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RECOVERY AND INVENTION: THE PROJECTS OF DESIRE IN HEGEL, KOJEVE, HYPPOLITE, AND SARTRE

Yale University PH.D. 1984

Recovery and Invention:
The Projects of Desire in Hegel, Kojève, Hyppolite, and Sartre

A Dissertation

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of

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Doctor of Philosophy

by

Judith Pamela Butler

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ABSTRACT

RECOVERY AND INVENTION:

THE PROJECTS OF DESIRE IN HEGEL, KOJÈVE

HYPPOLITE AND SARTRE

Judith Pamela Butler

Yale University

1984

This inquiry develops a theory of desire as a tacit effort to overcome ontological difference through a philosophical reconstruction of the treatment of desire in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and selected works of Jean-Paul Sartre, paying some attention to the writings of Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite. The central concern is to establish an ontology of desire which accounts for the interrelationship of choice, imagination, temporality, and personal and cultural history in the experience of desire. Hegel's discussion of the ontological significance of desire provides the framework by which Kojève and Hyppolite analyze desire with respect to its relation to temporality and historical life generally. Kojève, Hyppolite and Sartre accept and extend Hegel's contention that desire must be understood in terms of the problem of negation, and that this implies that desire plays a constitutive role in all conscious activity. Although Sartre's view of desire presupposes

a critical reformulation of Hegelian ontology, it nevertheless extends the doctrine of negation with clear consequences for concretizing and furthering the phenomenological understanding of desire. Sartre's reformulation of desire as negation involves a view of desire as choice (manifesting the lack which is freedom) and as a mode of apprehending the world (the 'nihilating' or discriminatory function of consciousness).

Sartre's later biographical studies on Genet and Flaubert provide culturally and personally concrete analyses of this view of desire. Moreover, they reveal that the Hegelian project to achieve ontological unity of substance and subject is an imaginary one, one which, accordingly, can only be achieved in imaginary works. In these biographical studies Sartre also returns to an Hegelian formulation of desire, recasting the relationship between desire and recognition in terms of early childhood experiences and the task of literary writing.

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Note On Texts

All quotations which are translations from the German or French have been checked against the original versions. Unless explicitly designated as my own translation, the quotations from Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit are taken from Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, ed. J.N. Findlay, tr. A.V. Miller, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1977. Quotations in English from Sartre's L'Être et le Néant are from Hazel Barnes' Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology, (New York: Philosophical Library), 1947. Texts by Kojève and Hyppolite are noted both in the original and in translation the first time they appear in this manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

"The greatest poverty is not to live
In a physical world, to feel that one's desire
Is too difficult to tell from despair. Perhaps,
After death, the non-physical people, in paradise,
Itself non-physical, may, by chance, observe
The green corn gleaming and experience
The minor of what we feel. The adventurer
In humanity has not conceived a race
Completely physical in a physical world.
The green corn gleams and the metaphysicals
Lie sprawling in majors of the August heat,
The rotund emotions, paradise unknown."

Wallace Stevens, Part XV, "Esthêtique du Mal"

When Philosophy points the way to the extinction of all desire as the path to wisdom that alone can free us from illusion and suffering, it also takes away the basis of individual identity."

Roberto Unger, Knowledge and Politics, p. 44

That desire has philosophical significance is still a controversial claim. Although both Plato and Aristotle conceived of desire as essential to philosophical and moral thinking, modern philosophy has either ignored the philosophical implications of desire or relegated desire to a pre-philosophical or pre-cognitive realm. Insofar as desire has been conceived as a natural, brute, or otherwise contingent feature of human experience, the native intentionality of desire has been silenced and misunderstood. Establishing desire as a bonafide philosophical theme involves rethinking certain received notions of desire as well as the proper domain of philosophy. For if desire is shown to manifest its own modality of reason, then certain conventional ways of thinking about reason and desire are effectively challenged. And if the assumed bifurcation of reason and desire is refuted, an integrated version of human identity and new possibilities for self-understanding appear to emerge in its place.

The failure to view desire as a philosophical theme results partially from not asking the right questions about desire. We must view desire, not as a fact of human existence, but as a possibility of this existence. Only then can we ask, what kind of human possibility is desire, what is it about the human world which conditions the emergence of desire? The question which occupies Hegel, his commentators, and Sartre takes this form: what is it about our fundamental relation to the world and, specifically, the world of others that makes us desiring beings? In turn, if we express fundamental ontological relations in and through desires, how can we read back from these desires the fundamental struggles they are said to enact?

All four of our authors - Hegel, Kojève, Hyppolite, and Sartre - agree that desire reveals an essential dimension of human ontology. Moreover, they concur in viewing desire not merely as a reflection of prior ontological truths, but as a key way in which these ontological relations are enacted and, thus, actualized. Although Hegel's remarks on desire (Begierde) are brief, his contentions in the Phenomenology of Spirit establish desire, not only as a philosophical problem, but as a bearer of philosophical truths. Drawing upon the Platonic view of eros as the foundation of philosophical pursuits, Hegel claims that desire, apart from being the origin of philosophy, intimates the structure of absolute reflection or truly philosophical thought. For Hegel, "self-consciousness in general is desire";[1] in short, it is the human effort to negate or overcome difference or externality through an appropriation of that externality. This urge to overcome difference is, for Hegel, the basic movement of all thinking; the cultivation of this urge into more encompassing modes of synthesis constitutes the development of philosophical thinking.

[1]Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, #167.

The Hegelian formulation of the ontological and epistemological meaning of desire is critically revised in the commentaries of Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite,[2] and although these later Hegelians preserve the view of desire as revealing and enacting the fundamental ontological relations which adhere between the human spirit and the realm of externality, they differ widely over how this relation ought to be understood. Kojève and Hyppolite both distance themselves from the interpretation of Hegel which avows a final satisfaction for desire; Kojève consigns this model of satisfaction to the now defunct view of history as progressing toward a definite telos; Hyppolite brings the Science of Logic to bear upon the Phenomenology and argues that difference, instead of becoming subsumed under the absolute, constitutes the very meaning of the absolute for Hegel. Similarly, Sartre criticizes the Hegelian project to rediscover substance as subject for its epistemological and ontological optimism. For Sartre, as for the Hegel commentators from which he draws, dissatisfaction becomes, not a moment of human experience which will be overcome, but a permanent fact of human ontology. Desire, rather than reveal the possibility of overcoming difference, avows difference as ineradicable. The Hegelian project still haunts Sartre's position, but it remains an impossible wish, a nostalgic ideal. Accordingly, desire affirms human reality as a "useless passion."[3]

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[2]Jean Hyppolite, Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'ésprit de Hegel (Paris: Aubaier, Editions Montaigne), 1946; Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Tr. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 1974; Alexandre Kojeve, Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel (2d ed.; Paris: Gallimard, 1947). Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, tr. James H. Nichols, Jr., ed. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1980. Other writings by both of the above commentators on Hegel will be referred to throughout this work.

[3]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 615.

On the one hand, the three reformulations of Hegel's view of desire can be seen as effecting a breakdown of Hegel's ontological optimism, i.e. the ideal of a final synthesis of difference. On the other hand, the modern assertion of the ineradicability of difference may be seen to allow for increasingly complex analyses of desire. The dissatisfaction of desire culminates for Kojève in the creation of historical life; for Hyppolite, in the enhanced awareness of human temporality and finitude. For Sartre, the ontological situation of dissatisfaction results in the creation of imaginary satisfactions; in his later studies of Genet and Flaubert, these imaginary fulfillments of desire are understood as literary works.

My approach to the theme of desire in Hegel, Kojeve, Hyppolite, and Sartre is not simply an historical one. I hope, rather, to present a philosophical reconstruction of the systematic interrelations which emerge among their texts; moreover, I hope to outline a theory of desire which maintains its ontological significance but which also offers a culturally and historically mediated explanation of its meaning and aims. This approach ought not to be confused with the effort to trace a line of influence from Hegel to Sartre. Although it is clear that Sartre read Hegel's Phenomenology, he admits quite frankly that he failed to study the text systematically.[4] And although Sartre enrolled in Kojève's lectures, Raymond Aron tells us that few people recall his presence there.[5] Hyppolite, although clearly affected by Kojeve, claims to have avoided reading the latter for fear of being influenced. Hence, it would make

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[4]cf. Sartre's comments on his cursory reading of Hegel's Phenomenology in "An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," with Michel Rybalka, Oreste Pucciani, and Susan Gruenheck in Paul Schilpp, The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Press), 1981, p. 9.

[5]Mark Poster, Existential Marxism in Postwar France, (Princeton University Press: 1975), pp. 8-9.

little sense to assume a clear and unambiguous line of influence from Hegel, through Kojève and Hyppolite, to Sartre.

Hegel's formulation of desire provides a distinctively phenomenological foundation for the later views of desire considered here. Hegel's view is not the first to discern the ontological significance of desire, nor to link desire with human projects and rationality, but it does seem to be the first major phenomenological treatment of desire. As such, it is not merely interested in seeing the extent to which desire is rational (the epistemological interest in desire), nor is it solely concerned with the being or essence of human reality as it is manifest in desire (the ontological concern with desire). For Hegel, knowledge always presupposes a prior relationship between the knower and the known; the task of knowledge is to make explicit the tacit or implicit relations which already adhere between the thinker and his object. This prior relationship requires recognition in order to take on its explicit and actual form; hence, the being of the object only becomes fulfilled or actualized through being known. Conversely, the knower only truly understands his object insofar as he understands his own consciousness as constitutive of - internally related to - that which it comprehends. Desire, as prefiguring and enacting the structure of reflection, is accordingly understood both as a relationship which adheres between consciousness and externality and as the articulation, enactment, or actualization of this relationship. Desire is an ontological concern insofar as it is a constant and universal relation between consciousness and that which is other to consciousness; it is an epistemological relation insofar as the encounter between self and otherness is enacted and articulated in determinate modes. In every case, however, the determinate desire for a specific object or Other implicitly presupposes a way of being in the world. Hence, desire always has a "double-object" in Hegel's

view; it is an intentional structure directed toward a determinate object, but also a reflexive structure, a way in which consciousness situates itself in its world.[5]

A possible objection to any effort to isolate Hegel's discussion of desire may well emerge from the concerns of traditional Hegel scholarship. First, it is unclear that wrenching a particular theme from one of Hegel's texts, and treating it in separation from its interrelations with the system as a whole, is a justifiable way to proceed. This objection might be seen as especially relevant to any isolated treatment of desire, for desire is mentioned as an early stage of subjective spirit, and is shortly thereafter discovered to be inadequate as a source of absolute knowledge. Desire is superseded in the Phenomenology, which means that it needs to develop into more sophisticated forms to be understood in its fully actualized being; hence, it may well seem that to understand desire as an autonomous theme is to remain restricted to a truncated notion of desire.

If our task were to consider Hegel's view of desire in isolation and nothing more, then the above criticism would surely be devastating to our project. This is, however, not the case. As will be shown in the later chapters on Hyppolite, Kojève, and Sartre, desire may have a more fundamental role in philosophical reflection than Hegel's cursory treatment would seem to indicate. The enhanced role of desire in philosophical reflection in these later writers is due to the central role which negation and difference come to play in their respective ontological schemes. Kojève and Hyppolite concentrate on the early chapters of Hegel's Phenomenology precisely because, taking more seriously than Hegel the point of view of lived experience, they interpret

[5]Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, #167.

desire as the power of the negative in human life. Hegel agreed with this claim, but saw the negative as a recurring moment in the journey of a consciousness which would ultimately be contained and preserved within a totality of interrelated beings. Kojève and Hyppolite, and, more strongly, Sartre, lacked this fundamental optimism with regard to the possibility of ever harnessing the negative within the wider circumference of being. Their various ontological pessimisms have direct consequences for their respective views of desire, for desire is the fundamental expression of the negative, the primary way in which consciousness articulates its relationship to that which is not itself, that which is different, strange, novel, absent, awaited, lost. In this view, then, the primary human attitude toward the novel and unknown is desire; desire becomes the essential way in which we thematize difference for ourselves. And insofar as consciousness can never wholly identify with an encompassing plenitude of being and cannot effect a final erasure of the negative, desire cannot find a final fulfillment for itself.

As the power of the negative in human life, desire is viewed by Kojève and Hyppolite as coextensive with all human activity. Insofar as human activity is intentional, i.e. directed toward an object external to consciousness, desire is never wholly aufgehoben, but persists as the fundament of negation which informs all human intentionality. As the ideal of an ultimate synthesis between subject and substance proves illusory for twentieth century readers of Hegel, either through the discovery of the structure of temporality (Hyppolite), or the meaning of historical agency (Kojève) or the insurpassibility of human freedom (Sartre), human subjectivity emerges as a permanent source of negation, and human desire proves to be a necessary and restless mode through which subjectivity constitutes and is constituted by its world.

The role of desire in Sartre's philosophy parallels and extends Kojève's and Hyppolite's interpretations of desire. The absolute non-coincidence of the for-itself and in-itself in Being and Nothingness has the effect of dissolving Hegel's ideal synthesis altogether. In effect, for the Sartre of Being and Nothingness, desire comes to characterize intentionality itself; accordingly, desire becomes the "useless passion" which is human life.

As early as the Psychology of Imagination (1939), Sartre's descriptions of desire are haunted by the Hegelian ideal of satisfaction, yet Sartre argues that this ideal can only be entertained imaginatively. Indeed, in this work Sartre maintains that "the image is the ideal for desire"; and the image, despite its momentary allure, remains essentially "nothingness," a contribution of consciousness rather than a manifestation of being.[6] On the other hand, in an essay of that same year, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology", Sartre seems to argue that desire, rather than being 'about' objects of its own making, truly refers to objects in the world.[7] In the first position, desire appears to be a solipsistic activity, referring only to imagined objects or reflections of itself. And in the second, desire appears to be intentional and cognitive. In this article Sartre finds in Husserl's theory of intentionality an alternative to positivist and idealist accounts of emotional life which invariably end in solipsism. Insofar as emotion is viewed as intentional, according to Sartre's Husserlian perspective, they are viewed as ways of apprehending the world. Sartre sometimes views the intentionality of consciousness as a constituting activity, and sometimes

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[6]Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 103; cf. p. 211 of this same text: "A desire is in fact never satisfied to the letter precisely because of the abyss that separates the real from the imaginary."

[7]"Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology", tr. Joseph Fell, in Journal for the British Society for Phenomenology, Vol. I, #2 (1970) pp. 4-5; cf. Chapter Four of this manuscript for a more detailed analysis of the intentionality of emotions in this article.

as a revealing activity, and occasionally, as both. In the above article, Sartre does not maintain that intentional consciousness 'refers' to an object which has a self-contained reality independent of consciousness: "consciousness and world are given at one stroke: essentially external to consciousness, the world is nevertheless essentially relative to consciousness."[8] Hence, whatever is constituted by consciousness is said to have a meaningful reality for consciousness, but every meaningful reality may not necessarily have existence; indeed, imaginary objects are precisely of this nature.

The difficulty involved in maintaining the above distinction between reality and existence plagues Sartre's discussion of the cognitive or referential function of desire and affectivity in general. While he claims that the intentionality of consciousness implies that consciousness is forever in a state of self-transcendence, "a sliding beyond itself", this non-egological view of consciousness as a translucent medium which reveals the world as it is contrasts sharply with the creative view of consciousness elaborated upon in the Psychology of the Imagination. In the latter view, consciousness confers reality on objects which may or may not have existence, and thus creates for itself an autonomous world, one which approximates the solipsistic universe his theory of intentionality originally sought to escape. While emotional life is deemed cognitive, "a revelation of the meaning of the world", it is also considered a "degradation of reality."[9] And insofar as Sartre adopts this latter viewpoint, he sets emotions in distinct contrast with cognitive judgements, and even occasionally pronounced them 'irrational'.

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[8]Sartre, "Intentionality...", p. 4.

[9]Sartre, The Emotions: Outline of a Theory, p. 81 and 84.

The problem of whether and how emotions 'refer' in Sartre's view has consequences for the thesis defended here. If the breakdown of Hegel's ontology and, correspondingly, the ideal of satisfaction, results in a dualistic ontology, does that imply that desire can never reach across the ontological difference which separates it from the world of being in order to be 'about' something other than itself? If a common ontology fails to bind consciousness to its world, is consciousness deprived of any cognitive access to that world? Can desire, as an actualization of consciousness, be understood as a way of situating oneself in the world, if desire is essentially solipsistic? Sartre's position on this issue may be seen as undergoing a number of stages, but our presentation will seek to show that eventually Sartre achieves a reconciliation of these two views which, in effect, return him to an Hegelian formulation of desire.

Two competing views of subjectivity persist throughout Sartre's philosophical writings. On the one hand, Sartre committed himself in The Transcendence of the Ego to a non-egological account of subjectivity. The self, according to this view, is always projected toward the world, a "bursting forth" or permanent ekstasis of consciousness. Intentional selfhood is described in this context as a "translucent" medium: "there is nothing in it but a movement of fleeing itself."[10] As translucent, intentional consciousness presents the world as the world appears; it contributes nothing; it is a revelatory act in which consciousness is supplanted (supplants itself) by the world. On the other hand, Sartre in The Emotions: Outline of a Theory and in Being and Nothingness is skeptical of such an harmonious union of

[10]Sartre, "Intentionality.....", p. 4.

subjectivity and the world; indeed, the ontological dualism of the latter work seems to imply that "the object of knowledge recedes into the far side of the epistemological gulf."[11] The world is often described as adverse or resistant, and in The Emotions Sartre argues that emotions - rather than revealing the world - constitute an escape from a world which appears intransigent. In this discussion of emotions as magical transformations of a necessarily difficult world, Sartre opposes the emotional relation to the world to the rational one and thus deprives emotions of the cognitive function he originally sought to invest them with. According to the magical view of emotions, affective life seeks a purposeful obfuscation of the real; affectivity becomes the mode in which an imaginary world is constituted and a real world is escaped.

Sartre comes to acknowledge and, ultimately, reconcile these two competing views of the intentionality of emotion. Prior to What is Literature? Sartre appeared to vacillate between the claim that his philosophy restored human beings to the world and the contrasting position that human fulfillment could only be found in the imaginary realm. Perhaps at the initial stages of Sartre's Marxism these two projects appeared to be at odds; hence, he claimed at one point that his early preoccupation with the imaginary was a bourgeois concern.[12] But Sartre's biographical studies signify an approach which synthesizes the realistic and the imaginary views of emotional life.[13]

The biographies can be seen to give concrete meaning to some of the existential postulations of Being and Nothingness and to Sartre's lifelong

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[11]Joseph Fell, Heidegger and Sartre: An Essay on Being and Place, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1979, p. 201.

[12]Simon de Beauvoir, The Prime of Life, tr. Peter Green (Cleveland: World Publishing Co.), pp. 113-114.

[13]See Ronald Aronson, Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophy in the World, (London: Verso Editions), 1980, pp. 68-69 and pp. 122-141 for a discussion of Sartre's continuous concern with the imaginary.

concern with the imaginary. In Being and Nothingness Sartre claimed that desire was "the being of human reality"; human being is fundamentally signified by the "desire to be."[14] This quest after being, a striving for an ultimate plenitude, remains the characteristic way in which Sartre describes the fundamental project of human reality throughout his work. To insist that Sartre's 'conversion' to Marxism eliminates the possibility of continuity between his earlier and later works is to fail to understand that the basic questions he pursued in the biographical studies of Genet and Flaubert were the same questions pursued in Being and Nothingness. In the earlier work Sartre argued that desire implied a choice of a world, and that in desiring as we do we tacitly interpret the situation we are in. Although 'world' and 'situation' remain abstract terms in some of Sartre's earlier works, they nevertheless provide the foundation upon which his biographical studies are built. Sartre retains his initial conviction that desire is always a way in which human beings tacitly pose fundamental ontological questions for themselves; in the biographies these questions are posed in culturally and personally concrete ways.

The insight of the biographical works is that the quest for plenitude is a mediated one, that is, that desire is always desire in situation, employing the cultural conventions of a given social place and time, steeped in a history which determines the specific ways in which the fundamental project of human life is formulated and pursued. The radical subjectivity of Being and Nothingness is transformed into the "universal singular" of Flaubert.[15] Flaubert's choice of being, his particular and irreducible desire, remains a

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[14]Being and Nothingness, p. 565.

[15]Sartre, The Family Idiot... Vol. I, p. ix.

radically individualized project, although the cultural and historical terms in which individuality is formulated transcend his individuality; his choice is highly situated. Flaubert, like any individual, does not have an immediate relationship to 'being', nor could he find for himself "the desire to be" as an isolated and immediate desire. For "the desire to be" to become manifest in Flaubert, it must, in Hegelian fashion, take on a determinate or historical form; it must particularize itself in order to achieve actuality.

Apart from concretizing the fundamental project of Being and Nothingness, the biographies also trace the essential relationship of desire to the imaginary. Both Genet and Flaubert were literary writers whose fundamental project, whose abiding desire, was to find fulfillment through the creation of imaginary worlds. And yet, these creations were not simply escapes from the real world, but also profound social commentaries and, implicitly, social criticisms. As literary works, these imaginary answers to desire were nevertheless non-imaginary events in the world. The literary work, as product and actualized form, itself becomes a part of the world from which it seeks to escape. And insofar as these works posit a possible world within the real world, the literary work is an effort to transform the real world, to hold before it a mirror which reveals that world's inverse self. The literary fulfillment of desire is less an escape from the already existing world than an original reorganization or reformulation of that world. Hence, the intentionality of the literary work does reveal a world outside of consciousness even as it presents that world in the mode of transformation. The literary work reveals human affectivity as both referential and original; emotion does not create a wholly solipsistic universe, but, rather, transforms a world already there. Emotion, and desire in particular, is neither wholly

creative nor wholly referential; it maintains ties to a world independent of consciousness, but the ties it maintains are wholly original.

The imaginary relationship to the world remains an essentially ambivalent relationship for Sartre, for the image and the imaginary world generally poses for consciousness as a complete and undifferentiated presence; the imaginative work creates a compelling illusion that the work sustains no relations to anything outside itself. Thus the work creates the illusion that it is an absolute plenitude devoid of negativity, an experience of pure being. This illusion is, of course, sustained by the negativity which is consciousness, and although consciousness masks its participation in the creation of the imaginary world, consciousness remains that world's essential precondition and knows itself pre-reflectively as such. This knowledge tacitly undermines the illusion that unreflective (spontaneous and constituting) consciousness seeks to create.

Imaginary works thus come as close as possible to satisfying Sartre's requirements for the fulfillment of desire, but even these fail to establish on firm ground that access to being toward which all desire strives. The author assumes the place of God insofar as he creates an imaginary world which is ultimately reducible to himself; and insofar as the imaginary work elicits belief, it is possible for the author to ascribe being to that world, to indulge the tempting illusion that an ultimate unity between consciousness and being is attainable. Hegel's ideal synthesis between subject and substance haunts Sartre's philosophy as well, although this ideal remains an impossible one for Sartre; indeed, the ideal remains an image. This impossibility is not one to which consciousness resigns itself with ease; the 'bad faith' of the for-itself consists in this very effort to convince itself that ontological difference can be overcome.

Sartre's analysis of the early childhoods of Genet and Flaubert trace the career of a desire through its transformation into the imaginary and its final actualization in literary works. The work of literature becomes, like the work of Hegel's bondsman, a new occasion for a struggle for recognition, an affirmation of identity which is the 'being' toward which desire strives. Our study will examine Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr and Volume I of The Idiot of the Family: Gustave Flaubert, 1821-1857 in order to view Sartre's novel appropriation of Hegel's doctrine of desire. In the case of Flaubert, we restrict ourselves to Volume I of the biographical study to see how the consideration of childhood forces Sartre to reformulate his own earlier theory of choice and desire. In the final chapter we hope to understand desire as both a reflexive and intentional relation, a way of defining oneself through relating to an Other, a way of situating oneself in one's complex historical situation. In these later studies Sartre implicitly criticizes his own earlier conception of radical freedom and also returns to an essentially Hegelian understanding of the kind of choice which desire concretizes and enacts; the desiring agent finds himself in a personal and historical world which is already there, and the choice which is desire becomes a way of taking up that history and formulating it anew.

Our project takes its bearings in a cultural situation in which human desire is often naturalized and mystified, deemed irrational or pre-cognitive, treated as a given of biological nature rather than as an essential expression of personhood. As long as desire is conceived naturalistically, it cannot indicate a meaning for consciousness; indeed, desires are then encountered as so many brute facts, as either intrinsically meaningless or governed by natural laws wholly alien to the self-understanding of the desiring subject. Sartre himself points out that "the most discerning moralists have shown how a

desire reaches beyond itself to a meaning which transcends it,"[16] suggesting that moral self-reflection requires an ability to recover the tacit meanings of desire. Sartre's suggestion, one which is corroborated by the theories of Hegel, Kojève, and Hyppolite, is that desire's hidden meanings and aims can be discerned, indeed, that the knowing subject can read back from its desires the opaque regions of itself. As long as desire is viewed naturalistically, as reason's opposite, human being is ontologically split so that the possibility of ever rendering one's desires into an intelligent expression of one's values and life proves meaningless. If desire and the projects of consciousness are ontologically distinct realms of human activity, then the possibility of ever knowing ourselves in our desires becomes infinitely remote. It is only when we understand the various intentionalities of desire - as a choice in response to a situation, as an interpretation of a cultural system of norms, as a pursuit of plenitude, as a mutual enhancement of self and otherness, as recognition - that the full realm of human choice and project will become apparent to us. And it is only when we pursue these domains of reason and choice which have largely remained opaque to us that the full range and depth of human projects will become available to a reflective understanding.

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[16] Being and Nothingness, p. 562.

Chapter One: Hegel on Self-Certainty: The Ontology of Desire

"The sun by day and the gods revealed are familiar sights
Shaping the countenance which, by ancients named "one and all",
Has filled to the brim with free satisfaction the reticent heart,
And first and alone is the source of gratified desire."

Holderlin, "Bread and Wine"[1]

A consideration of the theme of desire in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit necessitates a preliminary turn to the larger problem of how philosophical themes are introduced and examined within the terms of this tortuous text. Those who write about Hegel need to contend with Hegel's labyrinthine prose and the complex character of the text's development; indeed, the problem emerges for any close reader of Hegel's text because the narrative style of the Phenomenology proves essential to the content or explicit propositional claims of the text. Hegel's curious rhetoric is very often an effort to subvert the tacit metaphysical presuppositions of customary sentences; his refusal of natural language is thus actually a refusal of a crude substance metaphysics which customary language presupposes and reinforces. Hegel's narrative aim is to narrow the distance between philosophical presentation and content. In his view, philosophical prose both refers to an objective content and constitutes it essentially. Hence, the Phenomenology is not merely a story about a journeying consciousness, but is the journey itself. The reader is implicated in this gradual process of revealing the unity of substance and subject; indeed, reading becomes the way in which Hegelian truth is continuously reconstituted.

The Phenomenology does not state a position - it enacts one. And the procedure of enactment, its ontological presuppositions, proves central to the

[1] Friedrich Hölderlin, Eduard Mörike: Selected Poems, tr. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1972, p. 41.

consideration of desire. Although Marx criticized Hegel for extending the tradition of contemplative philosophy, Hegel must nevertheless be seen as aligned with the Romantic positions of Schiller and Schelling who viewed consciousness as a productive activity. The chapter on Self-Certainty in Hegel's Phenomenology reveals the inadequacy of the contemplative position in which consciousness is opposed to its object and seeks a description of its object without acknowledging its own contribution to the truth of the object. Consciousness cannot maintain the assumption that its object is wholly external to itself because in coming to know its object, consciousness discovers the object as an externalization of itself. Through actualizing itself, i.e. rendering itself external, consciousness develops into self-consciousness. In the form of desire, consciousness discovers itself as self-consciousness, i.e. as an effort to overcome the difference between external reality and consciousness, a difference which contemplative philosophy assumes. Desire establishes consciousness as that which enacts itself; it is in this sense that the transition to self-consciousness (a consciousness which, external to itself, can now recognize itself) is enacted through desire, and Hegel can claim that "desire is self-consciousness in general."[2]

Attributing such a central function to desire in the Phenomenology may at first appear curious inasmuch as desire (Begierde) is mentioned only briefly in this text and treated only tangentially in Hegel's System der Sittlichkeit. Further, desire is surpassed (aufgehoben) in Chapter IV of the Phenomenology, suggesting that it is an early and relatively unsophisticated form of self-consciousness, one which achieves meaning only through its dissolution into more capable forms of self-consciousness, i.e. work, morality, and,

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[2]Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, #167.

finally, reason. The brevity of Hegel's discussion, however, should not lead us to dismiss the philosophical importance of his formulation. Indeed, the dynamics of desire and its satisfaction characterize the project of philosophical knowledge for Hegel. The comprehension of absolute knowledge is the only true satisfaction for desire, so that philosophical knowing is itself a sophistication and expression of desire, and reason itself becomes the highest expression of desire insofar as reason expresses an ontological synthesis of subject and substance. We turn to the chapter, "The Truth of Self-Certainty", to discover the intimations of Hegel's ultimate aim to overcome the externality of the world, the finality of difference, in the doctrine of desire.

Rather than summarize the entirety of the Phenomenology which precedes the introduction of desire, we will attend to the situation of consciousness which precipitates the emergence of desire as a relevant and necessary expression of consciousness. But first we must understand what it means that desire 'emerges' or 'appears' at a given point in the Phenomenology.

The development of spirit in the Phenomenology follows an historical progression which can only be construed as a meaningful fiction. Literary readers such as M.H. Abrams contend that the Phenomenology is a Bildungsroman of spirit, an educational journey which facilitates the gradual emergence of wisdom.[3] According to the inner logic of this narrative, forms of consciousness emerge as vital protagonists in the dramatic revelation of truth. Hence, to say that desire appears or emerges as a relevant form of consciousness at some stage in spirit's journey is not to make any concrete historical claims about the evolution of human history; the temporal

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[3]M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: Norton, 1971), see chapter four, section three, "Hegel's 'Phenomenology of the Spirit': Metaphysical Structure and Narrative Plot", pp. 225-237.

development of the Phenomenology, although occasionally typifying different eras in history, is not primarily a phenomenology of human cultures.[4] The phenomenological beginning for this text is not the anthropological beginnings of human society, but, rather, the simplest or most naive postures of human thought and experience and the ontological assumptions which they presuppose. Insofar as the Phenomenology seems to provide a rational account of experience, it seeks constantly to expand its prevailing notions of rationality to encompass those aspects of experience unaccounted for by those notions. The educational journey of human thought, according to Hegel, is the gradual realization of the rationalist program, to discover reason in the full range of being. The phenomenological starting point in the Phenomenology is a rather restricted view of both reason and being, and the progression of the text is marked by a series of efforts to find an ultimate integration of the two.

When we ask to what kinds of experiences these different configurations of consciousness refer, we are, I think, left with a difficult interpretive task. The stages of self-certainty, of consciousness, and self-consciousness never existed in any historical world, although as Hyppolite points out, they may have characterized prevailing ideological formations at different points in Western intellectual history.[5] Of significance, however, is that Hegel is reconstructing the genesis of his own intellectual position from the vantage of hindsight, and that this reconstruction is essentially organized by this retrospective point of view. The point of the reconstruction is not to understand historical times or past ideological formations as they were, but

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[4]Jean Hyppolite suggests in Genese et structure de la Phenomenologie de l'esprit de Hegel that the Phenomenology is not the history of the world, but does maintain some tenuous links with history. For a detailed discussion see Part I, Chapter 2 of Hyppolite's commentary.

[5]Ibid.

only insofar as they have contributed to the development of Hegel's own perspective.

This phenomenology, then, is a history constituted by reflection as much as it is a history which forms reflection. To say that desire emerges at a given point in the Phenomenology is not to say that it comes to exist for the first time at some point in human history; indeed, everything which appears in the Phenomenology has, in a sense, been there all along. Stages of consciousness do not come into being and then pass out again; they simply move from the opacity of being to its transparency, and back again, i.e. they survive as implicit potentialities all along, gaining explicit appearance only to be relinquished in favor of a new stage which provides for a more inclusive account of experience.

Insofar as the Phenomenology can be read as a phenomenology of philosophical positions, Hegel's introduction of desire appears to draw upon the Hobbesian view of desire as constitutive of egoistic individualism.[6] It could be argued that the section on self-certainty which gives rise to the struggle for recognition gives philosophical expression to Hobbes' state of nature, or following Hyppolite, that Hegel's discussion of desire is an effort to synthesize the Spinozistic conception of desire as a rational impulse with Kant's view in the Critique of Practical Reason that desire is coextensive with life. But whether one seeks the rationale for the discussion of desire in its historical or intellectual referents, the problem of how to explain its appearance in the Phenomenology in terms of the progression of stages internal to the Phenomenology still remains to be addressed. The general philosophical

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[6]In Leo Strauss' The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, its Basis and Genesis (Oxford: 1936), p. 63, he argues that Hegel's discussion of desire and recognition is derived from Hobbes' position in the Leviathan.

problem persists: what does it mean to say that desire emerges only on the basis of certain pre-existing relations? What are these relations, and how do they precipitate and inform desire?

Clearly, when Hegel speaks of desire he is always talking about human desire, although he does not have a full conception of human subjectivity until the final stage of the Phenomenology. Desire both precedes the emergence of subjectivity and is instrumental to that emergence; it is a formative stage in the development of human spirit. It is both precipitated and surpassed, although never fully consigned to nothingness. Desire is less a presupposition of human experience than an emergent phenomenon which helps to establish a being as a human subject. As that which appears, desire has its own preconditions, and it makes sense to ask, as Sartre was later to ask of emotion, what is it that makes desire possible?[7] After consideration of this problem we will then turn to the alternate question, what is it that desire makes possible?

The question of what it is that makes desire possible is one which presupposes a given ontological landscape as the prior and necessary precondition of desire. We must ask, what must the world be like for desire to emerge? What features of the world allow for the experience of desire; what features necessitate desire?

When we ask after the conditions or features of the world which make desire possible, we are not asking a purely methodological question, i.e. a preliminary question which, once answered, will allow us to continue the investigation with ease. The preconditions of desire are the object of the

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[7]In The Emotions: Outline of a Theory (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 7, Sartre proposes to study "the possible conditions of an emotion, that is, wondering whether the very structure of human reality makes emotions possible, and how it makes them possible...".

inquiry itself because they form the intentionl object of desire and are, therefore, the key to the meaning of desire itself.

Stanley Rosen formulates this conception of the reflexivity of desire: "In analytical terms, part of the self is encountered outside oneself; the desire to assimilate the desire of the Other is thus an effort to grasp analytically the preanalytic or indeterminate structure of absolute reflection."[8] Extending Rosen's view, we may say that desire is fundamentally an effort to uncover or thematize the preconditions of its own identity. The conditions which give rise to desire are at the same time the final aim of desire, and this aim must be understood as the recovery of the opacity from which desire emerges, the opacity or otherness of the self which desire both presupposes and enacts--and potentially illuminates. Desire is thus an effort to gather into light the various relations which form the precondition or context of desire, to make into its own theme the world which preexists and informs desire. Desire does not offer up the world for reflection, but is itself a cognitive grasp of the world, enacting and revealing the structure of self-consciousness.

The discussion of desire first emerges in the Phenomenology in the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness. The transition from consciousness to self-consciousness is among the most problematic sections of Hegel's text, and critics such as J.N. Findlay have ceased to apply rigorous standards of coherence to the transitions which link the themes of Force, infinity, Life, self-consciousness and desire.[9] Rather than become involved

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[8]Stanley Rosen, G.W.F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974), p. 159.

[9]See J.N. Findlay, Hegel: A Re-examination (New York: Humanities Press), 1958), p. 96.

in the myriad debates which have arisen in response to this difficult section, we shall restrict ourselves to a retrospective point of view and ask, whatelements of this preliminary discussion are taken up and formulated in the doctrine of desire. For consciousness, the sensuous perceptual world exists as an independently subsisting reality, a world which exists only in an external and non-essential relationship to the consciousness which apprehends it. The apparent paradox of consciousness consists in the fact that this world of sensuous and perceptual reality only has its appearance external to consciousness, but gains its truth or delineation in consciousness. From the point of view of consciousness, the world of sensuous and perceptual reality is one which both appears to consciousness and yet has its truth or being outside of consciousness. This paradox must be resolved if the experience we have of the sensuous and perceptual world is to make sense: "...what is true for consciousness is something other than itself. But the Notion of this truth vanishes in the experience of it."[10] Experience for Hegel clearly imposes certain normative requirements on thinking, and in the case of consciousness we find that we do not, in fact, experience the sensuous and perceptual world as an independent reality only externally related to the consciousness which knows it; in fact, we come to see that the 'knowing' of this world is itself a form of participation in it and seems to implicate this supposedly external world in the life of consciousness itself.

The notion of Force, appearing in the final section of Part I, introduces the Concept or Notion (Begriff) as a mode of consciousness which, as Hegel says, permits one to "think antithesis within the antithesis itself, or contradiction."[11] Force is essential to the transition from consciousness to

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[10]Hegel, Phenomenology, #166.

[11]Ibid., #160.

self-consciousness because it posits the externality of the world of sensuous and perceptual reality as one which is essentially related to consciousness itself; Force posits externality as a necessary moment of thought. In order that consciousness complete its own project to think 'something', it must become determinate thought; it must be a thought 'of' something external to itself. Thought which remains a purely inner phenomenon is not truly thought at all; it must be related to something outside itself in order to achieve its full self-hood as consciousness. The notion of Force gives us a way of understanding this distinction between the inner and outer moments of thought. Force is, according to Hegel, a constant movement between an inner reality and a determinate manifestation; in effect, Force is the compulsion that a nascent reality exhibits to find a determinate manifestation for itself. And although Force is said to characterize relations in the physical world at large, and is taken up into a general discussion of organic life, it is also clear that the dynamic of inner reality finding expression in determinate form is also characteristic of the kind of thinking executed with the concept (Begriff). The Concept, according to Charles Taylor, is "the Idea of necessity which necessarily posits its own external manifestation."[12]

If Force or the Concept were the kinds of movements which only sought a determinate embodiment for a nascent reality, then there would be no grave difference between Hegel's notion of the Concept and an Aristotelian notion of teleological development. The particular shapes or embodiments which conceptual thinking may attain, or which Force may posit for itself within the organic world, are, however, only temporary respites from the dynamism of life. Conceptual thinking is not only concerned with finding or positing forms for an inner reality, but is itself an infinite process which both posits and

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[12]Charles Taylor, Hegel (Cambridge: 1975), p. 146.

negates determinate forms in a constant effort to achieve an all-encompassing idea of all that is.

Force not only introduces the notion of an inner reality in search of a determinate shape, but also delineates the notion of "inner difference" or the unity of opposites which is so central to Hegel's mode of dialectical thinking. Insofar as Force characterizes the movement and process of organic life, it is a constant process of giving and superceding determinate shape. In a brief discussion of gravity, Hegel claims that without the notion of Force, or inner difference, we might have to think of space and time as only contingently or externally related: "But through the Notion of inner difference, these unlike and indifferent moments, space and time, etc. are a difference which is no difference, or only a difference of what is self-same, and its essence is unity. A positive and negative they stimulate each other into activity, and their being is rather to posit themselves as not-being and to suspend themselves in the unity. The two distinguished moments both subsist; they are implicit and are opposites in themselves, i.e. each is the opposite of itself; each has its 'other' within it and they are only one unity."[13]

Hegel moves from a discussion of Force to a discussion of Life, relying on the common theme of 'self-sundering' to effect the transition. Whatever has determinate form also has an indeterminate opposite which is equally constitutive of the reality itself. Reality is not co-extensive with determinateness, for every determination has an implicit context which forms the reality or, in Hegel's terms, the 'unity' of the phenomenon. In order to think the unity of phenomena, we must therefore relinquish faith in the kind of thinking which can only take determinate beings as its objects; conceptual

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[13]Hegel, Phenomenology, #161.

thinking is distinguished in this regard insofar as it is able to think the movement between opposites. The Understanding cannot grasp movement itself; it is always prone to render its objects as determinate and specifiable beings. And since consciousness reaches its most sophisticated development in the Understanding, it proves no longer capable of the kind of thinking which experience - here, the experience of Force - calls upon it to make. In the explication of Force, of the dialectical unity and self-sundering of opposites, self-consciousness arises as a new and more inclusive form of thinking. While consciousness could think determinate being, it could not think the process of determination and indetermination which is life itself; it could not think change.

Appropriately, it is in the thinking of movement itself that self-consciousness arises: "Appearance, or the play of Forces, already displays infinity...this absolute unrest of pure movement, but it is as an '<u>explanation</u>' that it first freely stands forth; and in being finally an object for consciousness, as <u>that which it is</u>, consciousness is thus <u>self-consciousness</u>."[14] The Understanding can give an explanation of Force, but this explanation can only consist in a fracturing of the moments of force; gravity can be analytically separated from positive and negative electricity, and distance and attraction can similarly be scrutinized in isolation. The Understanding can only posit these different moments as interrelated theoretically; Understanding alone cannot thematize its own 'difference' from that which it investigates as <u>part</u> of the phenomenon investigated. Understanding lacks reflexivity, and so cannot understand its differences from its own object as a constitutive or essential relationship of negation.

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[14] <u>Ibid</u>., #163.

The Understanding relinquishes its own status of understanding and becomes transformed into self-consciousness through its own explanation. "Explanation" for the Understanding succeeds unwittingly in giving determinate form to the laws or rules which consciousness itself has fashioned, and in recognizing the authorship of that explanation, consciousness becomes aware of itself for the first time; it discovers itself as 'other' to itself, only to understand itself as an essentially reflexive being: "The reason why explaining affords so much self-satisfaction is just because in it consciousness is, so to speak, communing directly with itself, enjoying only itself; although it seems to be busy with something else, it is in fact occupied only with itself."[15]

Consciousness thus relinquishes itself as consciousness in the process of explaining what it knows. In explaining, consciousness gives itself determinate form; it renders itself in the form of a stated explanation, and thus also reveals something of its essential nature. Consciousness henceforth is the kind of being which can render itself as other. Charles Taylor concludes: "self-consciousness arises through self-repulsion."[16] And yet this alienation of consciousness from itself requires an object to be thought, to be explained. But self-consciousness puts into question the radical alterity of the object; while consciousness had 'objects' or external realities as its proper object of thought, self-consciousness thematizes the very relation which holds between consciousness and object as contitutive of reality. Not only is consciousness discovered to be a reflexive structure, but the reflexivity of that structure is found to be constitutive of the world. Self-consciousness is not counterposed to the world as such; the ways in which

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Taylor, Hegel, p. 150.

consciousness is other to itself are precisely the ways in which the world is united with self-consciousness. In #164 Hegel expresses the view that self-consciousness is constitutive of reality:

> "I distinguish myself from myself, and in doing so, I am directly aware that what is distinguished from myself is not different (from me). I, the self-same being, repel myself from myself; but what is posited as distinct from me, or as unlike me, is immediately, in being so distinguished not a distinction for me. It is true that consciousness of an 'other', of an object in general, is itself necessarily self-consciousness, a reflectedness-into-self, consciousness of itself in its otherness."[17]

The world of 'objects', the entire realm of 'alterity' is, then, not to be conceived as yet a third component in the schema of knowledge whereby there is first consciousness, then consciousness in its otherness, and then the otherness of the world. Consciousness in its otherness is identical with the otherness of the world. Consciousness of the world is always simply consciousness of itself in its alienation or alterity.

