

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
Department of Philosophy



**A Critical Inquiry into the Sartrean Ontology of “The Look”
as a Source of Inter-subjective Conflicts**

By:

Hannibal Bekele

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**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis
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Introduction

Anyone who is acquainted with the Western philosophical tradition would witness the great attempt made by J. P. Sartre to get over various philosophical problems. The look is the means by which Sartre attempts to account for the problem of how we know other minds. That is, how can we account that other people are like us. If they are like us what do we mean that they are other? Is the fact that other people have the same body constitution enough for us to argue that, the other person is like us? Sartre's answer to this question is no. The other person is indeed like me, that is, a subject; however his subjectivity is revealed to me not by simply relating my body to his but through the look of the other person. The other person has a look, which is capable of destroying my subjectivity; turning me in to an object, which reveals him to me as a subject. Fortunately since I am like the other that is a subject, I also have the look with which I counter the others look hence rendering him in to an object in turn.

This shows that for Sartre despite any historical contingencies the relation between the 'I' and the other is ontologically doomed to conflict, hence every interpersonal relation is infected by this ontological war between subjects. Moreover, since the world has more than two individuals every human association is organized through the look. For instance the look of the "third" could organize me and the other; as either those who are looking at the third or as who is being looked by the third. Using the organizing nature of the look Sartre attempts to account for any possible form of human association.

In this paper I will attempt to expose as clearly as possible the general Sartrean ontology following the same path that Sartre has taken in his major philosophical work *Being and Nothingness* (B&N) In the first chapter, I would expose the being of the I, or the subject which Sartre calls being for itself. In the second chapter I would expose the look, showing its profound philosophical implication; moreover I would also point out in brief that though Sartre has made a shift in his thought in his later work "*The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (CDR) he has remained consistent regarding his general ontology. As a result the conflictual nature of inter personal relations remained more or less similar

even in his latter works. Therefore in critically analyzing Sartre we would not have to worry whether Sartre changed his view in his latter work.

And finally in the third chapter I would attempt to critically evaluate the Sartrean ontology in general and the look in particular using the arguments raised by his critiques, especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty because it is usually argued that Ponty is Sartre's major critic. From my perspective Ponty's criticism of the Sartrean look is in fact acceptable; however the Pontian general ontology is still problematic that it cannot uproot the general Sartrean ontology. Moreover besides the points which Sartre's critiques have raised I also think that Sartre's inter-subjective analysis does not really address the inter-subjective relation as well as human association in music and dancing.

Chapter One

Sartre's Ontology

As I have mentioned in the introductory part of this paper, this chapter exposes Sartre's analysis of inter-subjective relations or the relation of the "I" and "You". For Sartre, despite any attempt or effort, a complete synthesis of the "I" and "You" is literally impossible and is doomed to failure. The root cause of such failure, though could be aggravated or minimized by historical contingencies, is ontological. In a way we can say that, the ontological relation of the "I" with the other is in such a way that the "I" cannot be with it (the other) but at the same time cannot be without it (the other). At this juncture we realize the problems we are dealing with have no easy way out. It requires us to thoroughly delve into Sartre's analysis of being in general. In what follows, I will attempt to present Sartre's phenomenology on ontology.

Sartre divides being into two realms completely separate but with an intricate one sided relation. His distinction, as can be seen from the introductory chapter of *Being and nothingness*, results from Sartre's attempt to solve the subject-object dichotomy and other related dichotomies like mind-body. Sartre argues that modern thinkers in their attempt to transcend such dichotomies have created a new dualism, that of finite and infinite, when they try to reduce everything to the phenomenon.

Modern thought has realized considerable progress by reducing the existent to the series of appearances which manifest it. Its aim was to overcome a certain number of dualism which has embarrassed philosophy and to replace them by the monism of the phenomenon. Has the attempt been successful? Does this mean that by reducing the existent to its manifestation we have succeeded in overwriting all dualism? It seems rather that we have converted them all into a new dualism: that of finite and infinite.¹

Strictly speaking the above criticism belonged to Edmund Husserl. Sartre argues that Husserl's phenomenology has in fact helped to get away with the Kantian distinction between noumenal and phenomenal world; because phenomenology, as Husserl has

shown, does not take the phenomena to be something illusive or a mind construct. The phenomenon, as we will see later, is in fact the only means by which the mind could construct anything. It has its own being; it is not a pretension of some other world. However, though Husserl has expelled the nominal, he further created another distinction between the finite and infinite. Sartre argues, in accordance with Husserl, that the phenomenon is not something which hides its being. In fact, what the phenomenon does is to manifest its being in some manner rather than hide it. As a result Sartre denies the existence of a noumenal world. For Sartre the Kantian distinction of noumenal and phenomenon makes the phenomenon something which has no being of its own. As a result it leads us to conceive the phenomenon as something illusive and distorted which therefore requires us to posit the existence of a noumenal world in the same way Kant did. However, as we will see next, there is no need for the noumenal world anymore because Husserl has managed to bring a strong tie between the phenomenon or what appears and its being as well as the subject that perceives it. To put it in Sartre's words;

“The obvious conclusion is that the dualism of being and appearance is no longer entitled to any legal status within philosophy. The appearance refers to the total series of appearances and not to a hidden reality which would drain to itself all the being of the existent. And the appearance for its part is not an inconsistent manifestation of this being. To the extent that men had believed in noumenal realities, they have presented appearance as a pure negative. It was “that which is not being”; it has no other being than of illusion and error. But even this being was borrowed, it was itself a pretence, and philosophers met with the greatest difficulty in maintaining cohesion and existence in the appearance so that it should not itself be reabsorbed in the depth of non-phenomenal being. But if we once get away from what Nietzsche called “the illusion of worlds-behind-the-scene,” and if we no longer believe in the being-behind-the-appearance, then the appearance becomes full positivity; its essence is an “appearing” which is no longer opposed to being but on the contrary is the measure of it. For the being of an existent is exactly what it appears. Thus we arrive at the idea of the phenomenon such as we can find, for example, in the ‘phenomenology’ of Husserl or of Heidegger—the phenomenon or the relative-absolute.”²

To further elaborate the above point, I will introduce Husserl's phenomenology in brief. I will be strictly limited to presenting those points which Sartre accepts as well as rejects from Husserl's phenomenology. In doing this, it will be easier for the reader to understand by what Sartre means when he refers to the finite / infinite dichotomy.

Moreover, it will also help us to see how Sartre's rejection of some of the points of Husserlian phenomenology contributes for the ontological problem of the "You" and "I" in Sartre.

1.1. Husserl's Phenomenology

Husserl phenomenology to which he gave the dictum "to the thing themselves" can be seen as a critique to both realism and idealism. The realists took mind independent realities for granted and hence proceed by establishing grand theories in explaining such objective realities. On the other hand, the idealists remained within the reality of the mind maintaining that what is directly given is the mind. Husserl by introducing phenomenology or by returning "to the things themselves" wanted to correct both these extreme ends. For Husserl, what appears or the phenomenon and the subject cannot exist detached from one another in any serious way; because the phenomenon or what appears, appears to the subject as it appears, it does not hide it is being. It presents itself as it is. As Danzahavi argues;

"Husserl's dictum "to the things themselves" should be interpreted as a criticism of scientism, and as a call for a disclosure of a more original relation to the world than the one manifested in scientific rationality. It is a call for a return to the perceptual world that is prior to and a precondition for any scientific conceptualization and articulation. Scientism seeks to reduce us to objects in the world, objects that can be exhaustively explained by objectifying theories like those of physics, biology, or psychology.... Phenomenology's emphasis on the importance of the first-person perspective should not be confused with the classical (transcendental) idealistic attempt to detach the mind from the world in order to let a pure and world less subject constitute the richness and concreteness of the world. This attempt was also naive. The subject has no priority over the world, and truth is not to be found in the interiority of man. There is no interiority, since man is in the world, and only knows him- or herself by means of inhabiting a world."³

1.1.1. Intentionality

The above point would become further clear when we look upon some central themes within Husserl's phenomenology. The first one is Husserl's theory of intentionality. It is through the notion of intentionality that Husserl manages to put a strong tie between the

subject and everything that is outside it. The notion of intentionality is relatively simple to understand. Husserl is trying to show us the need to go beyond the realm of the mind because we will not find anything inside it which we have not previously conceived from something external to it. Consciousness in general arises as it interacts with the external world. For instance when we say I know, it means I know something or someone; when we say we are happy, we are happy because of something. In general consciousness is “consciousness of something”. On its own, consciousness neither could be explained nor known. So intentionality is this act, movement or transcendence of consciousness towards the object or toward the “of something”. Therefore, remaining within the realm of the mind is impossible and is not going to help us gain any knowledge. Moreover, when we say consciousness is “consciousness of something” we should not be tempted to think we have consciousness on one hand and the “of something” (the object of consciousness) on the other hand. Rather what we have is one thing, that is, an “object presented intentionally”. This shows that the being of consciousness is dependent on the object.

“The locution “intentional experience referring to an object” should not be construed as meaning that two things are present in experiences, an object and an intentional act directed toward it. Only one thing is present, an intentional experience, and “(I)f this experience is present, then eo ipso and through its own essence (we must insist), the intentional ‘relation’ to an object is achieved, and an object is ‘intentionally present’ ” (Husserl 1970a: vol. II, 558). He thus rejects a relational understanding of intentionality. He is not trying to understand how consciousness (which is allegedly within me) relates to an object out there. There is no intentional experience without already having an intentional object. Likewise, the alleged consciousness that is to achieve its relation to an object is already, to begin with, consciousness of this object and of no other.”⁴

1.1.2. Inexhaustibility of the Object

However though the object or the phenomena is presented intentionally this does not mean that we grasp everything about the object when it is presented to us intentionally. The object for Husserl transcends every experience that we have of it; we could not exhaust it wholly. For instance if we take a coin and try to analyze what it is we can not perceive the head and the tail at the same time, it becomes impossible. By the time we are analyzing the tail we anticipate as if it has a head and continue our analysis and vice

versa, in our analysis certain things always escapes us we can not totally grasp the thing, what we can do best is try to analyze the thing from various perspectives holding on to our anticipation. Generally speaking the object;

“is not exhausted by our anticipations, and it never will be. As we go on examining the object, walk around it, turn it around, explore it with our various senses or with scientific instruments, our anticipations always go beyond what “meets the eye” or our other senses. The object, in turn, goes beyond anything that we ever anticipate.”⁵

The facts that the object transcends our experience in some manner made Husserl introduce three notions which are associated with intentionality. Consciousness as we have seen is an intentional act but the object transcends our experience. Because of this the way this intentional act relates to the object is through meaning. When the act and object meet, the act confers a certain meaning on the object. This meaning cannot be conclusive and total because as we have seen we are surrounded by our anticipations. As a result the meaning conferred in a certain act is always open for revision. This general meaning of the act Husserl calls it “noema.”

As a result this general meaning or the “noema” remains as far as every new encounter with the object provides us similar meaning based on our anticipation. The minute a situation arises that reflects that our anticipation is no more correct or fulfilled the “noema” falls into crisis; it should be reconstructed in accordance with the new experience. This new experience Husserl calls it the Hyle, whereas the elements which restructure and shape up the “noema”, Husserl calls them noesis. The noema, noesis and the hyle, though are involved in every act, we usually do not recognize them, as a result

Husserl called them transcendental. This should not be confused with transcendent... “Transcendent” means “inexhaustible,” while “transcendental” means hidden, but crucial for our experience⁶

1.1.3. Husserl's Transcendental Turn

The notion of noesis, noema, and hyle heralded what is usually labeled us “Husserl's transcendental turn”. This is relatively easy to understand, once we have grasped the above mentioned central points of Husserlian phenomenology. The first thing that we have to do now is recognize or realize the problematic nature of the objects. That is we

now see that the object is transcendent hence we are no more in the “natural attitude” where we see an object and take it for granted, for what it is. As a result if we want to study the object we should perform some reductions or we should get away from the natural attitude in which we are embedded. The first of such a reduction, Husserl calls it the eidetic reduction. That is we try to find some essential nature of the object rather than its particularities. We should look for the universal trait it carries with in it that other objects also have. Such a reduction is commonly employed in mathematics, where we can infer from a particular object its universal side like its color, shape, and size. The second reduction Husserl calls it the transcendental reduction. Here our main concern is to see how these transcendental noema, noesis and hyle interact or perform their act. As a result we should suspend our judgment about the existence or non existence of the object. “Husserl calls this change of attitude an epoch, using the old Greek word for abstaining from judgment. He also calls this a bracketing of the object” (DAGFIN). The third reduction is what Husserl calls the phenomenological reduction which is a combination of the other two reductions which philosophers have to do when they philosophize.

phenomenological reduction, finally, is a combination of the eidetic and the transcendental reduction. It leads us from the natural attitude, where we are directed toward individual, physical objects, to an eidetic transcendental attitude, where we are studying the noemata, noeses, and hyle of acts directed toward essential traits of acts directed toward essences.⁷

1.2. The Dualism of the Finite-Infinite

We can easily see now why Sartre accuses Husserl of the finite-infinite dualism. As we have seen, for the latter Husserl the object is transcendental it always escapes us because we are always perceiving it from a particular perspective. Moreover we not only perceive it from a particular perspective we perceive it through the transcendental notions of the noema-noesis and hyle. For Sartre such conception of consciousness and the objects of consciousness are problematic. First of all, if we take the fact that we perceive a certain object from a certain perspective at a time, the fact that it is meaning is endowed or constituted through the noema-noesis and hyle could multiply the meaning to infinity even from that single perspective we are referring to the object. That is since the

transcendental are constitutive of the meaning of the object the object is completely dependent on my whim for it is meaning. Generally speaking;

*“Although an object may disclose itself only through a single abschattung, the sole fact of there being a subject implies the possibility of multiplying the points of view on that abschattung. This suffices to multiply too infinity the abschattung under consideration”.*⁸

Moreover as we have seen, at the level of phenomenological reduction, we take the essence of the object that is we perform the eidetic reduction and also suspend our judgment of the actual existence or non-existence of the subject (epoch) and see how the noema-noesis and the hyle interact with the essence conceived.

For Sartre, this is not going to help us in any way to talk about the being of the object. Because there is always more to the object than it appears or it is a series of appearances. Hence if we reduce it to its essence and bracket it is actual existence while we still have the noema-noesis and hyle, we are reducing the object into a finite serious leaving it to our subjective will. As Sartre has succinctly put it;

*“the reality of that cup is that it is there and that it is not me. We shall interpret this by saying that the series of it is appearance is bound by a principle which does not depend on my whim. But the appearance reduced to itself and without reference to the series of which it is a part could be only an intuitive and subjective plenitude, the manner in which the subject is affected.”*⁹

The discussion of the finite-infinite directly leads us to the core of Sartre’s argument as to why knowledge cannot be the primary way to deal with being in general. As we have seen, the phenomenological reduction fails to give us a concrete account of the being of the transcendent object, because, it reduces the object to a finite phenomenon while the object actually appears as a series of appearances. For Sartre, as a phenomenologist we should not do this because “returning to the things themselves” requires us to describe the phenomenon as it is. In a general manner Sartre’s entire ontology could be described by just taking the first two sentences of the quotation from above which reads as “the reality of that cup is that it is there and that it is not me. We shall interpret this by saying that the series of it is appearances is bound by a principle which does not depend on my whim.”

As can be easily inferred what Sartre is saying is that I see the cup, I am not imagining it, if I were imagining it I could have easily un imagine it. It is there forcing itself towards

me making me perceive it. It does not matter what knowledge I have of it is essence, or what it is. The main point is that “it is” and to be more specific “it is” there either on the table or the on the floor. Moreover though I might not know what it is; one thing I am sure about is that it is not me, or I am not it. A more deeper phenomenological description of the above situation of “Sartre vs. the cup” reveals us “the non-primacy of knowledge,” that is when Sartre perceive the cup, he doesn’t first perceive the cup and then starts thinking in his head and then say, when he first looks at the cup he becomes aware that “it is there” he might not know what it is, but it is just there. There is no reflection involved here. We can say there is this spontaneous and automatic recognition that the cup “is there” and that it is not me. There is no reflection here. This led Sartre to define being as trans-phenomenal.

1.3. Transphenomenality of Being

By transphenomenal, Sartre is saying that the phenomena does not hide being, however it does not also give it out, in the sense that we abstract it from the phenomena and make it a matter of reflection or knowledge. For instance if we take the “Sartre cup” encounter from above, if Sartre attempts to abstract being from the cup conceives it and tries to reflect on it, it is neither practically nor theoretically possible. Practically the cup “is”. I can not abstract this “is” and insert it in my mind in any possible way. This “is” of the cup is not some quality or quantity of the cup; it is not it is essence. As we have seen this was the problem with Husserl’s eidetic reduction. We cannot reach the “being of the cup as we could reach it is essence”. From the particular cup we could infer certain qualities like it is color, or shape, but not it is being. However this does not mean that the cup is hiding its being, because as I can clearly see it is referring itself to me in some manner .it is appearing there on the table or on the floor.

