Jean-Paul Sartre's Anarchist Philosophy

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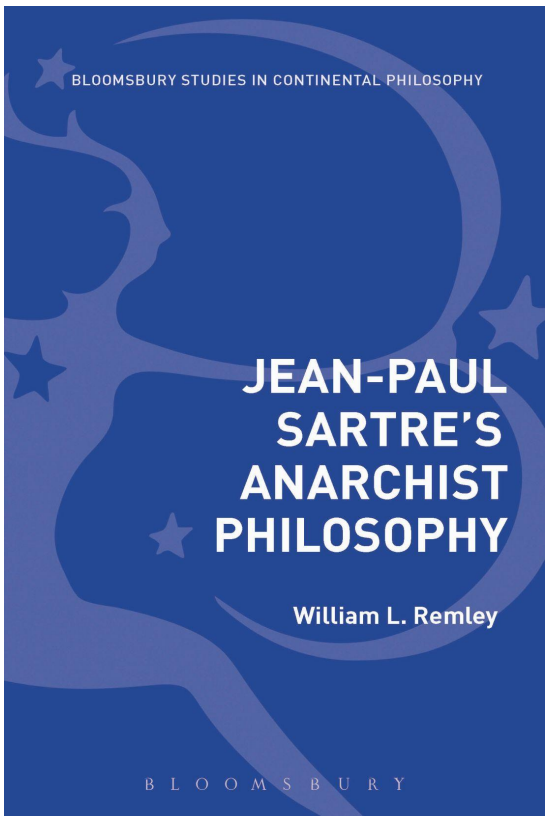

2018

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Violenta nemo imperia continuit diu
—Seneca, *The Trojan Women*

People have never given up their right and transferred their power to another in such a way that they did not fear the very person who received their right and power, and put the government at greater risk from its own citizens than from its enemies.
—Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*

If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and the morality of custom at last reveal *what* they have simply been the means to: then we discover that the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*.
—Friedrich Nietzsche. *On the Genealogy of Morals*

Acknowledgements

Many people played a role in the writing of this book, and I appreciate all of them. I want to single out several people who talked to me about the project, gave me helpful suggestions, and provided me with very worthwhile criticism. At Georgetown University, I benefited from numerous conversations with Wilfried Ver Eecke who first ignited my interest in Sartre's work. At the New School for Social Research, I was greatly aided by my conversations with Simon Critchley, Bernard Flynn and James Dodd. The latter agreed to oversee an independent study of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, which solidified my interest in Sartre and, more importantly, the *Critique*. I also want to acknowledge and greatly thank Ian Rhoad and Nicolas de Warren for agreeing to form a reading group that first probed the intricacies (some might say mysteries, others absurdity) of Sartre's *The Family Idiot* – all five volumes and over 3,000 pages. As if that were not enough, they also read and discussed with me both volumes of the *Critique* in a succeeding reading group. Each of these reading groups proved invaluable to my understanding not only of the *Critique* specifically, but Sartre's anarchist political philosophy generally. Lastly, I wish to thank Nicolas de Warren for engaging in numerous conversations regarding Sartre and the *Critique*, reading several drafts of this book, and offering many insightful comments and suggestions. Without that help, what follows would not be possible.

Introduction

> *'I have always been an anarchist'.*
>
> —*Interview with Sartre*, 1975

Jean-Paul Sartre was not particularly political until the events of the Second World War, when his prodigious mind eventually engaged in the world, political events swirling all around him. At that time, most argued that he embraced a form of Marxism tightly connected to his conception of existentialism. The ensuing scholarly debates of the 1960s and afterwards tended to revolve around the question of Marxism's compatibility with existentialism; ignited, no doubt, by Sartre himself when he declared existentialism to be a parasitic ideology to an overriding Marxism. While he later admitted this was not possible, few seemed to notice. The overwhelming sentiment was and remains that Sartre espoused a political philosophy based fundamentally on Marxism.[1]

This 'common' theme fails, however, to come to terms with or even recognize a foundational aspect of Sartre's political philosophy, namely his anarchism. Early in his life, Sartre declared his affinities to anarchism, a feeling he reiterated in the early 1970s when he identified his anarchism not with the student upheavals of 1968, but with the anarchist movements of the nineteenth century.[2] This sentiment should not appear overly surprising, since in his own autobiography, *The Words*, Sartre recognized he was a product of an earlier time and place, the nineteenth century:

> between the first Russian revolution and the first world war, fifteen years after Mallarmé's death, when Daniel de Fontanin was discovering Gide's *Fruits of the Earth*, a man of the nineteenth century was foisting upon his grandson ideas that had been current under Louis Phillippe. … I started off with a handicap of eighty years.[3]

[1] Sartre declared existentialism parasitic to Marxism in the introduction to the *Critique de la Raison dialectique*: *Théorie des Ensembles Practiques tome I* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1960), p. 22. For an example of the discussion that occurred in the 1960s and thereafter see, Wilfrid Desan, *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1965). The discussion went on even after Sartre's death. See, for example, Mark Poster, *Sartre's Marxism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). More recent scholars also make the case for Sartre's Marxism. In one such instance, Sam Coombes, *The Early Sartre and Marxism* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), argues in favour of Sartre's Marxism, but admits to the many differences between their positions. Contrary to the popular position there were some who thought the idea of combining Marxism and existentialism as 'perfectly futile'. Edouard Morot-Sir, 'Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22, no. 4 (October to December 1961): 573–81.

[2] 'Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (La Salle: Open Court, 1981), p. 21 (interviewed by Michel Rybalka and Oreste Pucciani on 12 May and 19 May 1975); see also, Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Self-Portrait at Seventy', in *Life/Situations*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), pp. 24–5 (interview with Michel Contat in June and July of 1975) where Sartre says he has always remained an anarchist. In her autobiography, de Beauvoir refers to their political position in the 1930s as anarchist. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*: *The Autobiography of Simone de Beauvoir*, trans. Peter Green (New York: Paragon House, 1972), p. 113.

[3] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), p. 63. Sartre is referring to his relationship with his grandfather Charles Schweitzer.

In many respects, much of what Sartre espoused derives from the intellectual thought of the nineteenth century, and, as will become clear, his anarchism is no exception.

While Sartre's Marxism seems to dominate the discussion, some commentators have not altogether lost sight of his anarchism, but generally, any references tend to be offhand remarks concerning his 'anarchist inclinations'. In some sense, this is a not so subtle reference to Sartre's perceived *infant terrible* persona, but the references are just that. Significantly, there has been no attempt to both explain what anarchism means and then apply it to Sartre's work, or to view his political position from the vantage point of anarchist thought.[4] As if saying he is an anarchist, implies that everyone automatically knows what the outcome entails. Here, we encounter a substantial problem, which is the very nature of anarchism itself. Any attempt to explain anarchism in a definitive manner proves quite elusive, since it is a complex and nuanced concept with many divergent approaches that oftentimes seem contradictory and difficult to comprehend. Commentators are, I think, disposed to avoid any involved discussion of anarchism, and settle instead for a far more oversimplified understanding of anarchy as merely a lack of government without ever interrogating what that means. As we shall see, anarchists thought does not so much go in the direction of no government at all, as it puts into question the type of government allowing for the peaceful coexistence of all human beings while safeguarding individual freedom.

The *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is Sartre's main political text, but certainly not his only one. Originally published in 1960 and referred to as a 'monstrous and unfinished volume', the *Critique* is still neither widely read nor generally understood, even after more than fifty years.[5] Many focus their attention either on the sociological aspects of group formation that on the surface forms the heart of the study, or, as I have said, on Sartre's existential Marxism. Few try to either understand the origins of the *Critique* or delve deeply into the work itself to ascertain its implications, and, none undertakes an analysis of the text in light of anarchist thought.

[4] There are those who scratch the surface of Sartre's anarchism such as Thomas Flynn, 'Mediated Reciprocity and the Genius of the Third', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, pp. 364–5, but Flynn's very brief analysis labels Sartre a 'libertarian socialist', which he equates with anarchism. Flynn bases this designation on one factor alone, direct democracy as the 'very model of an existentialist society'. Ibid., p. 364. This, Flynn argues, derives from Sartre's dual notions of reciprocal relations and the third. As we progress in the present discussion, we shall find that anarchism is a far more complex concept than mere direct democracy alone, and, in fact, such a concept is generally rejected by most anarchists and neither discussed nor advocated by Sartre up to the publication of the *Critique*. In the early 1970s, Sartre does allude to direct democracy as an alternative to voting for particular parties. He does not, however, extend the discussion any further, but these later comments were made during Sartre's so-called Maoist period, which is beyond the scope of this discussion. See, Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Elections: A Trap for Fools', in *Life/Situations*, pp. 199–210, first published in *Les Temps Modernes,* 318 (janvier 1973); see also, Michael Cross, *Communities of Individuals: Liberalism, Communitarianism, and Sartre's Anarchism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). A second author has written not only about Sartre's anarchism but aligns Sartre's thought to that of Proudhon and Bakunin, Jeffrey Barker, 'Sartre's Dialectical Anarchism: Institution, Sovereignty, and the State', *Cogito: An International Journal for Philosophy, Society, and Politics* 2 (June 1984): 93–116. However, Barker limits his analysis to Volume I of the *Critique,* and while the author draws certain conclusions concerning Sartre's anarchism, there is scant analysis of anarchists' positions for those conclusions. As with many others, Barker seems to want to find Sartre's political philosophy compatible with Marxism based on the desire of each to eliminate the state, even though Marx did not advocate a stateless society as the anarchists did. In fact, that was one of the contentious points between anarchism and Marxism. Moreover, Sartre's notion of the state is altogether different than Marx's.

[5] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason: Theory of Practical Ensembles Volume I,* trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, ed. Jonathan Rée (London: Verso, 2004), hereinafter referred to as '*CDR I*'. And Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason Volume II (unfinished)*, ed. Arlette Elkäim-Sartre, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 2006), hereinafter referred to as '*CDR II*'. In the text, I shall refer to the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* as the '*Critique*', followed by the volume number.

In this book, I argue that, primarily in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* but in his other writings as well, Sartre espouses a far more radical anarchist political philosophy than has been previously attributed to him. I further claim, and it is the thesis of this book, that Sartre's political philosophy is anarchistic in nature and emanates from the classical revolutionary anarchism that emerged in the nineteenth century of which Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin are two of its primary champions. In the discussion, I intend to redirect past conceptions, so bound-up in the idea of Sartre's Marxism, and present his political thought through a different lens, the aperture of which is theoretical anarchism.

* * *

In the *Critique*, Sartre begins his analysis by asking a simple question: does history have meaning?[6] This most rudimentary of enquires evolves into a complex investigation starting with isolated individuals ensconced within a collective structure of other isolated individuals that leads Sartre through a sociologically based anthropology designed to explain how those individuals unite to form a group that is, at least in its inception, capable of exerting revolutionary change within a society. At this point, Sartre conjectures human freedom – within what he calls the group-in-fusion – to be the least alienating and the most beneficial, not to the group itself, but to the individuals comprising the group.[7] While Sartre could have ended the discussion at this point he chose not to, since his ultimate desire is to understand how the members of the group-in-fusion, once capable of toppling the *Ancien Régime* and in more recent times the modern day 'pharaoh' of Egypt during the so-called Arab Spring, eventually fall prey to their own maniacal desire for group unity. In the process, Sartre demonstrates the progression of the group through various dialectical stages including the solidifying of the group by means of the 'pledge' that inevitably leads the group to organize itself around particular functions.

Ultimately, however, the group 'degrades' itself as functions become institutionalized in the form of bureaucracy. All along the journey, Sartre elaborates how these various group formations, while ultimately necessary in the eyes of the members of the group, nevertheless, represent an ever-increasing and pervasive dep rivation of the freedom once felt within the group-in-fusion. This latter investigation is of utmost importance to our discussion, since it involves Sartre's understanding of sovereignty as the essential cause in limiting human freedom. From an early age, Sartre views the concept of sovereignty in a very different light than most political theorists. Not only does sovereignty play an essential role in limiting human freedom (a position not necessarily at odds with his concept of human freedom in *Being and Nothingness*, but is a more nuanced view); it also accentuates the violence inherent in all human relations and ultimately leads to the dominance and oppression associated with the *milieu* of 'Fraternity-Terror'.

The impact of Sartre's discussion is immediate: as the group organizes its praxis and eventually institutionalizes itself, an ever-increasing need to justify the group's existence displaces the 'moment' of the revolution. At this stage, Sartre gives full weight to the question why revolutions

[6] Sartre first brings up this question in Part IV of *Being and Nothingness* in his discussion of My Death in the section titled 'Freedom and Facticity: The Situation'. There he says that the question whether history has meaning depends on if history is completed or only terminated. He goes on to say this question is unresolved, since all answers are themselves historical. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), pp. 696–7. Hereinafter referred to as '*BN*'.

[7] The official translation of *le groupe en fusion* is 'fused group'. I believe this translation fails to convey the meaning Sartre intended, since it implies a group that has stopped the process of continual activity in its 'coming together'. This may indeed happen, but at the level of the group-in-fusion it most certainly has not. I shall use the term 'group-in-fusion' throughout this discussion as I think it conveys the metastable nature of the activity involved.

always seem to fail. Yet, and this will become clear as our discussion progresses, he is also pointing out that the revolutionary principles inspiring political change do not necessarily have to entangle themselves in a web of unity. This is where Sartre directs our attention to a revolution directed from below, with interchangeable leadership capable of eradicating the present political system.

Sartre's analysis of group formation provides the key to understanding his political anarchism and its convergence with the thought of both Proudhon and Bakunin. The *Critique* should not, however, be seen as the only statement of his anarchistic political philosophy. In order to come to terms with his anarchism, I shall delve more explicitly into his earlier writings including those from his days at the *École Normale Superieure*. Even though these early writings prove invaluable, there are also later writings, mostly produced in the 1950s, that solidify his anarchist credentials. Of course, the *Critique* both elaborates his earlier thoughts, and provides new insight into his political philosophy as he redefines and reshapes the anarchist landscape.

I should note that Sartre's best-known work, *Being and Nothingness*, is not considered a particularly politically oriented text, primarily because it deals with individual relations on an ontological level. However, many aspects of *Being and Nothingness* find their way into the *Critique,* and I shall highlight them as I progress in the discussion. Moreover, while Sartre's investigation in *Being and Nothingness* analyses the individual who is famously condemned to freedom, that individual still inhabits a world of reciprocal social relations with others. This concept is not lost in the *Critique* and, in fact, Sartre enhances and embellishes his earlier concept of individual freedom in his later project. Furthermore, Sartre's ever-present concern for the individual as well as the individual's freedom is quite in line with and fundamental to anarchist thought.

From an overall point of view, I shall build the case for Sartre's anarchism by first discussing what it means to espouse an anarchist political philosophy. Once I establish a general understanding of anarchism, I shall then move to a discussion of Proudhon and Bakunin and their particular form of nineteenth-century anarchism.

With regard to Sartre and his political philosophy, I begin the analysis by first looking at his very early writings from about 1927 to the publication of *Being and Nothingness* in 1943. I follow that discussion with an analysis of his more mature political books and articles emerging after the war and continuing up to the publication of the *Critique* in 1960. Sartre's work undergoes a transformation during this period and I intend to show his maturity, but one should not understand the later work as a rejection of the earlier. I hope to establish a life-long commitment on Sartre's part to the anarchist cause, and it is only by delving into those works that we begin to get a clear understanding of how he ultimately views his own political philosophy. Lastly, I shall undertake an examination of the *Critique,* which is Sartre's political testament.

One final point needs explanation. When I first began to plan this project, I intended to discuss the entire range of Sartre's political anarchism throughout his life, including the period after 1960. In addition to what I have already outlined, I envisioned the discussion to include the many disparate tendencies of anarchist thought that seem to have experienced a resurgence in the past twenty-five years. In general, contemporary anarchism appears to turn away from confrontation with the state by maintaining that the growth of neoliberalism, with its multinational corporations able to exert the power to shape and control governmental policies, negates the supremacy of the sovereign state.

Understanding this change in anarchist thought, perhaps, the most visible tendency in current anarchism is Insurrectionary Anarchism that engages in acts of violence and rioting, of-

ten making sensational headlines in the press. This trend tends to be associated with the global justice movement and includes such groups as the Occupy Movement, the Invisible Committee and the Tarnac Nine. Another major anarchist tendency, Post-Leftism, proclaims societal divisions neither are the result of class struggle nor are they related to relationships of oppression, but arise between those who exercise authority and those who are anti-authoritarian. A more all-encompassing trend, Social Movement Anarchism, argues that classical anarchism has been usurped and replaced by several social trends and criticisms that are not necessarily consciously anarchistic. These social movements include radical ecology, black and queer liberation movements, militant feminism, and anti-neoliberalism. However, contemporary anarchism also involves earlier tendencies such as Anarcho-Syndicalism (orientated towards class struggle), Platformism, Synthesis Anarchism, the Post-Structuralist Anarchism espoused by Todd May, as well as 'The New Anarchism' associated Andrej Grubačić. Surely, there are other tendencies in contemporary anarchist thought, but whatever the tendency they are generally intertwined and overlapping thus making them, at times, indiscernible and certainly not mutually exclusive.

I think it is rather obvious from this brief discussion that it is not a simple task to sort out all the various anarchist tendencies in the current political climate. This task is only exasperated if we try to situate Sartre's anarchism within any particular tendency, since Sartre's political stands during the last twenty years of his life were very complex. I say complex because it would have to confront the events of 1968 and Sartre's involvement in those events, his so-called Maoist period, his relationship to such people as Benny Lévy (Pierre Victor) and the so-called New Philosophers, Pierre Sollers and the *Tel Quel* organization, as well as his association with Michel Foucault in the early 1970s, to name just a few. Such an undertaking, I feel, requires its own lengthy discussion, and since the *Critique* provides a natural dividing line in Sartre's political life, I decided to concentrate the present study on Sartre's political anarchism up to 1960. Thus, leaving the task of further analysing Sartre's anarchism and how it may or may not fit within (there are many points of departure between Sartre's anarchism and its present-day incarnations) contemporary anarchist thought for another time. I feel that first discussing the intellectual foundation of Sartre's political anarchism allows me the opportunity to enter into a proper, albeit complex, analysis of his political thought in his later life.

Part One: What is Anarchism?

1. Anarchism: Towards an Understanding

> 'Anarchy is the condition of existence of adult society, as hierarchy is the condition of primitive society. There is a continual progress in human society from hierarchy to anarchy'.
>
> —Proudhon, *Resistance to the Revolution*

Anarchism: An Overview

Anarchism is a movement torn between various approaches emerging out of different conceptualizations of the term. Oftentimes portrayed as a peculiar and unsavoury expression of distorted, power-rejecting political thinking, it is also considered merely a simplistic classificatory label for a broadly based system of political beliefs and the historical traditions in which they unfold. Indeed, the difficulty in coming to terms with the concept of anarchism is a lack of an agreed-upon understanding of what one means when the word is invoked. It seems just as there is no one liberalism but many 'liberalisms', so too there is not just one anarchism but many 'anarchisms'. If one seeks an exact definition, it is difficult to state its meaning with any precision, since, as David Miller points out, anarchy is not one single ideology but rather a point of coming together of several ideologies.[1]

The nineteenth century – the so-called golden age of anarchism – witnessed a rise of various movements of anarchist ideologies, most importantly individualist and social, but a type of philosophical anarchism also took shape that was not tied to any particular formula for action. Our contemporary world seems to have appropriated the nomenclature of the earlier period, but without its deeper intellectualism. In this regard, we have only to look to the 1960s radicalism of such people as Guy Debord or Raoul Vaneigem.[2]

In a sense, anarchism is a victim of someone else's beliefs or political value system, and is often used to cast aspersions on individuals or groups who deviate from certain imagined and oftentimes ingrained norms.[3] Perhaps, this is because the mere mention of anarchy evokes visions of spontaneous and unruly behaviour, gratuitous violence, and mindless hedonism – a dark

[1] David Miller, *Anarchism* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1984), p. 3.

[2] See, for example, Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, eds, *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (London: Verso, 2011); and Jeff Shantz, *Against all Authority: Anarchism and the Literary Imagination* (Charlottesville: Academic Imprint, 2011), pp. 114–16.

[3] See, for example, Anonymous, *Call*, trans. Lawrence Jarach (France: Anonymous, 2004), originally published in France as *Appel* in 2004. More importantly see, The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (France: Anonymous, 2007). This small book was published by an alleged French terrorist group comprised of at least nine people residing in the village of Tarnac in France (thus, the 'Tarnac Nine'). The French government arrested the nine on 11 November 2008 and accused them of 'pre-terrorist activities', which the French Ministry of the Interior publicly associated with an emerging 'ultra-left' threat. The book, with its heavy reliance on the future to come sand what Simon Critchley refers to as 'mystical anarchism', is the primary evidence against the Tarnac Nine. See, Simon Critchley, 'Mystical Anarchism', *Critical Horizons: A Journal of Philosophy and Social Theory* 10, no. 2 (2009): 272–306.

vision of a nihilistic existence.[4] As with many words in our contemporary lexicon of endless superlatives born out of a need to classify both people and events, the term anarchy has lost its meaning.

Commentators such as John Clark believe anarchism is the victim of oversimplified usage, a usage lacking an analysis of the phenomenon to which it refers.[5] As Clark rightly points out, this leads to abstraction where scholars no longer investigate the historical roots of anarchism, but merely see anarchy as a state 'without rule' – a society they point out that is utopian and unattainable. Certainly, the Marxian position views anarchism in terms of strict anti-authoritarianism, which they believe is at best naïve or infantile and at worst unsustainable utopianism.[6]

Even though present-day society may have a narrow and somewhat skewed view of anarchism, this was not always the case. While anarchist thought did not originate in the nineteenth century, that period did propel and foment its development through such thinkers as Proudhon and Bakunin who, as we shall see, go far beyond the simple notion of a state without government. In order to come to some understanding of what anarchism means, I shall first present an overall picture of the main ideological currents prevalent in anarchist thought. This discussion provides a valuable foundation for framing a more precise conceptual foundation of what anarchism looks like, but, at the same time, it also highlights the inherent problems with any understanding.

Varieties of Anarchism

Perhaps, part of the problem lies with the theoretical viewpoints advocated by the main varieties of anarchist thinking – philosophical, individual and social – all of which fall within the anarchist cause. None of these three categories is exhaustive, and, in fact, some ascribe different names to these tendencies, but largely they cover the broad spectrum of anarchist thinking.[7]

[4] In some of Sartre's works, anarchism plays a central role. For instance, in 'Dirty Hands' Hugo is 'an undisciplined anarchistic individualist, an intellectual who thought only of striking an attractive pose, a bourgeois who worked when it pleased him and stopped at the slightest whim'. Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Dirty Hands', in *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), p. 134. Hugo's ideal of anarchist action is much like the assassins who practised 'propaganda by deed' when they approached politicians and royalty with bombs in their pockets in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Ibid., p. 144.

[5] John Clark, 'What is Anarchism?', in *Anarchism*, eds Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1978), pp. 4–5. Clark points out the manner in which anarchists themselves describe their political philosophy in either vague or oversimplified language leading to its share of confusion. For example, Emma Goldman says 'all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary'. Emma Goldman, 'Anarchism: What it Really Stands For', in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1969), p. 50. Likewise, Peter Kropotkin asserts that anarchism is 'a principle or theory of life and conduct in which society is conceived without government'. Peter Kropotkin, *Revolutionary Pamphlets,* ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 284.

[6] See, Friedrich Engels, 'On Authority', in *The Marx and Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), pp. 730–3.

[7] These three varieties of anarchism follow David Miller's classification, which I find the most suitable in expressing an overall view of anarchism. Miller, *Anarchism*, pp. 15–59. Others may use different labels, but most commentators essentially say the same thing. For example, April Carter recognizes the primacy of the individual as the ultimate anarchist classification, although she does situate the individual in society. Carter does not address philosophical anarchism. April Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). While George Woodcock covers the spectrum of anarchist thought, he does not attempt any formal classification. George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962). Gerald Runkle advocates a twofold classification of anarchist thought. The first is based on the bonds obtained among the individuals in the

While I shall discuss each of these traditions, one of the elements uniting their thought is an attack on the principle of authority, an attack, however, emanating from widely divergent philosophical positions.[8] Furthermore, one should be cautious in placing any individual anarchist strictly within a particular classification, since not unlike William Godwin it is quite possible to advocate a form of anarchism based on stringent individualism and still believe in some communitarian or social structure for humankind. This is also the case with Proudhon who straddled both individualist and social anarchist camps, and, as we shall see, Sartre's political progression is no different. Not unlike a great deal of anarchist thought these categories lack a concrete foundation with regard to the desired outcome, and because of a lack of firmness they are more of an indication of the means to arrive at a certain outcome, and not an end in itself.

Philosophical Anarchism

I want to start the discussion with philosophical anarchism mainly because it does not advocate an actual model of society, and thus is not, a variety of anarchism in the same sense as individualist and socialist forms of anarchism. Rather, it is in the nature of a philosophical attitude, or as Paul McLaughlin points out, philosophical anarchism is the 'argumentative expression of the anarchist case'.[9] It is a manner of responding to authority, which is, I would add, only worthwhile when coupled with a more concrete ideology such as individualist or socialist anarchism.

Philosophical anarchism tends to centre around the question of legitimacy of the state and the coercive institutions established by the state to enforce its will.[10] There are those who think all states are morally illegitimate, since by their very nature they are coercive and hierarchical.

proposed new society. That is, whether the bonds are external and adventitious, or internal and definitive of the life of the individual. These differences generally break down into individualist and socialist classifications. The second classification Runkle proposes is along the line of methods employed to achieve a stated goal, which generally revolves around the issue of violence. Again, Miller's classifications encompass all of Runkle's. Gerald Runkle, *Anarchism Old and New* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1972), pp. 9–12.

[8] See, for example, the discussion in Miller, *Anarchism*, p. 14; and, Paul McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

[9] Paul McLaughlin, 'In Defence of Philosophical Anarchism', in *Anarchism and Moral Philosophy*, eds Benjamin Franks and Matthew Wilson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 31.

[10] See, A. John Simmons, 'Philosophical Anarchism', in *For and Against the State: New Philosophical Readings*, eds John T. Saunders and Jenn Narvason (London: Roman & Tutlefield, 1996) and Chaim Gans, *Philosophical Anarchism and Political Disobedience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962). I use the term 'state' to mean a group of persons who possess and exercise supreme authority within a particular territory. The state may include all of the people falling under its authority as, for example, in democratic states. It may also include just one person to whom all the rest are mere subjects. Absolute monarchies fall within this category, and as Louis XIV reminded us, '*L'état, c'estmoi*'. In any case, the distinctive characteristic of the state is supreme authority, or 'sovereignty', where authority is the right to command, and concomitantly the duty to obey. Power differs from authority in that power is the ability to compel compliance, generally with force. Supreme authority grants to the state the ultimate authority over all matters taking place within its borders. There is a divergence of opinion on this issue among political theorist. For example, in his discussion of sovereignty, Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserts that the social contract 'gives to the body politic absolute power over all of its members, and it is this same power which, directed by the general will, bears, as I have said, the name sovereignty'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other Later Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 61 [Book II, chapter 4]. John Locke, on the other hand, thinks the supreme power of the state extends only to matters proper for state control. While the state is the highest authority, its right to command is less than absolute according to Locke. See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), especially 'The Second Treatise', p. 353.

Others see all existing states as illegitimate, but they say nothing precludes a state from becoming legitimate. Philosophical anarchists ground their attack on the issue of authority, since they see the state as the embodiment of authority that is both coercive and corrupt. Their motivation stems from a commitment to the moral importance of individual autonomy and free choice directly colliding with the concept of the state as hierar chical and non-egalitarian.

While it is common among anarchists to oppose authority in general and state authority in particular, what is distinctive about philosophical anarchism is its position regarding the moral character of resolutions concerning the legitimacy of the state. Philosophical anarchists believe that the mere fact the state is illegitimate does not morally require the imperative to either oppose or eliminate it. Instead, these anarchists typically think state illegitimacy removes any overwhelming moral presumption in favour of compliance with its directives. In other words, the philosophical anarchists argue that the state has no legitimate power to tell anyone what to do. Yet, opposition to the state is not always necessary, since one can remain passive in the face of state oppression and do nothing. The proper stance for philosophical anarchism is, therefore, to weigh carefully the facts and circumstances that bear on action in any particular political circumstance, which reduces the illegitimacy of the state to merely one moral factor among many for consideration. Even illegitimate states possess virtues unaffected by the defects undermining their legitimacy.[11] No matter what choice philosophical anarchists make, the key element is to act on one's own direct moral assessment of any given situation, uninfluenced by the directives received from others. According to this view, individuals do not have a political obligation to obey the law merely because it is the law, nor are they required to support political leaders or institutions.

An obvious criticism regarding philosophical anarchism is its inability to propose a direct plan of action even though it condemns the state as illegitimate. This passive response is characteristic of philosophical anarchists who generally evade troublesome problems by taking no positive action to get rid of the state they find morally reprehensible, but more importantly they espouse no constructive view with regard to what might take the state's place.[12]

While philosophical anarchism is a rather vague notion, amelioration usually occurs when its lack of a plan of action is combined with the two more conventional and concrete forms of anarchy – individualist and social. This is especially true of the ever-present moral qualities of anarchist thought that underlies philosophical anarchism (as well as other varieties of anarchism), and it is to this discussion of individualist and social anarchism that we must turn to now.

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[11] See, A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 21, and Jeffrey Reiman, *In Defense of Political Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

[12] This view is generally associated with Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), who believes de jure authority is a contradiction. Consequently, no one has an obligation to obey anyone simply because one is in a position of authority, since it would be a breach of one's primary obligation to be autonomous. As a result, Wolff does not believe any state is legitimate other than one that practices direct, unanimous democracy, since he believes this form of democracy eliminates coercion. This view has been highly criticized by anarchists who think if someone voted for some legislation but then turned against it, they would nonetheless be forced to comply with its strictures. See, for example, Miller, *Anarchism*, p. 15; Alan Ritter, *Anarchism: A Theoretical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 62–3. Of course, there are other ways to deal with so-called illegitimate states. For instance, one can reject the state and seek to subvert it in various ways. In this vein, Josef Švejk is, perhaps, the most famous literary anarchist whose method of undermining authority is to obey it with an absurd sense of stupidity designed to frustrate authority and even turn authority against itself, oftentimes with hilarious results. Jaroslav Hašek, *The Good Soldier Švejk and his Fortunes in the World War*, trans. Cecil Parrott (New York: Penguin Books, 1973).