The problem of consciousness, we will remember, is how to conceptualize the world of sensuous and perceptual reality. Consciousness, in the form of understanding, could delineate the features or 'moments' of this world, but, as we have seen, lacked the reflexive tools to understand its own participation in this world and, conversely, the participation of that world in consciousness itself. The problem of desire arises here, in the confrontation with the supposed alterity of the sensuous and perceptual world. That world seems external to consciousness, and yet consciousness seeks to have certainty of that world's existence. How is consciousness to have certainty of that which has no relation to it? With the emergence of consciousness as a reflexive structure, and with the corollary claim that the world is self-consciousness

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[17]Hegel, Phenomenology, #164.

in its otherness, the supposedly external world of sensuous and perceptual reality comes to have its 'truth' in the life of consciousness itself. The object of sense and perception is not merely an object in-itself; it is as much an object for-itself or, equivalently, for consciousness. Moreover, the object, even as in-itself, is not externally related to consciousness; it is in-itself insofar as it is a distinct moment of self-consciousness, one which maintains internal integrity but is nevertheless a moment of self-consciousness. The object does not exist in a realm wholly alien to consciousness; it exists in experience, and as such, as part of self-consciousness. In the transition to self-consciousness, "the Notion of the object is superseded in the actual object, or the first, immediate presentation of the object is superseded in experience: certainty gives place to truth (die Gewißheit ging in der Wahrheit verloren)."[18]

The above sketch suggests that the object of consciousness is a moment of self-consciousness itself, and that the world of sense and perception is not external to consciousness, but a manifestation of consciousness in its alterity. But this sketch remains, as Hegel would say, merely notional, a theoretical possibility; it remains to be seen how the sensuous and perceptual world is constitutive of consciousness itself, how it is consciousness in its alterity. Hegel's task is to show us that we have the tools for understanding this claim in experience, and that a close scrutiny of the presuppositions which undergird experience make the case for us, as it were.

Paragraph #167 begins to answer the question posed above, and it proceeds through calling upon the experience of desire to give us the concrete understanding of how the world of consciousness is constitutive of self-consciousness. Hegel explains:

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[18] Ibid., #166.

> "With (the) first moment, self-consciousness is in the form of consciousness, and the whole expanse of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time only as connected with the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness with itself; and hence the sensuous world is for it an enduring existence which, however, is only appearance, or a difference which, in itself, is no difference. This antithesis of its appearance and its truth has, however, for its essence only the truth, viz, the unity of self-consciousness with itself; thus unity must become essential to self-consciousness, i.e. self-consciousness is Desire in general."

In the "first moment" or primary thesis - roughly Part I of the Phenomenology - the sensuous world endures as appearance. But what kind of appearance is this? It is an appearance which is ostensibly differentiated from a reality or essence, but this ostensible distinction turns out not to hold: it is "difference which, in itself, is no difference." Consciousness, insofar as it is externally related to the sensuous world, appears to be the 'truth' of the external world, yet without ever being directly related to this world; hence, for consciousness, the problem of knowing the external world is beset by a bifurcation between appearance (the world) and truth (consciousness). Hegel's refutation of this view, an implicit rejection of a Kantian dualism, is to claim that "this antithesis of its appearance and its truth has, however, for its essence only the truth, viz. the unity of self-consciousness with itself." If the world is unified with self-consciousness, and the world is a sensuous world, then self-consciousness must itself have a sensuous expression. And this sensuous expression must be essential to self-consciousness. Desire is precisely this expression: "self-consciousness is Desire in general."

Self-consciousness must participate in the sensuous world in order to have some knowledge of that world, and it must, moreover, have the sensuous world as constitutive of its own identity. But desire is not simply one expression of

the sensuousness of self-consciousness; it is an essential and necessary expression. Desire is not an instance of self-consciousness - it *is* self-consciousness. In order to understand this formulation more precisely, we will return to the problem posed in Chapter 3 of the *Phenomenology*, namely, how are we to think the movement which effects the unity between consciousness and its world? We will, I submit, understand desire properly for Hegel if we understand desire as an *enactment* of the unity of consciousness and otherness. What Hegel refers to theoretically as the 'unity of self-consciousness with itself', is given to us concretely through the expression of desire.

Immediately following the formulation of self-consciousness as "Desire in general", Hegel explains the ambiguity of the project of desire.

> "Consciousness, as self-consciousness, henceforth has a double object, that of sense-certainty and perception, which however, for self-consciousness has the character of a *negative*; and the second, viz, itself, which is the true *essence*, and is present in the first instance only as opposed to the first object."[19]

Insofar as self-consciousness confronts the "immediate object...of sense-certainty and perception", self-consciousness still acts in the mode of consciousness, for the object appears as an external reality; it has "the character of a negative" because it is *not* consciousness. As negative, it is purely other. When self-consciousness assumes its true selfhood, as it were, the object of desire is no longer considered as ontologically distinct from self-consciousness; rather, the object is considered as implicit in the reflexivity of self-consciousness: it is self-consciousness in its alterity. This transition from consciousness to self-consciousness is synonymous with the movement of desire itself; equivalently, the transition from consciousness to

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[19] *Ibid.*, # 167.

self-consciousness is henceforth considered as a transition internal to, even constitutive of, self-consciousness itself.

The movement of desire consists initially in a confrontation with brute, self-subsisting being. As indicated in the previous discussion of sense-certainty and perception, the simple being to which sense-certainty attends and the empty 'thing' which forms the object of perception, are unable to maintain an independent existence and are forced to become, in Hegel's terms, 'vanishing essences'. Consciousness notes this vanishing of the object in vain, for it can make no sense of the movement - or relations - which bind the various discrete objects which appear for it; consciousness can only view negation as absolute negation, and the cessation of a given object's present appearance as its irrevocable death. It is only with the advent of self-consciousness that negativity becomes a bearer of meaning, and change is viewed as constitutive of the real. For self-consciousness, the immediate object is no longer viewed as a being or immediate object, but its negative relation to consciousness becomes the essential mode of being for this object. The movement of self-consciousness, the movement of desire, is the gradual revelation of immediate being as mediated being; it is the revelation of the object in its contextual relations, and the revelation of the knowing subject as implicated in the object of investigation. Desire thus becomes a form of investigating and disclosing the opaque regions of the real.

Self-consciousness for Hegel is not only defined as desire in general, but also as "essentially the return from otherness." Desire is thus a constant effort to return from an appearance of ontological disparity between self and world; it is a constant effort to reveal a common ontological ground. From the analysis above it is already clear how this common ontology is to be conceived: the disparity between self and world is never wholly negated by Hegel, but is,

rather, radically re-conceived as a dynamic internal to self-consciousness. This disparity initially appears as insurmountable, and its alleged insurmountability pervades the naive experience of everyday life; it is a primary phenomenological given, but one which is overcome gradually, not through a bracketing of the everyday, but through the dissolution of structures within the everyday. Desire emerges from a confrontation with otherness, and has as its highest aim the 'assimilation of otherness'. The disparate world must not be annihilated, but reconceived and rediscovered as constitutive of self-consciousness, and the negative relation which characterizes self and world must be understood as a determinate negation, a link which both distinguishes and binds. Desire investigates and discloses a common ontology of self and world insofar as it reveals negation as constitutive of experience itself. Desire not only discovers the binding work of negativity, but is this work, the mode through which the unity of self and world is enacted.

We can see, then, that the ontological primacy of negation is both enacted and revealed by desire, and that negation can only be understood as essential to experience through a consideration of the reflexivity of self-consciousness. Insofar as all external relations are transformed into internal relations - or double relations - through the mediated self-reflection of Hegel's knowing subject, all indeterminate negations or ruptures in the ontology of experience are rediscovered as determinate negations, differences which are still determinate relations. In that as desire always emerges through a confrontation with a difference or externality which appears ontologically distinct from itself, and is always an effort to overcome this disparity through disclosing a common ground which has remained opaque, desire is thus always a project in thematizing the ontological preconditions of its own emergence. Moreover, the search for these ontological preconditions is an

effort of consciousness to discover its own relation to participation in worlds of otherness which have remained unexplored. The self not only discovers itself as implicitly related to the entirety of its world, but in making that implicit relation explicit, instates itself in that world, and expands itself to encompass that world. In this sense, the project of desire is to disclose and attain a more capable self.

After establishing desire as self-consciousness in general, and after formulating desire as a negating relation which both distinguishes and binds, Hegel proceeds to consider in what sense desire is a movement which distinguishes self-consciousness from that which it desires. Initially, desire confronted the world of sensuous and perceptual reality as a brute, self-subsisting world; desire thus sought to assimilate that world, to rediscover that world as constitutive of a reflexive notion of self-consciousness. Because as self-consciousness reveals the 'difference' as a determinate and constitutive relation of both realms, it posits these realms as essentially mediated, i.e. as dependent on the opposite realm for its own existence. Hegel concludes that the consequence of mediating difference is that self-consciousness and its object are again established as independent domains, but their independence from one another is no longer that of externally related beings, but of beings internally related to one another.[20] Hence, both self-consciousness and its world reemerge as independent yet related terms, and it remains to be seen in what this new, mediated independence consists.

The object of self-consciousness or, equivalently, the object of desire is henceforth characterized as that which both has a determinate existence but is

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[20] #168.

also a relational being. The unity of determinateness and relation is, according to Hegel, paradigmatic of Life: "the simple substance of Life in the splitting up of itself into shapes and at the same time the dissolution of these existent differences...life...is just as much an imparting of shape as a supersession of it."[21] The object of desire is understood as a mediated object, an object which gains its existence through being known or desired; hence it is considered to be Life itself: "it is a being that is reflected into itself."[22] At this point in the Phenomenology, it appears that it is only the object of desire which has a mediated existence, that is both itself and relationally or contextually defined. Desire is, at this stage, enthralled with its object, viewing its object as the sole locus of reality and mediated existence. The object of desire becomes the domain in which the unity of difference is overcome: Life is both independent and determinate existence and the dissolution of determinateness. As such, it is a unity of independence and negation which desire or self-consciousness cannot achieve.

Where life is the generalized object of desire, desire must experience itself as a futile enterprise, for desire is thus defined as a vacuity in search of an impossible fulfillment. Hegel defines life as a "self-differentiating totality of being", as that which is wholly "in-itself". Nothing is 'other' to life, for life is the very unity of independence and existence which characterizes all reality. And, says Hegel, since nothing is 'other' to life, everything is within it. Desire must define itself as vacuity or as a pure 'for-itself' in the face of this monolith, Life, which appears to encompass all reality. Desire is thus defined conversely as a pure

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[21] #171.

[22] #168.

nothingness, a futile and negating activity which appears once again to be separated from its object by an insurpassable ontological gulf.

At this stage in which desire emphatically seeks the plenitude which Life appears to offer, the relation between self and world appears again to have fallen into that of externality; desire has lost sight of its own reflexivity, that is, it no longer sees itself as participating in life, or considers itself as a living being. This experience of desire presupposes its own essential poverty, views itself as a moment of death in the midst of life, as a vacuum which must consume life in order to gain some temporary reality for itself. But desire so counterposed to life is not merely a pessimistic conviction. It is not merely a nothingness, but a negating relation as well. Hence, desire whose object is generalized life becomes consuming or annihilating desire; convinced of its essential poverty, its own status as a kind of death, it strives to consume or destroy the other in order to be.

Although the supercession of this stage of desire's development is carried out conceptually rather than phenomenologically, we will try to make use of Hegel's logical and experiential claims in tracing the transitions. Conceptually, Hegel argues, Life is to be understood as the constant process of producing determinate shapes and dissolving those shapes. The unity of Life, its integrity or its mediated independence, consists in its being a "self-developing whole which dissolves its development and in this movement simply preserves itself."[23] But how or where is this fluid unity preserved? The answer, according to Hegel, is in <u>consciousness</u>. Life only achieves its unity through the comprehension of its development by consciousness: "life points to something other than itself, viz, to

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[23]#171.

consciousness, for which Life exists as this unity, or as genus."[24] Self-consciousness, or desire, is thus revealed once again as reflexivity related to its object, Life, for Life depends on self-consciousness to unify its various permutations; the integral self-development of life only exists insofar as it is recognized by a kind of reason which can comprehend this development. Life only gains integrity insofar as it is known and unified by consciousness; consciousness renders the unity of life explicit.

Phenomenologically, the experience of desire provides information which points to the same conclusion. Insofar as consuming desire seeks the plenitude apparently monopolized in the exterior realm of life, it seeks to gain being, not as a possession, but <u>for itself</u>. Because desire seeks to find <u>itself</u>, and the determinate shapes of life appear to monopolize being-in-itself, desire seeks to gain the determinate being of the living other through destroying it; self-consciousness is thus certain of itself only by superseding this other that presents itself to self-consciousness as an independent life: self-consciousness is desire. Consequently, desire is the effort to annihilate the independence of the other, living being; only by negating the other, rendering the other as nothing, can self-consciousness then view the other as essentially nothingness, and conversely, posit itself as an agency of accomplishment. Certain of the nothingness of this other, self-consciousness explicitly affirms that this nothingness is <u>for it</u> the truth of the other; it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself a positive form as an agent of destruction; regarding its own agency in this accomplished art, self-consciousness becomes certain of its own reality once again.

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[24] #172.

Having destroyed an independent life, self-consciousness now knows itself as an agency of destruction, and has rendered itself an explicit reality. The self-certainty furnished by the expression of desire as destruction is, of course, essentially dependent on that which is destroyed, and could not be sustained as self-certainty were it not for the reality of that object. Desire, even as the effort to consume or destroy life which exists independently of itself, proves to be essentially related to that life, even if in the mode of negation. The experience of consuming desire, therefore, makes explicit the mediated relationship of self-consciousness and its object once again, for desire cannot give rise to a sense of independence or self-certainty without first relating itself to an independent object. Although the implicit project of desire was to gain a sense of self-certainty for self-consciousness, and this sense was to be won over and against the independent shapes of life, the experience of desire even in its satisfaction attests to the insurpassability of the other: "In this satisfaction...experience makes it aware that the object has its own independence...It is in fact something other than self-consciousness that is the essence of Desire; and through this experience self-consciousness has realized its own truth."[25]

In the above case of desire as annihilation or consumption, we can see readily how a given presupposition about desire gives rise to an experience or project of desire which turns out to refute that initial presupposition. The presupposition at hand is that desire is a pure nothingness, a pure for-itself, which must seek an experience of plenitude in the domain of exterior life. As a nothingness, a vacuum, desire becomes an agency of consumption, and inadvertently, posits itself as a determinate being through its determinate

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[25]#175.

acts. The conceptual error in the presuppositional schema which structures the experience of consuming desire is that desire is simply the opposite of being, the negation of being, and that it cannot overcome this ontological status. And yet we see through the consuming acts of this desire that it is more than simple negation - it is a negating negation, as it were, an active or generating negation which, logically and experientially, gives rise to desire as a determinate position. Desire thus reveals self-consciousness as an internally reflexive structure, a negating negation. Moreover, as we have previously pointed out, the inverted consequences of the experience of consuming desire also discloses the intrinsic fallacy of conceiving of desire as possible outside of a relation to an object. Not only does desire reveal a reflexivity internal to self-consciousness, but also a reflexivity of self-consciousness and its objects: "Desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superceding this other: in order that this supercession can take place, there must be this other."[26]

At the end of "The Truth of Self-Certainty" we have already arrived at a fairly sophisticated understanding of desire as a negative relation and of how this negative relation constitutes the very structure of self-consciousness. The experience of desire calls upon the ambiguity of self-consciousness' project to gain unity with the world: there is no satisfaction for desire, i.e. no effective unity with the realm of otherness, if otherness is denied. But the very meaning of 'otherness' is irreducibly two-fold: desire is always desire 'for' something other than the self (even when desire desires the obliteration of the other, it is 'the obliteration of the other' which remains

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[26] Ibid.

its intentional object). Moreover, desire always reveals the desiring consciousness as intrinsically other to itself: self-consciousness is an ek-static being. Because self-consciousness is not a simple substance or static being, it is a movement which must always become what it is, and, to prefigure Sartre, never wholly coincides with itself. Self-consciousness is a negative relation which must posit itself in some form in order to gain determinate being and to effect a unity with the world. And yet whatever determinate position self-consciousness may assume, it can never wholly coincide with that position, for it still remains the absent negativity which sustains that position. Thus, even at this stage in Hegel's thinking, it is clear that self-consciousness is such that it is what it is not, and is not what it is.

The dissatisfaction of consuming desire becomes clear as soon as desire reemerges in the face of a persistent realm of alterity. Desire may successfully consume a determinate object, but other objects persist, and so desire must reproduce itself to meet every new object which countenances its path. Moreover, in order for desire to continue to be - which was, of course, its initial ontological project - it must reproduce objects, set them before itself, as it were, in order to experience itself once again <u>as</u> desire. The lesson gleaned from the repetitive experience of consuming desire is that the domain of objects is not only insurpassable in fact - one cannot consume the whole world - but that desire requires alterity in order to express itself as a determinate being. Desire would no longer be desire if the realm of otherness were to be wholly consumed - it would be a quiescent satiety, an end to the dynamism which is self-consciousness.

The experience of desire requires the alterity it seeks to overcome, and were desire to overcome this alterity, it would no longer be desire, but neither would it be true satisfaction: desire must overcome otherness in a mode which preserves that otherness as well, for the unity of self-consciousness and its world which desire enacts is a unity of identity and difference, a preservation of each term as distinct yet interrelated. Consuming desire operates on the presupposition that it can, by consuming objects one by one, gradually eliminate the realm of otherness, but in so doing, it posits an infinity of determinate objects and, correspondingly, the infinite insatiability of desire.

Hegel concludes that the necessary object of desire is another self-consciousness. He bases this argument on the above conclusion that desire as consumption can only lead to the infinite reduplication of desire and of its determinate objects. Let us quote this transition in full in order to follow the argument in detail:

> "It is in fact something other than self-consciousness that is the essence of Desire; and through this experience self-consciousness has realized its truth. But at the same time it is no less absolutely <u>for itself</u>, and it is so only by superseding the object; and it must experience its satisfaction, for it is the truth. On account of the independence of the object, therefore, it can achieve satisfaction <u>only when the object itself effects the negation within itself</u> (my emphasis); and it must carry out this negation of itself in itself, for it is <u>in itself</u> the negative, and must be <u>for</u> the other what it <u>is</u>. Since the object is in its own self negation, and in being so is at the same time independent, it is consciousness."[27]

When Hegel claims in the first sentence above that something "other than self-consciousness" must be the essence of desire, he seems to be relying on

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[27] #175.

the previously drawn conclusion that desire is necessarily linked with otherness, that for desire the realm of alterity is insurpassable. And yet the very next sentence casts doubt on this initial claim: "at the same time it [self-consciousness] is no less absolutely for itself." The question then emerges, how are we to understand self-consciousness as essentially realized in otherness, and yet to understand this very self-consciousness as absolutely for itself? What kind of 'otherness' must self-consciousness find for its self-realization such that this realization delivers self-consciousness back to itself? If desire is realized in otherness, and this otherness reflects itself, then the otherness which desire seeks must be another self-consciousness.

Hegel here contends that the only true satisfaction for desire is to be found in an object which mirrors the reflexive structure of desire itself. The externality of the independent object can only be overcome if, intrinsic to that externality, is a self-negating or reflexive structure: "on account of the independence of the object, therefore, it can achieve satisfaction only when the object effects the negation within itself", i.e. only when that object can relinquish its independence of its own accord.

We have seen that the externality of objects cannot be effectively overcome through summarily consuming or annihilating those objects, and so we are left with the task of negating or superceding the realm of otherness in some other fashion. The experience of another self-consciousness suggests itself as the route by which to effect the unity of self and world which forms the tacit project of desire. Another self-consciousness is distinguished by the fact that it is also a double negation or desiring being. As an agent of desire, this other self-consciousness is always in the process of overcoming itself in an effort to gain being or determinate form for itself, and yet is

also caught in the paradox of never fully coinciding with the positive forms it assumes; however it may determine itself, it still remains that which does the determining, i.e. a negating or desiring relation to things. The only way for this other self-consciousness to assume a form which simultaneously reveals the negating or desiring relation which forms the dynamic base of its present form, is to present itself as the ambiguous consciousness which it is. To be both independent and a negation, a determinate and determining desire, is to be a consciousness, and to reveal itself in its commonality with other consciousnesses.

Self-consciousness proves to be the appropriate object of desire insofar as it manifests negation as "absolute negation."[28] Hegel distinguishes absolute negation from other kinds of ostensibly relative or conditional negations. He refers to three kinds of negation: (1) negation as Desire, or negation in another self-consciousness; (2) negation as a determinateness or apparent externality with respect to another determinateness or externality; and (3) negation as "the inorganic universal nature of Life", by which he doubtless means the dynamic of giving and dissolving determinate shapes.[29] Only in the first of these kinds of negation do we find absolute negation, that is, negation as it operates as the essence or final realization of a given phenomenon. Self-consciousness is <u>essentially</u> negation in the sense that negation is both the presupposition and realization of itself. In this same paragraph Hegel contends that only in self-consciousness do we find a "universal independent nature in which negation is present as absolute negation", and then in the following paragraph we find an elaboration of this theme: "the immediate 'I' - the other self-consciousness which is the object

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[28] #175.

[29] <u>Ibid</u>.

of desire - "is itself absolute mediation, it is only as a supercession of the independent object, in other words, it is Desire."[30]

This absolute mediation or final reflection into itself requires the duplication of self-consciousness, that is, it requires absolute negation as the object of its desire. Only another self-consciousness as absolute negation is both independence and negativity, and hence, is a determinate freedom. Only through the recognition of another does self-consciousness have its own essential structure rendered explicit: "A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it."[31] The object of desire in this instance is not a brutely given, self-subsistent thing, or rather, it is not merely that; the object of desire, when it is another desire, is a determinate principle of negation, it is the unity of independence and negation. As such, it can be both recognized as identical to the first self-consciousness in its independence, its alterity surpassed and preserved, rather than annihilated.

This recognition of the other self-consciousness as a structurally identical yet independent being forms the basis of Hegel's notion of Geist. The exploration of the unity of distinct yet similar consciousness, he claims, will reveal the possible structures of community life, the interrelationship of individuals and communities which forms the dynamic of historical life. He also suggests that it is only in this network of interdependent self-consciousnesses that "perfect independence and freedom"[32] can be found.

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[30] #176.

[31] #177.

[32] Ibid.

We suggested earlier that desire was implicitly a project in the investigation and discovery of the ontological preconditions of its own emergence. We also noted that desire appeared to be a key way in which negation functions as a common ontological precondition of self-consciousness and its world. The disclosure of a common ontology - and the refutation of the appearance of an insurpassable ontological gulf - is thus linked to the thematization of negation, the revelation of how difference is expressed and resolved. Insofar as self-consciousness determines itself through desire, and this determination can only be fully realized through a reflection of itself in another, it follows that self-consciousness is essentially linked to another self-consciousness in order to be itself. Another self-consciousness seems to be the only determinate other which could provide such a function for self-consciousness, for it is the only kind of being which is capable of 'reflection' as Hegel outlined it. We shall see in our subsequent discussion of recognition exactly how the self-negating character of consciousness is both an agent and object of recognition by another. For our purposes at this point in the inquiry, it is significant to note that internal negation forms an ontological bond between self-consciousnesses. At this point, the postulation appears to have conceptual cogency. We turn to the section, "Lordship and Bondage", to understand how the necessity of this thesis makes itself known through experience.

Chapter Two: Hegel on Lordship and Bondage: Desire and Recognition

> "...an infernal love...aims at subjugating a freedom in order to take shelter in it from the world."
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> Sartre, Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr, p. 550.

Desire is aufgehoben in "Lordship and Bondage": it is cancelled yet preserved; in other words, it is transformed. Desire is not merely rejected as the least sophisticated project of self-consciousness, it is also preserved and cultivated into a more capable form of self-consciousness throughout this section. Self-consciousness' expression in the form of the struggle for recognition does not replace desire as a more adequate way of effecting a unity between consciousness and its world; rather, the drama of labour and recognition which structures this section is itself a more capable form for desire. Hegel refers to labour as "inhibited desire,"[1] and appears to view recognition as the true satisfaction of desire.[2]

In "The Truth of Self-Certainty" we learned that through the experience of desire self-consciousness discovers itself as 'essentially negative'. Moreover, we came to see how the 'difference' between consciousness and its object became the ground for a new identity: the effort of desire to appropriate an object, and through that appropriation, to assert its own identity, revealed the general truth that self-consciousness is such that it must relate itself to another being in order to become itself. The gradual yet insistent effort of Hegel's journeying subject in the Phenomenology of Spirit never relinquishes this project, namely, to relate itself to externality in order to rediscover itself as that externality. The insurpassability of externality implies the permanence of desire. In this sense, Hegel's subject,

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[1] Phenomenology, #195.

[2] See the historical argument offered in footnote 11 below.

insofar as it never achieves a static union with externality, is hopelessly beyond its own grasp, although it retains as its highest aim the thorough comprehension of itself. This thoroughgoing self-determination is the ideal of integrity toward which self-consciousness strives, and this 'striving' is denoted by desire.

On the one hand, we concede that desire alone will never achieve this total self-comprehension, for desire alone is the consumption of objects, and we have seen how consumption fails effectively to assimilate externality. On the other hand, we need to ask whether speaking of 'desire alone' in Hegel's view makes any sense. After all, desire revealed an implicit intentional aim, namely, to disclose and enact a common ontological structure with the world. Hence, despite the alleged object of desire,[3] i.e. 'this piece of fruit', or its more general aim, 'the consumption of this brute being which poses as other to me', desire has at base a metaphysical project which, while requiring determinate objects, transcends them as well, i.e. to effect a unity with the realm of externality which both preserves that realm and renders it into a reflection of self-consciousness. The dissatisfaction of desire implies that something would satisfy desire, that this something is missing, and that a consideration of the inadequacies of the mode of consumption will provide the criteria for a satisfying object. In the turn to another self-consciousness as a possible object of satisfaction, we can see that it is not desire itself which is superseded, but a peculiar form of desire, and that the aim of self-consciousness, even as it leaves the section on self-certainty, is still the satisfaction of desire.

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[3] cf. Phenomenology #165 for a description of the two-fold intentionality of desire.

Desire does not merely survive into the section "Lordship and Bondage", but remains essential to the ever expanding project of negation which structures the Phenomenology. Because desire is the principle of self-consciousness' reflexivity or inner-difference, and because it has as its highest aim the assimilation of all external relations into relations of inner-difference, desire forms the experiential basis for the project of the Phenomenology at large. Desire and its satisfaction constitute the first and final moments of the philosophical pursuit of self-knowledge.[4] In this regard, the metaphysical project which informs the entire project of Geist finds its original and final measure in the criteria which desire sets forth for its satisfaction. Hence, to claim that desire is simply an unsophisticated form of knowing and being in Hegel's system is to misread the standard of truth which governs the Phenomenology generally: the gradual sophistication of desire - the expanding inclusiveness of its intentional aims - is the principle of progress in the Phenomenology.

Stanley Rosen, a student of Kojeve's, argues that desire is the basis of both historical progress and the development of philosophical self-reflection; he places Hegel among those modern philosophers who stress the primacy of desire in human development:

> In the tradition of such modern philosophers as Machiavelli and Hobbes, [Hegel] recognizes desire as the 'engine' of world-history (thereby uniting the Platonic Eros with the directedness of historical development). The spirit first knows itself as subjective feeling. When feeling is localized externally, or given an objective status, spirit divides itself into inner and outer world. We become alienated from ourselves or regard our true self as contained in the object outside us, which we desire to assimilate. Desire is thus fundamentally

[4] cf. Plato's Symposium in which Diotima claims that eros issues forth from a lack and is, in turn, a pursuit of a metaphysical experience of plenitude.

> desire for myself, or for my interior essence from which I have become detached. The struggle to satisfy my desires leads to the development of individual consciousness. Since others desire the same things, this struggle is also the origin of the family, the state, and, in general, of world-history.[5]

As Rosen suggests, the dramatic education of Hegel's journeying subject consists in a series of self-alienations which prompt a revision of the subject itself. Every confrontation with an external reality is at once an alienation of the subject; difference threatens the subject with annihilation until the subject can discover that difference as an essential moment of itself. In the section "Lordship and Bondage", Hegel's emergent subject confronts another self-consciousness, and immediately concludes that it, the initial subject, has lost itself. Desire remains defeated until it can find a way of revealing that other subject as essential to its own identity; this way is forged through the struggle for recognition.

The previous section on self-certainty provides a theoretical understanding of the necessity of the Other. Self-consciousness needed to understand itself as self-negation, as a self-determining being. The Other was distinguished from other objects in that it was like the first self-consciousness - an independently subsisting being which exhibited the principle of self-negation. Discovering this Other self-consciousness appears in that section to be the only way that the initial self-consciousness can regard its own essential structure rendered explicit. The task of "Lordship and Bondage" is to demonstrate how this process is effected in experience. The reflection of the subject in and through the other is achieved through the process of reciprocal recognition, and this recognition proves to be - in the terms of this chapter - the satisfaction of desire. Our task, then, is to understand the project of

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[5]Stanley Rosen, G.W.F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom, p. 41.

desire - the negation and assimilation of Otherness and the concomitant expansion of the proper domain of the subject - in the encounter with another subject with a structurally identical set of aims.

The transition from "The Truth of Self-Certainty" to "Lordship and Bondage" is a curious one in that the former section establishes the Other as an adequate object for self-consciousness' desire only in theoretical terms. And yet the progress of the Phenomenology is supposed to be necessitated through knowledge gained from experience. The first paragraph of "Lordship and Bondage" reiterates this theoretical conclusion, asserting prior to its demonstration that "self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged [anerkannt]."[6] Because we cannot expect that self-consciousness has certain knowledge of its own requirements before these requirements are made clear in experience, we are forced to regard the emergence of the Other in the following paragraph as puzzling. "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness...",[7] but why? And why has it not happened earlier? Why did the journeying subject of the Phenomenology begin its journey alone, and why was its confrontation with the sensuous and perceptual world previous to its confrontation with an Other?

The development of the Phenomenology suggests that the reader must make a strict distinction between the appearance of a given entity and its conceptual reality. The appearance of the Other must be understood as an emergence into explicit reality which has hitherto remained an implicit or nascent being. Before its actual appearance, the Other remains opaque, but not for that reason without

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[6]Phenomenology, #178.

[7]Ibid., #179.

reality. Coming into existence - or explicit appearance - is never, for Hegel, a creation ex nihilo, but is, rather a moment in the development of a Concept (Begriff). The Other is revealed as an essential structure of all experience in the course of the Phenomenology; indeed, there can be no experience outside the context of intersubjectivity. Hence, even as the Phenomenology claims to be an experience of the genesis of Geist, it is a fictive experience created by and through the text, and it must be understood as an experience uniquely philosophical - a sustained inverted world - which delineates in the terms of its own temporality the structures which condition and inform historical experience as we know it.[8]

To say, then, that the Other appears is not to claim that the initial self-consciousness discovers a phenomenon which previously had no ontological status; rather, it is only now that the Other becomes explicit in virtue of its centrality to the initial self-consciousness' pursuit of an identity which encompasses the world. The Other becomes the general object of desire.

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[8]The 'experience' of the Phenomenology cannot be understood as ordinary experience, but, rather, as the gradual and insistent cultivation of philosophical truths embedded in ordinary experience. Werner Marx accounts for the distinction between natural and phenomenal consciousness in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Commentary on the Preface and Introduction tr. Peter Heath, (New York: Harper and Row), 1975, op. cit. pp. 12-16. Although Hegel occasionally claims to begin his phenomenological narrative with ordinary experience (cf. Phenomenology #8: "...it has taken such a long time...(to) make attention to the here and now as such, attention to what has been called 'experience', an interesting and valid enterprise"), he also claims that philosophy must now lift spirit beyond the realm of pure sense. The philosophical cultivation of sensuousness into an all-embracing truth begins not with 'ordinary experience' or daily life, but with the philosophical assumptions of ordinary experience. Hence, the 'experience' of the Phenomenology is never devoid of philosophical appropriation; although the referent is implicitly the ordinary experience of human beings, this referent is never disclosed as outside of the philosophical language which interprets it.

The optimism which characterizes the closure of "The Truth of Self-Certainty" and the opening paragraph of "Lordship and Bondage" is a function of the purely conceptual nature of the conclusion that mutual recognition is a possible and gratifying object for desire; the struggle to make sense of this possibility in experience is hard won. Self-consciousness begins this struggle in paragraph #179 where it discovers that the structural similarity of the Other is not an immediate occasion for deriving an adequate reflection of itself in the Other; indeed, the first experience of the Other's similarity is that of self-loss.

> Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself. This has a two-fold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an other being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self.[9]

The initial self-consciousness seeks to have itself reflected in the other self-consciousness, but finds itself not merely reflected, but wholly absorbed. The initial self-consciousness no longer seeks to consume the Other, as it sought to consume objects, but is instead consumed by the Other. Self-consciousness comes out of itself when faced with the Other: "ausser sich" in German not only denotes coming out of oneself, but ecstasy as well as anger.[10] The intentional and reflexive relations to the Other are

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[9]"Es ist fur das Selbstbewus_tsein ein anderes SelbstbewuBtsein; es ist ausser sich gekommen. Dies hat die gedoppelte Bedeutung: erstlich, es hat sich selbst verloren, denn es findet sich als anderes Wesen; zweitens, es hat damit das Andere aufgehoben, denn es sieht auch nicht das Andere als Wesen, sondern sich selbst im Anderen." Hegel, Phanomenologie des Geis_tes (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag) 1970, p. 146.

[10]For a discussion of Hegel's appropriation of the ecstatic religious concepts, see Nathan Rotenstreich, "On the Ecstatic Sources of the Concept of Alienation," Review of Metaphysics, March 1963.

temporarily lost, and self-consciousness is convinced that the Other has occupied its own essence - self-negation - stolen it even, and in this sense self-consciousness finds itself besieged by the Other. In one respect, self-consciousness discovers that the self-negating principle of self-consciousness itself is a detachable attribute, one which might be extricated from the particular embodiment which the initial self-consciousness is. And insofar as self-negation is its own essence, self-consciousness concludes that essence and embodiment are only contingently related, that the same essence might inhabit different embodiments at different times. That self-consciousness can find its own essential principle embodied elsewhere appears as a frightening and even angering experience. And yet the ambiguity of ausser sich sein suggests that the externality which self-consciousness is now seen to inhabit is not wholly external: in desiring the Other, self-consciousness discovers itself as ecstatic being, a being which has it in itself to become other to itself, which, through the self-surpassing principle of desire, gives itself up to the Other even as it charges that the Other has somehow appropriated it. The ambiguity of gift and appropriation characterizes the initial encounter with the Other, and transforms this meeting of two desires into a struggle (Kampf).[11]

[11]The struggle for recognition was reconceived a number of times throughout Hegel's early writings, but the Phenomenology establishes the struggle as consequent upon the experience of desire for and by another. Although Kojeve and Leo Strauss have interpreted this struggle as emerging from a conflict of desires over goods, the scarcity of which sets individual wills against each other, this interpretation has been deftly refuted by the scholarship of Ludwig Siep in "Der Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur Auseinandersetzung Hegels mit Hobbes in den Jenaer Schriften" Hegel-Studien, Band 9 (Bonn, 1974), "Zur Dialektik der Anerkennung bei Hegel" Hegel-Jahrbuch, (1975), and in "Zum Freiheitsbegriff der praktischen Philosophie Hegels in Jena", Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 20, pp. 217-228. In his "Der Kampf un Anerkennung..." Siep traces the evolving conception of the struggle for recognition throughout the Jena writings, and discovers that Hegel's conception of the struggle between self-cosciousnesses differs significantly from Hobbes'

notion of the conflict of interests which forms the basis of contractarian legal theory. While Hobbes understood the conflict of desires to give rise to an artificial state apparatus which would limit the (naturally) limitless freedom of egoistic individuals, Hegel developed the view that the struggle for recognition gave rise to a concept of the individual essentially defined in terms of a larger cultural order, which, rather than limit the individual's freedom, provided for its concrete determination and expression. In the System der Sittlichkeit (1802-3), Hegel viewed the struggle for recognition, not as a pursuit of property or personal honor, but of the integrity of the family. The struggle was enacted within the family, as a struggle between members who must reconcile their individual wills with the exigencies of collective family life, and as a struggle between distinct families for recognition. The act of recognition insures that the individual is no longer a discrete entity, but is, rather, "ein Glied eines Ganzen" (System der Sittlichkeit (Hamburg: 1967), p. 50. That recognition aids in the construction of a collective identity is reinforced by Henry S. Harris' analysis of the System der Sittlichkeit in "The Concept of Recognition in Hegel's Jena Manuscripts", Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 20.

In the Realphilosophie II (1805-6), Hegel reconceives the struggle for recognition as a pursuit of property and honor, but even here it is not the individual who seeks recognition of his own interests, but, rather, a set of individuals who seek to find recognition for their common identity. Hegel here develops his notion of absolute freedom which calls for the surpassing of individual wills: "die Einzelnen haben sich durch Negation ihrer, durch Entäusserung und Bildung zum Allgemeinen zu machen" (Realphilosophie II, #245). The Realphilosophie II envisions the struggle for recognition as following the breakdown of a contractual agreement; hence, the struggle does not, as it does for Hobbes, signify the need for a contract, but, rather, for an ethical community based on non-artificial, i.e. natural, ties.

In every case in the Jena writings, Hegel conceives of the struggle for recognition as one which is resolved through a discovery of a prior unifying ground which remains concealed throughout the struggle itself. Both of the above cited texts resolve the struggle through positing love or family as its necessary solution. This struggle for a community based on agape is prefigured in Hegel's early essay on love (Die Liebe), written between 1797 and 1798. By the time of the Phenomenology (1806) Hegel views the struggle for recognition as motivated by the demands of reciprocal desire, but the life and death struggle emerges as an intermediary stage of this development. Siep points out that the struggle for recognition is often misconceived as a struggle which begins with the life and death struggle, but he argues that the life and death struggle is itself precipitated by the prior struggle for recognition implicit in desire: "Die Bewegung des Anerkennens beginnt namlich nach Hegel damit, dass es 'ausser sich' ist, sich als 'Fürsichseiendes aufhebt' und sich nur im Anderen anschaut...Diese Struktur entspricht nicht dem Kampf, sondern der Liebe...Nicht der Anfang der Bewegung des Anerkennens, sondern erst der Schritt des Selbsbewusssteins, 'sein Andersein auf(zu)-heben', ist im Kampf auf Leben und Tod verkörpert" (Siep, "Der Kampf um Anerkennung...", p. 194).

The struggle for recognition arises then, not from a primary competitive attitude toward the other, but from the experience of desire for and by another. Specific desires for property, goods or positions of social dominance must be, according to Hegel's framework, seen as derivative expressions of the desire for a community based on love. Desire is, thus, not originally an

The first lesson gleaned from the encounter with the Other is that of the essential ambiguity of self-consciousness' externalization. Self-consciousness seeks a reflection of its own identity through the Other, but finds instead the enslaving and engulfing potential of the Other. As desire for a comprehensive identity, self-consciousness initially expects the Other to be a passive medium of reflection for itself; the Other will mirror itself since the Other is like itself. Perhaps extrapolating from its experience with objects, self-consciousness naively expects that the Other will be passive like objects, and differ only insofar as it can reflect self-consciousness' structure. Apparently, this initial self-consciousness did not take seriously enough the extent to which the Other is, indeed, _like_ itself, i.e. a principle of _active_ negation, and so is scandalized by the independent freedom of the Other. The independence which was to be a passive reflection of the initial self-consciousness is now conceived as an externality which safeguards freedom within the Other, a situation considered threatening by the first self-consciousness who viewed freedom as its own exclusive property.

Self-consciousness' anger - the way in which it is _ausser sich_ - does not proceed directly from the perceptual experience described above, but as a consequence of its own ecstatic involvement with the Other. The Other embodies its freedom because the initial self-consciousness has forfeited its freedom to the Other. Desire is here understood as ecstatic self-sacrifice, which is in direct contradiction to the overriding project of desire, i.e. to attain an ever more capable identity. Desire thus founders on contradiction, and becomes a passion divided against itself. Striving to become coextensive with the

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effort of acquisition or domination, but emerges in such forms only when a community based on the principles of reciprocal recognition has not yet been developed.

world, an autonomous being which finds itself everywhere reflected in the world, self-consciousness discovers that implicit in its own identity as a desiring being is the necessity of being claimed by another.

The initial encounter with the Other is thus a narcissistic project which fails through an inability to recognize the Other's freedom. This failure of recognition is itself conditioned by the view of the Other's externality as encapsulating, a view which presupposes that the ecstatic involvement of the first self-consciousness is necessarily self-annihilating. The philosophical assumption of this experience is that freedom is an exclusive characteristic of the individual, and that it can inhabit a particular embodiment only insofar as it is that embodiment's exclusive property. Thus, insofar as it is the body of the Other which is seen to lay claim to freedom, it is that body which must be destroyed. Only through the death of the Other will the initial self-consciousness retrieve its claim to autonomy.

The quandary conditioning the struggle of life and death is that of having to choose between ecstatic and self-determining existence. It is not merely the bodily exteriority of the Other which offends the initial self-consciousness, project of self-determination, but its own estrangement from itself. This estrangement is not to be understood solely in terms of the fact of the Other as an independent freedom, but also as the self-estrangement implicit in the experience of desire. As an intentional movement, desire tends to eclipse the self which is its origin. Enthralled with its object, the desiring self can only regard itself as estranged. As a movement outside of itself, desire becomes an act of willful self-estrangement even as its overriding project is to establish a more inclusive self. Thus, the effort to overcome the Other is simultaneously an effort to overcome self-consciousness' own otherness to itself.

The ambiguity of the 'otherness' which self-consciousness seeks to overcome forms the central thematic problem of "Lordship and Bondage", and it becomes clear that any reflexive relation that self-consciousness seeks to have is itself only possible through an intentional relation to an Other; it can overcome its own self-alienation only through overcoming the externality of the Other self-consciousness:

> "It must supercede this otherness of itself. This is the supercession of the first ambiguity, and is therefore itself a second ambiguity. First, it must proceed to supercede the other independent being in order thereby to become certain of itself as the essential being; secondly, in so doing it proceeds to supercede its own self, for this other is itself."[12]

The meaning of 'supercession' or 'overcoming' in the above reveals itself as recognition (Anerkennung). The initial self-consciousness can only retrieve itself from its ecstatic involvement with the Other insofar as it recognizes the Other as also in the process of retrieving itself from its own estrangement in desire. Self-consciousness' predicament, that of having to choose between ecstatic and self-determining existence, is seen to be the predicament of the Other as well. This similarity between the two self-consciousnesses ultimately proves to be the basis of their harmonious interdependence, the discovery of each that "as consciousness, it does indeed come out of itself, yet, though out of itself, is at the same time kept back within itself, is for itself, and the self outside it, is for it. It is aware that it at once is, and is not, another consciousness...".[13] Recognition, when it is achieved, affirms the ambiguity of self-consciousness as both ecstatic and self-determining. The process of recognition reveals that the self-consciousness which is self-estranged, un-recognizable to itself, is still

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[12] Phenomenology, #180.