Hence being also appears or has a phenomena. However from this manifestation or appearance we cannot reach being because the phenomenon of being refers to something which is “transphenomenal” to something which appears in series, to something which

escape us and is inexhaustible.. This is the only knowledge that we could grasp from the phenomenon of being. As Sartre has clearly put it;

“the being of the phenomenon, although coextensive with the phenomenon cannot be subject to the phenomenal condition -which is to exist only in so far as it reveals itself- and that consequently it surpasses the knowledge which we have of it and provides the basis for such knowledge.”¹⁰

We might be wondering as to how then we realize this being if it surpasses our knowledge. Sartre’s argument for this is quite amazing. For Sartre being is communicated in some immediate manner it is not a matter of reflection. The best exposition on how we communicate with being is found in his literary work under the title *NAUSEA*. However since it is not of utmost important, I will deal with to B& N. The immediate ways of communicating with being involve, feelings like nausea, boredom etc. the main point is to know when we encounter being it is our feelings that express not reflection. To put it in his word;

“the phenomenon is what manifests itself, and being manifests itself to all in some way, since we can speak of it and since we have a certain comprehension of it. Thus there must be for it a phenomenon of being, an appearance of being, capable of description as such... Being will be disclosed to us by some kind of immediate access-boredom, nausea, etc”¹¹

This discussion will now directly lead us to Sartre distinction of being in to two realms. The two realms could be identified, if we recall the “Sartre-cup” example from above. The first realm consists of Sartre, or it is the realm of conscious being or the being of the I and the second realm consists of the cup, the realm of unconscious beings. Sartre calls the realm of conscious beings being for itself and the realm of unconscious beings being in itself.

1.4. Being-For-It self

As I have, already mentioned being for itself, constitutes the realm of reality of conscious being, hence I will begin by expanding Sartre’s analysis of consciousness, Sartre in accordance with, Husserl agree that consciousness is intentional that is consciousness, is consciousness of something. As he explicitly puts it; “all consciousness, as Husserl has shown, is consciousness of something. This means that there is no consciousness which is not a positing of a transcendent object, or if you prefer consciousness has no content.”

However he does not accept Husserl's notion of the transcendental ego; which as we have seen has an idealistic over tone. First of all consciousness has no content there is nothing in it, it is not a storage box. It is not a thing, it is just intentional, or directedness towards the outside. Secondly the transcendental ego does not describe on how self consciousness is achieved because it is discovered through reflection. Sartre's argument is that, how can I be conscious of the things I did if was not aware somehow that I was the one who was doing it. In such a situation consciousness "would be a consciousness ignorant of itself, an unconscious-which is absurd"¹² for Sartre there is no stage in consciousness where it becomes unconscious. Consciousness is always fully consciousness, there are no breakthroughs. "Consciousness is consciousness through and through" as Thomas R. Flynn, clearly puts it.

If phenomenology enabled Sartre to philosophize about concrete, individual reality, it is central concept of intentionality allowed him to escape the 'principle of immanence' that entangled idealist philosophers in a mind-referring world. Philosophical idealism claims that reality is essentially mental or mind-referring. Berkeley's famous maxim 'To be is to perceive or be perceived' illustrates this view. Sartre published an essay in 1939 that countered this idealist claim with the principle of intentionality, namely, that consciousness is essentially other-referring: 'All consciousness is consciousness of another.' He applied this Husserlian principle with characteristic rigour, even directing it against Husserl himself, whom he accused of sliding into idealism by appeal to a 'transcendental' ego.¹³

As a result Sartre argues that "every positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non positional consciousness of itself". That is every time I will judge, think, etc. I will something, I judge someone, or I think about something. In all these activities am taking everything as an object, except myself. I always remain to be the subject and my undertakings as objects. I am non- positionally aware that I am not any of the things that is presented to me intentionally. I can never lose myself and be one with the things I do. If I become one with the object then I am no more a conscious being but rather it is opposite. It is only this Impossibility to mix and disappear in the object that makes consciousness, consciousness. Consciousness always keeps its distance from its object. It is therefore non- positionally aware of itself without taking itself as an object without reflecting on its activity.

This does not mean that consciousness is not reflective on itself rather there is this “non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible”. This point becomes clear when we see the example Sartre himself gave. Let’s suppose we are trying to count the cigarettes that are in the cigarette pack. In such a situation we usually just pick up the cigarette pack and start counting. At this point if someone approaches us and asks what we are doing we instantly answer by saying that I am counting the cigarettes, now this “I” that count appears when I reflect back at my action. Prior to this reflection I was just aware of what I was doing without reflecting on what I was doing. This “I” that was aware of what I was doing prior to this reflection is what helps me to instantly answer this question. I cannot put it to words or I cannot strictly say this “I” out in the usual sense we use the term I because every time we say, I am this or that what is present is the reflected I, not the pre reflected. This is why Sartre accuses Descartes of not going one step further behind his Cartesian cogito that says “I think”. Before the I that says I think there is the pre reflective I which helped Descartes to say I think, “There is the pre-reflective cogito which is the condition of the Cartesian cogito”¹⁴

At this juncture, we see the problem involved with the being of consciousness. On the one hand we see that consciousness is always consciousness of something, it requires the object because it is intentional and has no content. On the other hand it must keep it distance from this object towards which it transcends. That is, we can only be identified with our activity or our being can only be identified with our activity but we cannot be this activity.

To answer the question what am I, we all have our individual answer, we exist either as a teacher, a farmer, a doctor or as anything that we are as that individual, but as we all know we cannot be these activities. I might be a farmer, but this does not mean I am one and the same thing with farming that I am nothing but farming. I might easily give up being a farmer and be a student, a priest, a waiter or what so ever, in which case my being or what I am changes with what I do. This shows that my being rests on what I choose to do, yet I am not what I do. This led Sartre, to derive some notions about consciousness,

besides, intentionality. These are the notions of nihilation, nothingness, lack, freedom facticity, responsibility and absurdity, anguish, bad faith.

1.4.1. Nihilation

Can in general be seen as the process by which consciousness remains being itself, that is, it is the process by which consciousness stays away from its object; saying I am not it. Any activity, object or whatever that is brought before consciousness is pushed aside because consciousness would no longer be consciousness if it becomes the “of something” towards which it transcends. Now the obvious question could be, what is the being of consciousness then if it does not become the “of something”. What is the being of this consciousness which nihilates. That is, I am a doctor, but this doctor I am is nihilated. I am always non-positionally aware or present to myself. Now the question would be what is this “I” that I can’t even talk about, but is always there? Sartre’s answer is that, the being of this “I” is nothingness. If it was something, I would have grasped it or perceived it, or be able to reflect on it. I would have been able to take it as an object. But all this is unfortunately impossible, what remains after nihilation is this nothingness, which has no being of its own. To explain it this much I need the object, the activity which is positionally present, without it I wouldn’t be able to even talk about it. Thus the being of consciousness is on one hand dependent on its object on the other hand this being is nihilated to nothingness. This however should not tend us to think that nothingness is some sort of being towards which consciousness returns. Instead “nothingness is nihilated” as Sartre puts it.

“for although the expression “to nihilate itself” is thought of as removing from nothingness the last semblance of being, we must recognize that only being can nihilate itself; however it comes about, in order to nihilate itself it must be. But nothingness is not. If we can speak of it, it is only because it possesses an appearance of being, a borrowed being, as we have noted above. Nothingness is not, nothingness “is made-to-be.” Nothingness does not nihilate itself; nothingness “is nihilated.”¹⁵

1.4.2. Lack

As we have seen consciousness, is intentional, it requires its object in order to transcend towards it. In itself it is nothing it cannot even be conceived in any manner without its object. This shows that consciousness is a lack it requires its object. Sartre argues that lack involves three things. First of all there should be something lacking or missing. Secondly there should be something remaining which lacks what is missing. Thirdly there is the synthesis that is achieved when the lacked and that which was lacking is conjoined. Sartre's example could help us to clarify this better, if we for instance say the moon is not full or it is quarter is missing, it shows these three things. The moon that is not full signifies that which lacks, the quarter signifies that which is missing and the full moon signifies the synthesis.

Therefore in case of consciousness, that which misses something is consciousness itself, what it is lacking is basically itself or to be itself and the synthesis in this case would be the synthesis of consciousness and its object, which is impossible. So consciousness remains being a lack. To put it in Sartre's word

*"Lack presupposes a trinity: that which is missing or 'the lacking,' that which misses what is lacking or 'the existing,' and a totality which has been broken by the lacking and which would be restored by the synthesis of 'the lacking' and 'the existing' –this is 'the lacked'. The being which is released to the intuition of human reality is always that to which some thing is lacking – that is, the existing."*¹⁶

1.4.3. Freedom

The other important notion about consciousness is freedom. As we have seen consciousness cannot become anything. It cannot determine itself with anything; in fact the only thing it cannot strictly change is its incapacity to determination. Therefore we see that consciousness, nihilation, freedom are one and the same thing. To put it as Sartre argues;

"For the for-itself, to be is to nihilate the in-itself which it is. Under these conditions freedom can be nothing other than this nihilation. It is through this that the for-itself escapes its being as its essence; it is through this that the for-itself is always something other than what can be said of it. For in the final analysis the for-itself is the one which escapes this very denomination, the one

which is already beyond the name which is given to it, beyond the property which is recognized in it."¹⁷

In more concrete terms what this notion of freedom implies, is that, freedom is not some mode of being, which consciousness or man becomes in the usual sense of the term we say I am free, rather it is the very being of the I that says I am free. "Freedom is not a being; it is the being of man..... man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free, he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all."¹⁸ Moreover, as we have seen, consciousness consists in transcending towards some object, either this or that object, but it should necessarily transcend towards some object, and this object towards which it has transcended is said to be it has been chosen by consciousness, because consciousness is a transcendence towards some object and not any particular one it has chosen. In terms of freedom, it means man has to choose to do this or that action to say either I am this or that. However, this choice that he makes between becoming a farmer or philosopher can in no way be justified, because the being of consciousness is such that it chooses. To ask why does it choose is nothing more than asking why consciousness is consciousness. Sartre's answer to this is that it is absurd, as we will see next, it means there is no reason why consciousness or man is, but it is. As Sartre put it "such a choice made without base of support and dictating it is own cause to itself, can very well appear absurd, and in fact is absurd. This is because freedom is a choice of its being but not the foundation of its being".¹⁹

Furthermore the fact that there is no necessary reason that made me choose a particular mode of being shows similarly that there is no reason that prohibit is me from choosing a different mode of being. There is no necessary reason that made me choose philosophy from farming, similarly there is no necessary reason that would stop me if I further choose to study medicine or astronomy abandoning my earlier choice of philosophy. "Therefore, I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free. This means that no limit is to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free."²⁰

This however should not lead us to think that freedom consists in choosing what is not there to be chosen. We can take multiple choice exam as an example , in such an exam our freedom consists primarily in choosing any one of the choices given but it does not stop there, we could also choose not to choose any of the choices and give back a blank sheet, but we cannot choose anything more than this. If one of the questions has choices of a, b, c, and d, I cannot choose e. for it is not on the menu. If we put this in terms of consciousness we have seen consciousness is consciousness of something, hence at this point the “of something” that we have is the question with four choices. So strictly speaking these four choices are in fact not my limitation but the objects on which I exercise my freedom. Moreover, let’s say I choose d and after the exam is over I wanted to change my choice to c; this is also impossible, even if I bribe the examiner and he lets me change it to c. it does not erase the fact that once at that prior point and time I have chosen d. Generally speaking freedom always arises in a “situation”; it is about the choice we make in that particular situation.

Moreover even the situation is revealed as a situation because of freedom itself. It is because I am conscious that I look at something as a situation, as something to be passed, failed, maintained difficult, or easy. As Sartre puts it “human reality everywhere encounters resistance and obstacles which it has not created, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning only in and through the free choice which human reality is”.²¹Sartre calls such a resistance and obstacle our facticity it is the “given” which we discover in our encounter with the external world on which we exercise our freedom.

1.4.4. Facticity

Facticity as I have pointed out above generally refers to the “given” to what is out there which consciousness discovers as it transcends towards its objects. It not only transcends towards them but gives meaning to them in relation to its freely chosen project. Sartre gives an example of a crag to explain this point; the crag appears either as difficult or easy to climb if we make climbing the crag our project. The crag is neither difficult nor easy on it is own. It is either difficult or easy to climb for me when I see it in the

perspective of an end which I have already posited; in this case which happens to be climbing the mountain. “Therefore it is only in and through the free upsurge of a freedom that the world develops and reveals the resistance which can render the projected end unrealizable.”²² Sartre gives an account of what constitutes facticity. Facticity includes “my place”, “my past”, “my environment”, “my fellow man” and “my death” since my fellowman and my death are related to the being of the other and the nature of inter-subjective relations; for the sake of clarity their discussion would be followed once after the being of the other is exposed.

1.4.4.1. My Place

My place constitutes the place which I inhabit in any particular minute in my life. In any moment I am in a particular place, either next to this or that thing or person and coming from, this or that place or going to this or that place. There cannot be any moment in my life where I cannot have a place; and this place is always explained in terms of reference from myself. Right now I am in my room, writing my thesis, I am next to the window behind the door etc. however I just came to my room after I ate my dinner in the kitchen and prior to this I was at school. Such regression finally leads to the place where I was born.

However does this mean that, this place on which I was born have a determining effect on my freedom? That is, can I proclaim that the place I have today is necessarily related to any outcome of my birth place? Sartre’s answer to this is no. Because this place I have today could have been similar even if I was born in some other place, which shows the contingency of my place rather than it is necessity. But the main point is that I should have a place. In short I should be born either in this or that place in order for me to have a place. And once I have this place, this place becomes mine. “it would be useless to explain this last place by the one which my mother occupied when she brought me into the world. The chain is broken... for me birth and the place which it assigns me are contingent things.”²³

And once I am in place, I reveal it by being the organizer of it. When I say I am next to a tree or something, I reveal this place. If it wasn't for me there would have been no "next to the tree" of which I was just talking about. Similarly, the place which I have at a particular point would either be too far, or too close in relation to me or the end I have freely chosen. My work place or school is either too close or too far in relation to the place I take in a particular time and if my end is either to go to school or work. Therefore, the meaning of my place is always related to the end I choose. And this end I choose is always made by nihilating the current place I have.

*"Thus it must be said that the facticity of my place is revealed to me only in and through the free choice which I make of my end. Freedom is indispensable to the discovery of my facticity. I learn of this facticity from all the points of the future which I project; it is from the standpoint of this chosen future that facticity appears to me with its characteristics of impotence, of contingency, of weakness, of absurdity. It is in relation to my dream of seeing New York that it is absurd and painful for me to live at Monte-de-Marsan. But conversely facticity is the only reality which freedom can discover, the only one which it can nihilate by the positing of an end, the only thing in terms of which it is meaningful to posit an end"*²⁴

1.4.4.2. My Past

We might wonder, as to how, the past does not contribute as a limitation to freedom. Because we certainly tend to think that our past has a determining effect on us today. But Sartre is uncompromising on this issue. The past for Sartre is not a necessary condition or cause that determines "our act as a prior phenomenon determining a consequent phenomenon".²⁵ The fact that I am writing this master's thesis is of course because I finished my undergrad and pursued my education further ;but this does not mean that, the fact that I have finished my undergrad necessarily lead to this route. It is just one of the choices I choose among many others. However this does not mean I don't have a past as a philosophy undergrad student. No matter what I do from now on I could not erase this fact. It has happened. In fact it is based on it that I choose what to do next. I might say I don't want to learn philosophy anymore because it is tough or boring and start to do something else or I could say I like it and hence I want to pursue further in studying philosophy. So my past is my facticity it has happened, I have made it happen in that it is the outcome of my then present choice. And based on it I would further choose to do

what I have to do, in which case the past gets its meaning as something that was either painful, tolerable, unbearable etc, .

Generally speaking “while freedom is the choice of an end in terms of the past, conversely the past is what it is only in relation to the end chosen”.²⁶ I am in fact the author of my past, “the order of my choices of the future is going to determine an order of my past”²⁷ Which as can easily be imagined culminates in my death. Now because of this rather than a limitation of my freedom my past serves as a spring board towards the future. “The perpetual historization of the for-itself is the perpetual affirmation of its freedom.”²⁸

1.4.4.3. My Environment

“My environment is made up of the instrumental things which surround me, including their peculiar coefficients of adversity and utility”.²⁹ That is, my environment includes things that we discover once we are in the world, which depending on their potential serve us as either a facilitator or inhibitor of our action or freedom. It includes natural things, like the sun, earth, trees, wind, etc. and manmade things like cars, bicycles, TVs, spoons etc.