Individualist Anarchism

The second variety of anarchism is individualist. These anarchists generally place an overriding emphasis on the notion of sovereign individualism, directly at odds with the idea of the state. According to its tenets, everyone possesses an unchallengeable sphere of influence and action in which their reign is absolute. This generally consists of one's body as well as one's possessions or property, and within the privileged sphere one is free to do as one pleases. In effect, each is sovereign within one's own territory, and the only legitimate relation between what Max Stirner calls two egos is through gift, exchange or contract. One's sovereign right to one's 'space' also includes the right to defend that space against invasion by whatever force necessary. The moral issue, then, turns on the distinction between the use of force by the aggressor and the use of similar or greater force by the victim of aggression.

The individualist position is most closely associated with a philosophy of natural rights where each person's private sphere of influence does not derive from divine will or Providence, but in terms of the principles of rights to life, liberty and property. Even though this position seems to be the dominate one among the individualists, there are derivations from this common theme, most notably Stirner's radical egoism, which presumes a mutual recognition of everyone's freedom.[13] Regardless of the differences in viewpoint, the overriding ingredient for individualist anarchists is, as David Miller argues, a certain ideological vision of the structure of human society and endeavours, and not a philosophical position.

With regard to government, the individualists see it as an invasion of one's private sphere, and because the state is merely the monopoly of government, it too is an invasion. Not unlike the majority of anarchists, the individualists condemn the state for the ways in which it coerces its own people by violating their rights to act and speak freely or, for example, by forcing them to fight wars. However, the state's interference with property receives special emphasis. Even the regulation of markets is an invasion of the rights of those who participate in those markets, which in today's world is a major tenant of American style libertarianism.

At this juncture, the term 'libertarianism' and its relation to anarchism needs some explanation, since in the mid-nineteenth-century libertarianism was, much like socialism's linguistic relation to communism, interchangeable with that of anarchism. In the early history of anarchist thought, the term 'liberation' came to be synonymous with human freedom and liberty, and just as there are varieties of anarchism, so too, there are varieties of libertarianism.[14] William Godwin is thought to be the first 'libertarian' thinker, but after the French Revolution, those ideas fell out of favour following the emergence of more authoritarian regimes. In the United States, the term libertarian took on its own meaning, quite separate from that of anarchy. This is es-

[13] For a utilitarian account of individualist anarchism see, D. Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

[14] In contemporary times, libertarian thought breaks down into two broad groups, each of which support some idea of a minimal state. The first are pragmatic libertarians who defend the minimal state because limiting a state to protecting individual rights has other benefits associated with it. F. A. Hayek, for example, argues that only a minimal state can satisfy the people's needs, since it satisfies those needs through an unfettered market utilizing the best available information. F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960). The second group, principled libertarians, believes the rights the minimal state protects are natural or fundamental. Here, rights are a good unto themselves, and not a good for incidental reasons. See, for example, Robert Nozik, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

pecially so regarding libertarian positions on economic issues, which generally advocate very limited government and individual sovereignty that needs some further explanation.[15]

In very general terms, there are those who adopt the social anarchist label while still advocating a market system. Benjamin Tucker is representative of this aspect of socialist thought who concern themselves with the plight of the working class, but who also believe in the market system.[16] In Tucker's view, however, the market system is viable only with the removal of certain elements. Chief among them is the ownership of land. While he did not advocate the outright abolition of the ownership of property, he did wish to eliminate unearned income derived from ownership, specifically rent. Occupation and use of the land is sufficient, in Tucker's view, to give rise to ownership and not the mere ability to purchase land.[17] This position is close to Proudhon's, but many of Tucker's concerns originate in Proudhon's writings such as Tucker's desire to abolish money, or more appropriately, a system premised on 'free money'.[18] T his argument centres on his belief that free banking and easy money would drive interest rates to zero allowing any individual to establish a business. In contrast, and although he did not advocate the abolition of money, Proudhon recognized the problem of the established banking system in France, and advocated a People's Bank providing credit to the working class on favourable terms.

In recent times, libertarian thought – again, most notably in the United States – ventured away from Tucker's libertarian socialism and embraced capitalism with unbridled zeal. According to one of the leading advocates of this type of libertarianism, Murray Rothbard, inequalities between workers and capitalists is not a particular goal, since he believes there are natural differences in everyone's abilities. His concern is not with the aim of engendering individual equality as such, but with the truly free market – a system distorted by government – as a mechanism to see that everyone is better off. Quite unlike anarchist thinkers, Rothbard defines coercion and exploitation in terms of political intervention in the market, and not as occurring within or because of the market.[19]

Such outright acceptance of unfettered free markets is generally at odds with anarchist thought, and, as we shall see, Proudhon embraced the market system, but he did so by placing considerable restraints on competitive forces not likely to appeal to current libertarian views. It is equally true that Proudhon and Bakunin viewed their political positions as radical and essentially socialistic, which is also the position Sartre adopts. It is, therefore, difficult to see

[15] See, Miller, *Anarchism*, p. 31. For a general history of the libertarian/anarchist movement see, Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*, trans. Ida Pilat Isca, ed. Heiner M. Becker (London: Freedom Press, 1996).

[16] Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939) is an American who advocated individualist anarchism, which he labelled 'unterrified Jeffersonianism'. He was editor and publisher of the periodical *Liberty,* and was the first to translate into English Stirner's *The Ego and His Own.*

[17] Benjamin R. Tucker, 'Property Under Anarchism', in *Instead of a Book* (New York: Benjamin R. Tucker Publisher, 1893), pp. 309–12. With regard to Tucker's views on rent see generally, Tucker, 'Basic Principles of Economics: Rent', in *Instead of a Book*, pp. 300–4.

[18] Tucker, 'State Socialism and Anarchism', in *Instead of a Book*, pp. 11–13. While Tucker did not want to back any currency on precious metals, he did think the value of land could act as a basis for money. Thus, in his scheme, those with 'assets' such as land would be entitled to issue money. See also, Miller, *Anarchism*, pp. 33–4.

[19] See, Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto*, revised ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1978), pp. 41–2. For Rothbard, the central core of the libertarian creed is to establish the absolute right of private property, as to both one's own body and all the natural resources transformed through labour. From these tenets, everything else evolves in libertarian thought. See, Murray Rothbard, *Power and Market: Government and the Economy* (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1970).

how libertarian thinkers of today would embrace Sartre, since he rejects the liberal democratic forms of government that place great emphasis on property rights and free market activity.

Social Anarchism

Social anarchism took shape primarily in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and most probably originated in the split that occurred between the followers of Marx and the supporters of Bakunin immediately following the First International (1864–72). During this period, Marx's followers chose to call themselves communist, and, at the same time, the anarchist began to describe themselves as collectivists.[20] Bakunin desired to adopt this label in opposition to the authoritarian nature of Marxist communism, but anarchists also wanted producers to freely choose the form of production under socialism rather than have it arbitrarily imposed by a Marxian workers state.[21] Bakunin saw the instruments of production as the collective property of the workers who would reward each member of the group according to their labour. This did not discount, however, the possibility of the system evolving in a voluntary manner towards communism. In fact, over the ensuing decades certain anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta, and Elisée Reclus argued that communism was the inevitable mode of economic organization.[22]

Even though communism may be the ultimate goal, fundamental differences exist between Marxian communism and social anarchists. Yet, a central point of convergence is social solidarity, which stands in stark contrast to the individualist anarchists' notion of individual sovereignty. For social anarchists, the normal relation between all humans is empathy and understanding expressed in the form of mutual aid and social cooperation. Even though both the individualists and the social anarchists agree that the ultimate aim is human freedom, the individualists tend to define this in the negative – as the absence of restraints – while the social anarchists treat freedom in a more positive vein arguing no one can be truly free except in a community, where each person acts to promote the well-being of all the others.

Both Marxist communists and social anarchists see the exploitative relationship between capitalist and worker resulting in the impoverished physical as well as mental condition of the latter, while at the same time enriching the former to new heights of luxury. This notion of exploitation is less critical to anarchists' critique of capitalism than it is to a Marxist analysis. The anarchist base their position on two claims: the first asserts that capitalism limits society's developmental powers, which deprives the majority of people the necessities they need, since the goal of the system of production is to maximize profit and not to fulfil need. The second claim is that capitalism, as a system of private property, exploits the technical skills and expertise resulting from centuries of collective human endeavour for private gain. To this the social anarchists add other

[20] In his September 1867 address, 'Speech to the League for Peace and Freedom', Bakunin was one of the first to call himself a collectivist. Mikhail Bakunin, 'Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism', presented as a 'Reasoned Proposal to the Central Committee of the League for Peace and Freedom', accessed electronically at: _http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/Bakunin/works/various/reasos-of-state.html_.

[21] *Jean Maitron,* Le movement anarchiste en France: Des origins à 1914tome I *(Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 15.*

[22] Miller, *Anarchism,* pp. 45–6. In this regard, Bakunin sees the collective ownership of all property eventually replacing private ownership. See, Mikhail Bakunin, 'Revolutionary Catechism', in *Bak unin on Anarchy*: *Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, trans. and ed. Sam Dolgoff (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 76–97. Hereinafter referred to as 'Dolgoff' followed by the article or book title written by Bakunin and then the page number. See also, Eugène Pyziur, *The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael Bakunin* (Chicago: Henry Regnery & Co., 1968), p. 41; pp. 134–9.

charges ranging from the dehumanizing routine of capitalist production methods, to the imperial adventures of capitalist regimes engaging in wars as a nefarious means to stimulate demand for products. However, all of these charges are standard commodities in the socialist world and not necessarily strictly anarchistic.[23]

A significant point of departure setting the main body of social anarchists apart from Marxian communists is the insistence that the state not only acts as a necessary support mechanism for capitalism, but in its own right, is an instrument of oppression. Social anarchists believe the poverty and injustice generated by the capitalist system relies on the corroboration of the state including its apparatuses designed to protect, at all costs, the property interest of the ruling class. Chief among those apparatuses is the legal system constituted and enforced by those who are in power and designed merely to protect the interests of the ruling class. Again, this is especially true with regard to property. In the ensuing discussion, we shall see that Sartre also thinks the capitalist system embodies the idea of an institutionalized group oppressing its members through the apparatuses of authority including the juridical structures of the state.

Other key issues separate Marxian communists from social anarchism including the question of the revolutionary spontaneity of the masses. In almost all of the anarchist writings, including Godwin, Stirner, Proudhon and Bakunin, the words spontaneous and spontaneity appear repeatedly. In fact, Bakunin thought the only thing necessary was a spark to unlock the spontaneous creativity of the masses. Sartre also describes the events leading up to the formation of the *groupe en fusion* in terms of what he calls spontaneous 'enthusiasm'.[24] In contrast, Daniel Guérin points out that Marx and Engels rarely refer to the word spontaneous to depict the action of the masses preferring instead to use the term *Selbsttätigkeit* with its more subdued meaning private or self-activity of the masses.[25] For Marx, if the revolution occurs because of the spontaneity of the masses, it might pose a risk to the leadership role of the rev olutionary party. On the other hand, a certain amount of less robust and more 'guided' self-activity may prove beneficial to the party and its apparatuses.

The issue of who the people are who come together to affect revolutionary change, brings us to another distinction between social anarchists and Marxian communists. While both groups align themselves with the 'working class', what that means has far-reaching consequences. The social anarchists tend to define the working class in much broader terms than Marxian communists. Most anarchists use the term proletarian, but they are generally referring to the down-and-out, the peasants and the rural farm workers – in short, anyone not part of the ruling hierarchy of capitalism or state functionaries. What they are not referring to are the factory workers from the cities. Marx, on the other hand, disdains what he terms the lumpen proletariat and instead insists the true revolutionary agents are those very same factory workers from the urbanized area.

When it comes to a remedy for the ills of capitalist society and its state sponsorship, the social anarchists advocate a radical reshaping of the political and social landscape; this does not

[23] Miller, *Anarchism*, p 47.

[24] In *Search for a Method*, Sartre says that as long as praxis is still alive it will 'impregnate' the masses to become a collective instrument of emancipation. He also recognizes the immediate response of the oppressed will prove critical. As analytical Reason vanishes, it is replaced in the form of 'spontaneity', which means the abstract revolt precedes the actual revolution (i.e., the French Revolution) by some years. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 6.

[25] Daniel Guérin, 'Marxism and Anarchism', in *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice*, ed. David Goodway (London: Routledge, 1989), p.122.

entail, however, a completely new set of political institutions without some adherence to existing societal institutions. In mere appearance, a common form of ownership of the means of production replaces the capitalistic economic system, and voluntary associations based on territorial or functional operation replace the state. Social anarchists envision the workers taking over the means of production with local communities in charge of the manner of distribution of consumption – especially necessities like food, shelter and clothing. A divergence of opinion emerges at this stage with some social anarchists seeing the move to full communism as decisive while others posit a more gradual transition. Having said this, both eschew the need for an intermediate regime of centrally directed state socialism – the dictatorship of the proletariat in Marxian terms. Sartre, too, unequivocally rejects this Marxian notion. Whatever the outcome, social anarchists believe it must be freely chosen by the workers at the local level.

As I have alluded to, the concept of 'authority' seems to be one element binding both the individualist as well as the social anarchist movements, albeit rather loosely. Both individualists and social anarchists view authority as abusive and oppressive. This abhorrence of authority, especially state authority, is usually cast in negative terms. Anarchism is held to be 'against' something and in some instances against everything, as Malatesta declared when he said anarchists desire 'the complete destruction of the domination and exploitation of man by man'.[26] In this vein, some view anarchism as against all government, or as completely anti-authoritarian. Proudhon supports this position when he defines anarchy as 'the absence of a ruler or a sovereign'.[27] Still others, such as Bakunin, characterize anarchism as an attack upon the state by saying, 'the abolition of the State and the Church should be the first and indispensable condition of the real enfranchisement of society'.[28]

While anarchism's negative attributes, which generally refer to objects and institutions like the state and government, seem to dominate the discussion, it does endorse certain positive aspects as well. These positive notions tend to accentuate the social sphere and are equated with such terms as voluntary association or mutualism, a type of decentralized federalism denoting a lack of planning or order, and even 'contract' theory.[29] In a very concise but very famous statement of these positive aspects, Bakunin asserts that anarchism espouses:

> organizing of a society by means of a free federation from below upward, of worker's associations, industrial as well as agricultural, scientific as well as literary associations – first into a commune, then a federation of communes into regions, of regions into nations, and of nations into an international fraternal association.[30]

[26] Errico Malatesta, 'Il Programma Anarchico' (1920), in *Quotations from the Anarchists*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 28. This theme is also discussed in Alan Carter, 'Some Notes on "Anarchism,"' *The Anarchist Studies* 1, no. 2 (1993): 141–5.

[27] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Selected writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, ed. Stewart Edwards (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 89.

[28] Mikhail Bakunin, 'The Paris Commune and the State', in *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism,* ed. G. P. Maximoff (New York: The Free Press, 1953), p. 299. Maximoff's edited book of Bakunin's writings is an invaluable resource, especially for many of his rare writings. In citing Maximoff's work, I shall first cite the work as 'Maximoff' followed by the article or book title written by Bakunin and then the page number.

[29] See, Robert Graham, 'The Role of Contract in Anarchist Ideology', in *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice*, ed. David Goodway (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 150–75.

[30] Maximoff, 'A Circular Letter to my Friends in Italy', p. 298.

The entire notion of organization from below assumes a significant position in anarchists thought as a means to eradicate social as well as political hierarchies.

I think the better view of anarchism is a system that both opposes such things as government, authority, the state or domination, but also positively advocates voluntarism, mutuality, decentralized authority, and, most significantly, human freedom. This last element is, perhaps, of acute relevance to all anarchists, since in one form or another human freedom, linked to a distaste for authority, is a fundamental principle uniting otherwise diverse anarchists' thought. George Crowder, for instance, sees anarchists as most concerned with the promotion of freedom in accordance not with an empirical self, but with what he terms our authentic self, which he believes is the most fundamental personality characteristic that makes up one's personal identity.[31]

Our authentic self manifests two basic characteristics, the first being rationality. Crowder thinks authentic individuals have a deep sense of personal reason that allows them to act and to take responsibility for those actions. Secondly, our authentic self is not only the rational but also the moral self, such that this self wills morally right action. Human freedom is attainable so long as one governs one's action in accordance with moral rules that are, for the most part, beyond convention and tend to be, to use Proudhon's word, 'immanent'. As I have already pointed out, natural law plays an important part in anarchist thinking, where truly free humans necessarily converge on the same universal norms when they are obedient to the natural law.

The type of behaviour sanctioned by the moral law within anarchist circles is, however, somewhat divergent. For William Godwin, a fairly strict utilitarian, the pleasures of benevolence are paramount, while for Proudhon, who rejects gratuitous assistance, only adherence to a strict form of reciprocity is acceptable. Bakunin, on the other hand, is more open to human psychology, especially the role sympathy and overall unity play in human solidarity and a sense of community. Nevertheless, all agree that the moral law is the highest value for human existence.

This more general discussion of the various ideological movements that converged in the nineteenth century and became known as 'anarchism' enables us to now narrow our focus and present a more definitive understanding of what the concept means.

Clark's Four-Prong Approach

Undoubtedly, George Woodcock gives the best summary of anarchism. According to him, 'historically, anarchism is a doctrine which poses a criticis m of existing society; a view of a desirable future society; and a means of passing from one to the other'.[32] In utilizing Woodcock as a foundation for a discussion to frame his understanding of anarchism, John Clark offers a four-prong approach that elaborates Woodcock's own understanding. However, Clark warns any analysis that reduces anarchism to a single dimension is woefully inadequate.[33] With this in mind, let us examine Clark's criteria in detail.

Clark believes his particular approach to understanding anarchism both clarifies its meaning and takes into account the importance of historical perspective reflecting the wealth of diversity within the anarchist tradition. Clark offers four elements, all of which must be apparent for one

[31] *George Crowder,* Classical Anarchism: the Political Theory of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin *(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991),p. 10.*

[32] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p. 9.

[33] Clark, 'What is Anarchism?', p. 6.

to be termed an anarchist in the full sense of the word. In order for a political theory to call itself 'anarchistic', it must contain:

> (1) a view of an ideal, noncoercive, nonauthoritarian society; (2) a criticism of existing society and its institutions, based on this antiauthoritarian ideal; (3) a view of human nature in terms of the qualities or characteristics that allow humans to live together in peace, harmony, and most importantly freedom; and (4) a strategy for change, involving immediate institution of noncoercive, nonauthoritarian, and decentralized alternatives.[34]

Clark recognizes his approach allows for a strong sense of anarchism, where all four elements are present, as well as a weaker meaning where not all of the elements are present. At first glance, Clark's approach seems to be an adequate explanation; however, we need to probe deeper to understand what exactly he has in mind. We should keep in mind that some elements of Clark's standard may prove to be more important than others, but ultimately all are necessary. This is especially true when considering human nature, a central tenet of the four elements Clark delineates and one that seems, at least on the surface, difficult to adhere to in Sartrean terms.

1. Nonauthoritarian Society

With regard to the first element, the term anarchy implies a concept of an ideal society for which anarchists endeavour to achieve and, most importantly, believe to be fully moral. While this concept is at times obscure, Clark thinks free and autonomous individuals eventually come to terms over their differences, but in the context of present-day society, solutions are not always foreseeable. Moreover, anarchists do not want to be beholden to any single vision of the ideal, since pluralism implies a multitude of groups creating variations on the ultimate goal. This does not mean, however, that some fairly specific description of a society satisfying anarchists' criteria for moral justification could not be put forth. What it does infer is that the plan would necessarily be subject to criticism and change, and in this sense, it could not be a type of inflexible and unalterable 'Five Year Plan' inaugurated in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s that took on a life of its own. At the very minimum, such a plan has to show how such an ideal society would be noncoercive and nonauthoritarian, that it comports with anarchists' conceptions of human nature, and that it provides a strategy for action.

2. Criticism of Existing Society and Institutions

On the surface, the second element, anarchists' critique of the present, seems to be fairly straight forward, since anarchists have a rather distinctive view of the present state of affairs. Centring on the notions of coercion and authoritarianism, anarchists find many institutions unacceptable from a moral point of view, since force and externally imposed authority are usually at their core. Of course, the state and centralized political authority comes under the most scrutiny, but generally any theory that on an anti-authoritarian basis questions the moral foundations of the state and government fulfils the criterion. At the outset, one should understand that anarchists do not view the state as the equivalent of government; rather, the state is a sovereign body

[34] Ibid., p. 13 (original slightly altered). Clark feels both Proudhon and Bakunin meet the full sense of the four elements and, therefore, each espouses an anarchist political philosophy.

that imposes certain demands upon its citizenry and is, therefore, the only entity with complete and compulsory authority. In arguing against the state, Clark sees anarchists putting forth two points of view both of which were briefly touched upon earlier: the first claims the state is illegitimate and, therefore, has no right to exist. The second, while recognizing the first point of view, argues the state brings forth an entire multitude of social evils requiring its abolition.[35]

This does not mean all functions of the state are superfluous; on the contrary, the state envisioned by anarchists comprises organizations in the form of institutions established to achieve collective goals. This is different, however, from the traditional state model because these institutions are not sovereign but voluntary in nature and operate in a functionally specific manner, each with a clearly defined goal. From here views tend to diverge with some anarchists seeking competition between collective agencies within a given territory, with others insisting that institutions would better serve the people if they were governed by the people *en masse*, a type of direct democracy with rotating functionaries. Regardless of the direction taken, anarchists do not stop at mere criticism; rather, they investigate the authoritarian nature of 'economic inequality and private property, hierarchical economic structures, traditional education, the patriarchal family, class and racial discrimination, and rigid sex-and-age-roles'.[36] All of which leads quite naturally to Clark's third criterion, or what he describes as human nature, a highly multi-faceted and contentious aspect of anarchism, and one which I shall explore in more detail in the following chapter. At this point, I merely want to lay out Clark's position with regard to anarchists' notions of human nature.

3. Human Nature

Anarchists look to the qualities allowing humans to live together in a condition of peace and freedom, a condition Clark labels human nature. Some anarchists, especially those tied to Proudhon, describe the capacity of humans for mutual aid, cooperation, respect and communal relations, all of which form the basis for social progress. While most anarchists subscribe to this criterion, others do not, especially some individualist anarchists who base their proposals for social organization on contract, rational self-interest or, in the case of Max Stirner, on radical egoism. However, both the social and the individualist anarchists adhere to the proposition that all humans have a great potential for volunteeristic behaviour and a keen ability to overc ome coercion and violence. Even though this view is often criticized as overly optimistic, Clark argues it is necessary in order for anarchism to develop a coherent theory of its conception of human nature, which forms the basis for speculation about the ideal for society and gives a necessary foundation for those practical proposals if, in fact, the ideal is to have political and social relevance.

This is not to say, however, that anarchists' view of human nature is in any significant way optimistic. Many commentators, including Clark, think anarchists hold a quite realistic view of human nature.[37] In this assessment, power is a corrupting influence and in their exercise of power,

[35] Miller, *Anarchism*, p. 5. John Simmons makes a similar distinction in his analysis, but he sees the first group, which he labels *a priori* anarchists, advocating all states are illegitimate regardless of how they are constituted. The second group, *a posteriori* anarchists, argues that while all existing states are illegitimate, this does not mean it is impossible for there to be a legitimate state. Simmons, 'Philosophical Anarchism', pp. 20–1.

[36] Clark, 'What is Anarchism', p. 15.

[37] April Carter thinks anarchists invert Hobbes' notion that humans are naturally violent and government is, therefore, a necessary evil in order to ensure peaceful coexistence. She thinks anarchists believe humans are naturally

humans are quite irresponsible. The dispersal of power is generally the solution, not because everyone is always good, but because when power is concentrated some people tend to become extremely evil. Anarchists think this lust for power jeopardizes the outcome of the revolutionary process. Once ensconced as leader of the organized hierarchy, the possessor of power simply assumes all authority and subordinates the individual to one will. In fact, this understanding of society's capacity to do evil is one of the distinctive attributes separating anarchists from Marxists. Quite simply, anarchists think Marxists are unable to fathom human nature.[38]

4. Praxis

The last of Clark's criteria is a practical proposal for change. Clark argues that anarchism has a distinctive programme for action in the present as a response to the failure of existing institutions, which constitutes a strategy for movement in the direction of the ideal. As such, anarchism lacks all meaning as social or political theory unless it embraces a theory of *praxis*. Under this particular criterion, philosophical anarchism undoubtedly fails the test and, at best, falls into a category of weak anarchism. What is distinctive about anarchist programmes is their institution of a spontaneous and immediate movement in the direction of voluntarism and anti-authoritarianism. Included within this movement is the decentralization of political authority, worker self-management, freedom of expression, sexual freedom, decentralized economic structures, cooperatives, free education, neighbourhood government and the elimination of arbitrary distinctions based on age, sex or race, to name just a few.

Overall, Clark sees his approach clearing up erroneous views of anarchism reducing its thought to a simplistic, uncritical demand for the immediate abolition of government. While many anarchists do desire the end of government as we now know it, their demand does not include the abolition of the nation-state, but rather a decentralized system in which federation from below increasingly displaces centralized authority from above. Again, the guiding principle applicable to historical conditions is the abolition of coercive and authoritarian institutions and their replacement with voluntary and libertarian ones.

Clark's approach to anarchism is, I think, a reasonable summary of the various components that comprise its ideology; there are some, however, who think it overly restrictive. Since it seems to revolve around the necessity of a 'coherent' political philosophy, Alan Carter argues that one can be an anarchist without resort to a coherent position, although he sees anarchism as a coherent political philosophy.[39] Others, such as Paul McLaughlin, complain that Clark's undertaking is rather cumbersome. In one particular aspect, the emphasis on and necessity of anarchistic praxis, McLaughlin seems quite critical of Clark. McLaughlin argues that Clark overstates the

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cooperative, but are corrupted by the perverting influence of government and evil societies. According to this view, government is unnecessary as a protector of individuals and a guarantor of their lives. Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism*, p. 16. There is a sense in which this idea comports with Sartre's discussion in the *Critique*. While Sartre does not necessarily believe that humans are naturally cooperative, the practico-inert exerts itself as a force of impotency that deadens the ability to engage in all-out warfare. Only when human praxis organizes and eventually institutionalizes itself does fear, violence and authority come to full fruition.

[38] See generally, Dave Morland, 'Anarchism, Human Nature and History', in *Twenty-first Century Anarchism: Unorthodox Ideas for a New Millennium*, eds Jon Purkis and James Bowen (London: Cassell, 1997), p. 13.

[39] Alan Carter, 'Some Notes on "Anarchism,"' p. 144 n4. See also, David Leopold, '"The State and I," Max Stirner's Anarchism', in *the New Hegelians: Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 181.

importance of praxis by requiring anarchists to be some kind of 'activist'.[40] In other words, a Marxist intellectual is still a Marxist even if she has never been an activist. While this is true of Marxists, it is equally true of anarchists. Yet, in both instances, unless one acts, the theoretical never joins with the practical to induce change.

McLaughlin is, I think, forgetting Marx's famous admonition in thesis eleven that 'philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways, the point, however, is to *change* it'.[41] Moreover, McLaughlin reads Clark as saying *only* an activist can lay claim to the anarchist label. This is not, however, what Clark is actually proposing. In order to assure anarchy's relevance by way of praxis, Clark merely advocates a strategy of movement towards anti-authoritarian change, and not some centralist, or bureaucratic policy promising some evanescent reform.[42] Clark wants, I think, to avoid not only a tendency to speculate about the minute details of an ideal society, but also a penchant to get bogged down, as certain Marxist do, in endless and ultimately fruitless arguments concerning the future when, in fact, the future is now.

Not pleased with Clark's four-pronged approach to understanding anarchism, McLaughlin proposes a different standard he calls 'skepticism towards authority'.[43] This standard sees the basic philosophical procedure of anarchism as raising questions or doubt about the bases of all authority and the ability to challenge those forms of authority it sees as illegitimate.[44] McLaughlin places the anarchist tradition in the sphere of Left Hegelian politics saying they regard authority, in its conceptual significance, as inherently a practical matter. Thus, should authority lack a foundation or some rational claim to legitimacy, it will be susceptible to dialectical confrontation and, therefore, negation. One could argue, as Sartre does in the *Critique*, that all foundations for legitimate authority are illusory, and thus the authority needed by the state is always subject to dialectical confrontation.

The real issue with relying on McLaughlin's scepticism towards authority is its extreme vagueness; it does not even seem to satisfy the minimal standard offered by Woodcock. As a means to better understand the 'what' of anarchism, let alone as a stand-alone criterion, it does very little to allow us to grasp the particular nature of anarchy; it seems to fall into the trap Woodcock warned against, 'simplicity is the first thing to guard against in writing a history of anarchism'.[45] It is also the first thing to guard against when espousing a definitive standard of anarchy. Moreover, such a standard seems to say nothing other than anyone can question or be sceptical about authority in any manner whatsoever and adopt the anarchist label, which seems to bring us back to an amorphous standard where anarchy is anything one says it is. Not only is it amorphous but it fails to say anything about the type of social change to be brought about, which is critical

[40] McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Approach to Classical Anarchism*, p. 26. A controversial book published in 1970 is Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, where the author argues the concepts of state authority and individual autonomy are so at odds that they can never be reconciled. As such, he offers no plan of action for any future anarchist society. The book was widely condemned. See, for example, John Clark's rebuke saying the book has done the most to retard meaningful analysis and criticism of the anarchist position. Clark, 'What is Anarchism?', p. 8. See also, Jeffrey Reiman, *In Defense of Political Philosophy,* which is, on the one hand, a defence of political philosophy and, on the other, an attack on Wolff.

[41] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'Thesis on Feuerbach', in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Work, Volume 5* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 5 (emphasis in original). Hereinafter referred to 'MECW' followed by the volume number.

[42] Clark, 'What is Anarchy', p. 17.

[43] McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, p. 29.

[44] Ibid., p. 31.

[45] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p. 9.

to the anarchist ideology, since merely being sceptical about authority seems hardly a standard for any political philosophy, let alone anarchy.

As I have indicated, anarchists' notions of human nature are critical to an understanding of anarchist political philosophy. As a result, I shall discuss in some detail what this means for our understanding of anarchism generally, and how Sartre fits into anarchists' ideas regarding human nature.