[13] Ibid., #184.

the author of its own experience: "there is nothing in it of which it is itself not the origin".[14] When the Other is viewed as the same as the self, and it understands that its act of recognition has brought the Other into explicitness, then the self is also revealed as the author of the Other. As it becomes clear that the same truths hold true of the Other's relationship to the self, the Other is also viewed as the author of the "I". Desire here loses its character as a purely consumptive activity, and becomes characterized by the ambiguity of an exchange in which two self-consciousnesses affirm their respective autonomy (independence) and alienation (Otherness).

The life and death struggle appears as a necessity to a self-consciousness, which assumes that it is the determinate embodiment of the Other which is primarily responsible for thwarting self-consciousness' pursuit of its own identity. The corporeality which contained the freedom of self-consciousness presents itself as that which requires annihilation in order for that freedom to be retrieved. The externality of each to the other presents itself as an insurpassable barrier, and seems to imply that each individual can be certain only of his own determinate life, but can never get beyond his own life to be certain of the life of the Other. Determinate life itself becomes suspect in this predicament; it thwarts self-consciousness' project to transcend its own particularity and discover itself as the essence of objects and others in the world. The effort to annihilate the Other is originally motivated by the desire of the initial self-consciousness to present itself as a "pure abstraction"; it seeks to break its dependency on the Other and, hence, prove "that it is not attached to any specific <u>existence</u>, not to the individuality common to existence as such, that is, not attached to life."[15]

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[14] #182.

[15] #187.

And yet this effort to dis-enthrall itself from the enslaving externality of the Other requires that this self-consciousness stake its own life in the process. The project of "pure abstraction" is quickly foiled as it becomes clear that without determinate existence the initial self-consciousness would never live to see the identity after which it strives. Moreover, the death of the Other would deprive self-consciousness of the recognition it requires in order to have, not merely self-certainty, but truth.

The life and death struggle is a crucial section in the Phenomenology's development of the notion of autonomy, for, as Hegel claims, "the individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a person, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness."[16] Although determinate life may be a necessary precondition for the project of self-consciousness, it is not to be regarded as an end in itself. In order to discover itself as a negative or self-surpassing being, self-consciousness must do more than merely live; it must transcend the immediacy of pure life. It cannot stay content with the 'first nature' into which it is born, but must engage itself in the creation of a 'second nature' which establishes the self, not merely as a presupposition or a point of view, but as an achievement of its own doing. Autonomy can be achieved only through relinquishing an enslavement to life. Hence, Gadamer concludes, "self-consciousness...is unable to achieve true being-for-self without overcoming its attachment to life, i.e. without annihilation of itself as mere 'life'."[17]

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[16] Ibid.

[17] H.G. Gadamer, "Hegel's Dialectic of Self-Consciousness", Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies, p. 66.

The life and death struggle is an extension of self-consciousness' initial project to gain unity with the Other, and to find its own identity through the Other. Insofar as the effort to obliterate the Other is a mutual or "two-fold action",[18] each self-consciousness seeks to destroy the determinate boundaries which exist between them. Violence to the Other appears as the most efficient route by which to render the externality of the Other irrelevant. And insofar as both individuals seek to rid themselves of their dependence on determinate existence, and release the pure freedom which they view as trapped within corporeality, each seeks to merge with the Other as the abstract principle of freedom, "absolute abstraction",[19] pure being-for-self.

Thus, the life and death struggle is a continuation of the erotic which introduces Hegel's chapter; it is desire transformed to destruction, a project which assumes that true freedom only exists beyond the body. Endeavoring to rid the Other of its determinate life, each self-consciousness engages in an anti-corporeal erotic which endeavors to prove in vain that the body is the ultimate limit to freedom, rather than its necessary ground and mediation.

The dynamic of lord and bondsman emerges as an extenuation of the desire to annihilate, but, because annihilation would undermine the project altogether, by taking away _life_, the precondition for identity, this desire is held in check. Domination, the relation which replaces the urge to kill, must be understood as the effort to annihilate within the context of life. The Other must now _live its own death_; rather than become an indeterminate nothingness through death, the Other must now prove its essential nothingness in life. The Other which was at first captivating, now becomes that which must be captured, subdued, contained. Angered at having been captivated by the

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[18] _Phenomenology_, #187.

[19] _Ibid._, #186.

Other, self-consciousness in pursuit of its own absolute freedom forces this Other to annihilate its own freedom and thus affirm the illusion that the Other is not a freedom at all.

The lord's reflexive relation must be understood as an internalization of the intentional relation it had toward the Other in the Life and Death struggle. The original effort to annihilate the body of the Other had the consequence that the original self-consciousness must stake the life of its own body. This unintended consequence becomes a purpose of its own as self-consciousness realizes that transcending its own body within lived experience might become a way to render irrelevant the body as a limit to freedom. The lord cannot deny his body through suicide, so he proceeds to embody his denial. This internalization of an intentional relation, i.e. its transformation into a reflexive one, itself engenders a new intentional one: the reflexive project of disembodiment becomes linked to the domination of the Other. The lord cannot get rid of the body once and for all - this was the lesson of the Life and Death struggle. And yet he retains the project of becoming a pure, disembodied "I", a freedom unfettered by particularity and determinate existence, a universal and abstract identity. He still acts on the philosophical assumption that freedom and bodily life are not essential to one another, except that bodily life appears to be a precondition of freedom. But freedom does not, in the tacit view of the lord, require bodily life for its concrete expression and determination as well. For the lord, bodily life must be taken care of, but it is not part of his own project of identity. The lord's identity is essentially beyond the body; he gains illusory confirmation for this view by requiring the Other to be the body which he endeavors not to be.

The lord appears at the outset to live as a desire without needs; hence, it is significant that the lord is said to "enjoy" (im Genusse sich zu

befriedigen) the fruits of the bondsman's labor, for enjoyment implies a passive reception and consumption of something other to self-consciousness, while desire requires an active principle of negation.[20] The lord desires without having to negate the thing desired, except in the impoverished sense of consuming it; the bondsman, through working on the thing, embodies the principle of negation as an active and creative principle, and thus, inadvertently demonstrates that he is more than a mere body, and that the body itself is an embodying or expressive medium for the project of a self-determining identity. Through the experience of work, the body is revealed as an essential expression of freedom. And insofar as the bondsman works to create goods which sustain life, the bondsman also demonstrates that desire - rather than expressing a freedom from needs - can find fulfillment through the satisfaction of needs. Indeed, insofar as the bondsman creates a reflection of himself through the creation of products, he triumphs as the freedom which has, through finding itself expressed in determinate existence (through physical labor on physical things), found some semblance of recognition for himself as a self-determining agent. And although the lord endeavors to be free of the need for physical life, he can sustain this illusory project only through developing a need for the bondsman. As needed by the lord, the bondsman discovers his action as efficacious. The lord's need thus confirms the bondsman as more than a body; it affirms him indirectly as a laboring freedom. It provides indirect recognition of the bondsman's existence.

At the outset of the struggle of lord and bondsman we know that self-consciousness' desire is, at its most general articulation, a desire to discover itself as an all-inclusive identity, and also a desire to live.

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[20] #190

Desire must arrange for its satisfaction within the context of life, for death is the end of desire, a negativity which, except in the imaginary realms of Augustine's or Dante's hells, cannot be sustained. Desire is coextensive with life, as it is coextensive with the realm of otherness, and with Others. Whatever the ultimate satisfaction for desire, we know at this stage that certain preconditions must first be met. We also know from our introductory remarks on Hegel, that whatever exists as a precondition of desire serves also as an intentional aim. The lord acknowledges with reservation and self-deception that he is, indeed, tied to life. Life appears as a necessary precondition for the satisfaction of desire. The bondsman asserts this precondition as the proper end of desire - acting in the face of the fear of death[21] - the bondsman asserts the desire to live.

Both the posture of the Lord and the posture of the bondsman can be seen as configurations of death in life, as death-bent desires emerging in the shadows of more explicit desires to die. Domination and enslavement are thus defenses against life within the context of life; they emerge in the spirit of nostalgia over the failed effort to die. In this sense, domination and enslavement are projects of despair, what Kierkegaard termed the despair of not being able to die.[22] Life or determinate existence requires the sustained interrelationship of physical existence and the cultivation of identity. As such, it requires the maintenance of the body and the project of autonomous freedom.

The lord and bondsman turn against life in different ways, but both resist the synthesis of physicality and freedom, a synthesis which alone is

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[21]# 194.

[22]Soren Kierkegaard, Sickness Unto Death, tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton University Press: 1980), p. 18.

constitutive of human life; the lord lives in dread of his body, while the bondsman lives in dread of freedom. The dissolution of their antagonism paves the way for an embodied pursuit of freedom, a desire to live in the fullest sense. "Life" in this mediated sense is not mere physical endurance - that was seen as a posture of death in life in the case of the bondsman; the desire to live in the full sense is rendered synonymous with the desire to attain a more capable identity through reciprocal recognition. Hence, the desire to live is demonstrated here not merely as the precondition of the pursuit of a self-determining identity, but as its highest achievement. Desire which seeks to rediscover substance as subject is the desire to become the whole of life. Desire is thus always an implicit struggle against the easier routes of death, domination and enslavement considered as metaphors of death in life. The failure of desire is thus always an admission of death into life, the presence of a contradiction which keeps one from wanting life enough.[23]

The dialectic of lord and bondsman is implicitly a struggle with the problem of life, generally speaking. The division of labor between lord and bondsman presupposes a discrepancy between the desire to live and the desire to

[23]It is not merely the failure of desire which precipitates the experience of death in life, for desire is itself an expression of the negative. The failure to achieve substantial being, which is, strictly speaking, not the failure of desire, but the failure of satisfaction, must be viewed in Hegelian terms, as philosophically important. Prefiguring Kierkegaard's frustration with those "too tenacious of life to die a little".
Hegel claims in his "Preface" that "the life of the spirit is not the life which shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life which endures it and maintains itself in it" (Phenomenology, #32). Walter Kaufmann's translation of the rest of the paragraph elucidates the project which devastation, the failure of desire, the experience of death in life, gives rise to: "Spirit gains its truth only by finding itself in absolute dismemberment. This power it is - not as the positive that looks away from the negative - as when we say of something, this is nothing or false, and then, finished with it, turn away from it to something else: the spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face and abiding with it. This abiding is the magic force which converts the negative into being", Kaufmann, Hegel: Texts and Commentary (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1966), p. 50.

be free. The lord, displeased with the prospect of having to live, delegates the task to the bondsman. The bondsman takes to working on things, fashioning them into products for human consumption. For the lord, life appears as material exigency, as a limit to his project of abstraction. The lord's desire to be beyond life (the intentionality of his desire) reveals a desire to be beyond desire (the reflexivity of his desire). He does not relish the dialectic of want and satisfaction; his sole project is to remain sated and, hence, to banish the possibility of desire.

The bondsman, delegated the task of trafficking with life, is originally cast as a mere thing, "the consciousness for which thinghood is the essential characteristic",[24] but this role did not accommodate the repetitive dimension of having to live. The bondsman cannot merely exist as a thing and yet endeavor to live; in fact, the inorganic quality of things is constitutive of their death-like dimension. Life is not, as the lord assumed, a merely material and, hence, limiting precondition of self-consciousness. It is a task which demands to be taken up again and again. The bondsman cannot be identified with the Naturwüchsigkeit of the things he works upon, precisely because work turns out to be the negation of naturalness: "through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it."[25] The labor of the bondsman emerges as a truncated form of desire: it exhibits the principle of active negation, but it does not wholly view itself as the author of its actions; he still works for the lord rather

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[24] Phenomenology, #190.

[25] Ibid., #194.

than for himself. In the case of the bondsman, the desire to live, specified as the desire to create the goods to live, cannot become integrated with the desire to be free until he relinquishes his shackles through disobedience and the attendant fear of death.

The division of tasks between lord and bondsman can be seen to explicate two different yet related projects in failed desire. The lord implicitly restricts desire to the consumption of ready-made goods and thus substitutes the satisfaction of desire for the entirety of the process. The bondsman exemplifies the dimension of desire missing from the lord's implicit account; his is a project of survival and activity encompassed by the meaning of labour. The lord's project of disembodiment becomes ironically a posture of greed; distanced from the physical world, yet requiring it to live, the lord becomes a passive consumer who, despite his privilege, can never be satisfied.

The lord's project to be beyond need becomes itself a pressing and relentless need; and his requirement to remain always sated ties him irrevocably to particularity and his own body, a situation he sought originally to flee. And the bondsman, consigned to the realm of particularity, discovers through laboring on natural things his own capacity to transform the brutely given world into a reflection of his own self. The lord becomes schooled in the lessons of life, while the bondsman becomes schooled in freedom. And the gradual inversion of their initial roles offers lessons in the general structure and meaning of desire.

The project or desire to live and the project or desire to gain autonomous identity can be integrated only in the desire which explicitly takes account of need. The denial of need alienates self-consciousness from itself, and is a key way in which self-consciousness renders part of itself as an externality. As long as need is considered to be a contingency or externality,

self-consciousness remains split off from itself, and the possibility of attaining an integrated self is foreclosed. When the satisfaction of needs becomes integrated into the pursuit of identity, we find that needs are but the alienated forms of desire; the need to live, formulated as such, affirms the view of life as mere exigency, and confirms the faulty distinction between the desire to live and the desire to achieve a self-determining identity. When needs are appropriated, they are experienced as desire.

Desire requires as well the transformation of the particularity of the natural world (the lived body as well as natural objects) into reflections of human activity; desire must become expressed through labor, for desire must give shape or form[26] to the natural world in order to find itself reflected there. Giving form is thus the external determination of desire; in order to find satisfaction, i.e. recognition for itself, desire must give way to creative work. Desire is not wholly cancelled through work of this kind, but "work...is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing. The negative relation to the object becomes its form and something permanent, because it is precisely for the worker that the object has independence." (my emphasis)[27]

The negating or appropriative function of desire is no longer to be construed as consumption, the ecstatic enthrallment with another, or domination, but, rather, as the re-creation of natural objects into reflections of their maker. Desire is to find its satisfaction, the reflection of itself

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[26] #195.

[27] #195; in the German: "Die Begierde hat sich das reine Negieren des Gegenstandes und dadurch das unvermischte Selbstgefühl vorbehalten. Diese Befriedigung ist aber deswegen selbst nur ein Verschwinden, denn es fehlt ihr die gegenständliche Seite oder das Bestehen. Die Arbeit hingegen ist gehemmte Begierde, aufgehaltenes Verschwinden, oder sie bildet.", p. 153.

as a self-determining and determinate existence, through effecting a human genesis of the external world. The externality of the world is negated through becoming transformed into a creation of human will. Self-consciousness is to attain to a god-like authorship of the world, "a universal formative activity", not "master over some things, but...over the universal power and the whole of objective being."[28]

We have argued that desire always maintains a reflexive as well as an intentional structure; we must now add that desire's intentionality is two-fold: desire is always linked with the problem of recognition of and by another self-consciousness, and desire is always an effort to negate/transform the natural world. The realm of sensuous and perceptual reality relinquished in the discovery of the Other as a self-negating independence is here resurrected in new form. Mutual recognition only becomes possible in the context of a shared orientation toward the material world. Self-consciousness is not only mediated through another self-consciousness, but each recognizes the other in virtue of the form each gives to the world. We are recognized not merely for the form we inhabit in the world (our various embodiments), but for the forms we create of the world (our works); our bodies are but transient expressions of our freedom, while our works shield our freedom in their very structure.

Hegel begins "Lordship and Bondage" with the claim that "self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged [als ein Anerkanntes]".[29] But what is it that the other recognizes us as? The answer

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[28] #196.

[29] #178.

is, as a desiring being: "Self-consciousness is Desire in general."[30] We have seen that desire is a polyvalent structure, a movement to establish an identity coextensive with the world. Hegel's discussion of work begins to show us how the world of substance becomes recast as the world of the subject. Desire as a transformation of the natural world is simultaneously the transformation of its own natural self into an embodied freedom. And yet, these transformations cannot occur outside of an historically constituted intersubjectivity which mediates the relation to nature and to the self. True subjectivities come to flourish only in communities which provide for reciprocal recognition, for we do not come to ourselves through work alone, but through the acknowledging look of the Other who confirms us.

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[30] ¶167.

Chapter Three: Alexandre Kojève: Desire and Historical Agency

> "Desire is at the base of Self-Consciousness, i.e. of a truly human existence (and therefore - in the end - of philosophical existence)."
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> A. Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, p. 37

As late as 1931 Alexandre Koyré reported in the Revue d'histoire de la philosophie[1] that Hegel studies in France were practically non-existent. With the exception of Jean Wahl's Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel[2] published in 1929, no major French commentary on Hegel claimed any intellectual popularity in France.[3] By 1946, however, the situation of Hegel studies in France had changed considerably; in that year Merleau-Ponty was to claim in the preface to his Phenomenology of Perception

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[1]"Rapports dur l'état de; études hegeliennes en France", Revue d'histoire de la philosophie, 5:2, (April-June, 1931).

[2]Presses Universitaires de France, 1929.

[3]Hegel's early theological writings were edited and made available in 1907 by Henri Noel in German, as the Theologische Jugendschriften. Wahl cites this edition, as well as the histories of Hegel's development by Rosenkranz (1844), Haym (1857) and Dilthey (1905) as central to his own investigation of the tragic element in Hegel's early religious writings through the Phenomenology of Spirit. He quotes very few French texts in his work with the exception of Brunschvicg's Les Progres de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale (Paris: 1927). Before the publication of Kojève's lectures (1933-39) and Hyppolite's Genèse et Structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit, both in 1947, only Henri Niel's De la mediation dans la philosophie de Hegal (Aubier, 1946) stands out as a major, full-length study in French. The publication of the Phenomenology in French by J. Hyppolite from 1939 through 1941 prompted a good deal of critical articles in various French philosophical and intellectual journals. Hyppolite gives an account of Hegel's emergence into French intellectual life during and after the war years in pp. 230-241 in his Figures de la pensée philosophique (PUF, 1971). He credits the interest in Bergson in the 1920's with introducing certain themes, i.e. life and history, into French intellectual life which ultimately made a serious consideration of Hegel possible. Mikel Dufrenne in "L'Actualité de Hegel" also likens Hegel's dialectical notion of becoming with the notion of durée in Bergson. Only Mark Poster among the major intellectual historians of the period sees in the turn to Hegel a reaction against Bergson.

that, "all the great philosophical ideas of the past century - the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche, phenomenology, German existentialism, and psychoanalysis - had their beginnings in Hegel."[4] Although we may reasonably question Merleau-Ponty's exuberant valuation of Hegel's influence, the more significant inquiry is into the intellectual climate which made such exuberance possible. Indeed, the intense interest in Hegel during the 1930's and 40's in France appealed to widely shared and long-suppressed intellectual and political needs. In Force and Circumstance Simone de Beauvoir recalls that she turned to Hegel in 1945 at Hyppolite's urging: "we had discovered the reality and weight of history; now we were wondering about its meaning."[5] By 1961 Koyrè in a postscript to a reprinted version of his 1931 review of Hegel studies in France remarked that Hegel's presence in academic life had "changed beyond recognition."[6]

If our inquiry were to enter the domain of the sociology of knowledge, we might then ask after the historical conditions of world war in Europe which precipitated the enthusiastic turn to Hegel during this period.[7] Our interest, however, is in a different sort of question, namely, what were the philosophical themes which became significant during this time, and how were they taken up and extended by Hegel scholars such as Kojève and Hyppolite? More specifically, our question concerns the significance of the theme of desire and its role in the Phenomenology of Spirit; what view of subjectivity

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[4]Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sense and Non-sense, tr. Hubert and Patricia Dreyfus, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 1964, pp. 109-110.

[5]Simone de Beauvoir, Force and Circumstance, tr. R. Howard (N.Y. 1964), p. 34.

[6]Koyré, A., Etudes d'histoire de la pensée philosophique, (Armand Colin, 1961), p. 34.

[7]cf. Vincent Descombes, Modern French Philosophy, p. 14.

and history did Hegel's concept of desire afford the writers of this period? In the case of Kojève, Hegel provided the context in which to approach certain philosophical questions relevant to the times: the problem of human action, the creation of meaning, the social conditions necessary for the constitution of historically responsible subjectivities. Hegel's view in the Phenomenology of an active and creating subjectivity, a journeying subject empowered by the work of negation, served as a source of hope during these years of political and personal crisis. Hegel provided a way to discern reason in the negative, that is, to derive the transformative potential from every experience of defeat. The destruction of institutions and ways of life, the mass annihilation and sacrifice of human life, revealed the contingency of existence in brutal and indisputable terms. Hence, the turn to Hegel can be seen as an effort to excise ambiguity from the experience of negation.

The ontological principle of negation made itself known historically during these times as a principle of destruction, and yet Hegel's Phenomenology provided a way to understand negation as a creative principle as well. The negative is also human freedom, human desire, the possibility to create anew; the nothingness to which human life had been consigned was thus at once the possibility of its renewal. The non-actual is at once the entire realm of possibility. The negative showed itself in Hegelian terms not merely as death, but as a sustained possibility of becoming. As a being which also embodies negativity, human being was revealed as able to endure the negative precisely because it could assimilate and recapitulate negation in the form of free action.

Kojève's lectures on Hegel are both commentaries and original works of philosophy. His appropriation of the theme of desire is, accordingly, an elucidation of Hegel's concept and a theory which stands independently of

Hegel. Taking seriously Hegel's claim that the object of philosophical analysis is itself partially constituted by the analysis itself, Kojève analyzes Hegel, not as an historical figure with a wholly independent existence, but, rather, as one engaged in a hermeneutical encounter in which both parties are transformed from their original positions. Hegel's text is not a wholly independent system of meanings to which Kojève's commentary endeavors to be faithful. Hegel's text is itself transformed by the particular historical interpretations which it endures; indeed, the commentaries are extensions of the text, they <u>are</u> the text in its modern life.

Kojève's peculiarly modern appropriation of Hegel's doctrine of desire aids us in the formulation of an acceptable understanding of the projects of desire. Hegel's claim that desire presupposes and reveals a common ontological bond of subjective consciousness and its world requires that we accept a prior set of ontological relations which structure and unify various subjectivities with one another and with the world that they confront. This presupposition of ontological harmonies which subsist in and among the intersubjective and natural worlds is difficult to reconcile with the various experiences of <u>disjunction</u> which emerge as insurpassable in the twentieth century. Kojève writes from a consciousness of human mortality which suggests that human life participates in a peculiar and unique ontological situation which distinguishes it from the natural world and which also establishes the differences among individual lives as negative relations which cannot be wholly superceded in a collective identity. Kojève's refusal of Hegel's postulation of an ontological unity which conditions and resolves all experiences of difference between individuals and between individuals and the external world is the condition of his own original theorizing. By rejecting the premise of ontological harmony, Kojève is free to extend Hegel's doctrine of negation. The experience of

desire becomes crucial for Kojève's reading of Hegel precisely because desire thematizes the differences between independent subjects and the differences between subjects and their worlds. Indeed, desire is not taken up into more capable forms of consciousness; desire becomes a permanent and universal feature of all human life, as well as the condition for historical action. Hegel's Phenomenology becomes for Kojève the occasion for an anthropology of human beings in which desire's transformation into action, and action's aim of universal recognition become the salient features of all historical agency.

Kojève's reading of Hegel is clearly influenced by the early Marx's recapitulation of Hegelian views of action and work. Although inspired by the newly discovered manuscripts of 1844, Kojève sought in Hegel a more fundamental theory of action, labor, and historical progress than he found in Marx. Reversing the Marxist trend to view Hegel as wrong-side-up, Kojève argued that Hegel provided an anthropology of historical life,[8] delineating the essential features of human existence which necessitate the continual re-creation of social and historical worlds. Kojève traced Marx's theory of class struggle to Hegel's discussion of lord and bondsman in the Phenomenology, and although Marx viewed class struggle as the dynamic proper to capitalist society, Kojeve generalized his conclusion, claiming that the struggle for recognition forms the dynamic principle of all historical progress. Although influenced by Marx, Kojève appears exclusively concerned with the early Marx: the theory of labour as the essential activity of human beings, the theory of alienation, the necessity of transforming the natural and intersubjective worlds in order to fulfill essential human projects. The early Marx, as opposed to the Marx of Capital or the Grundrisse, accepted an anthropological view of human labour,

[8]Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

that is, a view which enforced the universal and invariant features of labour cross-culturally.

Kojève found the basis of an anthropological view of human action and labour in the fourth chapter of the Phenomenology. Indeed, one might argue that the Phenomenology stops with Chapter Four for Kojève, for it is there that the structures of desire, action, recognition, and reciprocity are revealed as the conditions for historical life universally. For Kojève, the Phenomenology achieves the telos of western culture insofar as it occasions the beginning of an anthropocentric understanding of historical life. Kojève's claim that all post-Hegelian thought inhabits a post-historial time attests to this achievement. Insofar as Kojève and his readers live post-historically, they live without the hope that philosophy will reveal new truths concerning the human situation. The telos of history was to reveal the structures that make history possible. Modernity is thus, for Kojève, no longer concerned with unlodging the teleological plan that is the historical cunning of reason; modernity is characterized by historical action on the part of individuals, an action less determined than free. The end to teleological history is the beginning of human action as governed by a self-determining telos. In this sense, the end of history is the beginning of a truly anthropocentric universe. In Kojève's words, it is the revelation of "Man" or, perhaps more descriptively, of human subjectivity.

Kojève appears to reverse the order of significance that the Phenomenology establishes between human desires and a larger metaphysical order. For Kojève, Hegel's metaphysical categories find their consummate expression in human ontology; the categories of Being, Becoming, and Negation are synthesized in human action. Action which is truly human transforms (negates) that which is brutely given (Being) into a reflection and extenuation of the human agent

(Becoming). In a review of the contemporary significance of Hegel, Mikel Dufrenne wrote in 1941 that for Kojève, "...ce qui est ontologiquement la Négativité est métaphysiquement le temps et phénoménologiquement l'Action humaine."[9] For Kojève, then, the perspective of human agency gave concrete expression to Hegel's entire system; indeed, the Logic was to be understood as gaining its concrete meaning only in the context of human action. In this sense, Chapter IV of the Phenomenology becomes the central moment in Hegel's entire system. Kojève went so far as to claim that Hegel's entire theological speculations ought to be understood as a theory of human action.[10]

In order to maintain the centrality of the human perspective in Hegel's system, Kojève rejected the panlogistic interpretation of Hegel's view of nature. Indeed, in order to safeguard reason as the sole property of human beings, Kojève had to read Hegel's doctrine of the dialectic of nature as either mistaken or as requiring the contributing presence of a human consciousness.[11] Kojève's discussion of desire in the Introduction to the Reading of Hegel begins by introducing the premise of the ontological difference between human consciousness and the natural world. In particular, Kojève distinguishes human from animal consciousness through designating human consciousness as something more than a simple identity, that is, as the kind of being which only becomes itself through expression. Human consciousness remains indistinguishable from animal consciousness until it asserts its reflexivity in the form of self-expression.

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[9]Mikel Dufrenne, "L'Actualité de Hegel", Esprit, 16:148 (Sept. 1948., p. 296.

[10]Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, pp. 258-59.

[11]cf. Mikel Dufrenne, pp. 401-403, Henri Niel, "L'interprétation de Hegel", Critique, 1947, III, p. 428.

In Kojève's view, human consciousness prior to its self-constituting expression is, like animal consciousness, absorbed in the objects outside itself; this absorption is termed "contemplation" by Kojève. The self learns nothing about itself in contemplation for "the man who contemplates is 'absorbed' in what he contemplates; the 'knowing subject' 'loses' himself in the object that is known." As opposed to contemplation which cannot afford the experience of self-constitution or self-knowledge, Kojève distinguishes desire as the only mode through which the human subject can express and know itself. Desire distinguishes human subjects as reflexive structures; it is the condition of the self-externalization and its self-understanding. Desire is "the origin of the 'I' revealed by speech"; desire prompts the linguistic subject into self-reference: "desire constitutes that being as I and reveals it as such by moving it to say 'I...'".[12]

Through referring to the role of self-expression in desire, Kojève builds upon Hegel's notion that desire both forms and reveals subjectivity. For Kojève, desire motivates the formation of a distinct sense of agency. In order to achieve what one desires, one formulates desires in speech or expresses them in some other way, for expression is the instrumental medium through which we appeal to others. Expression is also the way in which we determine our desires, not simply in the sense of 'give concrete expression to', but also in the sense of 'give direction to'. Desires are not contingently related to their expressions as if desires were wholly formed prior to their expression; desire is essentially a desire-for-determination; desire strives for concrete determination as part of its satisfaction. Moreover, the determination of a desire as a concrete desire for something necessitates the determination of the

[12] Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, p. 3.

self. In the formulation, 'I desire x', the 'I' emerges as if by accident; subjectivity is unwittingly created and discovered through the concrete expression of desire.

Human and animal desire are thus distinguished for Kojève insofar as animal desire does not achieve self-reflection through desire, whereas for human desire, satisfaction and self-reflection are indissolubly linked. Human desire does presuppose animal desire insofar as the latter constitutes the organic possibility of the former; animal desire is the necessary but not sufficient condition for human desire. Biological life, according to Kojève, can never constitute the meaning of human desire, for human desire is less an organic given than the negation or transformation of what is organically given; it is the vehicle through which consciousness constructs itself from a biological into a non-biological, i.e. distinctly human, being. Contrary to the common belief that desire is itself a manifestation of biological necessity, Kojève inverts this relation and claims that desire is the transcendence of biology insofar as biology is conceived as a set of fixed natural laws.[13]

Kojève views nature as a set of brutely given facts, governed by the principle of simple identity, displaying no dialectical possibilities, and, hence, in stark contrast to the life of consciousness. Desire is thus non-natural insofar as it exhibits a structure of reflexivity or internal negation which natural phenomena lack. The desiring subject is created

[13]For a consideration of Kojève's view of nature, see M. Dufrenne, "L'Actualité de Hegel". Not only is Kojève's view problematic in the context of Hegel's apparently more complex view, but also in terms of contemporary scientific accounts of nature. Kojève is clearly writing in the context of a philosophical tradition which maintains a view of natural existence as static and non-dialectical; he does not consider the possibility that nature is itself an evolving system, nor does he consider the kinds of 'reasons' which account for evolutionary schemes in nature. In his single-minded account of nature as brute and unintelligible, he seems to subscribe to certain 17th and 18th century views of nature which inform liberal political theory, i.e. Hobbes and Locke.

through the experience of desire and is, in this sense, a non-natural self. The subject does not precede his desires and then glean from his desires a reflection of a ready-made self; on the contrary, the subject is essentially defined through what it desires. Through desiring a certain kind of object, the subject posits itself unwittingly as a certain kind of being. In other words, Kojève's subject is an essentially intentional structure; the subject is its desire for its object or Other; the identity of the subject is to be found in the intentionality of its desire.

For Kojève, the proper aim of desire is the transformation of natural givens into reflections of human consciousness, for only through taking this process of transformation as its object can desire manifest itself as the transformative power that it is. In Kojève's view, "desire is a function of its food",[14] so that were a subject to remain content with desiring natural objects alone, his desire would remain a purely natural desire; he would not evince the "transcendence" implicit in human desire: "The I created by the active satisfaction of such a Desire will have the same nature as the things toward which that Desire is directed; it will be a 'thingish' I, a merely living I, an animal I".[15]

Kojève interprets the transition between "The Truth of Self-Certainty" and "Lordship and Bondsman" as the development of desire's intentional aims from objects to Others. Interpreting Hegel's contention that desire is conditioned by its object, Kojève views the transition between these chapters as signifying the cultivation of desire into a "transcendent" or non-natural capacity. Arguing that desire takes on specific forms according to the kind of object it

[14] Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, p. 4.

[15] Ibid., p. 5.

encounters and pursues, Kojève rejects the suggestion that an inexorable logic necessitates the transformation of desire into a satisfactory synthesis of self and world. There is nothing intrinsic to desire, no inner teleology, which would itself create the 'anthropogenesis' of the world which Hegel views as desire's ultimate satisfaction. Desire is itself dependent upon the availability of proper objects to express its own transformative potential. Desire's satisfaction, then, is not secured through ontological necessity, but is itself context-bound, dependent upon an historical situation which might occasion the expression of desire's transformative potential.

In Kojève's view, desire only becomes truly human, fully transformative, when it takes on a non-natural object, namely, another human consciousness. Only in the context of another consciousness, a being for whom reflexivity or inner-negation is constitutive, can the initial consciousness manifest its own negativity, i.e. its own transcendence of natural life: "Desire directed toward another Desire, taken as Desire, will create, by the negating and assimilating action that satisfies it, an I essentially different from the animal 'I'".[16]

The act of reciprocal exchange which constitutes the two subjectivities in their transcendence is that of recognition. The initial consciousness does not contemplate itself reflected in the other; the passivity of contemplation is supplanted by the activity of desire. Kojève explains the movement of desire in search of recognition as an active negation: "this 'I' will be 'negating-negativity', and since Desire is realized as action negating the given, the very being of this I will be action."[17] Recognition of one

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

consciousness by another takes effect within a shared orientation toward the material world; the context of work (the negation of the natural world) occasions the process of recognition (the negation of the Other's naturalness). Work which exemplifies human being as transcending the natural and which occasions the recognition of others is termed historical action. As the efficacious transformation of biological or natural givens, historical action is the mode through which the world of substance is recast as the world of the subject. Confronting the natural world, the historical agent takes it up, marks it with the signature of consciousness and sets it forth in the social world to be seen. This process is evident in the creation of a material work, in the linguistic expression of a reality, in the opening up of dialogue with other human beings: historical action is possible within the spheres of interaction and production alike.

Kojève's anthropocentrism leads him to view desire as a negating activity which founds all historical life. Desire cannot be overcome precisely because human subjectivity is the permanent foundation of historical life; action does not indicate a prior and more inclusive reality as its ground - action is the ground of history, the constituting act by which history emerges as nature transformed. Desire is thus a kind of negation which is not resolved into a more inclusive conception of being; desire indicates an ontological difference between consciousness and its world which, for Kojève, cannot be overcome.

Kojève's formulation of desire as a permanent activity of negation permits a modern conception of desire freed from the implicit teleological claims of Hegel's view in the Phenomenology. Kojève views desire as a "revealed nothingness",[18] a negative or negating intentionality without a preestablished

[18] Ibid.

teleological structure. The various routes of desire are conditioned by the social world confronting desire, but the specific routes that desire pursues are in no sense pre-arranged. Human desire indicates a set of options for Kojève. The dissolution of Hegel's harmonious ontology, the scheme whereby negation is continuously superceded by a more encompassing version of being, allows for a crucial insight into the freedom expressed in desire.

Kojève's valuation of negation as a permanent feature of historical life proves central to the articulation of the role of subjectivity as constituting and constituted by desire. For Kojève, desire does not - as it does for Hegel - discover its pre-given commonality with the world through an affirmation of itself as a sensuous medium. In Kojève's view, the sensuous aspect of human identity is precisely what calls for transcendence, what desire seeks to negate. Desire is thus an idealizing project; it endeavors to determine human agency as transcendent of natural life. In this way, Kojève's formulation of desire avows the insurpassability of subjectivity; the ultimate project of desire is less a dialectical assimilation of subjectivity to the world, and the world to subjectivity, than a unilateral action upon the world in which consciousness instates itself as the generator of historical reality.

For Hegel, desire is a negating activity which both distinguishes and binds consciousness and its world, whereas for Kojève desire is a negating activity which instates consciousness in the world as externally yet efficaciously related to that world. Rather than <u>revealing</u> the mutually constitutive dimensions of subject and substance as ontological presuppositions of their encounter, Kojève asserts consciousness as <u>creating</u> its relation to the world through its transformative action.

Kojève's reformulation of Hegel furnishes a more realistic view of human desire as a subjective experience; this seems clear in the discussions of

freedom and temporality to which we will turn. On the other hand, by viewing desire as non-natural, as a transcendence of the purely sensuous, Kojève deprives his position of an embodied understanding of desire. Negation for Kojève is less an embodied pursuit than an effort to become a pure freedom. Moreover, Kojève's rejection of Hegel's argument that the sensuousness of desire reveals self-consciousness' link with the sensuousness of the world implies a radical disjunction between human consciousness and the natural world which deprives human reality of a natural or sensuous expression. Kojève's distinction between the sensuous and the 'truly human' involves him in an idealist position which recreates the paradox of determinateness and freedom that Hegel overcame in the Phenomenology. We turn to the problematic features of this position first in order to clarify the relation between the sensuous and desire and in order to lay the groundwork for Kojève's view of desire as manifesting human existence in its temporality and freedom.

Kojève's reading of the lord and bondsman section underscores their different approaches to the problem of the sensuous. In Hegel's chapter, "Lordship and Bondage", the bondsman discovers that he is not a thing-like creature, but a dynamic, living being capable of negation. The bondsman's experience of himself is as an embodied actor, one who also thirsts for life. Although the bondsman confronts his freedom from natural constraints through the negating activity of his labour, he rediscovers the 'natural' aspect of his existence as a medium of self-reflection. The body which once signified his enslavement comes to appear as the essential precondition and instrument of his freedom. In this respect the bondsman prefigures the synthesis of determinateness and freedom that Geist subsequently comes to represent. In the larger terms of the text, substance is recast as subject through the reconciliation of determinate life and absolute freedom.

Kojève's reading of this section stops before the reconciliation of determinate life and freedom is introduced through the concept of Geist, and neither does he acknowledge the bondsman's body as a medium of expression. Instead, Kojève argues that the lesson of the section is that negating action consists in a transcendence of the natural and determinate. The paradox of consciousness and the body remains a dynamic and constitutive paradox. The fate of human reality is "not to be what it is (as static and given being, as natural being, as 'innate character') and to be (that is, to become) what it is not."[19] In this formulation which prefigures the Sartrian view of the paradoxical unity of the in-itself and for-itself, Kojève underscores his view of consciousness as that which transcends rather than unites with nature. The project of subjectivity is to overcome all positivity which includes the 'inner nature' or apparently fixed features of consciousness itself: "[i]n its very becoming this I is intentional becoming, deliberate evolution, conscious and voluntary progress; it is the act of transcending the given that is given to it and that it itself is."[20]

Kojève's normative view, that desire must become manifest as a thoroughgoing experience of "conscious and voluntary progress" implies that all claims regarding innate drives or natural teleologies to human affectivity must be dismissed as mistaken. In that the givenness of an agent's own biological life is to be transformed into a creation of will, Kojève is proposing that desire be regarded, not as a natural or biological drive, but as an instrument of freedom. The reification of desire as a natural phenomenon is, then, the

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

arbitrary restriction of desire to certain ends, and the unjustifiable elevation of those ends to a natural or necessary status. As an expression of freedom, desire becomes a kind of choice.

Kojève's view of the paradoxical ontological situation of human beings - not to be what it is (nature), and to be what it is not (consciousness or negation) - has the consequence that human beings are necessarily projected into time. The human 'I' is a continual surpassing of itself, an anticipation of the being which it is not yet, as well as an anticipation of the nothingness which will emerge from whatever it at any moment happens to be: "...the very being of this I will be becoming, and the universal form of this being will be not space, but time."[21] Desire thus is a nothingness which is essentially temporalized: it is a "revealed nothingness" or an "un-real emptiness" which intends its own fulfillment, and, through this intending, creates a temporal future. In Kojève's view, the experience of time is conditioned by the various projects instituted by human agents; time, like the Heideggerian notion of temporality, is relative to the human orientation through which it is experienced. By 'time', Kojève means lived time, the experience of time conditioned by the way agents through their hopes, fears, memories create a specific experience of future, present, and past. Thus, for Kojève, desire gives rise to futurity: "the movement engendered by the Future is the movement that arises from desire."[22]

In keeping with Kojève's dictum that nature be subjected to a thoroughgoing anthropogenesis, natural time is thus relinquished for a human temporality essentially structured by desire and its intended fulfillment.

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[21] Ibid.

[22] p. 134.

Unsatisfied desire is an absence which circumscribes the kind of presence by which it might relinquish itself as absence. Insofar as it posits itself as a determinate emptiness, i.e. as empty of some specific object or other, it is itself a kind of presence: it is "the presence of an absence of reality";[23] in effect, this absence 'knows' what it is missing. It is the tacit knowledge of anticipation. The anticipation of fulfillment gives rise to the concrete experience of futurity. Desire reveals the essential temporality of human beings.

Kojève's emphasis on the lived experience of time suggests a more plausible alternative to the Phenomenology's approach to temporality. We suggested earlier that the Phenomenology makes use of a fictive temporality in order to demonstrate the development of appearances into their all-encompassing Concept. That certain figures of consciousness 'appear' at some juncture in this development does not mean that they come into being; rather, their opacity must also be regarded as an essential moment of their being. In effect, it is only from the human perspective that appearances pass in and out of being. In effect, every moment of negation is ultimately revealed to be contained within a unity which has been there implicitly all along. The progression of the Phenomenology consists in the gradual replacement of the point of view of the journeying subject for the point of view of the comprehensive absolute.

Kojève rejects the possibility of an absolute point of view, restricting his account of desire and historical action within the confines of lived experience. However, Kojève does not view himself as rejecting or even revising Hegel; he argues that Hegel's position is rightly represented in his own. Rather than enter into a debate over whether Kojève's interpretation is

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[23] Ibid.

correct, suffice it to say that Kojève asserts the ontological primacy of individuality over collectivity, and also maintains that Hegel's Phenomenology, despite the appearance of Christ at the closure, is a tract in atheism.[24] Whether Kojeve improves upon Hegel or simply brings into relief a possible reading of Hegel, the point remains that Kojève asserts the perspective of lived experience as the necessary context in which to analyze desire and temporality. For Kojève, human action is the highest incarnation of the absolute, so that the experience of lived time is vindicated over and against the fictive temporality of the Phenomenology's development. According to this latter view, lived temporality could only be regarded as a mere appearance within the overarching framework of Hegel's ontological unity: hence, the temporal experience of desire moving beyond itself toward an object (and thereby opening up a future for itself), turns out to be a perspective essentially deceived. The movement of desire reveals itself as a movement internal to the all-encompassing dance of subject and substance, "a bachanalian revel"[25] to be sure, but one in which everyone dances in place.

Kojève's view implies that temporality gains its meaning only through the experiences through which it is engendered. Anticipating a future which is not-yet, the desiring agent does not come to find that the not-yet has always-been; rather, desire creates the not-yet through an orientation toward

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[24]For a discussion of Kojève's atheistic interpretation of Hegel, and a defense of Hegel's theism, see Henri Niel, "L'interprétation de Hegel", Critique, 1947, III, #18. In his Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Kojeve calls for an overcoming of Christian society, and appears to subscribe to the conventional Marxist view of religion as a mystification. See also, "Hegel, Marx et le Christianisme" by A. Kojève, in Critique, #3-4, p. 340. Hyppolite in "Note sûr la Preface de la 'Phénoménologie de l'esprit' et le theme: l'Absolu est sujet" in Figures de la pensée philosophique rejects this interpretation of Hegel as an atheist - as does H. Niel and J. Wahl - claiming instead that the very meaning of God is transformed within the Hegelian system such that it is not vulnerable to the criticisms of the conventional Marxist view.