Sartre gives an example of riding a bicycle from one town to another to meet a friend to explain this issue. Now let’s say we are in a hurry to meet with this friend situated in the next town, our goal is to reach there as soon as possible, however let’s say the wind started to blow very high from the opposite direction toward which we are headed hence making riding the bicycle toward that direction very difficult. Let’s further say that there is a burning sun, and on top of all this we have a flat. Does this mean that our freedom to reach the next town is restricted? Obviously Sartre’s answer is no. First of all the environment, reveals it is meaning as an inhibition or as favorable environment in relation to my end, which I freely choose. If it was the case that I was sleeping at home,

my environment would have had a difficult setting and meaning which again would be revealed to my project of sleeping.

Secondly, even if I change my mind, or give up my project of going to the next town because of the wind, the sun and the flat tire, it is not going to show that my freedom is restricted. Rather I give up my projects for a more valuable project. I could definitely start to walk, to the next town if the tires are flat but I am not going to do that because probably I value my health that I wouldn't want to walk in that climate or some other end which I value more. Even if I claim that I would be late and hence my friend would not be waiting for me it is not going to be a reason good enough, because even if I had reach on time I have no justification that my friend could be there on time, so similarly when I am late, there is no justification for me that he would not be there. So when I give up my project of going to meet my friend I give it up for another project which I choose, none of what happened could constitute as an ultimate excuse for my giving up of my project to meet my friend.

“Freedom implies therefore the existence of an environment to be changed; obstacles to be cleared, tools to be used. Of course it is freedom which reveals them as obstacles, but by it is free choice it can only interpret the meaning of their being. It is necessary that they be simply there, wholly brute, in order that there may be freedom. To be free is to-be-free-to-do, and it is to-be-free-in-the-world. But if this is the case, then freedom, by recognizing itself as the freedom to change, recognizes and implicitly foresees in it its original project the independent existence of the given on which it is exercised”³⁰

1.4.5. Responsibility

Now, because of the fact that facticity in general is the ground on which we exercise our freedom, Sartre thinks that the for-itself is endowed with all the responsibility for his/her action. There is nothing in the world that would constitute as a reason for doing or not doing this or that action. Facticity is not a justifying ground for our action. As a result everything that we do is done because we choose to do it and for what I did no one or thing could be hold responsible but me. I cannot bring forth any excuse. I should face the consequences of my free act. There is no room neither for surprise nor excuse. Whatever

it is “it is” because of me, I am the cause of everything that happen out there, hence should be accountable for it. As Sartre puts it;

“we are taking the word “responsibility” in it is ordinary sense as “consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object.” In this sense the responsibility of the for-itself is overwhelming since he is the one by whom it happens that there is a world; since he is also the one who makes himself be, then whatever may be the situation in which he finds himself, the for-itself must wholly assume this situation with it is peculiar coefficient of adversity, even though it be insupportable. He must assume the situation with the proud consciopusness of being the author of it, for the very worst disadvantage or the worst threats which can endanger my person have meaning only in and through my project; and it is on the ground of the engagement which I am that they appear. It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, or what we are.”³¹

1.4.6. Anguish

Anguish for Sartre is the means by which freedom is recognized. Anguish is a sort of fear that comes from within, because at the end of the day I will find no good justification of my being. Sartre gives an example of a man standing on a cliff. The man standing in the cliff is afraid of two things, one is external in that someone might push him or he might slip accidentally. Such fear Sartre calls it vertigo, because it cause is external. Anguish however is a fear within the man when he realizes that he could always jump off his accord, it is a realization that he cannot give himself no necessary reason not to jump. When he introspects he would find nothing that would stop him from jumping which reveals to him his freedom or the lack of necessity. Jumping is equally one of the possible things he could do among any other things he is capable of doing at that time.

“Anguish in fact is the recognition of a possibility as my possibility; that is, it is constituted when consciousness sees itself cut from it is essence by nothingness or separated from the future by it is very freedom. This means that a nihillating nothing removes from me all excuse and that at the same time what I project as my future being is always nihilated and reduced to the rank of simple possibility because the future which I am remains out of my reach”³²

1.4.7. Absurdity

The lack of necessity reveals, what Sartre calls, absurdity. Absurdity is the realization that being in general is contingent. It has no reason to be but it is. Both me or

consciousness and the world exists but there is no necessary reason for existence itself. The best description of absurdity is found in Sartre's *Nausea*, where he characterizes existence as superfluous in general. As David Sherman puts it;

In Nausea, a philosophical novel published in 1938, when Sartre was still substantially under the influence of Husserl, he characterizes absurdity as a quality of all existing objects (and, more broadly, the material world as a whole), regardless of the stance that human beings might take with respect to them. Because Sartre sees consciousness as wholly external to the objects that it perceives, his protagonist, Roquentin, is totally estranged from the world of his experience, which – in a twist on the Cartesian problematic – leaves the justification for his own existence, if not his actual existence itself, in doubt: “I am. I am, I exist, I think, therefore I am; I am because I think, why do I think? I don't want to think any more, I am because I think that I don't want to be, I think that I . . . because . . . ugh! I flee”, (Sartre 1964: 100–1). Set off from the world of objects, Roquentin comes to see not only that his own existence, as he recognizes it, is based on purely contingent thought, but also that the external reality perceived by language encrusted thought bears only a contingent relation to the objects themselves, which are actually “divorced” from the words that we use to either name or describe them: “The world of explanations and reasons is not the world of existence.” And, finally, as to the objects “themselves” – that is, their brute existence – there is, once again, just contingency: all is “superfluous.” Thus, “the essential thing is contingency. I mean that one cannot define existence as necessity. To exist is simply to be there” (Sartre 1964: 131)³³

1.4.8. Bad Faith and Authenticity

The concepts of bad faith and authenticity, strictly follow from the above, analysis, bad faith is a sort of lie which we tell our self. Since this lie is told by self to self the lie fails to convince us at the end of the day. Bad faith results, when we try to convince our self that our existence or being is of necessity. We try to flee our freedom and hence responsibility and the anguish associated with freedom. It is an attempt to justify our existence. Bad faith can be said is motivated ontologically because as we have seen consciousness is a lack and as a lack it always wants to full fill itself. But we have also seen that this is impossible. hence bad faith at the end of the day is unavoidable, “if bad faith is possible, it is an immediate, permanent threat to every project of the human being; it is because consciousness conceals in it is being a permanent risk of bad faith”³⁴

However through consciousness somehow motivates bad faith, it does not mean it can totally conceal it is freedom; this too is impossible because consciousness always remains

to be free and unjustified. Sartre gives an example of a waiter in certain café. The waiter walks, talks, and acts in a certain manner that he looks like a robot performing his pre-established task. This waiter is strictly performing these acts as if he was born a waiter. He is attempting to be totally what he is doing. He is trying to justify himself of being a waiter, of being made in such a way that he is nothing but a waiter. This guy is trying to forget that he became a waiter out of his choice. He is trying to forget that any day from now on, that he might freely choose to quit being a waiter. As Sartre argues the waiter “is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it; he is playing at being a waiter in a café.”³⁵

Authenticity can be said is the opposite of bad faith, it is a realization of our freedom and contingency. Every single thing we do, we do it knowingly that we freely choose what we are doing and that we can freely choose to change it paying the necessary responsibility for our action. If we for instance take the waiter example from above, the authentic waiter will also perform his assigned task. However, in case you ask this waiter why he is a waiter; he will tell you that the he choose to be a waiter because from the varieties of options he had, he thought this one is better for a certain reason. He will further tell you that this certain reason is not of a strict necessity, that justify him for once and for all that he should choose to be, a waiter for he knows being in general is absurd. That is “Authenticity must consist in somehow keeping firmly in view the “double simultaneous aspect of the human project,” that is, it is transcendence and facticity, and in the end it is arbitrariness and futility (Sartre 1992: 481).”³⁶

1.5. Consciousness Is Not What It Is and Is What It Is Not

At the end, all these lead Sartre to define consciousness or man as “that is not what it is and is what it is not”. If we take the first part of this definition that says; “is not what it is”; it shows that consciousness of something does not consist on consciousness becoming the something towards which it transcends. It reflect the nihilation and hence freedom of consciousness. As David Detmer clearly puts it;

“Consciousness is not what it is, because it is not anything at all. It is not any kind of substance; it is not an ego; it cannot be identified with its objects, nor

with it is states, it is moods, or it is emotions. Moreover, it is not in any sense a container of things. Rather, all of it is objects, whether physical or mental, perceived or imagined, "real" or "unreal," are external to it. Indeed, literally everything is external to it. In itself, it is nothing at all. Consequently, consciousness is completely independent from the world of things and from the causal order; consciousness is completely, or as Sartre would say, "absolutely," free".³⁷

second part of the definition supports the first part, as we have seen the first part of the definition reflects that consciousness is free, however if consciousness is not what it is, then to say consciousness is free would amount to saying that consciousness is not free which in turn amounts to saying that consciousness is consciousness and unconsciousness. The solution to this problem lies on the second part of the definition which affirms that consciousness "is what it is not". If the first part reflects that consciousness is free then the second part affirms that it remains being free. Moreover this second part reflects that, consciousness or freedom or nihilation or nothingness rests or exists as far as consciousness remains in opposition to it is object, moods etc. furthermore it shows the intricate relation between consciousness and it is object. Consciousness exists, in as far as it perpetually nihilates it is object. As Detmer further argues

Consciousness is what it is not, because consciousness is characterized by its negative activities. It is only through such "nihilating" behaviors as imagining, doubting, abstracting, questioning, denying, etc. that non-being emerges in the world. And since consciousness is "the being by which Nothingness comes to the world," Sartre argues that "it must be it is own Nothingness, "and that" it must arise in the world as a No. "69 Thus, consciousness not only is (negatively) not what it is (e.g., it is objects, the ego, it is acts, roles, states, decisions, emotions, etc.), but it also is(positively) what it is not (e.g., the source of all "negativities, which it brings about through it is multifarious nihilating activities).³⁸

1.6. Being In itself (the unconscious realm)

As I have already mentioned, being in itself is the realm of the unconscious beings. In other words, being in-itself is that part of reality which consciousness was being directed to. We can say it constitutes the being of all non-humans. It is that part of reality which consciousness could take as an object. Being- in- itself though absurd, that is, though we cannot say for example why the world exist, we can deliberately assign essences to them, define them, I can say the tree is tall, , the sun is bright, and since this things are not

consciousness, that is free, or nihilating they stick having the essences, I give them. However as we have seen being in general is transcendent, I cannot exhaust everything about such being in general, because it presents itself as a phenomena. Therefore Sartre characterizes the being of these phenomena by saying; “being is, being is in itself being Is what it is.”³⁹

1.6.1. Being Is

In defining, the being of the phenomena, by saying “being is”, Sartre wants to show us the absurdity of being in general. It is, his way of saying the things that I perceive touch, or the world in general, has a being, it is there, but I don’t know, why it is there, or what it is. In other words we cannot say being is such and such, because of such reason all we can say is being is; what is it or why is it. We cannot answer this question. It is just there. As Sartre put it;

“it is. This is what consciousness express in anthromorphic terms by saying that being is superfluous (detrop)- that is, that consciousness absolutely cannot derive being from anything, either from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is de top for eternity.”⁴⁰

1.6.2. Being is in itself

To say being is in itself shows the main difference of consciousness with the un conscious being. Consciousness as we have seen is intentional it transcends towards it is object and creates itself in such a way that we can say I am this or that I can be a doctor, a teacher, or any other thing I choose to be. However the unconscious being cannot do this. It cannot choose itself .however to say it cannot choose itself does not mean that some other being like God has created it. The unconscious is neither created nor destroyed it just is itself. Generally speaking to say being is in- itself is; “equivalent to saying that being is un created. But we need not conclude that being creates itself, which would suppose that it is prior to itself. Being cannot be causa Sui in the manner of consciousness. Being is itself”⁴¹

1.6.3. Being is what it is

To say being is what it is shows another major difference of consciousness with the unconscious beings. Consciousness as we have seen is what it is not it is a nothingness it is a lack. However the unconscious knows no such lack. It is a thing. it is a complete synthesis of itself with itself. As Sartre puts it, “the in-itself has nothing secret; it is solid (massif).in a sense we can designate it a synthesis. But it is the most indissoluble of all: the synthesis of itself with itself.”⁴²

So far, we have been treating, the two realms of being, and as we have seen, consciousness or the, for itself is a pure subjectivity and everything is external to it. And we have also seen that, what is external to it, is the in- itself (the unconscious), which consciousness takes as an object. As a result everything out there is something, to be done, felt, or perceived by consciousness. At this juncture we realize one problem, that is, besides the in-itself, there are also other consciousness or other for themselves. Are they also objects among objects? In other words, do I, for instance, perceive another human being in the same way I perceive a tree and say the reality of that man/woman is that it is there and it is not me? Sartre’s answer to this is very interesting and complicated. As we will further see, his answer to this question is no. it is true that the other whom I see is out there that is, he is definitely not me. However not as an object but as a subject, as another I. one might ask how do we know this, that is, how the being of the other is different from the being of every other things that we discover? Obviously, as we have seen earlier, being is disclosed in some immediate manner. It is not a matter of knowledge or reflection. Hence the being of the other as a subject is disclosed to me in my immediate experience of shame, pride and the like. I will now proceed to expose Sartre’s analysis of the being of the other and the nature of the inter subjective relation in the next chapter.

End Notes

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Chapter Two

The Other

When we recall the discussion towards the beginning of this chapter, we have seen that, modern philosophy though managed to dismiss the notion of noumenal world it failed to give a clear account on how the phenomena relates to being, because modern philosophy aimed to treat being in terms of knowledge. This same problem, that is, treating the being of the other in terms of knowledge inhibited modern philosophy from giving a clear account on how the other is given to us. As Sartre put it;

“the philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth century’s seems to have understood that once myself and the other are considered as two separate substances, we cannot escape solipsism; any union of these two substances must in fact be held to be impossible. That is why the examination of modern theories reveals to us an attempt to seize at the very heart of the consciousness a fundamental, transcending connection with the other which would be constitutive of each consciousness in it is very upsurge. But while this philosophy appears to abandon the postulate of the external negation, it nevertheless preserves it its essential consequence; that is, the affirmation that my fundamental connection with the other is realized through knowledge.”¹

As can be seen from the quotation, traditional philosophy suffered from two problems; one is external negation. That is to negate the other, that is to say the other whom I see before me is not me, however he is not also an object among objects, or something different from me but like me by simply taking the others existence realistically. In other words external negation is made by a realistic account of the other or the external world in general. We naively presume the other is not me but like me. However when asked to explain how the other is not me but like me and not like other objects or animals, we are going to fall into idealism because we are going to say look at him, his body constitution looks like mine therefore he is definitely something that thinks, wills, doubts etc like me. However there remains the probability that the other might not be like me. As Sartre argues, for the realist;

“the existence of others is certain, and the knowledge which we have of them is probable. We can see here the sophistry of realism. Actually we ought to reverse the terms of this proposition and recognize that if the other is accessible to us only by means of the knowledge which we have of him, and if this knowledge is only conjectural, then the existence of the other is only conjectural, and it is the role of critical reflection to determine its exact degree of probability.”²

This being the case, similarly idealism is also going to refer back to realism if it wishes to avoid solipsism. Sartre gives Kantians as an example, in Kant we saw that the noumenal world always escapes us, however the phenomenal world is completely communicable because it is constituted by us. Now in such idealistic conception the other is similarly taken naively as unproblematic and given, in fact the Kantians “preoccupied with establishing the universal law of subjectivity which are the same for all, never dealt with the question of persons.”³

However when asking such Kantians on how we really know that the other is like me. They either have to retort to realism or solipsism. They need to retort to realism, because when asked how we know the other is a subject, they would have to go beyond the phenomena towards the noumena or what is not directly given to experience. That is the subjectivity of the other does not present itself as a phenomena which I apprehend through my apperception and if I keep on talking about the other, the other becomes a phenomena which organizes my experience rather than the other way round

“There remain then only two solutions for the idealist: either to get rid of the concept of the other completely and prove that he is useless to the constitution of my experience, or to affirm the real existence of the other—that is, to posit a real, extra-empirical communication between consciousnesses.”⁴

Moreover, external negation since is made on the basis of difference in space between two bodies for the realists and between two mental substances for the idealists it is always going to lead to the third man argument. That is through external negation we are saying the other is not me in the same manner we claim the chair is not the table. However though the chair is not the table it is me the third person who is doing the negation between them. Similarly to say I am not the other, we always need a third person to make the negation. This is in fact the reason why most idealist philosophers recourse to notions like God.