2. Anarchist Notions of Human Nature

> 'It must be recognized that a friendship in Socrates' time has neither the same meaning nor the same functions as friendship today. But this differentiation, which completely rules out belief in any "human nature," only throws more light on the synthetic bond of reciprocity … an individualized universal, and the very foundation of all human relations'.
>
> —Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*

Not surprisingly, there are various points of view when it comes to anarchists' positions regarding human nature, and Clark did not intend to venture into a detailed analysis of those differences. Therefore, before embarking on a discussion of nineteenth-century anarchism of Proudhon and Bakunin, it will be useful to expand the dialogue on human nature with the views of two people at somewhat opposite ends of the spectrum, William Godwin and Max Stirner. Then, I shall situate Sartre in the discussion of human nature, at least through his early work. As we move on to an analysis of Sartre's *Critique*, with its reformulation of the notion of human nature, the discussion takes on particular significance.

While both Godwin and Stirner come within the individualist sphere of anarchism, they do not share compatible views, and this is readily apparent when looking at the topic of human nature. Obviously, and this will become more apparent as we progress, when discussing such a topic more needs to be and will be said about Godwin and Stirner than solely their views on human nature.

William Godwin

William Godwin, born in 1756 and educated for the ministry, gradually abandoned those endeavours to devote his energies to writing. The publication in 1793 of his best-known work, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, made him a famous personality within the intellectual and artistic circles of London, especially the main radical organization in England the London Corresponding Society. The *Enquiry's* importance rests on its main argument – probably the first to so argue – that the state is a corrupting influence on its citizens, and that humankind is capable of devising a much better society without resort to it.

Before entering into a more detailed analysis of Godwin's concept of human nature, perhaps, some general thoughts will help set the framework for our further discussion. Human nature forms the basis not only for Godwin's ethics, but for his politics as well. In short, Godwin is a utilitarian who, in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, embraces the idea that an individual's character originates in external circumstances.[1] There are no innate ideas and the effects of human genetics or heredity are minimal; we are essentially the product of our own environment,

[1] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness* (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2009), p. 259. Hereinafter referred to as '*Political Justice*'. Woodcock argues that Godwin

and are born neither wicked nor good but become such as a result of our upbringing. Even though our human nature is malleable, Godwin believes it exhibits certain definite characteristics. Consequently, Godwin advocates individual or personal autonomy, while at the same time insisting upon the necessity of a social aspect of human life. As humans, we are made for social activity and interaction, and, in fact, Godwin sees society as the true mechanism designed to bring out human sympathies and moral values. In his opinion, no gulf exists between individual autonomy and social community, since the desire for human freedom naturally allies one to another in a bond of unity where concern for the other is a prevalent sentiment.

For Godwin, reason is the connection between his belief in determinism and human choice.[2] Even though every action is determined by a certain motive, it is reason alone that enables one to choose between motives and act upon that choice, which leaves the will alone as the last act of the understanding. Godwin also thinks evil is born out of ignorance and our voluntary actions originate in our opinions. Through a process of education and enlightenment, we become not only virtuous but also free and, since education helps us to think critically about our circumstances and to change them, we create our own destiny.

With these overall thoughts on Godwin's philosophical position in mind, I shall now turn to a more detailed examination. A good starting point is John Clark's analysis of Godwin's anarchism in which he remarks that the topic of human nature – interconnected to his moral philosophy – takes on considerable importance for the latter's social and political theory.[3] Clark separates Godwin's position into five main concerns: the first deals with the extent to which human motivation derives solely from self-interest, the second asks the question whether humans are by nature good or evil, the third deals with human equality, the fourth with human perfectibility, and the last poses the question of individuality. These categories are helpful in understanding Godwin's ideas concerning human nature as well as his anarchist political philosophy.

Godwin sees a popular philosophical doctrine of his day as a threat to his concept of virtue: the doctrine is universal self-love, or psychological egoism. Reason, Godwin maintains, demands that each person's personal welfare be impartial and equal. For an action to be virtuous, it must display an impartial consideration of the good resulting from the action. The outcome of Godwin's thinking necessities a capacity for human benevolence, which means if one is to act virtuously then one must act out of an idea of the greater good for another even at the expense of a lesser good for oneself. Ultimately, one must abandon self-interest if one is to act virtuously, which is

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is the first Libertarian theoretician who refused to call himself an anarchist, since the term retained its negative connotations from the French Revolutionary period. Woodcock, *Anarchism,* p. 60. Kropotkin thought Godwin the 'first to formulate the political and economic conceptions of anarchism'. Kropotkin, *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, p. 289. While most believe Godwin was a fairly consistent utilitarian, one commentator in particular does not. See, Woodcock, *Anarchism,* p. 59. Those who view Godwin as a consistent utilitarian are represented by Peter Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 103 and D. H. Monro, *Godwin's Moral Philosophy: an Interpretation of William Godwin* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 14.

[2] Ibid., p. 265. Alan Ritter indicates that Godwin emphatically rules out the effects of emotions on his rational individual. He not only rules out the emotions as marks of individuality, but sees them as threats. In order to maintain oneself as an individual, one must suppress emotional feelings. This does not mean, however, one must be devoid of emotion. Godwin wants to direct emotions and not eradicate them. Ritter, *Anarchism: A Theoretical Analysis*, pp. 41–2. A fact Ritter overlooks is that Godwin apparently recognized the problem in a note he wrote admitting *Political Justice* did not take into account the emotions. C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries Volume 1* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), pp. 294–5 (originally published in 1876); see also, Crowder, *Classical Anarchism*, p. 65.

[3] John Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 60.

in stark contrast with Stirner's notion of radical egoism, but comports generally with Sartre's position.

In *Political Justice*, Godwin describes two forms of egoism: the first he ascribes to Rochefoucault, who believes calculated personal interest motivates every human action, a view Proudhon embraces but not as one might imagine.[4] In the second, Godwin thinks pleasure and pain alone determine the will, which is the 'sole, proper, and necessary cause of the subsequent action'.[5] Godwin finds this second form of egoism more sinister, since it comports more with actual human experience. If psychological egoism is true, then, the upshot for Godwin is the possibility that virtuous action would not exist, since Godwin believes virtuous activity produces the most good for all, but one must possess the motivation to produce good in the first place.

Godwin's basic fear of psychological egoism stems from the following: if I am truly self-interested, then I believe that what I desire for myself is naturally good for all others. Unfortunately, Godwin sees human nature as very unlikely to foster this typ e of altruism. Later on, we shall see that the *Critique* follows this line of reasoning as it moves through a discussion of the institutionalized bureaucracy carrying out the will of the 'experts' for the benefit of all. If egoism is true, then Godwin sees society as remaining locked within a system of oppression with little in the way of justice. Unwilling to accept this outcome, Godwin rejects the very idea that self-interest alone motivates humans and, in fact, thinks they can be motivated to act contrary to their self-interest.

Godwin sees humans acting out of what he calls disinterestedness. Such disinterested actions are voluntary and directed by foresight; they have a motive that 'consists in the view present to the mind of the agent at the time of his determination'.[6] As with other utilitarians, pleasure is the prime motivating force, but he also thinks if one becomes attached to a particular source of pleasure, it is then desired for its own sake. These motivating forces generally fall into two categories, one direct and the other indirect. On the one hand, direct motives are ones actually present in the mind when one makes a decision to act, which Godwin thinks all originate in human opinions. An indirect motive, on the other hand, affects action through habit, and thus is not consciously considered when made.[7] At least for Godwin, pleasure is an indirect motive for a particular action when a habit of acting in a certain manner develops because of past associations of the action with pleasurable results. Even though we oftentimes act out of self-interest, Godwin thinks self-interest alone is not, as the psychological egoists claim, the sole motivating force. This position gives rise to a more or less common criticism that alleges Godwin advocates a benevolent position with regard to all motives, which has the effect of oversimplifying human motivations.

This benevolent view fails, however, to take into account Godwin's quite clear discussion of the obstacles placed in the way of reason where not all actions are motivated out of a sense of benevolence. Habits and prejudices arise within human nature that naturally lead people to act selfishly and without regard to the welfare of other people. Unfortunately, humans possess a very limited initial view of any given situation such that personal interest quite possibly constitutes our primary motivation for action. In the end, reason leads us to act in a more benevolent manner towards others, which over time guides human conduct so as to eliminate (although probably not entirely) selfish motives.

[4] *Political Justice*, p. 248. Sartre outright rejects the Rochefoucault notion of egoism in his *War Diaries*.

[5] Ibid., pp. 243–4.

[6] Ibid., p. 244.

[7] Ibid., pp. 32–63.

Other specific critics of Godwin, but also critics of anarchism in general, think he professed a great but unreasonable faith in human goodness. Most of these critics rely on Godwin's own statements where, for example, he says, 'in truth criminal laws were only made to prevent the ill-disposed few from interrupting the regular and inoffensive proceedings of the majority'.[8] While these statements are rather abundant, a better understanding clearly shows that Godwin recognizes the multi-faceted aspects of human nature including its seamier side. In *Political Justice*, he explains, 'the whole history of the human species, taken in one point of view, appears a vast abortion. Man seems adapted for wisdom and fortitude and benevolence. But he has always, through a vast majority of countries, been the victim of ignorance and superstition'.[9] Godwin not only appreciates the darker side of human nature, but is, in fact, concerned it will ultimately prevail over the brighter side. Nevertheless, Godwin does not try to explain away the prevalence of evil and the selfishness of human actions; rather, he explains its occurrence through a lack of insight. Humans are not at all times good, but goodness is a natural attribute residing in human nature as a potentiality.

A concept closely related to his belief in human goodness is Godwin's third area of concern, human equality. Epistemologically, our distinctive human characteristics result from our experiences in the situations we encounter. As I have indicated, he generally sees human development as a *tabula rasa* where the mind begins life as a blank sheet of paper and is moulded and formed through our environment and upbringing, with heredity and genetics playing only a superficial role.[10]

Equality, for Godwin, arises as an effect of the environment, and not in any presumed differences in the ability of each individual. Rather, if differences exist, they are the result of varying social structures associated with modern civilization. Thus, our organized and institutionalized forms of government coerce and create inequality. Here too, however, there is the possibility of restructuring society to preserve its accomplishments, while at the same time producing greater equality. Since class differences lead to inequality, Godwin attacks capricious distinctions such as birthright arbitrarily manifested in monarchial claims to hereditary rule. The resulting class inequalities are artificial social constructs contrary to nature, which, he asserts, distributes her gifts without reference to societal distinctions.[11] Thus, he locates the responsibility for differences between people on the environment with inequality the product of social institutions.

Godwin outlines his understanding of the fourth area of his concern, perfectibility, as the 'faculty of being continually made better and receiving perpetual improvement'.[12] Obviously, we can never attain perfect knowledge, for if we did there would be an end of improvement altogether. Generally, as experiences unfold, we gain a better appreciation of the available possibilities for actions. Having said this, we are still dealing only with approximations; yet, with time and experience one will make continual progress towards truth, which Godwin refers to as perfectibility.

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[8] William Godwin, *Thoughts on Man, his Nature, Productions, and Discoveries: Interspersed with some Particulars Respecting the Author* (London: E. Wilson, 1831), p. 113. Accessed electronically at: 'The Making of the Modern World Web': `http://find.galegroup.com.libproxy.newschool.edu/mome/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=MOME&userGroupName=n` on 1 August 2011.

[9] *Political Justice*, p. 262.

[10] Ibid., pp. 15, 21.

[11] Godwin, *Thoughts on Man*, p. 29.

[12] Political Justice, *p. 52.*

While one could argue that this too is an overly optimistic account, Godwin seems to recognize the problem when he avers that while humankind appears to be moving to a greater degree of perfection, there is always the possibility it will fall back into a less perfect existence. Three considerations limit Godwin's conception of optimism: first, he thinks improvement has not been a constant characteristic of the universe; on the contrary, vicissitude rather than unbounded progress is the ultimate characteristic of nature. Secondly, he believes 'nothing is positively best'.[13] Lastly, because he believes in necessity, it is not possible that anything else could have happened under the circumstances. He emphatically rejects any idea that if something else is possible, it may have entailed a better outcome. In the end, Godwin is rather indisposed towards optimism, which he sees as a dangerous doctrine doing much harm in the world.[14]

The last of Godwin's elements of human nature concerns his belief in individuality, which, as some observe, reaches an extreme not warranted by the logic of his position.[15] Godwin generally rejects theories attributing qualities to society not reducible to individual qualities. Society is the aggregation of individuals, and the improvement of society starts with each individual member of society. Unless individuals within a society become more rational, and therefore more moral, social institutions will not be more just. Godwin's reliance on an idea that individuality is the very essence of intellectual excellence implies anything advocating cooperation is by its very nature evil. Cooperation threatens the autonomy of the individual, since to rely on the opinions and directions of others lessens one's ability to depend on their own reason. The more we cooperate, the more we become a 'clock-work uniformity'.[16]

As I have discussed, Godwin does not outright reject some level of cooperation, but, not unlike Stirner, cooperation should be kept to a minimum and then only for specific purposes. However, Godwin does find one type of cooperation useful and conducive to community, the participation in conversation.[17] Conversation serves individuality because the thoughts of other people help each to grow, and, as a form of interaction, creates the social self while still enriching one's individuality. While this may seem to be a contradiction, Godwin turns to the concept of sincerity to clarify his position. Sincerity requires each to tell the truth to another person regardless of the outcome. When one hides the truth, insincerity rules, which merely means the benefit of conversation is lost completely. Consequently, Godwin avoids concluding that conversation is detrimental to the individual by placing the destructive ability of conversation for self-development at the hands of insincerity. In its dual role, conversation not only creates individuals, but also helps tie those individuals together.[18]

Since Godwin ultimately sees humans as rational and progressive beings, it may be easy to dismiss him as a naïve visionary, but it would also be wrong. He was well aware that history is

[13] Ibid., p. 260.

[14] Ibid., p. 263.

[15] See for example, Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin,* p. 81; Ritter, *Anarchism*, pp. 41–9; and Crowder, *Classical Anarchism*, p. 68.

[16] *Political Justice*, p. 554.

[17] See the discussion of Godwin's notion of conversation in Ritter, *Anarchism*, pp. 41–9.

[18] William Godwin, *The Enquirer, Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature, in a series of essays* (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797), pp. 337–50 and especially p. 343. Accessed electronically at Eighteenth Century Collection Online, Gale: _http://find.galegroup.com.libproxy.newschool.edu/mome/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=MOME&userGroupName=new39617&ta
on 23 August 2012. See also, Yvon Belaval, *Le souci de sincérité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944), pp. 127–9.

'little else than a record of crimes', and that power creates evil through its coercive institutions.[19] Yet, he also understands the past as one of progress that he sees as capable of continuing into the future.

Max Stirner

In some respects, Stirner lies at the opposite end of the spectrum from Godwin. In simple terms, Stirner is an egoist and where Godwin believes reason brings out the benevolence of human beings and ultimately their solidarity, Stirner thinks humans are only self-interested and, indeed, the self is the most important possession one can own. John Clark characterizes Stirner's task as 'a desire to release the individual from what he sees as an absorption into the totality'.[20]

Born Johann Kasper Schmidt in 1806, Stirner attended several universities including the University of Berlin, but never received a degree. His most famous work, indeed his only book, the *Ego and His Own* appeared in 1844. The book, at first widely and instantly acclaimed, fell rapidly out of favour and into obscurity for almost fifty years. It was not until the 1890s, with the publication of his biography, that Benjamin Tucker published his work in the journal *Liberty*.

The Ego and His Own emerged at a time of considerable turmoil in Western Europe, and just four years before the events in France of 1848.[21] France was not, however, the only country facing political unrest at the time. Germany and Italy were also particular hot beds of political and theological clamouring that not only opposed Liberalism, but questioned the sacred tenets of religion as well.[22] Although still nascent, an active underground continually stirred the propaganda pot of socialism, while on the opposite side stood the philosophical proponents of a powerful secular state, most notably the adherents to Hegel and his *Philosophy of Right*.

In many ways, Stirner dangled between these competing camps. He enjoyed considerable fame in the immediate aftermath of the publication of his book; yet, at the same time, he endured extreme hostility and disparagement. Stirner represented an alternate force with his spirited polemic against the left Hegelians with whom he so often talked politics with at Heppel's Weinstube on Berlin's Friedrichstrasse. At the same time, in Stirner's usual effort to spare no one, he also castigated the socialists Whilhelm Weitling and Moses Hess. In his attacks, Stirner defended neither the theological, nor the monarchical state, nor the secular models advocated by liberals and socialists. As Frederick Beiser somewhat romantically explains, Stirner is the Thrasymachus of his time posing the same difficult questions to his contemporaries as he once did to Socrates.[23] His views were, it seems, as shocking to the left as they were to the right.[24]

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[19] *Political Justice*, p. 4.

[20] John Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism* (London: Freedom Press, 1976), p. 10.

[21] Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven Byington, ed. James Martin (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2005). Hereinafter referred to as '*EO*'.

[22] Daniel Guérin, *No Gods, No Masters*, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), p. 13.

[23] Frederick Beiser, 'Max Stirner and the End of Classical German Philosophy', in *Politics, Religion, and Art: Hegelian Debates*, ed. Douglas Moggach (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), p. 282.

[24] P. W. K. Paterson does not believe Stirner is an anarchist; rather, he thinks 'today, his language and his whole philosophical approach seem plainly to locate him somewhere in that line of thinkers whose unseasonable writings prefigured themes since made more urgent and explicit in the works of contemporary existentialists'. P. W. K. Paterson, *The Nihilistic Egoists: Max Stirner* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 126. In furtherance of this position see, Henri Arvon, *Aux sources de l'existentialisme: Max Stirner* (Paris: Presses Univesitaires Française, 1954).

The general themes of *The Ego and His Own* generally fall into various categories starting with the structure and object of his attack, which is then extended to an overall discussion of Ludwig Feuerbach and Christianity, and finally to Stirner's successive analyses of Consciousness, Liberalism and Revolution. However, his concept of egoism is generally the starting point for any understanding of his position. What Stirner means by egoism is, at times, obscure, but Beiser sees several distinct elements associated with the term including, an individual will as the source of all value, and a belief in self-interest such that one leads life solely for one's own sake and not for anyone or anything else.[25]

One's individual will as the source of all value is paramount to Stirner's thinking; so much so that what ultimately determines whether an act is right or wrong is an individual's will, and not Godwin's rationalism that sees the determination of right or wrong based solely upon its rationality independent of all acts of the will. Not only does Stirner think that the individual alone determines right or wrong; he also discounts any possibility that the source and basis of the law is the people, the state o r God.[26]

I want to emphasize that Stirner's individual ego is not a substantive thing, but rather a process of development. The ego continuously develops in an immediate, heterogeneous temporal flow; it is self-created and at the same time self-creating. As Stirner says, 'I do not presuppose myself, because I am every moment just positing or creating myself, and am I only by being not presupposed but posited, and, again, posited only in the moment when I posit myself; that is, I am creator and creature in one'.[27] Stirner's ego is always becoming, since it exists only in not remaining what it is and creates itself by projecting itself towards an open future.

The second element of Stirner's egoism involves self-interest, the exact problem Godwin found disconcerting. Here, egoism involves seeking one's own advantage, which Stirner contrasts with idealisms requirement for some form of self-sacrifice.[28] However, there is a distinction between the type of self-interest advocated by Stirner and the psychological egoism Godwin found repugnant. The egoism Godwin argued against occurred where individuals necessarily act according to their self-interest, such that it is the *only* motive of all actions. What concerns Stirner is where those individuals all too often *sacrifice their interests* for abstract and impersonal ideals. There is, he thinks, a natural tendency among humans towards altruistic behaviour. In other words, to hypostasize abstract principles eventually leads one to become a slave to and exploited by those very principles. Some, including R. W. K. Paterson, maintain that Stirner's position is nihilistic and devoid of an ethical element. In arguing for his position, Paterson emphasizes, 'for the nihilistic egoist, nothing is to be prized or admired, nothing is to be believed or endured, apart from the unique individual himself, who is himself nothingness'.[29] Stirner is, I think, advocating a type of 'ethical egoism'.

Since Stirner rejects all values unless created by the individual ego, he also rejects all objective obligations conflicting with his egoist interests. In this sense, he is probably a moralist, but this

[25] Beiser, 'Max Stirner and the End of Classical German Philosophy', p. 284.

[26] *EO*, p. 170.

[27] Ibid., p. 150.

[28] Ibid., p. 32.

[29] Paterson, *The Nihilistic Egoist*, p. 169. Those who see Stirner as an ethical egoist are for example, Ritter, *Anarchism,* p. 6, and George Crowder, 'Anarchism', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy Volume I*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 245. Accessed electronically at: _http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/5003_, on 10 August 2012.

does not necessarily mean he is without an ethical viewpoint. As Clark points out, Stirner's ego is surely nothing; yet, as the source of all value, the ego is paradoxically essentially everything. Values, which the ego creates, are worthwhile for Stirner, which seems to place him at odds with Paterson's verdict of nihilism because the ego does not inhabit a world bereft of all values.[30] This is not to say, however, some modest form of psychological egoism is not lurking below the surface in Stirner's thought. On the contrary, Stirner still thinks, even though individuals sacrifice themselves for ideals, there remains something quite natural and compelling about seeking one's self-interest. Hence, Stirner adheres to some more modest element of psychological egoism according to which people naturally but not necessarily seek their self-interest. As Beiser indicates, the point of Stirner's ethical egoism is to get moral command and nature in agreement when nature's voice is all too often stunted by false ideals.[31]

Having articulated an understanding of egoism as Stirner sees it, a concept underlying every aspect of Stirner's thought, I want to broaden the discussion of his understanding of human nature, and to do so we must turn to *The Ego and His Own*. Stirner's overall portrayal of modernity is, in David McLellan's view, 'a sort of demonology of the spirits to which humanity has been successively enslaved', and in Stirner's world, the ultimate expression of such oppressive spirituality is Fuerbach and his writings.[32]

While Stirner's discussion of Christianity is not entirely germane to our discussion, there are some concepts worth noting. Stirner begins by seizing upon Feuerbach's notion of the conception of human divinity, not as something humans built or created, but as something regained at the level of consciousness. Once regained, however, as they did before God, humans must bow down before this newfound divinity. This 'divinity', Stirner maintains, is as oppressive and burdensome a taskmaster as any other spirit or collectivity to which humans subject themselves to. Christianity's disdain for the world and devaluation of the individual proves to be the villain for Stirner. In loving the spiritual alone, the Christian loves no particular person. To the extent one finds oneself in spirit, one loses oneself in reality. As Stirner says,

> The concern of Christianity, as of antiquity, is for the divine. … At the end of heathenism the divine becomes the *extramundane*, at the end of Christianity the *intermundane*. … Christianity begins with God's becoming man, and carries on its work of conversion and redemption through all time to prepare for God a reception in all men and in everything human, and to penetrate everything with spirit.[33]

Even though Stirner agrees with Feuerbach's assessment that Christianity signifies human enslavement to self-created categories, he nevertheless sees in Feuerbach the most extreme possible form of the eminently Christian principle that locates the divine spirit within the individual. If one makes *Geist* the centre of their existence, they bifurcate themselves exalting the better spiritual part over the paltrier mortal remainder. Feuerbach's relocation of human essence is no

[30] Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism*, p. 53.

[31] Beiser, 'Max Stirner and the End of Classical German Philosophy', p. 286. David Leopold challenges Stirner's ethical egoism, since he thinks Stirner advocates a position whereby the modern middle classes are *too* self-sacrificing in their egoism rather than insufficiently so. As such, Leopold thinks Stirner's ideal is best thought of in terms of a species of self-mastery or individual autonomy instead of in terms of the pursuit of self-interest. Leopold, 'The State and I', pp. 183–4.

[32] David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 121.

[33] *EO*, p. 364 (emphasis in original).

solution for Stirner, since human essence, brought into opposition to the real individual, continues to split the person into essential and nonessential selves. Feuerbachian humanism is not the denial but the ultimate expression of spirituality and human enslavement to self-created categories. This, for Stirner, acts as an impetus for the egoist's *Verein* and for the overcoming of the state and its morality.

Stirner sees in Feuerbach's celebrated inversion of the subject and the predicate – his substitution of man for God as the agent of divinity – as merely the moral aspect of Christianity ensconced as a fixed idea.[34] Any revolutionary mentality relying on moral postulates or dependent on an ought is, according to Stirner, to be attacked because evil resides and consists in the very existence of ideals. Humankind as a collectivity is just as oppressed and sacred as God because the real individual continues to be related to it in a religious manner.

After Christianity, Stirner turns to the Hegelian notion of the dominance of consciousness in history. In accepting this concept, all we need to do to change history is to master our thoughts. Stirner despairingly maintains that throughout history humans submit themselves voluntarily to a sequence of outside beliefs. *The Ego and His Own* is a polemic against those successive fixed ideas, what Stirner refers to as 'wheels in the head', that have worked successfully to prevent the ego's acting on its own behalf.[35] The autonomous individual, the Unique One, is not a descriptive category but a goal of future human endeavour, not reducible to a concept subject to definition. In the end, the Unique One is a term expressing nothing in the sense that no predicates attaches to it as a defining essence; yet, this nothing is not 'empty' it is a creative nothing endowing the whole of reality with meaning from 'which I myself as creator create everything'.[36] Stirner's resolution of the contradiction between thought and being thus resides in the Unique One's ability to both think and, more importantly, to actually exist. Thoughts have existence only as the Unique One's property, since it alone exists beyond language. Consequently, thoughts do not exist separate and apart from the transitory consciousness of the individual as embodied ego, and only in consciousness are the ideal and the real reconciled.

While Feuerbach could not accept the ramifications of the idea that there are as many faculties of reason as there are individuals, and thus he could not bring himself to identify the consciousness of the species with the consciousness of the individual. To the contrary, Striner is quite prepared to reject the claim that reason is the objective reality of the species, and embrace the natural consequences: the unmitigated relativism entailed by such rejection. This means, 'I am really Man and the un-man in one; for I am a man and at the same time more than a man; I am the ego of this my mere quality'.[37] As a result, universal human reason is not reality, only human reason from individual to individual played out from moment to moment is real, which, of course, is antithetical to Godwin's position.

When it comes to politics, Stirner believes liberalism, 'simply brought other concepts on the carpet; human instead of divine, political instead of ecclesiastical, "scientific" instead of doctrinal, or, more generally, real concepts and external laws instead of "crude dogmas" and precepts. Now nothing but mind rules the world".'[38] In somewhat different terms, liberalism only accentuates and institutionalizes the Christian depreciation of the individual, and as Stirner says:

[34] Ibid., p. 48.
[35] Ibid., p. 43.
[36] Ibid., p. 5.
[37] Ibid., p. 178.
[38] *EO*, p. 96.

> The rights of man … have the meaning that the Man in me *entitles* me [furnishes me with a right] to this and that; I as individual, as this man, am not entitled, but Man has the right and entitles me. Hence as man I may well be entitled; but, as I am more than man, to wit, a *special* man, it may be refused to this very me, the special one.[39]

Here, Stirner is generally separating himself from fellow anarchists with his distinct lack of any real concept of the social. He sees all collectives tyrannizing the individual to the extent that the collectives' liberty is merely the individuals' slavery.

With the advent of citizenhood and the rise of the bourgeoisie, Stirner says, 'it was not the individual man – and he alone is man – that became free, but the citizen, the *citoyen*, the political man, who for that very reason is not man'.[40] The process of development of each individual's selfhood is, according to Stirner, not within a shared community. Thus, as Kathy Ferguson argues, the boundary between selves is fixed and rigid, and consequently there is nothing outside the self.[41] Marx and Engels, I believe, rightly argued in 'The German Ideology' that this view is simply an inadequate explanation of what really occurs in human development.[42] As they point out, the human ego is a product of other egos all of which are enveloped in a social *milieu.* Certainly, Sartre maintains that humans are moulded, formed, and structured by the other so that one's very existence is as Arthur Rimbaud so aptly expressed: '*je est an autre'*. Even Godwin, with his distrust of social collectives, recognized that humans are above all social in nature. Rising to Stirner's defence, Ferguson thinks he is reluctant to discuss the social because his project centres around the other pole of existence, the elusive 'I'.[43] However, nowhere does Stirner evidence either a developed account of sociality or a social structure.

A lack of a social context presents a lacuna in Stirner's political and social philosophy, but it does provide an interesting counterpoint to Marx's sociological theory that sees all human existence as a process of socialization. Stirner's conclusion is that without the denigration of the individual for the sake of an abstract *Sollen,* the state could not subsist. The kernel of the state is, like the kernel of morality, the abstraction 'man', an apparition existing only in the immaterial. As Stirner explains, 'man is the last evil *spirit* or spook, the most deceptive or most intimate, the craftiest liar with honest mien, the father of lies'.[44]

Under Stirner's analysis, the attempt to control the individual is a necessary and not a contingent factor in the behaviour of all states. Accordingly, Stirner directs his attention to the claim states make of ultimate authority over individuals, namely sovereignty. Similar to his arguments with regard to religion, states require the subordination of individuals to an alien will, which can never be justified according to Stirner. The individual 'I' can never be genuinely free in any state or under any legal system, and this includes the hypothetical case of a direct democracy in

[39] Ibid., p. 314 (emphasis in original).

[40] Ibid., p. 111.

[41] Kathy Ferguson, 'Saint Max Revisited: A Reconsideration of Max Stirner', *Idealistic Studies* 12, no. 3 (1982): 281–3. See also, Todd Gooch, 'Max Stirner and the Apotheosis of the Corporal Ego', *The Owl of Minerva* 37, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2006): 169.

[42] *MECW volume 5*, 'The German Ideology', pp. 17–539.

[43] Ferguson, 'Saint Max Revisited', p. 284. Daniel Guérin also thinks Stirner offers a 'social' construct through the voluntary association of the Unique One with others to form a new type of society founded on federative free choice with the right of secession. Daniel Guérin, 'Marxism and Anarchism', pp. 116–17. While Guérin is right as far as he goes, Stirner thinks even the Unique Ones will only come together for a specific purpose and for a limited duration. This is, I would argue, not what is meant by a sociality. In the end, Stirner's ego is solipsistic.

[44] *EO*, p. 184.

which all citizens make a unanimous collective decision. For Stirner's ego, there can be no future constraints on a self-determining individual.