[25]Phenomenology, #13.

an absent object. Desire, for Kojève, no longer reveals a common ontological situation, a pregiven structure of temporal progression within an overarching unity, but institutes temporality ex nihilo. The ecstatic character of desire, then, is not resolved into a more inclusive form of self-relatedness, but desire remains truly outside itself. Desire in the form of anticipation (the negation of the present, the desire for the not-yet) reveals the ambiguous 'place' of subjectivity, as neither here nor there, but spanning both; anticipation discloses subjectivity as a being projected into time and as a being who projects time. That temporality gains its meaning through subjective experience alone is underscored by Kojève in his essay, "A Note on Eternity, Time, and the Concept": "...we have seen that the presence of Time in the real World is called Desire".[26]

In this same article Kojève refers to Hegel's comment in his Jena lectures that "Geist ist Zeit."[27] This formulation is echoed in the preface to the Phenomenology: "die Zeit ist der daseiende Begriff selbst."[28] This time in the real world is the experience of projected possibilities implicit in desire which distinguishes human desire. Time arises through human "projects" which manifest the idealizing function of desire:

> "...Time (that is, historical Time, with the rhythm: Future Past Present) is Man in his empirical - that is, spatial - integral reality: Time is the History of Man in the World. And, indeed, without Man there would be no Time in the World....To be sure, the animal, too, has desires, and it acts in terms of those desires, by negating the real: it eats and drinks, just like man. But the animal's desires are natural; they are directed toward what is, and hence they are determined by what is; the

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[26]Kojeve, Introduction, p. 137.

[27]Jenensar Realphilosophie, Vol. I, 1803-4, p. 4.

[28]Phenomenology, Preface, #46.

> negating action that is effected in terms of <u>these</u> desires, therefore, cannot <u>essentially</u> negate, it cannot change the <u>essence</u> of what is. Being remains identical to itself, and thus it is <u>Space</u>, and not Time...Man, on the other hand, essentially transforms the World by negating action of his (struggles) and his Work. Action which arises from <u>non</u>-natural human Desire toward another Desire - that is, toward something which does not exist really in the natural World."[29]

The desire of another individual serves as the condition for the experience of futurity; hence, reciprocal recognition and temporality are, for Kojève, essentially related. To recognize another means to relate to the other's <u>possibilities</u>, implicit to which is a sense of futurity, i.e. the conception of what the Other can become. Only when we relate to Others as natural beings do we assert a purely present relation to them; acknowledging them as consciousnesses, i.e. as negativities, beings who are not yet what they are, do we relate to them as truly human: "desire...is directed toward an entity that does not exist and has not existed in the real natural World. Only then can the movement be said to be engendered by the Future, for the Future is precisely what does not (yet) exist and has not (already) existed."[30]

The Other is distinguished from natural beings insofar as the Other is capable of futurity and is, thus, a non-actual being in terms of the present. And yet the Other achieves being through the act of recognition, not as a natural entity, but as a social one. A human reality comes into being as a social being to the extent that it is recognized, and this recognition follows the performance of transformative acts. Insofar as desire achieves this second-order being through recognition, the pure futurity which was desire is

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[29]Kojève, <u>Introduction</u>, p. 138-9.

[30]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 134.

transformed into "History" or, equivalently, "human acts accomplished with a view to social Recognition..."[31]

Desire serves as the foundation of historical life insofar as the transformation of desire into a social identity constitutes the structure of the act by which history emerges from nature. Defined as a "hole" in existence, or occasionally, as "the absence of Being",[32] desire is conceived as a negating intentionality which seeks social reality through reciprocal recognition. Unrecognized, desire lacks positive being; recognized, desire achieves a being which is a second-nature, a creation of a community of reciprocally recognizing desires. Without the world of Others, desire and the personal agency which it introduces would have no reality: "only in speaking of a 'recognized' human reality can the term human be used to state a truth in the strict and full sense of the term. For only in this case can one reveal a reality in speech."[33]

History is defined by Kojève in normative terms; it is not merely a set of events, but, rather, a set of projects which effectively transform naturally given being into social constructions. History is a set of <u>acts</u> in which an idea or possibility is realized, something is created from nothing, ananthropogenesis succeeds. In a formulation that breaks with the monism of Hegel's Concept and prefigures Sartre's view of negation as pure creation, Kojève argues that,

> "...the profound basis of Hegelian anthropology is formed by this idea that Man is not a Being that <u>is</u> in an eternal identity to itself in Space, but a Nothingness that <u>nihilates</u> as Time in spatial Being, through the negation or transformation of the

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[31] <u>Ibid</u>.

[32] <u>Ibid</u>., <u>op. cit</u>., p. 135.

[33] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 9.

> given, starting from an idea or ideal that does not yet exist, that is still nothingness (a 'project') - through negation that is called the Action (Tat) of Fighting and of Work (Kampf und Arbeit)."[34]

Kojève's reformulation of Hegel's doctrine of desire and recognition provides a more plausible interpretation of the project of desire insofar as it relinquishes the point of view of the Absolute for a more phenomenologically sound perspective. Instead of enacting and revealing ontological projects which were prearranged from the start, desire is now seen to be an expression of an individual's freedom in search of a social reality. Kojève's view of desire as a free project in search of social recognition does not require an imaginative identification with a point of view that does not correspond to lived experience; instead of appealing to a fictive temporality to explain the development of desire, he elucidates the temporality implicit in desire and thus achieves Hegel's project more successfully than does the Phenomenology, i.e. the elucidation of the philosophical presuppositions of experience.

Accepting Kojève's view of desire as an active negation which is not resolved into a more inclusive conception of being, we can see how this view supports the conception of desire as a free project in pursuit of recognition. At first glance, this conception of the desiring agent as a "voluntary progress" might seem paradoxical in light of the general truth that "all human Desire...is finally a function of the desire for Recognition."[35] Although voluntary, human desire does not seem able to manifest a choice which does not ultimately gain its meaning through the desire for recognition. If desire can be said to manifest a choice or free project, we must nevertheless see this freedom as delimited by the forms of recognition available to it. This claim

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[34] p. 48.

[35] p. 7.

does not imply that individual projects must conform passively to existing norms of recognition because individuals are also free to delimit for themselves the domain of recognizing norms by which they aspire to be affirmed: "my freedom ceases to be a dream, an illusion, an abstract idea, only to the extent that it is universally recognized by those whom I recognize as worthy of recognizing it."[36]

Although Kojève argues that Hegel preserves the value of the individual's perspective, it seems clear that Kojève gives the individual a central importance that Hegel himself could not have intended. While Hegel closes the preface to the Phenomenology with an admonishment that "the individual must all the more forget himself, as the nature of Science implies and requires",[37] Kojève argues that social recognition is always directed toward the individual's value. Indeed, for Kojève, the kind of action which satisfies human desire is that in which one is "recognized in (one's) human value, on (one's) reality as a human individual." For Kojeve, all human value is individual value, and "all Desire is desire for a value."[38]

Recognition does not have the effect of assimilating the individual into a more inclusive community; following the tradition of classical liberalism, Kojève views recognition as distinguishing individuals from one another, conferring singular values on each. Community consists of individuals who recognize each other, but for whom recognition is a restoration to individuality and not its transcendence. The difficulty in achieving this

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[36] p. 50.

[37] Phenomenology, p. 45.

[38] Introduction, p. 6.

state of reciprocal recognition is exemplified for Kojève in historical strife. Every individual agent desires recognition of his value from all other individuals in the community; as long as some individuals do not recognize an Other, they view him as a natural or thing-like being and exclude him from the human community. Domination arises as a self-contradictory effort to achieve recognition in this context. For Kojève, the desire for domination is derivative from the desire for universal recognition, but the strategies of the oppressor - the lord - guarantee the failure of the project. The lord may attempt to impose his individual will upon the bondsmen who depend on him, but this imposition can never elicit the recognition that the lord requires: the lord does not value those by which he aspires to be recognized so that their recognition cannot be received by him as a human recognition.

The satisfaction of desire, for Kojève, which is simultaneously the development of individuality, requires the universalization of reciprocal recognition, i.e. a universally instituted egalitarianism of social value. The struggle for recognition which has produced a conflict of interests throughout history can be fully overcome only through the emergence of a radical democracy. Conversely, this kind of egalitarianism would imply the complete recognition of individual values, the satisfaction and social integration of desires:

> "Man can only truly be 'satisfied', History can end, only in and by the formation of a society, of a State, in which the strictly particular, personal, individual value of each is recognized as such; and in which the universal value of the State is recognized and realized by...<u>all</u> the Particulars."[39]

Although Kojève claims that it is the essence of Hegel's system which he explicates through his analysis, it seems clear that he has, in fact,

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[39] p. 58.

restricted his analysis to certain central themes of the Phenomenology, and provided a peculiarly modern elaboration of these themes. Kojeve clearly accepts the modern liberal conception of individual desire as the foundation of the social and political world. Although a good many Hegel scholars view individual desire as transcended in and through the concept of Geist, Kojeve clearly sees the ideal Hegelian society as one which maintains a dialectical mediation of individuality and collectivity. In fact, collective life appears to gain its final measure and legitimation to the extent that it proves capable of legitimating individual desires.

Kojève's brand of democratic Marxism does not, however, rely on the Hobbesian view of the conflict of desires without re-interpreting that doctrine. In line with Hegel, Kojève views the conflict of individual desires, not as a natural state of affairs, but one which implies its own supercession through a universally accepted social order resting on principles of reciprocal recognition. Moreover, individuality itself is not to be understood strictly in terms of individual desire, for desire creates a distinctively human subjectivity through recognition of and by another desire; individuality gains its own full expression and satisfaction only through a validated participation in the social sphere. As distinct from the Hobbesian view, society does not arise as an artificial construct in order to arbitrate between naturally hostile desires, but society provides for the articulation and satisfaction of desire. Accordingly, the political community does not recognize individual wills which, strictly speaking, exist prior to the state apparatus of recognition; rather, recognition itself facilitates the constitution of true individuals, truly human subjectivities which forms the ultimate aim of desire. The end of history, the satisfaction of desire, consists in the successful recognition of each individual by every other.

Kojève's reading of Hegel through the natural law tradition results in a theory which values individuality more than Hegel's original theory does. His acceptance of the subjective point of view permits him an analysis of desire in terms of the structures of freedom and temporality which desire presupposes and enacts. And yet the distinction between consciousness and nature which pervades his view leads him to promote desire as a disembodied pursuit; desire is a negation, but one which is unsupported by a corporeal life. Kojève's references to desiring agents as "negations" and "nothingnesses" suffer from an abstractness which has philosophical consequences. Hegel's argument that the pursuit of recognition must take place within life remains true: the body is not merely the precondition for desire, but its essential medium as well. Inasmuch as desire seeks to be beyond nature, it seeks to be beyond life as well. We turn to Hyppolite in an effort to reconsider the paradox of determinateness and freedom which still troubles the Hegelian formulation of desire.

Chapter Four: Jean Hyppolite: Desire, Transience, and the Absolute

> Dans ce nouveau monde humaine toutefois le tragique ne saurait disparaître. Nous l'aperçevons biens dans ce qui menace l'existence humaine dans sa précarité, mais nous ne sommes pas surs, comme Hegel, qu'il coincide avec le rationnel. Cette coincidence est encore une forme d'optimisme que nous ne pouvons plus postuler.
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> J. Hyppolite, "le Phénoméne de la 'Reconnaisance Universelle' dans l 'éxperience Humaine"[1]

Jean Hyppolite attended Alexandre Kojève's lectures at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes on Hegel's Phenomenology, and although Hyppolite was deeply influenced by Kojève's anthropocentric reading of Hegel, he found himself turning from the Phenomenology to the Logic in order to escape some of the problematic features of Kojève's reading. Kojève's strict distinction between the natural and the human worlds had the consequence of avowing human desire as a non-natural and, hence, non-corporeal pursuit. Hyppolite offers a way to correct the problematic consequences of Kojève's ontological dualism through rehabilitating the concept of a monistic absolute. For Hyppolite, however, the absolute no longer signifies a final synthesis of self and world which requires the journeying subject to assume an omnipotent perspective on the world-a phenomenologically untenable position. Through referring to Hegel's view of the Concept as an infinite structure, Hyppolite interprets the absolute as the ineluctability of time. Hyppolite's reformulation of Hegel's project has the advantage of dispensing with the ontological dualism and anthropocentrism which lead Kojève to separate human ontology from the natural world. Moreover, this interpretation of the absolute as time allows Hyppolite to maintain the

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[1]Hyppolite, "le Phénoméne de la Réconnaisance Universelle dans l'experience Humaine", Figures de la Pensée Philosophique, I, p. 261.

existential insights that originally lead Kojève to establish his theory of ontological dualism. In fact, Hyppolite succeeds in revealing further dimensions of the Hegelian formulation of desire as negation. Human desire not only negates externality in the mode of transforming it, but itself expresses an orientation toward temporality and death which simultaneously reveals it as specifically human and as essentially part of the natural world.

Although Hyppolite was to write, "j'etais d'accord avec Kojève pour reconnaitre toutes les resonances existentielles de l'oeuvre de Hegel",[2] he takes issue with Kojève's equation of absolute knowledge and historical action. For Hyppolite, Kojève did not take his criticism of the teleological view of history far enough. Although disputing the future of any teleological view of history, Kojève nevertheless maintained that historical action - transformative activity recognized on a universal basis - constituted the telos of individuals. Hence, the teleological view of development was less rejected than internalized, and history still maintains its end in the kind of actions which command world-wide attention and assent. In Hyppolite's reading of Kojève,

> "La Phénoménologie serait l'épopée de l'esprit humain pour aboutir à cette fin de l'histoire, de l'opération de la négativité humaine. La philosophie de Hegel, en prenant conscience de cette histoire, maintenant achevée, serait le savoir absolu."[3]

The negativity of human beings reveals itself not only in the transformation of nature into social reality, but persists as well in a speculative knowledge of

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[2]Hyppolite, "La Phenomenologie de Hegel et la Pensee Francais contemporaine", Figures, p. 239.

[3]Ibid., p. 237.

the world, i.e. in the thinking of difference which, for Hyppolite, constitutes the being of life or the absolute. He writes,

> Je crois que l'interprétation de Kojève est trop uniquement anthropologique. Le savoir absolu n'est pas, pour Hegel, une théologie, mais il n'est non plus une anthropologie. Il est la découverte du spéculatif, d'une pensée de l'etre qui apparait a travers l'homme et l'histoire, la révélation absolue. C'est le sens de cette pensée speculative qui m'oppose, semble-t-il, à l'interprétation purement anthropologique de Kojève."[4]

Hyppolite distinguishes between two strains in Hegel's works, one which begins with the point of view of the subject and one which begins with the point of view of substance, 'the adventure of being', which cannot be assimilated to the perspective of human action. He writes in "Note sûr la Preface de la 'Phenomenologie de l'esprit' et le theme: L'Absolu est sujet",

> "...il y a selon nous deux aspects complementaires et presque inconciliables de la pensée hegelienne: 1) Elle est une pensée de l'histoire, de l'aventure humaine concrete et elle s'est constitutée pour rendre compte de cette experience; 2) Elle est aussi une aventure de l'Être - Hegel dit de l'Absolu - et non pas seulement de l'homme, c'est pourquoi elle est spéculative, savoir absolu, en restant histoire, devenir et temporalité..."[5]

The absolute is, then, not confined to the human sphere; the synthesis of subject and substance is less a consequence of human negation than it is a manifestation of negativity as it both structures and transcends human action. Hyppolite's argument that Kojève treated the Phenomenology in isolation from the Logic appears right insofar as Kojève did not account for the workings of negativity apart from the human sphere.[6]

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[4]Hyppolite, "la 'Phénoménologie' de Hegel et la pensee francais contemporaine", p. 241.

[5]Hyppolite, "Note sûr la Preface de la 'Phénoménologie de l'esprit' et le theme: l'Absolu est sujet" in Figures de la pensée philosophique, p. 334-5.

[6]Hyppolite, "La 'Phénoménologie' de Hegel...", p. 237.

Hyppolite's rejection of Kojève's dualistic ontology returns him to Hegel's initial project to find a common ontological ground between self and world which conditions their ultimate unity. Hyppolite's rehabilitation of Hegel's monism challenges Kojève's strict distinction between human and natural reality by interpreting the absolute - the monistic principle which structures the development of all reality - as difference itself. While Kojève saw the difference between human and natural being as an external relation which could only be overcome through the social transformation of nature, Hyppolite views transformation as essential to natural and logic developments regardless of the presence of a human consciousness. Hyppolite asks not after the being of "man", but, rather, after the being of life;[7] and it is through this return to life, the imparting and dissolution of shape, that Hyppolite finds a dynamic yet thoroughly monistic absolute.

Hyppolite's criticism of Kojève's dualism appears to be a necessary step in disputing the latter's anthropocentrism, but also in revealing in closer phenomenological detail the interrelation of desire and temporality. Hyppolite insisted that Hegel did not confine the absolute to the sphere of human action precisely because part of what it means to be human is to realize the essential exteriority of truth. Human life cannot be a fully immanent development, a pure creation of itself because of the ecstatic nature of human beings. Indeed, the ecstatic temporality of human agents is a form of permanent self-estrangement which no historical order could eradicate. The self-estrangement which follows from living in time, that is, of being always beyond oneself through being projected into a future or a past, reflects the principle of non-coincidence or internal negation which structures all things.

[7]Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, p. 147.

The absolute is discovered, then, in very different experiences for Kojève and Hyppolite; for the former, it is located in History, normatively conceived, and for the latter it is found in temporality. For Hyppolite, temporality is a truth which exceeds all historical action, for action itself cannot be sustained in its original form. When action is completed, it becomes its opposite, and its achievement reveals itself as less than absolute. Historical action creates a substantive human community for some duration of time, but it must give way to that community's dissolution, if only to assert it once again. As a form of life, the creations of historical action must be submitted to repetition, and yet Kojève appears to forget this key Hegelian lesson. Indeed, Kojève's view of History seems to be in opposition to time; historical deeds and works are meant to stay time, to elevate the human spirit beyond the futility of animal life to the permanence of an historical world. Kojeve has elevated the wisdom of the bondsman to an absolute task, for the bondsman learned that in the creation of a work, desire was held in check, and transience was staved off.[8] In effect, for Kojève, the problem of time is resolved through the creation of forms. Hyppolite rightly reminds us, however, that intrinsic to life itself is the dissolution of form as well as its reconstitution. Hence, Hyppolite might be said to reverse Kojève's interpretation of the absolute; as the perpetual non-coincidence of beings, the absolute for Hyppolite is the permanence of desire and the inevitability of transience.

The synthesis of self and world is, for Hyppolite, no longer a unity of these terms, but is, rather, a paradox constitutive of all beings. The

[8]cf. Phenomenology of Spirit, #195: "work...is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off."

absolute is the process of becoming, and signifies that becoming - rather than any determinate telos - as the permanent feature of all reality, i.e. a permanence which is no permanence.

> "le savoir absolu n'existe pas ailleurs, il n'est pas au-delà de ce devenir, dans un ciel intelligible ou suprasensible; mais ce devenir à son tour n'est pas une suite éparpillée et sans lien, il est une téléologie sans préalable, une aventure du Sens, où les moments se joignent en s'écartant commes les moments du temps: 'Le Temps est le concept étant la..., il est l'inquietude de la vie et le processus d'absolue distinction.'"[9]

Hyppolite's interpretation of the concept relies on Hegel's view of the infinite as absolute. Rejecting Kojève's postulation of a positive coincidence of thought and being in the historical agent who enacts and reflects his own historical times, Hyppolite affirms the infinite non-coincidence of thought and life, the fundamental dissonance which characterizes all conceptual thinking. Here Hyppolite self-consciously follows Kierkegaard whom he, along with Jean Wahl, views as closely aligned with the Hegel of the Theologische Jugendschriften.[10] Kierkegaard's claim that the thought of existence could only founder on paradox is echoed in Hyppolite's contention that Hegel's effort to "think pure life through"[11] is an essentially paradoxical venture. The

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[9]Hyppolite, "Note sûr la Preface de la 'Phénoménologie de l'esprit'...". p. 335.

[10]Hyppolite, "The Concept of Existence in the Hegelian Phenomenology". Studies on Marx and Hegel, tr. John O'Neill, (New York: Basic Books), 1969; Hyppolite claims, "...there is little doubt that in general Kierkegaard is right against Hegel, and it is not our purpose here to enter a defense of the Hegelian system against Kierkegaard's attack. What interests us is to reveal in Hegel, as we find him in his early works and in the Phenomenology, a philosopher much closer to Kierkegaard than might seem credible. This concrete and existential character of Hegel's early works has been admirably demonstrated by Jean Wahl in his work on The Unhappy Consciousness in Hegel.", pp. 22-23.

[11]Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, p. 147.

Hegelian concept which is supposed to grasp the unity of thought and being is not undertaken in a single moment; rather, the concept is itself a temporalized form of knowing, a fluid effort of interrelation which never comes to rest.

In the "Introduction" to the Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology, Hyppolite traces Hegel's efforts throughout the Jena period to effect a conceptual synthesis between the being of man (self-consciousness) and the being of life. In the early theological writings, Hegel rejected the possibility of a rational movement between the finite perspective of the human knower and the infinity of the world. In the System der Sittlichkeit he argued that only a religious movement could effect this transition. And in his essay, Natural Law, he outlined the kind of transcendent intuition which alone could grasp the finite and the infinite within a single movement of consciousness. That Hegel later developed the Concept as a rational comprehension of the infinite is not, according to Hyppolite, a thorough break with his earlier claims concerning the limits of reason. Reason does not replace religion or intuition, but reason is expanded to include them. Hyppolite argues,

> If later, in the Logic, he managed to express in rational form an intuition of the very being of life or of the self, which he earlier declared could not be thought through, we should not conclude from this that nothing remains of the first intuition, the kernal from which his whole system developed.[12]

Even in the Logic, according to Hyppolite, the Concept is tied to the notion of infinity such that conceptual knowing must itself be a continuous process rather than a determinate act or set of acts. The telos of conceptual knowing is not the resolution of Becoming in and through an enhanced conception of Being, but, rather, the discovery that this enhanced conception of Being is nothing other than continuous Becoming. Being, no longer conceived as simple

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[12] Ibid.

identity, is identity-in-difference, or, equivalently, self-relatedness through time. Difference is not 'contained' in identity as if some spatial relation adhered between the two: identity is now defined as flux, the perpetual "disquiet" of the self. Commenting in a later article on the Preface to the Phenomenology, Hyppolite writes, "l'Absolu...est toujours instable et inquiet, qu'en lui la tendance, l'élan n'ont pas disparu derrière le resultat acquis...l'Absolu est toujours en instance d'altération, il est toujours un départ, une aventure..."[13]

To 'think pure life through' presupposes a prior identity of consciousness and life, a kind of 'thought' which, encompassing the whole of the world, would be identical to the life which it seeks. This kind of vital knowledge, according to Hyppolite, is both a knowledge of time and a temporalized form of knowing. In the kind of knowing which characterized the Understanding, the object escapes any determination which thinking sets for it; Conceptual knowing, on the other hand, is the kind of thinking which makes this very escape into its proper theme. The identification of the being of man and the being of life is made possible, not through an appeal to a common ground, but to a common groundlessness: "this being of life is not substance but rather the disquiet of the self".[14]

The disquiet of the self is the disquiet of time, of transience, of permanent alteration. To 'know' the disquiet of the self is not an act performed in a determinate moment or set of moments; knowing which seeks to fix its object, rescue it from time, is knowing which destroys that which it seeks. Rather than a rigid determination of the real, the Concept is an empathetic

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[13]Hyppolite, "Note sur la Preface de la 'Phénoménologie...'...", p. 333.

[14]Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure..., p. 149.

move toward the world, an effort at mutual disclosure which proceeds through an attunement to a common and inevitable incompleteness, a common transience, the impossibility of repose. One could argue that the disquiet of temporal life is the middle term which joins the being of the self and the being of life, but such a formulation neglects the essential point that the self is disquieted precisely in virtue of its exclusion from the totality of life: the "is" which traverses the being of man and the being of life is a copula which both distinguishes and binds.

As a limited perspective, the self is restrained within its particularity, even as its desire seeks to match the world and overcome the boundaries of embodiment. Hyppolite's self is caught in the paradox of determinate freedom: "This life is disquiet, the disquiet of the self which has lost itself and finds itself again in its alterity. Yet the self never coincides with itself, for it is always other in order to be itself."[15]

No longer convinced of the coincidence of subject and substance, Hyppolite here avows their infinite non-coincidence, and affirms this non-coincidence (of each to the other, and each to itself) as their common situation. The absolute mediation of the self and its alterity is no longer conceived as a feasible project, and Hyppolite confirms that alterity always exceeds the self, as the self exceeds alterity. Hyppolite understands this non-coincidence or dis-quiet at the heart of being as implicit in Hegel's notion of the infinite, the priority of Becoming over Being, i.e. the reconceptualization of Being as a movement of Becoming. In this sense, the Concept must be understood as a gradual achievement of a singular life, for the task of nearing the 'thought of the being of life' is synonymous with the development of autonomy, the return from Otherness.

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[15] Ibid., p. 150.

The mediation of self and world is gradually pursued through the discovery of the essential relationship of consciousness and life in another individual. This synthesis of particular and universal proceeds through the action of mutual recognition, entering and receiving the lives of others. The project of this synthesis, according to the Preface of the Phenomenology, is to find oneself at home in another.[16] To be lost and recovered in simultaneity is, according to the early Hegel, the end goal of love in which "life senses life."[17] And yet love is not simply the desire for another life, but for the specific other, a life which, through its own process of becoming, its own singular history, has become specific. The genuine specificity or irreducibility of the Other is the proper object of desire, for it is only in the recognition of and by a specific other that the infinite is discovered as embodied, as singular and specific.

Reciprocal desire appears to approach this thought of the infinite. Hence, Hyppolite confirms the identity of desire and Conceptual thinking by claiming that desire is an "absolute impulse":[18]

> "...the concept is omnipotence; it is omnipotence only through manifesting itself and affirming itself in its other. It is the universal which appears in the soul of the particular and determines itself completely in it as the negation of the negation, or as genuine specificity. Or, in yet other words, it is love, which presupposes duality so as continually to surpass it...the concept is nothing else than the self which remains itself in

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[16]Hegel, Vorrede, Phänomenologie des Geistes, #25: "Das Geistige allein ist das Wirkliche..(das) in dieser Bestimmtheit oder seinem Aussersichsein in sich selbst Bleibende..."

[17]Hegel, "Love" in Early Theological Writings, tr. T.M. Knox, p. 305.

[18]Hyppolite, "The Human Situation in the Hegelian Phenomenology", Studies on Marx and Hegel, p. 164; cf. "The Concept of Existence in Hegelian Phenomenology", pp. 26-27.

> its alteration, the self which exists only in this self-becoming."[19]

The development of reciprocal desire is towards the ever-expanding autonomy of each partner. "Desire is conditioned by a necessary otherness",[20] and yet this otherness is surpassed every time that one self-consciousness discovers the Other not as a limit to freedom but as its condition. This constant transformation of the Other from a source of danger into a promise of liberation is effected through a transvaluation of the other's body. The self and Other do not observe each other, documenting the mental events which occur in the course of their transaction; they desire one another, for it is only through desire that the exteriority of the Other, the body, becomes itself expressive of freedom. In desire, the exteriority of the Other is suffused by and with the Other's freedom. Desire is the expressiveness of the body, freedom made manifest. The alterity of the Other is softened, if not overcome, as the body gives life to consciousness, as the body becomes the paradoxical being which maintains and expresses negation. It is in this sense that desire is the embodiment of freedom, and reciprocal desire initiates an infinite exchange.

The ontological project pursued by desire for Hyppolite takes its bearings within Hegel's own formulation, but strays from the presumption that the absolute can be discerned as a coincidence of the rational and the real. Turning the Hegel of the Logic against the Hegel of the Phenomenology, Hyppolite continues to assert that desire seeks to discover itself as ontologically joined with its world, but qualifies this claim through asserting this ontological juncture as the being of time. Hyppolite maintains that "the

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[19]Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure..., p. 147.

[20]Ibid., p. 162.

most profound aim of desire is to find itself as a being",[21] but this is not a determinate or positive being, but a being internally negated, a temporalized and paradoxical being. Hyppolite steeps himself in Hegel's own contentions in the Logic: "If we ordinarily say of Spirit that it is, that it has a being, that it is a thing, a specific entity, we do not thereby mean that we can see it or hold it or stumble against it. But we do make such statements."[22] For Hyppolite, the kind of being which informs both consciousness and life in general, and which characterizes desire, "is not merely a positive reality, a Dasein which disappears and dies absolutely, crushed by what exceeds it and remains external to it; it also is that which at the heart of this positive reality negates itself and maintains itself in that negation."[23]

Self-surpassing or internal negation requires a reciprocal relation of recognition between selves. The aim of desire, according to Hyppolite, "the vocation of man - to find himself in being, to make himself be," is an aim "realized only in the relation between self-consciousnesses."[24] Recognition conditions the 'recovery' of the self from alterity, and thus facilitates the project of autonomy. The more fully recovered this self, the more encompassing of all reality it proves to be, for 'recovery' is not retreat, but expansion, an enhancement of empathy, the positing and discovery of relations in which it has all along, if only tacitly, been enmeshed.

Hyppolite's claim that the experience of desire gives us phenomenological access to the Concept allows us to formulate a view of desire as an infinite

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[21]Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure..., p. 163.

[22]Ibid., p. 167.

[23]Ibid., p. 166.

process which does not reach a teleological closure. His view does not require that we transcend the perspective of lived temporality, nor does it suggest some final satisfaction for desire in a normative account of history and action. Hyppolite's formulation allows us, rather, to examine the ceaseless process of self-generation, a temporal project which requires an Other, and which can be said only to end with death. Hyppolite thus aids in our task, namely, to discern the full implication of desire as a negating or transforming activity, one which both constitutes and reveals the self.

If Hyppolite's contribution is right, we can begin to view desire in greater detail as a two-fold structure of intentionality and reflexivity, an ambiguous project which creates and seeks itself through constant exchange. This ambiguous discovery of an alterity both reflexive and intentional constitutes the action of desire, the essence of self-consciousness. As Hyppolite claims, "(C)oncretely, this is the very essence of man, 'who never is what he is', who always exceeds himself and is always beyond himself, who has a future, and who rejects all permanence except the permanence of his desire aware of itself as desire."[25] The experience of desire initiates our education into the Concept; the permanence of desire - the insurpassability of Otherness - is the lived experience of the infinite. Hence, Hyppolite makes phenomenological sense of Hegel's contentions not only that "self-consciousness is Desire in general"[26] but that "self-consciousness is the concept of infinity realizing itself in and by consciousness."[27]

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[24] Ibid., p. 167.

[25] Ibid., p. 166.

[26] Hegel, Phenomenology, #167.

[27] As quoted in Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure, p. 166.

By interpreting the absolute not as a closure to Hegel's system, but as its inevitable openness, Hyppolite counters the view of Hegel's Phenomenology as a movement toward a determinate telos. The being which Geist achieves is not a plenitude void of negativity, but an infinite movement between positive being and nothingness. In Hegel's original formulation, desire was conceived as that which posited and revealed both self and world as more than externally related positive beings. The being which commonly structured self and world was to be understood as an all-inclusive reflexivity, a second-order being which contained difference within itself. The effort to find an all-inclusive being which could at once preserve the integrity of its moments and reveal their essential interdependence would not be a Parmenidean mass for which change is simply phenomenal illusion. This being would itself contain the infinite, would have the infinite as a constitutive feature. And yet to speak this way is still to court a substantial model, for if being were a 'container' or a substance which either carried predicates within or bore them as so many attachments to its integument, such a being could not serve the purposes of Hegel's vision. In speaking this way, one substitutes a spatial model which assumes substance as a discrete and independent entity to which predicates are only arbitrarily related. To do justice to the dialectical or mutually constitutive relation of substance and predicate in Hegel's view, one must devise a model which accounts for the interchangeability of substance and attribute. The kind of being which 'contains' the infinite is also, to extend the metaphor, contained by the infinite. Hence, the relation between substance and predicate is a double relation, one which, in this case, presents the infinite as an aspect of being and also presents being as an aspect of the infinite. The usual hierarchy between substance and predicate is subverted through a constant exchange of roles. Hence, this second-order being is the

infinite in this speculative sense of "is". The Concept, that form of knowing and being which structures the being of the self and the being of the world, is time itself, infinite displacement, the movement of the world engendered constantly through difference as a permanent source of dissatisfaction.

The consequence of this view is that desire no longer strives after satisfaction, but endeavors to sustain itself as desire, "reject(ing) all permanence except the permanence of itself as desire." Only as dissatisfied desire is consciousness still alive and united with the being of life, the infinite altercation of self and not-self which sets and keeps the organic world in motion. The dissatisfaction of desire must be seen as a determinate dissatisfaction; it is a dissatisfaction with an intentionality. It is not a simple craving, the plight of Tantalus infinitely distanced from the object of desire. Desire's dissatisfaction is one that is discovered in the midst of life, as a consequence of abundance rather than of lack. Desire implies that human beings are always more than they can be at any given time, i.e. that self-consciousness is a structure at odds with itself, fundamentally paradoxical and thus incapable of ever coinciding with itself.

This non-coincidence of self-consciousness also implies that the object of desire is always partially undisclosed. The aims of desire are always two-fold; there is a determinate object (the intentional aim) and the project to achieve greater autonomy (the reflexive aim). In other words, desire is always after something other than the self, but is also always involved in a project of self-constitution. Because the aims of desire are two-fold, any effort to isolate the 'real' object of desire necessarily falls into deception. Any effort to subject to determinate thinking the object of desire turns out to be a truncated version of the truth. Thus the problem of desire is the problem of the paradoxical nature of self-consciousness, how to remain oneself

in the midst of alterity. If one resolves the aims of desire into the aims of a singular identity to discover and reflect itself, one dispenses with the realm of alterity. And if one, along the lines of Aristotle, claims that it is in the nature of determinate objects to elicit desire, one neglects the project of identity informing desire. Hence, any effort to determine the true aim of desire is necessarily deceptive. Desire, then, can be said always to operate under the necessity of partial deception; in Hyppolite's words, "desire is in essence other than it immediately appears to be."[28]

We may add, desire always implies more than what appears as the object of desire; in effect, there are no simple desires; its projects are always both manifest and hidden. Desire is never simply desire for a particular project or other, but is fundamentally a project of self-relatedness as well. And neither is desire a wholly solipsistic affair, relating to determinate objects only as occasions to relate to itself; desire is compelled to become committed to some determinate end in order to appear - gain reality - in life. Desire carries with it a necessary opacity and depth, for it can never become transparent to itself without first forfeiting itself as desire. Desire is the opacity of the self and its world - an opacity pursued but which is never wholly overcome.

Because desire is in part a desire for self-reflection, and because desire also seeks to sustain itself as desire, it is necessary to understand self-reflection as a form of desire, and desire as a cognitive effort to thematize identity. Desire and reflection are not mutually exclusive terms, for reflection forms one of the intentional aims of desire, and desire itself may be understood as the ambiguous project of life and reflection. To comprehend the conditions of thought, to become a fully existing being through

[28] Ibid., p. 160-161.

the reflection on the life which has produced the reflecting posture, this is the highest aim of the Phenomenology, the all-inclusive aim of desire. Deception emerges as a function of perspective, of the insurpassable fact that human consciousness can never fully grasp the conditions of its own emergence; in the act of 'grasping', that consciousness is also in the process of becoming.

This non-coincidence of life and thought is not, for Hyppolite, cause for despair. The project of attaining to capable identity is not to be forfeited only because there is no guarantee of its success. The project is not necessitated by any natural or teleological principle, nor does it operate with the hope of success; in fact, it is both arbitrary and doomed to failure. The striving to know oneself, to think the conditions of one's own life, is a function of the desire to be free. Only by assimilating otherness can human consciousness escape the vulnerability of merely positive being. The desire to reflect is thus originally indebted to a desire to establish oneself as a negating being, that which is both ensconsed and eluded in finite being.

If there is a telos to the movement of desire, an end and motivating force, it can be understood only as death. As a merely positive being, human life would have no capacity to influence its surroundings; it would be merely itself, relationless, brute. As a single body, this life would appear as a positive being which only exists and perishes and which, insofar as it exists has a positive existence, and, as dead, is an indeterminate negation. If human life is construed in terms of positive being devoid of negation, human life would itself be negated irrevocably by death. But desire is a negative principle which emerges as constitutive of finite life, as a principle of infinite altercation which strives to overcome positive being through revealing the place of the self within a network of internal relations. Paradoxically, desire enlivens the body with negation; it proclaims the body as more than

merely positive being, that is, as an expressive or transcendent project. In these terms, desire is the effort to escape the vulnerability and meaninglessness of positive being through making the finite body into an expression of negation, i.e. of freedom and the power to create. Desire seeks to escape the verdict of death by preempting its power - the power of the negative.

Although the above sketch is our reading of the implications of Hyppolite's view, it seems clear that Hyppolite does accept the above view of desire and death. In "The Concept of Existence in the Hegelian Phenomenology", he claims that "the negation of every mode of diremption is always revived in the negative principle of desire. It is what moves desire..."[29] In a following discussion, he claims that it is the principle of death in life which performs this role:

> The fundamental role of death in annihilating the particular form of life becomes the principle of self-consciousness that drives it to transcend every diremption and its characteristic being-in-the-world, once this being-in-the-world is its own.[30]

We may safely conclude that the negative character of desire draws from a more fundamental principle of negation which governs human life; human life ends in negation, yet this negation operates throughout life as an active and pervasive structure. Desire negates determinate being again and again, and, hence, is itself a quieted version of death, the ultimate negation of determinate being. Desire evinces the power which human life has over death precisely by participating in the power of death. Human life is not robbed of its meaning through death, for human life is, as desire, always already partially beyond

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[29]Hyppolite, "The Concept of Existence in the Hegelian Phenomenology", p. 27.

[30]Ibid., p. 28.

determinate life. Through the gradual appropriation of negation - the cultivation of self-reflection and autonomy - human being tacitly struggles against its own ultimate negation.

> Man cannot exist except through the negativity of death which he takes upon himself in order to make of it an act of transcendance or supercession of every limited situation.[31]

Self-consciousness exists partially in rancor against determinate life, and views its assimilation of death as the promise of freedom. Hyppolite speculates that, "the self-consciousness of life is characterized in some way by the thought of death."[32] This suggestive phrase might be made more specific if we understand desire as "the thought of death", a thought sustained and pursued through the development of autonomy. As desire, the body manifests itself as more than positive being, as escaping the verdict of death's negation. Insofar as desire is striving to become coextensive with life, the identity of the self is extended beyond the positive locus of the body, through successive encounters with domains of alterity. In desire, the self no longer resides within the confines of positive being, internal to the body, enclosed, but <u>becomes</u> the relations it pursues, instates itself in the world which conditions and transcends its own finitude.

One might conclude, following Freud in <u>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</u>, that all desire is in some sense inspired by a fundamental striving toward death, i.e. the desire to die. Although this claim is plausible in the above context, it is important to note that Hegel's (and Hyppolite's) Christianity would seem to imply that the death to which consciousness aspires is itself a fuller notion of life. Hegel is characteristically ambiguous on this point, but his claim in the <u>Phenomenology</u> that individuality finds its proper expression in

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[31] <u>Ibid</u>.

[32] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 25.

Geist would seem to imply that death is not an absolute negation, but a determinate one which establishes the boundaries of a new beginning. The 'trembling' of the bondsman highlights a different aspect of Hegel's thought on death, however, and aligns him more closely with the fear and trembling of Kierkegaard. Hyppolite, following Kojeve and Jean Wahl, restricts himself to the interpretation of death offered in the section on lord and bondsman. He takes seriously the facticity of the body, finitude as the condition of a limited perspective, corporeality as a guarantor of death. The vision of a new life, a life beyond death, remains purely conjectural in Hyppolite's view, but it is a conjecture which holds sway in human life. Human desire envisions a life beyond death which it nevertheless cannot inhabit; for Hyppolite, desire affirms itself as an impossible project, a project whose fulfillment must remain imaginary - a theme elaborated by Sartre throughout his career. In Hyppolite's view, that one cannot sustain life after death implies that death must be sustained in life: self-consciousness exists only "through refusing to be". And yet, "this refusal to be must appear in being; it must manifest itself in some way."[33] Freedom must make itself known in order to be, posit itself in existence and gain reality through the acknowledgement of others. And yet this desire to be a pure freedom is vanquished ultimately by the irreducible facticity of death, a facticity that makes itself known throughout life as the striving of a limited being to supercede its limits:

> Consciousness of life is, of course, no longer a naive life. It is the knowledge of the Whole of Life, as the negation of all its particular forms, the knowledge of true life, but it is simultaneously the knowledge of the absence of this 'true life'. Thus in becoming conscious of life man exists on the margin of naive and determined life. His desire aspires to a liberty that

[33] Genesis and Structure..., p. 167.

> is not open to a particular modality; and all his efforts to conceive himself in liberty result only in failure.[34]

Both Kojève and Hyppolite accept the formulation that human beings are what they are not and are not what they are. For Kojève, this internal dissonance of the self implies a dualistic ontology which severs human beings into a natural and social dimension; the work of negation is confined to the task of transforming the natural into the social, i.e. a process of gradual humanization. For Hyppolite, the paradoxical character of human being suggests that freedom escapes each of the forms of determination to which it gives rise, and that this constant displacement of the self from itself signifies that non-coincidence, time itself, is the monistic absolute which characterizes human and natural ontologies alike. In effect, Hyppolite is able to extend Hegel's doctrine of negation to include the difference between nature and humanity as a constitutive or internal difference. Kojève's anthropocentric reading of Hegel restricts negation to a creative power which humans exhibit in the face of external realities; for Kojève, negation is an action of human origin which is applied externally to the realm of the non-human. Hyppolite returns to Hegel's original formulation in order to make modern sense of negation, not merely as action, but as constitutive of external reality as well. For Hyppolite, negation resides already in the objects which human consciousness encounters; for Kojève, negation is the sole property of an active and transforming human consciousness.

Desire takes on very different ontological implications in these views, for while Kojève would read desire as a human effort to transform that which appears initially alien and hostile to the human will, Hyppolite views desire as revealing the ontological place of human beings in a temporal movement which

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[34]Hyppolite, "The Concept of Existence...", p. 24.

embraces the whole of life, which is, in effect, prior to human reality, more fundamental, yet essentially constitutive of human reality as well. While both positions view desire as implicating human beings as paradoxical natures, as determinate freedoms which cannot simultaneously be both determinate and free, the one infers from this non-coincidence a dualistic world, and the other establishes duality (inner-negation) as a monistic principle.

Hyppolite wrote of Kojève that "la double ontologie que reclamait Kojève, c'est Sartre qui la realisé dans L'Être et le Néant".[35] And Sartre's own formulations of human beings as a paradoxical unity of in-itself and for-itself appear to echo almost verbatim the phrasing of Kojève: "We have to deal with human reality as a being which is what it is not and which is not what it is."[36] It is less clear, however, that Sartre follows Kojève in consistently adopting a dualistic ontology. Sartre occasionally refers to consciousness as internally related to its world, i.e. as a consciousness 'of' the world in which both consciousness and world are a unity. Other times he suggests that consciousness is a "rift" in being, a contingency which can have no necessary relation to that to which it refers. It is only when Sartre accepts consciousness as embodied that he relinquishes the vocabulary of dualism for a language of intentionality which returns him in his own terms to Hegel's recognition that the sensuousness of desire becomes its access to the sensuousness of the world. We turn to Sartre in order to trace the gradual embodiment of consciousness, the phenomenological fulfillment of Hegel's early contention that desire both constitutes and reveals the relations which bind

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[35]Hyppolite, "La 'Phenoménologie' de Hegel et la pensée francais contemporaire", p. 240.

