-social. But our concern is to carry out a concrete investigation of the general, dialectical conditions which produce a determinate inversion in the relations of man and matter as a moment of the overall process; and which produce, within that determinate moment, through the *praxis* of Others, and through his own *praxis* as Other, the domination of man by matter (by *this* particular already-worked matter) and the domination of matter by man. It is within this complex of dialectical relations that the possibility of the capitalist process constitutes itself as one of the possible historical moments of alienation. (*CDR1*, p. 152)

On Sartre's account, the negation of man by materiality entails that 'alienation becomes the rule of objectification in a historical society', and by making this negativity 'the implicit motive force of the historical dialectic', we are equipped to understand the possibility of classes and capitalist production, and able to make history intelligible: 'the possibility of these social relations becoming contradictory is itself due to an inert and material negation re-interiorised by man' (*CDR1*, pp. 152–153 n35). The initial negation of man by matter is translated into the subsequent negation of man by man, i.e. relations of domination. This can take place only because the medium of sociality is quasi-fictive. It is therefore not the 'economic factor' which is decisive, as Marx believes: the real key lies, not in the development of the productive forces and corresponding relations of production, but in their *uptake* and *transformation* in the extra-economic dimension of subjectivity. The transcendental social theory with which Sartre began, absent from Marx, restores continuity between the analysis of capitalism and general socio-historical theory.

So we begin to see how being-for-itself, which in the early Sartre is always defeated at the end of the day by being-in-itself, can hope to avoid a tragic outcome. The task identified in the *Critique* is of course extended to infinity, in the sense that Nature or the in-itself will never be absolutely transcended, and the plurality of self-consciousnesses will never fuse into a single universal self-consciousness in Hegel's sense.⁴⁹ But nothing stands in the way of supposing that collective historical development may at least succeed in eradicating the structures of domination which are inscribed in the practico-

inert, since this end is implicitly constitutive of all praxis. Once again, nothing but free subjectivity can necessity the good will,⁵⁰ but if History can be realized *at least* to the extent of eliminating the *resistance* to freedom and invitation to domination which inheres in the practico-inert, then an individual who chooses to negate freedom will no longer be simply following the contours of social reality.⁵¹

The third claim in particular will raise doubts. A puzzle is unquestionably posed by Sartre's insistence that knowledge of History must have 'all the marks of apodictic certainty' (*CDRI*, p. 21), and that Engels' materialism is crippled by its failure to yield more than an appearance of empirical truth.⁵² What exactly does Sartre hope to show? Mere conceptual possibility is obviously too little, but certainty of future actuality would be equivalent on the face of it to knowledge of *historical inevitability*; and this would seem to make it a matter of theoretical cognition, resolving historical development back into the sphere of the merely 'factual' and returning us to the anti-humanistic determinism of Engels' *Anti-Dühring*.

At a minimum, Sartre may be read as aiming to secure what Kant calls practical faith, moral certainty that hope of the Good is sufficiently grounded in social reality.⁵³ But there is more to the argument of the *Critique*, which does not claim to be pure transcendental theory. What Sartre extracts from transcendental reflection at the outset is strictly only a *conjecture*. His strong speculative thesis in the philosophy of history, which the *Critique's* transcendental social theory sponsors but cannot confirm, presupposes the *additional* application of the progressive-regressive method – elaborated in a series of case histories, ranging from Lévy-Strauss on the potlach, to the Reformation and peasant's revolt, the French Revolution, and Soviet Russia (to cite but a few). It is on this basis that Sartre seeks to demonstrate the *actual* tendency of all praxis to realize History. The indispensability of historical detail to his argument is reflected in the sheer scale and detail of the work.⁵⁴

The method involves a double characterization of moments in the architecture and historical development of the human world. (i) One aspect corresponds to what is *purported* by a collective formation or historical event, i.e., its implicit significance *qua* the realization of History. (ii) The other aspect corresponds to the actuality which purports to have that meaning. The two aspects, which might be called ideal and real, are unified but not identified. Reflection on the *a posteriori* social and historical world is thus interwoven with the *a priori* teleology of the for-itself.⁵⁵ And this distinction and opposition of aspects, employed in comprehending history, is grounded in the object theorized: corresponding to the methodological duality is a dynamic between two species of collectivity, (i) 'the group', which asserts at a collective level the *a priori* spontaneity of being-for-itself, and (ii) 'seriality', tends towards an assimilation of social existence to the inert passivity of inorganic matter, whereby it acquires the reality of something given *a posteriori*. That the latter is never final and must always yield to the former – a reiteration of *BN's* claim that in the perspective of the for-itself all facticity points to transcendence, but which has now been exemplified in the historical case studies of the *Critique* – is the key to Sartre's speculative historical thesis.