“For as we have seen, every external relation, inasmuch as it is not constituted by it in very terms, requires a witness to posit it. Thus for the idealist as for the realist one conclusion is imposed: due to the fact that the other is revealed to us in a spatial world, we are separated from the other by a real or ideal space.”⁵

This being the case, modern philosophers have realized the problem of external negation however they still made the other a matter of knowledge. Sartre mentions as an example, Husserl, Hegel, and Heidegger.

2.1. Husserl

We can easily infer how the other is not related by external negation for Husserl. As we have seen consciousness for Husserl is intentional, that is, it is “consciousness of something”. Hence the object which is out there helps us constitute the being of consciousness; without the object consciousness is not possible. This shows that consciousness is intricately related to its object while it internally says I am not it. In fact such mode of internal negation is the peculiar aspect of consciousness because it is the only thing that is a pure subjectivity. However this relation of consciousness as we have seen is one sided. The in- itself does not perform the negation from its side. As Sartre argues;

By an internal negation we understand such a relation between two beings that the one which is denied to the other qualifies the other at the heart of it is essence- by absence. The negation becomes then a bond of essential being since at least one of the beings on which it depends is such that it points towards the other, that it carries the other in it is heart as an absence. Nevertheless it is clear that this type of negation cannot be applied to being-in-itself.⁶

As a result, for Husserl we cannot possibly doubt whether the object of consciousness or the world out there exists or not; because if it did not exist, then consciousness wouldn't even arise because there is no object towards which it is directed. However, as we have seen, since the object is transcendent any discourse about existence or nonexistence of the object is to be bracketed. The main point is that to doubt whether the object exists or not cannot be made without doubting my own existence. Similarly the other is also out there; more specifically out there doing something, either as a teacher, farmer, or as someone perceiving some object. In other words, I find the other with some relation with the world. As a result there is no way I am to doubt whether the other exists or not without undermining my existence. As Sartre put it;

If I am to doubt the existence of my friend Pierre or of others in general, then inasmuch as this existence is on principle outside my existence I must of necessity doubt also my concrete being, my empirical reality as a professor having this or that tendency, these habit is, this particular character. There is no privilege for my self; my empirical ego and the other's empirical ego appear in the world at the same time.⁷

However Sartre thinks this is problematic because though the other is discovered out there in some relation to the world or as an empirical ego, a phenomena. He is something

that reflects back to a transcendental subject, because as we have seen with the latter Husserl, the transcendental noema, noesis and hyle sort of constitute the world. Now the problem is not whether the other is out there as an empirical ego. It is to know whether the other out there is a phenomena that refers back to a transcendental subject. Now this is impossible because a transcendental subject is not given as a phenomena. And as we have earlier seen since Husserl treats being in terms of knowledge there is no way how the other is going to be known as a transcendental subject. Utmost I can only know what the other is for me. I cannot know what the other is for himself, which In other words is a retort to solipsism.

*“Now even admitting that knowledge in general measures being, the other’s being is measured in it is reality by the knowledge which the other has of himself, not by that which I have to him”.*⁸

2.2. Hegel

Hegel’s analysis of the other is relatively better than Husserl’s because the other is not brought to me through the intermediary of the world, it is direct, and it is also reciprocal. That is both I and the other are dependent on one another and it is also based on internal negation. Though this is the case, Hegel still measures “being” in terms of knowledge. Sartre gives Hegel’s master-slave relations as an example, in the master-slave relation, the being of the master is dependent on the slave. The master to be a master needs the slave, and similarly the slave to be a slave needs a master. Moreover for the master to realize himself as a master or to be self conscious of himself as a master the slave is required, the slave should constantly remind him that he is the master, he should affirm the truth and objectivity of the masters mastery.

*Thus Hegel’s brilliant intuition is to make me depend on the other in my being. I am, he said, a being for-itself which is for-itself only through another. Therefore the other penetrates me to the heart. I cannot doubt him without doubting myself since ‘self-consciousness is real only in so far as it recognizes it is echo (and it is reflection) in another.’*⁹

However, we can easily infer the problem with such Hegelian analysis; for Sartre we have seen that the “for itself” could never achieve a synthesis with its object. That is, no matter how hard the slave justifies the master as the master, the master can never become a master, because consciousness is what it is not and is not what it is. The Hegelian

master that says I am the master or I am I is just talking about his reflected self consciousness, which Hegel however used to measure the being of the I. as a result Sartre accuses Hegel of an epistemological optimism.

In the first place Hegel appears to us to be guilty of an epistemological optimism. It seems to him that the truth of self-consciousness can appear; that is, that an objective agreement can be realized between consciousness- by authority of the other's recognition of me and my recognition of the other. This recognition can be simultaneous and reciprocal; 'I know that the other knows me as himself.' It produces actually and in truth the universality of self-consciousness¹⁰

Secondly Sartre accuses Hegel of ontological optimism. That is Hegel believes that at the end the truth that I am I will be truly achieved when we understand the whole, the spirit or Geist. However this truth of the whole is seen from Hegel's perspective. So Sartre accuses Hegel of forgetting himself in this whole truth;

" but if Hegel has forgotten himself, we cannot forget Hegel. This means that we are referred back to the cogito. In fact, as we have established, the being of my consciousness is strictly irreducible to knowledge, then I cannot transcend my being toward a reciprocal and universal relation in which I could see my being and that of others as equivalent."¹¹

2.3. Heidegger

Heidegger, by far, is the one who was relatively close to treating the other in terms of being fully. However Heidegger too, had some problems. for Heidegger human reality is a "being in-the-world" that is we cannot disentangle the world from the being of the I in a practical manner, moreover the "being" of the I which is "-in-the world" is a "being with" that is, ontologically the I is not alone. I don't come to this world alone and discover the other, rather the I and the other together emerge in-the-world. This shows that the I and the other are related in terms of being. However, Sartre thinks such analysis fails to give a concrete account of the I. it turns the ontological status of the I into a we, as Sartre put it;

"The empirical image which may best symbolize Heidegger's intuition is not that of a conflict but rather a crew. The original relation of the other and my consciousness is not the you and me; it is the we. Heidegger's being-with is not the clear and distinct position of an individual confronting another individual."¹²

2.4. The Look

We can now, proceed to Sartre's, analysis of the being of the other, which he explains in his phenomenology of the look. The look is one of the most common experiences which we all encounter in our day to day activity. It is so unlikely that we make it through the day to day activity without seeing or being seen by another human being. It is through this simple experience of looking and being- looked- at that Sartre bases his entire philosophy of the I and you. The look is fairly easy to understand, and has a profound philosophical implication. As we have seen the problem that permeates any analysis of the being of the other in traditional as well as modern philosophy is external negation and the resulting treatment of the being of the other in terms of knowledge (reflection). Sartre attempts to transcend this problem by making a phenomenological analysis of the other as his starting point.

His starting point as already mentioned is the look. The obvious and most simple way that the other is present to us, at least for those of us who are not blind, is through the activity of seeing. That is despite any knowledge that we have of the other we just happen to look at the other, moreover we not only look at the other but the other also looks at us. For Sartre this simple experience of looking and being looked by the other reflects on how the other's being as a subject is introduced to us. Now let's look at the experience of looking at the other and being looked by the other separately for they have different meaning attached to them. I will start first by the experience of looking at the other.

2.4.1. Looking At the Other

Looking at the other is nothing more than the positional (as well as non positional for the two cannot be disentangled) consciousness we have of the other. As a result the other is nothing more than an object for consciousness at this point. we could say that man is short or tall, or that man is seating in the café next to the window etc. in other words, the man that we are looking at is an object for us. However though he is an object for me, I am still saying this man is an object, there is something peculiar about this man as an object, it is probable that this object is a man. He could be some sort of a robot or a

dummy, but despite this I always look at this man in some relation to the world or can be said to my world. Because as a subject the world is mine, it is my object. Now supposing that this man is not a robot or a dummy and he is a man, he is still an object for me, that is he is an objectified subject. Now this shows that this object-man is very different than the object tree or any other object, because though objectified he too makes the world his, he either perceives something or thinks something etc. which in principle escapes me.

Let's take the man sitting by the window in the café and is looking outside, as an example. I am taking this man as an object that is I am looking at him and saying he is sitting by the window in the café and is looking outside. But it doesn't stop there, what is he looking through the window, is he looking at the beautiful woman standing beside the red car, is he looking at the tall beggar, is he just thinking about something with his eyes staring at the window, is the woman beautiful for him, is the car red for him, all this I cannot know it escapes me. So of all the objects, this object-man sort of shakes my world. However despite all this he is "still an object for me"¹³

2.4.2. Being Seen By the Other

In the above analysis, the other was still an object-- a problematic object so to say. But in the mist of all these, let us suppose the man in the café directs his look towards me, who was wandering what this man was, and returns his look to it is original position. At this juncture everything changes, I am no more the subject but I am someone who has just been looked upon. The other by forwarding his look towards me made me realize myself, as someone behind him, sitting on a chair in a café, wearing a black hat, whose shirt is a little bit too color full, whose eye glass is too big that it made him look like a nerd, all this the other did in a glance. I am present to myself as I am. A certain feeling of shame dwells in me. All this transformation in me took place automatically with no reflection involved. The quick glance of the man turned me from the man who was analyzing him, (a subject) in to all those things I mentioned. He did not even speak a word, but all those things I now am, to myself.

The above two examples of seeing the other and being seen by another reflects Sartre's analysis on how the other is given to us as a subject. As we have seen in the example of looking-the other, the other still had the status of an object, though it was a little problematic. However, when the other glanced back at me everything changed. My initial project of analyzing the other failed and I became conscious of my own being the moment the other's look was directed towards me. I was this object that was sitting in a chair, with a colorful shirt, and this big eyeglass, which the other just looked as an object. Deep down inside me, without reflection I have realized my being in the same manner the other has seen me. I cannot even deny this, at least at that particular exact moment "my shame is a confession."¹⁴ This being which I am because of the other look Sartre calls it being for others.

2.5. Being For Others

Being-for-others, reflects three transformations which one undergoes, first of all, as we have seen, the being of the for itself is in such a way that it is not what it is and is what it is not, as a result, it is always a transcendence, it is not able to associate itself with it is activity or object in such a way that it is capable of grasping itself as an I pre reflectively, however in the presence of the other it was able to grasp itself pre reflectively, the way the other sees it. Now this transformation shows that the foundation of my being lies in the hand of the other, that is, this being I am now is an outcome of the way the other saw me(as an object). Secondly, there is a loss of project, as we have seen in the above example as the look is directed towards me my original project of analyzing the man was lost. Thirdly this loss of project was accompanied by a transformation of my status as a subject to an object, I was no more the person that was analyzing what the other was but I was the analyzed one in turn. As Steve Martinot, correctly notes;

*"three transformations occur to the self-as-object. First, one is given a nature, an 'outside'; the self (the "I") find it is foundation beyond itself, in the other-as-subject. Second, there is a loss of project, of instrumentality in the word; one understands oneself as the other's project. And third, there is a loss of mastery or autonomy; the once autonomous self finds itself no longer self-determining. It is foundation is elsewhere, lost to the other's hidden apprehension. Through loss of self, one gains a knowledge of an unknowable other because one becomes the other's knowledge (BN 261). One is transformed from person to personage and becomes an aspect of a situation that is by and for the other."*¹⁵

2.5.1. Some Clarifications

We can now move to Sartre's analysis of inter-subjective relation, for we have finished exposing the being of the I and the other. But prior to that, I will like to make two points which need further clarification, first, regarding the look, and second shame experience. The look as we have seen above was presented in the perceptual field. However the look is not restricted to the realm of the perceptual or the eyes. If we for instance take the earlier café example, when the man turned around or looked back he, of course, used his eyes or vision to locate the particular position I was taking. In the café, however, it was not his eyes, that was turning me in to an object but rather, the look itself which was being forwarded towards me by the help of the eyes, as a result, notions, like footsteps, cracking noises even objects like houses could play the role of the eyes. If for instance, we hear a certain footstep or cracking noise in the dark we automatically become conscious of our being as a being- for- others at that particular point and time we have heard those things. Without any reflection, we realize that we have been aimed at, of course, through reflection we might be able to know whether it was us or not who the look was directed too, but at that juncture, my objectivity cannot be doubted. As a result, the footsteps and cracking noises too could serve as the eyes or the "support of the look"¹⁶. As Sartre puts it;

*"The look which the eyes manifest, no matter what kind of eyes they are, is a pure reference to myself. What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is not that there is someone there; it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt, that I occupy a place and I that I can not in any case escape from the space in which I am without defense- in short, that I am seen."*¹⁷

The second clarification is that of shame. The revelation of the others subjectivity and my objectivity is not limited to shame. Pride could also play similar role. We certainly feel proud before the presence of the other; it is nothing more than to see oneself as the other sees us. moreover fear also plays similar role, in the above example of hearing the cracking noise or footstep in the dark reflects the development of a certain fear, that reveals to us the disappearance of our project, a sense of danger before the others presence. Moreover by shame, we should not take it to be a sort of shame which is

morally interpreted, by shame and pride Sartre wants to reflect the immediate non-reflected feeling that arise as one is reduced to an objective status- as Martinot argues:-

“The look is always accompanied by shame- the shame of having been rendered an object. However, it is important to understand that by this, Sartre means an existential rather than a moralistic shame. Existential shame is the situation of being stripped of one’s autonomy as an objet for another; it names a formal relation. The content of this relation may indeed be morally shameful, such as being caught peeping through a keyhole, but it is not restricted to such situations. Sartre conflates them in his example, perhaps for purposes of starkness.”¹⁸

2.6. Nature of Inter-Personal Relations

As can be clearly inferred, by now, the nature of the relation between the I and the other is not going to be smooth. As we have seen, when the others subjectivity upsurges, before me, my objectivity, manifests itself to me, which consists of my loss of project, possibilities and foundation. Moreover we have also seen that, the others subjectivity is revealed to us as our subjectivity escapes in to our objectified state. If we recall the café example, the other was at first a complete object for analysis or reflection, but when he turned, all that stopped and he manifested as a subject, but let’s further suppose that after a while I start to look back at the other and either pursue, my earlier analysis, or start comparing his shirt or look to mine, at this point he again has fallen back to an object status for me. Hence he is required to forward his look towards me if he still wants to avoid this objectified state. So within the look there is this perpetual attempt or war of reducing a subject to an object. As a result Sartre says “conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others”¹⁹

2.6.1. The Body

“This object which the other is for me and this object which I am, for him, are manifested each as a body”.²⁰ hence, I will briefly touch upon Sartre’s analysis of the body in short. According to Sartre, the body has three dimensions. The first dimension involves, the body as it is lived by conscious being that is, for Sartre consciousness is embodied, it is within a framework of a body that consciousness can exist, by associating to it is object. There is no consciousness without a body, hence no I. The second dimension of the body

is, the body for- the- other. prior to the look; if we recall the café example, when I was analyzing the man in the café, the man's body was simply there for me to objectify it. However as we have seen the man was sort of problematic because, his body always referred to something more, that is he was not just an empty body which could be grasped. He sort of "steals the world from me" though still objectified. Now the third dimension as can be easily inferred is when the body is seen by the other. Hence when my body is objectified, as Hazel E. Barnes argues;

*"The connecting link here is the body. When I "exist" my body in the process of achieving my usual relations with objects in the world, this is my "body-for-me." But the body has two other dimensions as well. There is the body-for-the-other and "the body-seen-by-the-other." When I behold the other's body, I can interpret it is movements only by assuming that it is directed by a for-itself, in short by recognizing it is psychic quality. But this means that the spatial and instrumental organization of the world which I had effected with my own body as a center of reference is no longer the only possible arrangement. Instead there appears a grouping of objects around the other as center; he has caused an "internal haemorrhage of my world which bleeds in his direction." He has stolen my world away from me. Still further development occurs when I experience my body-seen-by-the-other. In this case I suddenly realize that I exist as an object for the other, that I possess a self which he knows and which I can never know, and that I am vulnerable to the other, who may anticipate and block my possibilities for action."*²¹

2.6.2. Origin of Inter-Subjective Relations: Attitudes towards Others

Now, that we have seen inter-subjective relations are embedded within the body, the next thing we should see is how this relation between subjects arises. The relation between the I and the other arise as a result of the I's response towards the others look. When objectified since, it is the I's being as a for itself that is undermined its going to attempt to reclaim its subjectivity. It is going to respond to the other's look by taking two attitudes towards other. These attitudes which the I attempts to take towards the other are basically impossible to achieve, because they are contradictory. Moreover these attitudes exist in a circle in such a way the failure of one of those attempts is going to lead to the adoption of the other attempt, which also is a failure, and is also going to lead to the previous attempt. Generally speaking both attempts of the "for-itself" are failure and the failure of the one

is going to motivate the other, hence the relation exists in a circular mode with no breakthrough.