Where does egoism lead Stirner to place his hopes? The answer certainly does not lie in political man, but on those held most in contempt by dignified societ y – the people despised for having nothing to lose because they lack settlement. In other words the pauper, what Marx contemptuously labels the lumpen proletariat. In a double movement, the bourgeoisie maintain the existence of the pauper so as to justify their own superior position while, at the same time, they maintain the state in order to suppress the paupers should they become unruly. Thus, the principle of the state is the denial of individuality epitomized not only in the empty moralism relied upon by the state, but also in its refusal or inability to alter the conditions of the pauper. For Stirner, pauperism is:

> the *valuelessness of me*, the phenomenon that I cannot realize value from myself. For this reason State and pauperism are one and the same. The State does not let me come to my value, and continues in existence only through my valuelessness: it is forever intent upon *getting benefit* from me, exploiting me, turning me to account, using me up, even if the only use it gets from me consist in my supplying a *proles (proletariat)*; it wants me to be 'its creature'.[45]

Neither Proudhon nor Bakunin likely read Stirner, but the notion of the pauper as a revolutionary force comports with most anarchist thought including Proudhon's and Bakunin's own viewpoint.

The last area Stirner discusses is revolution. In order to overcome the state, one has to be self-assertive; merely receiving freedom gratuitously amounts to empty 'emancipation', which for him is not freedom. In Stirner's scheme, revolutionary activity is more than just another demand for self-sacrifice, which he equates with communism's or socialism's call for blind 'religious' adherence not unlike all previous systems demanding the sacrifice of the sovereign individual. Stirner's resolution of this tension amounts to his extreme individualist version of anarchism by distinguishing revolution from insurrection. In Stirner's estimation, revolution is just another human act. In contrast, insurrection is 'not an armed rising, but a rising of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it'.[46] Whereas revolution aims at new arrangements and associations, insurrection's goals are to be no longer subject to those very arrangements. Its object is less the overthrow of the established order than the individual's autonomous act of elevation above all established order, including the 'union of egoists' (*Verein von Egoisten*). This is as far as Stirner goes, however, in outlining a new sociopolitical system. In fact, he does not go beyond the catch phrase 'new order' to describe what he has in mind; rather, the union of egoists is in contradistinction to the state and its inherent deficiencies. Since the state, and this means any state, is the embodiment of the *idée fixe* of all morality in the Hegelian sense, the institution must cease to exist.

Of all the forms of political organization, only Stirner's *Verein* exerts no moral influence or legal constraint. It does not displace the individual's ego; rather, the individual remains more than *Verein*. We should aspire, according to Stirner, not to the chimera of community but to our own one-sidedness and combine with others simply in order to multiply one's own powers, and then

[45] Ibid., p. 254 (emphasis in original).
[46] Ibid., p. 316.

only for the duration of the task at hand. For Stirner 'one goes further with a handful of might than a bagful of right'.[47] Moreover, Stirner's conception of rights and morals and, indeed, relations among individuals is exceedingly egocentric. In this vein, Stirner argues, 'I decide whether it is the *right thing* in me; there is no right *outside* of me. If it is right for me, it is right'.[48] There is little room for human compassion and understanding; *Verein* is a chaotic situation in which everyone is entitled to as much as one can appropriate regardless of the circumstances.

The Ego and Its Own maintains that each individual is unique and only the ego can arbitrate among individuals. In an ironic sense, however, Stirner furthers the notions advanced by Feuerbach and the left Hegelians. For Feuerbach religion was a form of alienation in which believers projected their own human qualities onto a transcendent God. In order to eradicate this alienation, Feuerbach thinks the ideal qualities attributed to God are really just human qualities. For Stirner, this hardly goes far enough. Instead of merely trying to capture a human essence like the left Hegelians, Stirner thinks that the human ego represents the highest form of reality. As such, the self is a unity acting from a self-seeking will that ethically is the sole good. While nature does not point us to any universal truths or values, and it is equally clear that natural rights do not exist, neither are there social rights common to all nor are there any historically based rights. All that exists is might and that, as Stirner reminds us, makes right. As Stirner says, 'take hold and take what you require! With this the war of all against all is declared. I alone decide what I will have'.[49] Morality here depends on who has the power to enforce his will; a state of nature exists where no one has an obligation to the law or to morality. One is only interested in one thing, the satisfaction of needs.

In emphasizing the primacy of the ego, Stirner develops a concept of freedom calling for an absence of constraint as well as the ability to choose one's actions freely. All human actions are, according to Stirner, motivated by promoting one's own welfare. In other words, if one desires freedom one does so out of a belief in self-interest. However, to make freedom itself the aim is tantamount to making it a religion or idealism. As such, it turns an idea into something sacred, rather than requiring freedom to subordinate to the ego. One should do what one does and pursue freedom only insofar as it is in one's own egoistic self-interest to do so. Thus, no individual is subject to the abstractions of God, the law or the state. What this inevitably leads to is a war of all against all in a Hobbesian like state of nature. Where Hobbes sees individuals banding together out of self-interest with an all-powerful Leviathan ruling over the unruly passion of the masses, Stirner – much like other anarchists – sees only a spontaneous but short-lived union of egoists coming together for a specific purpose and then retreating, once again, into their solipsistic egoism.

The Foundation for Sartre's Notion of Human Nature

Sartre generally denied the existence of a human nature or essence common to all humans. Indeed, in his 1945 lec ture 'Existentialism is a Humanism' Sartre declares that human existence precedes essence, thus it is not possible to discover universal characteristics called human na-

[47] Ibid., p. 167.
[48] Ibid., p. 190 (emphasis in original).
[49] Ibid., p. 257.

ture. This means no predetermined factors constitute humankind; rather, we determine our own existence through the very projects we engage in.

This common perception of Sartre's position is well known, but he also refers to features and structures common to human existence he denotes as the 'universal human condition'.[50] Here, Sartre argues that humanity 'is indeed a project that has a subjective existence, rather unlike that of a patch of moss, a spreading fungus, or a cauliflower'.[51] Moreover, he argues, 'certain original structures … in each For-itself found in each individual constitute the essence of his or her belonging to the human race'.[52] Other examples abound, but I will refer to just one more. In the *Critique*, Sartre posits that an individual human is not just a unique singular entity, but also a 'singular universal' with characteristics common to all other individuals.[53] Obviously, if Sartre espouses a universal human condition composed of certain original structures whose singular but universal characteristics are common to all, then it seems he recognizes some form of a human nature.

The better view of Sartre's concern with human nature is that he rejects any notion humans possess fixed or particular features common to all. Thus, he states it is determinism to believe in any 'fixed' or 'given' human nature, which can only mean 'man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself. … Thus, there is no human nature since there is no God to conceive of it'.[54] Moreover, if a so-called human nature exists, then it is an abstract, timeless, ahistorical and universal entity.[55] Yet, according to Sartre, at no time has an abstract human nature ever existed.[56] As Thomas Anderson points out, contrary to Platonism, for Sartre there is no universal human reality separate and apart from concrete individual human beings.[57] As such, every era evolves in accordance with its own dialectical laws that define human beings.[58] In other words, we are thrust into various situations that mould our lives and shape our very existence.

Clearly, Sartre rejects conceptions of human nature based on deterministic, foundationalist or essentialist attributes, but he does think a universal human condition exists, which he denotes as all '*limitations* that *a priori* define man's fundamental situation in the universe'.[59] Since historical situations vary – one may be born a king, a slave or a member of the working class – one's situation will also differ greatly not only from person to person, but from time to time. Yet, what never varies is the necessity for all humans to be in the world, to work in the world, to live life engaged with others in the world, and inevitably to perish in the world. Furthermore, this condition is both objective and subjective: objective because it exists everywhere and as such it can be recognized, and subjective because humans live it. Since all humans share things in the

[50] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber, ed. John Kulka (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 42. Hereinafter referred to as ''*EH*'.

[51] Ibid., 23.

[52] *BN*, pp. 456, 512–13.

[53] *CDR I*, pp. 32–41.

[54] *EH*, p. 22.

[55] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert 1821–1857 Volume 5*, trans. Carol Cosman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 62–4; 295–6.

[56] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 174.

[57] Thomas Anderson, 'Sartre and Human Nature', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1997): 587.

[58] *EH*, p. 70.

[59] *EH*. p. 42 (emphasis in original).

world, there are, for Sartre, universal qualities. We experience these qualities not as a concept of what or who we are, but as features of human existence each experiences differently.

Sartre further elaborates upon his conception of universal qualities by saying that in every purpose there is universality, since each purpose is a response to the limitations of the human condition comprehensible by everyone. No matter what project engages me, it will always be comprehensible by someone else because it presents itself as an attempt to surpass, postpone, overcome or reject the very limitations of my experience. As a result, like everyone else, my project has a universal dimension, and through my project I transcend myself, and only by transcending myself do I realize myself as human.[60] My self-transcendence is not something I possess as an innate quality; I engage in it through my project as praxis.

While Sartre believes only individuals exist, he also recognizes that we understand singulars only in general terms. However, the universals to which general terms refer are not merely those in language or in the mind, they are real structures of things existing only in singular individuals. Thus, the whole structure is situated 'in its entirety' in each individual human.[61] In the *Critique*, Sartre furthers his explanation of singular universals with the introduction of a new term incarnation, which he famously illustrates by use of a boxing match. I will say much more about this concept later, for now, incarnation means that a singular entity 'embodies', 'encloses', and 'realizes' abstract general structures and meanings. Incarnated universals are present only in humans, and as such, they constitute 'real substance' that creates the 'very stuff' of their being.[62] He goes even further by stating that general structures are created by individuals through language and do not exist apart from individuals in which they are instantiated.

Sartre will again take up the subject of human nature in the *Critique*, and I shall discuss the topic further at that time.

While our discussion of the varieties of anarchism along with Clark's four-prong approach is essential to an understanding of what it means to be an anarchist, not only for Proudhon and Bakunin but for Sartre as well, it is also necessary to see how the anarchists themselves came to participate in various movements. These groups are indeed diverse, but the standard for anarchism I have been discussing is capable of embracing most of them; just as it can apply to both Godwin and Stirner, it applies also to Proudhon and Bakunin. By now, it is apparent that any discussion of anarchism can only provide the 'boundaries' of the nature of anarchism, and as such, it is not a definitive concept that can never be moulded, modified, transformed or even reformulated. That would be uncharacteristically anti-anarchistic. Such a discussion eventually leads to Sartre and his anarc histic political philosophy that finds its intellectual heritage, its lineage if you will, centred in the nineteenth-century ideals of Proudhon and Bakunin.

[60] *EH*, pp. 42–3.

[61] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Kierkegaard: the Singular Universal', in *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, trans. J. Mathews (London: New Left Board, 1974), p. 168.

[62] CDR II, p. 27.

Part Two: The ‘Golden Age’: Nineteenth-Century Anarchism of Proudhon and Bakunin

Introduction

French Political and Social Life 1815–1870

The nineteenth century was one of vast political and social change, especially in France. While late to industrialize, by the mid-nineteenth century rapid changes were taking shape as the country embraced the industrial revolution. However, industrial development also spawned social discontent. Small shop owners, threatened by large-scale manufacturing and the newly employed workers, experienced the alienating effects of mechanized technology. The period from 1815 to 1870 also witnessed rapid political and social advances, which in time were wrestled away by those who dreamed of a different time and place: the period of absolute monarchy, strict adherence to the church, and otherwise conservative values. Within this social *milieu* Proudhon and Bakunin came of age; the period shaped both their writings and their world view, and was the period in which anarchism bloomed.

My goal is not to present a comprehensive history of nineteenth-century French political and social life, but rather to discuss the significant political and social currents of the times. I shall also argue that various philosophic ideologies played an instrumental role in driving the events shaping the nineteenth-century political landscape. This was, perhaps, the most formative period for the development of theoretical anarchist political thought that in many ways reacted to other political ideologies of the times, most notably liberalism, which was itself a reaction to the French Revolution and its Jacobin Terror. Anarchism viewed the prevalent liberal political philosophy as inadequate to the needs of the masses, and for this reason it sought to 'stake out' a much more inclusive position, far more to the left and, indeed, more radical. I would also add that it was also more original than the liberal position that dominated the French political scene by the late nineteenth century.

Since liberalism was the prevailing political philosophy in France at the time, we should understand what this implies. Like most political labels, liberalism defies a simple definition. However, we can start with Benjamin Constant's notion that it was primarily a political and philosophic commitment to, 'the liberty of the moderns'.[1] As Andrew Jainchill points out, Constant believed the goal of the moderns rested in the secure enjoyment of private pleasures with governmental institutions guaranteeing those pleasures, but this did not mean these institutions would play any role in shaping social reality; rather, they merely reflected reality.[2]

Liberalism would remain, at best, indifferent to active political participation; it could easily coexist with an absolute monarch or a single sovereign as long as individual liberty remained intact. As I have said, to a very great extent, nineteenth-century liberalism emerged from the

[1] Benjamin Constant, 'The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns', in *Political Writings*, trans. Bian Camaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 308–28.

[2] Andrew Jainchill, Liberal Republicanism after the Terror: Charles-Guillaume Theremin and Germaine de Stael', in *Pluralism and the Idea of the Republic in France*, eds Julian Wright and H. S. Jones (New York: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 25–6.

revolutionary politics of the Terror. As such, it reflected a disdain for the heavy emphasis Jacobin's placed on the state as guarantor of the equal rights of citizens. They also objected to the Jacobin's disregard of the social sphere in favour of the political that implies only the state is capable of protecting the weak against the strong, and only the state can act as the primary legitimate arbiter of the public interest. Lastly, they viewed the Jacobin tendency to force the multitude to conform and accept their monistic vision of the world as an infringement on liberty. This debate with the Jacobin philosophical position, which necessarily believed that society could only operate successfully if guided by a strong centralized – and in many respects authoritarian – government, would last well into the twentieth century, and assume a critical role in the politics of pre–Second World War France.

If any one event defines French political life in the nineteenth century, that great event took place late in the previous century. While the French Revolution brought about the modern era's first written constitution and its first republican form of government, it also spawned the Terror and authoritarian regimes in its aftermath. This, in turn, created an 'atmosphere of revolution' that reacted to the succession of authoritarian governments with sudden and violent outbursts designed to reshape society by upsetting traditional beliefs in government, especially relations of power and authority. This was a time for a new direction in politics with vast possibilities for social change, but which also posed incredible dangers. Indeed, as Robert Tombs shows, the century witnessed a long and violent struggle to come to terms with the Revolution by attempting to either control it or destroy it altogether.[3]

The Restoration

After the restoration in 1815, France seemed to vacillate between liberal political desires on the one hand, and, on the other hand, those intent on returning to the 'values' of an earlier time by eradicating the disruptive elements of society, all under the guise of preserving order. Generally, this latter group associated itself with the monarchy or other forms of anti-democratic authority. Certainly, on one level, the restoration of the Bourbons under Louis XVIII in the wake of Waterloo was a move by the allies to fortify the 'Holy Alliance' of Tsar Alexander I. On another level, it provided a bulwark against the Revolution and its democratic ideals, even if the public as a whole seemed quite indifferent to the prospect of royalist restoration.

The allies realized, however, that in order to survive the monarchy had to meet with public approval, a far from certain task. The more moderate elements in France believed their survival rested on the question of loyalty, which, after the years of Napoleonic war, was seen in terms of peace and order. To his credit, Louis endeavoured to separate the role of monarch from the more mundane role of day-to-day governance, a separation his successor failed to recognize with unfortunate consequences. On the other hand, the 'ultra-royalists' or hardliners, many of whom were members of the royal family including the king's brother the Comte d'Artois (1757–1836, later Charles X 1824–1830), sought a return to absolute monarchy. These groups clashed during Louis' reign, but the government, through various means such as purges of the ultras, press censorship and detention without trials, managed to keep the ultras at bay at least until the elections in November 1820 when the ultras won 370 seats to the liberals 80.

[3] Robert Tombs, *France 1814–1914* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 8. Tombs uses estimates derived from other sources that conservatively put the number of deaths in France due to political violence at around 60,000.

As I have said, the ultras dreamed of a bygone era, and generally traced their philosophic ideology to the authoritarian writings of Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821).[4] Maistre believed that society was born and not made, which also meant it was in every manner anterior to and above any single individual. Much like Hobbes preached, Maistre thought humans were social animals by nature, and only the necessity for survival drove them to gather together and eventually form societies. Unlike many others, however, Maistre argued that human will had little or nothing to do with this process. Society and its rules and regulations, its hierarchical structure, and its actual form of government were natural facts in which morality played no role. Consequently, government by its very nature must be absolute and unlimited, and its ruler – for Maistre this could only mean a king whose authority was of divine origin – could be bound neither by law nor by promise.

Maistre argued against individual rights out of fear that 'popular sovereignty', which was, at the time, also called freedom or growth, would merely lead to what he thought of as anarchy. For Maistre, and for those who followed him, such popular sovereignty and its promised equality was merely a repressive mystification and detestable falsehood. The more civilization progressed the more removed individuals became from the general interest of society, and the greater the need for a strong if not dictatorial political and religious ruler. Indeed, Maistre thought it was, again, anarchy for the governed to have any rights at all, and this was especially so if the governed had any say in who ruled them.[5]

The ultras ruled until 1827 under the leadership of the Comte de Villèle (1773–1854), a relatively long time in modern French political history. During this period, the ultras main objective was, as I have said, to return the country's political and religious institutions to the France of 1788; in short, to the pre-Revolutionary days of Louis XVI. Their support came generally from the wealthy including landowners and nobles who geographically resided primarily in the south and west of France, no doubt aided by backing from the Catholic Church.[6]

Support for the ultra-regime gained a boost in 1823 when France successfully intervened on behalf of the Spanish Bourbons who faced a revolt. After meeting little to no resistance, royal authority was quickly restored. The success of the army and the restoration brought with it approval of the monarchy at home, which was reflected in the election of March 1824 when the royalists won 410 seats to the liberals mere 19. The stage was set for a return to a counter-revolutionary agenda, and, when Louis XVIII died in September of that year his successor, Charles X, was quite willing to be the king the ultras were seeking. Now in complete control, the goals of the ultras to grant the church significant influence in all aspects of French life and to enhance the power and prestige of the land-owning nobility seemed to be within reach. Obviously, these goals were antithetical to the Revolution, and had the unintended effect of gradually arousing the moribund liberal opposition decimated by their election losses in 1820 and 1824.

[4] Maistre's influence extended well into the Third Republic. In fact, Charles Muarras, the leader of the royalist, anti-Semitic group *Action française,* was highly influenced by de Maistre.

[5] Jack Howard, *Fragmented France: Two Centuries of Disputed Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 69–70.

[6] The 'electorate' in France at the time was exceedingly small. Only males over the age of 30 paying over 300 francs in direct tax could vote. This amounted to about 110,000, which was reduced to about 80,000 by 1827 due to the government's effort at gerrymandering. Over 60 per cent of the electorate were landowners. Tombs, *France 1814–1914*, p. 340.

As for the liberals, they were generally a divergent group united mostly in their opposition to the ultras' political positions. Intellectuals such as Benjamin Constant and Francois Guizot, whom we shall hear more about later, shared their anti-ultra viewpoint with veterans of the 1790s including Lafayette and Prince de Talleyrand among others. Bonapartists such as General Foy also united with the liberal opposition, as did the nouveau riche of the day. Even the future socialist leaders Louis Blanqui and Etienne Cabet were liberal sympathizers.

If we can point to some shared principles among this diverse group, it might be embodied in two main viewpoints: first, liberals possessed a fairly restrictive and legalistic ideology of government that saw laws as not only a necessary limit on unbridled authority, but which also meant they embraced the institutions designed to enforce their legalistic viewpoint. Secondly, their world view represented a governing-class mentality that generally was anti-democratic. In essence, they saw liberty within a rather narrow framework.[7] Accordingly, they rejected any demand that liberty be seen in the principles of the Revolution, or that anything like inherent individual rights should be advocated. In fact, liberals not only eschewed the revolutionary tradition, but also rejected any political philosophy based on those revolutionary principles. While reason played a part in human nature, liberals thought humans, more often than not, were swayed by their prejudices, their inherent weaknesses and their passions. Of utmost concern to the liberals was a belief in social order where power, including the power to rule, was in the hands of a distinct, well-defined class – generally, the bourgeois middle class who owned property, ran small businesses or were members of the professions. In commenting on the period, Steven Vincent makes the point that French liberalism was primarily a socially and politically conservative movement whose members were the well-to-do elites who displayed little concern for the plight of the masses.[8]

Liberal divergence with their more conservative counterparts generally revolved around the issue of government by a single ruler with an ill-defined position, coupled with unlimited powers. While these liberals rejected hereditary rights of the monarchy, it is a mistake to think they espoused a representative, democratic and, therefore, republican point of view. In fact, they believed the monarch had a role to play, but not an absolute role. They envisioned the king's powers subject to institutional control, which meant a parliament, a judiciary and an executive separated from each other. In their minds, however, all of these liberal governmental 'institutions' functioned without the 'harassment' of press scrutiny.

The ultras' attempt to turn back the hands of time eventually led to a round of new elections in November 1827. Villèle's government lost its majority and with it, Villèle lost his position. From this point on Charles X, who ascended the throne in 1824 and could no longer rely on Villèle's advice, sought to conjoin the role of monarch and government as he played a much more active role in daily politics, a role he was ill suited to undertake.

In order to divert attention from his unfavourable domestic popularity, in March 1830, Charles announced to the National Assembly France's intention to invade Algeria. The justification, at least on the surface, proved comical. Three years earlier and desperate for money, the Regency in Algiers requested the repayment of loans made to France during the Napoleonic period. In a face-to-face meeting, the French consul refused the repayment request whereupon the Ottoman

[7] Roger Henry Soltau, *French Political Thought in the 19th Century* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1931), pp. 32–3.

[8] K. Steven Vincent, *Benjamin Constant and the Birth of French Liberalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), p. 3.

Regent, Khodja Hussein, 'attacked' the French consul with a flyswatter. The incident soon took on a life of its own as an affront to national honour.[9] The invasion occurred on 14 May and took just twenty-one days to capture Algeria and end the Ottoman reign. Unfortunately for Charles, the success of the Algerian campaign, the largest since the Napoleonic Wars, was not enough to save the last Bourbon monarchy.

Talk was rife on both sides of a *coup d'état*, but the king's speech to a reassembled parliament in March of 1830 probably set the wheels of revolution spinning. Charles blamed the opposition for the political turmoil facing the country. In turn, the deputies replied with an add ress squarely putting the blame on the government and had it delivered directly to the king. An outraged Charles took the deputies response as a personal insult and a challenge to his prerogative. Since Charles and his entourage saw the events as a crisis destined for revolution, he immediately dissolved parliament. In July 1830, new elections pitted the monarchy as the symbol of order against the chaos of revolution. The results were quite clear; the opposition won a clear majority of 275 seats to the government's 145. The 'revolution' had won.

Perhaps, forgetting Adolphe Theirs' (1797–1877) admonition that the 'King reigns, but does not govern', the government, fearing electoral defeat and revolutionary turmoil – either real or imagined – published emergency decrees on 26 July once again ordering the dissolution of parliament, increased censorship of the press, and greatly reduced the electorate. All of these decrees were promulgated under a provision of the Charter giving the king the power to enact ordinances in the name of 'public safety'. In effect, this was a *coup* by the ultras. The next day rioting broke out that eventually turned bloody. On 1 August, with the government's troops defecting to the opposition, the last of the Bourbon kings abdicated. Almost immediately, liberals took control of the reins of government fearing little or no opposition.

The 'July Monarchy'

The fall of the monarchy in 1830 meant, at least for French nationalists, the end of the Holy Alliance and a repudiation of the defeat of Napoleon. It was also a revolution without a clear leader. Many wished for Napoleon II, the nineteen-year-old son of the great emperor, but he was then in the hands of the Austrians. There were those who advocated a republic, and there were those who supported the grandson of Charles X. However, for the most part the opposition members of parliament were not revolutionaries, but liberal monarchists who simply wanted the end of Charles X's rule. A solution presented itself in the form of the Duc d'Orléans (1773–1850), a descendant of Louis XIV's brother who made his liberal leanings well known. Posters created by Thiers, who would later play a significant role in the events of 1848, were placed all over Paris proclaiming the Duc d'Orléans as a prince devoted to the revolutionary cause who would rule as a 'Citizen King'. On 9 August, the Chamber of Deputies voted overwhelmingly to proclaim Louis-Philippe I, king of the French, and thus usher in what became the 'July Monarchy'.

The first days of the new regime proved busy as new laws came into being to lower the minimum age for election to parliament and reduce the franchise tax. However, the purpose of these laws was not to transform French society in any meaningful way, but to make it easier for liberals to enter parliament. More importantly, the Citizen King found himself locked in a world of two extremes: on the one hand, the nationalists desired backing for revolutionary causes

[9] Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.8.

occurring in Europe, especially the uprisings in Belgium and Poland. On the other hand, lay the urban workers who feared technological change. Riots, strikes and demonstrations soon broke out throughout France, which the government seemed unable to control. Consequently, in March 1831, Louis-Philippe named Casimir Perier (1777–1832) to head the government, signalling a decisive turn in the conservative direction.

Perier stopped all talk of intervention in Belgium and Poland and took a hard line on domestic issues, which brought an element of stability to the regime. He was not, however, able to complete his task as he succumbed to Paris' first cholera epidemic of 1832. After Perier's death, a return to strike activity occurred with the years 1833–4 witnessing an exceptional number of work stoppages fuelled by republican agitation. The government responded by prosecuting liberal newspapers and tightening control over patriotic societies such as the Societé des Droits de l'Homme. On 25 July1835, the enemies of the regime fought back. As the king reviewed the National Guard, an assassination attempt occurred. Louis-Philippe escaped, but the attack left fourteen dead. The government quickly passed broad-based oppressive legislation known as the September Laws. These laws made, among other things, insulting the king, inciting riots and publicly advocating a different form of government new offences. The effect was to greatly diminish the revolutionary left and the legitimist right, whose societies were banned and newspapers curtailed.

The period between 1835 and 1840 experienced a thawing of relations as a growing number of elected deputies espoused a more moderate middle-ground approach. This lasted until 1840 when Louis-Philippe called on Thiers to form a government. His appointment marked the beginning of the end for the July Monarchy, even though Thiers' government lasted barely eight months. Thiers appointment gave further weight to parliament in its struggle with the king, and it also meant a victory for the left-centre. The keystone of Thiers' government rested on nationalism with symbolic endeavours such as the reburial of Napoleon's body from St. Helena to Paris. Ultimately, however, Thiers' foreign policy caused a domestic crisis, exacerbated by nationalist extremism.

France had long supported the pasha of Egypt, Mohammed Ali. In 1839, Ali fought successfully against the Sultan of Turkey causing the Great Powers to intervene to save Turkey. While France was ostensibly part of the Great Power alliance, it tried to hold up any military action with the aim of gaining concessions from Egypt. Exasperated by France's inactivity, the other Powers signed a convention threatening force if Egypt did not withdraw from Syria. Unfortunately, no one informed France of this action until it was a *fait accomplis*. A great outcry arose in France, which viewed the convention as an insult to national integrity and a return to the days of 1815. Strikes and nationalist demonstrations filled the streets of Paris. Theirs' solution to the problem was to sabre rattle not in the Levant but in Europe. The idea was to talk about revolution in the other European countries using the democratic ideals of France as a rallying cry. The hope was to intimidate the other European powers into granting France concessions, even though France was ill prepared to wage war at the time. In October, Thiers resigned and François Guizot (1787–1878) took his place.

Guizot, an intellectual and historian, was a member of a small group called the 'Doctrinaires' who rather inconsistently accepted monarchy as a fact but not as a principle of government. At the same time, they recognized the idea of representation by elected bodies, but defied logic by rejecting any government ruled by the majority. Staunchly believing in the middle class, the class to which he closely identified, Guizot advocated what he called *le pays legal*, or the restructuring

of society, including suffrage and most importantly political power, to the benefit of the middle class, a considerably small number of people at the time.[10] Power, he believed, originated from above and imposed on those below with the state as the mainstay of liberty and not a threat to liberty as anarchists preached. His liberalism emanated f rom a belief in the sovereignty of reason, but he rejected any notion of popular sovereignty as well as any thought that the ordinary individual was capable of participating in government. Consequently, a society without a hierarchy or some well-established order offered no protection to its citizens; on the contrary, only an elite governing class could thwart despotic tendencies. Obviously, for Guizot, the price paid for individual liberty was the acceptance of inequality.

Guizot held office for the next seven years, which was a period of rapid economic development in France followed by economic decline brought on by crop failures and a downturn in the business cycle. While the Guizot-Louis-Philippe alliance, in furtherance of its bourgeois policies, relied on economic prosperity to win support, after 1846, everything seems to have gone wrong for the government and its policies. In foreign affairs, Guizot's convoluted machinations over Spanish succession outraged the British and made Guizot appear to be shabby intriguer. The result was a cooling of relations with Britain, and a move closer to the Catholic, conservative regime in Austria.

In the end, however, an economic crisis proved too difficult to overcome; yet, the events of 22–24 February 1848 were by no means foreseeable by everyone in advance, and this is especially true of members of the government. In fact, the February events were mostly contained within Paris, which indicates as goes Paris, so goes the nation. Having said this, perhaps because he was far closer to the working class, Proudhon felt the stirring of discontent in the months leading up to the actual events, but he also felt grave trepidation and counselled his friends on nonviolent action. When the regime finally collapsed, Proudhon was not entirely despondent, although he made a distinction between the revolution itself and its leaders whom he believed to be later-day Jocobins.[11] As Woodcock reports, Proudhon saw the revolution as empty, which only proved to 'fatigue his spirit'. He lamented the rampant intrigue permeating Paris, and thought it necessary to give the movement a sense of direction or order. Afterwards he summed up his feelings by saying, 'they have made a revolution without ideas'.[12] In this belief, he was probably correct. One of the reasons the Second Republic lasted for only a short period was undoubtedly its lack of a coherent philosophy, or understanding of the functions of the State.[13]

The immediate events leading to the regime's downfall are well known. Demonstrations against the government occurred on 22 February. As groups of workers and students showed up to demonstrate, the authorities were unable to disperse them. Everything changed overnight. Extreme left-wing groups, eager for violence and the overthrow of the government, entered the scene and began to construct barricades. The government called out the National Guard to restore order, but for the most part these citizen soldiers proved unreliable. This disaster illuminated the regime's vulnerability, and Louis-Philippe had no choice but to dismiss Guizot. Events, however, overtook the king whose offered reforms were both too little and too late. Louis-Philippe was

[10] Soltau estimates the middle class numbered around 250,000 at the time. Soltau, *French Political Thought in the 19th Century*, pp. 43–4.