This methodology needs fuller discussion, and Sartre's employment of it to show that the historical dynamic takes determinate form as class struggle would require an

independent exposition.⁵⁶ What in any case merits emphasis is the originality of Sartre's entire strategy. Nature's negation of man, he proposes, is responsible for relations of domination, but only in the weak sense that humanity takes possession of this negation and redirects it against itself; it is a mere occasioning cause of man's failure to realize Freedom. And it also plays a positive role in relation to Freedom: *contra* Hegel's idea that the dialectic of Freedom leaves Nature behind, and Marx's Aristotelian idea that Freedom will be found inside Nature once it has run its course, Sartre's thesis is that Nature affords human reality the necessary *means* to resolve the otherwise insoluble problem that Freedom creates for itself independently from Nature, for it permits being-for-itself to exit from the frictionless and contrapurposive fictionality of the social world, and to advance into a condition that merits being affirmed as social *reality*.⁵⁷ The pure, theoretical, *metaphysical* puzzle of how social objects can be both ideal and real will thereby remain unsolved – it has no solution, just as the puzzle of the imaginary has no solution – but the *real* problem of intersubjectivity, which Hegel rightly saw but left unresolved, will be disposed of, in so far as the metaphysical *puzzle* will no longer manifest itself as an existential, ethical, and political *problem*.

5. Sartre and classical German philosophy

It is appropriate to add some brief remarks concerning how Sartre stands in relation to classical German philosophy, in view of the loud echoes in *BN* and the *Critique* of systems other than Hegel's, some of which I hope to have evoked. In particular, we have seen parallels in Sartre of Fichte's conceptions of (1) the Other as an *Anstoß* and *Aufforderung*, (2) the realization of subjectivity as involving a sacrifice of the *Agilität* of consciousness and the acquisition of inertia (*Trägheit*), (3) man's relation to Nature and sociality as having the end of absolute self-sufficiency, which sets a task of infinite approximation, and (4) which is capable of warranting otherwise problematic theoretical assumptions, on the model of Kant's postulates of practical reason.⁵⁸

Comparison with Schelling is also invited. Manfred Frank has argued that Marx's famous identification of the 'naturalization of man' with the 'humanization of Nature' derives from Schelling, and is evidence of Marx's rejection of Feuerbach's one-sidedly naturalistic rejection of Hegel.⁵⁹ It might therefore be asked: If Marx arrives at that notion by restoring a dimension of idealism that Feuerbach's materialism had stripped away, and thereby returns to Schelling, and if Sartre is endeavouring to restore to Marx a subjectivity that dialectical materialism has stripped away, is Sartre also returning to Schelling?⁶⁰

What stands in the way is Sartre's doctrine of being-in-itself, which lacks the living interior of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* (just as it implies Sartre's rejection of Fichte's transcendental idealist construction of Nature). It is true that in numerous passages Sartre locates matter inside the human world,⁶¹ but it is always on the condition that it has been 'worked': it is not matter or Nature *per se*. The 'autonomy' of being-in-itself – its *irreducibility* to matter-as-worked – remains a conceptual pillar of the *Critique*, presupposed according to Sartre by its account of the dynamic of human history: 'we find the being-in-itself of praxis-process as what might be termed its unassimilable and

non-recuperable reality, an exterior limit of totalization [...] it *on principle* eludes knowledge' (*CDR2*, p. 309). This calls to mind Schelling's *unvordenkliches Seyn*, but again the parallel is limited, since Sartre's being-in-itself is not similarly embedded in a theory of determinate actuality designed to make the genesis of man intelligible. Thus, although Sartre – in reaction against Hegelian idealism and Marxian materialism – travels a considerable distance in the direction of Fichte and Schelling, his system remains distinct from theirs.