One of the attempt, involves, a protection of the others subjectivity either by modifying it a little bit or by completely affirming my objectivity. if we for instance, take the café example, I was ashamed, one of my attempt to do would be to make the other see me as I want him to see me, that is I either want the guy to see me as someone with good looks, or as someone average in look depending on what I want the other to think of me, or depending on what my being-for-others should be. However this is impossible, because the other as a subject could only see me as he sees me. No matter how hard I try I am not going to make him, see me as I want myself to be, Secondly this attempt by itself is nothing more than reducing the other to an object. In which case, the other is no more a subject but an object who is just repeating what I am showing him, he is no more the man-mirror which reflects me but literally he has become the object-mirror which we have either in our bedroom or toilet which reflects our image every time we stand before it.

This attempt as we have seen earlier is the attempt which is motivated by consciousness itself, that is, it is bad faith. I am going to attempt to be my own foundation for my being, which for Sartre is impossible. Generally speaking, this attempt involves by the side of the "I" to become a subject, by being it is own foundation. As a result the attempt involves a modification of the others subjectivity, it is not because I made the other see me as beautiful or smart, that I want him to see me as beautiful or smart, but because, he sees me as such out of his freedom or subjectivity. I don't want the other to be an object, but a subject, who reflects what I only present him with. I don't want him to change or have additional perspective besides what I have given him. Now this is a contradictory as well as an impossible attempt.

The other attempt which is going to be motivated by the first is, my attempt to totally destroy the others subjectivity and my being for others, that is I am going to attempt not indirectly (as in the case of the previous attempt) but directly to make the other see me as

I am, (let's say as handsome and smart), I could for instance kidnap him and torture him until he changes his mind. But this too is a failure, even if the guy changes his mind I could never know whether it is because of the torture, or because I have truly convinced him as such. In fact I would most definitely know it is because of the torture, which shows that I am still an object for him, that he too has not lost his subjectivity. So this attempt too is a failure. Similarly in this second case we see the attempt of consciousness to become its foundation.

We might ask, how about indifference, could it be an attitude which one can hold to the others look, Sartre thinks it too is nothing more than the denial of the others subjectivity, as well as my being for others. It is to say I am only the way I see myself; and we can easily infer the bad faith involved with it too. Generally speaking, for Sartre, neither in blood or iron, hook or crook, could there be a success in such attempts. With the first attempt which we have seen, Sartre associates love language and masochism, where as with the second he associates, hate, sadism, including indifference. I will now in brief attempt to show these notions.

2.6.2.1. Love and language

Love for Sartre is characterized by the two attempts manifested above. As we have seen, the failure of the one of the attempts leads to the other in a circular manner with no possible dialectic. Let's for instance start analyzing the attempt to assimilate the others subjectivity in love. Unless someone in self denial one way or another we have all somehow experienced, or have had a glimpse of love, or we might have heard a friend or a relative claim that he or she is in love with someone. Now the question will be what exactly does it mean to love? Well at least one thing could be easily inferred, that is to say I am in love, shows that I am the lover, and there is also the other whom I love. But does it stop here. I guess not. I just don't love the other and go back home and call it a day. I definitely would want the other to know that I love him/her with the hope that the other would love me back. Hence "to love is to want to be loved" 22. But here the problem starts, because to want to be loved is not something which is fully under my

control, even if it is, it is not something I would even want to do, because what I want is not to make the other love me, but for the other to love me out of his/her will. I want him/or her to wish that I love him/her.

However, if I don't make the other love me, there is no reason for the other to love me as opposed to all other people in the world. So the first attempt which I would do would be to attempt to make the other love me, by showing the other that I am "the one" for him/her. However this cannot be done in a direct manner because then the other would be the subject who agreed to love me because of some reason that I gave him. Hence in love, there is seduction, which is an attempt to constitute myself in such a way that I am more than the world itself. So the other does not love me just because I am rich, educated, smart, handsome or beautiful, healthy or funny but always for more. I attempt to show the other that I am always more than what he/she sees, but in doing this I have to always attach myself to this world so that I give the other a little bit taste of my being, I try to show off, how rich, powerful, educated, etc I am.

However this attempt is a failure, because the other could never be a solid foundation for my being. First of all I truly understand for myself that I made the other see me as I am or love me. I know that it is because of the game I played that the other loves me. Hence it is not the others subjectivity which I touched, but rather the other has been objectified. Hence the satisfaction which I expect from guarantying my objectivity is always missing. Secondly since I am fully aware that the other is a subject I live in constant threat of losing the foundation I built any minute of the day. Thirdly, though I attempt the other to see me as the "chosen one", there are still others in whose presence that I am just an ordinary person. As Sartre put it;

"In the first place its, in essence, a deception and a reference to infinity since to love is to wish to be loved, hence to wish that the other wish that I love him. A pre-ontological comprehension of this deception is given in the very impulse of love- hence the lover's perpetual dissatisfaction. It does not come, as is so often said, from the unworthiness of being loved but from an implicit comprehension of the fact that the amorous intuition is, as a fundamental-intuition, an ideal out of reach. The more I am loved, the more I lose my being, the more I am thrown back on my own responsibilities, on my own power to be. In the second place the other's awakening is always possible; at any moment he can make me appear as

*an object- hence the lover's perpetual insecurity. In the third place love is an absolute which is perpetually made relative by others. One would have to be alone in the world with the beloved in order for love to preserve it is character as an absolute axis of reference- hence the lover's perpetual shame (or pride-which here amounts to the same thing)"*²³

Now, we might claim all this requires language, Sartre argues to this but “we shall say rather that they are language or, if you prefer, a fundamental mode of language”²⁴. As we know there is no society without language. We all have language. This shows that rather than an addition to our being-for-others language itself is a fundamental proof that we are a being-for-others. “in a universe of pure objects language could under no circumstance could have been “invented” since it presupposes an original relation to another”²⁵. Whatever I speak or signify gets its meaning in the other. It is the other that approves the meaning of what I intend to say, which makes me a meaningful object for him. In fact each expression, each gesture, each word is on my side a concrete proof of the alienating reality of the other”²⁶. Therefore for Sartre whatever the internal content; language is a basic mode of our being-for-others.

2.6.2.2. Masochism

Masochism is also an attempt to safe guard my foundation in the others subjectivity. However in masochism I do not directly aim at assimilating the others subjectivity but rather I attempt not to let go of my objectified state so that the others subjectivity is not lost. When the others tells me I am a Christian, I attempt to become more Christian than the pope. I am constantly engaged in the project of maintaining myself as an object which the other has made me, however this too is a failure, for every attempt shows that I am indeed as I am; not because the other has made me but I chose to be. Hence the very attempt which I use to keep my objectified state destroys the others subjectivity and brings out my subjectivity.

*“Thus in every way the masochist's objectivity escapes him, and it can even happen- in fact usually does happen- that in seeking to apprehend his own objectivity he finds the other's objectivity, which in spite of himself frees his own subjectivity. Masochism therefore is on principle a failure.”*²⁷

As a realization of the failure of the indirect attempt to assimilate the others subjectivity, I might shift to the second attempt, which involves the attempt to totally destroy the others subjectivity. Such relation as I have mentioned earlier could take the form of hate, indifference, and sadism.

2.6.2.3. Indifference

Indifference as the name implies is the attitude to remain intact to what the other has made us, I couldn't care less if the other thinks I am ugly or rude, handsome or polite. The other is no more a subject which can pass his judgment on me. In fact indifference is a denial that I am a being-for-others. As a result Sartre calls it "blindness to others";

"where I practice factual solipsism; others are those forms which pass by in the street, those magic objects which are capable of acting at a distance and upon which I can act by means of determined conduct. I scarcely notice them; I act as if I were alone in the world. I brush against "people" as I brush against a wall; I avoid them as I avoid obstacles".²⁸

However, indifference is also, an attempt that fails, even if I attempt to subdue the others subjectivity, by a total neglect of it, there is nothing stopping the other from seeing me as indifferent that is a total object who won't even react even if I slap him. So the very attitude of indifference includes within it, its own means of destruction. Hence, I exist in constant fear or anxiety. As Sartre put it;

"But if the other is an object for me while he is looking at me, then I am in danger without knowing it. Thus my blindness is anxiety because it is accompanied by the consciousness of a 'wandering and inapprehensible' look".²⁹

2.6.2.4. Sadism

Sadism, also, is an attempt that fails us at the end, because what the sadist attempts to do is also contradictory. The sadist aims at turning the other in to an object, however, his aim is not to directly change the other into an object, but he wants the other to turn himself into a complete object. His satisfaction lies to the extent the other affirms to himself the amount of pain or humiliation he is in;

“The sadist does not seek to suppress the freedom of the one whom he tortures but to force this freedom freely to identify itself with the tortured flesh. This is why the moment of pleasure for the torturer is that in which the victim betrays or humiliates himself If the victim resists and refuses to beg for mercy, the game is only that much more pleasing.”³⁰

2.6.2.5. Hate

Hate, “represents the final attempt, the attempt of despair”. Once after realizing the true nature of the other as a subject, I totally want to put an end to it. When I hate the other I have truly recognized my powerlessness before the others subjectivity. So strictly speaking hate is hate before all others subjectivity. To hate the subjectivity of a certain person, is not to hate a certain quality or character of a person but his being as a subject, his existence in general which all humans possess. So to hate cannot be practically maintained. Even if we presume that we can do that, it is not going to change the fact that once we have been a victim of the others objectification. That is;

“he who has once been for-others is contaminated in his being for the rest of his days even if the other should be entirely suppressed; he will never cease to apprehend his dimension of being-for-others as a permanent possibility of his being.”³¹

2.6.3. The “We”

Now, the remaining thing to see would be to see Sartre’s analysis of the “we”. As we have seen, the relationships between two for-itself is embedded in conflict and is doomed to failure. However does this mean that the notion of the “we” does not exist or is something illusive? That is as far as the I is related to the other through internal negation how can the I be with the other in the form of a “we”. Sartre argues that it is in fact possible to be in a form of “we”. But this doesn’t mean that ontologically the “I” is given as a “we”, as Heidegger’s being- with. For Sartre the “we” arises as a result of something external. Lets for instance take the earlier café example, to see how the I and the other are organized in the form of a “we”. In the example as we have seen, the I and the other were in conflict, however let us for instance presume some incidence happens outside the café,

may be a car accident, or a woman screaming as someone stole her purse and run away. At this point both I and the other turn to see what is happening outside. At this point, neither my look is directed towards the other nor his towards me, we are both looking outside. So we are engaged in a form of a “we”. However this does not mean that this we is a sort of synthesis of the “I” and the other where I am lost in the other and the other in me. In this we, it is me as a for-itself who is watching the incident and similarly the other as a for-itself who is watching the incident.

Moreover this is not the only way where the “we” could be experienced. That is in the “we” who was watching the incident; both I and the other were a subject who was watching the incident outside. Therefore we can say this is a form of a “we” as a subject. However the “we” could also be experienced as an object. Let’s for instance think that someone walks inside the café, the minute he walks in and he looks at us, at that point we are both an object for this new other. He just looked at us, however this us is similarly not a synthesis of me and the previous other. Though he looked at us, he definitely looked at me and the other in specific. I will now attempt to expose the “we” as subject and the “we” as object (or the “us” object).

2.6.3.1. The Us-Object

As I have mentioned above the us-object arises in the presence of a third. It is always in the appearance of a third that the us-object, appears, and is organized. If we recall the café example again, we can see how it is organized. In the café before the presence of the third the other and I were engaged in the usual conflict of inter-subjective relation, now let’s further suppose that the other walks in and looks at me, now it is not only the other but also the third that is looking at me. At this point for me they are looking at me despite the fact that it is two individuals that are looking at me, “I experience them as forming a community, as “they” (they subject) through my alienation”. This “they” tends as we know, toward the impersonal “somebody” or “one”³² However nothing has changed I am still an object I am being looked at. “It does not alter the fact that I am looked at; it does not strengthen (or barely strengthens) my original alienation”³³

However, it is also possible that the third might also look at the other who is looking at me. This would help me to disarm the others look, because the other is no more the other but the “other looked at (by the third). I am neither with the third nor under the treat of the other look. This situation gets form when I join the other to look at the third in which case the third and I become a “we subject” which turns the other in to “our object”. I could also look at the third, which turns him into an object, which however returns the others look towards me. In which case, I become an object for the other and the third becomes an object for me. This situation however is indeterminate, it lacks structure. It can only be organized in some form when one of us chooses to join the other. As Sartre put it;

“There is constituted here a metastable state which will soon decompose depending upon whether I ally myself to the third so as to look at the other who is then transformed into our object and here I experience the we-as-subject.”³⁴

Generally speaking, the “us-object” for Sartre is organized and held together in the presence of the third. The third holds the “I” and the other together, which in its absence is doomed back to disintegration, and conflict. Moreover though in our everyday experience it is some concrete situation that makes us realize our self in the form of an us, almost all everyday experience is organized in the form of an “us”. When I walk on the street it is actually us that’s walking down the street as opposed to those that walk up the street. Therefore “if some situation thus appears empirically more favorable to the upsurge of the “us”, we must not lose sight of the fact that every human situation, since it is an engagement in the midst of the others, is experienced as “us” as soon as the third appears”.³⁵

The most empirically situation that is favorable for the upsurge of the “us” according to Sartre, is that of workers engaged in producing a certain material object. The workers are more likely to realize themselves as an “us” than other people; Because the material object which they produce would refer back to their collectively than their individuality. As Sartre argues, “materiality puts its seal on our solid community, and we appear to ourselves as an instrumental disposition and technique of means, each one having a particular place assigned by an end.”³⁶

2.6.3.2. Class Consciousness

Moreover, the third, is not necessarily limited to an individual, even groups can be taken as the third. Class consciousness, is one such example class consciousness as an “us-object” that is as an us the oppressed arises in the presence of the oppressing class. Hence we should not think that it is the poor conditions of life, the lower wage and so on that creates the class consciousness of the oppressed. For Sartre, it is the look that creates the class consciousness. That is if it was the case that the oppressed people were in the same factual situation as they were, eating what they are eating, working what they are working and there was not the oppressor, they would have not seen or recognized themselves as oppressed. It is only in the presence of the oppressors look that the oppressed could feel ashamed that he could see himself as he is seen by the oppressor. “the “master”, the “feudal lord” the “bourgeois” the “capitalist” all appear not only as powerful people who command but in addition and above all thirds, that is ., as those who are outside the oppressed community and for whom this community exists”.³⁷

2.6.3.3. Mob Psychology

Mob psychology is one such form of the ‘us-object’, the mob sees itself as one, but yet as one below a certain speaker or leader. The mob is the follower as opposed to the leader. Without the leader, “the third” there is no mob. The mob consists of the individuals who have freely consented to give their freedom to the leader. Such constitution of ‘us-object’ for Sartre depicts the original projects of love, whose failure leads to masochism. The individual in the mob attempts to loose itself in the mob, and is ready to sacrifice his freedom; just like the masochist who attempts to loose his freedom.

“Mob-psychology collective crazes (boulangism, etc.) which are a particular form of love. The person who says “us” then reassumes in the heart of the crowd the original project of love, but it is no longer on his own account; he asks a third to save the whole collectivity in it is very object-state so that he may sacrifice his freedom to it. Here as above disappointed love leads to masochism.”³⁸

2.6.3.4. The Humanistic “Us”

We could now easily infer that this could never be achieved for Sartre. For humans to be in the form of an us-object we are going to need a third, which has to be extra human, a subjectivity beyond our subjectivity, in whose presence that we realize our self as an ‘us-object’. Super subjectivity that will direct his look upon us, but which we cannot direct upon him. The humanistic ‘us’ is simply a reference to an idealistic concept of God which serves as the third. It arises from our conceptualizing of the ‘us’ writ larger, that is;

“Thus the humanistic ‘us’-the us-subject- is proposed to each individual consciousness as an ideal impossible to attain although everyone keeps the illusion of being able to succeed in it by progressively enlarging the circle of communities to which he does belong. This humanistic “us” remains an empty concept, a pure indication of a possible extension of the ordinary usage of the “us” in this sense (to designate suffering humanity, sinful humanity, to determine an objective historical meaning by considering man as an object which is developing it is potentialities) we limit ourselves to indicating a certain concrete experience to be undergone in the presence of the absolute third; that is, of god.”³⁹

From the analysis of the ‘us-object’, what we discover is the fact that the “us-object’ in general is not some new ontological dimension of the I, it is only a more complex modality of the being-for-others”⁴⁰ it always arises in the presence of the third which helps as a constitutive ideal. It is similarly revealed in shame or pride or fear as it is our being-for-others that is revealed to us. “Moreover it encloses within itself a power of disintegration since it is experienced through shame and since the “us” collapses as soon as the for-itself reclaims its selfness in the face of the third”⁴¹ which therefore leads us to Sartre’s analysis of the we subject.