[11] George Woodcock, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987), p. 118.

[12] Ibid., p. 119. For a discussion of Proudhon's involvement in the 1848 Revolution, see generally Guérin, *No Gods, No Masters,* pp. 58–70.

[13] Soltau, *French Political Thought in the 19th Century France*, p. 119.

forced to flee Paris (some say in a taxi) while republican politicians established a provisional government.

The Second Republic

The new government proclaimed France's Second Republic on 5 March; in fact, the organizers never considered any other form of government. The republican leaders saw themselves politically to the left of the liberals, and for the most part based their beliefs on the work of Rousseau, especially his *Contrat Sociale*. As such, they espoused an enthusiasm for the Revolution in all of its aspects, while at the same time trusting the ordinary person to affect the social change they advocated. These republican leaders were generally anti-clerical, and pledged their support for the popular sovereignty notions of universal adult suffrage, abolition of all privilege, and opposition not only to the throne but to the altar as well.

Almost immediately, the government declared universal male suffrage as well as the promise of work for all citizens; it also endorsed the right of free association, and the right to enjoy the legitimate profit of one's labour. They also announced other key social reforms including the National Workshops, which generally accomplished very little actual work. Proudhon was outspoken in his view of the National Workshops, which he thought merely palliative and did nothing to address the systemic social problem of chronic unemployment.

Disagreements among the leaders of the new government quickly appeared, and one of the first was over the National Workshops. Enrolment in the Workshops ballooned from about 28,000 to over 100,000 between February and May, and became an expensive and unpopular project with conservatives. Those on the left held a different point of view, however. They saw the Workshops as the beginning of a socialist society, but after a lengthy and boisterous debate, the Assembly voted in mid-June to abolish them. Inevitably, protests occurred on 22 June, and the following day barricades appeared in the working-class neighbourhoods. The National Guard, called out to maintain order, was largely composed of working-class members who sided with the rioters. Real fighting broke out two days later, which saw large numbers of troops firing artillery into the improvised barricades. The resistance was spontaneous in nature with various individuals taking part as 'leaders', but fighting would last only four more days with the capitulation of the last stronghold – the Faubourg Saint-Antoine.

The political consequences were instantaneous. The Assembly voted full powers to General Cavaignac, the war minister and the person charged with putting down the insurrection. Conservatives in the Assembly organized a so-called Party of Order under the leaders of the former July Monarchy, especially Thiers. Through conservative controlled committees, they set out to once again undo what they saw as the social radicalism that emerged in February. When Proudhon, then a very new, but also very isolated member of the Assembly, delivered his programme to solve the economic crisis, and to start the process of transforming French society along socialist lines, his measures met with derision and were defeated by a vote of 691 to 2.[14] Among his proposals was the 'liquidating of the old society', which included the abolition of unearned

[14] Like most socialist candidates, Proudhon lost an election in April 1848 as France witnessed a decided right-wing turn against extremist candidates that set in after the more heady early days of the Revolution. However, when new elections were held to fill vacancies on 5 June, Proudhon ran from the department of the Seine, and was elected along with Victor Hugo, Theirs, and Louis-Napoleon.

income made through the mere ownership of property, a position he first advocated in 1840 in his book, *What is Property?* Also included in his proposals was the radical idea of an income tax that required proprietors to pay for their part of the revolutionary work. So incensed was the conservative block in the Assembly that a resolution was entered to condemn Proudhon's position as an 'odious attack on public morality'.[15]

The stage was set for an entirely new dimension to French politics. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (1808–73) had tried unsuccessfully on two occasions to wrest power away from the July Monarchy. While many believed he possessed liberal ideas concerning the plight of the masses, there was no indication the nephew of the man who had such an influence on France possessed the skills necessary to climb to the top of the political scene. His first election to the Assembly in June 1848 came as a shock to pundits and professionals alike, but not to the working class who voted for him. The new constitution provided for the direct election of a president of the Republic under universal suffrage. In December 1848, Bonaparte won a resounding victory with more than five million votes out of slightly more than seven million cast.

The Party of Order regarded Bonaparte as one of their own. In fact, Thiers advised Bonaparte on his first government, which seemed like the rebirth of the Louis-Philippe's regime. Moreover, the Party of Order took it as its duty to root out the remnants of the Revolution in order to establish a far more conservative French society. This more conservative society promulgated three major policy initiatives: restricting the press, especially the socialist press; social reform aimed, again, at curbing socialist influence; and education reform, once again in their fear of socialism they desired the French educational system to instil conservative values in its students.

The other area of concern was foreign policy. Here the Party of Order, who detested the burgeoning republicanism taking hold throughout Italy, sent an expeditionary force to Rome in April 1849 to oust the newly formed republic and restore the pope to the Vatican. While the government moved quickly to suppress opposition demonstrations protesting the betrayal of republican values, Bonaparte was not willing to be the puppet of the Party of Order. He wrote a letter, conveniently leaked to the press, criticizing the papal government. An outrage ensued and the entire government resigned in protest, but instead of bowing to the Party of Order, Bonaparte appointed a new government not chosen from among its ranks. A different direction was announced, a direction with Bonaparte in the lead.

The constitution that made Bonaparte president also forbid him to run for a second

term. But, by 1850 France was polarized politically between the conservative Party of Order and the *democrats-socialistes* who organized the rural masses into a movement combining traditional peasant values with a mixture of utopian socialist political philosophy swathed in the language of Christian rhetoric. Their strategy was to assert the right of universal male suffrage including the three million disenfranchised by the Party of Order's law of May 1850. The *democrats-socialistes* hoped such an action would lead to a ballot box revolution with the left coming out the winner in both the Assembly and the president. Bonaparte was not, however, willing to leave office. There was considerable support in the Assembly to amend the constitution to allow for a second term in office, but Theirs' Orleanist group managed to block the law that needed a three-quarters majority. On the night of 2 December 1851, Napoleon launched 'Operation Rubicon', his *coup d'état,* effectively ending the short-lived Second Republic.

[15] Woodcock, *Proudhon*, p. 135.

The Second Empire and Napoleon III

The second Bonapartist regime lasted twenty years. It saw both triumph as well as defeat, but it did usher in an era of political stability. It enjoyed both unprecedented popular support, based on the charisma of its leader who appealed directly to 'the people' for support, and sanctioned an authoritarianism that was neither conservative nor liberal – it was both. Indeed, the masses saw Louis-Napoleon, who named himself Emperor Napoleon III in 1852, as the extension of his great uncle. There was a certain fantasy and nostalgic magic attached to the name Bonaparte, which implied a resolution to France's ever-present problems. Nevertheless, even if the people, through plebiscites, approved not only of the *coup* but also of the restoration of the Empire, it came at a price. The regime ruled by intimidation, martial law and pressure to discourage disobedience. Indeed, republicans of the Second Empire found themselves in complete disarray by the early 1850s. Exiled, imprisoned or in hiding, the republican cause was virtually non-existent as a political force in the early years of Bonaparte's reign.

The constitution of 1852 granted more power to Napoleon III than previous rulers. Ministers were responsible solely to the emperor, parliament saw its powers reduced, and the emperor was able to by-pass the parliament by appealing directly to the people through plebiscites. Even so, there were those who became increasing wary of Napoleon's intentions and ideas, especially his escapades in foreign wars. In order to maintain power, Napoleon adopted a strategy of appealing to the masses that brought him to power. To fulfil this goal, he concentrated on economic growth, which he saw as having the added bonus of bringing with it the support of the upper classes. One of his first acts was to improve the virtually non-existent credit system in France. The government also acted quickly to develop railways, which fostered economic prosperity. This prosperity continued throughout the 1850s, but when a new decade arrived along with it came new challenges.

Napoleon's involvement in Italian internal affairs aroused alarm with the political class at home. Catholics disliked the spoliation of church lands and directed their anger at Napoleon. At the same time, peasants' feared conscription to fight future wars, while landowners dreaded the government imposing new taxes to pay for them. Thus began a steady turn towards more liberal policies by uniting the political system operating pursuant to a democratically elected government, with a press corps, and political parties that were gaining more and more independence. With these more liberal influences, an opposition inevitably formed, and by the elections of 1863, the parliamentary opposition became a significant force.

The liberalization of the regime also rekindled republican ideas, which brought with it a debate that became central to France in the 1860s, a debate in which Proudhon played a key role. The issue turned on the question of decentralization of governmental power. During this period, republicans began to question their position regarding local liberties, which ultimately caused them to rethink their philosophy of citizenship. As Sudhir Hazareesing points out, three distinct approaches to the problem of decentralization emerged including the Jacobin idea that a strong centralized government was necessary to protect individual rights against those who would suppress those rights, and, on the other hand, there was Proudhonian federalism. The third strain of argument attempted to synthesize these two opposing theories into what Jules Ferry (1832–93) called the 'municipalist' doctrine, which essentially adopted a central state as necessary to safeguard the general interest together with a proactive communal component where citizens worked together to solve social problems. As a consequence, the 'commune would become the

petite patrie, and the central state the *grande patrie*'.[16] This distinction eventually become commonplace in the Third Republic, especially after 1882 when mayors were no longer appointed by the central government, leaving the task to the municipalities.

The policy of economic growth, upon which the government staked its popularity, showed signs of deteriorating by 1860 and accelerated by the late 1860s. By the elections of 1869, only about 90 of the 292 deputies supported the Bonaparte government. The loss of support meant that Napoleon made further concessions to liberalization and parliamentary power. Once more, Napoleon's foreign policy proved fatal to his regime. In July1870, through the political manoeuvring of German chancellor Bismarck, a distant relative of the king of Prussia became a candidate for the vacant Spanish throne. This eventuality was unthinkable in France who considered Spain in its sphere of influence. Even though the Prussian king was unwilling to press the issue, both sides seemed destined for war. When urged never to put forth the relative as a future monarchial candidate, Prussia refused. France felt its honour at stake and declared war on 19 July. A little more than a month later on 2 September the entire French army, including the emperor, surrendered at Sedan. The Empire had come to a dramatic and abrupt end.

This brief account of the major political and social currents in France between 1814 and 1870 not only provides much-needed context and background for the discussion on Proudhon's and Bakunin's anarchistic philosophy, but it also allows us to understand the atmosphere of political instability of the times with its vacillation between authoritarian rule and various attempts at republican democracy. I shall now turn to a detailed discussion of Proudhon's political and social philosophy followed by a similar analysis of Bakunin's theories. To some extent, they overlap, but I think overall Bakunin's augments compliment Proudhon's, but from a very different viewpoint.

[16] Sudhir Hazareesing, 'The Republicans of the Second Empire', in *The French Republic: History, Values, Debates*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, eds Edward Berenson, Vincent Duclert and Christophe Prochasson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 40.

3. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Life and Political Philosophy

> 'As man seeks justice in equality, society seeks order in anarchy'.
>
> —Proudhon, *What is Property?*

Proudhon's Early Life

Born in the Franche-Comté region of France in 1809, Proudhon was, for the most part, a self-taught intellectual who made his livelihood as a printer, publisher, journalist and radical anarchist thinker. George Woodcock has presented us with what is the standard biography. As a result, I am neither interested in recalling a strictly biographical account of Proudhon's life, nor shall I attempt to replicate Woodcock's otherwise excellent work. However, some important aspects of Proudhon's life need to be briefly touched upon.

First, as Woodcock points out, Proudhon was of peasant stock whose family fortunes oscillated between mediocre times and bad times.[1] This poverty affected Proudhon throughout his formative years as well as his later life. For example, while he gained admission to the college in Besançon, it was as a scholarship student. Being relieved of the burden of tuition did not mean, however, that his family could afford to supplement the scholarship with their own funds; yet, Proudhon, obviously not deterred by the situation, mastered Latin without ever owning a dictionary. This anecdotal point is revealing as it indicates Proudhon's remarkable intellectual skills that enabled him to rise above the poverty of his upbringing. His tenacity coupled with intellectual curiosity remained with him throughout his life, and, without these intellectual skills, it is doubtful that one of the nineteenth century's greatest social and political thinkers would have produced an *oeuvre* extending to over twenty-five volumes, not to mention fourteen separate volumes of correspondence.[2]

It was also during his school years that Proudhon came to doubt the religious dogmas so prevalently preached at the time. Undoubtedly, his religious reservations would not have gained such strength if his intellectual experiences had not acted as a fulcrum by which the revulsion against excessive piety worked on his deeper religious feelings, so engrained in children at the time.[3] One need only look to the work of Stendhal, especially his novel *Le Rouge et la Noir*, to realize that Eastern France was a religious centre with Besançon as the site of its most important seminaries.

Although he would later return to his studies, his family's economic perils forced Proudhon to seek employment around the age of eighteen. He reluctantly chose the printing industry, but

[1] Woodcock, *Proudhon*, pp. 2–3.

[2] See, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Oeuvre complèts de J.P. Proudhon* (Paris: M. Rivière, 1923).

[3] Woodcock, *Proudhon*, p. 7.

came to enjoy the comradery of his fellow workers. Moreover, his work as a printer put him in direct contact with Charles Fourier (1772–1837). Proudhon, who had by then attained the position of corrector, supervised the printing of Fourier's masterpiece, *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel et Sociétaire,* a book Woodcock describes as one 'of the most curious combinations of insight and eccentricity, of sound social reasoning and chiliastic fantasy, ever to be published'.[4] Fourier recognized that wealth emanated through labour, but he wanted everyone to find joy and happiness in their work. This could occur only if the workplace organized itself in a specific manner, which meant a division of society into *autonomous* cooperative units was necessary. These units were to be small enough to ensure individual freedom, yet they were to be large enough to allow for economic self-sufficiency. Fourier called these units *phalanstères* (Phalanstery), composed of about 1,600 individuals, where each was free to choose their occupation, with all property held in common, and all trade undertaken by the community as a whole. Fourier also envisioned his communities to be as free from authority as possible, and, in fact, he rejected the use of force to create his new society. It is not difficult to see the traces of Fourier's thought in the writings of Proudhon with their emphasis on mutualist societies joined together in his federalist system. Moreover, as we shall see, Proudhon rejected force as an agent for social change, much as Fourier championed.

While Proudhon was at first favourably struck by Fourier's work, he later repudiated much of what Fourier espoused. There was, however, one aspect of Fourier's work that Proudhon never attacked, and, indeed, he incorporated it into his own philosophy. Generally, Fourier's 'Serial Law' is the means by which science distinguishes itself from philosophy in that science concerns itself with how things exist, not why they exist or their cause or substance. In seeking to know how things exist, science looks to the relationships between objects, and the study of these relationships yields the Serial Law because the arrangement of all objects is a series.

Proudhon adapted the Serial Law to his own thinking, which sets him apart from the extreme egoism of Stirner, whose reality, as we have seen, was the individual with the community playing a nefarious role. While Proudhon sees the individual as the basic unit of society, the community of individuals provides the serial order where those individuals' function enriches their lives. There is no such thing as an isolated individual living life in some solipsistic environment. All people live within serial groups interconnected to each other, yet these social groups do not constitute a totality in which differences among individuals coalesce into a uniform, rigid order. At the same time, the serial group is not merely a collection of individuals; it is much more a collective force with a character distinct from the individuals comprising the group. We shall see how this entire notion of the Serial Law applies to Sartre's concern with human existence in the social world.

Proudhon's position in the printing business also brought him into contact with another young scholar, Gustave Fallot (1807–36). His friendship with Fallot opened Proudhon's world to French literature, and to the social and political theories of Montaigne, Rousseau, Voltaire and Diderot. Fallot's influence, as Woodcock points out, began a difficult process for Proudhon of

[4] Ibid., p. 13. The full title of Fourier's book is: *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel et Sociétaire, ou, Invention du procédé d'industrie attrayante et naturelle distribuée en séries passionnées* (Paris: Bassouge pére, 1829). Accessed electronically at: The Making of the Modern World Web, _http://find.galegroup.com/mome/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=MOME&userGroupName=new64731&tabID=T001&docId=U1047 17 October 2011. Generally, Fourier advocated voluntary associations or a type of socialism that advances from one stage to another through argument and prophetic vision towards sublime perfection culminating in real anarchism. Fourier was also the first to apply a study of technical perfection and exact proportions to socialist thought.

disciplining his thoughts so necessary for a burgeoning author. While Proudhon never became a systematic thinker in any strict sense of the word, there does exist what Woodcock refers to as an 'organic pattern' that emerged from the combination of his natural dynamism coupled with the method and premeditation he learned from Fallot.[5]

I need to interject one additional anecdotal note at this time. Sometimes, a single event in someone's life may prove very meaningful, but in reality it is probably never utterly life changing. If there was a singular event in Proudhon's early life, it perhaps occurred in 1833 when his younger brother Jean-Etienne die d while undergoing military training. While the facts concerning his death are unreported, speculation, which Proudhon helped to fuel, portrays the demise from a self-inflicted wound as a result of Jean-Etienne's refusal to cover-up the actions of an embezzling superior officer. As Proudhon explains, this finally made him an irreconcilable enemy of the existing order.[6] The importance of this event cannot be understated. For the rest of his life, Proudhon viewed the state, with its compulsive machinery and apparatuses, as the entity that seized Jean-Etienne and killed him without regard for the feelings of his family, a process the state replicates indefinitely at its will with other poverty-stricken victims. The state became, in Proudhon's mind, the instrument of power as a destructive force; accordingly, the state, with its concomitant authority, must be crushed.

Proudhon's Political Philosophy: Anarchy

General Criticisms of Proudhon's Philosophy

Proudhon developed his political philosophy over most of his adult lifetime shaped, as I have said, by his upbringing in and around Besançon. While he was a radical thinker – at least during his own time – Proudhon was also a realist steeped in a moralist tradition who desired to integrate all three concepts into a coherent politics. Many think he failed in his mission arguing that his thoughts are too confused, or they lack consistency.[7] However, much of the criticism goes deeper than mere inconsistency and can be shown to be either misplaced or a blatant appropriation for political purposes. I want to turn to the work of Alan Ritter who has taken note of these criticisms and placed them within several categories, which should be helpful in setting a framework for Proudhon's thought.

Proudhon's Economic Theory

The first category of criticism denoted by Ritter, Proudhon's economic theories, centres around his excessively 'realistic' style of theorizing that led Joseph Schumpeter to assert Proudhon lacked an ability to analyse, thus rendering his theories absurd.[8] Ritter responds that even if many of Proudhon's explanations of social and economic facts are unacceptable or lack

[5] Woodcock, *Proudhon*, p. 15.

[6] Ibid., p. 24.

[7] See, for example, E. H. Carr, *Studies in Revolution* (New York: The Universal Library, 1964), pp. 38–9, who thinks Proudhon is difficult to comprehend not only because of the vast quantity of his writings, but also for their constant contradictions that render them incomprehensible.

[8] Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, ed. Elizabeth Schumpeter (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 457. See also, Nicholas Wapshott, *Keynes and Hayek: The Clash that Defines Modern Economics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), especially pp. 67–8.

economic standards, mere scientific fact alone does not disqualify Proudhon's arguments. Ritter argues that there are non-empirical elements that show Proudhon's work as worthy of study.[9]

Although Ritter does not point this out, Proudhon proposes an economic order based on competition and private property with the elimination of unearned income – interest, royalties and rents. While his solution is, to a great degree, economic in nature, the main thrust of the attack is a social restructuring premised on the abolition of the gold standard, elimination the stock exchange, and replacement the Bank of France with his so-called People's Bank. In short, Proudhon argues against the very bureaucratic institutions that create speculation and economic instability, but which were entrenched within French society of his day. Again, Proudhon never advocates the elimination of private property, and while he encourages competition, it is to be given certain necessary and essential constraining conditions in order to assure equality in the market place of competitive forces.[10] In fact, many of the economic theories developed by Proudhon find their way into Marx's thought even though the latter was keen to separate Proudhon from their origin.

Economic theory, while important for Proudhon's overall political philosophy, is not the only basis for his thought. Certainly, his ideas regarding the People's Bank and the use of credit in general have economic impact; they are also part of a much larger outlook concerning human development and the eventual structure of society known as mutualism within a federalist framework. Even his ideas concerning social welfare and the Working Men's Associations, envisioned as the 'regular armies of the revolution', showed considerable insight for his time.[11] In his *Solution to the Social Problem*, Proudhon makes it clear that 'social reform will never come from political reform; on the contrary, political reform must come from social reform'.[12]

It is a mistake, in other words, to think Proudhon is merely an economist, and a rather bad one at that. A similar argument can be levelled against Sartre who appears to be less than convincing when he ventures into economic analysis in the *Critique*, especially with regard to Marxist economic theory. No doubt, an economist would be struck by the 'confined' or limited nature of Sartre's analysis of economic matters, where he seems to concentrate primarily on the psychological and social aspects of economic occurrences. Yet, one would not dismiss Sartre's writings based on his use of economic examples alone, and this is also true of Proudhon who establishes not only a psychological basis for his economic theory, but a sociological construct as well.

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[9] Alan Ritter, *The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 4–5.

[10] For an interesting article detailing the relationship between the economic theories of John Maynard Keynes and Proudhon see, Dudley Dillard, 'Keynes and Proudhon', *The Journal of Economic History* 2, no. 1 (May 1942): 63–76. In one comparison, each recognized the inherent dangers to the overall economy that results from the propensity to accumulate vast amounts of money. Ibid., p. 67. This insight is not lost on Sartre who details, at some length, the deleterious effects of Spanish gold hoarding in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an example of what he calls 'counterfinalities' or unintended consequences. See, *CDR I*, pp. 165–71.

[11] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), p. 220 (first published in 1851). Hereinafter referred to as '*Revolution 19th Century*'. The Syndicalist of the early twentieth century took many of Proudhon's ideas. See, for example, Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme and J. Roth (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2004), who also believed the Working Men's Associations would form the vanguard of the revolution.

[12] Proudhon, 'Solution to the Social Problem', in *Property is Theft!: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, ed. Iain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2011), p. 267. Hereinafter referred to as '*Proudhon Anthology*'.

Proudhon and Violence

The second attack on Proudhon that Ritter points out, which could also be a generalized attack on anarchism as a whole, is his support not only social change but also violent revolution, whose goal is to destroy all bourgeois property.[13] Proudhon did harbour contempt for bourgeois society, but this attack is a more or less common belief easily dismissed with a reading of Proudhon's first important work. *What is Property*? (1840), centres his critique on what he terms '*the right of increase claimed by the proprietor over anything which he has marked as his own*'.[14] This so-called right is, Proudhon believes, inherent in property and its absence would render property 'null and void'. And while the increase operates under various names, Proudhon lists several categories: 'farm-rent [*fermage*] for lands, house-rent [*loyer*] for houses and furniture, rent for life-investments, interest for money, benefice, gain, profit (three things which must not be confused with wages or the legitimate price of labor)'.[15] His reasoning for eliminating these forms of unearned income stem f rom the belief that 'by the right of increase the proprietor reaps but does not toil, gathers but does not plant; consumes but does not produce, enjoys but does not labor'.[16] Again, he does not advocate the abolishment of private ownership, although he prefers communal proprietorship. However, as he rather famously said, the unearned income aspect of property is 'theft'.

The second part of this claim that Proudhon is a violent subversive overlooks the fact that he abhorred violence, and was quite consistent in this belief. Unlike Marx, Proudhon hoped the necessary changes in society would occur without resort to violence. In Proudhon's thought, the term 'revolution' means a peaceful, albeit spontaneous and immediate, establishment of a new social order. He felt it tantamount to a crime, however, should the new order rise on the back of class warfare. In this sense, his use of the language of violence only serves as a substitute for the action of violence. In fact, while Bakunin loved nothing more than rousing the proletariat from the barricades, Proudhon shirked from the ramparts amid the gratuitous violence of revolutionary activities.[17]

[13] See, for example, Gaston Isambert, *les idées socialistes en france de 1825 à 1848: le socialisme fondé sur la fraternité et l'union des classes* (Paris: A. Alcan, 1905), pp. 316–70. Isambert takes the position that Proudhon is an anti-clerical, radical subversive.

[14] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property?*, ed. and trans. Donald R. Kelley and Bonnie G. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 118 (emphasis in original). Proudhon uses the term *droit d'aubaine,* which has been commonly translated as 'right of increase' ever since Benjamin Tucker's translation published in 1890 (including the 1994 Cambridge edition). *Aubaine*, however, means 'windfall', 'bargain', and even 'steal'. In this sense, the word increase expresses the concept of surplus value (*plus-value*) generally associated with Marx**.** For a discussion of the differences between Proudhon and Marx, but more importantly the ideas Proudhon first published and were later used by Marx see, Georges Gurvitch, 'Proudhon et Marx', *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, Nouvelle Série* 40 (janvier-juin 1966): 7–16, especially p. 9 with regard to the concept of surplus value.

[15] Proudhon, *What is Property?* p. 119.

[16] Ibid.

[17] See, for example, Proudhon, 'Letter to Marx' (17 May 1846), in *Proudhon Anthology*, pp. 163–5. See also, Proudhon, 'Confessions of a Revolutionary', in *Proudhon Anthology*, pp. 409–11.

Marxist Criticism

The next area of concern Ritter discusses is, quite naturally, Marx who attacked Proudhon in several broad-based and sweeping denouncements.[18] Generally, Marx viewed Proudhon as a petty bourgeois who desired to thwart the real revolution, not create one. In support, Marx points to Proudhon's conciliatory attitude towards class conflict and his support of those whose livelihood was relatively small but independent, the so-called *les petits*.[19] As we shall see, these attacks generally miss the point, and fail to realize the full scope of Proudhon's support for the proletariat cause. His opposition to strikes was not because he was devoted to class collaboration, as Marxist propagandized, but because he was gravely suspicious of the trade union's mentality to incite strike after strike among the working class.

Right-Wing Criticism

Rather than denounce Proudhon as the left had done, French right-wing reactionaries followed an altogether unique approach, they adopted him as their own. First advocated by the anti-Semite Edourd Drumont, who applauded Proudhon as a great nationalist in an article written in *La grand revue* in1909, the cause was further advanced by Charles Murras (1868–1952), the founder of the ultra-nationalist *Action française*, through his 'leftist' front organization *Cercle Proudhon*.[20] As Julien Jackson points out, a disciple of Murras', Georges Valois, established *Cercle Proudhon* in 1911 as an economic and social studies group. Its goal was to win over syn-

[18] See, for example, *MECW volume 6*, 'The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon', pp. 105–213 (first published in 1847). Accessed electronically at _http://www.marxist.org_ on 9 March 2012. See also, *MECW volume 38*, 'Letter from Marx to Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov' (28 December 1846), p. 95, accessed electronically at _http://www.marxist.org_ on 8 March 2012. Marx initially praised Proudhon's book *What is Property?* as 'a great scientific advance. ...,' *MECW volume 6*, 'The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism', p. 32 (originally published in 1845). At least one histo rian, Eric Hobsbawn, thinks any influence Proudhon exerted on Marx was quite minimal. Hobsbawn sees Marx's praise for Proudhon as neither an endorsement of Proudhon's economic theories nor that he had anything to learn from Proudhon, but merely as recognition of Proudhon's insightful critical thinking regarding political economy that occupied so much of Marx's thought. Eric Hobsbawn, *How to Change the World: Reflections on Marx and Marxism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 34.

[19] Georges Cogniot, *Proudhon et la démagogie bonapartiste: un 'socialiste' en coquetterie avec la pourvoir personnel* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1958), pp. 24–32, accessed electronically at _http://encyclopedie-marxiste.org_ on 8 February 2012. See also: *MECW volume 42*, 'Marx's letter to Ludwig Kugelmann' (9 October 1866), p. 325, accessed electronically at _http://www.marxist.org_, on 15 October 2011, and *MECW volume 38*, 'Engels' Letter to Marx' (21 August 1851), p. 434, where Marx and Engels reiterate their shared disdain for Proudhon's alleged support of the bourgeoisie.

[20] Henri Grégoire et M.-C. Poinsot, 'Le centénaire de Proudhon', *La grande revue* 53 (10 janvier 1909), pp. 132–43, accessed electronically at _http://babel.hathitrust.org_ on 12 January 2012. All translations are mine. At the end of the article, various well-known people are asked to write a short paragraph on Proudhon. Edouard Drumont's statement appears on p. 140. Charles Murras, 'A Besçancon', *Cahiers du Cercle du Proudhon* 1 (janvier-février 1912): 3–8, accessed electronically at _http://www.gallica.bnf.fr_ on 11 January 2012. All translations are mine. Edouard Drumont (1844–1917) was a French journalist who founded the Anti-Semitic League of France in 1889 and was the founder and editor of the anti-Semitic newspaper 'La Libre Parole'. He was well known in France as the author of the *La France juive* (1886). Tony Judt argues Proudhon was both an icon for the syndical Left and the neo-monarchist Right because he addressed the limitations and frustrations of parliamentary republicanism that occupied the thoughts of earlier generations. Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944–1956* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), p. 18.

dicalists for the monarchist cause, which is why the group took on Proudhon's name.[21] For the most part, these right-wing organizations tended to attach themselves to Proudhon's patriarchal family views, his criticism of democracy, his qualified support for the south in the American Civil War, his anti-Semitic views which are mostly limited to his private correspondence, and his French nationalism to justify their own positions.[22]

Curiously, these organizations felt it necessary to co-opt Proudhon as a fellow traveller even though he died fifty years earlier. Perhaps, it indicates the power of Proudhon's thought well after his death, yet it is not difficult to refute the reactionary's desire to bind Proudhon to their cause. He clearly condemned 'traditional' values including those of the Catholic Church. Moreover, as Ritter correctly points out, he opposed Italian unification not as a defence of Catholic objectives, but because of the fear of elimination of the small, local governments prevalent in Italy.[23]

As far as fascism is concerned, this too must be rejected, since Proudhon not only argued against a dictatorship so dear to fascism, his entire fundamental theory of individual freedom, as well as his hatred for all forms of authority, is certainly at odds with fascist thought. When he rhetorically asks himself what he thinks of dictatorships, Proudhon responds, 'what is the point? If the dictatorship's goal is to establish equality by the principles of institutions, it is useless. … The dictatorship has for all of time never been really very popular. It is the wildest secret dream of some fools, the very great argument by which the democrat is able to preserve the imperial regime'.[24]

Anarchist Utopianism

Many of the arguments against Proudhon were unjustified, but there is one argument Proudhon personally desired to dispel. Even though he thought utopianism a worthwhile goal, he also viewed it as socialism's error to perpetuate a religious fervour for utopianism by 'launching forward into a fantastic future instead of seizing the reality which is crushing it'.[25] This untenable

[21] Julien Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 46. See also, Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right Nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*, trans. David Maisel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 10–15.