[36]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 58.

the self with its world. If Hegel's doctrine is to become concrete, human desire must be shown not merely to signify abstract ontological bonds, but must be viewed as a negating activity which signifies an embodied and historically situated self.

Hyppolite's contribution to Hegelian reflections on desire consists mainly in his disavowal of the possibility of final satisfaction, and his understanding of the relentlessness of desire as a function of human temporality. The implicit struggle of desire to discover or establish an ontological unity with otherness, to recast apparently external relations as internal ones, is perpetually thwarted by a temporal movement which undercuts any temporary achievement of unity. In every case, satisfaction is tempered by the knowledge of impending time which is grasped phenomenologically as a relentless demand that the self renew its satisfaction in the present. The achievements of desire are consummations which must invariably give way to renewed desire; satisfaction is thus always provisional and never final or definitive. Hyppolite thus transforms Hegel's journeying subject into a Faustian character who, in Goethe's words, is forever "blundering with desire towards fruition, and in fruition pining for desire."[37]

Kojève's distinction between history and temporality allows him to entertain a true and final satisfaction for desire, for history in his view is less subject to time than it is its organizing principle; indeed, for Kojève, time only arises as a feature of historical acts or projects, but otherwise exerts no power. One may thus conclude that Kojève's historical acts are historical in a deeply paradoxical sense, for they transcend time in the moment that they consecrate time. History, as the progressive revelation of universal

[37]Faust Part I, tr. Philip Wayne (Baltimore: Penguin Classics), p. 146.

values, is a normative construal of time, a model of unity imposed upon an existential reality of perpetual disunity. In this sense, Kojève's view of history is the denial of existential time, a denial which allows him to consider a definitive satisfaction to desire.

We may conclude from this discussion that desire can achieve satisfaction only through the temporary denial of time, i.e. through the imagined or conjectured state of presence for which time discriminations are irrelevant. The ideal of self-sufficiency which haunts post-Hegelian thinking is a nostalgia for a life freed of the exigencies of temporality - one which could escape a fate of continual self-estrangement and then death. Kojève essays to recast satisfaction in the secular terms of historical action, while Hyppolite eschews the possibility of self-sufficiency, although he qualifies this disavowal by contending that the 'life beyond death' which haunts the project of desire remains a meaningful conjecture, an imaginary hope which gives meaning to the actual strivings of finite human beings.

Sartre concurs with Hyppolite on this point: human desire is motivated and structured by a projected unity with the world which must remain a pure projection, an imaginary dream. For Sartre, desire labors under imaginary ideals which give meaning to desire even as they elude desire's reach. The effort at anthropogenesis elaborated upon by Kojève finds existential transcription in the Sartrian contention that all human desire is a function of the desire to become God. But for Sartre, this desire is bound to fail. Kojève, on the other hand, thought that god-like men were possible; he conceived historical agents like Napoleon and Hegel as capable of an anthropogenetic creation of history through eliciting the pervasive recognition of others. For Sartre, however, anthropogenetic desires can only be realized in an <u>imaginary</u> mode. In other words, insofar as we deem certain individuals

to be god-like men, we have transfigured them into imaginary characters. Indeed, whenever we conceive of a satisfaction for desire, we do so only through participating in the domain of the imaginary. Sartre's contention throughout his career is that satisfaction can be achieved only through the imaginary construction of worlds, for it is only in the imaginary that a timeless presence can be entertained, a transfigured temporality which relieves us provisionally from the exigencies of perpetual transience and self-estrangement.

We will not argue that Sartre's doctrine of desire is solely derivative from Hegel and his French commentators, nor will we attempt to prove that Sartre self-consciously sought to extend the tradition we have been following here. However, we can see that Sartre's dualism of in-itself and for-itself is Hegel's logic in modern dissolution,[38] and that his assertion of the internal non-coincidence of human beings reflects both the phraseology and meaning of Hegel's French explicateurs. Sartre's contention in Being and Nothingness that "man is the desire to be"[39] echoes Hyppolite's earlier claim that "the vocation of man (is) to make himself be...We should recall that this being is...the being of desire."[40] Rather than assert a relation of influence between authors - although one might well be found - we restrict ourselves to a consideration of how the ideal of an absolute synthesis of self and world is taken up by Sartre in his understanding of desire. Accordingly, we will examine once again the role and extent of negation as the principle of desire,

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[38]See Klaus Hartmann, Sartre's Ontology: A Study of Being and Nothingness in the Light of Hegel's Logic, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 1966.

[39]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 565.

[40]Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure..., p. 167.

and the paradox of determinate freedom which characterizes the corporeal pursuit of the absolute. Extending the rift between substance and subject, Sartre can be seen to enhance the powers of the negative - desire comes to be seen as a choice, as a judgement, and as a project of transfiguration. Desire is always and only resolved in the imaginary, a Sartrian truth which conditions the various projects of desire throughout mundane life, in sexuality, and in the creation of literary works.

Sartre's ontological dualism of for-itself and in-itself can be seen as a reformulation of the paradox of determinate freedom, the perpetual self-estrangement of the subject which makes the ideal of self-sufficiency or final satisfaction into an impossibility. "Desire is the being of human reality"[41] for Sartre, but it is desire governed by possibilities rather than actualities. The desire to "be" which characterizes the impossible project of the for-itself, is the desire to become the foundation of its own being - anthropogenetic desire. Yet the factic aspect of existence, particularly the body, cannot be self-created; it is simply given and, in Sartre's view, this givenness or externality is adverse to the project of the for-itself; it is from the start the guarantor of the for-itself's failure. The synthesis of for-itself and in-itself which forms the projected goal of desire is a hypothetical unity of self and world. The synthesis is an impossibility or, rather, a permanent possibility which can never be actualized.

This permanent possibility is, in Sartre's theory of imagination and desire, what gives rise to the special character of imaginary works for Sartre: the impossibility of realizing the imaginary in the real world points to a solution which is second best, namely, the imaginative realization of this

[41]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 575.

possibility in the world of the text. Imaginary works are so many 'noble lies' which allow for the creation of transfigured worlds which remain the elusive dream of desire. Imaginary works, like images, are "essentially nothingness",[42] but they are a nothingness with a determinate goal: they manifest the desire to be through creating an embodiment - the text - which reflects the self which is its author. The impossibility of realizing the imaginary gives rise, dialectically, to the de-realization of the world in the literary text. The imaginary provides a tentative satisfaction for desire because it effects a momentary denial of the factic; it creates its own temporality, it renders fluid the facticity of matter; it infuses the contingent with the authorship of human will.

The Hegelian framework allowed us to see the ontological significance of desire as a two-fold structure, i.e. as the movement of an identity comported outside itself in order to be itself. This comportment toward the (apparently) external domain is anolagous to Sartre's view of intentionality. The intentionality of desire characterizes the directionality of consciousness which seeks to know the world outside itself. For Sartre, the world is forever external to consciousness, an exteriority which can never be assimilated. Because the world cannot be reclaimed as a constitutive aspect of consciousness, consciousness must set up another relation to the world; it must interpret the world, imaginatively transfigure the world. Desire becomes a way in which we impulsively situate ourselves in the world: it is the primary act, an act incessantly performed by which we define ourselves in situation. In effect, desire is the building of ourselves which we perform daily, and only rarely under the aegis of reflective thought.

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[42]Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 18.

The cognitive component of desire - that which constitutes it as a reflexive and interpretive act of consciousness - is understood by the Sartre of Being and Nothingness as pre-reflective choice. As such, it is both an epistemological and ontological relation. As non-positional awareness, desire is an epistemological relation which encompasses more than purely reflective kinds of judgements; in effect, desire forms the intentional structure of all emotional judgements - a theme to be addressed later. As an "upsurge" of consciousness, desire reveals human being as a self-determining or choosing being, a contingency which must give itself determinate form.

For Sartre, then, desire is both a relation to exteriority and a self-relation, but these two relations are not mediated in a dialectical unity. Rather, consciousness is in exile from its world, and only knows itself in and through its exclusion from the world. Accordingly, the world only bends to human will in the imaginary mode. Confronted with the impossibility of finding itself as a being, Sartre's existential subject is one who thematizes this very impossibility, who makes it his mediation, and ultimately derives from it a literary form. The desire to be is constitutive of human life, and yet the impossibility of ever being in a definitive sense confronts it as an ontological necessity; caught in the paradox of determinate freedom - of being either free or determinate but never both at once - human beings are forced to desire the impossible. And impossibility guarantees the continued life of desire, the paradoxical striving which distinguishes human beings definitively.

Desire can only effectively relieve human beings of the consciousness of their own negativity - whether that be their temporality or freedom or finitude - through magically instating a provisional presence. The incantation of presence is an imaginary venture which can only claim plausibility in an imaginary world and is, hence, still no final satisfaction for desire. This

incantation can be a reciprocal creation as in the case of sexuality, or it can be a literary transfiguration of the negative, but it remains in every instance a struggle against difference which can never wholly be won. Desire thus reveals our ineluctable freedom in the face of our ontological exile, a freedom which necessarily attends the world but can never relinquish itself there. We can never wholly lose ourselves, but neither can we achieve that ideal of anthropogenesis which would make us pure freedoms. Sartre's persistent claim seems to be that we interpret the world even as we live it, that all immediacy is tempered by ontological disjunction and some semblance of self-awareness. Even in the experiences in which we appear alien to ourselves, seized or overwhelmed, a pre-reflective strategy of choice is at work, a strategy which seeks to establish a determinate reality for the self so that it can be known, and, in being known, created.

We are in desire in the process of creating ourselves, and insofar as we are in that process, we are in desire. Desire is not simply sexual desire, nor is it the kind of focused wanting that usually goes by that name. It is the entirety of our spontaneous selves, the "outburst" which we are, the upsurge which draws us toward the world and which makes the world our object. As the world appears as a complex historical and biographical situation, desire becomes a central way in which we seek a social place for ourselves, a way of finding and refinding a tentative identity within the network of cultural norms.

The theme of desire can only be fully explored for Sartre in the context of a life whose 'choice of being' can be reconstructed and explained. For Sartre, biography is precisely such an inquiry. And insofar as Sartre contends that all desire finds an imaginary resolution, it makes sense to see him turn

again and again to those lives which have given imaginative forms to desire. Before we examine Sartre's appraisal of two of these lives, Genet and Flaubert, we must first recount the steps of this theory; desire and the imaginary, desire as a choice of being, desire and incantatory creation. In turning to biographical studies, Sartre implicitly asks a question with rhetorical consequences for his own life's work, namely, what is the desire to write? 'Why write?' is an extension of 'why give desire determinate form?' and, in the case of fiction writers, 'why give form to impossible worlds?' We asked at the outset, what makes desire possible? For Sartre, it is precisely the domain of the merely possible which makes desire; the conditions of desire are the non-actualities of our lives, the determinate absences of the past and the merely suggested and unexplored realms of the present.

Chapter Five: Sartre's Early Works: The Imaginary Pursuit of Being

> "A desire is never satisfied to the letter precisely because of the abyss that separates the imaginary from the real."
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> Sartre, The Psychology of the Imagination, p. 211

Sartre's early studies of the imagination include two works, L'imagination and L'imaginaire, which differ in style and purpose. The first of these, published in 1936, criticizes theories of imagination which fail to distinguish between imagination and perception and which posit the 'image' as a self-contained reality posing somewhere between consciousness and its object. In this treatise, Sartre follows the Husserlian program of phenomenology and calls for a reflexive analysis of imagination as a form of consciousness. Sartre here criticizes empiricist and intellectualist theories alike, and calls for an analysis of imagination based on experience, but not on the reduction of experience to sense data. An exercise in the epistemological debates concerning the proper approach to the imagination, this particular work of Sartre's does not address the larger question of the existential origins and meanings of imagining.

The second book, L'imaginaire, published in 1940, restates the thesis of the earlier tract, namely, that images ought to be understood as forms of intentional consciousness, but also makes some forays into the existential ground of imagining. Throughout this book, largely in the context of unsystematic asides, Sartre begins his speculations on the relationship between desire and the imaginary. Intentionality becomes in this context an essential structure not merely of perception and imagination, but also of feeling. Eschewing the claims of representational theories of knowledge, Sartre claims that all of these are intentional forms of consciousness, i.e. that they refer

to objects in the world and are not to be construed as impoverished perceptions or solipsistic enterprises. Indeed, Husserl's doctrine of intentionality signified for Sartre the end to solipsistic idealism in the tradition of modern epistemology.[1]

Sartre's extension and reformulation of Husserl's view of intentionality entails a shift from an epistemological to an existential perspective. Intentionality for the Sartre of the 30's came to signify not merely the various ways in which we stand in knowing relations to things, but also an essential structure of the being of human life. The directionality of consciousness, its comportment toward things outside itself, comes to signify the ontological situation of human beings as a 'spontaneity' and 'upsurge'. As intentional beings, it is not merely our knowledge which is of the world, but our essential passion as well, our desire to be enthralled with the world, to be 'of' the world. Intentionality came to signify human access to the world, the end to theories of consciousness and subjectivity which closed them off from the world, and forced them to reside behind the dense screen of representation.

Sartre discovered the possibility of a non-solipsistic view of consciousness in Husserl's Ideas.[2] Against a background of psychologistic theories of perception and knowledge, Husserl appeared to Sartre as the first philosopher successfully to avoid the "illusion of immanence" - the malaise of "digestive philosophy" - which understood objects of perception as so many contents of consciousness, fabricated and entertained with the spatial confines

[1]Sartre makes this argument in a short article published in 1939 entitled, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology", tr. Joseph Fell, Journal for the British Society for Phenomenology, Vol. I, #2, May, 1970.

[2]See Sartre, Imagination: A Psychological Critique (L'imagination), tr. Forest Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1972, chapter IX, "The Phenomenology of Husserl" for Sartre's early understanding of the Ideas as laying the framework for a non-solipsistic psychology.

of the mind.[3] Husserl's view of intentional consciousness, claiming that all consciousness is consciousness of an object, affirmed the capacity of consciousness to reach outside itself and gain knowledge of the world which was not simply an elaboration of the self.

One might suspect that Sartre fashions himself a realist, yet he consistently eschews the category, arguing instead that neither consciousness nor the world is primary, but that both "are given in one stroke: essentially external to consciousness, the world is nevertheless essentially relative to consciousness."[4] The world does not unilaterally impress itself on consciousness, as if consciousness were a tabula rasa to be formed at will by the contingencies of the world; nor does consciousness create the world as a particular representation. Consciousness reveals the world through determinate intentional relations; it presents the world through specific modes without ever denying the essential externality of the world. Although the world never makes itself known outside of an intentional act, the noematic pole of experience - the object pole - is in itself irreducible; every intentional act, in virtue of being directed toward a noematic correlate, affirms the independence and externality of consciousness and its world. In Sartre's early essay on intentionality, he affirms the difference between consciousness and world as an external relation, but insists that this very externality is what binds the two indissolubly. The externality of this relation assures a non-solipsistic encounter with the world: "You see this tree, to be sure. But you see it just where it is: at the side of the road, in the midst of the

[3]Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology", p. 4.

[4]Ibid.

dust, alone and writhing in the heat, eight miles from the Mediterranean coast. It could not enter into your consciousness for it is not of the same nature as consciousness."[5]

Consciousness, then, does not apprehend the world in virtue of a common identity with the world, except insofar as consciousness and world represent noetic and noematic poles which are structurally isomorphic. This structural isomorphism, however, does not refute the ontological distinctness of both poles: one intends the world in the mode of fearing, imagining, desiring, yet the world cannot intend consciousness in the mode of fearing or desiring, and neither can consciousness successfully enclose itself in its objectness without first denying itself as consciousness - the denying of which would, in effect, affirm itself as consciousness, the power to negate. Consciousness eludes the world even as the world - and its own self-elision - remain its proper and necessary theme. Consciousness, for the Sartre of "Intentionality..." as well as The Transcendence of the Ego, is a translucent revelation of the world, not a passive medium, but an active presentation, which moves toward the world as a nothingness driven to disclose. The ontological difference between consciousness and world is not a difference between kinds of objects; consciousness is not an object, but, rather, the possibility of the presentation of objects. Consciousness confronts the world as a non-actuality actively in pursuit of the actual; the ontological difference between consciousness and world is the difference between nothingness and being: "consciousness (is) an irreducible fact which no physical image can account for except perhaps the quick, obscure image of a burst...I can no more lose myself in the tree than it can dissolve itself in me. I'm beyond it; it's beyond me."[6]

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[5]Ibid., p. 4.

[6]Ibid., p. 5.

The notion of intentionality, as appropriated by the early Sartre, not only was viewed as a liberation from idealism, but also a vindication of the cognitive function of a variety of modes of consciousness apart from representational consciousness: "...pure 'representation' is only one of the possible forms of my consciousness 'of' this tree; I can also love it, fear it, hate it...hating another is just a way of bursting forth toward him..."[7] Emotions are various forms of presentation, kinds of intentionalities which, according to Sartre, are "ways of apprhending the world."[8]

In The Emotions and in the article on intentionality, desire is referred to as a possible intentional relation, one among many affective presentations of the world; in the Psychology of the Imagination desire begins to take on a privileged status as a form of intentionality which informs all other emotional forms of presentation. The discussion of desire in the Psychology of Imagination, although unsystematic and largely suggestive, begins to elucidate desire as coextensive with consciousness itself. This text suggests that desire is coextensive with intentionality, and, moreover, that intentional relations - relations of desire - are not merely cognitive in the sense of presentifying acts of consciousness, but signify the ontological status of human beings as the desire to be.

Before establishing desire as coextensive with intentional consciousness generally, we turn to the Psychology of Imagination and also The Emotions to evaluate certain inconsistent, even contradictory, features of Sartre's theory of intentionality. On the one hand, Sartre claims that intentionality guarantees that emotions are actually 'about' something outside of the self:

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[7]Ibid., p. 5.

[8]Sartre, The Emotions: Outline of a Theory, p. 52.

"the desirable moves the desiring."[9] On the other hand, emotions are considered to be a 'degraded' or magical form of consciousness, an apprehension of the world which is essentially imaginary, a flight. Similarly, desire is seen to be a response to the desirable, an "apprehension" and "discovery" of the other, and yet it is also seen to be an imaginary pursuit which must remain a mere "incantation" which can never reach its object except through an imaginary construction. An ambiguity, or perhaps a paradox, appears to afflict Sartre's discussion of the intentionality of affective consciousness, for it would seem impossible that desire, for instance, be at once a revelation of the world and an imaginary degradation of the world. Our procedure here, however, will be to approach this paradox with generosity. Where paradox characterizes all human activity, one must exercise caution in making charges of contradiction, for contradiction may not necessarily indicate the exclusive presence of falsehood, but may indicate that truth never appears unfettered of its opposite.

Sartre's ambiguous relation to Husserl gives us a context for understanding the paradoxical character of his view. Husserl's theory of intentionality was criticized by Sartre for a number of reasons, most notably for the postulation of a transcendental ego which exists prior to its intentional relations. In the Transcendence of the Ego Sartre argued that such a postulation deprived the doctrine of intentionality of its most insightful contribution to epistemology, namely, the non-solipsistic character of consciousness. If consciousness is defined by intentionality, then it is the object of consciousness which unifies consciousness. According to Sartre, Husserl was mistaken to seek recourse to a Kantian "I" which supposedly

[9]The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 56.

provided for the possibility of synthesizing perceptions prior to any actual synthesis, for if consciousness is directional, and if it is truly "of" the object, consciousness will organize itself in the very process of thinking the object:

> It is possible that those believing 'two and two make four' to be the content of my representation may be obliged to appeal to a transcendental and subjective principle of unification, which will then be the I. But it is precisely Husserl who has no need of such a principle. The object is transcendent to the consciousnesses which grasp it, and it is in the object that the unity of the consciousnesses is found.[10]

In Sartre's view, the "ego is not the owner of consciousness; it is the object of consciousness."[11] Moreover, consciousness only discovers itself as an ego when it becomes reflected consciousness. In reflecting upon its own spontaneity, i.e. consciousness as unreflected, the ego is constituted; agency is discovered and posited only after the act. "Consciousness", Sartre claims, "is aware of itself insofar as it is consciousness of a transcendent object."[12] This 'I' which consciousness discovers reflectively is not a ready-made 'I', but an 'I' which is constituted through the acknowledgement rendered by a reflective consciousness which takes its own spontaneity as its object. For Sartre, "the ego is an object apprehended, but also an object constituted by reflective consciousness."[13]

Sartre's rejection of the transcendental ego entailed as well a radical re-interpretation of the Husserlian epoche. In Sartre's terms, it was not necessary to leave the natural attitude for a transcendental perspective by

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[10] Ibid., p. 138.

[11] Ibid., p. 97.

[12] Ibid., p. 40.

[13] Ibid., p. 80.

which the intentional acts of the empirical ego might be described; for Sartre, the shift between pre-reflective consciousness - consciousness which is non-positionally aware of itself as it is aware of an object - and reflective consciousness - the consciousness which takes stock of the spontaneous acts of unreflected consciousness as well as the pre-reflective awareness which accompanies those acts - was a shift which occurred within the natural attitude. We can, as it were, reflect upon the conditions of the emergence of consciousness from within everyday experience, according to Sartre:

> ...if the 'natural attitude' appears wholly as an effort made by consciousness to escape from itself by projecting itself into the me and becoming absorbed there, and if this effort is never completely rewarded, and if a simple act of reflection suffices in order for conscious spontaneity to tear itself abruptly away from the I and be given as independent, then the epoche is no longer a miracle, an intellectual method, an erudite procedure: it is an anxiety which is imposed on us and which we cannot avoid: it is both a pure event of transcendental origin and an ever possible accident of our daily life.[14] (Note: Sartre uses the Greek word for epoche in this passage.)

Consciousness, for Sartre, has no need to take distance from itself, precisely because consciousness - as a paradoxical unity of pre-reflective and reflective consciousness - is already at a permanent distance from itself. The ego which consciousness creates for itself is a pseudo-self, a construct imposed upon the spontaneity of pre-reflective intentionality, and which can never wholly account for it. When we come to understand desire as coextensive with spontaneous consciousness, with pre-reflective intentionality at large, we will see that the consequence of this non-coincidence of pre-reflective and reflective consciousness is that desire always outruns deliberate reflection, even as it is its own mode of pre-reflective consciousness.

The problem of imagination, i.e. imaginative consciousness, became a central problem for Sartre in his effort to expand Husserl's critique of

[14] Ibid., p. 103.

psychologism and representational theories of consciousness. Moreover, the imagination aided in the elucidation of the structure of spontaneous or pre-reflective consciousness. With regard to the critique of psychologism, it was clear that if images were to be construed as intentional, one must account for what an image was "about" or "of". And if an image were non-representational, how could it be construed as 'about' something in the world? With regard to the elucidation of pre-reflective consciousness, Sartre sought to show, not only that the imagination could be understood as a set of intentional relations, but that the imagination was a necessary constituent of all acts of knowing, indeed, that without the imagination the apprehension of objects in their reality would be impossible. In this sense, then, the imagination is a kind of spontaneous inquiry into the possible and hidden structures of reality, an epoche of the existing world which consciousness performs within mundane experience.

The positivist conflation of the real with the existent can be seen fairly clearly in Hume's theory of knowledge, a theory which Aron Gurwitsch takes as a clear example of what Husserlian intentionality seeks to refute.[15] Hume's theory of the imagination also presents us with the traditional empiricist problem of the imagination as a container of representational 'contents' which Sartre sought to refute. Hume claims that "our ideas of bodies are nothing but collections formed by the mind of the ideas of the several distinct sensible qualities, of which objects are composed, and which we find to have a constant union with each other."[16] In Hume's view, these sensible qualities are what

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[15]See Aron Gurwitsch "On the Intentionality of Consciousness", Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and its Interpretation, ed., Joseph J. Kockelmans, (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books), 1967.

[16]As quoted in Gurwitsch's "On the Intentionality of Consciousness", p. 120, from Hume's A Treatise on Human Nature, ed. T.H. Green and T.H. Grose (London, 1890), I, 505-6.

we directly know; they indicate an object outside of consciousness, but do this only obliquely. As direct impressions, they are actual evidence of what we know; they are, in effect, 'real' elements within consciousness. These sensible qualities are not merely representations of objects external to consciousness, but also exist as constitutive features of the object itself. Hence, Hume claims, "those very sensations, which enter by the eye or ear, are...the true objects...there is only a single existence, which I shall call indifferently object or perception...understanding by both of them what any common man means by a hat, or shoe, or stone, or any other impression conveyed to him by his senses."[17] If these sensible qualities are impressions in consciousness, and if sensible qualities are the object itself, it would seem to follow that the object of consciousness is in consciousness. 'Digestive philosophy' has its day.

Hume's identification of the real object of perception with the mass of sensible qualities or impressions presents a clear difficulty with respect to determining the continued identity of the object through time. If every time we confront an object we are in the presence of different sensible qualities - let us assume that the object turns, or we change our perspective - how are we to conclude with confidence that we are in the presence of the same object? How could we, on this view, derive a principle of identity from this theory by which we could adjudge a single object as itself even in its alteration? Hume's answer brings us closer to the problem of imagination which we are to consider in the context of Sartre. Because Hume is committed to the notion that only sensible qualities are real, he must view the organization of successive sense impressions into discrete objects as an act of faith, an imaginary construction which the mind poses for itself in order to make the

[17] Ibid., p. 491.

world more liveable. The identity of the object is, in effect, an achievement of the imagination. If only sensible qualities are real, and the criteria used to organize these qualities are not equally real, then the criteria are contingent, and according to Hume, contributions of the imagination which are to be construed as so many projects of pretense.

Husserl's doctrine of intentionality sought to refute this problem of identity as it emerged from psychologistic theories such as Hume's. For Husserl, the object is 'built up' through a series of intentional acts which are directed toward the noematic nucleus which is the object. These intentional acts can include those which simply present that which is immediately given, but they can also include those which present dimensions of the object which are spatially or temporally hidden. This is the main concern of Husserl's Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness, the work which perhaps affected Sartre's appropriation of intentionality more than any other.[18] When we encounter one side of an ashtray, we do not, according to Husserl, take this three-sided entity to be the entirety of the thing; we encounter it as an object which is partially hidden and partially revealed. In other worlds, in the very perception of the object there is an act of anticipation at work which posits the criterion for a completed understanding of the object. This kind of knowledgable anticipation is possible on the basis of the structural isomorphism that informs the noetic and noematic correlates of experience. The opaque aspects of the object are, although absent for consciousness, nevertheless meaningful to consciousness. The triumph of phenomenology in this regard has been to dignify the realm of the unexpressed

[18]Sartre refers throughout The Transcendence of the Ego to the Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness as portraying a non-egological theory of intentionality which he himself accepts. Cf. pp 39, 42, ft. 21.

and the absent as itself constitutive of meaningful reality. When we 'know' that the hidden side of the object is there, and something about what it must be like, we do not know it through an arbitrary act of imagination which turns out to be an epistemic lie which we regularly tell ourselves. The imaginary is structured, and itself structures any determinate act of knowing. The imagination allows us to understand the object in its completeness where perspectival or positivist thinking would fail. It is the move toward omniscience within any determinate act of consciousness.

The imagination is thus crucial for the constitution of objects in Husserl's view, for if we were deprived of the imagination, we would only know truncated objects, the mere surface of things. Hence, Husserl's emphasis on the method of imaginary variation is essential in order to form a complete phenomenological description of any considered object. Objects are not present to consciousness in their entirety precisely because consciousness is perspectival and can only encounter partial objects as present. The imagination, however, is consciousness' effort to surpass perspective, for the 'presence' of the image is not a partial reality, but a full reality in itself.[19] The essence of the object, for Husserl, is to be found in its ideal reality, and the ideal is indicated through an imaginary inquiry into the object which successively reveals the Abschattungen of the object which cannot come into perceptual consciousness in simultaneity.

Sartre's Psychology of the Imagination follows upon Husserl's attempt to distinguish between the real and the existent and, further, to vindicate the imagination as a bona fide form of consciousness with complex structures which intend objects. While Husserl sought to refute the kind of psychologism

[19]The Psychology of Imagination, p. 10: "the image...is complete at the very moment of its appearance."

indicated in Hume's assessment of consciousness through recourse to the structural isomorphism which adheres between an intending consciousness and its noematic fulfillment, Sartre clearly thought that a refutation was possible through an elucidation of the positional acts of consciousness. For Sartre, an image is not an object or a content, but a relation in which an object is either posited as not present or not existing, or not posited at all but presented in such a way that is neutral with regard to the question of existence.[20] For both Husserl and Sartre, the imagination is a set of intentional relations directed toward the world even if, in the case of Sartre, it is a relation which seeks the de-realization of that world. In such a case, the imagination is still intentional: it is directed toward the world in the mode of denial or de-realization.

Sartre's critique of Husserl's egological conception of intentionality has specific consequences for his appropriation of Husserl's view of the intentionality of imagination. For Husserl, the noetic pole of imaginary experience is said to intend certain kinds of objects and to contribute to the constitution of those objects. Hence, imaginary objects are to be understood as noematic correlates noetically intended as non-existing. They are not, for instance, the same as illusions or vague representations, but are highly structured objects of consciousness. The imaginary is not a poor representation of the real; it does not aspire after reality at all, but is its own set of objects intended explicitly as irreal. Sartre clearly appreciates this achievement of Husserlian phenomenology to circumscribe and dignify the domain of the imaginary as an autonomous and structured domain of consciousness, and yet his refutation of the noetic pole

[20] Ibid., p. 16.

of intentionality - a position which he inconsistently maintains - casts doubt on his ability to sustain this achievement within his own theory. Sartre's claim in the Transcendence of the Ego that consciousness is organized by the object of experience risks becoming a strongly behaviorist position unless it can offer an account of consciousness' contribution to its object. Sartre clearly wants to maintain that in the case of imaginary objects - images, in his terms - consciousness intends the image through one of four possible positional acts.[21] And yet, if we ask after an account of the structures of consciousness which permit for these four positional relations, we are left with no explanation if we accept the view of consciousness' intentionality as it is presented in these early works. If consciousness is a pure nothingness, a translucent phenomenon which merely lets the world appear, then we have no way to understand the modes of presentation which let the world appear as hateful, desirable, imaginary, etc. In addition, we have no way of understanding why different consciousnesses present the world differently, i.e. why the world might in an instance appear desirable to one consciousness, and disgusting to another. It cannot simply be the world which acts on consciousness in these various ways, but consciousness must arrange for its own experience, and Sartre's object-oriented version of intentionality cannot account for this apparent fact.

Sartre's interpretation of intentional consciousness as a translucent medium which lets the world appear leads him to the conclusion that emotional and imaginary consciousness, to the extent that they are opaque expressions of

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[21] Psychology of Imagination, p. 16: "This act...can posit the object as non-existent, or as absent, or as existing elsewhere; it can also 'neutralize' itself, that is, not posit its object as existing."

consciousness, are degraded forms of consciousness.[22] The image, as well as the emotion, are flights from the world, de-realizations of reality which signify a retraction from the world. This aspect of Sartre's theory, one which will be explored shortly in greater detail, appears as a direct consequence of his object-oriented view of intentionality, for the denial or transformation of 'given reality', i.e. of the world external to consciousness, is at once the congealing of consciousness as a translucent medium. While for Husserl the imaginary constitutes its own domain of objects, and provides a necessary function in the apprehension of given objects, for Sartre, the imaginary is a failure of translucent consciousness, rather than a constitutive dimension. By claiming that only that which is outside consciousness has reality, Sartre appears to forfeit the claim of Husserlian phenomenology which he cherishes most: "for Husserl and the phenomenologists our consciousness of things is by no means limited to knowledge of them. Knowing or 'pure representation' is only one of the possible forms of my consciousness of this tree: I can also love it, fear it, hate it, and this surpassing of consciousness by itself that is called 'intentionality' finds itself again in fear, hatred, and love."[23]

Sartre is clearly inconsistent on this point, for he occasionally claims that images are part of our apprehension of the "real" and yet maintains in other contexts that they are de-realizing phenomena, a flight from the real. This ambivalence which runs through Being and Nothingness appears to arise not merely as a function of his view of intentional consciousness but also in his

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[22]Sartre uses the expression "degradation" to refer to the state of consciousness in emotion throughout The Emotions: Outline of a Theory; in the Psychology of Imagination he implies that consciousness, as imaginary, is involved in a purposeful project of self-obfuscation, a belief in plenitude which turns out to be an "essential poverty". p. 11.

[23]Sartre, "Intentionality...", p. 5.

contradictory accounts of 'being'. At times Sartre appears to argue as if the realm of exteriority is the sole locus of reality, and consciousness is a translucent intentionality which can immediately reveal being-in-itself.[24] According to this view, the objects of consciousness are positive data of experience, and consciousness has no role in the constitution of their existence or meaning. Although an active movement toward objects, consciousness finds its consummate expression as a revelatory presentation, one which dissolves itself in letting the object appear. This belief in direct perception appears to rank Sartre among the positivists whom phenomenology has from its origin sought to refute. Reality is defined as a self-contained domain from which consciousness is excluded, yet consciousness can present or reveal this reality when it is enlightened consciousness, free it of imagery and emotion.

This consideration of Sartre's non-egological view of intentionality provides the context for understanding the problematic character of Sartre's view of imagination and, ultimately, of desire. Speaking in Husserlian terms, Sartre claims that images are objects which consciousness presents to itself; referring to positional acts of consciousness, Sartre appears to affirm consciousness as a structured activity which constitutes the objects of imaginary experience; speaking, however, from what seems to be a positivist perspective, Sartre does not view images as indicating a domain of the real, but, rather, as an escape from the real. The implication of this second perspective is that reality ought to be confined to existing, positive phenomena, the very conflation of reality and existence which Husserl sought to repudiate. Sartre's disloyalty to the Husserlian program, however, is not definitive, for he does claim that images are a kind of affective

[24] Ibid., p. 4: "there is nothing in (consciousness) but a movement of fleeing itself" and (p. 5), "everything is finally outside."

consciousness which is "also knowledge".[25] The discussion of affective consciousness which comes to inform Sartre's view of desire begins to take on its ambivalent character in the Psychology of Imagination; whether affectivity is an "apprehension" of the real or an indicator of solipsism is a question which haunts Sartre's discussion of the imaginary, the emotions, and desire. Insofar as Sartre comes to regard affectivity as a form of knowledge, he is forced to reconstruct his staunch repudiation of the noetic pole of experience. In the course of his theory the noetic is indeed reconstructed, but not along the epistemological lines set down by Husserl. The non-substantial being of the self, and of consciousness generally, is reformulated as the presence of choice at the origin of the self. The noetic pole of experience is re-asserted, and with it, the cognitive function of affectivity, through the existential conception of the self. Objects are not merely 'given' but 'constituted' as well. The pursuit of being which characterizes intentionality is not a pursuit unilaterally solicited by the world, but is motivated as well by the desire of a self in search of its own emergence. The world is understood in the context of a subjective project, and this project, an expression of the fundamental desire to be, is a passionate one; the efforts of knowledge to present the world are, thus, always impassioned efforts of the self to find itself in the situation it both discovers and creates.

This shift from an epistemological to an ontological model can be discerned within the Psychology of the Imagination, although it is not explicitly acknowledged in that text. Although the inquiry fashions itself as a project in descriptive phenomenology, it is also an inquiry into the

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[25] Psychology of the Imagination, p. 103.

existential origins of imagining. The image is, for Sartre, strangely self-sufficient, a pure presence which fills its own space completely. Images differ from perceptions in that the latter have "an infinite number of relationships to other things".[26] Sartre explains that "to exhaust the wealth of my perception would require infinite time." Images, on the other hand, give themselves in their entirety; they "suffer from an essential poverty"[27] insofar as they bear no relationship to the rest of the world of perception, and yet are a kind of pure presence which the world of perception cannot offer. The perceptual world is a landscape riddled with negation; the various relationships which hold between discrete phenomena are passively recorded and described by perceptual consciousness, and, qua perceptual, consciousness understands itself as inadequate to its world. In the image the complexity and alterity of the perceptual world is denied along with the sense of impotence which perceptual understanding endured in confrontation with that world. The image presents its object as absent or non-existent or indifferent to any existential status. This 'non-being' of the image, however, is the occasion of its fullness and presence. In effect, the absence which occasions the image is filled by the consciousness which attends it; the image is a "presence-within-absence", a way in which consciousness fills absences with itself. Images thus arise in virtue of the lacunae which exist in the perceptual world; they manifest a desire for presence, and are a way of interpreting absence: "...if the image of a dead loved one appears to me suddenly, I have no need of a 'reduction' to feel the ache in my heart: it is

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[26] Ibid., p. 11.

[27] Ibid.

part of the image, it is the direct consequence of the fact that the image presents its object as not existing."[28]

The perceptual world forbids the experience of consciousness as author of its world, for the perceptual world, in its facticity and complexity, outruns perceptual consciousness. The imagination does not succeed in creating facticity and external relations, but, rather, in positing its object as not existing, it gives free reign to consciousness to pose as author of its experience. In the imagination the factic or perceptual world is put out of play; in a sense, the imagination is a kind of bracketing procedure to be found in the ordinary experience of consciousness, and is a manifestation of that "anxiety" mentioned in The Transcendence of the Ego by which consciousness tears itself away from its ordinary involvement with the world. The world gains a kind of temporary presence to consciousness through the de-realization of the world which occurs through the image: "alive, appealing, and strong as an image is, it presents its object as not being."[29] This presence to consciousness which the image exhibits allows consciousness to experience itself as adequate to its object. The image, although intended as not existing, is nevertheless sustained through a belief that the image has some kind of existence. The need to believe in the existence of the image indicates the existential project at the origin of image-making: "the false and ambiguous condition we reach thereby only seems to bring out in greater relief what we have just said: that we seek in vain to create in ourselves the belief that the object really exists by means of our conduct towards it: we can

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[28] Ibid., p. 17.

[29] Ibid., p. 18.

pretend for a second, but we cannot destroy the immediate awareness of its nothingness."[30]

The imagination is thus a form of consciousness which embodies freedom, where freedom is defined as an overcoming of facticity. In perception, Sartre writes, the representative element is passive, but in the image, "this element, in what it has of the primary and incommunicable, is the product of a conscious activity, is shot through and through with a flow of creative will."[31] Imaginative consciousness thus affords the experience of radical autonomy in Sartrean terms; the de-realization of the world is the advent of consciousness: "it follows necessarily that the object as an image is never anything more than the consciousness one has of it."[32] If reality is identified with positive existence, the imagination is a flight from reality, a denial of the real; and yet if, following Husserl, we see absences as constitutive of the real, the imagination is that recourse to significant reality which perceptual life, according to Sartre, cannot attain. In the former case, consciousness falls into solipsism; in the latter, it gains access to hidden dimensions of the real. In either case, consciousness asserts itself at the limits of positive being, not merely constructing the world beyond its positive contours, but constructing itself as a creative activity.

As the existential origins of imagining are considered in greater detail in the section, "The Imaginary Life", and in Sartre's references to affectivity throughout Psychology of Imagination, we can see the increasing emphasis on a subject-oriented view of intentionality. Sartre's realism, which in

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 20.

[32] Ibid.

identifying the real with the existent appears as a form of positivism, is increasingly pre-empted by a view of intentionality for which the project of desire is central. Sartre explains that the image is a subjective project to fancy the self as undaunted will:

> "...the act of imagination is a magical one. It is an incantation destined to produce the object of one's thought, the thing one desires, in a manner that one can take possession of it."[33]

Paralleling the view of emotions as magical efforts to overcome adversity, Sartre's view of the image is that of a refusal of the factic world: "In that act there is always something of the imperious and the infantile, a refusal to take distance or difficulty into account."[34] Images are not given in adumbrations - unless, one purposefully intends the adumbrated version of an image, i.e. Peter in his home yesterday evening, rather than an image inclusive of more perspectives. Unlike perceptual objects, images are given all at once. In this sense, they are objects of desire which do not offer the usual resistance that objects of the perceptual world - external and, for the most part, appearing in truncated form - to the projects of consciousness. An image is an object which can be fully desired and fully appropriated: "these objects do not appear, as they do in perception, from a particular angle; they do not occur <u>from a point of view</u>; I attempt to bring them to birth as they are in themselves."[35] The tentative rise to omniscience which the imagination affords occasions the momentary satisfaction of desire: "what I want and what I get is just Peter".[36] The image thus represents a satisfaction for desire

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[33] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 177.

[34] <u>Ibid</u>.

[35] <u>Ibid</u>.

[36] <u>Ibid</u>.

predicated upon the de-realization of the factic world; hence, desire is an effort to overcome facticity, the limits of positive being, through the appropriation of that world. Desire seeks magically to possess its object through instating itself as the creator of that object. Images accompany most affective states, according to Sartre, because affectivity or emotion has an intentionality which seeks the magical possession of and control over the world: emotions are means by which we imagine alternate worlds. Emotions require images in their effort to create the world anew, if only in an imaginary mode: "To become conscious of Paul as hateful, annoying, sympathetic, disturbing, winning, repulsive, etc., is to confer upon him a new quality, to construct him along a new dimension."[37]

Sartre does not provide a formulaic way of understanding the interrelationship of images, emotion and desire, although his various remarks in The Psychology of Imagination do provide a basis for a plausible reconstruction of his developing views. Toward the end of that work he ventures the following formulation: "the image is a kind of ideal for feeling, it represents a limited state for the affective consciousness, the state in which desire is also knowledge."[38] In his view, most affective states "envision" reality in a subjunctive mode, and, hence, maintain images as central features of their intentionality: the image is the kind of undifferentiated presence toward which desire strives, and emotions appear to be so many permutations of human desire. On the one hand, the creation of objects appears to be the project which structures affectivity and imagining, for both of these activities are subordinate to a fundamental desire to become

[37] Ibid., p. 99.

[38] Ibid., p. 103.

the foundation of one's world. In this way, desire, as the desire to ground one's own reality, forms the basis of both emotional and imaginative consciousness. On the other hand, desire is intentional, and not merely reflexive; the objects of desire are "outside" the self, which is the meaning of Sartre's claim that it is the desirable which moves desire. The two-fold character of desire as intentional and reflexive requires an explanation which establishes that these two strains of desire, its idealistic and its realistic projects, are not simple contradictions but dynamic and constitutive paradoxes.

Sartre's argument that desire seeks to construct its object appears to conflict with his claim that desire is a form of knowledge. We need to ask, what kind of creative knowledge is human desire? Is it conceivable that desire both discovers and creates its object? What sense can we make of this paradoxical view? When Sartre claims that desire is itself a form of knowledge, he appears to differentiate between intentional and representational knowing. Desire does not 'know' its object in the sense that the desired object corresponds to the objective object which allegedly stands behind the desired object. "Knowing" for Sartre always takes place through determinate acts of presentation and through determinate modes of appearance. The object is never received immediately apart from a specific manner of presenting the object; indeed, even if the object is to be considered 'objectively', it must be intended as such. Hence, the desired object is not to be differentiated from some 'objective' object, for the object must be construed in terms of its modes of appearance, and if the object appears as desirable, its desirability is constitutive of its objective truth.

The critical problem which attends this explanation is that it seems difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between an illusory and an objective appearance. How would one, on such a view, account for the

deceptiveness of desire? How would one account for the experience of displaced wants and illusory objects of desire? Is there a critical difference between image and illusion, between the imaginary world which desire seeks to create and self-deception generally? If desire seeks to deceive the self that facticity is surpassable, is not all desire a project of self-deception? What sense does it make to refer to desire as a form of knowledge if it is at base a self-deceiving enterprise?