2.6.4. The We Subject

The ‘we-subject’, can be said is the opposite, of the us subject or we can say it is the third for the ‘us-object’. Sartre thinks it is characterized by basically two notions. First of all the recognition of each individual as a ‘we’ subject is a psychological connection. As we have seen earlier the most concrete form of the ‘us-object’ is found in the worker, because the worker could easily relate his individual contribution with the total product, or we can say “the very meaning of the manufactured object refers to the working collectivity.”⁴² Now in as far as the objects refer to the collective side of the working

collectivity the worker relates to it is third through the object. Now in this case the consumer is the workers third. The worker produces the objects anticipating the consumer, as far as he/she is not producing for himself. For the worker the consumer appear in the form of the “they subject”. For instance when producing readymade cloth, it is not by anticipating a certain individual but rather collectives. The “they” for whom that the products are produced. Therefore “the alienating transcendence is here the consumer; that is, the “they” whose projects the worker, is limited to anticipating”.⁴³

But the problem for Sartre here is that the material is not going to play the same unifying role for the consumer. For the individual consumer the product is off course in the form of “our object”, that is when someone goes to buy a shoe, he realizes that the shoe is for anyone that buys it he does not think it is made specifically for him, but this “we-subject” that arises because of “our-object” is purely psychological. We mostly find our self in this psychological state, when we use almost any manufactured products, like trains, bus, elevators, stairs etc in all this case we realize that the objects refer not only for us but for all users. However this we in the form of the “we users” is highly psychological, which does not even require the presence of the other individual.

Obviously the most tempting “we subject” that can be thought of is the humanistic we, which includes the organization of all humans in order to make some objects theirs, but such a human communality remains at the psychological level of the individual. As Sartre puts it “in this sense the ideal we-subject would be the “we” of a humanity which would make itself master of earth. But the experience of the “we” remains on the ground of individual psychology and remains a simple symbol of the longed for unity of the transcendences.”⁴⁴

Secondly the “we subject” is not primary for Sartre, that is when individuals are organized as awe-subject, the recognition of the “us-object” is made through the intermediary of the manufactured object. As a result it is by recognizing that the manufactured-object is made by a human being that the “we-subject” can be realized. The third is not apprehended in an immediate encounter. Sartre gives an example of signs. For

instance let's take the entrance and exit sign on doors as an example. When we see these signs we realize that it is written by another human being, not only that though I know that the sign is referring particularly to me when I am about to enter, psychologically I presume that it is for all that this sign refers to.

Generally speaking "the experience of the we-subject cannot be primary; it can not constitute an original attitude toward others since, on the contrary, it must in order to be realized presuppose a twofold preliminary recognition of the existence of others. In the first place, the manufactured object is such only if it refers to the producers who have made it and to rules for its use which have been fixed by others".⁴⁵

2.7. Facticity Again

2.7.1. My fellow man

I have pointed out earlier that the facticity, of the other (my fellow man) and my death will be exposed after the exposition of the being of the other and intersubjective relation. Hence as promised, I would attempt to expose the facticity of my fellow man which will be followed by the exposition of my death as a facticity.

As we have seen above, the presence or the existence of the other is given. The other is there, though the existence of the other is a pure contingent fact. That is, there is no necessary reason for the other to be there but it is there, and since the other is there, I am doomed to being objectified, this objectivization takes three forms. First of all, when I am in a world which pre-exists me, I discover the world as organized by another freedom, the other. Hence every instrument, roads, buildings, etc. have meaning which I did not give. Moreover I am also born to the cultural and societal organization element that pre-exists me. Hence I am born as an Ethiopian, German, French, etc, and these things are referred back to me from the other. If I was alone I could have never grasped myself as an Ethiopian or German. I would have walked as I would want without following any rules which the other has endowed the instruments that surrounds me. for instance I might cross the road without using the zebra lines.

Moreover I do not only encounter the world as it has been organized by the other but also depend on it, the food I eat, the clothes I wear, the transportation, all my basic necessities are somehow dependent on this organization, in whose disintegration, my very being is in danger. That is “if I submit to this organization, I depend on it. The benefit which it provides me can cease; come civil disturbance, a war, and it is always the items of prime necessity which become scarce without my having any hand in it”. Now, can we say this is a real limitation to our freedom, at least as we have seen with the facticity of my place, and my environment, things were as I see them. Now I am seeing them as the other sees me. That is, instead of me who is being a writer of my past, it seems like I am following the route which the other has already paved for me. Sartre in fact agrees with this “we must recognize that we have just encountered a real limit to our freedom- that is a way of being which is imposed on us without freedom being its foundation.”⁴⁶

However “this limit imposed does not come from the action of others”, that is the fact that I stop when the traffic light turns red, is because I choose to stop. I could freely choose to drive even if the light turned red. I could freely choose to walk in to the ladies room though I perfectly grasp that the sign on the door to the ladies room. This shows that the other by its very existence mingles with my situation and not my freedom. As we have seen earlier freedom is always in situation, and the other adds something to this situation, which I either have to adhere to, deny or neglect making it impossible for me not to put it in to consideration. If for instance I go out to cut a tree right now, the tree is not just something, which would appear to me as difficult or easy to cut, with the tools I use to cut it; rather I should also put in to consideration the environmental law of the country. I should not only think whether it is possible or not to cut it in terms of my potential of cutting the tree but whether to pay a fine or be arrested if I cut it.

Similarly, “for myself I am not a professor or waiter in a café, nor am I handsome or ugly, Jew or Aryan, spiritual, vulgar or distinguished we shall call these characteristics unrealizable.”⁴⁷ However, I can only be these things when I choose them, I might deny or accept, like or hate these characteristics. These are ‘unrealizable to be realized’⁴⁸ for me. And as we have seen since the for-itself is a nihilation of “what is” I can never be

these things. “Although I have at my disposal an infinity of ways of assuming my being-for-others, I am not able to assume it”.⁴⁹ In terms of responsibility because the other is a facticity it makes me responsible for my being though it is the other who is the foundation for it. Nothing that comes to me through or because of the other should surprise me. It is mine. As Sartre put it;

“Everything which happens to me is mine. By this we must understand first of all that I am always equal to what happens to me qua man, for what happens to a man through other men and through himself can be only human. The most terrible situation of war, the worst torture do not create a non-human state of things; there is no non-human situation. It is only through fear, flight, and recourse to magical types of conduct that I shall decide on the non-human, but this decision is human, and I shall carry the entire responsibility for it. But in addition the situation is mine because it is the image of my free choice of myself, and everything which it presents to me is mine in that this represents me and symbolize me. Is it not I who decide the coefficient of adversity in things and even their unpredictability by deciding myself?”⁵⁰

2.7.2. My Death

A reader might be wandering as to how death is related to the other and inter subjective relation that it is presented after the exposition of the other and inter-subjective relation. The reason for this simply stems from the fact that it is literally impossible to say for me I am dead. I can neither reflectively and off-course pre-reflectively take account of my death from my action. strictly speaking if I was alone I could never have grasped the meaning of death. Hence, when I am dead, I am dead for the other. It is only the other that can see me as dead. In terms of inter-subjective relation I am now completely an object for the other, the other can see me as a person that was good or bad, hero or coward, without me having any power to nihilate what has been made of me. In fact my death is a complete object status, I am revealed as a particular dead person, for instance, for my wife, or parent. And I am revealed in relation to a totality of dead people; losing all my particular qualities I had, as for instance a person who talks about death puts into consideration dead people in general.

“Thus the very existence of death alienates us wholly in our own life to the advantage of the other. To be dead is to be a prey for the living... Death cannot therefore belong to the ontological structure of the for-itself. In so far as it is the triumph of the other over me, it refers to a fact, fundamental to be sure, but

totally contingent.... We should not know this death if the other did not exist; it could not be revealed to us, nor could it be constituted as the metamorphosis of our being into a destiny."⁵¹

The above exposition by now has made it clear why Sartre claims the problem of inter-subjective relations is ontological. As we have seen, the being of the 'I' renders inter-subjective relations from becoming a synthesis of the I and you. In fact, as we have seen the nature of the inter-subjective relation is conflictual. Every attempt made by the 'for-itself' is a sway between the desire to objectify oneself for the other and a desire to want the other to objectify himself for me; which however is never possible or fails. The best picture that we can have about the problem of inter-subjective relations is found in Sartre's literary work known as "no exit". In this short story Sartre associates the existence of other people with hell. As he puts it; "you remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the "burning marl" old wives' tales! There's no need for red-hot pokers. Hell is - other people!"⁵²

2.8. Later Sartre

In his later works Sartre shifted his attention from ontological concerns in general to more practical issues. In his later work, especially the critique of dialectical reason (CDR), Sartre's attempt to be involved with more practical issue of socio-economic, political and historical issue can be witnessed. As Detmer argues;

*That the interests of the later Sartre are somewhat different from those of the early Sartre will, I trust, be granted by everyone. One has only to recall, for example, that in BN Sartre is principally concerned with ontology, while in CDR he addresses himself much more extensively to anthropological, sociological, historical, and political issues. Consequently, the former work deals primarily with abstract, theoretical questions, while the latter delves directly into the concrete, practical realm. As Sartre himself explains, "BN is a general point of view, a fundamental point of view. And CDR is a point of view that on the contrary is social and concrete. The one is abstract, studies general truths, and the other is not so concerned with that and places itself upon the plane of the concrete."*⁵³

However Sartre's shift of emphasis towards practical matters has been a ground of controversies. Some argue that Sartre's later perspective, contravenes the ontology of being and nothingness where as others argue otherwise. Though this

issue is not a concern of this paper most well known scholars on Sartre affirm the former perspective. Especially regarding inter-subjective relation the latter Sartre strictly remained within his prior ontology. As Dagnachew Assefa puts it;

“in general’ as the question or issue of human relations is concerned, the critique still remains within the perspective of being and nothingness. Thus, in both the early and later works, human cooperation, for one reason or another does not exist. In being and nothingness we should recall that relation between people are full of mutual tension since each wants to objectify the other and rob him/her of liberty. Suspicion of others, and fear of loss of freedom makes each person highly individualistic and ontologically separate from one another.”⁵⁴

This being the case I will point out in brief some notions about Sartre’s inter-subjective relations as expounded in the CDR so that the reader would have a more or less encompassing view of the general Sartrean framework regarding inter subjective relation.

2.8.1. Need

In the CDR, we can say the background or the stage of inter-subjective relations are need and scarcity. That is, as a concrete human being we have certain needs or desires. We at least want to eat, drink etc and such needs can only be fulfilled from something external to us, the external world. Now this need is going to play a unifying role among individuals, it reveals to individuals their insufficiency to work or act on the external world only on their own. So need on one hand reveals the external world to me on the other hand it reveals that I need the other in order for me to fulfill this need in some manner. So the other and I are hold together because of the external world which presents itself to us as that thing to be worked out by our mutual activity.

Our problem concerns these connections. If there are individuals, who, or what, totalises?... need is the first totalizing relation between the material being, man, and the material ensemble of which he is part ... need is a link of univocal immanence with surrounding materiality in so far as the organism tries to sustain itself with it; it is already totalising, and doubly so, for it is nothing other than the living totality, manifesting itself as a totality and revealing the material environment, to infinity, as the total field of possibilities of satisfaction.⁵⁵

2.8.2. Praxis and Labor

We can easily infer that this need is to be satisfied through some action using one's body; with or without tools as a means of mediating the external world with some purposeful end. This action or activity which is made by positing some purposeful end, Sartre calls it praxis. And since this praxis is affected by the body as a means, Sartre argues that labor is the "original praxis by which man produces and reproduces his life".⁵⁶

2.8.3. Practico-Inert and Scarcity

The practico-inert can be said is the out come of praxis. That is, as we have seen through praxis we organize the world in some manner materially as well as socially. We make houses, factories, laws, religion, etc. these things that we have made now have their own being. Through human praxis they are or were created once but they come back on us to shape us in turn. Hence, they become a limiting factor on our freedom. Think of any particular road for instance, the road was obviously made through some human praxis. Once the road has been made with all the does and doesn't like zebra lines. The road becomes something which shapes the way I act in the world. I have to cross using the zebra lines, I cannot dig a hole somewhere in the middle of the road to plant a tree etc.. All this I cannot do freely because of the praxis of my generation or prior generation which I have to abide now. However this does not mean that I am totally unfree to at least try but rather my practical freedom to actually do it is limited to a relatively higher degree. "Thus, the relationship between praxis and practico-inert might most clearly be stated this way: we shape the world (praxis); and the world, on the basis of the manner in which we have shaped it, comes back to shape us (practico-inert)."⁵⁷

This being the case however, the practico-inert is also what holds us together. It makes us unify as we will see next by serving as "the third". That is, we mostly exist in our everyday life as people who either live in some city or who use a particular road. For instance, to claim that I am a Parisian or Addis Ababa-ian is to consider one self together with other people who inhabit in Paris or Addis Ababa, hence the city becomes the means

through which my togetherness with other people is achieved. In general we are related to one another through the practico inert. The story however does not stop there; behind all this we realize that there is scarcity. And as we know what is scarce typically refers to each one of us the potential danger of the other. As a result inter-subjective relations are to be viewed within the framework of 'need' and 'scarcity' which from the outset gives us a gloomy picture of inter-subjective relation. In the absence of scarcity I can see the other as the other but yet the same that is his end and my end are the same. We both tend to enrich our being further by our praxis. However once scarcity is involved the presence of the other is not only something that enrich my being but also that diminishes it, which render inter-subjective relations violent. As Sartre argues

In pure reciprocity, that which is Other than me is also the same. But in reciprocity as modified by scarcity, the same appears to us as antihuman in so far as this same man appears as radically Other - that is to say, as threatening us with death. Or, to put it another way, we have a rough understanding of his ends (for they are the same as ours), and his means (we have the same ones) as well as of the dialectical structures of his acts; but we understand them as if they belonged to another species, our demonic double. Nothing - not even wild beasts or microbes - could be more terrifying for man than a species which is intelligent, carnivorous and cruel, and which can understand and outwit human intelligence, and whose aim is precisely the destruction of man. This, however, is obviously our own species as perceived in others by each of its members in the context of scarcity.⁵⁸

2.8.4. The Practico-Inert, scarcity and the Serial

The serial for Sartre consists of passively organized or united individuals through the practico-inert; most of human unity as we find them at least today exists in a serial. This includes passive unity achieved through the practico-inerts like, bus, city, nations, markets, radio broadcasts, etc, if we take the bus, as an example, the people waiting for a bus in a queue are unified through the bus as "being those people who wait for the bus" for such people each one of them relate to one another as if they are the other. If I am the one standing in a queue, it does not matter, whether it is person x, y or z standing next, behind or in front of me. Not only that, I am also any particular person for me. There is nothing special about me standing there, I know, my being there could be replaced easily by any other person. so the relation among us is that of "other to other". Moreover when such relationship becomes based on something scarce, then the usual violence of inter-

subjective relation arises. Because, since the bus has only limited seats for anybody, I am going to rush or run towards the bus as that anybody who is going to get the seat.