It may be asked why Sartre should continue in the *Critique* to maintain an unassimilable remainder of alien being, and whether the explanation is not perhaps that he is still in the grip of the Manichaeism of *BN*. I suggest that, if so, this would not necessarily signify a failure to discard old habits of thought. The picture of human solidarity as recruiting its motivation, not only from insight into the reality of the 'We', the materiality of the 'I', and the historical conditions of an ethics of freedom, but also from the indifference of human reality's Other, is coherent: Nature cannot be conceived as *malign*, but History can be conceived coherently as man's *negation* of the *absence* of Freedom from the Nature which conditions him. On this account, Nature does not take God's (absent) place as the witness of humanity's totalization, nor is it strictly man's antagonist, but it is nonetheless true that man is moved to consummate his reality in spite of – so to speak, in the teeth of – Nature's inhumanity and God's absence. In this light the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* may be regarded, as Deleuze put it, as the necessary complement of *Being and Nothingness*.⁶²

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¹ References to the main works of Sartre's discussed are abbreviated as follows:

BN = *Being and Nothingness* (2018 [1943])

CDR1 = *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume 1: Theory of Practical Ensembles* (1982 [1960])

CDR2 = *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume 2: The Intelligibility of History* (1991 [1985])

IM = *The Imaginary* (2004 [1940])

TE = *The Transcendence of the Ego* ((2004 [1936-37])

² Sartre is clear that his Marxism is no transcendental realism: *CDR1*, pp. 21, 27.

³ See *IM*, p. 179: 'a primary and irreducible fact that is given as a contingent and irrational specification of the noematic essence of *world*'.

⁴ The ontological problem is not thematized in political philosophy conceived as normative theory, but it nonetheless lies in the background.

⁵ Begun in *Search for a Method* (1968 [1957]).

⁶ *Phenomenology of Spirit* (2018 [1807]), pp. 75–76, §175.

⁷ Discussed more fully in Gardner (2017), of which the present piece is a continuation.

⁸ These conclusions are briefly recapitulated in the *Critique*: *CDR1*, pp. 24–25.

⁹ Comparison may be drawn with Fichte's argument that the third principle of his *Wissenschaftslehre* requires that I and Not-I, once set in opposition, be co-determined as 'quantity', in order that they may determine one another. My exposition of Sartre here under-describes his view, which is (in full) that the primary relation to the Other is an ontological antagonism, an insight he attributes to Hegel (*BN*, p. 326). But this notion is not needed for what follows.

¹⁰ Taylor (2003), p. 30. The term 'social imaginary', employed by Taylor, is associated closely with Castoriadis. Castoriadis' use of the concept is however extremely broad, and its relation to Sartre's concerns is hard to determine. It is not clear that Castoriadis accepts that social reality poses a metaphysical, or pure philosophical problem: see Castoriadis (1987), pp. 101–114.

¹¹ *BN*, p. 347.

¹² See *IM*, pp. 3–5, 20, 179.

¹³ A mental image of a dog cannot be mistaken for an image of a cat.

¹⁴ See *IM*, p. 10. The object is 'intuitive-absent' (p. 14).

¹⁵ See *IM*, pp. 8–11.

¹⁶ As Sartre puts it, though enquiry leads to contradiction, it is 'not enough to denounce' it, for it pertains to the nature of imagining (*IM*, p. 86).

¹⁷ *Fascinare* was commonly employed in texts on witchcraft, denoting a visual power to bind, curse, or kill (whence the proverbial 'evil eye').

¹⁸ See *IM*, pp. 18–19.

¹⁹ See *IM*, pp. 131–132.

²⁰ More precisely, imagination consists in the pairing of (i) unrealizing consciousness, with (ii) its noematic correlate, the imaginary (*IM*, p. 3).

²¹ Rudimentary instances are what we ordinarily call 'imaginary feelings': see *IM*, pp. 141–147.

²² *TE*, p. 20 (translation modified). In *BN* Sartre does not talk of imagination as being at work, but rather 'impure reflection'. Nonetheless, what is said of the *Moi* in *TE* and of the *psyché* in *BN* assumes the possibility of positing irrealities at the level of intuition, and replicates much what is said of imaginary objects in *IM*. The difference is that the psyche is posited as real, not unreal, but this can be understood in the following terms: the formation of the psychic *subordinates* the 'irrealistic' intention in imagination to a new 'realistic' intention, suspending its original ontological aim, and yielding a double negation, a *negation of the irreal*ity of imagination. Involuntary imagining such as dream, as we have seen, already exhibits this character. In so far as the double negation does not directly yield a positive, the project is not a straightforward success, but nor is it a straightforward failure: it is suspended between them, hence it comprises, as I will shortly put it, a claim to be redeemed.