The full answer to these questions requires a turn to Being and Nothingness and the discussion of bad faith. At this point, however, we can approach the problem tentatively through our discussion of desire and the image. In Sartre's view, desire is a form of knowledge insofar as it 'envisions' its object in a determinate way, i.e. insofar as desiring is always co-extensive with imagining. Desire does not attend to what is given in perception, but, rather, what is hidden in perception; it is, in a sense, an investigation into the significant dimensions of absence. It thematizes absence and thereby makes it present to itself. In this way desire is fundamentally a desire for plenitude, an effort to fill the vacuums of perceptual life: "...the object as an image is a definite want; it takes shape as a cavity. A white wall as an image is a white wall which is absent from perception."[39] And yet the image of the white wall is not an image of the wall as it appears in perception; the presence which the white wall acquires in imaginary consciousness is a presence unattainable by a consciousness limited by perspective. The knowledge of the world which imagination affords, and which cannot be measured by its correspondence to perceptual objects, is that of the presence of things. The consciousness of a pair of smooth, delicate

[39] Ibid., p. 179.

hands, Sartre remarks, "is rather of something fine, graceful, pure, with a nuance of strictly individual fineness and purity". These nuances "appear" to consciousness; they do not "present themselves in their representative aspect". He explains: "this affective mass has a character which lacks clear and complete knowledge: the mass is present."[40]

Desire does, then, discover an object which is not a mere representation of a perceptual object, but, rather, an imaginary object which has certain features which no perceptual object can possibly have. The presence of the object is given to desire, i.e. it is what desire is after, and this presentifying function of desire requires imaginative consciousness to attain to this presence. The object of desire is unreal to the extent that it is not perceptual; and yet, perceptual consciousness is unreal to the extent that it is limited by the exigencies of perspective and adumbration. Whether one defines 'reality' in the terms of perceptual consciousness, or whether one defines it in terms of an hypostasized imagination freed from the constraints of perspective, determines the question of whether desire, and imaginary consciousness generally, generates illusion or truth. Insofar as Sartre remains within the Husserlian view of intentionality, the second criterion appears to hold: the negative aspect of the object remains constitutive of its objectivity and, correspondingly, the negating function of consciousness - its status as desire - gives consciousness access to the absent regions of objects. Insofar as Sartre restricts his definition of reality to positive being, the given objects of perceptual consciousness, desire and the imaginary are, indeed, flights from the real rather than its revelation.

In Sartre's The Emotions: Outline of a Theory, published in 1939, a year before The Psychology of Imagination, affectivity is presented as both

[40] Ibid., p. 101.

referential and transfigurative. On the one hand, he claims that "the affected subject and the affective object are bound in an indissoluble synthesis."[41] And he concludes, "emotion is a certain way of apprehending the world." On the other hand, he argues that emotions are "flights" and degradations of reality: "the hyper-tension of fear or sadness...aims at denying the world or discharging it of its affective potential by denying it."[42] And again, "anger appears...as an escape: the subject in anger resembles a man who, lacking the power to undo the knots of the ropes that bind him, twists and squirms about in his bonds."[43] In Sartre's view, emotions are ineffective responses to the various difficulties of the world, expressions of a fundamental impotence in which human beings are caught: "[emotions]...represent a particular subterfuge, a special trick, each one of them being a different means of eluding a difficulty."[44]

We have seen that the positivist construal of reality would appear to dismiss emotion as so much subjective fancy; the hateful, annoying, alluring, and joyous aspects of the world would be, according to that view, qualities subjectively imposed upon phenomena, rather than, as Sartre sometimes seems to suggest, qualities discovered _in_ phenomena. Insofar as emotion contributes to its object, it need not, for that very reason, be considered a solipsistic enterprise. One can contribute to a revelation - indeed, perhaps one _must_ contribute to such a discovery - in order for the revelation to occur. Emotion is thus an opportunity for the world to reveal itself, an opportunity denied in

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[41] _The Emotions_, p. 52.

[42] _Ibid._, p. 74.

[43] _Ibid._, p. 37.

[44] _Ibid._, p. 32.

the course of perceptual consciousness. Revelation requires a certain readiness on the part of consciousness; in this sense, emotions are a means of readying oneself for the world.

Sartre's inconsistency with respect to the intentional status of emotions seems to result, not only from his conflicting views of ontology, but also from a pessimistic interpretation of the efficacy of emotion. When the angry man is said to be "lacking the power to undo the knots of the ropes that bind him", we might justifiably ask in what such power would consist if he, in fact, were to have that power. Anger is seen in this context as a manifestation of powerlessness. But it seems we must ask, is not anger also a form of power? When Sartre argues that emotions are fundamentally inefficacious, that they achieve only a magical transformation of the world, we seem compelled to ask, why is it that emotion cannot reach the world? What is the gulf which resides between emotional consciousness and the world toward which it is directed? What makes of emotions the useless passions which Sartre describes?

The difficulty of the world, Sartre argues, is a permanent phenomenological given: "this world is <u>difficult</u>. This notion of difficulty is not a reflective notion which would imply a relationship to me. It is there, on the world."[45] The adversity of the world is its inaccessibility to consciousness, its brute givenness, its absolute alterity. And yet this world which resists consciousness cannot be the same world which reveals itself to consciousness in its very structure, if consciousness only readies itself for this revelation. Again, 'the world' is viewed inconsistently; first, as a noematic correlate to a structurally similar consciousness (the Husserlian view), and then, as a brute and impenetrable reality which consciousness can

[45] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 58-59.

only escape (the positivist view). The validity of this second interpretation seems to be immediately called into question by the apparent fact that emotions are occasionally efficacious in transforming the world. If we regard anger, not as a sign of definitive impotence, but, rather, as a possible source of power from which efficacious action might draw, Sartre's view of emotion as degradations of the real, as merely magical transformations of the world, appears to meet a serious challenge. Robert Solomon suggests that Sartre himself is inconsistent in this regard:

> For Sartre, the concept of magic serves to underscore the ineffectiveness of emotional behavior, the fact that our emotions merely change the direction of consciousness without really changing the world at all...The problem is that Sartre continues, in the fashion of those psychologists whom he castigates, to treat the emotions as 'isolated' and the 'world of emotions' as a world that is distinct from the 'real' world of effective action and commitment. But it is our emotions which motivate our actions and sustain our commitments. The 'fundamental project' that dominates so much of Sartre's writings is by its very nature an emotional project, one in which we heavily invest ourselves, even to the extent of reorganizing ("transforming") our entire world around its demands.[46]

An even stronger objection to the view of emotions as exclusive engaged in projects of denial and de-realization can be found by looking at the contribution of emotion to all of consciousness. What Sartre refers to as the "spontaneity" of pre-reflective consciousness, the "upsurge" of consciousness which constitutes the lived experience of pre-reflective intentionality, is itself a passion or desire which is the very being of consciousness. Emotions can be understood as various permutations of this fundamental engagement with the world, the fundamental project of human life as a striving to be. Every act which seeks to make the world present to consciousness, which seeks, in effect, to construct the world as present to consciousness, is an expression of

[46]Robert Solomon, "Sartre on Emotions," The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, ed. Schilpp, (Library of Living Philosophies: Open Court), 1980, p. 284.

this primary urge toward plenitude which characterizes intentional consciousness and the being of human reality. In effect, no act of consciousness is without this affective structure. The intentionality of consciousness is lived concretely as the diffuse and insistent experience of human desire.

We asked at the outset of this discussion whether Sartre's account of affectivity suffered from inconsistency or paradox, assuming that if the former were the case, the theory proves inadequate, and if the latter were true, the theory might be retrieved. Although we have pointed out an inconsistency in Sartre's thought, a conflict over the interpretation of the accessibility of the world and, correlatively, the efficacy of emotional consciousness, we have not exhausted the possible interpretations of Sartre's theory. The either/or which seems to haunt his theory of affective consciousness consists in a battle between solipsism and realism; either desire - and affectivity generally - is structured by a subjective project to achieve an omnipotent presence to the world or desire is "moved by the desirable", elicited and structured by the object of consciousness. Being and Nothingness can be seen to take up the problem of this apparent paradox and to devise a philosophical program for making sense of affective consciousness as both referential and magical.

Because the world is "difficult", consciousness can never achieve the projected unity which Hegel considered plausible; indeed, we might interpret the succession of theories from Hegel to Sartre as the gradual revelation of the world's inherent difficulty. For Sartre, the ontological disjunction of consciousness and world does not preclude the intentional or referential function of consciousness, but it does suggest that intending the world and identifying with it are very different enterprises. Hegel's contention that consciousness can only come to know that to which it has always already been

ontologically bound does no hold true for Sartre. Accordingly, knowledge is not to be understood as a series of acts whereby the identities of consciousness and world are enhanced to include each other; but, rather, as a relation which presupposes necessary difference.

The world is, then, less constitutive of the self, than constitutive of the limits within which the self may make itself. Sartre's journeying subject does not develop itself in order to discover finally that it has been all along that which it has become; on the contrary, this subject is a novel creation, a being fashioned from nothingness. Accordingly, intentional consciousness comes to know its objects as external to itself, but this externality is never given in unadulterated form; we never know objects or Others outside of the experience of their fundamental difficulty, their exteriority, and, hence, we always bring to those objects our own relations to difficulty - our emotions. We turn to Being and Nothingness in order to understand the two-fold meaning of exteriority for the project of desire, as that which impassions human beings and as that from which we take flight.

The rift which Sartre presents between subject and substance further establishes consciousness as a negativity or, as Kojeve claims, "a hole in Being", which can never relinquish its negativity through participation in an inclusive being. Sartre's notion of consciousness is that of a a negating-negativity, a negation which turns against itself and thereby produces itself as a determinate being. This determination is in no sense pre-determined; it is a creation rather than a discovery. The desire which motivates human life becomes for Sartre a process of reflexive negation which creates a self and a process of reciprocal negation between selves through which each creates the other. We turn first to the labour of negation by which the self creates itself, and then, in the context of Sartre's discussion of sexuality, to the process of intimate recognition through which we constantly bring each other into being.

Chapter Six: The Strategies of Pre-reflective Choice: Existential Desire in Being and Nothingness

"The point of vision and desire are the same."

Wallace Stevens, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven"

Sartre's discussions of desire in Being and Nothingness take place first in the context of intersubjective relations, and then again in the section on existential psychoanalysis. In the former section desire is understood as sexual desire,[1] and in the latter, desire is understood as what might be called existential desire.[2] In the former context, sexual desire is but one permutation of "the desire to be," an existential project which structures the spontaneity of the for-itself. Because existential desire is considered to be more fundamental in Sartre's account, we turn first to the 'desire to be' and, in the following chapter, consider its meaning in the context of a reciprocal exchange.

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[1]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 384: "The first apprehension of the Other's sexuality in so far as it is lived and suffered can be only desire; it is by desiring the Other (or by discovering myself as incapable of desiring him) or by apprehending his desire for me that I discover his being-sexed. Desire reveals to me simultaneously my being-sexed and his being-sexed, my body as sex and his body." Also, see page 382: "My original attempt to get hold of the Other's free subjectivity through his objectivity-for-me is sexual desire." The understanding of desire in exclusively sexual terms can be found in Herbert Marcuse's "Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's L'Etre et le neant" in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 326 and Maurice Natanson's A Critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's Ontology, (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1973), p. .

[2]This broader conception of desire is discussed at length in the section "Existential Psychoanalysis" where desire is identified with the for-itself conceived as a lack: "Freedom is precisely the being which makes itself a lack of being. But since desire...is identical with lack of being, freedom can arise only as being which makes itself a desire of being." p. 567.

Sartre's task in "Existential Psychoanalysis" is to show the inadequacies of psychological theories which posit human desire as a substance or natural given, or as a psychic irreducible which serves as a primary cause of human behavior. He argues that the psychological tendency to reduce human behavior to certain primary desires reveals a refusal to radicalize the investigation of desire, that is, to treat it not merely as a cause, but as an expression of a prior and more fundamental choice:

> We are told, for example, that Flaubert had a 'grandiose ambition' and all of the previously quoted description depends on this original ambition. So far so good. But this ambition is an irreducible fact which by no means satisfies the mind. The irreducibility here has no justification other than refusal to push the analysis further. There where the psychologist stops, the fact confronted is given as primary.[3]

Flaubert's ambition is considered as a positive datum of experience, a contingency which, in Sartre's view, is no different than the qualities which adhere to natural objects. In an ironic portrayal of this kind of psychological empiricism, Sartre remarks, "this rock is covered with moss, the rock next to it is not. Gustave Flaubert had literary ambition, and his brother Achille lacked it. That's the way it is."[4]

Sartre rejects a naturalistic view of the relationship of desire to personal identity which is modelled on the relationship of contingent natural properties to their self-identical substance. Although desires might well be understood as 'properties' in Sartre's view, they are neither externally nor fixedly related to the substance to which they belong. Following Spinoza, Sartre views such properties as modes through which a substance determines itself:

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[3]Ibid., p. 560.

[4]Ibid.

> "In one sense Flaubert's ambition is a fact with all a fact's contingency - and it is true that it is impossible to advance beyond that fact - but in another sense it makes itself, and our satisfaction is a guarantee to us that we may be able to grasp beyond this ambition something more, something like a radical decision which, without ceasing to be contingent, would be the veritable psychic irreducible."[5]

For Sartre, then, one does not 'have' a desire as one has a possession which one might on another occasion lose by mistake or cast off in a moment of boredom. Desires are not contingent features of otherwise self-subsisting subjects precisely because desires constitute the modes through which the subject comes to subsist; they are, to extend the metaphor, the subject's very subsistence. Desire does not indicate a ready-made self, but reveals instead a self having-to-be-formed; indeed, desire is the mode through which the self comes to exist for the first time.

The investigation which seeks to uncover the ground of Flaubert's ambition would, according to Sartre, have to ask how it was that Flaubert determines himself as ambitious. Ambition is no longer considered as a cause, but as a product of a reflexive relation. The 'radical decision' which is, for Sartre, the true psychic irreducible, is a movement of inner negation which establishes Flaubert's ambition as a project and pursuit. And yet Flaubert does not determine himself in a vacuum; he determines himself with respect to a world. Indeed, every desire, like every emotion, indicates obliquely an existential orientation toward the world as such, a decision regarding how to live in the particular world - the situation - in which one finds oneself.[6] Flaubert's desire 'to be a great writer' is at once a choice of authorship and a choice of being; authorship is a way of being, a radical decision concerning how to be.

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 563.

Hence, for Sartre, the radical decisions expressed in and through desires are always reflexive and intentional; they are projects of self-determination, but always undertaken with reference to the world. Every particular desire indicates an existential choice of how to be:

> "The most discerning ethicists have shown how a desire reaches beyond itself. Pascal...revealed that in an activity which would be absurd if reduced to itself, there was a meaning which transcended it; that is, an indication which referred to the reality of man in general and to his condition. Similarly Stendhal...and Proust...have shown that love and jealousy cannot be reduced to the strict desire of possessing a <u>particular</u> woman, but that these emotions aim at laying hold of the world in its entirety through the woman."[7]

Sartre outlines three different but interrelated levels of meaning to desire which elucidate the status of all human desire as indicating the desire to be. Every desire presupposes an "original choice" or a generalized desire to be, an unspecified desire to live and be 'of' the world. Secondly, desires indicate a "fundamental choice" which is the mode of being through which a specific individual chooses to live - a way of life or determinate mode of being. And thirdly, there are the myriad particular desires which reflect, through a complex symbolic connection, both the original and fundamental choices.[8] The first of these choices, the original desire to be, has no separable ontological status, but is expressed essentially through the fundamental choice: "the desire of being is always realized as the desire of a mode of being."[9] And neither the original nor the fundamental choice makes itself known directly in experience, but must appear in the "myriads of

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[7] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 562.

[8] <u>Ibid</u>.

[9] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 567.

concrete desires which constitute the web of our conscious life."[10] Hence, particular desires express at once the specificity of the self, the radical decision concerning how to be which distinguishes individuals from one another, and the anonymous and universal projects of the self 'to be', i.e. to overcome the ontological disjunction of consciousness and its world.

The desire to be is, for Sartre, an effort to gain an absolute presence to the world, to overcome externality and difference, in order, finally, that the self might coincide with itself and, hence, have a completed self-understanding. This desire to overcome ontological disjunction is, for Sartre, the desire to become God - a striving to overcome the limits of embodiment, perspective and temporality which maintain the self at an ecstatic distance from itself:

> "God, value and supreme end of transcendence, represents the permanent limit in terms of which man makes known to himself what he is. To be man means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God."[11]

Human beings can never achieve this end, but it remains a permanent impossibility towards which human beings strive. As the <u>desire</u> to be, this project remains an experience of dissatisfaction; desire reveals the lack in being which consciousness is, a lack which cannot be relinquished save through the death of consciousness. In this sense, desire indicates freedom which, in Sartrian terms, can only remain itself through transcending the in-itself. In effect, one is only free to the extent that one desires, for desire is the necessary expression for freedom: "Freedom is precisely the being which makes itself a lack of being. But since desire...is identical with lack of being, freedom can arise only as being which makes itself a desire of being."[12]

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[10] <u>Ibid</u>..

[11] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 566.

[12] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 567.

The project to be God must be realized in and through "the free and fundamental desire which is the unique person."[13] Personal identity is a particularized desire to be God, the effort to become the foundation of one's freedom and facticity, the anthropogenetic dream which haunts this post-Hegelian position. Although for Sartre the desire to be God characterizes an essential aspect of all human striving, there is choice with respect to how this project is realized; in effect, one decides what kind of God one wants to be. The essentialism of Sartre's contention that all human striving is derivative from the desire to be God does not become a determinism of desire, for particular choices and situations remain variable features of these strivings. The ends of desire "are pursued in terms of a particular empirical situation, and it is this very pursuit which constitutes the surroundings as a situation."[14] Like Spinoza's substance which endeavors to "persist in its own being",[15] human striving is knowable only through its various modalities, and yet this underlying desire eludes determination even as it requires it. Our particular, situated desires are our necessary access to the existential project which characterize human identity universally:

> "...the fundamental project, the person, the free realization of human truth is everywhere in all desires...It is never apprehended except through desires (my emphasis) - as we can apprehend space only through bodies which shape it for us...Or, if you like, it is like the object of Husserl, which reveals itself only by 'Abschattungen' and which does not allow itself to be absorbed by any one Abschattung..."[16]

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[13]Ibid., p. 567/

[14]Ibid.

[15]Spinoza, The Ethics, Part Three, proposition VI, in The Philosophy of Spinoza, tr. R.H.M. Elwes, (New York: Tudor Publishing), 1934.

[16]Being and Nothingness, p. 567.

Sartre's argument that the desire to be appears only through the particular desires in which it is expressed raises the problem of whether we can ever know that such a desire does, in fact, exist. If Sartre's postulation that a unifying desire structures the myriad desires of everyday life cannot be supported through direct reference to such a desire, how are we to refrain from dismissing this postulation as an unsupportable speculation. Sartre seems to affirm that a description of these non-empirical desires is possible through a reflexive turn of consciousness on itself:

> Fundamentally man is the desire to be, and the existence of this desire is not to be established by an empirical induction; it is the result of an a priori description of the being of the for-itself, since desire is a lack and since the for-itself is the being which is to itself its own lack of being.[17]

Sartre warns against treating the original or fundamental desires as separable from empirical desire, and yet he suggests that there is an opacity to empirical desires that indicate the existential regions by which they are supported:

> the desire to be by no means exists first in order to cause itself to be expressed subsequently by desires a posteriori. There is nothing outside of the symbolic expression which it finds in concrete desires. There is not first a single desire of being, then a thousand particular feelings, but the desire to be exists and manifests itself only in and through jealousy, greed, love of art, cowardice, courage, and a thousand contingent, empirical expressions which always cause human reality to appear to us only as manifested by a...specific person.[18]

The possibility of recovering the existential projects of desire from their particular and determinate manifestations is grounded in the fact that reflective consciousness is itself related to the pre-reflective strategies of

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[17] Ibid., p. 565.

[18] Ibid.

spontaneous desires; indeed, this is why Sartre refers to the task of uncovering the opaque projects of desire as an "hermeneutic". Sartre suggests that the catalogue of empirical desires ought to be made the object of appropriate psychological investigations:

> ...here as elsewhere, truth is not encountered by chance; it does not belong to a domain where one must seek it without ever having any presentiment of its location...it belongs a priori to human comprehension and the essential task is an hermeneutic; that is, a deciphering, a determination, and a conceptualization.[19]

The inquiring subject is able to decipher the hidden projects of desire precisely because he is himself implicated in the object of inquiry. The existential projects of desire are not known through induction; they are discovered through a process more comparable to recollection. The success of the self-interpreter consists of being "able to know what he already understands."[20]

For Sartre, the hiddenness or partial deception which attends desire is not cause to conclude that the aims of desire are in principle irrecoverable. On the contrary, the agent who desires and the agent who reflects upon desire is a unitary agent, although the subjectivity of this agency is capable of paradoxical modes of expression. Because it is the pre-reflective cogito which is at the origin of desire - desires arise with consciousness, are co-extensive with consciousness, and, in fact, are themselves modes of consciousness - the aims of desire are in principle recoverable through a reflective thematization of spontaneous consciousness. Sartre's well-traversed criticism of Freud takes its bearing in the context of this problem. Sartre's charge is that Freud effects an ontological disjunction between sign (original desire) and signified (determinate manifestations of this original desire) in as much as both the

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[19] Ibid., p. 568.

[20] Ibid., p. 571.

origin and meaning of desires are to be found anterior to consciousness. If desires gain their meaning in the unconscious, and if conscious expressions of desire are reducible to a system which is not recoverable by consciousness, then conscious understandings of desire are by definition always deceptive. Indeed, the conscious effort to understand desire must always remain deceived, and the truth of desire is to be gleaned only from the assumption of a third-person point of view, i.e. the point of view of an unconscious system. That desires are said to exist or originate in the unconscious is, according to Sartre, an absurdity, an hypostatization which can claim no ontological status. The attribution of strategic desire to the unconscious is, according to Sartre, a projection of relations proper to reflective consciousness onto a non-reflective domain. Moreover, such a bifurcation of the human psyche into separate systems appears to preclude the possibility of ever recovering the aims and meanings of desire from within the perspective of subjective consciousness, the domain in which, according to Sartre, any interpretation of desire must receive its final verification.[21]

Sartre clearly takes exception to the implicit Freudian view that desire requires a scientific or third-person perspective for the disclosure of its significance. Such a view builds alienation into the very structure of the psyche, and makes self-comprehension into a vain illusion. For a recognition of the meaning of desire to be possible, the desire must emanate from the selfsame agency which reflects upon its meaning. Freud, according to Sartre, does not provide a unitary account of human agency such that this kind of recognition is possible. In the realm of desire, one can only acknowledge to be true what one has, in a sense, always already known, and Freud, by

[21]See Being and Nothingness, pp. 568-574 and The Emotions, pp. 44-47.

systematically isolating the unconscious as a non-experiential cognitive system, undermines on a theoretical level what his practical analysis has achieved. The possibility of knowledge without an origin and final meaning within experience, is, for Sartre, an anti-intentional position which definitionally precludes the phenomenological affirmation of its assertions; in other words, Freud's theory is, at best, speculative and, at worst, self-defeating.

Sartre's response to Freud is analogous to his critique of Husserl's epoche: he seeks in both cases to expand the natural attitude - the point of view of lived experience - to include the kind of radical self-reflection which Husserl thought required a transcendental perspective, and which Freud thought required recourse to the unconscious. Sartre certainly would agree that desire is not a lucid consciousness, and it has opacity and depth which - as with all affectivity - must be interpreted in order to be understood. This is clear from his distinction between the existential and determinate aims of desire. And yet, desire is not opposed to consciousness per se as an ontologically distinct phenomenon; indeed, desire is itself a mode of pre-reflective consciousness which is opposed on occasion to reflective consciousness. The battle between reason and desire is, according to Sartre, really a battle between a reflective consciousness and the aims of a pre-reflective consciousness. Desire does not oppose a knowledgeable self, but is simply another form of consciousness which challenges the sovereignty of the reflective agency. Pre-reflective consciousness is a non-positional awareness of consciousness in the act of intending a given object. Hence, it is part of an ambiguous experience of consciousness which prevents a lucid apprehension of itself. The existential project of desire is obscured by the object of desire, and yet the determinate project is fulfilled therein. The reflexivity which

attends every engagement with the world is one which shows itself obliquely and which can be illuminated only through a reflective thematization of this pre-reflective awareness.

Sartre's discussion of pre-reflective and reflective consciousness in The Transcendance of the Ego finds transcription in the terminology of Being and Nothingness as the problem of lived experience (l'experience vecu). In the former work, the self is discovered only through the intentional positing of objects. Every intentional movement of consciousness toward a specific transcendent object pre-supposes consciousness' non-positional awareness of itself as the agent of consciousness; and yet, this agency only becomes explicit through its actual deeds. The self is not the explicit aim of intentional consciousness, but is given "at the horizon of states."[22] It is in this sense that the Sartrian self is said to be permanently outside consciousness. Introspection outside the context of intentionality is an impossibility. Like Hegel, we know ourselves only through knowing objects; we are the manner in which we know; our identity is the style of our comportment toward the world. The self becomes an object for consciousness when it is posited as such, but it can be posited only indirectly, i.e. through the positing of objects; self-revelation is an inadvertent consequence of positing an object which is other to the self. Contrary to Hegel, reflective consciousness does not provide exclusive access to self-knowledge, for we know ourselves even in our spontaneity, and this 'knowing' is pre-reflective consciousness.

We must ask, What is this self which is sensed along the contours of the object of desire? It is the project of being, the original choice, which structures the spontaneity of the pre-reflective cogito. In effect, it is the

[22]Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 75.

discovery of the unitary structure of consciousness, i.e. that it is myself at the origin of my emotional manifestations and myself which, distanced from this spontaneity, reflects upon its meanings. Reflection upon desire is, then, reflection upon myself as a choice of being; to reflect upon desire is to acknowledge choices one has already made.

Sartre's argument concerning the unitary structure of reflective, pre-reflective, and non-reflective consciousness is exemplified most cogently in his discussion of bad faith. Rather than enter into an excursus on this vast theme, let us note the sense of 'pre-reflective choice' which is developed in that context, and then apply it to our discussion of the task of deciphering the existential projects of desire. A common ploy of bad faith is to treat emotions as if they were contingencies rather than as determinate expressions of a knowing self. Rather than contingent facts, desire and emotion are chosen, although not in any ordinary sense of 'to choose'. Sartre argues that empirical psychologists tend to treat desires as psychic irreducibles, that is, that in determining Flaubert's character, the empirical psychologist traces Flaubert's behavior back to an ostensibly primary desire to succeed, and henceforward considers that desire to be constitutive of Flaubert's identity. In Sartre's view, desire is not a psychic irreducible, except in the case in which desire is understood as a manifestation of choice. Desire is not given, but, in an important sense, created and re-created; as such, it indicates a free agency prior to its own emergence.

In Anti-Semite and Jew Sartre expounds upon the bad faith of cousin Jules who hates the British.[23] The hatred at issue is a posturing of the for-itself as in-itself, for the hatred is treated as a fixed property of Jules

[23]Sartre, Anti-Semite and Jew, p. .

rather than as a choice which Jules sustains. In bad faith emotion is considered as a fact - Jules' hatred simply is; hence, emotion is divorced from the agency which sustains it. Indeed, the sustaining power of choice is precisely what bad faith seeks to hide.

In current popular parlance, there is a phrase which appears to substantiate the Sartrian argument that Jules has access to the moment of choice at the origin of his hatred. 'To call someone on (a certain attitude)' is to bid them take responsibility for striking the attitude which they do. To persuade Jules to entertain the logical possibility that not all British citizens are intrinsically disdainful is, in effect, to persuade Jules that he has a personal stake in maintaining the false generalization with the vigor that he does. To 'call Jules on' this attitude is to persuade him that he maintains a certain set of emotions and beliefs as if they were facts because it both suits and conceals a particular project that he is pursuing. The fact that such an argument can persuade some if not all of the Jules-like people of the world appears to support Sartre's claim that, pre-reflectively, the emotional agent 'knows' what he is after. Moreover, that the object of desire - here hatred is sustained by the desire to hate - is more than simply 'the British', but also, in every case, some posture of Jules himself. The British are, in effect, the pretext for Jules' imaginary ascension to the en-soi.

Another example from contemporary popular language aids in the concretization of this point with respect to pre-reflective choice. In the case of desires which meet with swift or inevitable disappointment, i.e. when one desires another who is, for any number of reasons, inaccessible, one will hear the critical but sympathetic appeal, 'but you must have set this up!'. The pattern of bad faith which emerges in this context often takes the form of

claiming to be victimized by one's desires. In Sartre's view it is impossible to claim that one did not choose one's desires; indeed, in the kind of cases alluded to above, it may well be the case that a desire for an impossible object is a desire for an object precisely because it is impossible, and because the lack of consummation achieved suits the project of the person in desire. For Sartre, "desire is consent to desire."[24] One knows the outcome pre-reflectively in the case above, and one consents to the drama with this knowledge pre-reflectively intact; the surprise, the pain, the keen sense of betrayal, which issue from the drama's denouement are, in actuality, expressions of disappointment that reflective consciousness could not maintain its hegemony. It is oneself who could not be subdued, one's knowledge of the situation which is coincident with the upsurge of desire. When one claims to be victimized by desire, or to be totally enthralled with the object of desire, one temporarily conceals the reflexive dimension of desire, and is aware only of the intentional direction toward the object; and yet, in such a state, reflexivity works its hardest - one arranges for enthrallment, one arranges one's own victimization. In effect, one 'sets it up'.

The existential project of desire is not, then, a metaphysical abstraction, but a phenomenologically discoverable feature of mundane experience. The project is manifest in the quasi-knowledge we have of the hidden aims of desire even as we are in the midst of desire. The pre-reflective is not a lucid consciousness, not a deliberate pondering or consideration, but an ambiguous knowledge which lives in the shadows of every act, at once accessible and concealed. As an awareness it reveals the bond between engaged (unreflected) and reflective consciousness; it is the

[24]Being and Nothingness, p. 388.

possibility of self-recovery. As non-positional it is a marginalized consciousness, obscured by the intentional relation which it attends.

The postulation of desire as a form of pre-reflective consciousness both affirms and denies the opacity of consciousness. Desire is not, for Sartre, unambiguous immediacy; it is an immediacy which inhabits a middle ground between absorption in the object and self-reflection. For Hegel, opacity is a necessary feature of self-consciousness because of the alterity built into the very structure of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness cannot be coincident with itself because it cannot be all of its moments at once. Opposed to externality, self-consciousness is immediately rendered strange to itself; the realm of externality signifies a domain of the self yet to be recovered. The transformation of an external negation into an internal negation - the assimilation of the world to self-consciousness - is the recovery of the self, a recovery which is at once an expansion. The 'implicit' dimension of self-consciousness, or its opacity, is considered to be its own identity with the world which is not yet rendered explicit. For Sartre, a similar drama of estrangement and recovery can be seen to characterize the life of desire, and yet the terms of this dialectic are very different from those of Hegel. The opacity of the self is a function of pre-reflective consciousness, the consciousness whose reflexivity is obscured by its intentional object. Enthralled with the object, agency is temporarily eclipsed; the opacity of desire is first of all an opacity of the self to the self, an internal alterity between reflective and pre-reflective consciousness. The 'implicit' dimension of consciousness is the pre-reflective domain which is less an identity with the world than an interpretive effort to position oneself with respect to the world.

The desire to be the world which governs the tacit dimension in Hegel's Phenomenology is, for Sartre, abbreviated as the desire to be. The hope of becoming coextensive with the world, mutually implicated in the world, never develops beyond the status of a hope. Hence, Sartre's notion of the desire to be God is a vain yet compelling passion. Seeking to overcome the factic limits of perspective, desire is nevertheless mindful of the futility of this endeavor. The relation between self and world is not pre-supposed by desire, in the case of Sartre; it is precisely this relation which is forged through desire. Ontology appears as a demand, not as an implicit dimension which reveals itself as having always been complete. For Hegel, the recovery of the self from ecstatic estrangement is the discovery of the self as a being already related to other beings. For Sartre, the relation of human beings to each other is not discovered as a prior fact; it is what calls to be established. The implicit dimension of desire is, for Sartre, not the presence of an ontology which explains a pre-established identity, but a certain knowledge entertained by subjectivity that identity is that to be created. Pre-reflective consciousness is awareness of agency in the presence of a world; concretely, it is the reflection upon the choice of how to be in one's situation.

Sartre's ontology, however, is not a structureless void; it is, with regard to human existence, a void with a determinate intentionality. The shift from a Hegelian to a Sartrian perspective similarly is not to be construed as a transition from completed substance to incomplete freedom, for Hegel's substance carries within it negation as the principle of its development, and Sartre's notion of freedom -- the "non-substantial absolute"[25] is related to being as to its intentional object.

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[25] Ibid., p. 561.

Sartre's distinct sense of consciousness as a negating activity differs from the Hegelian understanding of negation as a relation which not only binds consciousness ontologically to its world, but which necessitates the encounter of consciousness and world as a developmental one. Sartre's understanding of pre-reflective consciousness as a relation of reflexive negation internal to consciousness implicitly refutes the Hegelian contention that all relations of negation are relations of mediation.

The Hegelian theme of mediation is counterposed to Sartre's notion of pre-reflective consciousness in a transcription of a session of the Societe Francais de Philosophie in June of 1947, four years after the publication in France of Sartre's L'Etre et le Neant.[26] Jean Hyppolite, a participant in this session, defended an Hegelian position, arguing that what Sartre terms pre-reflective consciousness is the same as the principle of negativity for Hegel. Hyppolite argues that it makes no sense to talk of a consciousness which is neither immediate nor mediate. If the pre-reflective is a species of knowledge, it must be a principle of mediation, a negating relation which, in the act of distinguishing two disparate realities, reveals their commonality. For Hyppolite, knowledge must always be a synthetic operation of this type. Sartre, however, resists this equation of knowing consciousness with synthesis. The dialogue begins with Hyppolite asking whether a paradoxical consciousness such as Sartre portrays is possible.[27] He queries whether there is a passage from pre-reflective to reflective consciousness, and whether the two are dialectically related. Sartre's response eludes the Hegelian categories assumed by Hyppolite's question:

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[26]The cited excerpts are my translations from the French transcript of this session published as "Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi" in Bulletin de la Societe Francaise de Philosophie, Vol. XIII, 1948, pp. 49-91.

[27]Ibid., p. 87.

> What is pre-reflective consciousness? All the originality and ambiguity of a position which is not the immediacy of life and which prepares this act of consciousness which is reflection.[28]

For Sartre, the pre-reflective is an intermediary stage which is not purely dialectical in relating the immediacy of life to the mediation which is reflection. Hyppolite clearly considers such a formulation impossible, resting as he does on an Hegelian epistemology which views knowledge as the exclusive property of reflection. Sartre's argument seeks to show that not all life is transformed into an object of reflection, and, secondly, that reflection is not the sole locus of cognitive functions. In keeping with Sartre's effort to expand the natural attitude to include a critical reflexivity, he argues that immediacy is not necessarily a source of falsehood, but that valid apprehensions can be made instantaneously.

Hyppolite's quarrel with Sartre appears to recapitulate Hegel's criticism of Fichte.[29] Hyppolite appears to reject the introspective capacity attributed to the pre-reflective cogito by Sartre, claiming instead that all knowledge must depend upon the mediation of externality. Sartre's rehabilitation of the Fichtean position is simultaneously a vindication of his Cartesianism, that is, the postulation that consciousness can become transparent to itself. Moreover, he claims, Hegelian categories cannot provide an understanding of "discovery pure and simple."[30] Not all knowledge requires a temporal progression, i.e. an altercation between self and otherness which is overcome through a development of that relation. The pre-reflective is the domain of instantaneous knowledge, the vindication of a domain of reflexivity

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[28] Ibid., p. 88.

[29] Cf. Klaus Hartmann, Sartre's Ontology, p. 21, n. 59.

[30] "Conscience de Soi...", p. 88.

which attends rather than succeeds intentional consciousness of objects. The succession of moments within the development of a known object in Hegelian terms are at once given through the polyvalent structure of intentional consciousness defended by Sartre. The conceptual understanding of this kind of instantaneous knowledge, according to Sartre, requires a turn from Hegel to Husserl:

> I consider Husserl the first philosopher to have spoken of a dimension proper to consciousness which is neither knowledge nor life, nor a kind of indefinite progress of spirit, nor a relation pure and simple to an object, but, precisely because it must be, a consciousness of itself.[31]

In the following dialogue Sartre endeavors to explain non-positional awareness to Hyppolite, a notion which can only appear conceptually confused to an Hegelian perspective. Let us consider their dialogue further:

"Sartre: '...there is an element of mediation in consciousness. You call it negativity, in Hegelian terms. It is a nothingness which touches consciousness, it is an immediacy which is not completely immediate, while nevertheless remaining immediate. That is exactly it.'

Hyppolite: 'That is the living dialectical contradiction.'

Sartre: 'Yes, but given without movement. There is not another movement. In other words, I would like to suggest that there is no innocence; there is neither innocence nor sin.
And that is properly to speak of man, precisely because man must become his being. All negativity, all mediation, all guilt, all innocence, all truth, must appear. But this is not to say that he must create all of himself. But, appearing in the world, it is not man who is in himself all of his categories, for that man he will never find in the world.'

Hyppolite: 'The only thing which is possible is the en-soi. That is what you say.'

Sartre: 'I add again, that this possibility is only achieved when it realizes itself.'"[32]

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 89.

The point of contention between Sartre and Hyppolite is that of the conditions and meaning of self-knowledge. For Hyppolite, freedom is not the instantaneous assertion of self which is designated by the pre-reflective cogito. The self is not merely a sum of its acts, however randomly those acts interrelate, but is defined, rather, in terms of a progressive unfolding, an opposition to the world which, if never wholly resolved, is nevertheless pursued. For Sartre, this effort to overcome difference is effected, not through mediation, but through the apprehensions of spontaneous consciousness, a spontaneity which is pre-reflectively aware of its own futility. Hyppolite's view of a perpetual altercation between self and world which constitutes an "indefinite progress", i.e. one with no credible telos, is, like Sartre's, a pursuit which can never find ultimate satisfaction. The difference between their views consists in the fact that Sartre internalizes this 'altercation' into the very structure of spontaneous consciousness. The project to be which is the structure and meaning of the for-itself knows itself as a vain passion from the start, for it knows itself as irreducible freedom which cannot be relinquished in the objects it pursues. For Hyppolite, dissatisfaction is revealed; for Sartre, it is assumed.

Hyppolite, in the final moments of this exchange, seeks to find an ontological guarantee that there is an immanent progress to freedom. Sartre's response is to reaffirm his primary principle, namely, that existence precedes essence, that there is nothing (!) on an ontological level which can guarantee a progress to freedom or a greater lucidity to self-reflection, but that such a progress can only be achieved by individual decisions. Hyppolite asks whether the "power of insurgent life" and a principle of "progress" are not given at once in Sartre's view:

"Hyppolite: 'The dialectical progress, as you yourself have pointed out, indicates that freedom is not simply an act of this immediate mediation, but is also the possibility of a perpetual progress, by which man gains ever increasing lucidity over himself...'

Sartre: '...whether one moves from one stage of consciousness to another depends on the kind of person one is. But I have never pretended that there was a progress...'"[33]

Although Sartre states clearly that the pre-reflective does not manifest a normative principle of development, i.e. that it is by itself an amoral structure, beyond 'innocence' and 'guilt', his own word should not be taken as necessarily true. Endemic to Sartre's notion of a unifying pre-reflective project to be is an assumption of a moral force to intentionality. We asked at the outset of this chapter two interrelated questions: one, how is the project of desire made known to consciousness and, two, how could we support the view of a single, original project of desire which unifies and explains the various determinate desires which appear to belong to a specific individual in the phenomenal world. In response to the first question, we discerned that the pre-reflective cogito is the access to this project of desire. It is with respect to the second question that we are confronted with a moral dimension implicit in desire. The unifying project to be which for Sartre structures every particular desire appears to fit the criterion posited by Hyppolite that freedom be viewed as a progressive movement. That desire be unified by a single and fundamental desire which is constitutive of individuality is, for Sartre, not merely a descriptive truth, but a normative one as well. The unifying of desires under a single project is at once the being of human reality and its highest moral aspiration.

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[33] Ibid., pp. 89-90.

The project to be God was considered desirable precisely because God represents a "complete self-understanding". We can view this aspiration as a moral one insofar as its fulfillment would be identical with perfect freedom. To be God would mean, finally, to achieve a coincidence of for-itself and in-itself such that human freedom would be at the origin of the in-itself. Contingency, facticity - the whole of the perceptual world described in The Psychology of the Imagination - would, for such a deity, appear as so many creations of the self; the factic would be subdued, relieved of its alterity and adversity.

This impossible normative ideal for desire posits an Hegelian conception of the reproduction of the external world as an extension of consciousness. The factic would, in such an ideal, confront consciousness as a product of consciousness rather than its limits. The desire to be can only be satisfied when consciousness manages to convince itself that its imaginary creations are real. The satisfaction of existential desire always presupposes the success of bad faith and, conversely, the pursuit of authenticity requires perpetual dissatisfaction.

There seems, then, to be a moral dimension to Sartre's view of existential desire to the extent that a normative view of freedom governs the project to be God. And it seems to occur again in his assumption that the self is a unity, a set of choices which reveal a single, overriding choice (the fundamental choice), that is, a consistent way of being in the world. Insofar as these ideals suggest that human beings desire an escape from facticity, an overcoming of perspective, Sartre seems to be promoting a view of human reality for which the escape from situation is paramount, and this desire to take flight from

adversity seems to contrast sharply with his earlier hope that the doctrine of intentionality would establish the self "in the midst of life".[34]

Although Sartre does seem to accept a normative view of human identity as a project to become an omnipotent subjectivity, he recognizes this ideal as an impossibility, and, in other contexts, suggests a view of authenticity as the paradoxical journey of an embodied consciousness. In the discussion of sexual desire, Sartre seems to offer a project for an embodied identity in which the body is not merely a factic limit to freedom but a facticity which occasions the determination and expression of freedom. In the context of sexual relations, we find that the desire to 'be' is not merely a desire for an

[34]Although Sartre appears to be aligned with the Nietzschean criticism of egological views of consciousness (cf. The Transcendence of the Ego), we can nevertheless consider what a Nietzschean criticism of Sartre's postulation of a unified subject might be like. Nietzsche's treatment of desire in The Will to Power supports a view of the fundamental multiplicity of desires, and the unified self as a deceptive construct. In section #518 of that text, Nietzsche argues against the idea of the self as a unity: "If our 'ego' is for us the sole being, after the model of which we fashion and understand all being; very well! Then there would be very much room to doubt whether what we have here is not a perspective illusion - an apparent unity that encloses everything like a horizon. The evidence of the body reveals a tremendous multiplicity..." Nietzsche, The Will to Power, tr. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House), 1966, p. 281. To this purpose one ought also to consult #489, #492 and #259. According to Nietzsche, the principle of identity which structures egological theories serves a normative purpose; the positing of a singular or unified identity masks a wish to overcome the multiplicity of the body, the contradictoriness of desires, "the systematic reduction of all bodily feelings to moral values" (#227). For Nietzsche, ontology cloaks morality, and morality is motivated by a desire to overcome the body altogether. One might extrapolate from this position a criticism of Sartre's view that desire is internally unified and that it seeks a transcendence of facticity. These positions could then be seen not as a consequence of an ontological situation, but as a transcription of a religious wish into the rationalizing language of ontology. In #333, Nietzsche explains, "...it is only this desire 'thus it ought to be' that has called forth that other desire to know what 'is'. For the knowledge of what is, is a consequence of that question: 'How? is it possible? why precisely so?' Wonder at the disagreement between our desires and the course of the world. But perhaps the case is different: perhaps that 'thus it ought to be' is our desire to overcome the world'".

omnipotent transfiguration of the world, but is also the desire to be known, to come into being through the look of the Other. Moreover, this look is not merely a hostile glance, and the exchange between two selves is not merely a fight in which each seeks to assert himself as God. The situation of reciprocal desire becomes the locus of a progressive movement of freedom, a domain in which the factic is suffused with human will. Although desire does seem to labor under an ideal of disembodiment in the discussion of existential desire, we can see that Sartre has formulated an alternative understanding of the projects of desire in the context of sexual desire. The progression of Sartre's own views on desire in the later works - Critique of Dialectical Reason, Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr, and The Idiot of the Family: The Life of Gustave Flaubert - attests to his growing awareness that the paradox of an embodied consciousness need not be formulated as an antagonistic struggle between body and consciousness. Indeed, in a set of remarks recorded in an interview, "Self-Portrait at Seventy", Sartre suggests that the body can be an expressive medium for consciousness:

"Sartre: '...for me there is no basic difference between the body and consciousness...'