Moreover such individuals organized in a series since are related to one another in the form of “other to other” every single individual is going to feel impotent before the presence of the practico-inert, in order to effect some change. for instance, every time we think of bringing a certain change in the structure of a city or government organization, we feel our individual powerlessness in order to bring that change. The problem is there not directly as my problem, but as the problem for me “as the other” and for all others. So this renders me as incapacitated on my own. Sartre thinks that this powerlessness is cultivated by dictators so that their stay in power is maximized. As Flynn correctly notes;

Practico-inert ‘mediation’ is alienating, it steals one’s activity the way the ‘look’ of the Other robs one of one’s freedom in Being and Nothingness. And when qualified by material scarcity, practico-inert mediation renders human relations violent. Sartre describes violence as ‘interiorized scarcity’. The fact that there is not enough of the goods of the world to go around colours human history as a tale of violence and terror... Most relations are ‘serial’ because they are mediated by the practico-inert. Most of the individuals who populate our world, from the television-viewing public to the people waiting for the same bus, are rendered serial by the ‘false’ or ‘external’ unity imposed on them by such collective objects as a television announcer or an expected bus. They are related among themselves as ‘other’ to ‘other’—as competitors for scarce space, for example, or as fashioning their opinions as the newscaster dictates .Sartre notes that such ‘serial impotence’ is cultivated by dictators who wish to maintain an illusion of power on the part of their subjects in the midst of the latter’s profound malleability.⁵⁹

2.8.5. The Group-In-Fusion, terror, pledge and the group-in-constraint

The group in fusion consists of the organization of individuals towards producing or eliminating something. Such groups are not organized as those in the series. The organization is not passive but rather active. The praxis of each individual is directed towards the same goal. Sartre gives the storming of the Bastille as an example. The people while storming the Bastille were not in opposition to one another. Each one was doing his best in bringing down the Bastille. Each individual’s praxis is a contribution to my end. In such a situation we can almost say everybody is the same, however a certain

otherness always remains. For Sartre it is always the individual praxis that makes this people turn in to such group.

However, such 'group' or 'we' always arise in the presence of such agitating and terrifying notions like the Bastille. Terror is what unites these people in to such groups from their previous serial organization. So it is always in the presence of some extreme calamity that people usually organize as a 'we' through their praxis. This implies that such groups are threatened to fall back to their serial organization once the job is accomplished. There is no direct threat which keeps the group from disintegrating. Hence a certain pledge is needed to hold this group together. They have to give their vow to one another to stay together. And as we know a vow could easily be broken so they need to create some bureaucracies or institutions to which each have to subdue, turning the group-in-fusion to a group-in-constraints. As Dagnachew clearly puts it;

Latter Sartre talks about the transition from group-en-fusion to a group-in-constraints in the form of authority and institution. The institution is a mature organizational form in which (i) responsibilities are distributed; thus, duties, jobs, functions are highly differentiated ;(ii) individual status is created; and(iii)the status quo assumes priority at the expense of individual freedom.⁶⁰

End Notes

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Chapter Three

Critical analysis

In this chapter, I will attempt to put Sartre's analysis of inter-subjective relation and the organization or the formation of the social in to critical analysis. However in criticizing Sartre I will attempt to put under consideration the general Sartrean ontology, for as we have seen everything that Sartre has done is basically attached to his ontology. There is not even a single notion in Sartre which, in one way or another, does not lead to his ontology. In taking this as a guide line, I think we could be able to give a more adequate criticism of Sartre. Especially in seeing some of the notions he said we are easily tempted to raise some questions right away. For instance, as we have seen, Sartre argues that man is condemned to freedom and this has been a ground of criticism. However before jumping into conclusion we should be able to ask how such a committed intellectual like Sartre could affirm such a thing. Moreover it will also help us see the strength and weakness of Sartre's critiques, because, as Barnes argues, Sartre "is often criticized and all-too-rarely understood."¹ in approaching Sartre from his overall or general perspective we can grasp some points which could help us shade some light in to our contemporary world in general.

3.1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty

The person that is mostly regarded to be Sartre's major critique is, Sartre's contemporary, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. As it is usually argued "criticism of a higher quality are raised against Sartre by his colleague and fellow phenomenologist Maurice merleau-Ponty."² Indeed it could be said that Ponty's criticism of Sartre is of a "higher quality" because Ponty's criticism of Sartre at least attempts to touch the entire Sartrean ontology. In fact Ponty not only criticized the Sartrean ontology but also brought forth his own. As a result I will make Ponty's criticism of Sartre my starting point.

In the *Phenomenology of perception*, *PP* one of Ponty's major work printed two years after Sartre's B&N, we discover an analogous attempt to that of Sartre made by Ponty. The fourth chapter of this book under the title "otherselves and the human world" puts forward Ponty's view of the Other in general. As the following quotation shows, Ponty was considering all problems that can surround any analysis of the other. Like Sartre he was attempting to give a phenomenological description of the other that could bypass the problem of solipsism, how the other is given as a subject, and the nature of inter-subjective relation. As he puts it

*how can the word 'I' be put into the plural, how can a general idea of the I be formed, how can I speak of an I other than my own, how can I know that there are other I's, how can consciousness which, by its nature, and as self-knowledge, is in the mode of the I, be grasped in the mode of Thou, and through this, in the world of the 'One'?*³

The other for Ponty, just like Sartre, is given through the look or the gaze and similarly it is through internal relation that the gaze reveals the other as a subject. However, the gaze for Ponty is not originally an objectifying gaze like that of Sartre's, because strictly speaking the gaze of the other and mine are communicated in the world. This should not lead us to think that the world in general plays the role of "the third" for Ponty. The world in general and the I are not strictly separated between one another as a being-for-itself and being-in-itself as in the case of Sartre. Ponty argues that once we have such a distinction between a for-itself and in-itself we cannot have any meaningful dialectic between the two. As Ponty puts it in his latter work the *Invisible and Visible*

*It is with this intuition of Being as absolute plenitude and absolute positivity, and with a view of nothingness purified of all the being we mix into it, that Sartre expects to account for our primordial access to the things.... From the moment that I conceive of myself as negativity and the world as positivity, there is no longer any interaction.... We are and remain strictly opposed.*⁴

For Ponty "Sartre's dialectic is a 'bad dialectic'.... The only 'good dialectic' on the other hand, is what he calls "the hyper dialectic"⁵. Such a Sartrean dialectic is an outcome of reflection. Prior to reflection the I and the world are not in this absolute cleavage between one another. Generally speaking the hyper-dialectic is."a dialectical definition of being

that can be neither the being for it-self nor the being in- itself...that must rediscover the being that lies before the cleavage operated by reflection, about it, on it is horizon, not outside of us and not in us, but there where the two movements cross, there where “there is” something”⁶

This point of intersection of the for itself and the in itself, for Ponty is the body. Ponty is attempting to extend the consciousness-body relation to the entire world. Like Sartre Ponty argues consciousness is embodied. The body is not some object of consciousness which it experiences as an object; and it is this similar relation of consciousness to body that is extended to the entire world including the other. Hence prior to reflection the I, the other and the world are intertwined together. It is through reflection that we break this original unity without synthesis. This primary oneness Ponty calls it the flesh.

The body is simultaneously part of the world of things and the thing that sees and feels things. The body (which is itself visible) can see things not because they are objects of consciousness, at a distance from it, but precisely because those things are the environment in which the seeing body exists. These two aspects of the body (seen and seer, visible and invisible) are inseparably intertwined: ‘the experience of my body and the experience of the other are themselves the two sides of one same being’ ([4.24], 225). This intertwining at the most fundamental and primordial level, this anonymous generality of the visible and myself, is what Merleau-Ponty calls ‘the flesh’ (la chair).⁷

In this case, what phenomenology should do is try to explain, such unity, such oneness, without any absolute cleavage. It is starting from our facticity that phenomenology should begin rather than a cleavage between the transcendence of consciousness and its facticity. Ponty tries to show us the two as they are intertwined together. As a result, the I, or the for itself is found as a factual being; a being that is in the natural world as well as in the cultural world. It is situated in these worlds as a living being who always anticipates the future. The past is always that thing which we can never recapture in its totality, not because we forget or not remember it but because it is attached to our being in general. We always reflect back on it from the present which always adds something to it. Hence historicity and time are inextricably linked to it. Similarly since the I is within the cultural world the other is always there. Everything that we are surrounded with reveals the other to us. Every cultural objects tell us the existence of others through “the

veil of anonymity". All this directly refer to and are inextricably linked to subjectivity. It is from here everything begins not from the pure Sartrean consciousness. As Ponty argues

I am thrown into a nature, and that nature appears not only as outside me, in objects devoid of history, but it is also discernible at the centre of subjectivity. Theoretical and practical decisions of personal life may well lay hold, from a distance, upon my past and my future, and bestow upon my past, with all it is fortuitous events, a definite significance, by following it up with a future which will be seen after the event as foreshadowed by it, thus introducing historicity into my life....Just as nature finds its way to the core of my personal life and becomes inextricably linked with it, so behavior patterns settle into that nature, being deposited in the form of a cultural world. Not only have I a physical world, not only do I live in the midst of earth, air and water, I have around me roads, plantations, villages, streets, churches, implements, a bell, a spoon, a pipe.⁸

Now, regarding the look, it is true that the negation of the other is internal, however, this internal negation as I have mentioned earlier does not originally lead to objectification. When I see another person I see him not as an object but as a subject; as a similar psych-physic subject. In the real world the gaze cannot let me see the living other as an object. Through reflection I might ask myself whether the other is a subject or not but the gaze as an original encounter with a living man cannot let me do that. I see him just like another me. To the extent that it is the consciousness-body relation that governs the relation between the other and me; I cannot take the other as an object. This means that the body initially has an inter-subjective significance As Ponty argues using the development of a child as an example;

Now the perception of others is anterior to, and the condition of, such observations, the observations do not constitute the perception. A baby of fifteen months opens its mouth if I playfully take one of its fingers between my teeth and pretend to bite it. And yet it has scarcely looked at its face in a glass, and its teeth are not in any case like mine. The fact is that its own mouth and teeth, as it feels them from the inside, are immediately, for it, an apparatus to bite with, and my jaw, as the baby sees it from the outside, is immediately, for it, capable of the same intentions. 'Biting' has immediately, for it, an inter subjective significance.⁹

Moreover, in this cultural world there is a peculiar cultural object that signifies inter-subjectivity which happens to be language. Through language inter-subjectivity is affirmed, my “co-existence” with the other is revealed. When we are engaged in speaking neither of us are objectified. Speaking is a direct encounter with the other that does not lead to objectification, because I have not fallen back to reflection. In dialogue we give each other to a common ground which is the language. My perspective and the others merge. As Ponty argues basing on Piaget’s analysis “the perception of the other people and the inter subjective world is a problematic only for adults”¹⁰, Because we tend to retreat towards reflection than actually living with the other. In Sartre, we have seen that language is the basic form of my being for others, however for Ponty it is our way of being -with the other. “Infact the others gaze transforms me in to an object and mine him, only if both of us withdraw into the core of our thinking nature”. As Ponty argues;

There is a particular cultural object which is destined to play a crucial rôle in the perception of other people: language. In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his are inter-woven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion, and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator. We have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behavior in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world.¹¹

Regarding the social, for Sartre as we have seen, it is organized in the presence of the third. And especially as we have seen in the latter Sartre terror plays a special role of organizing. Ponty argues that it is true, however the social in order for it to be organized in any manner should have its own being. The social is as areal as the natural world, and it always transcends us as the natural world. “Primarily, the social does not exist as a third person object. It is the mistake of the investigator, the great man and the historian to try to treat it as an object.”¹²

With regard to the freedom of the for-itself, Ponty’s criticism of Sartre similarly follows the same path. The whole notion of the Sartrean absolute freedom fails to give a concrete account of the for-itself in its facticity. The Sartrean notion of freedom is not statistical. It

is either we are free or not free at all. It fails to give a phenomenological account of the notions of generality and probability which draws Sartre to the rationalist. However for Ponty “the rationalist dilemma; either the free act is possible, or it is not- either the event originates in me or is imposed on me from outside, does not apply to our relations with the world and with our past.”¹³ Hence Ponty says the Sartrean freedom does not really explain the motivational as well as limitational factors in our choice. Ponty argues against the crag example that Sartre gave, which we have seen earlier, by saying

*The mountain is great or small to the extent that, as a perceived thing, it is to be found in the field of my possible actions, and in relation to a level which is not only that of my individual life, but that of ‘any man’. Generality and probability are not fictions, but phenomena; we must therefore find a phenomenological basis for statistical thought. It belongs necessarily to a being which is fixed, situated and surrounded by things in the world.’ It is improbable that I should at this moment destroy an inferiority complex in which I have been content to live for twenty years.*¹⁴

Now, as we have seen Ponty’s criticism of Sartre is systematic, he was not accusing Sartre of contradiction, but rather of failing to give a concrete account of our existential situation. In this regard from my perspective Ponty was right, if we for instance reflect on the above quotation it is actually possible to change an inferiority complex that has been a mode of life for an individual for twenty years but it is highly improbable that this change will take place. In fact we can say Ponty was concerned with this improbability whereas Sartre with the possibility no matter how deem it is.

However though this seems a matter of simple emphasis between Sartre and Ponty on how things are, in actual life. It becomes problematic because both philosophers have developed their ontology basing their argument in what seems a simple emphasis.

In such a case, I believe it makes Ponty’s criticism of Sartre’s general ontology unconvincing, because if some notion of possibility of change remains at the end of the day no matter how theoretical it is, it looks like ontologically we are free. In fact this is what Sartre was attempting to explain in all his works by rendering consciousness as a pure subjectivity or nihilation. In such a case the need for a Pontian ontology of a flesh where everything is sort of intertwined seems to be unimportant.

Nevertheless a certain complication arises here regarding the notion of inter-subjectivity. I think the perception of other people is primarily the way Ponty has shown I don't think we could primarily perceive other people as an object which renders the body as primarily inter-subjective and non conflictual. So, from my perspective the problem in Sartre lies in him extending the consciousness- world relation to that of the relation between humans; and Ponty, as we have seen, in extending human relation or the body-consciousness relation to that of the world. So its my contention here that Pontys ontology of the flesh can not fully penetrate or uproot the general Sartrean ontology but as far as the Sartrean social ontology is concerned Ponty infacts shows the basic problem inherent in Sartre's inter-subjective as well as social formation.

As we have seen the look is primarily objectifying for Sartre whereas for Ponty it becomes objectifying when we retreat to our thinking nature rather than actually living. It is the fact that Ponty has endowed the reflective cogito with the objectifying nature, which has helped him to overcome one major problem within the Sartrean ontology. That is, it has helped Ponty overcome the problem of the social in Sartre. As we have seen for Sartre the social is the outcome of praxis or project, it is created and organized by a third. In fact as we have seen, a real social organization is formed through praxis In the presence of terror. However for Ponty, the social though could be organized in such a manner, the social is as real as the natural world ontologically. It has to first be in order to be organized in any manner. And this as we have seen is strictly related to Ponty's ontology of the Flesh, which primarily renders the for-itself as we, as a co-existence, rather than conflictive and individualistic.

From my perspective then both Ponty and Sartre make a claim that is at least logically acceptable for us. The for-itself to be free ontologically it necessarily has to be a nihillation of what is as Sartre has shown. On the other hand, as far as every interpersonal relation as well as the organization of the social is concerned Sartre fails to give us a concrete account. "Sartre can offer us at best a theory of the other writ large, but not a social philosophy properly speaking"¹⁵

Moreover, I do not think that every interpersonal relation is based on such a conflictive and individualistic ground. A pregnant woman for instance, is literally in the mode of “a-we” as far as we cannot take our body as an object. The woman can in no way take what is inside her as an object unless reflectively. Similarly when the child is born I don’t think the usual conflictive, and individualistic ontological drive would guide the relation of the mother-child unless reflectively. In such a situation Ponty’s ontology becomes more acceptable. I think even the social would somehow fail in to this ground. It is somehow an extension of these kinds of relations rather than an outcome of a project.

Though from a religious perspective, I think Emanuel Levinas is right when he asserts that “contrary to the dialectic of master and slave and it is violence, there is a pacific relation to the other ... this relates to the feminine. The grace of the feminine founds the home and the dwelling out of which the laboring self is articulated, and with this the entire realm of economical, political and historical being”.¹⁶ I think there is more than mere historical contingency that most states in our world are identified as a motherland. So by demystifying Levinas, I think we could take the basic relation of the feminine to the child as one insight that could help us see that we are not only an individualistic and pessimistic being but also a “we” a “coexistence”.

Generally speaking, I think both Ponty and Sartre have loopholes in their ontology in general, which makes it impossible for us to try to synthesize their view without contradicting our self. There is some element of truth in what both philosophers affirm but since both generalize their view towards their respective ontology any attempt of synthesis would be ill defined. However I think both philosophers have pointed out a basic ontological problem, which requires us to go deeper in to the study of subjectivity in general. Infact in neuroscience we could see some elements which could help us see that both Ponty and Sartre have made a strong claim; the former regarding consciousness and the latter regarding inter-subjectivity.

3.1.1. Sartre, Ponty and Neuroscience

Though, we are engaged in an ontological inquiry in to the nature of the social, since we are dealing with the notion of consciousness. I thought it would be helpful to see what science could say about consciousness. In doing this I have in fact discovered some articles that could shade light in to our enquiry. One of the articles is by Matthew Ratcliff under the title *phenomenology, neuroscience and inter-subjectivity*. In this article, Ratcliff attempts to show how parallel Ponty's analysis of perception of other people is parallel to the conception of "mirror neurons" in neuroscience. The mirror neurons are cells which are activated when perceiving other similar being. When we perceive another human being in action, doing this or that action, these cells become activated. These cells are not activated as a result of reflection. That is, they are a response to an immediate perception.