²³ What Sartre describes here is the systematic equivalent of Fichte's derivation of feeling, drive, and the body in the *System of Ethics* (2005 [1798]).

²⁴ See *BN*, pp. 227–242.

²⁵ See *IM*, p. 144.

²⁶ Inverting Spinoza's 'Man is a God to man', *Ethics*, IVp35s (2006, p. 338).

²⁷ Sartre (1967 [1948]), pp. 203–204 (translation modified). The 'We' of the *Critique* is prefigured in the standpoint of the engaged writer in *What is Literature?* See, e.g., Sartre (1967 [1948]), p. 23.

²⁸ Rousseau (1973), p. 112.

²⁹ Rousseau (1973), p. 106.

³⁰ Rousseau (1979 [1776-78; pub. post. 1782]), pp. 27, 32, 35.

³¹ Rousseau's concern is restated in Kant's *Religion* book: human beings 'mutually corrupt one another's moral predisposition and, even with the good will of each individual, [...] they deviate through their dissensions from the common goal of goodness, as though they were *instruments of evil*' (p. 132; 6:97). Sartre cannot of course accept Kant's postulate of ecclesiastical faith as a means to achieve ethical community, any more than he accepts the possibility of Rousseau's de-socialization of the self. The *Reveries* are riddled with Sartrean contradictions, starting with Rousseau's ambition to justify himself in writing and hence in the eyes of those whose authority he says he has repudiated.

³² Rousseau (1973), p. 86.

³³ Pippin explores the idea in many places, but most intensively in his study of Henry James (2000): see, e.g., pp. 5–6, 9, 17.

³⁴ Sartre begins to consider the interlacing of objective historical structures (class interest) with sorcery – 'petrified values', a magical 'right to play with reason' – in *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1948 [1946]): see pp. 23–27. The impossibility of ethics under conditions where values serve sorcery is restated in *CDRI*, pp. 248–249.

³⁵ *CDRI*, Bk. I, Ch. 2, Sect. 2, pp. 100–109.

³⁶ *BN*, p. 544.

³⁷ The argument, differently put (*CDRI*, pp. 108–109), is that the relevant We-thoughts, even though purely conceptual considerations cannot stop someone from *disavowing* them, are otherwise *unaccountable*, since triadic consciousness cannot be constructed out of binary, I-Thou, consciousness.

³⁸ Cf. *BN*'s restricted account of class solidarity, pp. 551–553.

³⁹ Our reflection cannot begin by 'immediately locating ourselves in the world of productive forces' (*CDRI*, p. 97).

⁴⁰ See *CDRI*, p. 106, concerning synthetic a priori. Need, *le besoin*, is the *Critique*'s re-determination of *BN*'s indeterminate lack, *le manque* (*BN*, pp. 137–140).

⁴¹ By way of illustration, see, e.g., *CDR2*, pp. 248–249.

⁴² The vehicle of which is knowledge of mortality: *CDRI*, pp. 81–82, 132–134, 735–736. Cf. *BN*'s anti-Heideggerean treatment of death, pp. 689–718.

⁴³ The '*real* relation' between men is 'inscribed *in being*, that is to say, in the materiality of individuals' (*CDRI*, p. 109); 'there is nothing magical about' institutional action (*CDRI*, pp. 694–695).

⁴⁴ Previously Sartre tried to secure this global responsibility by an original choice of self: *BN*, pp. 647–648, 718–719.

⁴⁵ The question is succinctly put: 'For the transcendent totalization of all History, *who* will do it?' (*CDR2*, p. 447; italics added).

⁴⁶ Echoing the early Sartre's Kantian assertion that in choosing for myself I choose for mankind (2007 [1946]), p. 24.

⁴⁷ It can be said of them that they 'know and do not know what they are doing' (*CDR2*, p. 10). Relevant here is the distinction of *compréhension* and *intellection* drawn in *CDRI*, pp. 74–76.

⁴⁸ See *CDRI*, Bk. I, Ch. 1, 'Individual Praxis as Totalization' (pp. 79–94). '*The entire historical dialectic rests on individual praxis in so far as it is already dialectical*' (p. 80).