[22] See, J. Selwyn Schapiro, 'Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism', *The American Historical Review* 50, no. 4 (July 1945): 714–37, where the author paints Proudhon as the first progenitor of Hitlerism. E.H. Carr calls this allegation skilful and plausible and then goes on to say Proudhon was merely a petit-bourgeois who possessed a fear of and contempt for the proletariat. This fear, Carr reasons, is a noteworthy anticipation of the ideological foundations of National Socialism. Carr, *Studies in Revolution*, pp. 43–4. It is difficult to understand the efficacy of Shapiro's allegation much less Carr's less than convincing support.

[23] Ritter, *Proudhon,* pp. 9–10. See also, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Nouvelles Observations sur l'Unité Italienne* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865), (first published in 1865), accessed electronically at _http://www.gallica.bnf.fr_ on 18 September 2012. All translations are mine. The other reasons Proudhon opposed Italian unification were the disparate geography of the unified country, the ethnographic diversity of the people, the diverse historical considerations, and political and economic questions.

[24] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'De la Justice dans la Revolution et dans l'Eglise', Volume II, in *Oeuvres Complètes de P.-J. Proudhon tome* 7 (Paris: Riviere, 1930–5), pp. 286–7 (first published in 1858). All translations are mine. Volume 7 of the *Oeuvres Complètes* contains four separate books, one each for the sections of *On Justice*. Hereinafter referred to as '*Justice',* followed by the volume number. I should note that Sartre too thinks it is useless to establish equality – in his words human freedom – on the principles of an institutional, directorial society.

[25] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *The Evolution of Capitalism; System of Economical Contradictions or, The Philosophy of Misery Volume I* (Charleston: Forgotten Books, 2008), p. 96. (first published in 1846). Hereinafter referred to as '*Contradictions I'*. See also, *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 83.

position forms the basis for Proudhon's very important realism, which attempts to discover the underlying facts giving rise to the situation in the first place.

Much as Sartre does in the *Critique,* Proudhon seeks to investigate the reasons why certain social and historical 'forces' seem to place boundaries around change within society, since only by understanding these boundaries can real change occur. Nevertheless, understanding the limits are not enough, one must also prove the possibility of change; that is, what actions are necessary so the existing order is not permanent. Yet, Proudhon is not naïve in thinking social change comes about easily. On the contrary, he fully recognizes that there is no easy way out of the social conditions of his day. The road is difficult with many twists and turns, and in Proudhon's view, the road never leads to paradise. Perhaps, all one can hope for are better conditions of labour, but there still will, nonetheless, be labour. To achieve this modest goal would be worthwhile for Proudhon, but first he seeks to comprehend human nature, and the fixed character traits that seem to limit action and free choice. In this endeavour, he sees humans as possessing a constant and unchangeable nature.[26] It is important to understand exactly which human traits are fixed, but before advancing to a discussion of what human nature means for Proudhon I want to add an element of my own to Ritter's list, and that is Proudhon's notion of sovereignty.

Proudhon's Notion of Sovereignty

In his 'Solution to the Social Problem', Proudhon discusses whether sovereignty arises from the people or attaches to the state. In the usual sense, he thinks the sovereignty of the nation is the first principle of both monarchists and democrats.[27] While he equates the People's sovereignty with the fundamental problem of liberty, equality and fraternity as the first principle of social organization, he affirms that the People alone are sovereign. Yet, he questions the ability of the masses to exercise sovereignty: 'In principle then, I admit that the People exist, that it is sovereign, that it asserts itself in the popular consciousness, but nothing yet has proven to me that it can perform an overt act of sovereignty and that an explicit revelation of the People is possible.'[28] Never suitably roused to action, the People only demonstrate their will in momentary flashes, always falling back to what Proudhon calls a 'subordinate' state, and what Sartre refers to as the impotency of the practico-inert. Consequently, Proudhon opposes the 'effective sovereignty' of the people, and instead anchors his notion of sovereignty in a 'natural group', which is constituted:

> Whenever men together with their wives and children assemble in some one place, link up their dwellings and holdings, develop in their midst diverse industries, create among themselves neighborly feelings and relations, and for better or worse impose upon themselves the conditions of solidarity, they form what I call a natural group.

[26] Proudhon, *What is Property?* pp. 189–95. Marx took issue with this idea and said human history is nothing but the continuous transformation of human nature. See, *MECW volume 6*, 'The Poverty of Philosophy', p. 153.

[27] Proudhon, 'Solution to the Social Problem', in *Proudhon Anthology*, p. 259. In his earlier work, *What is Property?*, Proudhon discusses the definition of sovereignty as derived from the definition of law. Here he says the law is the expression of the will of the sovereign, so under a monarchy the law is an expression of the will of the king, and under a democratic form of government it is the expression of the will of the people. Proudhon rejects both systems saying that except for the number of wills, they are the same. Their error is in thinking laws are an expression of will, instead of an expression of fact. Proudhon sees the true nature of laws as merely bias and prejudice. Proudhon, *What is Property?*, p. 29.

[28] Proudhon, 'Solution to the Social Problem', in *Proudhon Anthology*, p. 265.

> This group then takes the form of a community or some other political organism, affirming in its unity its independence, a life or movement that is appropriate to itself, and affirms its autonomy.[29]

In Proudhon's natural group, 'the multitude that is governed would be at the same time the governing multitude; the society would be identical and adequate to the state, the people to the government, as in political economy producers and consumers are the same'.[30] Natural groups possess common interests and thus they understand each other, associate themselves, and thereby form a superior entity; they are what he calls 'indestructible organisms' with a new bond of right, a contract of mutuality. Nevertheless, this new bond is no more able to deprive the natural group of their sovereignty than any member of the community could. While Proudhon does not go beyond the group's formative phase, it is, I believe, safe to assume that he feels the natural group provides a high level of human freedom and understanding, a situation Sartre also maintains in the group-in-fusion. In a twofold manner, Sartre goes beyond the formulation stage of the group to analyse what it means to organize the group itself: first, he investigates the dialectical effect the individual members of the group have on the group itself, and then he asks how the group operates to affect its individual members.

Much as Rousseau championed, Proudhon seeks to make certain that the sovereignty of the people is never subject to alienation, which is Sartre's position in the *Critique* as well. Freedom establishes itself within a group or social enclave where reciprocal relations create bonds. Moreover, unlike both Hobbes and Locke who maintain that justice is impossible without a functioning legal system to provide it with credibility, Proudhon sees the proper basis of law not as the authority of a political constitution or the will of the sovereign people, but as the essential social norms developed over time by social groups. Those social norms may eventually express themselves in the form of statutes and laws, but they do not necessarily have to. However, they must always reflect the fundamental will of the people organized within voluntary relationships created in the course of living their lives.[31] We shall see that Sartre too proposes a theory of law in the *Critique* that reflects Proudhon's sentiments.

Human Nature

Returning once again to psychological egoism, Proudhon views this attribute, with its propensity to aim at nothing but one's own satisfaction, as a cause of unavoidable social constraint.[32] He thinks, adopting the view of Rochefoucauld that Godwin argued against, when one satisfies another person one always does so to satisfy oneself. This view seems to be untenable because it

[29] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Capacité politique des classes ouvrières* (Paris: Éditions du Trident, 1989), p. 216, see also, p. 237. (first published in 1865). All translations are mine.

[30] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Contradictions Politiques: Théorie du Mouvement Constitutionnel aux XIX Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1870), p. 127, (first published in 1870), accessed electronically at _http://www.gallica.bnf.fr_ on 11 September 2011. All translations are mine.

[31] See generally, William O. Reichert, 'Natural Right in the Political Philosophy of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon', *The Journal of Libertarian Studies* 4, no. 1 (winter 1990): 77–91, and especially pp. 79–80. Proudhon also believes, 'L'homme vivant est un groupe'. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Philosophie du Progrés* (Bruxelles: Alphonse Lebègue, 1853), pp. 44–61 (first published in 1853), accessed electronically at _http://books.google.com_ on 20 September 2012. All translations are mine.

[32] See, Proudhon, *Contradictions, I*, pp. 303–7 where he presents an early defence of psychological egoism.

requires one to act in order to achieve self-satisfaction as the only motive, when acts not undertaken out of selfish motivations occur all the time.[33] As Ritter argues, Proudhon's psychology is concerned with the limits of possibility of critical social change, or politics, and not some empirical limit of human understanding. In this sense, his entire concept of human nature is different from Godwin's. Moreover, Proudhon takes the counterintuitive view that it is better to assume everyone is an egoist in order to criticize existing institutions and, concomitantly, propose new ones.

As with many of his positions, Proudhon equivocated over psychological egoism in his writings. In *What is Property?*, he thought egoism erroneous, since for the most part humans are the most sociable of animals, which means that humans usually endeavour to benefit others rather than themselves.[34] In the *Contradictions,* Proudhon replaces this notion of generosity with an opposite doctrine that says humans not only prefer their own benefit, but desire immediate pleasure, self-satisfaction and gratuitous malice.[35] He ultimately resolves his position in *Justice,* which is, as Ritter correctly points out, the most complete text of his political philosophy, where he states, 'one must define [man] as both a combative animal as well as a social animal'.[36] Since egoism has a power all its own, Proudhon thinks humans 'cannot hold out for a long time against the ferocity of egoism, since egoism is overexcited by affections contrary to reason (*sens*) such as hate, the silent rage of en vy, the fantasy of vengeance, the irritation of original humility, or from long misery. It is passion against passion.' … '[37]

Finally, Proudhon looks to the weakness of the human conscience to explain the need for restriction. While he insists humans have a conscience, since they are quite capable of judging actions as morally right or wrong, he also thinks these judgements have little effect on human actions. Yet, he became increasingly distrustful of the power of human conscience, and, as he grew older, he felt humans could actually resist the pangs of conscience. Ritter argues that by taking the infirmity of human conscience as a given, Proudhon eliminates the condemnation of the people for inadequately living up to their own principles. Such a stance also excludes any programme to improve matters relying exclusively on moral arguments.

How do Proudhon's ideas regarding human nature play out in a wider social *milieu*? His analysis is sociological in its foundation, and is much like Sartre's continual reshaping of the individual's role as he moves from isolated individual to the group-in-fusion, to the functionary of the organized group, and finally to the impotent bureaucrat of the institutionalized group. Proudhon asserts that every social environment encountered by humankind affects character in a dissimilar manner. There are as many ideals, interests, political units, industrial organizations, teaching communities, etc., as there are people who inhabit a community.[38] Similarly, since each

[33] C. D. Broad, 'Egoism as a Theory of Human Motives', in *Ethics and the History of Philosophy* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1952), pp. 218–31.

[34] Proudhon, *What is Property?* p. 171.

[35] Proudhon, *Contradictions, I*, p. 308.

[36] *Justice III*, p. 416.

[37] *Justice III*, pp. 519–20; see also, *Justice III*, p. 35 where Proudhon has a lengthy discussion of human nature and what he terms the law of egoism.

[38] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'le cours d'économie', in Pierre Haubtmann, *la Philosophie Sociale de P.-J. Proudhon* (Grenoble: Presses Universtaires de Grenoble, 1980). pp. 104–9. All translations are mine. 'le Cours d'économie' is an unpublished manuscript originally written by Proudhon between 1851 and 1855. Haubtmann discovered the text in the early 1950s, and it became the subject of his dissertation published in 1980. In Haubtmann's system of ordering Proudhon's manuscript, the pages referred to here are Feuillet XIII no. 21, Feuillet XV no. 59. It is interesting to

person is a member of various social groups, one naturally develops many different character traits, which means humans are role players who act and think differently each time they enter another social environment. Not only are individuals role players, each member of a social group seeks the approval of the other members by adopting the group's norms. As Proudhon says, human 'relations are bound-up between one and another as cause and effect, as the mode of substance. Pleasure and pain are the inevitable consequences of our moral deprivation.'[39] Sartre too sees human relations as 'bound-up' in reciprocal relations between individuals, but unlike Proudhon Sartre extends his analysis to the effect the group itself exerts upon those 'bound-up' relations between individuals.

While status seeking is important for Proudhon's analysis of group role-playing, he advances his position by arguing that individuals generally go further than mere conformity with other's expectations in order to gain acceptance, and do so because they believe they are obliged to do so.[40] Much like Sartre advocates where individuals within the group are 'other directed', Proudhon sees individuals behaving as others expect them to behave because they accept such expectations and interiorize them into their own conscious thoughts and actions. Living up to others' expectations often leads, as Ritter points out, to acceptance of those expectations as morally valid, which results in two equally important social constraints. First, it *externally* influences behaviour and choice through a system of rewards and penalties, and, secondly, it *internally* moulds individual conviction into predominant customs.[41] A key element of Sartre's notion of human nature is how individuals internalize the external, and then externalize the internal.

Interestingly, while Proudhon acknowledges society's oppressive forces and apparatuses, he is careful to point out the limited scope of society's unavoidable control. Even though individuals feel compelled to become aware of their fellow individual's expectations, this awareness is not totally compelling. The other's expectations need not be internalized, since human conscience grants 'the right to judge that which is prior to the conventional existence of society'.[42] Proudhon thinks that social restraints are universal and thus unavoidable human facts; yet, they are not an absolute law. Much like Sartre argues, resistance or praxis is always possible within the group even if it is not likely to occur due to a desire for what Proudhon calls prestige.

Proudhon's Historical Viewpoint

In the *Critique*, Sartre puts forth a theory of history by way of a question: is history intelligible? Proudhon does much the same by laying out his own philosophy of history to show how individuals form groups, which eventually attain the status of oppressive institutions. More

note that in the section titled 'The We-Subject', in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre argues the human experience of the we-subject is not a correlative experience in others and this accounts for its metastability. The we-subject depends on particular organizations thrown into the world and it disappears with those organizations. Sartre goes on to say, 'in truth, there is in the world a host of formations which indicate me an anybody. … And of course I make myself anybody when I try on shoes or uncork a bottle or go into an elevator or laugh in the theatre'. *BN*, pp. 550–1.

[39] *Justice I*, p. 295.

[40] Proudhon, 'le cours d'économie', in *la Philosophie Sociale de P.-J. Proudhon*, p. 109. (Feuillet XI no. 17 et 19; Feuillet IV no. 2.)

[41] Ritter, *Proudhon*, pp. 35–6. For a more contemporary account of this phenomenon, and one Sartre refers to in the *Critique* see, David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). (originally published in 1950).

[42] *Justice IV*, p. 487.

fundamentally, and similar to Sartre, Proudhon investigates the root causes of oppression and human conflict in order to understand human behaviour and, therefore, to effect change. While Proudhon's analysis centres around two such institutions, government and the church, his real concern is with hierarchy and the social oppression resulting from hierarchy. As he phrases it, 'true justice lies outside institutions created by authority'.[43] Even though Sartre does not address the church, his concern is the same: in Sartre's mind, hierarchies inevitably lead to oppression and this is what he investigates. And, while Proudhon does not specifically talk about group unity in the same detail as Sartre expounds upon, he analyses society's effort to unify its actions in order to remain cohesive.

Proudhon acknowledges that the human condition is social from the beginning, but the origin of the philosophy of history is, as he describes it, the story of the state of desires and moral beliefs in the absence of any moral constraints.[44] Just as Sartre spells out, Proudhon's philosophy of history is one of constant human struggle where group structures develop, fallback upon each other and reform once again, all in a constant state of dialectical conflict.[45] In this condition, humans are both ethical and psychological egoists, since they not only seek full self-satisfaction, but also believe they should do so. For example, should I feel entitled to everything that satisfies me I will be doomed to failure, since I will expect the other always to acquiesce to my desires. Thought of in terms of Hobbes' state of nature, individuals possessing a self-regarding morality are constantly at war with one another. Unlike Hobbes, however, who solves the problem through a simple calculation of self-interest resulting in the social contract, Proudhon overcomes the dilemma in a different fashion. Humans leave the state of nature because the experience of mortal conflict causes a change in their *moral* point of view.[46]

What Proudhon has in mind is a scenario where as primitive humans compete among themselves for prestige, they undergo a change in their morality. They conclude that the most successful, the strongest among them ought to be that way. This attitude naturally pervades the successful who are adept at winning deference, but Proudhon sees the vanquished accepting this position as well.[47] Even though what Proudhon calls the 'right of force' prevails over human activities, he is not necessarily concerned with the causes as he is with the consequences. Social relations take on an entirely new meaning once right of force is accepted. A hierarchy based upon money, authority, and prestige dominated by those who are the strongest now replaces the war of all against all existing in the state of nature. This causes the members of society to internalize the expectations of those at the top, which results in harmonious relations prevailing over all of the members. Once again, the unity of the group is reestablished.

However, Proudhon goes on to argue that the bonds of harmony uniting the individual members of this primitive society are not permanent. Once individuals fail to follow expectations, the system becomes unstable with the systems two extremes likely to experience nonconforming behaviour first. Those at the top of the hierarchy, who achieved their status because of strength,

[43] Woodcock, *Proudhon,* p. xviii.

[44] Proudhon always maintained humans are social beings whose destiny is to live in society. See, for example, Proudhon, 'Confessions of a Revolutionary', in *Proudhon Anthology*, p. 431. (first published in 1849.)

[45] In this regard see, Chen Kui-Si, *La dialectique dans l'oeuvre de Proudhon* (Paris: Domat-Montchrestien, 1936), p. 39.

[46] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *La guerre et la Paix*, 3rd edn, ed. E. Dentu (Paris: Collection Hertzel, 1861), pp. 54; 114–15, accessed electronically at _http://books.google.com_, on 13 February 2011. All translations are mine.

[47] Ibid., p. 89.

seek to capitalize on their position of prestige by transforming it into a heredity nobility. With this new hereditary nobility comes an increase in the use of oppressive force, which may be even more violent if the descendants of the original elite are no longer the strongest among the society even though they still rule as if they are. At the other end of the spectrum, those who are at the bottom of the hierarchy, and who are subject to ever-increasing oppression, become disillusioned by the immorality of those at the top and no longer internalize the right of force into their conscious thoughts. The result of 'the exclusion of morals soon make themselves appear with their absurdities and their consequences of a dangerous practice. Humans return to slavery. They refuse all dignity and morality; it is through want (*vouloir*) made most abominable by stupidity that they are moved to vengeance.'[48]

Once the right of force is questioned, social harmony disintegrates, which gives rise to new forms of control and oppression. More effective than previous restraints, these new controls take the form of religion and government. By means of dogmas, mysteries and sacraments religion frightens its followers into obedience. Government, on the other hand, plays a similar role as religion; it too is a coercive power aimed at controlling conflict between the weak and the powerful. These two forces – religion and government – combine to stabilize society and revive its once precarious consensus. Individuals once again internalize the expectations of those at the top of the hierarchy, and accede to the right of force. As Proudhon says, 'once that formula, such as it is, has been embodied in a constitution, in a legal code and in articles of religious faith … the mind embraces it with full force of its conscience and its good faith'.[49] At this early phase of human development, an imaginary state is transformed into an actuality, which becomes the source of authority through the promulgation of laws and regulations that reflect the values of the dominate class.

So long as a particular society accepts the right of force, the established hierarchy remains stable. However, Proudhon sees this consensus ultimately disintegrating as the disparity in wealth and social status increases. As the masses grow poorer, they are less inclined to accept policies that only increase their state of misery. Thus, 'what distinguishes the proletarian from the surf and the slave is his condition of constraint *(contrainte*), his hard work, and his imposed misfortune, all of which causes him to live in a state of perpetual revolt and hatred'.[50] The homogeneity of society begins to unravel on both the class level and the geographical domain. While Proudhon does not explain the reason, eventually even the people at the top of the hierarchy lose faith in society.

Up to this point in his historical portrayal, Proudhon has only considered religion in its polytheistic form. However, at some juncture pagan religion no longer stabilizes the inherent conflicts within society, leaving government as the sole regulator of human conduct. This proves to be a difficult task. In the past, pagan religion provided the myth necessary for the acceptance of societal laws. Now 'man comes to consider laws and institutions as fetters imposed by force and necessity, but without roots in his conscience'.[51] When the social imperfections become apparent, incredulity shakes religion, and the fate of society becomes, 'inequality cuts between the citizens and renders society unstable. As a result, government, forced to use more and more vi-

[48] *Justice III*, p.33.
[49] *Justice III*, p. 529; see also, *Justice IV*, p. 402.
[50] Justice II, *p. 461.*
[51] Justice III, *p. 530.*

olence, turns to despotism, to tyranny, and becomes demoralized.'[52] The ever-increasing use of force, however, becomes counterproductive because 'by its violence, it losses the support that first gave rise to society'.[53] In the end, government concentrates its power and distorts its own constitution to fit its will, all the while shrinking ever further away from its foundation. In order to sustain itself, the hierarchy continually inflicts harsher penalties upon its citizens.

Proudhon believes this 'degraded' society, to invoke a Sartrean term, now becomes indifferent or hostile to established institutions, which curiously results in seclusion and acquiescence, not conflict and revolt. This mixture manages to avert immediate collapse, but it too cannot prevent the inevitable. As Proudhon explains, 'without the powerful who hold their heads up in a conspiracy of inequity of all the people, and behind a peaceful exterior, society is in a state of war; it is being consumed by its own flames'.[54]

Proudhon argues that the advent of Christianity is, with its dogma of original sin, better able to control the privileged from abusing their rights and thus prevent the imminent collapse of society. In effect, within the Christian system 'man, as the author of evil, cannot by himself have any rights; he is outside all rights, *ex-lex*'.[55] If the upper echelon of society has no rights, then surely the lower level has no compulsion to submit to the elite. Christianity solves this dilemma by requiring one's 'first act, the first movement of one's heart, to be an act of contrition, a plea for pardon, an d recourse to grace'.[56] In a twist, although no one is entitled to rights, should one possess them they presumably derive from the divine, since according to 'the spirit of the Christian society the inferior respects in the superior not a man but an officer of God'.[57]

Christianity plays a stabilizing role allowing individuals to reacquire compatible values and adhere to prevalent expectations. Piety takes centre stage as 'the value of man is no longer measured by his social and positive qualities, but by the rigor of his penance and the intensity of his expiation'.[58] Similarly, religious institutions and symbolic structures begin to take precedence over secular government with the church creating a system of monasteries and charities designed to encourage altruistic endeavours. Proudhon is not endorsing a Christian system of politics and values any more than he was with paganism. The key point is the ability of religion, whether polytheism or monotheism, to regulate conduct, mould desires, shape values, and ultimately unify and stabilize society.

Eventually, however, Proudhon sees Christianity suffering a similar fate as paganism. The same upsurge in inequality results, only now at the hands of the ecclesiastical class, from the establishment of a new hierarchy as the modern state grows increasingly arbitrary and despotic. Christianity's strength over paganism is its deep entrenchment; its dogmas are more firmly internalized than its predecessor. Even though Proudhon wants to show through his study of history that individual human freedom has finally become a possibility, he seems, much like Sartre, to allow for only a meagre exit from the oppression and violence of everyday existence. He acknowledges his problematic hope of liberty when he states that humankind:

[52] *Justice II*, p. 177.
[53] Ibid.
[54] *Justice III*, p. 533.
[55] *Justice I*, p. 394.
[56] *Justice I*, p. 396.
[57] *Justice I*, p. 405.
[58] *Justice I*, p. 399.

> experiences a physical movement; it goes from birth to death, which we call life. Human intelligence also has a movement; it goes from the instinct to reflection, from the intuition to the deduction, this movement is language. Human religious, political, industrial, and artistic life also has a movement, it is called monotheism. It is these reactions and decadences that are more or less accomplished over a long period of time in a continual coming and going.[59]

In the end, Proudhon must admit that

> it is inevitable that the principle of authority will always dominate. Justice is subordinated to the reason of the state. Yet, the state is not the result of a contract between its citizens and the obligations one has towards others, rather it emanates from the relation expressed by these two terms: authority that commands not in the name of necessity, but in the name of salvation, and the subject who is an object.[60]

So why does Proudhon believe humankind is on the precipice of human freedom from all the oppression and degradation that envelops them? In his opinion, history shows us that the incidences humans consider oppressive have certain unintended consequences – what Sartre labels counter finalities – that they are ignorant of at the time, but actually form a positive inclination towards human freedom.[61]

In the broadest sense possible, and comparing the desires and values of primitive man to those of his contemporaries, Proudhon asserts that conditions for human freedom have improved considerably. Interestingly, he compares primitive man's egoism, or his desire to satisfy all his wants and his craving for the esteem of others, with a noticeable lack of egoism in his own fellow contemporaries. This comparison, along with Proudhon's belief that humans have undergone essential character changes by shedding their primitive laziness, and by becoming hardworking, productive and perceptive individuals with a fundamental sense of values and impartiality, leads Proudhon to think humans are more capable of a social life less coercive and less violent than in the past. Oddly, the very institutions Proudhon found so repressive help bring about these changes. Inequality of wealth fostered an environment of industrious action. At the same time, government altered human morality by means of its use of force. Religion, especially Christianity, is paramount in the transition. If humans are to overcome their selfishness,

> and to arrive at a true notion of justice, and to understand the love of equality and its own dignity – the dignity of the other – they must tame their inflexible self (*moi*) through the discipline of terror. But because that discipline could only be produced in religious form, it was necessary to create in the place of a religion of pride, a religion of humility.[62]

The process of character alteration is not easily overcome. Consequently, the closer repressive organizations come to achieving it, the more superfluous, and even detrimental, they became.

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[59] *Justice III*, p. 512.

[60] *Justice I*, p. 222.

[61] Proudhon, *Philosophie du Progrès*, p. 28. Proudhon believes in the progress of mankind, and says, 'le thèorie du Progrès c'est le chemin de fer de la liberté'. Ibid., p. 19. See also, *Revolution 19th Century*, pp. 14–15; p. 41, as well as Proudhon, 'la Philospohie du Progrés', in Haubtmann, *la Philosophie Sociale de P.-J. Proudhon*, p. 137.

[62] *Justice I*, p. 396.

At some point in Proudhon's not so distant historical past, these oppressive institutions' contribution to the process ceased to exist. Even though they still stabilized society, they no longer contribute to its improvement. Thus, he sees the same conclusion for institutional development as he sees for character development: in the course of history, repressive institutions complete their task of educating conscience and reason. Once this is accomplished, the discipline they advocate becomes less essential and certainly not beneficial. Likewise, the danger of escaping it is also reduced, which allows Proudhon to view individual human freedom as a realistic goal.

While the context of Proudhon's argument is different from Sartre's, the outline proves quite similar. Proudhon sees the desire of organized society to preserve itself and its social unity, even though the fundamental relation between individuals is one of conflict and struggle. Ultimately, however, dogmas, mystification and authority provide the foundation for the unity of the group. Sartre puts forth analogous arguments as he discusses the transformation of the organized group into the bureaucratically dominated institution with a sovereign embodied in one person, a political reality also premised on struggle, conflict, dogmatic ideologies, mystification and above all violence.

4. Proudhon's Thoughts on Authority and his 'Solution to the Social Problem'

> 'it is not a crime to be poor, it is worse'.
>
> —Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

Proudhon and Authority

As with many anarchist thinkers of his day, much of Proudhon's attack on social institutions appears in economic terms, especially the concept of exploitation. However, as I have pointed out, Proudhon should not be seen merely in terms of economics; rather, his critical theory seeks, as Marx championed, to grab the situation at the 'root of the matter' and is directly aimed at what he feels to be the most effective implements of oppression: hierarchy and government.[1]

While Proudhon was an avid reader of philosophy, perhaps the one greatest influence on his political philosophy was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, but even that influence is rife with contradictions. On the one hand, Barbey D'Aurevilly described Proudhon as 'the Jean-Jacques Rousseau of the 19th century', and, on the other hand, Célestin Boglé viewed him as Rousseau's worst enemy.[2] In many respects, both are correct in their assessment. Even though Proudhon generally agrees with Rousseau, the conflict lies in Rousseau's alleged failure to go further in his critique. As such, Rousseau's 'error does not, cannot lie in this negation of society: it consists … in his failure to follow his argument to the end.'[3] Proudhon's self-appointed task is to complete Rousseau's work by accepting the latter's principles and carrying them to their limit. In words appropriate to either thinker, Proudhon explains that

> generally, the consideration that is attached to any man … is proportional to his faculties, to his reputation, to his wealth, and to his power. We are, therefore, made

[1] Proudhon defines authority as, 'Authority is to Government what the thought is to the word, the idea to the fact, the soul to the body. Authority is government in principle, as government is authority in practice. To abolish either, if it is a real abolition, is to abolish both'. *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 104.

[2] Barbey D'Aurevilly, *Les Oeuvres et les Hommes*, *Sensation d'art* (Paris: L. Frinzine et Cie, 1886), p. 4, accessed electronically at _http://archive.org_ on 19 September 2012. All translations are mine. Célestin Bouglé, *La Sociologie de Proudhon* (Paris: A. Collin, 1911), p. 238, accessed electronically at _http://babel.hathitrust.org_ on 12 September 2012. All translations are mine. For an extensive article discussing the relationship between Proudhon and Rousseau see, Aaron Noland, 'Proudhon and Rousseau', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28, no. 1 (January to March 1967): 35–54. In rejecting any notion of the social contract, Bakunin also has harsh words for Rousseau whom he says is 'the most malevolent writer of the past century, the sophist who inspired all the bourgeois revolutionaries – betokens a complete ignorance of both nature and history'. Mikhail Bakunin, 'Three Lectures to Swiss Members', in *The Basic Bakunin: Writings 1869–1871*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Cutler (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1992), p. 47 (lectures delivered in 1871).

[3] Proudhon, *Contradictions I*, p. 305.

> to always assume that the absolute is proportional to phenomena and that being is proportional to appearance. It is this respect, more or less justifiable, that humans create within society the acceptance of other people, privileges, preferential treatment (*passé-droits*), favors, and exception. In other words all the violations of justice.[4]

The difference between the two lies in Proudhon's more explicit reasons why deference, or the use of conventional standards of rank based on wealth, power and prestige to judge the worthiness of individuals, is wrong.