Interviewer: 'Isn't it true that we only yield our thoughts totally to the people to whom we truly yield our bodies?'

Sartre: 'We yield our bodies to everyone, even beyond the realm of sexual relations; by looking, by touching. You yield your body to me, I yield mine to you: we exist for the other, as body. But we do not exist in this same way as consciousness, as ideas, even though ideas are modifications of the body.
If we truly wished to exist for the other, to exist as body, as body that can continually be laid bare - even if this never actually happens - our ideas would appear to others as coming from the body. Words are formed by a tongue in the mouth. All ideas would appear in this way, even the most vague, the most fleeting, the least tangible. There would no longer be the hiddenness, the secrecy which in certain centuries was identified with the honor of men and women, and which seems very foolish to me.'"[35]

[35]Sartre, "Self-Portrait at Seventy", in Life/Situations: Essays Written and Spoken, Tr. Paul Auster, Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon), 1977, p. 11.

Chapter Seven: Trouble and Longing in Being and Nothingness: The Circle of Sexual Desire

> "In fact everyone will agree that desire is not only longing, a clear and translucent longing which directs itself through our body toward a certain object. Desire is defined as trouble. ...troubled water remains water; it preserves the fluidity and the essential characteristics of water; but its translucency is 'troubled' by an inapprehensible presence which makes one with it, which is everywhere and nowhere, and which is given as a clogging of the water by itself."
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> Being and Nothingness, p. 387.

Sartre's view of sexual desire is often interpreted as an existential argument for the inevitability of sadomasochism. Clearly, Sartre does affirm sadism and masochism as permanent possibilities of all sexual encounters.[1] And he does reject the category of 'dialectic', arguing instead that the sexual drama of master and slave is not aufgehoben in a state of universal reciprocity. Rather, sexual exchange is a "circle"[2] in which the inversion of sadism into masochism, and masochism into sadism, follows according to the ontological necessity that every determinate individual is what he is not, and is not what he is. That no third term or transcending synthesis emerges from the circle of desire does not necessarily imply that sexual roles are fixed and futile. The phenomenon of inversion gives rise to the consciousness of inversion, and this consciousness is at once awareness and choice. To take up the role of sadist or masochist as a permanent feature of one's sexual self is to posture as an essentialist, and indulge the bad faith of sexual desire. The constancy of inversion is, for Sartre, a new basis of reciprocity; the

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[1] Sartre describes both sadism (p. 378) and masochism (p. 405) as a "failure" of desire. The true aim of desire he defines as "reciprocal incarnation" (p. 398), but then goes on to claim that this is a necessary failure (p. 396). Sadism and masochism appear to be the most pronounced ways in which reciprocity dissembles into non-reciprocal exchange.

[2] Being and Nothingness, p. 363.

impossibility of being both subject and object at once for the other proceeds from the perspectival character of corporeal life. Sadomasochism is the paradox of determinate freedom revealed in sexual life.

For Sartre, consciousness is always an individual consciousness, and is as such distinct from every other consciousness; nothingness persists between the partners of desire as their necessary and ineradicable difference. The interiority of the Other cannot, as Hegel occasionally appeared to think, be revealed through cognition, because the pre-reflective is the private and hidden consciousness of an agency to itself; in this sense, the pre-reflective cogito is a locus of private and inviolable freedom. Sexual desire seeks the interiority of the Other, bids the Other to manifest its freedom in the form of flesh. Knowledge of this freedom requires the mediation of the body. A freedom purified of the body is an impossibility.

The paradox of determinate freedom, the continual problem of existing as an embodied choice, is surpassed in the Hegelian account when the body becomes the generalized body of Christ.[3] In other words, the body is no longer conceived as a limit to freedom where the body is no longer the determinate body of a mortal being whose contours indicate necessary difference. Simply put, Sartre's conception of the body differs from Hegel's in that as Sartre identifies the body with the limit to freedom and the insurpassable condition of individuation. And yet Sartre's view is not wholly negative, for the body mediates and determines freedom in the case of sexual desire. We must, then, turn to Sartre's treatment of sexual desire in order to understand how the body both limits and mediates the various projects of choice.

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[3]Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit, "The Revealed Religion", pp. 453-478.

If freedom is defined as the project to become the foundation of one's own being, and if the body is a contingent facticity - a being which we are but do not choose - it would appear to follow that in every case the body is opposed to freedom as its premature limit. In Sartre's discussion of the circle of desire, the body is not exclusively identified with contingency, and neither is freedom always construed as the freedom to be God. The body, although claimed as a 'factic' dimension of the self, is never purely factic; it is, equally, a perspective and a set of intentional relations.[4] Freedom is not always discussed as a project of disembodiment which is doomed to failure. Indeed, freedom is also construed as a project of embodiment, a constant effort to affirm the corporeal ties to the world which compose one's situation. In Being and Nothingness, and more distinctly in the later biographical studies and The Critique of Dialectical Reason, freedom becomes less tied to ontological ideals which transcend history than to the concrete and highly mediated projects of surviving, interpreting, and reproducing a socially complex situation.

The notion of freedom as an ex nihilo creation certainly has its moorings in Sartre's thought.[5] Herbert Marcuse's early review of Being and Nothingness aptly criticizes this conception of Sartre's, but does not give adequate attention to the notion of situation as radically qualifying the ex nihilo character of freedom.[6] The same holds true of Merleau-Ponty's

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[4]Sartre, pp. 318-320.

[5]For an interesting article tracing Sartre's Cartesianism and its eventual dissolution, see Thomas W. Busch, "Beyond the Cogito: The Question of the Continuity of Sartre's Thought," The Modern Schoolman, LX, March 1983, pp. 189-204.

[6]Herbert Marcuse, "Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's L'Etre et le neant", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. VIII, No. 3, March 1948, p. 330.

critique of Sartre's Cartesianism in Adventures of the Dialectic and Sense and Non-sense. Sartre's supposed adherence to an isolated consciousness unrelated to embodiment and sociality has been effectively refuted by Simone de Beauvoir in "Merleau-Ponty et le Pseudo-Sartrisme",[7] and, more recently, by Monika Langer in "Sartre and Merleau-Ponty: A Re-appraisal."[8] We shall see that the alleged opposition between body and consciousness is one which Sartre only tenuously maintains, for the body in its sexual being is not mere contingency, but is equally a mode of consciousness and a way of situating oneself in the world: desire is "consciousness making itself body."[9]

Sadomasochism introduces the paradox of determinate freedom as a drama of consciousness and objectification. Sartre's well-known formulation that one can only come into relations with another through becoming an object for that Other is misleading in its simplicity. Sartre, of course, contributes to the deception by employing the visual metaphor of the 'look' for the constituting act by which one consciousness apprehends another as an object. Sartre does not always clarify in what sense the identity of the Other is objectified, nor does he offer a definition of the 'look' which distinguishes its literal from its more general formulations.[10] Occasionally his own prose seems to invite

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[7]Simone de Beauvoir, "Merleau-Ponty et le Pseudo-Sartrisme", Les Temps Modernes, 10:2 (1955).

[8]Monika Langer, "Sartre and Merleau-Ponty: A Reappraisal", The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (Open Court Press), 1981, pp. 300-325.

[9]Being and Nothingness, p. 389.

[10]Sartre clearly does consider the 'look' as a figurative expression insofar as it can be "rustling of branches" or "the slight opening of a shutter" (p. 257-58). Objects can manifest a look, and a look can persist in the mode of memory or anticipation: cf. The Words: "Even in solitude I was putting on an act. Karlemamie and Anne Marie had turned those pages long before I was born; it was their knowledge that lay open before my eyes. In the evening they would question me: 'what did you read? What have you understood?' I knew it, I was pregnant, I would give birth to a child's comment. To

a literal reading so that sexual desire, as an exchange of constitutive 'looks', appears to be a circle of voyeurism and exhibitionism:

> "...my being-an-object is the only possible relation between me and the Other, it is this being-as-object which alone can serve me as an instrument to effect my assimilation of the Other freedom."[11]

Only under the Other's gaze does identity acquire being: "...the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculptures it, produces it as it is, sees it as I shall never see it."[12] As a self regarded, the agent of desire can make use of the Other's gaze as the instrument of its own self-objectification. As a self who regards the Other, the agent transcends the limits of bodily perspective and asserts itself as a productive freedom. Primarily the Other appears as the alienation of one's own possibilities. As in Hegel's dialectic of lordship and bondage, the Other appears as an alienated version of myself: "I grasp the Other's look at the very center of my act as the solidification and alienation of my own possibilities."[13] As the producer and sculptor of the Other, the sadist tends toward an identity of pure freedom, discovering the body as alienated in the Other. As the agent who effects his own objectification, the masochist discovers his freedom alienated in the Other.

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escape from the grown-ups into reading was the best way of communing with them. Though they were absent, their future gaze entered me through the back of my head, emerged from their pupils, and propelled along the floor the sentences which had been read a hundred times and which I was reading for the first time. I who was seen saw myself." The Words, tr. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Vintage Books), 1981, p. 70.

[11] Being and Nothingness, p. 365.

[12] Ibid., p. 364.

[13] Ibid., p. 263.

The Sartrian self can only know itself in its desire insofar as it attends to itself in a pre-reflective mode. This pre-reflective agency is always a non-positional consciousness of choice, the mode in which consciousness determines itself in the world. This awareness is necessarily an awareness of frustration, for human reality seeks to know itself as a being, and pre-reflective consciousness reveals it as a perpetually elusive agency. The Other appears as an agent which can grasp the self reflectively, i.e. as an object or set of realized possibilities. The Other has no access to the pre-reflective cogito, but recognizes the self only through the determinate acts in which freedom is congealed. Hence, the look at once confirms the self as a being - an objectification of possibilities - and threatens to deprive the self of its essential freedom. Although the look confers being, it does so only through becoming an act of deprivation, a violation and an expropriation of freedom. The self so expropriated is, however, only the phenomenal self - the self which appears. Under the gaze of the Other it may appear that there is nothing left of the self being seen and that the Other "has stolen my being."[14] And yet, 'the nothing left' is not an absolute negation, but a determinate posture of freedom, a 'nothing' which, in Sartrian terms, is "a non-substantial absolute."[15]

The experience of 'being seen' gives rise to the experience of 'seeing' in Sartre's view. The self regarded is never simply a self appropriated through an Other's glance; indeed, convinced of its own alienation, seeking to recover itself, this objectified self already surpasses the look which defines it. The sense of 'being convinced', the striving toward self-recovery, are already

[14]Ibid., p. 364.

[15]Ibid., p. 561.

postures of freedom - pre-reflective orientations which elude the look of the Other. Failing reflectively to thematize its pre-reflective acts, this self does not see the consciousness of expropriation as proof that expropriation has failed. It is in this sense that the pre-reflective is the domain of inviolable freedom. The encounter with the Other obscures pre-reflective awareness, and makes the self doubt its own interiority. The self appears outside itself as the ego constituted as a product of another's acts. So constituted, the self experiences itself as grasped, possessed, defined by the Other. The fact that it 'experiences itself' in these modes is obscured by the modes themselves; intentional enthrallment conceals pre-reflective choice - the reflexivity of consciousness. As in Hegel, the project developed in response to this enthrallment is that of "the recovery of my being."[16] The Other which deprives the self through the look of its freedom is seduced into giving that self a confirmation of its being; this seduction is effected through looking back. And this inviting look seeks to effect in turn a vision large enough to take in the self as both body and freedom.

The insurpassabilty of the 'look' is a function of the insurpassability of exteriority between self and Other. The distance is corporeal and, hence, spatial; thus, the 'look' signifies the necessity of a spectatorial point of view, a medium of exchange based on physical distance. This exteriority is not, however, a source of indifference because the corporeal distance establishes the Other in a privileged position of sight. The self can only be conscious of itself obliquely; it either senses itself indirectly, or infers from its acts what it might be. The self is burdened by the fact that it must live and reflect upon itself at once; hence, its self-understanding is never

[16] Ibid., p. 364.

complete, for in the moment that it grasps itself reflectively, it escapes itself pre-reflectively. Because the Other does not live the self which it sees, it is able to grasp that self purely in reflective terms. The self so regarded seeks to recover itself through an assimilation or absorption of the reflective posture of the Other: "thus my project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other."[17] The effort to absorb the Other's freedom is effected through the appropriation of an objectifying point of view on oneself, and, hence, the surpassing of the perspectival limits of corporeality:

> I want to assimilate the Other as the Other-looking-at-me, and this project of assimilation includes an augmented recognition of my being-looked-at. In short, in order to maintain before me the Other's freedom which is looking at me, I identify myself totally with my being-looked-at.[18]

The desiring agent who looks, who monopolizes the power of definition and transcendence, undergoes an inversion into objectification or embodiment in a similar fashion. This Other who 'looks', who defines and produces the agent identified with corporeality, is itself a disembodied self, a pure vision ungrounded in the world. Insofar as the 'look' signifies a free act of constitution, it is freedom in a limited sense; the freedom of the pure seer is a rootless freedom which cannot take stock of its own being. The self which is seen has itself reflected as an object and an embodied being; it is seen and affirmed in its corporeal situation. But the self who merely sees does not know itself reflectively, but can only sense itself pre-reflectively as a transcendent flight toward the self which it apprehends. Its body is permanently outside, as the Other. Hence, this seer who constantly defines

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 365.

objects and others exterior to itself lacks its own being, and begins to seek its own definition. The disembodied flight of the pure seer seeks its own concretization through the body. Sadism becomes the concrete expression for the project of disembodiment.

The circle of desire, which comes to be explained in terms of sadomasochism, is the paradox of the body as a determinate freedom played out in the context of reciprocal desire. "The body is a passion by which I am engaged in the world and in danger in the world."[19] The body is thus equally a source of productivity and victimization; it is a mode of affecting and being affected by the world; the body "is a point of departure which I am and which at the same time I surpass toward what I have to be."[20] One surpasses the body insofar as one makes of corporeal contingency a project of significance: "we can never apprehend this contingency as such insofar as our body is for us; for we are a choice, and for us, to be is to choose ourselves...this inapprehensible body is precisely the necessity that there be a choice, that I do not exist all at once."[21] The body is thus insurpassable perspective; it is both our distance from the world and the condition of our access:

> ...the body cannot be made for me transcendant and known; the spontaneous, unreflective consciousness is no longer the consciousness of the body. It would be best to say, using 'exist' as a transitive verb, that consciousness exists its body...my body is a conscious structure...[22]

Sartre concludes that the body belongs to the structures of non-thetic consciousness, and that "consciousness of the body is lateral and retrospective." We never experience the body as contingency pure and simple,

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[19] Ibid., p. 388.

[20] Ibid., p. 326.

[21] Ibid., p. 328.

[22] Ibid., p. 329.

for such a body would be deprived of consciousness. Contingency is always given as "that in terms of which consciousness makes itself a choice." Hence, the body, although referred to as facticity, is never experienced outside of an interpretive field. This is clear in Sartre's formulation that "consciousness of the body is comparable to the consciousness of a sign." And yet the body does not signify a prior or anterior set of meanings; rather, it signifies "the manner in which it affected." This affect which the body expresses is a "constituted affectivity", a mode of being in the world. The affect which the body signifies is "a transcendent 'intention'...directed toward the world."[23]

Sadomasochistic desire signifies the ambiguous meaning of the body as a limited perspective and as the condition of access to the world, i.e. as both contingency and project. The body is a restricted perspective as well as a perspective which constantly transcends itself toward other perspectives. As a sexual experience, the contingent or passive body is never wholly lifeless precisely because it must maintain itself in its passivity; moreover, passivity is discovered - or, in principle, can be discovered - as an instrument by which the Other's freedom is assimilated, i.e. the Other's perspective imaginatively and empathetically entertained. The sadist who seeks his own disembodiment, endeavors in vain to surpass facticity; he denies his own body without depriving it of existence; in effect, he eliminates his own body from the Other's field of sight. The only way to keep the Other from looking at the sadist and, hence, ruining his project of disembodiment, is to convince the Other to be his body exclusively, that is, to blind himself to his own capacity for sight.

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[23] Ibid., p. 330.

The sadist constructs distance between his flesh and the flesh of the masochist through the transformation of his own body into a pure instrument of control. As an instrument, it is known only through the effect which it causes, and is, thus, left unconsidered as it is in itself: "...the sadist refuses his own flesh at the same time that he uses instruments to reveal by force the Other's flesh to him."[24] Fashioning the Other as a pure body, the sadist tries to convince this Other to choose this congealment of his possibilities:

> He wishes that the Other's freedom should determine itself to become love - and this not only at the beginning of the affair but at each instant - and at the same time he wants this freedom to be captured by itself, to turn back upon itself, as in madness, as in a dream, so as to will its own captivity. This captivity must be a resignation that is both free and yet chained in our hands. In love it is not a determinism of the passions which we desire in the Other nor a freedom beyond reach; it is a freedom which plays the role of a determinism of the passions and is caught in its own role.[25]

The effort to subdue the Other as pure body fails because of an ambivalence intrinsic to both sadistic and masochistic desire. The sadist, as is clear from Sartre's description above, does not seek the Other as pure body, but as a freedom which has determined itself as a body. And the masochist could not become this pure contingency even if it were the sadist's true desire, for masochistic desire, like all other desire, is "the consent to desire": "consciousness chooses itself as desire."[26] The projects of sadism and masochism necessarily convert into each other, for all flesh gives rise to intentionality, and all intentional transcendence requires a ground in corporeal life. The sadist, like the lord in Hegel's "Lordship and Bondage",

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[24] Ibid., p. 399.

[25] Ibid., p. 367.

[26] Ibid., p. 388.

can only pursue his project of domination insofar as he blinds himself to the futility of the reflexive project simultaneously at work, i.e. the pursuit of disembodiment. The sadist requires of the masochist what the lord requires of the bondsman: to be the body which the sadist endeavors not to be. And yet, "sadism is a blind alley, for it not only enjoys the possession of the Other's flesh but at the same time in direct connection with this flesh, it enjoys its own non-incarnation."[27] Enjoyment or pleasure foils the sexual project of disembodiment, for pleasure reveals consciousness as a body: "...if pleasure enables us to get out of the circle, this is because it kills both the desire and the sadistic passion without satisfying them."[28]

The project of sadism is subverted through the experience of pleasure because pleasure reasserts the body which the sadist has tried to deny. As a sexual project which seeks to deny the very ground of sexuality, sadism is a movement of sexuality against itself, an expression of rancor against corporeal life which emerges from within its own midst. Its failure is clear insofar as desire, as the medium of this project, cannot be utilized without undercutting the project itself. This is not to say that there are no truly sadistic sexual acts, but, rather, that they are not satisfying in the way that they strive to be. Insofar as masochism is a project which also seeks to resolve the ontological situation of having to be a paradoxical unity of corporeality and freedom, it is similarly doomed to fail. The look of the sadist which confers being on the masochist must be sustained; hence, the masochist must keep himself fascinating for the sadist which means, paradoxically, that the masochist must keep his freedom in tact so that he can continuously offer it

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[27] Ibid., p. 399.

[28] Ibid., p. 405.

up. The masochist fashions himself an object, not to lose consciousness but to gain an expanded consciousness of himself. By identifying himself with his body, he seeks to elicit a thorough comprehension of himself through the objectifying look of the Other. The masochist wants to be defined by the Other and to participate in the Other's gaze. Hence, his identification with his own body is tacitly an effort to surpass the perspective of that body and take on the perspective of the Other. Masochism is thus an effort to transcend the body through an identification with the body: "I want to assimilate the Other as the Other-looking-at-me, and this project of assimilation includes an augmented recognition of my being-looked-at. In short, in order to maintain before me the Other's freedom which is looking at me, I identify myself totally with my being-looked-at."[29]

Sadism and masochism share a common goal in that they seek to transcend the restrictive character of corporeality; the sadist follows a path of self-denial, whereas the masochist, perhaps more realistically, seeks transcendence by pushing restriction to an extreme. In either case, desire is revealed as fundamentally an ecstatic intentionality in which the body comports the body beyond itself. Sadism and masochism, as highlighting the two poles of the paradoxical unity of embodied consciousness, are constitutive moments of every sexual expression: "I am at the root of my being the project of assimilating and making an object of the Other."[30] This project is rooted in the paradoxical nature of the for-itself: "The for-itself is both a flight and a pursuit of the in-itself; the for-itself is a double relation."[31]

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[29] Ibid., p. 365.

[30] Ibid., p. 363.

[31] Ibid., p. 362.

The circle of sadism and masochism might be termed a circle of freedom and embodiment, a circle in which the terms are essentially related although never synthesized into a completed unity. The enactment of sadism and masochism reveal the impossible premises on which these projects are based, and yet the recognition of impossibility does not, as it does in Hegel, give rise to a new, more inclusive framework in which paradox is resolved. The experience of futility gives rise to a consciousness of futility, but this second-order consciousness does not give rise to new possibility. Indeed, there is no resolution of this paradox which is not temporary and imaginary. Desire is an essential paradox for Sartre, and yet it is endemic to desire to seek, if only tentatively, a resolution to its own ontological situation. Desire exceeds the world which is given to it, so that any satisfaction to desire requires a turn away from the given world to one created. The body can be neither fully denied nor fully sufficient unto itself, so that desire can seek a resolution to this incessant paradox only by arranging for a temporary escape from the exigencies of corporeality. Desire must subject the body to the imaginary; it must create anew its object and itself in order to be satisfied.

In our discussion of The Emotions and Psychology of the Imagination we understood affectivity as a response to adversity, a magical effort to transform the facts of the perceptual world, the essential "difficulty" of that world. This distance between the aims of consciousness and the coefficient of adversity which characterizes all facticity can be bridged, in Sartre's view, only through a consciousness which assumes its own facticity and, through that facticity, discovers a 'flesh' of objects or, as Merleau-Ponty was to say, an "interworld". As magic is the mode by which emotion transforms the world, so "enchantment" becomes the transformative effect of desire:

> "The same is true of desire as of emotion. We have pointed out elsewhere that emotion is not the apprehension of an exciting

> object in an unchanged world; rather since it corresponds to a global modification of consciousness and of its relations to the world, emotion expresses itself by means of a radical alteration of the world. Similarly sexual desire is a radical modification of the For-itself; since the For-itself makes itself be on another plane of being, it determines itself to exist its body differently, to make itself be clogged by its facticity.[32]

Sexual desire is not merely a transformation of the For-itself, because this transformed For-itself presents the world in a transformed dimension. The world which sexual desire brings into being is not a magical world which is counterposed to a 'real' or 'objective' world. Sartre appears to confirm that sexual desire reveals a magical realm intrinsic to the world, a dimension concealed to the perceptual consciousness of mundane life. In Being and Nothingness Sartre does not refer to the perceptual world as such, and we can see in his discussion of sexual desire a readiness to admit that the imaginative consciousness is not wholly separate from the everyday perceptual consciousness which attends the factic world. Indeed, in Sartre's discussion of sexual desire, his position comes very close to Merleau-Ponty's in The Phenomenology of Perception, where perception itself is seen to contain and depend on imagination in an essential way.[33] Sartre explains that the world of sexuality is not an irrational or deceptive world, but, rather, a dimension of reality which requires desire for its disclosure. Desire does not, then, create a solipsistic universe:

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[32]Ibid., pp. 391-392.

[33]Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception sought to refute the notion, subscribed to by Sartre in The Psychology of Imagination, that perception confronts a factic world which is brutely given at an insurpassable distance from consciousness. Perception is not a mode of knowing the world which requires distance between the perceiving agent and the world it knows; for Merleau-Ponty, perception is already flesh, a sensuous act which apprehends an object in virtue of a common sensuousness. See also "The Intertwining" in The Visible and the Invisible.

> Correlatively the world must come into being for the For-itself in a new way. There is a world of desire. If my body...is lived as flesh, then it is as a reference to my flesh that I apprehend the objects in the world.[34]

In sexual desire, the world loses its primary value as a field of instrumental values and appears instead as present. For Sartre, desire is not an instrumental relation towards others and objects, but a two-fold effort to incarnate and reveal. The factic is no longer outside, as a difficult and estranged dimension of the world; it is, infused with consciousness, the experience of one's own flesh. Facticity is embodied and, as in the case of the image, "shot through and through with creative will."[35] As the For-itself, defined primarily as an instrumental orientation toward the world, assumes its own facticity, it discovers a prior relation with the world which its instrumental orientation tends to obscure. Consciousness, through assuming the body as its necessary expression, renders itself passive, but this passivity becomes the condition of the revelation of the sensible world:

> ...I make myself passive in relation to [the objects of the world]...and...they are revealed to me from the point of view of this passivity, in it and through it (for passivity is the body, and the body does not cease to be a point of view). Objects then become the transcendent ensemble which reveals my incarnation to me. A contact with them is a caress...to perceive an object when I am in the desiring attitude is to caress myself with it...In my desiring perception I discover something like a flesh of objects.[36]

For Sartre, the primary relation between the For-itself and its world is that of distance, and this distance is breached as consciousness submerges itself in its facticity. The embodiment of consciousness is itself a project, in Sartrian terms. Consciousness knows itself primarily as a translucency only

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[34]Being and Nothingness., p. 392.

[35]The Psychology of the Imagination, p. 20.

[36]Being and Nothingness, p. 392.

dimly aware of its own corporeal dimension. Alienation signifies the initial moment of consciousness' journey toward self-recovery, a movement to recover oneself as flesh, that is, as a body essential to consciousness. Interestingly, this assumption of an initial estrangement between consciousness and body, whereby consciousness exists first and then acquires its own embodiment, contrasts sharply with common intuitive notions concerning child development which assert that the somatic dimension of the self is primary and that consciousness is an emergent phenomenon. On Sartre's account, it is the body which emerges. The child for Sartre does not appear to come into the world through flesh, but from an existential void; indeed, this child is not 'delivered', but 'thrown'.

The reasons for the initial estrangement of consciousness from its body in Sartre's philosophy could be approached from a variety of perspectives. Clearly, Sartre does occasionally hold to a Cartesian belief that thinking is constitutive of personal identity, and that this constitutive thinking is essentially an abstract activity non-essentially linked to the sensuous. That self and world as sensuous phenomena are known initially at a distance, and are only finally encountered as flesh <u>after</u> consciousness moulds itself as desire, remains a profoundly counter-intuitive notion, and one which appears contrary to Sartre's own emphasis on consciousness as a form of engagement.[37] Indeed, that consciousness in this account must make itself into desire and only then discover the flesh of the world appears to contradict his later claim in <u>Being and Nothingness</u> that the For-itself is essentially desire and that "desire is the being of human reality." On the first model, consciousness is a spectator on the world, estranged from the sensuous, a disembodied instrument of

[37] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 308: "The point of view of pure knowledge is contradictory; there is only the point of view of <u>engaged</u> knowledge."

knowledge. On the second model, consciousness knows itself as essentially embodied, and primarily engaged.

When Sartre takes the spectatorial view of consciousness, we seem to have an inverse phenomenological description of experience, one which takes the epoche as constitutive of everyday experience and which views the entrance into the natural attitude as a philosophical achievement. For this consciousness, the form of an object appears before its matter, and reflection gradually gives way to desire:

> ...in the desiring attitude...I am sensitive not so much to the form of the object and to its instrumentality, as to its matter (gritty, smooth, tepid, greasy, rough, etc.). In my desiring perception I discover something like a flesh of objects. My shirt rubs against my skin, and I feel it. What is ordinarily for me an object most remote becomes the immediately sensible; the warmth of air, the breath of the wind, the rays of sunshine, etc.; all are present to me in a certain way, as posited upon me without distance and revealing my flesh by means of their flesh.[38]

The world of instrumentality is clearly opposed to the world of sexual desire. For Sartre, the usual orientation toward the world is that of an unreflective instrumental engagement which presupposes and reconfirms the distance between agent and object. The rays of sunshine are only felt and made immediately sensible once we lay down our tools, as it were. Instrumental action requires and confirms distance between the agent and his product; desire does not seek to make use of its object, but, rather, to let it appear as it is. Desire is, on this view, a relaxation of the instrumental mode; it is the emergence of the world not as a field of purposes and ends, but, rather, in its presence.

The Other, according to Sartre, is the occasion of the appearance of the world as present. The world as flesh only appears to the body which has been

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[38] Ibid., p. 392.

transformed into flesh, and this latter transformation is only possible through the look of the Other. We will recall, "the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born..." The body is no longer an instrument once it is desired; it becomes a creation, a presence, which, in turn, makes present the flesh of others and of the world.

Here we can see most clearly the significant relationship between desire and imagination, as it is considered in The Psychology of the Imagination, emotions as magical transformations, as outlined in The Emotions, and sexual desire in Being and Nothingness as "an attitude aiming at enchantment."[39] Sexual desire, is, for Sartre, a way of imagining the Other, but this imagining is not a source of delusion or solipsistic creation. The self is not a ready-made identity which desire endeavors to apprehend; the self is a gradual embodiment of freedom, the body become flesh, a process of becoming which the desire of the Other facilitates and confirms. The problem of solipsism considered in the Psychology of the Imagination no longer applies, for the Other is not a positive datum, a self-identical being, but a process of choosing itself; as such, it is an identity which requires its own social constitution in order to be. The self only comes to be through the look of the Other which affirms and creates this self. Clearly, the self is not wholly created through the Other; before the look of the Other, the self is a body and sustains instrumental relations with the world but remains at a distance from its own flesh and from the sensible presence of Others and the world. Before the constitutive exchange of desire, the self is mute and, perhaps, functional, closed in on itself, bearing within itself an implicit history and a thwarted set of possibilities. The desire of the Other brings that self into

[39] Ibid., p. 394.

being; it does not cause that self to exist, but rather, to assume its being, that is, to begin its process of creating itself through determinate acts which are affirmed through the recognition of the Other.

The constitutive exchange of desire takes place against a background of negation; the ineradicable differences among selves, the irreversible distance between consciousness and the sensible world gives rise to a need for presence, a yearning for unity which we saw in Hegel as the fundamental project of desire. That difference is an ontological given does not imply that it is given in static form. Although desire cannot, for Sartre, overcome difference, it can formulate it in various ways. The effort to formulate difference, to thematize negation, such that the negative is circumscribed and subdued through a perpetual creation of presence is the tacit project of sexual desire. As in our considerations of Kojeve and Hyppolite, desire reveals human being as able to endure the negative, i.e. loss, death, distance, absence, precisely because it appropriates the power of the negative and expresses it in the form of freedom. In the case of sexual desire this freedom takes the form of incarnating the self and the other, the experience of body as consciousness, a simultaneity of consciousness and the sensible world which, while sustaining difference in the form of tension, nevertheless creates a tentative configuration of presence.

Sartre describes the effort of sexual desire as a pursuit of the Other's facticity and "the pure existence of things."[40] The "world of desire" is a "...destructured world which has lost its meaning, a world in which things jut out like fragments of pure matter..."[41] Absorption in the flesh of the Other

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., p. 395.

is an impossible effort to merge with matter or facticity itself, a purposeful "clogging" of consciousness which seeks to forget situation and environment and the whole of the perceptual world riddled with negation. In this sense, then, desire is an effort to congeal the world, to reduce it to the flesh of the Other, to recreate the world as flesh. The pursuit of being which forms the tacit project of desire establishes desire as "an absolute impulse."[42]

This movement toward absolute presence necessarily meets with frustration precisely because the incarnation of the Other requires the incarnation of the self. Sartre appears to understand the initial project of desire as absorption in the Other: "desire is not only the desire of the Other's body; it is - within the unity of a single act - the non-thetically linked project of being swallowed up in the body."[43] Desire is always haunted by "disturbance" or "trouble" which intimates "the presence of an invisible something which is not itself distinguished and which is manifested as a pure factual resistance." The presence of facticity is an essentially ambiguous presence; it promises a resolution for negation at the same time that it reaffirms its necessity. Pleasure, for Sartre, is the "death and failure of desire"[44] precisely because it returns each partner of desire back to their separate corporealities; indeed, it reminds both partners that the creation of a presence which could effectively subdue difference was a <u>magical</u> creation, an enchanted creation which could not be maintained.

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[42]Sartre refers to emotion as "an intuition of the absolute" in <u>The Emotions</u>, (p. 81), a phrase which is reflected in Hyppolite's "The Concept of Existence in Hegelian Phenomenology", p. 26, when he claims that "desire is an absolute impulse."

[43]<u>Being and Nothingness</u>, p. 389.

[44]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 397.

We ought not construe the life and death of desire as a movement to a magical world which is doomed to return to a rational world. It is not as if desire creates a momentary fantasy of overcoming ontological differences and then forfeits that fantasy upon the remainder of inevitable separateness. Rather, the movement toward magical creation is necessitated by this ontology of difference; the inevitability of the negative conditions and necessitates desire as a magical project, a phenomenon of belief. In "The 'faith' of Bad Faith" Sartre writes, "...we take belief as meaning the adherence of being to its object when the object is not given or is given indistinctly..."[45] Desire is, in effect, always 'troubled' by the absence of the Other, i.e. that "invisible something" which signifies the interiority of the Other who is in principle inaccessible. Belief is, according to Sartre, a mode of attributing being to something not given or given indistinctly; hence, it undergirds the imaginary which, as we noted, posits non-existent or absent objects. Insofar as the world remains hidden from consciousness, appearing in partial and adumbrated form, we are forced to believe. Belief arises in the confrontation with non-being, and asserts itself as the way in which consciousness survives this everpresent absence. Because human reality is fundamentally the desire to be, an absolute urge toward presence, it encounters non-being primarily in the mode of suffering. It undergoes absence as an annihilation of itself. And yet this passivity which corresponds to non-being - and which is itself a kind of deterioration of the self's being, a disappointment of its constitutive desire - is not a static mode of being; passivity turns to passion which becomes the essential way in which human beings exist in the face of the negative.

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[45] Ibid., p. 67.

Sexual desire is predicated on belief insofar as it is a way of attributing being to an unattainable reality, and is a mode of passionately encountering the ineradicable differences between selves. In The Emotions Sartre maintains that "the body is belief".[46] In the sense that the body, lived as flesh or the contingency of pure presence, reveals a world of flesh, the body effects a magical transformation of the perceptual world. The flesh of the world is not a unilateral creation of the body lived as flesh, but it is a dimension of the already given world elucidated and made present. The body as flesh is a passive mode of presenting the world, but it is a passivity turned passionate: "the objects of the world...are revealed to me from the point of view of this passivity, in it and through it (for passivity is the body, and the body does not cease to be a point of view)."[47] Desire thus indicates a tenacity of belief as its own necessary precondition. This primary act of 'making present' which constitutes belief, also makes possible the image and, consequently, the creative or constitutive activity of desire. We might understand the essential 'desire to be' as a kind of pre-reflective enthrallment, a readiness to believe, to attribute being to the non-existent, absent, or lost. Similarly, we can understand ambivalent desires as indicating a prior crisis of belief. And the inability to desire at all might be understood as a radical disbelief in the possibility of overcoming any differences at all.

Although sexual desire nears the experience of presence which would satisfy the ontological aims of desire in general, Sartre also clearly states that desire is doomed to failure. The experience of pleasure, he argues, gives

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[46]The Emotions., p. 86.

[47]Being and Nothingness, p. 382.

rise to "attention to pleasure",[48] and we may conclude that there pre-reflective enthrallment of desire is extinguished through the reflective posture which disengages itself from belief. In the Transcendence of the Ego Sartre claims that "reflection poisons desire."[49] Referring to Sartre's discussion of belief in Being and Nothingness we can conclude that reflection poisons desire insofar as it undermines the magical belief which sustains desire. And insofar as human reality is a paradoxical unity of reflective and pre-reflective consciousness, the perpetual emergence and decline of desire is inevitable. Desire thus never escapes the doubt which reflective consciousness introduces. Unabashed desire reveals simple faith, abandon to the life of the body which signifies belief. Sartre follows Hegel in claiming that simple faith cannot endure as such:

> "This which I define as good faith is what Hegel would call the immediate. It is simple faith. Hegel would demonstrate at once that the immediate calls for mediation, and that belief by becoming belief for itself, passes to the state of non-belief....if I know that I believe, the belief appears to me as pure subjective determination without external correlative...To believe is to know that one believes, and to know that one believes is no longer to believe".[50]

Sartre's contrast between reflection and belief should not lead us to conclude that disbelief is rational, and belief is irrational. Instead, it seems crucial to consider that rationality appears in dual form. If an object crosses my path and then is gone, is it rational to conclude that the object no longer exists? Clearly, the domain of pre-reflective belief and, coincidently, of desire, is necessary if we are to have a rational understanding of a world

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[48] Ibid., p. 397.

[49] The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 59.

[50] Being and Nothingness, p. 69.

suffused with negation. The pre-reflective allows us to navigate the realm of negation as it is disbelief in the final word of positive reality. In this sense, the pre-reflective is its own kind of disbelief, an unwillingness to accept the hegemony of reflective consciousness. If the world is both presence and absence, then a rational comprehension of the world requires a consciousness which can attend to both realms.

Sexual desire has thus appeared in Sartre's discussion as an effort to enact with an Other the original desire to be which is constitutive of human reality. And yet a reference back to our discussion of existential desire immediately raises a set of questions. In that treatment, Sartre claimed that desire must be approached at three different levels; first, as an original choice, the anonymous desire to be which characterizes all human reality; second, as a fundamental choice, a determinate mode of being which characterizes a specific life; and third, as the myriad particular desires which indirectly express the prior two choices. In Sartre's discussion of sexual desire, we remain almost exclusively on the level of the first choice. Sexual desire is considered in its universal dimension, as an activity which emerges through an ontological necessity. As Sartre made clear in Search for a Method, and as he indicated as early as Being and Nothingness, the concrete analysis of desire must take place through an existential psychoanalysis of an individual in situation.[51] Considering the universal or anonymous features of desire, Sartre can claim that it is the flesh of the Other which we desire.

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[51]cf. Being and Nothingness, p. 615: "Generally speaking, there is no irreducible taste or inclination. They all represent a certain appropriative choice of being. It is up to existential psychoanalysis to compare and classify them. Ontology abandons us here..."

And yet certainly he must answer to the question he posed of Freud: why is it this Other rather than someone else whom we desire?[52] And if he is to claim that every life is structured by a fundamental choice which distinguishes it from other individual lives, then we need to understand in the context of a life what this desire is, and how it can be known.

We return to our original question, namely, how does desire both reveal and constitute the self, and we can conclude on the basis of Being and Nothingness and the earlier works, that desiring consciousness makes the self present as flesh, and, in the context of reciprocal desire, reveals this embodied self as that which it has always implicitly been, but never known itself to be. We have seen that the self is created through the reciprocity of desire, and we have seen that this self emerges from nothingness, but we have now seen how. As it stands, Sartre's theory is an interesting ontological inquiry, but the question remains whether it is a satisfactory phenomenological account of experience. We turn to the biographical studies of Genet and Flaubert with precise questions in mind. A thorough account of either work is impossible and unwarranted in this context, and we consider them here only in relation to the question we pose of desire: what can desire tell us about a given life? How does desire signify the project of a life, and how does it constitute that life? Genet and Flaubert were of special interest to Sartre because they, like himself, chose to determine their lives in words.[53] Their

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[52]The Transcendence of the Ego., p.

[53]Sartre, "Itinerary of a Thought", New Left Review (Nov.-Dec., 1969), pp. 50-51: "The reason why I produced Les Mots is the reason why I have studied Genet or Flaubert: how does a man become someone who writes, who wants to speak of the imaginary? This is what I sought to answer in my own case, as I sought it in that of others."

works not only explicitly trace the life of desire through their various characters, but are themselves products of desire. Moreover, Sartre, in trying to understand how certain works are created in the context of these lives, enacts for us a problem which is central to the theme of desire in Being and Nothingness, namely, to what extent can we know another human being, and to what extent, in knowing him, are we destined to create him?

Chapter Eight: The Struggle to Exist: Desire and Recognition in Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr and The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821-1857, Vol. I

"Each torpid turn of the world has such disinherited children, to whom no longer what's been, and not yet what's coming, belongs."

-R.M. Rilke, Duino Elegies[1]

Although one would not want to claim that Sartre's biographical studies of Jean Genet and Gustave Flaubert were primarily concretizations of his doctrine of desire, one is nevertheless justified on a number of grounds in approaching the biographies with this purpose in mind. As Hazel Barnes has pointed out, the biographical studies of Genet and Flaubert fulfill the promise that Being and Nothingness offered, namely, to perform a concrete existential psychoanalysis of individual lives.[2] In "Existentential Psychoanalysis", Sartre maintains, "(t)his psychoanalysis has not yet found its Freud. At most we can find the foreshadowing of it in certain particularly successful biographies. We hope to be able to attempt elsewhere two examples in relation to Flaubert and Dostoevsky".[3] In another passage from that chapter Sartre makes clear why the reconstruction of an individual life is crucial for the fulfillment of his own philosophical project: "...to be, for Flaubert, as for every subject of 'biography', means to be unified in the world. The irreducible unification which we ought to find, which is Flaubert, and which we require biographers to reveal to us - this is the unification of an original project, a unification which should reveal itself to us as a non-substantial absolute."[4] Desire, as the "being of human reality", is the concrete

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[1]Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies, tr. J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (New York: Norton), 1963, p. 63.

[2]Hazel Barnes, Sartre and Flaubert, p. 2.

[3]Being and Nothingness, p. 575.

[4]Ibid., p. 561.

expression of the original project.