⁴⁹ The 'untranscendable limit of History' where 'all synthesis is impossible', the 'limit of unification' in mutual recognition, is reaffirmed against Hegel (*CDRI*, pp. 114, 559), whose position is now described as 'human idealism' (*CDR2*, pp. 308–309).

⁵⁰ With these transcendental results we have not yet 'entered the kingdom of ends' (*CDRI*, pp. 111–112).

⁵¹ In the manner of the mine-owner whose 'free response to the exigencies of the situation can be realized only in the form of oppression' (*CDRI*, p. 739). Sartre also talks of exorcizing tendencies of ethical thought: *CDRI*, pp. 132–134.

⁵² History must appear '*as necessity*' (*CDRI*, p. 37). See also *CDRI*, pp. 25, 70–74, and 140.

⁵³ Thus in a late interview, Sartre allows this 'hope' to be described as also an 'obligation' (1996 [1980]), pp. 69–70.

⁵⁴ Because they do not take account of this methodological complexity, Hartmann (1966, p. 123) and Theunissen (1984 [1965], pp. 206–207) find a confusion of 'subjective' and 'objective' approaches in the *Critique*.

⁵⁵ See esp. *CDRI*, pp. 70–74. Analogy may be drawn with Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, which involves a similar intermeshing of an *a priori* hypothesis or Idea and its *a posteriori* filling-out with the results of natural science. Sartre's historical case histories taking the place of scientific experiments.

⁵⁶ See *CDRI*, Bk. II, Chs. 7–8. To repeat the earlier point, the balance Sartre must strike is a fine one, for he admits the possibility in *some* sense that 'praxis-processes' are without rationality, 'devoid of practical meaning', and that historical significance is 'an epiphenomenon, an anthropological illusion': Engels' economistic reduction of historical development to quantitative laws may 'kill the dialectic', but Sartre grants that it is not wholly unfounded (*CDRI*, pp. 698–699, 710–713). What Sartre must furnish, therefore, is a justification for thinking that, if history does appear to be a mere causal sequence, and collectivity a mere 'thing', this point of view corresponds 'only to an arrest of the total process of comprehension' (*CDRI*, p. 698). I have suggested that the 'progressive-regressive method' may provide this much reassurance. What Sartre does leave unresolved, I think, is the extent to which cognizing the dialectical intelligibility of History (and repudiating the 'empirical irrationality' of analytical Reason) presupposes an exercise of freedom: do we in some sense *will the existence* of the dialectical intelligibility that we discover in History? But this issue does not need to be resolved in order for the progressive-method to do its suasive work.

⁵⁷ Inorganic matter 'as worked' – the for-itself in its externality – is 'the inert motive force of History', 'the only possible basis for the *novelty*' of historical development, 'the absolute requirement *that there must be* a necessity in History at the very heart of intelligibility' (*CDRI*, p. 72).

⁵⁸ In so far as the *Critique* can be regarded, as I have suggested, as steering the demands of the Fichtean summons in Marx's direction, the later Sartre as well as the earlier belongs to the tradition identified in Wood (2014). Also evoked, I hope, are the numerous points where, despite Sartre's apparent lack of exposure to Frankfurt School writings, the *CDR* comes systematically into contact with Critical Theory, though the relationship is too intricate to embark on here.

⁵⁹ Frank (1992), pp. 303–313. Marx's formula, 'der durchgeführte Naturalismus des Menschen und der durchgeführte Humanismus der Natur', is from the 1844 manuscripts (Marx and Engels (1968), p. 538).

⁶⁰ There are other affinities. The strategy in Schelling's 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism* – which treats the mechanism implanted by Nature in human development not as a contingent prerequisite, as in Kant, but as integral to securing human freedom (1978 [1800]), pp. 193–212 – is of a kind with the freedom-engendering use Sartre

wishes to make of Nature: rationality must be seen as the 'dialectical unity of freedom and necessity' (*CDRI*, p. 35).

⁶¹ And that there are echoes of *Naturphilosophie*: 'the history of man is an adventure of nature' (*CDRI*, p. 71); Reason '*makes itself*' into a system of inertia in order to rediscover sequences in exteriority' (*CDRI*, p. 75). Regarding Sartre's conception of matter in the *Critique*, see esp. *CDRI*, p. 97–98, 113–114, 161–166, 180–192.

⁶² Deleuze (2004), p. 79.

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