For Proudhon, respect is the highest moral value; it is a state of mind and it is a manner of comporting oneself; it means identifying with the other and accepting the decisions the other makes. Most importantly, it means empathizing with the other and their circumstances. It is an inclination to view people separate and apart from their abilities, their contributions and their failures. But, respect is also more than this. It requires one to positively affirm the other's dignity and energetically defend that dignity at whatever cost.

Proudhon established certain 'rules' based on his notion of respect both of which play out within the much broader context of deference. The first requires acceptance of others' aims and decisions based on their terms. The second not only imposes a duty of tolerance with regard to the actions of others but also imposes a positive duty to defend the other's liberty. Proudhon thinks that one who engages in deference has little respect for the choices of others. In other words, should one think of another as ordinary, unfortunate or weak, there would hardly be room for the full consideration of the latter's opinions. More likely, they will be thought of as unworthy of due consideration. On the other hand, Proudhon sees the same person granting wide latitude to the thoughts and opinions of those considered rich, powerful and strong. Society as a whole misconstrues the relationship of rank and the aims pursued by those of such rank. Obviously, Proudhon's concern with deference is closely linked to his analysis of prestige.

By its very nature, deference enjoins freedom of action. In a deferential society, the ordinary, unfortunate and weak will usually be kept from reaching their goals, while the rich and powerful or those of high rank will attain theirs. The question then becomes, in a deferential society how do individuals treat one another. Proudhon thinks that deference plays a pernicious role, inasmuch as those at the top of the hierarchy only respect others through,

> compliments, obeisances and all the affectations of a puerile and Christian civility. Is it not the height of good breeding for a great lord to know how to say 'hello'! in as many different ways as there are rungs on the hierarchic ladder? M. Guizot calls this the science of pretenses respect. For us, men of the Revolution, it is insolence.[5]

In Proudhon's view, those who give deference are just as disrespectful as those who receive it. The difference is, perhaps, more a matter of attitude: those at the top are arrogant, while those on the bottom are servile.

If Rousseau thinks deference is a result of social inequality, Proudhon calls for the eradication of the entire practice as immoral. This is a far more radical step than Rousseau is willing to advocate, since to abolish deference requires the creation of a strictly egalitarian society, a society Rousseau thought unattainable. This point caused Rousseau to accommodate the concept

[4] *Justice III*, p. 174.
[5] Justice II, *p. 383.*

within his philosophy rather than its elimination. The sticking point between the two seems to be Proudhon's belief that the cause of deference, hierarchy within society, is capable of eradication. In this vein, Proudhon castigates Rousseau for relegating the concept of deference to an ideal; an entirely unacceptable equivocation.

Yet, even this does not go far enough for Proudhon. The mere existence of inequality carries with it the implication of how much wealth, power and prestige each individual within a society should receive. What Proudhon is referring to is the concept of distributive justice, which he wants to abolish in order to eliminate inequality. Inasmuch as 'this is the type of social problem that creates, in the masses, a distributive authority according to the formula of Saint-Simon: from each according to his capacity, to each capacity according to his work. As I have said many times, this is not true. This theocracy tends to establish within religion cover for masking the revolution.'[6]

The attack on distributive justice introduces a rather radical element to Proudhon's philosophy. As if his attack on hierarchies is not enough – after all most societies are based on some form of hierarchical structure even so-called socialist or communist regimes – Proudhon goes even further by calling into question the very idea that justice can be allocated like some commodity – a little here, a little there. Most thinkers of his day, and even most today, do not question the principle of distributive justice; they merely argue over its application. Proudhon centres his attack on the idea that distributive justice substitutes one form of inequality for another. The argument, generally emanating from the liberals of his day, criticizes the existing hierarchy as unfair to the claims of talent. The application of the slogan 'to each according to his ability' rules out 'both the fact of equality and the right to it', and is ultimately an offence to personal dignity.[7] However one may disguise it, a hierarchy of talent is, nonetheless, still a hierarchy.

Proudhon also rejected another prevalent formula of the day advocated by leading French socialists such as Louis Blanc and Etienne Cabet: 'to each according to his need'. Proudhon sees this position as preserving inequality, since needs vary among individuals and rewards proportional to those needs produces unequal distribution of income. Furthermore, Proudhon worries about who the judge of need will be, and concludes that decisions concerning needs will be coercively enforced. In the end, distribution according to need only 'leads to despotism'.[8]

Moving from Proudhon's concern with justice and equality, two interrelated subjects emerge, namely, government and its concomitant system of laws. As I have pointed out, a central tenet of anarchists thought deals with the illegitimacy of government as too coercive and violent. Proudhon is an obvious advocate of this position, but his views are rather more complex. Again, his starting point is Rousseau who condemned government as an enchainer, but does not recommend its abolition. In fact, he seeks its legitimization. Rousseau's high regard for lawmaking, since, as he says, 'conventions and laws are therefore necessary to combine rights with duties and to bring justice back to its object', requires him to argue for the legal legitimization of government, not its abolition.[9]

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[6] *Justice I*, p. 453. For a general discussion of Proudhon's federalism see, Yves Simon, 'Notes sur le Fédéralisme Proudhonien', *Esprit* 55, no. 4 (avril 1937): 53–65, accessed electronically at _http://www.gallica.bnf.fr_, on March 2012. See also, *Revolution 19th Century*, pp. 110–14.

[7] *Justice II*, p.72

[8] *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 246; see also, *Justice II*, p. 72.

[9] Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right', in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and other later political writings*, p. 66 [Book II, chapter 6]. In Rousseau's 'Discourse on Political Economy', he states, 'it is the law alone that men owe justice and freedom. It is this salutary organ of the will of all that restores in [the realm of]

Rousseau's general argument rests on the premise that laws themselves have only general application in their regulation of external behaviour, and they are, therefore, self-limiting and a good form of ordering societal behaviour. In Rousseau's mind, the merits of this ordering far outweigh the evils of political coercion. Proudhon, on the other hand, criticizes Rousseau's position by pointing out,

> In founding right on human conventions, in making law the expression of wills, in other words, in submitting justice, and morality, to the decision of the greater number and the rule of the majority, he plunged deeper and deeper into the abyss from which he believed he was emerging, and absolved the society he accused.[10]

Contrary to Rousseau, Proudhon sees government taking on the machine-like qualities of a system that becomes ever more complicated, but never more efficient or moral. This occurs because of the always incomplete and insufficient legislative process of the constituent assemblies, and because of the multiplicity of functionaries inhabiting the myriad institutions comprising government.

Proudhon does not stop at autocratic forms of government, he also condemns representative ones as well. Not unlike Rousseau, Proudhon argues that representative forms of government can never fully realize the will of the constituents. Essentially, Proudhon agrees with Rousseau's judgement that the masses are free only when they vote.[11] Once the election is over, however, the representatives become the masters and the constituents can only obey. Proudhon then extends his criticism of representative government further when he argues that a maleficent attitude overcomes the representatives once they enter the legislative chamber, which generally isolates them from their supporters. Representative government merely becomes a puppet of the reigning caste as it pits the interests of the representative against those of the represented. As I have pointed out, he concludes that social reform never emanates from political reform; it is quite the opposite, political reform must always come from social reform. In this endeavour, Proudhon thinks democracy is merely an illusion springing forth in the disguise of aristocracy.

Once again, going a step beyond Rousseau, Proudhon is even sceptical that representatives respond adequately to the desires of constituents even during the election period. He explains his position by saying:

> It is completely different in democracy, which, according to the authors, exists fully only at the moment of elections and in the formation of legislative power. Once that moment has passed, democracy retreats; it withdraws into itself again and begins its anti-democratic work. It becomes AUTHORITY.[12]

Constitutional government, then, becomes an instrument of bourgeois domination, but the most salient argument Proudhon levels against representative government is that the masses are

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right the natural equality among men'. Rousseau, 'Discourse on Political Economy', in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and other Later Political Writings*, p. 10.

[10] Quoted in Woodcock, *Proudhon*, p. 40.

[11] *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 140. See also, Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right', in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and other political writings,* p.114 [Book III, chapter 15].

[12] Proudhon, 'Solution to the Social Problem', in *Proudhon Anthology*, pp. 277–8 (emphasis in original).

incapable of electing representatives responsive to their needs because participation in a hierarchical society skewers their political judgement. Sartre too believes the hierarchical organized group alters the individuals' political priorities – through what Proudhon calls mental blinders – to such an extent that they are incapable of judging the true aspirations and motives of their leaders. In fact, Proudhon thinks the bourgeoisie prefer constitutionalism over autocracy because it is better able to maintain a level of order so necessary to ameliorate the fear 'of the sound of agitation, demonstrations, the overturning of local trolleys, the digging-up of cobblestones, the intrigues of parliamentarians, the helter-skelter of ideas, the entanglement of laws, the confusion of power.'[13]

Constitutional government remains oppressive because it only treats the symptoms while leaving the underlying causes intact. This results in inequality and oppression as unavoidable facts. In some respects, Proudhon sees democracy as more dangerous than dictatorship, since the illegitimacy of his status restricts the repression of the dictator. As a result, the dictator's subjects obey out of fear, not out of a sense of acceptance. Democratic governments, on the other hand, enjoy wide recognition, which is why they are able to repress their subjects more aggressively than their autocratic counterparts.[14]

The second element of Proudhon's attack on government deals with laws. Contrary to Rousseau's esteem for law, Proudhon directs his basic criticism not only at law, but also at the le gislative process spawning laws. In essence, he thinks law places an external authority in the place of an individual's inalienable and immanent authority.[15] In Proudhon's thinking, law encompasses two distinct problems: the first deals with the method of enforcement imposed by the governing authority, which he believes violates a fundamental rule of respect preventing the execution of decisions. In its coercive enforcement, law becomes an arbitrary and authoritarian means of political control. An altogether different problem with laws arises here. Because they only apply to outward behaviour and not to inward thought, laws ignore the decisions and goals of the individual. Proudhon's first rule of respect, on the other hand, requires the acceptance of the internal thought processes that precede action. Naturally, Proudhon considers the decisions to act and the purpose directing action a concern law is simply unable to accommodate.

Not content with just a criticism of the external nature of laws, Proudhon also denounces the external nature of laws promulgated by societal institutions. Where the rule of law dominates, society comes to believe that a crime occurs only if it is 'defined' as such by a specific law. Again, if law is inadequate to the task, then society will believe no crime has been committed, which, in effect, means legal claims equate to virtue, and the so-called lawful person is by default a just person. Consequently, individuals are judged by how well they conform to the law, rather than

[13] *Justice III*, p. 145 In the *Critique,* Sartre has a discussion concerning representative government and those chosen to represent the people. In bourgeois democracies, Sartre sees elections as passive, serial events. Every one casting a ballot makes a decision as Other and through Others based not on a united praxis but inertly by opinion. This means the elected officials only represent the gathering as long as they have not met. As soon as the elected body meets and organizes itself into a hierarchy, their real praxis only retains a formal aspect of the original election as an infinite alterity of isolations. Even though the representatives may believe they act in response to desires of the gathering, since they are now *organized* Sartre thinks this is impossible. In other words, the assembly is merely a false totalized unity. *CDR I*, pp. 351–2. A little later, Sartre adds that the relation of elector to elected is *a priori* not a reciprocal relation. Ibid., p. 471.

[14] Proudhon, 'Solution to the Social Problem', in *Proudhon Anthology*, pp. 272–5.

[15] *Revolution 19th Century*, pp. 138–9.

as to the degree to which they adhere to inwardly confirmed moral principles.[16] It should be clear that while Proudhon objects to the law's externality, he does not specifically object to the general nature of laws in their application. This distinction is, however, in accordance with his strongly held belief in rule-keeping morality, since the true judge of any person's actions is one's own conscience.[17]

Proudhon's first two elements, objection to both government and the law, must be combined with a third element to complete the picture of his anarchism, namely the belief that political rule is unnecessary. Here again, this is not a simple notion of abolishing government *tout court*, or even doing away with government altogether. Unlike certain anarchists who rather dogmatically cling to the notion that it is needless, Proudhon's theory of the development of history shows the usefulness of government in building character, combating laziness and maintaining order. In short, it is the need to replace government with something else, something that Proudhon sees as less authoritarian and considerably less oppressive.

The question comes down to whether government is indispensable for the maintenance of order, and in Proudhon's view, it is not. Law and order do not necessarily belong together. As Proudhon sees it, 'ORDER is a genus, GOVERNMENT is the species'.[18] Yet, society is hard-pressed to divorce itself from order because once a society exists, some must obey while others give orders:

> because, individual faculties being unequal, interests opposite, passions antagonistic, the advantage of one opposed to the general advantage, some authority is needed which shall assign the boundaries of rights and duties, some arbiter who will cut short conflicts, some public force which will put into execution the judgments of the sovereign.[19]

It is government in its unmodified nature that presents itself as the absolute necessary condition of order. In Proudhon's view, governments always aspire towards absolutism, since government is the cause and order its effect. Consequently, once the constitution and laws proclaim the ephemeral platitudes of liberty, equality, and progress, an immediate disregard of these ideals arises by the very institutions designed to safeguard them. The finger of blame points directly to the centralization of government, which renders the people subject to bureaucratic control at the hand of functionaries, themselves centralized in their power. This very critique reappears in Sartre's analysis as he moves through group formations where the harsh reality of centralization is the institutionalization of government.

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[16] Proudhon, *De la capacité politique des classes ouvières*, p. 227.

[17] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Les confessions d'un révolutionnaire pour servir à l'histoire de la Révolution de Février* (Paris: Bureau du journal la voix du peuple, 1849), p. 236 (first published in 1849), accessed electronically at: The Making of the Modern World Web : _http://find.galegroup.com.libproxy.newschool.edu/mome/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=MOME&userGroupName=new39617&ta on 3 June 2011. All translations are mine.

[18] *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 129 (emphasis in original).

[19] Ibid., p. 128.

Proudhon's Proposed Solution

In many ways, the solutions Proudhon proposes are more important than the criticisms he offers of existing institutions. After all, his claim that institutions can and should be abolished rests on the premise that he can offer superior substitutes. Primary to Proudhon's wish to find substitutes is his desire to manage conflict, a job now undertaken by government and law. At the same time, these substitutes must allow individuals to follow the rules of respect, so fundamental to Proudhon's thinking. I want to emphasize that even though he finds government and laws lacking, he does not advocate an existence devoid of rules. Proudhon feared that a society without hierarchy and government would merely devolve into a Hobbesian state of nature inevitably pushing humankind towards turmoil. A world without society's two great plagues – government and law – would not be respectful because an order-maintaining function would be absent.

Hobbes' state of nature is, for Proudhon, an acceptable depiction of the human condition, but the remedy provided by Hobbes is not. Where Hobbes sees an absolute Leviathan ruling over previously uncontrollable human passions and meting out punishment to those who do not conform to the order of the sovereign, Proudhon believes the underlying foundation for the cause of the conflict is erroneous. Aggressive behaviour, even in the state of nature, does not cause violence and conflict; rather, Proudhon thinks it arises out of need, the result of competition for limited goods. *Scarcity* is the real underlying foundation.[20] Of course, scarcity is the entire underlying premise of the *Critique*, which then gives rise to need. Proudhon reasons that legal deterrence may be the only way to allay the conflict brought on by a desire to dominate, but he also thinks antagonisms spring primarily from the pursuit of interests and ideals. Thus, in principle at least, a more respectful course is possible.

Much is written concerning Proudhon's embrace of laissez-faire economics whose allure lies in the free market system unencumbered by government and its intrusive regulation. This belief, however, only encompasses a partial reality. Proudhon does see the free market as intriguing, but he is also of the opinion that price mechanisms are just as oppressive as law and government because 'more than one honest searcher has been deceived …' by the wiles of the economists.[21] He thinks price mechanisms vacillate greatly and are oftentim es unpredictable; they take on the appearance of a lottery, the outcome of which is never certain. The vagueness of the markets concerns Proudhon most, since it has the potential to provide windfalls to those of power and means while depriving those at the lower echelon a steady existence.

If everyone enjoys an equal opportunity from price mechanisms, then the system may meet Proudhon's goal as an instrument to organize society. The law of supply and demand is, in Proudhon's view, a 'deceitful law … suitable only for assuring the victory of the strong over the weak, of those who own property over those who own nothing'.[22] In any free market system, a great potentiality exists for a few to dominate the system who can then control not only the supply of goods, but also the price offered for those goods. This artificial economic manipulation by a few was a general topic of interest, especially in the nineteenth century with regard to monopolist practices, but it is a real fear that Proudhon tries to come to terms with if the market is to fulfil its promise to protect everyone's freedom to pursue their aims.

[20] Ibid., pp. 224–5. See also, Proudhon, *La guerre et la Paix*, p, 185.
[21] *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 226.
[22] Proudhon, *De la capacié politique des classes ouvières*, p. 141.

Since markets are a human construct, Proudhon thinks they cannot help but impose restraints that will inevitably result in coercion of one by another. The free market is 'unable to solve its celebrated problem of the harmony of interests, [it is forced] to impose laws, if only provisional ones, and its abdication before this new authority is incompatible with the practice of liberty'.[23] As a result, the free market must resort to political coercion to assure the well running of the system. This does not mean Proudhon rejects the entire system of laissez-faire. As will become clear, competition plays a key role in his thought, but it is a competition unlike that envisioned by the political economists of the time.

If the market and its system of pricing are nefarious oppressors, competition is 'the spice of trade, the salt of work. To suppress competition is to suppress liberty itself; it is to begin the restoration of the old regime from below, by putting work back under the system of favoritism and abuse from which '89 has emancipated it'.[24] Proudhon's criticism is not, however, the normal socialist critique of capitalist free enterprise that wants, as Ritter says, to 'drown competitive relations in a sea of cooperation'.[25] Furthermore, Proudhon separates himself from people like Hobbes who are fearful of the conflict competition brings about. Not afraid of the rivalries inherent in competition, Proudhon seeks to refine and ultimately perfect the creative possibilities locked within the competitive nature of human actions. He sees competition, held captive to the free market and thus lacking a higher regulative principle, as perverted. It only serves the purpose of the ruling hierarchy who impose their will by exploiting the prices of goods and services at the expense of hapless victims. Proudhon does not think this necessarily has to be the case. In a more respectful society, competition may prove to be the guarantee of human freedom Proudhon so eagerly seeks.

It is fair to say, at the core of Proudhon's respectful society resides the bargaining process. In an ideal world, individuals freely negotiating with each other for all the goods and services they require. Of course, this negotiating process proceeds without the interference of any mediator; a process that maintains individual freedom to do as one pleases. By mediator, Proudhon thinks the government generally acts in this capacity so that individuals never have direct contact with each other to work out their differences.

The key for Proudhon is his belief that a bargainer should be free from external restraints upon his actions, which allows the process to work out the terms of an agreement with others. As such, the bargaining relationship 'imposes no obligation on the parties but that which results from their personal promise; … it is subject to no external authority … . When I bargain for some good with one or more of my fellow citizens, it is clear that then it is my will alone that is my law'.[26] The bargaining process requires each side to make concessions attractive to the other side in order to reach an agreement. This, in turn, necessitates each party identifying with the other's desires and motivations, which means the bargaining process is a *reciprocal* acceptance of purposes. While Proudhon is ostensibly concerned with the bargaining process, just as Sartre

[23] *Justice I*, p. 305

[24] *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 50; see also, Proudhon, *Contradictions, I*, pp. 162–204, where Proudhon has an extensive discussion of competition and declares in a word, it is 'liberty'. He also distinguishes what he thinks competition is with egoism, which he maintains is 'pernicious, immoral, unsocial, a jealous competition which hates and which kills'. Ibid., p. 167.

[25] Ritter, *Proudhon*, p. 123.

[26] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Mélanges: articles de journaux 1848–1852 tome II* (Paris: Librarie Internationale, 1868), p. 2. All translations are mine.

advocates these reciprocal relations apply to all human relations, since Proudhon's concept of respect is universal in its application in a mutualist society.

While the abstract notion of bargaining seems to satisfy Proudhon's desire for the highest value, obvious problems arise. In any society, the bargaining relationship runs the risk of breaking down and degenerating into struggles for supremacy. One may emerge as much richer, much stronger or much more able to dictate terms rather than make concessions. The prospect of being crushed by a rival is very real for Proudhon, an issue he seeks to ameliorate with his embrace of mutualist society.

Proudhon's response to the inequality of the bargaining process is an attempt to level the playing field by equalizing power. In a rhetorical response to the question of what is a social force, Proudhon answers that

> political power results from the relation of many forces. These forces must balance themselves, one by the other, in such a manner to form regular and harmonic force. Justice declares that the balance of these forces conforms to right demanded by law, and is obligatory for all conscience.[27]

In essence, Proudhon's goal is to distribute these 'collective forces' more evenly among competing parties so that each of them is reciprocally dependent on the other. Unfortunately, Proudhon neglects to indicate what exactly composes those heterogeneous forces, but the concept arises in the context of associations, and, I think, it is susceptible to multiple and amorphous meanings.

At one point, Proudhon refers to collective forces in terms of economies of scale, that is, if a hundred workers unite or combine their forces, then they may produce a hundred times or even a thousand times more than they would have individually. He goes on to say, 'collective force, in its bare metaphysical aspect, is another principle which is not less a producer of wealth. Moreover, its application is found in every case in which individual effort, no matter how often repeated, would be ineffective'.[28] This reiterates his understanding of the necessity for collective action as the only true means to effect social and political change.

Much like Sartre argues, politics is not possible at the indi vidual level alone; it is only viable within a group. Proudhon also emphasizes that no law commands the application of these collective forces. While others have speculated as to the nature of heterogeneous forces, Allen Ritter describes them as the capacity to control the supply of many goods, which would eventually lead to uneven bargaining power. For Proudhon, every individual must control the supply of goods others want and, accordingly, not depend solely on any other to supply one's own wants. This principle, premised on *reciprocal* relations between individual producers, consist in sellers and buyers guaranteeing each other their products at what he calls 'cost price'.[29] Regardless of the context, Proudhon advocates a system of association of shared responsibility where everyone is responsible for everyone; it is a binding union, perhaps not pledged in the sense Sartre elaborates, but a union of individuals bound together for a common purpose.

While Proudhon does not lay out a complete picture of the structure of this ideal mutualist society, he does say it consists of numerous bargaining units with some offering the same goods,

[27] *Justice II*, p. 262.
[28] *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 82.
[29] *Revolution 19th Century*, p. 91.

but none offering too many goods. Some commentators think Proudhon favoured only small groups.[30] This is, however, a misconception of the structure of mutualist societies based on the principles of federalism. For Proudhon, federalism is the disaggregation of large-scale sociopolitical structures, and not the aggregation of miniscule ones. While a group size reduction may be necessary to help stabilize bargaining power, Proudhon nevertheless is quite willing to encourage large group formation if they increase the power of the weaker competitors over the goods they supply. The fear is that groups may become too large and, thus, unilaterally control the supply of goods. He envisions the heterogeneous forces playing out within the context of the bargaining process, which will strengthen the worker's position in order to alleviate exploitation. By calling attention to their collective viability, Proudhon hopes to increase worker's power and make them less dependent on capitalist owners.[31] As long as this overriding concern proves unfounded, he is quite disposed to and recognizes the inevitability of large groups.

Not only did Proudhon fear hierarchical structures; he is also concerned with their opposite. Too much of the same thing, where society's units are too autonomous, is just as unstable as the hierarchy Proudhon abhorred. He then says that the juridical organism, so indispensable to the functioning of conscience, exists neither in the individual nor in the multitude: 'The juridical sentiment cannot function in the absence of a brain, or in the absence of a generating device. Conscience dwells in sleep, and man returns to the savage only to form imperfect societies who live like a pack of dogs in a commune'.[32] Proudhon faces this challenge by advocating a policy of social diversity. The greatest possible variety of individuals and groups as well as combinations derived therefrom must be encouraged. Not only are independent centres required, but a vast number of specialties are necessary. Such social diversity tends to deter stalemates in the bargaining process by increasing the incentive towards compromise of equally powerful competitors.

At this point, it is fair to consider some concerns surrounding his mutualist concept. Proudhon himself acknowledges that humans often lack integrity in the bargaining process. Fraud and conspiracy are real concerns for him, so much so he ultimately admits that no social arrangement by itself can maintain peace. Richard Vernon points out, in his concern for two linked but opposite concepts – *maintien* and *corruption* – Proudhon is indebted to Montesquieu.[33]

On the one hand, corruption is the loss of the group's founding principle. In his analysis, no regime remains faithful to its founding principles: 'Since arbitrariness enters necessarily into politics, corruption soon becomes the soul of power, and society is led without rest or reprieve along the path of incessant revolution.'[34] The type of corruption Proudhon fears most is when 'faith has given way to indifference and civic spirit to corruption'.[35] The organ of corruption

[30] See for example, Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), p. 28, and Franz Neumann, 'On the Theory of the Federal State', in *The Democratic and Authoritarian State* ed. Herbert Marcuse (New York: Free Press, 1957), p. 161. But see, *Revolution 19th Century*, pp. 219–21, where Proudhon recognizes the need for large groups.

[31] See, P.-J. Proudhon, *The Principle of Federation*, trans. Richard Vernon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 34–5 (first published in 1863), hereinafter referred to as "'*Principle of Federation*', where Proudhon discusses the growth of the of libertarian system.

[32] Justice IV, *p. 263.*

[33] Richard Vernon, 'Freedom and Corruption: Proudhon's Federal Principle', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 4 (December 1981): 781.

[34] *Principle of Federation*, p. 31.

[35] Ibid., p. 32.

is passivity and dependence both of which are the result of the overly centralized state. With its bureaucratic structure supplementing and implementing the power of the executive, these functionaries are a direct threat to a self-governing society.[36] Sartre also deals with this threat as he describes an overly centralized political authority empowered though the impotence of the masses.

When Proudhon talks about corruption's opposite, *maintien*, he means the maintenance not of the established order, but of the principles that founded the order in the first place. It is a renewal of a forgotten past; a past where self-government is indigenous, but where alien forms of government – by which he means Roman – have been implemented. While Proudhon desires to reinvigorate society, he eventually bows to the inevitable and draws the conclusion that mutualist society, not unlike any other society, 'cannot depend on the calculations and propriety of egoism'.[37] Does this mean Proudhon embraces the orthodox means of assuring order – government and its laws as well as social hierarchy?

Proudhon denies there is a need for the old orthodoxy, but he does recognize a defect in the mutualist apparatus. He desires to establish a system guaranteeing both the efficacy of the merits of disputes as well as the quid pro quo of the bargaining process; each contributes to his notion of a respectful society. Proudhon finds his solution in a standard of merit designed to regulate competitor's claims of right, just as mutualist society regulates their claim of power. Since people create societies in order to spread liberty, voluntary transactions, and engage in reciprocal activity, justice must be, therefore, 'commutative by its nature and in its form'.[38] Commutative justice imposes the duty of equivalent exchange on both parties; that is, every competitor is obligated to give to all others, goods as equally valuable as those he receives.

Proudhon still thinks he has failed to achieve the type of society he so desires, since his ideal allows for only absolute respect. In other words, his belief that the principle of authority is incompatible with his concept of respect needs rethinking. In the end, Proudhon admits that absolute respect is not achievable: 'Authority necessarily presuppos es a liberty which recognizes or denies it; in turn liberty, in its political sense, likewise presupposes an authority which confronts it, repressing or tolerating it.'[39] One is not capable of suppression without making the other nonsensical: authority is merely an empty word if liberty is not there to examine it. Likewise, liberty without the counterweight of authority is meaningless. The issue becomes not how a perfect order and respect comes about, but how to arrange society to maximize the effect of each. As Proudhon says, all political systems 'fall within the scope of one formula, *the balancing of authority by liberty*, and vice versa', thus recognizing the dialectical nature of the relation between the two.[40] The result of his re-evaluation recognizes the need for government, but a government that minimizes its inherent disrespectful qualities through the doctrine of federalism.

Proudhon divides these antithetical principles into what he calls a *regime of authority* and a *regime of liberty,* which he further delineates into four basic types of government, two for each of the regimes. In the regime of authority, he places government of all by one – monarchy – and government of all by all – communism. He assigns government of all by each – democracy – and government of each by each – anarchy – to the regime of liberty. He then discusses each in turn,

[36] Ibid., pp. 14–16.
[37] Justice IV, *p. 263.*
[38] *Justice I*, p. 304.
[39] *Principle of Federation*, p. 6.
[40] Ibid., p. 7 (emphasis in original).

but his elucidation on the more traditional categories of government is of little concern at the present. Rather, Proudhon spends some time on anarchy, the form of government he naturally favours, and by which he means 'that political functions have been reduced to industrial functions, and that social order arises from nothing but transactions and exchanges. Each may then say that he is the absolute ruler of himself, the polar opposite of monarchial absolutism.'[41]

Proudhon sees the more traditional forms of government as unable to sustain themselves without some compromise occurring between the forces of liberty and those of authority. The compromise, in Proudhon's opinion, results in a system of separation of powers or the division of sovereignty. In the end, however, no matter what the form of government, neither monarchy, democracy, communism, nor anarchy, will realize itself in the purity of their concepts without resort to mutual borrowings. Accordingly, in politics fidelity lands in the realm of the ideal, while reality calls for compromises of all kinds. Government becomes a 'hybrid, equivocal thing, a promiscuity of rule which strict logic condemns and innocence shrinks from'.[42] Invariably, this leads to arbitrariness where corruption soon becomes the soul of power. As Proudhon says, this is not the result of evil will, or weakness of nature, nor does it arise from a divine curse, or from the whim of fortune; things are just the way they are.

Unlike the more orthodox version of federalism and its concomitant to a state that divides power through a constitutional form of government as a way to achieve political unity, Proudhon's version of federalism is an arrangement designed to protect mutualist social practices, with the least amount of governmental authority. He constructs his federalism with the subordination of the largest units to the smaller ones by granting the most powers to the smallest units, thus allowing the largest units minimal powers. The result finds the normal hierarchy inverted where power erupts from the bottom and moves towards the top. While the central government retains limited powers over the bargaining process, it also assumes an unorthodox role as the creative initiator as well as neutral arbitrator and enforcer. In fact, the only thing Proudhon does not want the central government to become is a routine administrator. Rather,

> Whether it commands, acts, or supervises, the state is the initiator and ultimate director of change; if from time to time it involves itself in tasks directly, it does so by way demonstration, to make a start and to set an example. Once a beginning has been made, the machinery established, the state withdraws, leaving the execution of the new task to local authorities and citizens.[43]

Some might object that this notion of federalism leaves the central authority too enfeebled actually to regulate conflict, but one should remember that Proudhon's federalism operates within a mutualist society predisposed to peacefully resolving disputes. He recognizes that his type of federalism would be ineffective in society, as it then exists. I should point out, at this stage of his life, Proudhon was more interested in putting humanity on the proper road and not necessarily providing the final word for truth. As such, Proudhon's federalism remains flexible, there is nothing to prevent additional centralization should the need arise in the future.