This implies that the perception of other people prior to reflection does not lead to objectification as Ponty has suggested. The Sartrean subject-object reduction is not a primary phenomenon. Hence the "mirror neurons" can be taken as supportive evidence to Ponty's ontological "we-ness" or "coexistence" or as supportive evidence to "Merleau-Ponty claims that the meaning of behavior is perceptually evident in a sense that is prior to any intellectualized divide between subjects that philosophers might impose. (Merleau-Ponty 1964b: 17-18).¹⁷ Generally speaking, I think the "mirror-neurons" could help us somehow see that the perception of others in the Pontian sense has a strong scientific and logical claim within it which could help us see inter-subjectivity from a Pontian stance than that of Sartre. As Ratcliff argues;

*Mirror neurons provide a possible explanation of how action perception can be precisely perception and not implicit inference or tacit theorizing. An inter-modal link between perception of others and activation of one's own motor system constitutes the basis for a perceptual appreciation of others, not as mere objects that causally interact with a world but as agents, like oneself. Elaborate theorizing is not required*¹⁸

This being the case, the other article by Barnes under the title *consciousness and digestion Sartre and neuroscience*, Barnes attempts to show the close similarity of the

Sartrean conception of consciousness with that of the Nobel prize winner Gerald M. Edelman to put it in his words;

*“I have been excited to discover a promising, positive connection between Sartre’s philosophy and the work of the Nobel prize winner Gerald m. Edelman, currently director of the neuroscience institute and chairman of the department of neuroscience institute and chairman of the department of neurobiology at the Scripps research institute”*¹⁹.

According to Edelman, “the development of conscious life is bound up with the capacity to form complexities in increasingly refined discriminations”²⁰, which, in a more or less, Sartrean sense could mean nihilation. “the term discrimination” is for him as much a key term as “nihilation” is for Sartre”²¹. Hence the notion of the pre-reflective cogito as nihilation is asserted by Edelman like Sartre. The “I” in the sense we use it or Descartes I think therefore I am is not primary for both Edelman and Sartre. The pre-reflective is a nihilation of what is. In fact the Cartesian “I” or the ego Edelman calls it “the social concept of self” “since so much of what goes to form “a self” is the result of communication with other persons. Sartre could not object here for him, it is only by means of perceiving what I am for the other that I can begin to grasp my own objective existence”²²

However Barnes argues that the relation between Sartre and Edelman does not go any further than this. That is, he cannot tell whether Edelman accepts the Sartrean subject-object conflict at the root of human relations. As Barnes argues “ I cannot guess whether Edelman would accept Sartre’s claim that the subject-object conflict lies at the root of human relations as a constant threat, even if transcended in the fused group”²³.

This shows us that the basic Sartrean notion of nihilation also has some scientific ground. Edelman somehow points to the nature of consciousness as a being that nihilates. Though Edelman does not point out to the subject-object conflict in the Sartrean sense he has at least shown that there is a subject-object cleavage which is not a process of reflection. I don’t know what Edelman says about the “motor-neurons” but since Edelman was concerned with the nature of consciousness, the notion of embodied consciousness was not of his particular concern.

To conclude, Ponty and Sartre have indeed made some claims, which are even a matter of scientific scrutiny. However the problem as I have mentioned earlier is that both try to generalize their view in to their respective ontology which renders their ontology problematic for us to accept. The strength of Sartre's ontology is felt in his analysis of consciousness which however fails to give a clear account of the social. On the other hand the strength of Pontys ontology is felt on its inter-subjective and social side while remaining problematic in its notion of consciousness. As a result, what we should do is be open to the Phenomena as Husserl has shown and try to seek a better and more comprehensible individual as well as social ontology. We should not shy away or be discouraged from ontological concerns for the simple fact that most attempt until this day has not been adequate and satisfactory. The fact that no satisfactory solution is clearly visible does not mean that the problem is to be disregarded.

3.2. Other Critics

Other countless critics have criticized the Sartrean notion of the look. For Gabriel Marcel for instance "the Sartrean look is the look of the gorgon that would reduce the other to stone"²⁴. Though Marcel's ontological concern finally leads to the religious notion of God, Marcel's criticism of the Sartrean look is close to Ponty's, in that the body for Marcel, is primarily inter-subjective.

*"the flesh is where we are in a primary contact with all otherness, both natural and human. The affirmation of being that arises there articulates a sense of the togetherness of the existing self and the rest of being in it is other. It is as if the incarnate self is initially an inarticulate 'we are' ... the subject is an incarnate self-defined inter-subjectivity."*²⁵

Similarly for Dagnachew,Assefa the general Sartrean ontology is problematic, at the end of the day it fails to give us a concrete account of our existence, or "Sartre's philosophy unduly emphasizes and is highly dependent on an exaggerated notion of otherness ... accordingly, Sartre's negative assessment is not limited to individual relationship but he even attempted to establish an entire system of political theory based on the notion of

otherness”²⁶, and this is problematic because it fails to give us any picture of a “true community” based on such notions as “unity and cooperation” which are not the outcome of a “practical needs”. Generally speaking, for Dagnachew “Sartre promotes” a gloomy picture of mans ability to form a true community, fraternity, or any other form of human association”²⁷.

In this aspect, I think Dagnachew’s critique of Sartre is very close to that of Ponty’s, in that Dagnachew is accusing Sartre of “unduly emphasizing the notion of otherness” which if we put in Ponty’s words means that “generality and probability are not fictions, but phenomena; we must therefore find a phenomenological basis for statistical thought”, moreover we could trace a Pontyan line of reasoning in Dagnachew, in that, for Dagnachew a real social bond or ‘true community” and fraternity are not the outcome of solving a certain practical need. Hence do not necessarily need any third as the original unifying nature. As Dagnachew argues;I believe that the notion that individuals can be united by terror is unacceptable. There is no way that love, friendship or voluntary cooperation could be established by violence or the threat of it”²⁸.

This is not to imply that Dagnachew is arguing from the general Pontyan ontology of the flesh. But rather as far as the social is considered Dagnachew shares the Pontyan notion of the “we” or “coexistence”. And in this regard I think Dagnachew has correctly noted the problem within Sartre’s ontology. Sartre himself must have recognized this problem towards the end of his life when he affirms to Benny levy, “that he had never reconciled these fundamental features of social life, fraternity, and violence.”²⁹

Franz fanon, who also like Ponty was a close associate of Sartre and also one of the prominent figure of the negritude movement, accuse the Sartrean look of failing to give a concrete account of the factual situation of black people in colonial situation. A simple rebuttal of the look of the white man is not going to free the black man from his objectified state. The white man in a colonial situation is not just the other to the black man but also the master.

Fanon states that Sartre’s analysis of intersubjective relations as set out in L’Etre et le neant cannot be applied to relations between black and white.

*This is because the Sartrean schema is too abstract and elides crucial power difference, since, in the colonial situation, the white is not only the other but also the master from the outset*³⁰

As a result Negritude for Sartre becomes; a recognition of colonized black people as the us- object because of the presence of the colonizer which however is going to disintegrate, because this unity will help to fight the colonizer; and once the colonizer is defeated negritude itself is going to disintegrate or self-destruct because as we have seen the us object always needs the third. Fanon accepts that this has some truth in it; in that negritude has some historical ground; however “even if there may be a certain amount of truth in Sartre’s historicization of negritude as a means and not an end, fanon maintains that it is politically imperative to ignore this in order to act in the contemporary context of colonial relation”.³¹

So far, what fanon seems to claim I think makes sense. The Sartrean look does not fully help elucidate the situation of black colonized people. Infact one of the criticism of Ponty, as we have seen, was that Sartre failed to explain our factual existential situation. However I do not think we could jump from this line of reasoning towards saying;

*The dialectic which introduces necessity into the fulcrum of my freedom drives me out of myself. It breaks my position of non-reflection. Still in terms of consciousness, black consciousness is immanent to itself. I am not the potentiality of something else; I am fully what I am. I do not have to seek the universal. My heart admits no probability. My Negro consciousness does not present itself as a lack. It is. It supports itself. (PNMB 109/BSWM 135)*³²

First of all if fanon is so sure about the Negro consciousness he was talking about there is no need for him to accept Sartre’s historization of negritude. After all, if it is immanent in the consciousness of black people why worry about its disintegration in the absence of colonization. Secondly, as we have seen, I think Sartre’s argument against the immanency of consciousness as well as consciousness as a lack has some degree of truth in it which makes fanons Negro consciousness unconvincing.

3.3. The Club Vs the Bastille

Another important area which Sartre's look fails to explain is the unity through music and dancing. The usual subject-object conflict as well as the limitation of the other cannot strictly fit when we reflect on how music and dancing form human association. If we for instance take a certain festivity or a night club, as an example, the night club, is not a third in the Sartrean sense or it has no element of the Bastille in it whose terrorizing feature holds us together. Moreover the notion of labour and praxis do not fit with the notion of dancing; though the unity achieved is more than what the Bastille could ever achieve. Dancing cannot be a primary activity with the aim of reaching a certain practical end. A person can dance for money or seducing the other, but under any circumstance this cannot be the being of dancing. Dancing is primarily a dancing- with-the- other rather than for-others whose goal is nothing practical. Even if we say I dance for enjoyment; enjoyment cannot be disentangled from Dancing. Dancing is itself enjoyment.

Infact I think to the extent that there is no culture without language there is equally no culture without music and dance; which shows that dancing and music are our primary mode of our being-with rather than our being- for- other. The Hegelian master slave dialectic and its violence cannot literally fit here. The being of the club presupposes people who listens to music and dance, and once in the club it is not a dancing individual that we find, but rather people who are held together by a bond of music and dancing. Generally speaking, ontologically music and dancing reflect our "being with" rather than our being-for-others. That is, though, I can dance alone, or dance for the other. Dancing primarily reflects a dancing- with- the other. Rather than a conflictual ground, or a war zone, the dancing floor is a phenomena which reflects human oneness, love, and inter-subjectivity. And I really do not see how terror could play a role in such a situation. In fact instead of cafes and restaurants Sartre would have benefited more if his phenomenological inquiry had some ground where there is music and dancing. I really cannot see how Sartre encompassing lots of Nietzschean elements in his thought failed to encompass the Dionysian element in Nietzsches thought.

3.4. Being Seen By the Other vs. Being Heard By the Other

The look, as we have seen is not limited, to the perceptual field of our existence it also encompasses the audible. Martinot argues that the look in the audible field needs to go some transformation in order for it to account on how we communicate in a dialogue. Martinot makes a fascinating twist of the look that removes its conflictual nature as well as gives it a social character. Martinot argues that Sartre account of being seen by the other is not necessarily similar to that of being-heard in a dialogue. When in dialogue and we speak to the other, we only speak with the purpose of saying something and getting a reply or a response from the other which in turn makes us a subject. That is, the initial act of speaking confers subjectivity to the other rather than objectifying him/her and though I am objectified at this stage it is only for the purpose of me becoming a listener in turn. Therefore, “though one’s objectifying look engages a conflictuality, each objectifying act of listening engages a project of mutual subjectivization.”³³

Moreover, though speech is guided by the essence of what is being said and the speaker, it cannot be disentangled from the socio-historic aspects of the language the interlocutors speak. That is “each act of speech is both, autonomous and singular, yet not separable from the historicity of the language that the interlocutors speak, with it is multi-narrativities and vast cultural background”.³⁴ Which reveals the social side of every dialogue as well as its primacy, as Martinot argues;

*“ if meta-narrativity is a concomitant of subjectivity and a condition for a factual (as opposed to ontological) inter-subjectivity a certain priority is given the structure of dialogue as more than merely one of the possibilities of being-for-others. The ontology of dialogue, which repeats the structure of being-for-others in terms of being-heard rather than being-seen, reverses the priority of the visible and the discursive, and transforms the Lacanian priority of desire in to the desire to confer subjectivity”*³⁵

Martinot’s transformation of the look helps elucidates the Sartrean look to a large extent not only in rendering it non conflictual but also in giving it a more practical significance in our contemporary world. Since dialogue repeats the structure of the look it involves responsibility. As we have seen, for Sartre we are responsible for what has been made of us or our objectified state. And on top of this in its new transformation Martinot endows

the look with the notion of responsiveness. In such a situation the notion of public space is seen from a Sartrean perspective as that space where the interlocutors are held in an atmosphere of responsibility with mutual responsiveness. As a result the notion of freedom of speech becomes more concertized and meaningful.

“In what besets us politically, the relation of inter-subjectivity as facticity rather than as ontological category is a necessary transcendence of the “right to free speech”, which becomes meaningless in the context of corporate controlled public space. It is at the very fundamental level of dialogue- and with an understanding of dialogue as containing a sense of responsibility, responsiveness, and recognition, without proprietary hold on what one has said- than as essential dimension where in to begin to reconstruct a form of public space reveals itself.”³⁶

This being the case, I believe Martinot's transformation of the Sartrean look unless backed by a Pontian social ontology is going to lead back to the previous problem which we raised; because what is a failed attempt ontologically cannot truly be achieved factually. Bad-faith would become inevitable because dialogue would become a factual engagement which could always be transcended. Secondly the whole notion of conferring subjectivity from my perspective lacks clarity; if subjectivity is conferred to the other who is already a subject it sounds redundant and useless. Secondly if subjectivity is conferred to the other which has been objectified by the look in the visible realm then this becomes a return to the basic Sartrean view that one is seen while speaking, which at the end of the day brings out the conflictual nature of the the look.

To conclude the Sartrean ontology of the look is basically problematic that even to try to account for any positive transformation of it, at the end of the day, would lead to a transformation of the entire Sartrean ontology. The only reason why I think Martinot wanted to remain within the structure of being-for-itself, is because Martinot truly believed that Sartre has gotten over with the epistemological puzzlement of the other. As can be seen from the very first line of the article Martinot believes that; Sartre “at the center of his ontological treatise, *Being and Nothingness*¹, in a section titled “The look”, Sartre creates a small narrative moment of dubious virtue in which he is able to resolve one of the truly vexing problems of phenomenology up to his time. It is the problem of the other”³⁷. However, as we have seen, the basic structure of the look has some problems which Sartre in all his work could not adjust within his theoretical framework

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Conclusion

As we have seen for Sartre interpersonal relations are doomed conflictual ontologically. Consciousness being a pure subjectivity could not synthesize with its object. Consciousness though dependent on its object, it is not its object. Consciousness is a nihilation of what is. Sartre basing his account of consciousness in such a manner attempted to account for the relation between subjects. As can be easily imagined, once consciousness is rendered as a nihilation of what is, the relation between the two could not be positive no matter how hard we try to minimize the gap.

Moreover, the problem with such Sartrean ontology as we have seen, is not so much about logical consistency with in Sartre's ontological description of being but rather failing to give a concrete account of our existential situation. As Ponty has suggested especially in B&N Sartre seems to be more concerned about the logical consistency of his thought rather than giving a phenomenological account of being. However the difference between Sartre and Ponty though seems a matter of emphasis, their ontology shows that there is more to it than a matter of mere emphasis. As we have seen Ponty starts from the "we" and tries to describe the I in it, where as Sartre starts from the "I" and tries to describe the we. For Sartre there is always an I in the we and for Ponty there is always a we in the I. This difference between Ponty and Sartre is not only a difference in philosophical stance but as we have seen Ponty basically removes the primary nihilating aspect of consciousness which, renders inter-subjective relations primarily non-conflictual.

However though Ponty seems right in endowing the reflective cogito as the source of conflict it remains perplexing that consciousness as a nihilation of the environment at least seems to hold on. Other critiques of Sartre as well come from a more or less Pontian line of reasoning, Marcel for instance, almost repeats what ponty has said about inter-subject relation, by making the body primarily inter-subjective.

This being the case, Sartre has brought a considerable development in philosophy by conjoining the tradition of the cogito with that of phenomenology, which made philosophy

more concrete and familiar to our ears. In this regard Sartre helps us realize the tremendous problem involved with any philosophical discourse regarding the nature of relation between the I and you. As we have seen, any discourse that renders the relation between the I and you conflictual or not should be able to show its ontological implication by describing the being of the I. Moreover as we have seen the problem of solipsism should also be put under consideration for it lies at the center of this problem. In our contemporary world the general discourse regarding conflict or peace seems to forget this basic ontological concern. I think it would be a mistake to suppose the problems involved with terrorism, gender issue, poverty, environmental issues and globalization would be adequately dealt with or treated in what seems a mechanistic and technical approach

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