The choice which founds the particular project of an individual is not executed at an instrumental distance from the world; it is lived as a passion and a pursuit, and in Sartre's words, "the fundamental project, the person, the free realization of human truth is everywhere in all desires...it is never apprehended except through desires..."[5] Desire thus delimits the hermeneutical situation in which we read our own most fundamental project, the unified legacy of choices over how to be. In the determination which is desire, choice is rendered actual; moreover, it is only through this manifestation of choice as desire that we come to understand the choices we have already made. That desire emerges as an expression and actualization of a prior choice suggests that desire does not wholly coincide with choice, but might better be understood as emerging only with choice as a necessary precondition. This accounts for the belatedness of desire, the sense we have that desire is a fait accompli, an attitude already resolved into a determined intentionality. The facticity of desire, however, is only an apparent facticity; it is a choice which has resolved itself into a factic mode and which sustains itself perpetually in that mode. What we tend to term the brute facticity of desire is, then, the solidity of a given choice - not a natural fact, but a project which poses as necessary.

As we have seen, the task of reading back the fundamental project from determinate desires proved to be a problematic dimension of Sartre's discussion of desire in Being and Nothingness. In that text we saw that desire must be understood as a unity of three interrelated projects: the original project (the anonymous and universal desire to be), the fundamental project (the individual desire to be a determinate way, i.e. a decision regarding how to

[5]Ibid., p. 567.

be), and the myriad particular desires which constitute lived experience. Sartre claimed that these three desires are only analytically separable, and that in experience they are given in one stroke as a symbolic unity. The biographical studies can be seen as an effort to clarify this symbolic unity in the context of a concrete example. As a purely theoretical account of desire, Sartre's schema in Being and Nothingness can appeal only to the generous intuitions of its readers in order to gain verification. And this tactic proves increasingly weak as the reader is asked to plumb his intuitions for something to correspond to an anonymous 'desire to be'. It is not clear how existential desire makes itself known in and through the particular, myriad desires that we can identify; and it is all the more problematic to read back our existential projects from our daily desires once we recognize that both our existential and determinate desires are mediated through a complex and highly sedimented cultural and historical world.

In Hegelian terms, Sartre attempts in the biographical studies to exemplify human beings in their 'concrete universality' and, in particular, to elucidate affective life as a symbolic unity of concrete and universal elements. In his own terms, Sartre tries to illuminate an individual life as a "universal singular",[6] a phrase which recalls the Kierkegaardian filter through which Sartre appropriates Hegel's view of the subject; Sartre understands the mediation of concrete and universal, not as a necessary development of a Spirit which transcends individuality, but as a series of projects and practices which effect this unity in irreducibly individual ways. Mediation is less an assumption of ontology, than it is a task or demand which confronts every individual and to which every individual responds in original

[6]The Family Idiot, Vol. I, tr. Cosman, p. ix.

ways. Although the Flaubert biography was written after Sartre's appropriation of Marxism, we can still see how central the postulation of existential desire is for his theory. The formulation that choice must be understood phenomenologically as desire is complicated further by the recognition that desire is itself constituted by personal and social histories. Sartre's acknowledgement of the profound effects of infantile development and social and political structures on the life of desire does not culminate in a renunciation of the doctrine of choice; rather, choice is recast as a subtle process of appropriation and interpretation, a daily task of repeating one's history in all its variegations and, through that ceaseless repetition, reworking it, fashioning it anew.

In the study of Flaubert, Sartre repeats his own philosophical history. Taking up the assertion in Being and Nothingness that "in each inclination, each tendency, the person expresses himself completely, although from a different angle",[7] he writes again of the feelings and events which compose Flaubert's life that "each piece of data set in its place becomes a portion of the whole, which is constantly being created, and by the same token reveals its profound homogeneity with all the other parts that make up the whole."[8] As in Being and Nothingness, human reality as exemplified in Genet and Flaubert is still a ceaseless quest after unity, a symbolic enclosure and recapitulation of different layers of experience. In Flaubert, the choice which founds individuality is itself conditioned and delimited by a preceding historical and cultural world; choice is reformulated as a process of dialectical mediation: "summed up and for this reason universalized by his epoch, he in turn resumes it by reproducing himself in it as singulaity."[9]

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[7]Being and Nothingness, p. 563.

[8]The Family Idiot, p. ix.

[9]Ibid.

Sartre's selection of Genet and Flaubert as subjects of full-length biographical studies[10] is hardly accidental; in reviewing Sartre's own philosophical project it is easy to see why these two authors of the imaginary became the intentional objects of Sartre's biographical desires; both writers sought satisfaction for desire in the imaginary realm, and both concretized or 'realized' the imaginary in actual, literary works. Sartre explains, "The reason why I produced Les Mots is the reason why I have studied Genet or Flaubert: how does a man become someone who writes, who wants to speak of the imaginary?" In this interview Sartre responds to the question of why he chose to write on Flaubert in words which might well be suitable for answering the question of why he wrote on Genet: "Because he is the imaginary. With him, I am at the border, the barrier of dreams."[11] But it is not enough to study the life of dreamers; for Sartre, dreams must be realized, they must take on the form of a given work so that, once having been rendered actual, they can serve as the vehicle for the modification of reality and the self-consciousness of this modification: in Flaubert he writes: "altogether truth has the character of work, it is a controlled transformation of the thing in itself which continues to modify human relations through and by the modification of this reality".[12]

The literary consummation of the imaginary is for Sartre the tentative satisfaction of the desire for an omnipotent efficaciousness, the desire to be God, which Being and Nothingness treats at length. Genet seeks revenge on a social world that limits him by forcing the populace of that world "to dream

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[10]Apart from his autobiography, The Words, Sartre wrote two shorter biographical studies: Baudelaire (1946) and "Fragment d'une etude sur le Tintoret" (1957).

[11]"Itinerary of a Thought", New Left Review, November, 1969, p. 52.

[12]The Family Idiot, p. 152.

his dream".[13] "The fact is that he prefers the work of art to theft, it is because theft is a criminal act which is derealized into a dream, whereas a work of art is a dream of murder which is realized by an act...Murderers achieve glory by forcing good citizens to dream about crime".[14] As a thief, Genet imagines that his crimes will disrupt the complacency of bourgeois life, but he cannot sustain this dream precisely because he is caught. Genet's desire to create a dream which effectively transforms the social world is realized only through art; he cannot escape the look of the Other, so he endeavors in his plays and poetry to direct the Other's look and thereby to achieve omniscient mastery over their perspective on him. In a sense, Genet seeks to escape the look of the Other, to become an invisible power, non-corporeal, which inconspicuously determines the experience of others as they read or watch his literary productions. But on the other hand, Genet solicits recognition through writing; as Sartre claims, "with words, the Other reappears".[15] The transformation from thief to poet is predicated on the recognition of the insurpassibility of the Other. And yet for Genet the Other cannot be merely accepted as such; from early childhood the Other has signified a social reality which has excluded and illegitimated Genet. Excluded from the domain of the Other, Genet attempts through his art to assimilate the Other to his world, the inverted world of the bourgeoisie in which crime, vulgarity, and sexual license are the norms. As Sartre remarks, "...incapable of carving out a place for himself in the universe, he imagines in order to convince himself that he has created the world which excludes him."[16]

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[13] Saint Genet, p. 546.

[14] Ibid., p. 485.

[15] Ibid., p. 455.

[16] Ibid., p. 468.

The biography of Genet traces a career which begins with victimization and culminates in radical invention; Genet inverts his relationship to the social world through an original appropriation of language. As a young orphan alienated from his adopted family, Genet decided to steal silverware from this family. Genet is caught and labelled a "thief" whereby he becomes, according to Sartre, the social renegade which he already sensed himself to be. This theft is Genet's first act, and through it he determines himself as the kind of individual that others fear and loathe. Illegitimate by birth, Genet takes up this illegitimacy and transforms it into a personal mission: he will become the illegitimate child who illegitimates the Other in turn. His tools are wrought from the weapons originally turned against him; he becomes a master of inversion, sensing and exposing the dialectical possibilities of the social opposition between himself and others. The possibility of a dialectical inversion of the power relations which characterize his original relations with others is to be found in language: "'I'm a thief!', he cries. He listens to his voice whereupon the relationship to language is inverted: the word ceases to be an indicator, it becomes a being."[17] "Thief" is, in effect, Genet's initiation into the realm of poetic words. The word does not refer, but creates; he has, through being so named, become the name itself. The name clings to him as an essential moment of his being. Sartre later claims that "poetry uses vocables to constitute an apparent world instead of designating real objects."[18] Hence, poetic words are those which create apparent objects just as the vehement appelation, 'thief', transforms the child Genet, invests him with a destiny and restricts his possibilities. The transformative power

[17] Ibid., p. 42.

[18] Ibid., p. 512. Cf. Sartre's What is Literature?, pp. 35-37.

of language will become Genet's weapon in forcing others to dream his dream; henceforward, according to Sartre, "Genet wanted to name, not only to designate, but to transform."[19] And the object of his transformative acts will be the social world of the just, the instrumental world of the middle-class, and the rigid and hypocritical moralities which sustain those orders.

Both the biography of Genet and of Flaubert trace the resolution of desire into the imaginary, and the imaginary into a set of literary works in which a long-standing struggle for recognition is taken up and pursued. For both Genet and Flaubert, words become the vehicle through which early childhood struggles for self-affirmation are perpetuated; and, in both cases, the literary appropriation of this struggle effects an inversion of the power dynamics which characterized the original situation. Sartre's biography of Genet has often been called his most Hegelian work,[20] but we can see that this essential relation between desire and recognition pervades Flaubert as well. The early childhood situation of both Genet and Flaubert is one of deprivation; Genet is excluded from the legitimate social community, while Flaubert is mal aime. In both cases, an original situation of victimization is reinterpreted - although never entirely overcome - through the articulation of the experience. In Sartre's view, the literary works which reflect this early childhood situation make use of the experience of early victimization at the same time that they transform the experience into an active process of literary creation.

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[19] Ibid., p. 280.

[20] Douglas Collins in Sartre as Biographer (Harvard University Press: 1980) claims that in Saint Genet "the most powerful outside influence is Hegel", that "the master-slave relationship...reappears in Saint Genet as the framework for moral questions" and that "(i)n Saint Genet all issues are approached dialectically" but that "Hegel's individual consciousness, without being annulled, becomes at one with itself and others, whereas Sartre's unhappy consciousness must resort to a more earthly cure...the projection the self upon the another", pp. 84-85.

Imaginary writing requires access to the passive and receptive orientations of early childhood, but it must also effect enough distance from this passivity to make use of it in fashioning a work of art. Writing does not transcend victimization for either Genet or Flaubert, and, indeed, we can see why in Sartre's terms it never could. Writing cannot transcend the situation of the writer but is condemned to reformulate that situation again and again. As Sartre says of Genet, "to write is to explore systematically the situation into which one is thrown".[21]

Sartre transposes the struggle for recognition onto the scene of early childhood in order to understand the initial confrontation with the Other, the primary urges for love, which form the pathic structure of every individual life. Rejecting the tendency in Being and Nothingness to treat fundamental projects as choices emerging ex nihilo from the for-itself, Sartre claims in Flaubert that "what is important here is to reject idealism - fundamental attitudes are not adopted unless they first exist. What is taken is what is at hand".[22] Sartre acknowledges in Flaubert that "without early childhood, it is obvious that the biographer is building on sand".[23] In the case of Genet as well as Flaubert, the initial relation to the Other, i.e. the infant's need of parental love, was thwarted and deficient; as a result, both children confronted this absence of recognition with a desire for recognition which could find no satisfaction. The model of desire doomed to dissatisfaction comes to characterize the literary figures in Genet's works as well as in Flaubert's, most notably Madame Bovary. Desire as a "useless passion" characterizes Sartre's ontology as well, although he claims that his childhood

[21] Saint Genet, p. 558.

[22] The Family Idiot., p. 43.

[23] Ibid., p. 44.

was very different from that of both Genet and Flaubert; indeed, in Les Mots Sartre contends that he was so well loved that he grew up convinced of his omnipotence. In any case, it is clear that for Sartre, Genet and Flaubert represent the problematic careers of a desire which from the outset is convinced of its insatiability; and though Sartre does well, especially in the context of Flaubert, to show how this self-interpretation emerges from the inferences drawn from early childhood, it seems clear that Genet and Flaubert exemplify truths which characterize the human situation universally. Although Sartre refers to the abused child Genet as a "crack in the plenitude of being", he refers to human beings generally in such terms; indeed, consciousness is said to be a "rift" in being. The loneliness of the unloved child reflects the existential loneliness of every consciousness in that consciousness is a lack, excluded from the realm of being, nostaligic for that realm, but in a state of permanent exile.

Genet and Flaubert turn to the imagination precisely because desire cannot find satisfaction in the actual world; and, indeed, for Sartre, since the writing of The Psychology of Imagination, desire may be said to find its only satisfaction in the imaginary realm. The absence of an Other who recognizes the child precipitates the creation of an imaginary world which provides a temporary filling for the impoverished social landscape. Genet, confronted at an early age with his own social illegitimacy, never having been loved by a parent, reacts to this lack of recognition through inventing a literary universe which effects his transubstantiation into words. Without a body, Genet figures he will become exempt from the need for recognition. Genet writes, "this wonderful language reduces the body, wears it down until it is transparent, until it is a speck of light." Sartre concludes: "Genet evaporates; he believed seriously, profoundly, in a transubstantiation that

would wrest him from his actual life and embody him in words, those glorious bodies."[24] Flaubert suffers a somewhat altered fate at the hands of his mother: "Gustave is immediately conditioned by his mother's indifference; he desires alone..."[25] As a child Gustave suffers from intense lethargy, and Sartre describes him as living in a state of "passive emotion". Lacking recognition, i.e. lacking parental love, Gustave becomes convinced of his own inefficiency and makes one of his own passivity to absorb the world:

> Without value, Gustave feels need as a gap, as a discomfort or - at best and most frequently - as a prelude to an agreeable and imminent surfeit. But this discomfort does not break away from subjectivity to become a demand in the world of others, it remains inside him, as inert and noisy emotion; he suffers it, pleasant or unpleasant, and when the time comes he will suffer satiety....He has neither the means nor the occasion to externalize his emotions through outbursts of any kind; he savors them, someone relieves him or else they pass, nothing more. With no sovereignty or rebellion, he has no experience of human relations; handled like a delicate instrument, he absorbs action like a sustained force and never returns it, not even with a cry - sensibility will be his domain."[26]

Sartre explains in Flaubert that positive self-regard or self-valorisation follows from the internalization of the affirming 'look' of parental love. Children come to recognize themselves through the mediation of the parental 'look'. To make a demand for oneself, to translate one's desires into speech, presupposes the existence or possibility of another who might respond. The child unconvinced of the possibility of such an Other, remains a mute and inexpressive child, one who is barred from knowing himself through want of a mediating Other. Of Flaubert, Sartre writes: "He was...frustrated well

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[24] Ibid., p. 20.

[25] The Family Idiot, Vol. I, p. 133.

[26] Ibid., p. 130-1.

before weaning, but it was a frustration without tears or rebellion."[27] Similarly, Genet's early lack of recognition leaves a mark of essential poverty on his character; Genet does not grieve or despair over his loneliness because "grief and despair are only possible if there is a way out, whether visible or secret".[28] Both Genet and Flaubert lack the means by which to recognize their own value, and because they cannot see themselves reflected in their parents' gaze, they are forced to invent themselves. Imaginary characters become key ways in which these unmirrored selves find objectification for themselves in the social world. Remarking on the youthful Flaubert, Sartre writes: "Gustave is certainly tormented by the need to know himself, to unravel his tumultuous passions and find their cause. But he is put together in such a way that he can understand himself only through invention."[29] Genet is similarly excluded from the benefits of parental recognition, and though he senses his exclusion as a determinate, though negative, relation to Others, he still lacks the means to see himself as the excluded being which he is. After he commits his crime, the young Genet "is ready to hate himself if only he can manage to see himself."[30]

The bleak childhood situations of Genet and the young Flaubert appear to deprive these young men of a sense of value and plunge them both into careers of passivity and masochism. And yet the early childhood 'situation' does not determine the adult lives of either writer in any strict sense, although it does establish the reigning motifs and circumscribe the domain of possible

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[27] Ibid., p. 129.

[28] Saint Genet, p. 191.

[29] The Family Idiot, p. 211.

[30] Saint Genet, p. 47.

choice. Early childhood does not stand in a directly causal relationship to adult life; rather, it is transmitted through the mediating activity of appropriation (internalization) and interpretation; in effect, Gustave remains passive only because he believes very deeply that that is his only choice. Sartre explains, "...passivity does not simply exist; it must continually create itself or little by little lose its force. The role of new experience is to maintain or destroy it".[31]

Sartre follows Hegel in claiming that subjectivity cannot be understood merely as a result of a history of circumstances, but must also be seen as the realization or determination of this history. In other words, subjectivity is an essentially reflexive structure, one which is not simply made, but which also makes itself. As an historical being, the child is thrown into a set of circumstances; and yet as a consciousness - and as a maker of history - the child appropriates these circumstances and concretizes them in his own personality. Sartre refers in Flaubert to the person both as sign and signifier, and suggests that the effects of history and circumstance ought to be understood as constituting the person as sign. He concludes that "...if every person in the singular contains in himself the structure of the sign, and of the totaled whole of his possibilities and his projects is assigned to him as its meaning, the hard, dark, core of this meaning is early childhood".[32] The fundamental project, filtered through the medium of early childhood, thus calls for reformulation: choice becomes the incessant process of taking up a childhood which has already asserted itself as the guiding motif of one's life. One is not simply free to take this motif up again - one must: subjectivity

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[31] The Family Idiot, p. 42.

[32] Ibid., p. 44.

is bound to thematize the conditions of its own existence; this is the necessity of its reflexive structure, and the inherent logic of its desire.

Sartre refers implicitly to Hegel's view of subjectivity in claiming that Genet's exclusion and Flaubert's alienation are psychic facts which must be realized; for Sartre - as for Hegel - affective life perseveres in an intentional structure which requires that it find some expression for itself. Affects do not exist as positive data, but are, fundamentally, projects which only survive to the extent that they are taken up and pursued. Thus, mid-way through Volume I of Flaubert, Sartre warns his readers that a comprehensive understanding of Flaubert's life cannot be content with a causal history of his affective life, but must turn also to an explanation in terms of its intentional aims. Recalling Hegel, Sartre writes:

> "...intimate experience is characterized ontologically by doubling, or self-consciousness. It is therefore not sufficient to have shown the original structure of this life and its particular kind of alienation, not even to have reconstituted its immediate savour; starting with the facts at our disposal we must determine the way in which this experience is made living. If he is condemned, how does Gustave realize his condemnation?"[33]

As in his earlier works, Sartre questions here the origin of the fundamental projects of human beings. But in contrast to the analysis offered in Being and Nothingness, Sartre's ontological categories in Genet and, more convincingly, in Flaubert reveal to a greater degree the concrete mediations through which these categories appear. The 'projects' which serve as the unifying themes of Genet's and Flaubert's lives are defined by the ontological categories schematized in Being and Nothingness; they are a formulation of a "lack"; a response to a "look"; concretized in desire. But in the biographical studies these ontological categories are to a certain extent historicized. The

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[33] Ibid., p. 382.

possibilities of this historicization can be seen in the ontological framework of the early and middle Sartre; even then human beings are defined as "in situation", projects are understood to be limited by the factic domain. But in the earlier works we receive only occasional illustrations - the waiter, the Anti-semite, the homosexual, the flirt - in order to give concrete mediation to these categories. And even then it is difficult to ascertain what exactly the relation is between the ontological structure of projects and its culturally specific incarnation; indeed, the latter appear to exemplify the former - and historical projects appear simply to provide proof of the invariant and universal features of all human intentionality. It is only in the biographical works, especially in Flaubert which is richer in historical and cultural analaysis than Genet, that these ontological categories are themselves historicized. The 'lack' from which human projects emerge is now to be understood as the concrete deprivations of childhood; the 'look' of the Other which constitutes identity is modelled more self-consciously on the Hegelian notion of recognition, and this struggle for affirmation is itself transposed onto the scene of infantile development. And desire itself is seen as a nexus of agency and cultural life, a complex mediating act by which the past is taken up and reproduced, a way of discovering and creating one's personal and cultural situation.

Sartre's view of human projects in the biographies reflects the historicizing influence of Hegel; Sartre rejects what he regards as his own earlier idealism and claims, "fundamental attitudes are not adopted unless they first exist".[34] Projects do not emerge from an ontological nothingness, but, rather, from the concrete lacks which characterize the life of the child.

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[34] Ibid., p. 43.

Projects do not assert a reality ex nihilo; they construct a past that never was through a subjunctive anticipation of the future. Sartre's view of desire in Flaubert takes on the character of a project to repeat and correct the past. In the case of Flaubert, it is the strong inferences of youth, as it were, which provide the reigning metaphors of his life. And these inferences, pre-reflective and naive, constitute a primary relation to the Other which is recapitulated endlessly throughout Flaubert's life. Flaubert's fundamental 'choice' is revealed not in the situation he creates, but, rather, through a cultivated style of his response to the situation into which he is thrown. Flaubert's originality - and, indeed, his imaginary prowess - consists in his ability to reformulate this primary relation in ways which alter the relation. Sartre explains that Gustave "derives his right to be born only from his relationship to his progenitor, he bases it equally on the material whole that represents him: feudal property..." The symbolic fusion of father and feudal lordship becomes in Sartre's view such a primary interpretation of the Other. Flaubert, the young bondsman, struggles for recognition always within the terms ofthis dynamic:

> "their connection, experienced, becomes a subjective structure within him. Not that it is ever felt or suffered; it is a matrix, an infinity of practices - actions, emotions, ideas - evoked by the most diverse situations and unwittingly, invisibly marked; without ever assuming its role, these practices reveal or reproduce the original connection in the objects they pursue. Thus the subjective moment is the moment of mediation; the first relation is internalized so as to be externalized once again in all other areas of objectivity."[35]

For Genet as well, the strong inferences of early childhood condition his relations to Others permanently. Genet's experience of rejection as a child

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[35] Ibid., p. 330.

culminates in an adult life in which he exists with a "melodious child dead in me".[36] Starved of recognition the young Genet does not exist; in effect, he is a stillborn who is condemned to live: "to the chid who steals and masturbates, to exist is to be seen by adults, and since these secret activities take place in solitude, they [and he] do not exist. [my addition]"[37] Recognition would not only confer love and a sense of value on the child, it would give him a sense of existence. Genet's acts become a way in which he realizes what he senses to be his pre-ordained fate, his primary relation to the Other, his exile: "We do not see that he lives on two levels at the same time. Of course Genet condemns theft! But in the furtive acts he commits when he is all alone he does not recognize the offense which he condemns. He, steal?" Genet does not realize the fundamental belief in his own exile which informs his desire to steal; indeed, that belief cannot be extracted from the desire until he objectifies or realizes this matrix in an act. This sense of his own doom arrives in present experience as anguish, ill-defined and urgent. Sartre writes, "The truth is that he is impelled by anxiety. At times he feels obscurely within himself a kind of budding anguish, he feels that he is about to see clearly, that a veil is about to be torn and that he will know his destitution, his abandonment, his original offense. So he steals. He steals in order to ease the anguish that is coming on. When he has stolen the cakes and fruit, when he has eaten them in secret, his anxiety will disappear, he will once again find himself in the lawful and sunlit world of honesty".[38]

Although the Sartrian existentialist position is often interpreted to promote a non-normative view of human reality, i.e. one in which there is no

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[36] Saint Genet, p. 1.

[37] Ibid., p. 15.

[38] Ibid.

pre-existing value set on human life save that which each individual invests in that life, Sartre seems to have moved a good distance away from that position in Flaubert. Hyppolite's quarrel with Sartre appears to achieve a curious resolution in Hyppolite's favor in Sartre's later speculations on human existence, for existence is not merely a descriptive term in Flaubert - or in Genet; existence is a normative task, one which requires the affirming recognition of others in order to be fulfilled. Regarding existence as having an implicit or non-actual dimension and as having an explicit of actual dimension seems to be a clear way in which Sartre appropriates the Hegelian view of human existence, and seems, in turn, to confirm Hyppolite's point that "the dialectical progress, as (Sartre) himself pointed out, indicates that freedom is not simply an act of this immediate mediation, but is also the possibility of a perpetual progress, by which man gains ever increasing lucidity over himself."[39] Sartre's reply, that he "never pretended that there was a progress" remains partially true. Indeed, Sartre would in the later works still agree that "whether one moves from one stage of consciousness to another depends on the kind of person one is", and yet it does seem that Sartre subscribes implicitly to a normative ideal of development, even if there is nothing in human being per se that guarantees a movement toward that ideal's realization. To say that Genet does not exist for lack of recognition is to posit a normative view of existence. Genet exists implicitly but requires the recognition of Others in order to render that existence actual; existence unfolds in stages; human beings must be understood developmentally.

Using this Hegelian framework, Sartre asks how it is that Genet and Flaubert realize - or fail to realize - their existences. And in both cases

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[39]Cf. supra, p. 213.

the lack of affirming recognition in childhood results in existences which despair of actualization in the world of others, but which resort to the imaginary in an effort to create a world in which recognition can be solicited and secured. Despairing of recognition, both authors retreat into imaginary satisfactions, create fictive Others, embody them, struggle with them; sensing the need to concretize the imaginary and procure the recognition of actual Others, both men embody the imaginary in the literary work of art, delivered to and received by audiences; in the public delivery of art, both Genet and Flaubert create and receive the valorising glances of Others. And yet the production of literary works does not wholly fulfill the desire to repeat and achieve compensatory satisfaction for the past. As a writer, Genet is a "perpetual absence",[40] a disembodied vision which escapes from the look of Others even as he creates the spectacle that entranced them. Flaubert, too, is lost to his objectifications, embodied by Madame Bovary, recapitulating the themes of infinite dissatisfaction that form the core of his childhood.

In the case of Flaubert it is clear that the imaginary does not provide a durable satisfaction for desire; rather, the imaginary works repeat the theme of dissatisfaction, and although they may be satisfying as literary works, this satisfaction in the imaginary realm does not alter the living dissatisfaction of Flaubert. Indeed, Flaubert's imaginative production is predicated upon the failure of his own desire. In becoming a writer Flaubert does not alter the inefficacy of his desire - he merely uses this inefficacy to his advantage. It becomes the lack from which his imaginary projects emerge. In Sartre's words, "praxis becomes the efficacy of the passive".[41]

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[40] Saint Genet, p. 568.

[41] The Family Idiot, p. 139.

Sartre traces the intimate link of desire and defeat in the context of Flaubert's existence, and attempts to show how the failure of desire becomes the foundation of a literary credo. In that desire is the concretization of an existantial project, and existential projects are viewed normatively, it is clear that a normative ideal governs desire. Flaubert sustains an ambivalent relationship to desire; he desists from desire insofar as he remains convinced of the inevitability of satisfaction. And yet this refusal to desire implicitly avows desire as an infinite appetite. In the context of Flaubert desire is not a given, but is itself a task; to truly desire means to give a concrete and full expression to one's freedom, and this can only be effected through the prior internalization of the right to one's own life. Flaubert lacks such a sense of right because he was deprived of the affirming recognition of others. Sartre explains,

> "...in order to desire one has to have been desired; because he had not internalized - as a primary and subjective affirmation of the self - this original affirmation of objective, maternal love, Gustave never affirmed his desires or imagined they might be satisfied. Having never been valorized, he did not recognize their value. As a creature of chance, he has no right to live, and consequently his desires have not right to be gratified; they burn themselves out, vague transient fancies that haunt his passivity and disappear, usually before he even thinks to satisfy them...he is consumed by the negative of desire, by envy".[42]

In his early literary works, Flaubert begins to elaborate the vision of a permanently unsatisfied desire which finds its fullest expression in Madame Bovary. Sartre remarks that, "in all [Flaubert's] early works there is an identical motif, that of alien intentionality or stolen freedom; in every life a great computer has worked out the Unwelt beforehand, as well as its tools and circumstances, so that each desire should be evoked at the very moment when the

[42] Ibid., p. 409.

organization of the surroundings makes it most inopportune."[43] Flaubert arranges time and again the defeat of his own desire by opting to desire only when defeat emerges as a certain consequence. In a sense, defeat is the intentional object of desire as it is only as a defeated being that Flaubert can recognize himself. It is not that Flaubert failed to internalize a sense of self; rather, he internalized an impoverished sense of self, a self devoid of rights. His desire thematizes this primary internalization, and reenacts the drama of defeat. His desire seeks to realize himself, as all desire seeks to make explicit the existential projects which form identity, but in Flaubert's case, he can only realize himself as a de-realized being, i.e. as a being who has no place in reality. Flaubert thus lives a life of pure desire, much like the body-less souls of Dante's Hell or, in Flaubert's own "Reve d'enfer", the figure of Satan whose lack of organs preclude the satisfaction of desire.

Flaubert's lack of rights seem to make him into a suitable existential hero for Sartre, because Flaubert, like Genet, is born into the world without justification. The biographical situation of Flaubert exemplifies the existential situation of everyone insofar as the absence of a 'birth-right' characterizes every human birth. For Flaubert, Genet and, in a sense, for each individual, legitimacy is not given contemporaneously with birth, but is, rather, a pursuit and an achievement. The figure of the unloved child seems to exemplify the existential abandonment of every individual for Sartre. In his following description of Flaubert's symbolic universe, we can see the convergence of Flaubert's biographical situation and Sartre's own view of the universal existential situation. Note in the following how Sartre's ontology appears to find literary transcription in the symbolism of Flaubert:

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[43] Ibid., p. 379.

> sovereignty...seems to be desired rather than truly possessed. At this point in our investigation we discover the depth of Flaubert's descriptions and the convergence of his symbols; the nothingness that touches being, the negativity that can engulf all positive plenitude, the suctioning void that sucks up reality is quite simply pure subjectivity, inchoate and conscious insofar as it has become pathos, meaning the desire for valorization. The basis of the nonexistent rights which the envious person maintains are his against all odds and which cause him suffering is desire in itself, which knows its impotence and is preserved in spite of everything as a gaping demand, all the stronger because unheeded.[44]

Flaubert's doctrine of dissatisfaction gives credence to Sartre's view of desire as a lack in search of an impossible plenitude. That human reality is "fundamentally desire" means, among other things, for Sartre, that human beings labour under impossible goals. Satisfaction is an ideal norm of human life which, because ideal, can never be attained; it is in this sense that human beings are inevitable failures in Sartre's view - this is also the ground of their ontological status as striving beings. Sartre extrapolates this existential situation from the concrete experience of Flaubert:

> From the beginning Flaubert experienced his desire as a need since he recognized the impossibility of satisfying it and managed to internalize that impossibility through experienced death...this desire stands on good grounds, posing its own impossibility, tearing itself apart; its wounds embitter but inflame it. Better, it would be quickly soothed, suppressed, if the thing desired were within reach; because that is impossible, it swells. Impossibility conscious of itself awakens desire [my emphasis] and provokes it, adding rigor and violence; but desire finds this impossibility outside itself, in the object, as the fundamental category of the desirable...man defines himself as a right to the impossible.[45] (my emphasis)

An impossible situation becomes the achievement of desire insofar as the belief in impossibility is constitutive of the self which thematizes itself through desire.

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[44] Ibid., p. 418-9.

[45] Ibid., p. 420.

Hyppolite's disjunctive interpretation of Hegel's ontology also necessitates a re-interpretation of the relationship between desire and its satisfaction. In his view, desire is fundamentally the desire for another desire, and that, rather than culminating in the satisfaction or end of desire, is the condition of desire's constant renewal. Desire's highest aim, then, is to keep itself alive as desire. Sartre position is similar to Hyppolite's reinterpretation of Hegel in claiming that desire's intentional aim is to submit itself to an impossible ideal of gratification in order to sustain itself as desire. Sartre claims, "Desire comes afterward. If dissatisfaction characterizes desire, it is because (desire) is never awakened except by the acknowledged impossibility of being satisfied".[46]

We saw in Sartre's discussion of sexual desire the impossible aim that sexual love sets for itself, namely, the ideal overcoming the differences between bodies through a magical effort of mutual incarnation. Sexual love takes up bodily difference in an effort to subdue that difference as far as possible; the body experienced as flesh reveals the common sensuousness which binds individuals, and yet this unity is not a lasting one. In Sartre's terms, we seek to extract the Other's consciousness from their flesh, to experience the flesh in an expressive unity with consciousness, but this magical experience cannot be sustained; pleasure delivers us in its aftermath back into a consciousness of necessary difference. The Other cannot be wholly possessed, and the flesh of the Other cannot be wholly merged with the self; the contours of separate selves be recede in reciprocal sexual desire, but they are not for that reason gone. In a sense, the Other is a permanent impossibility for desire insofar as the flesh cannot give us consciousness, and whatever we have from the Other necessarily reveals what we do not have. The impossibility of

[46] Ibid., p. 426.

this final appropriation of the Other is what keeps desire alive; the permanent mystery of the Other sustains us as desiring beings.

In thematizing the infinite distance of the Other, Flaubert provides a pretext for Sartre's own elaboration of impossibility as the precondition and intentional object of desire. Sartre writes of his adherence to Flaubert's view of desire in Madame Bovary:

> When Gustave claims that the essence of desire is contained in the lack of gratification, he is far from wrong. Still, this claim must be properly understood. Desire, aside from all the prohibitions that mutilate and curb it, cannot be gratified to the extent that its demand is not amenable to a correct statement or has no rapport with articulated language; whatever its current objective, it seeks a certain relation of interiority to the world which cannot be conceived or consequently realized. With the exception that in the present, pleasure exists, even if it is seen as corresponding imperfectly to what was demanded; in order to perceive that by the sexual act one is asking for something other that vanishes, one must still "possess" the body of the other and take pleasure from it. In this sense it would be more valuable to say that desire is revealed as ungratifiable the more it is gratified.[47]

In discussing "Reve d'enfer" Sartre suggests a parallel between the figure of Satan in that work and Flaubert himself: "Satan professes to be prey to infinite and insatiable desires; only the lack of organs, he tells us, makes him deficient. He is boasting. In actuality, he affects imaginary desires because he desires to desire".[48] Desire becomes desirable for Satan and, in Sartre's view, for Flaubert because it seems to promise an escape from a factic situation; for Flaubert, desire seems to be a way to "wrench himself away from the ponderings that tear him apart, from the grip of the past, from that retrospective passion which makes him advance backward, his eyes fixed on a childhood lost forever...to negate the deep, narrow circle in which his

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[47] Ibid., p. 421.

[48] Ibid., p. 263-4.

passions revolve..." Through developing an infinite desire Flaubert refuses to reconcile himself with human finitude; indeed, his desire becomes a project to transcend facticity altogether. Desire becomes an ultimate good for Flaubert, as it does for Sartre, precisely because it refuses the limitations of the body. This desire which seeks its own infinity is understandably modelled after Satan, for while Satan lacked organs in order to achieve consummation of desire, Flaubert refuses his organs, as it were, and "set(s) against the iron collar of his finitude...the immense abyss of his unreal desire for everything, that is, for the infinite." The young man Flaubert imagines the Satan who can desire ceaselessly, and he imagines him with envy; in Sartre's view, Flaubert's passivity precludes such an audacious kind of wanting; his imagination compensates for the choices he cannot make: "For the moment, let us confine ourselves to observing that this driven, morose, fierce, and wretched adolescent wants to take, and refuses to give himself, the freedom to desire, to love, in a word to live."[49]

Both Flaubert and Genet can be seen as fulfilling the requirements of a subjectivity to realize itself. And in asking how each individual concretizes and appropriates his history, Sartre appears to be accepting the Hegelian view of subjectivity as a mediating activity. Both children are born into childhoods characterized by a lack; they are ill-loved, unattended, undervalued. The question Sartre poses to these lives echoes the Hegelian view of the ontological drama which all subjectivity must undergo: <u>how can a negation, through self-negation, create itself as positive being</u>? Hegel's answer to the question in the abstract might be anticipated. A negation which inverts itself and becomes a positive being must have been a positive being all

[49]<u>Ibid</u>, p. 264.

along. Sartre's ontology in Being and Nothingness would be in stark contrast to this claim, and would seem to support the view that a negation which resolves itself into positive being is an impossibility and that were consciousness - as a lack - to posture in such a way it would be an act of bad faith.

And yet Sartre does appear to claim that desire thematizes an identity which has, in some sense, been there all along. The biographical works are distinguished precisely along these lines, namely, that the self does not arise from nothing as a magical transformation from non-being into being, but is, rather, an historically constituted identity whose present life implicitly recalls the personal and cultural history through which it has been formed. Hence, Sartre appears in tentative agreement with the Hegelian solution to the problem of a double-negation which emerges as a being which has had a tacit reality all along.

Sartre's view of personal identity, especially as it develops in Flaubert, acknowledges the tacit historical dimension of the self, but does not go as far as Hegel to claim that the full reality of the self is given in tacit form with birth. Sartre still maintains in Flaubert that existence precedes essence, that it is only when we enter relationships that identity begins to be forged; yet, the early relationships of childhood become similar to essential structures, for they seem to determine the reigning metaphors by which one constructs one's life. The lack which characterizes human beings at the outset (both temporally and ontologically) remains an indisputable premise in Sartre's works, but in Flaubert we begin to understand that that lack itself is historicized; in other words, every life not only begins as a negativity, but becomes in time a peculiar and irreducible kind of negativity. Lack is never overcome because unity with otherness is definitionally impossible, and yet

human life is preoccupied with the thematization of this lack, the discovery and recapitulation of the determinate absences, deprivations, separations and losses which make human personalities what they are. These negations are repeated, often with the imaginary hope that this time satisfaction will be at hand, but the repetition of negation succeeds only in reaffirming its inevitability.

For Sartre, then, desire does not thematize an identity that has been there all along, but neither is identity a creation ex nihilo; it is an essence historically constructed. As in Freud, Sartre's final view of personal identity seems to be derived from early experiences of separation; indeed, in Freudian terms, the ego arises as a defense against loss, as a self-protective agency which infers its exclusion from parental love. If desire is a negating negativity which creates the being of the self, we might then understand it as a vain striving to heal this wound at the inception of life, the wound of inevitable separation, through a repetition which seeks to be a compensation - but never can. Human beings can negate the negations which constitute them only through creating a fantasy of satisfaction; and because this satisfaction can only be imaginary, it remains finally unsatisfying, and negation, rather than overcome, is only histrionically reenacted. For Sartre, human beings must enact negation in various ways, but these enactments can become singular achievements, human creations of the highest order. Indeed, the meaning of Flaubert for Sartre seems to reside in the extreme fertility and comprehensiveness of this life dedicated to the imaginary, this person who made his pain into the occasion of an unparalleled imaginative creation.

In the context of the biographies, especially Flaubert, we can see that Sartre relies on the Hegelian inversion of opposites to explain human careers. Flaubert's passive constitution becomes a source of pathos and, in turn, an

unprecedented literary presentation of passion. Flaubert, like every consciousness, must objectify himself to know himself; and yet the self which he comes to know cannot truly be said to exist prior to that objectification. This self exists in the form of an internalized relation with Others that remains a mute and inchoate dimension of his experience. It is only when this anxiety is taken up and given form that it comes to be in an actual sense. Flaubert writes from his passivity, and yet in writing pathically, he subverts the passivity which is the very source of his writing. The realization of a lack always involves a process of inversion; the act of representing asserts itself as constitutive of the self which it seeks to represent. In effect, there is no self in tact prior to its representation; the representation draws upon a latent history, but reworks that history in the moment of its representing. The act of representation thus itself becomes integral to the intentional acts which form the self, and the self becomes understood as a temporal sequence of intentional acts.

Writing becomes for Sartre the act of self-negation which effects the transition from a latent history *to* an invented self. In Hegelian terms, the literary work emerges as the necessary mediation between a mute life and the recognition which confers value and objective existence on that life. This double negation which forms the activity of writing does not create a self ex nihilo; the deprivations of early childhood are determinate negations, lacks with a causal history and an intentional structure. Flaubert's wounds become the source of his receptivity which in turn constitutes the pathic brilliance of his art. The lack is never wholly negated, but journeys through a series of Gestalten in which its original meaning is transformed.

Writing also becomes a way in which Flaubert sustains desire, for Flaubert writes of the imaginary; he desires an impossible world. Words become the

realization of desire, and its perpetual re-invention. In Sartre's terms, "the love which is lived cannot be named without being reinvented. One will be changed by the other, discourse and lived experience. Or rather, the claims of feeling and of expression are mutually heightened...since both come from the same source and interpenetrate from the beginning."[50]

Sartre's reflections on writing, desire, the invention of the self and the invention of the Other bear rhetorical consequences for his own biographical writing. In one interview Sartre maintained that his biography of Flaubert was less a piece of empirical research than a novel in its own right. He termed this work a "true novel"[51] and proceeded to question whether this kind of narrative was not the only kind of novel possible today. Similarly, when Genet disputed the accuracy of Sartre's portrayal of his life, Sartre found the criticism inconsequential. The question emerges in the context of these biographical studies whether they are reports of a given life, or whether they are instruments in the invention of a life. Clearly, Sartre's developed view of intersubjective relations seems to indicate that 'knowing' and 'inventing' an Other are indissolubly linked. When he predicts, "one will be changed by the Other", he means, too, that Flaubert, dead though he is, will be transformed by Sartre. Biography is less an empirical study whose truth consists in correspondance to the facts than it is an effort to take up one's own cultural history through its concretization in another person. Sartre does not analyze Flaubert from a position of non-participation; both analyst and analysand are bound together through a common cultural history and a common set

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[50] Ibid., p. 28.

[51] "On the Idiot of the Family", p. 112.

of projects which provide the context in which Sartre can explore their differences as well.

Sartre maintains that the proper biographical attitude is that of empathy,[52] and we might well speculate that this attitude was one which Sartre cultivated over time with regard to Flaubert, who, Sartre claims, always evoked antipathy in him.[53] We can speculate that Sartre's project in the writing of Flaubert might have been to transform this antipathy into empathy. And we can speculate that this emotional transformation required that Sartre find a common ground with Flaubert. The subject of biography is almost always a subject of the past, and in the context of Sartre's theory of the self as it emerges in Flabuert, we can see that Flaubert is to a certain degree Sartre's cultural past as well as his past vocation as a literary writer. That Sartre no longer writes literature by the time he writes Flaubert, indeed, that he concludes that perhaps literature must now become biography, suggests that there is no standpoint of pure inventiveness which does not sustain a relation to the cultural and personal past. Biography is the kind of invention which enters into an ongoing story only to tell it again slightly altered. The dream of a leap into the imaginary which releases one from the weighty facticity of one's situation is no longer a tenable pursuit for Sartre; invention, choice - alas, desire - must mediate the present through the past which produces it, and through that mediation, produce the past anew.

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[52] Ibid., p. 113.

[53] Ibid., p. 110.

Sartre the biographer, in cultivating antipathy into empathy, and in reconstructing through an imaginative identification, the affective life of another human being, seems to be testing the question of how far it is possible to know another human being. And yet we must understand that the biographer is himself implicated in this quest, for it is only through summoning up the Other in oneself through the act of empathy that such knowledge can proceed. Sartre's question which he posed again and again throughout his career was 'why write?'. Formulated in his autobiography, in What is Literature?, in Genet, and, finally, in Flaubert, the question haunts his works as a constant inquiry into the existential project which resides in this desire. The transformation of desires into words and, finally, literary and philosophical works seems to be for Sartre the transformation of an original silence into an articulated self. The process of writing typifies the act of self-transformation which characterizes every career in that writing dramatizes the labour of desire. In Genet Sartre writes, "with words the Other reappears". And we might well add that so, too, does the self. Writing becomes the new scene for the struggle for recognition, the struggle to exist which can only occur in the presence of an Other. It is in this sense that the word becomes a solicitation and an affirming regard, and the labour of desire offers up ourselves.

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