There are several key points in the discussion of Proudhon's work and its relation to Sartre that need emphasis, especially as we approach a discussion of the *Critique*. Importantly, Proudhon sees sovereignty emanating from the people through what he calls 'natural groups', and

[41] Ibid., p. 11.
[42] Ibid., p. 31.
[43] Ibid., pp. 45, 61.

not singularized individuals. These natural groups form the basis of collective activity in Proudhon's analysis as they most certainly do in Sartre's. Secondly, 'human nature' for Proudhon is decidedly sociological with a heavy influence of psychology. As such, he rejects the notion of egoism in favour of human relations that are bound-up with one another in a symbiotic manner. Human behaviour is thus completely determined by the other, a point Sartre analyses at length. Thirdly, Proudhon's historical perspective appears eerily similar to Sartre's. Lacking in the detail Sartre provides, Proudhon establishes a credible account of how individuals come together to ameliorate the effects of conflict of the state of nature. And, just like Sartre, Proudhon bases his analysis on two elements – scarcity and human struggle – both of which lead to oppression as hierarchical and established institutions become dogmatic and fixed. With regard to Proudhon's abhorrence of authority, again, we shall see that Sartre espouses a dislike for authority quite similar to Proudhon's, and this will certainly be true with regard to the origin of authority. I want to make a special note of Proudhon's critique of law, which as we shall see some have argued is completely lacking in Sartre's work. This, I think, is a misplaced conception that I hope to shed light on as we move the discussion to the *Critique* and specifically to the pledge. Lastly, Proudhon's solution to what he terms the social problem relies upon a concept of reciprocity in all human relations. We shall find Sartre imbued with a similar concept of reciprocal relations as he moves from the collective to the group.

If Proudhon was far more interested in the theoretical and intellectual aspects of revolution and social change, his friend and compatriot-at-arms Mikhail Bakunin was altogether different. Yet, the two complemented each other in many respects: the oftentimes ethereal Proudhon could see his words come to life in the more action oriented Bakunin, while Bakunin relied heavily on Proudhon's erudition to support his desire for revolution. I want to turn now to the work of Bakunin, not so much as an end in itself, but as a continuation of Proudhon's thoughts, since in many respects that is exactly what the larger-than-life Russian anarchist represents.

5. Mikhail Bakunin and Revolutionary Anarchism

> 'I believe in the absurd; I believe in it, precisely and mainly, because it is absurd'.
>
> —Mikhail Bakunin, *God and state*

The Development of Bakunin's Political Philosophy

If Proudhon grew up a peasant, Bakunin enjoyed the genteel upbringing of the son of a Russian aristocrat; if Proudhon eschewed the violence of strikes and revolutions, Bakunin seemed to revel in them; if Proudhon based his political philosophy on moral grounds, Bakunin cared less for abstract thought and more for action; and if Proudhon tended to intellectual introspection, the flamboyant Bakunin loved nothing other than intrigue and secret societies. Yet, the two were by most accounts close friends, and it was Bakunin who felt Proudhon to be the master of them all.

As with Proudhon, I am not interested in a strictly biographical account of Bakunin's life, however colourful it was.[1] Rather, the aspects of his political philosophy as they shed light on anarchism generally and how they compare with Sartre's own political philosophy is of greater importance. Inescapably, however, Bakunin was an unusual character whose life intersected his philosophy. Physically, Bakunin was a giant of a man, everything about him was, as his friend Richard Wagner explained, colossal and full of a primitive exuberance and strength. He smoked constantly, drank copious amounts of tea as well as brandy, and lived financially off his compatriots. As another friend, Alexander Herzen, described:

> his activity, his laziness, his appetite, his titanic stature and the everlasting perspiration he was in, everything about him, in fact, was on a superhuman scale. … At fifty he was exactly the same vagrant student, the same harmless *bohémian* from the *rue de Bourgogne* with no thought of the morrow, careless of money, flinging it away when he had it, borrowing it indiscriminately, right and left, when he had not. … This manner of life did not worry him; he was born to be the great vagrant, the great outcast.[2]

[1] E. H. Carr is generally credited with the classic study of Bakunin's life, yet in recent times others have expanded on Carr's work, not necessarily in a harmonious fashion. E. H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961). See also, Paul McLaughlin, *Mikhail Bakunin: The Philosophical Basis of his Anarchism* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2002); Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosopher of Freedom* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993); Aileen Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). Kelly provides a psychoanalytic analysis of Bakunin and his work.

[2] Quoted in Eugenii Lampert, *Studies in Rebellion* (London: Routledge and Kegen Paul, 1957), p. 112.

A consequence of his aristocratic childhood was, as Brian Morris notes, a cosmopolitan outlook completely devoid of class consciousness despite his privileged status.

He enjoyed all types of people and mixed freely with the well born as well as the not so well off. Probably due to his eccentric nature, Bakunin exhibited countless contradictions: he was highly intelligent, but at the same time gullible; he espoused revolt and individual liberty, but always exhibited a tendency towards authoritarianism such that he was a despot by nature; and, while he descended from Russian royal ancestry, he was one of the most eloquent representative of the peasants. Other contradictions abound, but I think the sense is apparent.

Much like Proudhon, Bakunin was not a systematic thinker. Although fluent in seven languages and formally educated in German Idealist philosophy, Bakunin's writings are often scattered and at times difficult to understand. Yet, in some respects his influence eclipsed Proudhon's, especially in the years after the latter's death and certainly through the struggles with Marx over the First International.

In approaching Bakunin's political anarchism, I shall first present an overall view of his thought as it develops first from the sociopolitical, then to revolutionary nationalism, and finally to revolutionary anarchism. I shall then follow this discussion with a more detailed analysis of several of Bakunin's essential political themes that will prove to be very useful when discussing Sartre's own anarchism.

Bakunin's Early Philosophical Positions

After deciding to abandon an academic career to devote his considerable energies to social causes, in the spring of 1842 Bakunin moved to Dresden to join Arnold Ruge. That Fall Bakunin published one of his first noteworthy articles in Ruge's Dresden based *Deutsche Jahrbucher* titled 'Reaction in Germany: From the Notebooks of a Frenchman'. The article contains Hegelian overtones, but generally argues against reactionaries who established their positions based on Comte's positivist philosophy. Here, the realization of freedom lies at the head of the agenda of history. While few claim to be the enemies of liberty, there are those – namely the reactionaries – who in their hearts simply do not believe in it. These reactionaries find comfort in the status quo and in compromise, while Bakunin sees in Hegel's philosophy an emphasis on the negative expressing itself in the spirit of revolution. He proclaims that the 'air is sultry and pregnant with lightning', for in every country the poor are assuming a threatening attitude. His conclusion, still quite famous among anarchists today, leads Bakunin to say:

> Let us therefore trust the eternal spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternal source of all life. *The passion for destruction is a creative passion.*[3]

The article marks Bakunin's passage from philosophical to sociopolitical movements, which ushered in both a call to social revolution and an assertion of faith in the revolutionary ability of the lowest classes in society, namely the poor.

[3] Dolgoff, 'The Reaction in Germany', p. 57 (emphasis in original).

Bakunin's Sociopolitical Thought

While in Dresden, Bakunin formed friendships with several socialist thinkers including Georg Herwegh and Adolf Reichel. However, it was his meeting with Wilhelm Weitling, whom Bakunin later described as Germany's 'first practical … socialist, or, rather communist', while on a short journey to Zurich in 1843 that proved to be an important stimulus to the formation of his subsequent anarchism.[4] Bakunin read Weitling's book, *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit* (1842), and came away quite impressed, especially with the ideas concerning the perfect society having no government only an administration, no laws only obligations and no punishments only the means of correction.[5] Some suggest Bakunin adhered to this creed for the rest of his life. Others rightly pointed to his disagreement with Weitling over the latter's adoption of communism, which Bakunin, much like Proudhon, felt to be equivalent merely to a herd mentality.[6]

Ordered to leave Switzerland and return to Russia, Bakunin instead went in the opposite direction and d eparted for Belgium, but eventually found his way to Paris in 1844 – then the centre of revolutionary activity. There he became acquainted with such luminaries as George Sand, Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux, and Étienne Cabet, but it was his meeting with two other people in Paris – Marx and Proudhon – that played key role in his life.

Bakunin's relationship with Proudhon was amicable, and they often met for discussions concerning social politics. Since Proudhon read no German and because Hegel had yet to be translated into French, it is thought that Bakunin initiated Proudhon into the philosophical world of Hegel's writings. Undoubtedly, however, Proudhon greatly influenced Bakunin's thinking. As Eugène Pyziur frames it, Proudhon's ideas transformed Bakunin's instinctive rebellionism into a formulated, doctrinaire, anarchist creed. Proudhon provided all the intellectual theorems and concepts so necessary to Bakunin's later duel with Marx.[7]

Bakunin's Revolutionary Nationalism

After the Paris uprising of 1848, Bakunin once again travelled to Dresden, but this time the authorities arrested and imprisoned him for his revolutionary activities. Eventually, sent back to Russia where he had been condemned in absentia for treason, he was imprisoned in St. Petersburg's notorious fortress of Peter and Paul. Tsar Nicholas I offered him an opportunity to make a full 'confession'. The result was Bakunin's famous or, depending on one's point of view, infamous 'Confession to the Tsar' (1851).

Critics seized upon it as a document of hypocrisy, since Bakunin openly pleads for the Tsar's forgiveness as a 'repentant sinner'. Notably, the Tsar remained unmoved by the document, and Bakunin languished in prison for several more years until sent into internal exile after Nicolas I died. I suggest the confession should be read as an attempt to ameliorate otherwise inhuman conditions, a path anyone faced with a similar situation would have a hard time ignoring. More importantly, the letter is quite ambiguous. It tells the story of Bakunin's revolutionary activity,

[4] Michel Bakunin, trans. and ed. by Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 141.

[5] Carr, *Bakunin*, p. 127.

[6] See, Morris, *Bakunin*, p. 11, as well as Max Nettlau, 'Mikhail Bakunin: A Biographical Sketch', in *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism,* ed. G. P. Maximoff (New York: The Free Press, 1953), p. 35. Nettlau believes Bakunin liked Weitling, but was never captivated by the latter's communism.

[7] Pyziur, *The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael Bakunin*, p. 32. See also, Daniel Guèrin, 'From Proudhon to Bakunin', *Our Generation* 17, no. 2 (1986): 23–4.

and his plans to foment revolution throughout the Slavic world including Russia. As Carr expresses it, the confession illustrates Bakunin's desire for Slavic liberation wherever found; as such, it is an oracle of 'flaming Slav patriotism'.[8] Bakunin says he planned a revolution that was both 'terrible and unprecedented, although directed more against things than against people'.[9] He does not stop there. Bakunin asserts his desire to transform society into a revolutionary camp where:

> All clubs, newspapers, and all manifestations of an anarchy of mere talk were to be abolished, all submitted to one dictatorial power; the young people and all able-bodied men divided into categories according to their character, ability, and inclination were to be sent throughout the country to provide a provisional revolutionary and military organization.[10]

While the Confession is largely a document aimed at Slavic freedom and independence, its message applies to all countries, and forms of government as seen in his writings during the Franco-Prussian War; it is a call to revolution despite its genuflecting tone.

Bakunin escaped the small town where he served his internal exile and eventually landed in England in 1861, but was soon on the move once more, this time to Italy where he lived from 1864 to 1867. During this stay, his revolutionary nationalism gave way to his revolutionary anarchism. His 'Revolutionary Catechism' (1866) generally outlines the basic tenets of his doctrine, as it delves into the more practical side of the revolution, and not with any grand scheme for a perfect anarchist society.[11]

Bakunin's Revolutionary Anarchism

The Catechism is a lengthy document, but several provisions are of immediate importance. First, Bakunin acknowledges that 'man is truly free only among equally free men; the slavery of even one human being violates humanity and negates the freedom of all'.[12] Furthermore, the freedom of each individual is realizable only through the equality of everyone. Echoing Proudhon, Bakunin goes on to state that 'the realization of freedom through equality, in principle and in fact, is *justice*'.[13] While justice is a virtue for Bakunin, he also inverts what traditional state

[8] Carr, *Bakunin*, p. 223. In 1848, Bakunin wrote 'The Appeal to the Slavs', which sees the bourgeoisie as a specific counter-revolutionary force, and places the future hope of the revolution squarely in the hands of the working class. Interestingly, he thinks the Russian peasants will ultimately be the decisive force in the revolution. See, Dolgoff, 'The Appeal to the Slavs', p. 61.

[9] Dolgoff, 'Confession to Tsar Nicholas I', p. 69.

[10] Ibid., pp. 69–70.

[11] This text should not be confused with the rather controversial pamphlet also commonly but mistakenly called 'Revolutionary Catechism' written in 1869 while Bakunin was in Geneva. The actual title to this pamphlet is something like 'Rules by which the Revolutionary ought to abide'. See Guerin, *No Gods, No Masters*, p.153. While in Geneva, Bakunin met a young Russian *émigré* named Sergi Nechaev. It seems his young nihilistic compatriot captivated Bakunin, and together they made plans to foment a world revolution through a group they formed called the World Revolutionary Alliance with Nechaev designated as Agent Number 271 of the Russian section. The group was, however, merely a figment of their imaginations. But, in 1869 they authored a series of seven pamphlets, the most famous of which is the commonly referred to Revolutionary Catechism, which famously declares that 'the ends justify the means'.

[12] Dolgoff, 'Revolutionary Catechism', p. 76.

[13] Ibid. (emphasis in original).

apparatuses require: a hierarchical social and political structure. Bakunin instead advocates an economic and social structure that 'must be recognized to issue *from the base to the summit – from the circumference to the center – according to the principles of free association and federation'*.[14] The influence of Proudhon is unmistakable. From these abstract notions, Bakunin moves to discuss the state, which he thinks should be abolished in favour of a commonwealth of associations. These associations would be relatively autonomous but guided by certain shared principles such as universal suffrage and communal property. Much like Proudhon envisioned, these associations would be united by a federation of provinces made up of a group of associations.

The Catechism is an anarchist doctrine that outlines a society devoid of all religion and hierarchies, socialist and collective in its nature, yet individualistic in its concern. It provides a basis for Bakunin's anarchism, but it is also a source for the differences between Bakunin and Marx, or between anarchism and communism.

The outbreak of the ill-fated Franco-Prussian War in July of 1870 inspired Bakunin to write one of his clearest and more consistent pieces, 'Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis' (1870). The letter is quite long, and divided into six sections by James Guillaume who edited the work prior to its publication. In it, Bakunin rallies the French people by saying:

> *France can be saved only by the immediate, nonpartisan action of the people*, by a mass uprising of all the French people, spontaneously organized from the bottom upward, a war of destruction, a merciless war to the death.[15]

The immediate and spontaneous uprising of the French people carries with it a plea to renounce bourgeois politics, and to o rganize French society from the bottom up. More importantly, Bakunin places his confidence in the revolutionary ardour and capability of the peasants, which he thinks should come under the control of the vanguard of the revolution, his fictional World Revolutionary Alliance. In his view, only the complete dissolution of the state and the initiation of what he calls the social revolution will accomplish his goal.[16]

Unique to his thought, and contrary to Marxist preaching, is Bakunin's notion that the revolution would emanate from the provinces, and not spearheaded by the working class in Paris. As he remarks, 'the best and only thing that Paris can do, in order to save itself, is to proclaim and encourage autonomy and spontaneity of all provisional movements', and only the workers in the provinces can spearhead such a movement.[17] It is the peasants with their 'native energy and simple unsophisticated folkways', untouched by the malevolent influence of bourgeois society that will, for Bakunin, turn the despair of defeat into the success of social revolution.

Bakunin's trust in the peasant class has a basis in his belief that there exist two diametrically opposed social bodies naturally hostile to one another: the privileged classes, or those possessing land, capital, or even bourgeois education, and the working class.[18] In his view, there could never be a moment of reconciliation between these two opposing camps, which means class struggle is

[14] Ibid., p. 77 (emphasis in original).

[15] Dolgoff, 'Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis', p. 184 (emphasis in original). James Guillaume (1844–1916) was a schoolteacher who became friends with Bakunin in 1869, and later edited the last five volumes of the six volume French edition of Bakunin's collected works. He was one of the founders of the First International in Switzerland and eventually published a four-volume history of the International.

[16] Ibid., p. 188.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Maximoff, 'Federalism, Socialism, and Anti-Theologism', p. 189.

inevitable; 'obviously one destroys the other'.[19] Although he views the German victory at Sedan as catastrophic, he also sees a glimmer of opportunity in the then current events. The time is ripe for a revolution in France, but not one led by the bourgeoisie, who will merely 'decree' the revolution. As he says:

> *I am above all an absolute enemy of revolution by decrees*, which derives from the idea of the *revolutionary State, i.e., reaction disguised as revolution.* To the system of revolution by decree *I counterpose revolutionary action*, the only consistent, true, and effective program. The authoritarian system of decrees in trying to *impose* freedom and equality obliterates both.[20]

Again, Bakunin sees the revolution playing out at the hands of the rural peasants and not the workers of the urban centres. Not surprisingly only an 'anarchistic system of revolutionary deeds and action naturally and unfailingly evokes the emergence and flowering of freedom and equality, without the necessity whatever for institutionalized violence or authoritarianism'.[21] Moreover, quite unlike Marx who disdained the peasants as 'lumpen proletariat' and envisioned the revolution emanating from the urban working classes in conjunction with an element of the radical bourgeoisie, the anarchistic system of revolution must originate in the rural areas, since those in the urban hierarchy cannot impose it from above.[22]

An issue, quite relevant to the entire idea of how the revolution evolves, is the role of organization or in Bakunin's word 'discipline' in his anarchist thought. As I have discussed, ordinary wisdom tends to see anarchists as lacking any organizational structure, ill-disciplined, egoistic and devoid of any goal or determined means to achieve a goal if ever one is apparent. Bakunin dispels this misnomer when he says:

> hostile as I am to that which in France is called discipline, nevertheless I recognize that a certain kind of discipline, not automatic but voluntary and thoughtful discipline, which harmonizes perfectly with the freedom of individuals, is and ever will be, necessary when a great number of individuals, freely united, undertake any kind

[19] Maximoff, 'The Politics of the International', p. 189.

[20] Dolgoff, 'Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis', pp. 193–4 (emphasis in original). In 1870, Bakunin wrote a letter to Albert Richard (1846–1925), an anarchist from Lyon who advocated a revolution directed from Paris. Bakunin asserted that his plan for revolution is exactly the opposite, and said, 'the constructive tasks of the Social Revolution, the creation of new forms of social life, can emerge only form the living practical experience of the grass-roots organization which will build the new society according to their manifold needs and aspirations'. Dolgoff, 'Letter to Albert Richard', p. 180. He also tells Richard Paris' role in the revolution should be strictly negative; it should concern itself with the destruction of the old social order. Bakunin was well aware of the animosities exhibited by the urban workers towards their rural counterparts. But he thinks the estrangement is born out of ignorance and the two parties have much in common. Here Bakunin counters arguments made by certain communists that the urban workers should engage in 'terrorism of the cities against the countryside', since the city dwellers only see the rural inhabitants as superstitious and fanatically religious, zealously devoted to the emperor, and obstinate supporters of individual property. Dolgoff, 'Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis', p. 198; see also, p. 192. But Bakunin thought unless the anarchy inherent in the countryside was not let loose, any hope of a social revolution would be lost.

[21] Ibid., p. 194.

[22] Ibid., p. 204. See also, Dogloff, 'The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State', p. 62, where Bakunin reiterates this theme.

> of collective work or action. Under these conditions, discipline is simply the voluntary and thoughtful co-ordination of all individual efforts toward a common goal.[23]

Bakunin recognizes, 'at the moment of action, in the midst of a struggle, the roles are naturally distributed in accordance with everyone's attitudes, evaluated and judged by the whole collective; some direct command, while others execute commands'.[24] Of utmost importance is the fact that 'no function remains fixed and petrified, nothing is irrevocably attached to one person'.[25] No hierarchy exists upon which advancement depends on so that 'the executive of yesterday becomes the subordinate of today'.[26] No one can be raised above all the others unless, of course, that person is raised to a higher level for a short time, only to fall back at a later time to a former position 'like the sea wave ever dropping back to the salutary level of equality'.[27]

Bakunin, much like Proudhon before him and Sartre after him, argues against the concept of governmental centralization with its entrenched bureaucratic structure of institutionalized power and authority. While economic centralization is essential to liberty, Bakunin also believes political centralization is destructive because it extinguishes the life and spontaneous action of the population for the benefit of the government and the class that rules that government. Sartre takes up the entire issue of leadership in some depth as he explains the role of the 'leader' in the French Revolution. This too is a role destined for a short duration because Sartre sees the entrenchment of leadership as destructive of individual freedom.

Even though Bakunin is concerned with the structure of the revolutionary group and its leaders, he is also keenly aware of the role the masses play. In 'The Program of the Alliance' (1871), he addresses the relationship between the conscious revolutionary vanguard – again, Bakunin's fictional Alliance – and the working masses. The essay begins with a discussion of union bureaucracy, and here Bakunin points out that power corrupts. The power that corrupts is the result of what he calls the 'devil in human history', namely the principle of command, since 'it alone, sustained by the ignorance and stupidity of the masses, without which it could not exist, is the source of all catastrophes, all the crimes, and all the infamies of history'.[28] Clearly, no organization, however free, can long withstand the impotence, lethargy and indifference of its members without degenerating into a form of dictatorship. Yet, not just the servile demeanour of the masses is cause for concern; Bakunin explains,

> It can well be said that the masses themselves create their own exploiters, their own despots, their own executioners of humanity. When they are quiescent and patiently

[23] Maximoff, 'The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution', p. 259 (written between 1871 and 1872, but never completed). The title derives from the unholy alliance between Russian and German authoritarianism designed to eradicate social progress. Bakunin considered the work his political and social testament and its subjects range from history, to politics, to metaphysics, to religion. The existing portions of the text are divided into two parts. The first part deals with the resistance of the French to German imperialism and was published as a pamphlet in 1871. Bakunin's friends, Carlo Cafiero and Élisée Reclus discovered the second part after Bakunin's death, which, at the time, they were unaware was part of the larger work. Bakunin wrote the second part on the eve of the Paris Commune in February and March 1871, but never finished it. Cafiero and Reclus retitled this work, *God and the State,* and published it separately in 1882, but it is also known as 'Authority and Science'. I will refer both to the separately published text and to the portion reprinted by Maximoff.

[24] Ibid. Sartre also asserts that groups-in-fusion form a metastable relation with the leaders of the group.

[25] Ibid., pp. 259–60.

[26] Ibid., p. 260.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Dogloff, 'The Program of the Alliance', p. 245.

> endure their humiliation and slavery, the best men emerging from their tasks – the most intelligent, the most energetic, the very men who in better circumstances could render great services to humanity – become despots even deluding themselves that they are actually working for the benefit of their victims.[29]

Once more, Bakunin lays the blame for despotic rule squarely at the feet of the masses who invariable fall back into the serial impotency of the practico-inert, as Sartre later describes. For Sartre, as well as for Bakunin, only the action of the group can shake off the mesmerizing lethargy of the practico-inert's quiescence.

Before moving on to Bakunin's historical materialism, I want to point out that his notion of human nature largely reflects Proudhon's. Humans are born ferocious beasts and slaves, who only gradually liberate themselves through societal formations. In this situation, emancipation is achieved through the collective efforts of all the members of a society who realize their individual freedom through other individuals around them. Without the formation of society, Bakunin speculates that humans would remain ignorant. Thus, society is a liberating force creating individual freedom; 'society is the root, the tree, and liberty is its fruit'.[30] In order to be free, one needs the acknowledgement of his fellow humans. This reciprocal recognition, so fundamental not only to Sartre's group formations but for Proudhon as well, plays a constitutive role in Bakunin's concept of human freedom: 'The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation'.[31]

Bakunin's Historical Materialism

Bakunin starts *God and the State* (1871) with a question: 'Who are right, the idealists or the materialists?'[32] For various reasons, Bakunin sides with the materialists, but what exactly does this mean? Bakunin tells us almost immediately, 'the whole history of humanity, intellectual and moral, political and social, is but a reflection of its economic history'.[33] Yet, he also thinks humans are the result of a gradual negation of the animality of their origin, and in Darwinian terms, declares:

> The gradual development of the material world, as well as of the organic animal life and the historically progressive intelligence of man, individually or socially, is perfectly conceivable. It is a wholly natural movement from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher, from the inferior to the superior; a movement in conformity with our daily experiences, and consequently in conformity also with our natural logic, with the distinctive laws of our mind, which being formed and developed only by the aid of these experiences, is, so to speak but the mental, cerebral reproduction or reflected summary thereof.[34]

[29] Ibid.

[30] Dolgoff, 'God and the State', p. 236. Bakunin further says, 'freedom of individuals is by no means an individual matter. It is a collective matter, a collective product. No individual can be free outside of human society without its cooperation'. Mikhail Bakunin, 'Three Lectures to Swiss Members', in *The Basic Bakunin: Writings 1869–1871,* p. 46.

[31] Dolgoff, 'God and the State', p. 237.

[32] Michael Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 9.

[33] Ibid., p. 9.

[34] Ibid., p. 14.

Our social world is, therefore, nothing other than a dialectical progression, which Bakunin sees as both rational and natural, historical and logical. In Hegelian terms, human history is a universal, world process that moves in a progressive manner towards greater human freedom; in short, it is intelligible. Not something independent or outside the world, and very similar to how Sartre frames the issue, human freedom can only reside in nature and society: first with the actual development of life, then with human consciousness and cultures that grant a sense of autonomy from the world of nature, and finally with the establishment of truly social structures. History is 'made, not by abstract individuals, but by acting, living and passing individuals'.[35]

In Bakunin's mind, everything in the world is in a sense determined or conditioned; it is not chaotic but organized and governed by inherent, natural laws. This particular order is a creative process where the so-called natural laws are not fixed by any authority, they are simply manifestations of the continual fluctuations of the development of things. Much like Godwin argued, the human subject is essentially determined by the natural and social milieu it inhabits**;** 'man is wholly the product of the environment that nourished and raised him – an inevitable, involuntary, and consequently irresponsible product'.[36] Humans thus enter the world as an organism ready to have circumstances mould their existence and the situation they inhabit.

As with most anarchists, Bakunin is particularly sensitive to the concept of authority, which he thinks is the inevitable power of the natural laws. While these laws pose no threat of domination, since no external master is involved, nevertheless, they are within us and constitute our very being; physically, intellectually and morally.[37]

This point brings us to a rather important discussion, one having tremendous implications for Bakunin's materialism as well as Sartre's later rejection of dialectical materialism. The last half of the nineteenth century witnessed the need for some objective authority separate and apart from any alleged Heavenly revelation, but still ascertainable by ordinary individuals, while at the same time opposed to any subjective liberty or individualism. What was necessary was a force capable of possessing all the power of religion without its supernatural foundation. In other words, some principle was required that would transcend any temporary expediency and claim finality through presenting an ultimate explanation of the universe and everything within it.

The answer, it seems, was science. Inspired by Comte's positivism, leading scientists of the day – in fact not just scientists but those working in other disciplines as well, including philosophy – thought they had arrived at an objective method of discovering all truth through rigorous scientific investigation. Such a virtually infallible method was not limited merely to the study of inanimate objects, but could be applied to the animate world as well, and thus ultimately lead to all truth everywhere including the utterly human *milieu* of politics. The scientific method and investigation applied to politics would then lead to original political truth capable of universal application that would transcend the opinions and prejudices of humans. Thus, if science confirmed certain political principles as 'true', their acceptance was certain and all others thought of as incompatible with reality.

Essential to Bakunin's understanding of the dialectic is his belief that humans obey natural laws because they recognize them as such, not because they are imposed from some external

[35] Ibid., p. 58. This is a sentiment shared by Sartre in his discussion of history in the *Critique.*

[36] Maximoff, 'Federalism, Socialism and Anti-Theologism', p. 153.

[37] Bakunin, *God and the State,* pp. 28–9.

authority whether divine or human, collective or individual. As a result, if science or its representatives – *savants* – are tasked with the responsibility of governing, the outcome would be a travesty. His reasons are varied, but he generally thinks human science is at best imperfect; he sees government imposed in the name of science as venerated for the mere mention of science, but which would lack all comprehension; and most importantly, he sees a scientific academy invested with sovereignty only ending in its own moral and intellectual corruption.[38] Under such circumstances, the inevitable degradation of the scientific body to which government is entrusted no longer devotes itself to science, but to its own perpetuation.

In his critique of science, Bakunin furthers his argument by indicating that

> human thought and, in consequence of this, science can grasp and name only the general significance of real facts, their relations, their laws – in short, that which is permanent in their continual transformations – but never their material, individual side, palpitating, so to speak, with reality and life, and therefore fugitive, and intangible. Science comprehends the thought of reality, not reality itself; the thought of life, not life.[39]

In these remarkable words, Bakunin presages almost exactly the criticism Sartre levels at dialectical materialism and the dogmatic, scientific Marxism of the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) in the next century. Each questions science's inability to grasp the individuality of human beings. And, it is because of science's necessary abstraction in which it can conceive of the abstract principle of real and living individuality, but can have no dealings with real and living individuals that underlies both Bakunin's and Sartre's attack on scientific Marxism on the one hand, and dialectical materialism on the other. In fact, these 'knights of science' have only 'created for themselves an ideal social organization into which … they want to force the life of future generations whatever the cost'.[40]

While Bakunin was one of the first to recognize that human social life is not adaptable to laboratory formulas and analysis, and those efforts to do so only lead to despotic tyranny, he did not reject science altogether. His writings exhibit a great respect for science, but he cautions against attributing too much weight to the role scientific knowledge plays in society, and he certainly rejects science taking on the part of final arbiter of all personal life and of the social future of humankind, a position quite close to Sartre's.

The State

While Bakunin understands the state, much like the church, as a transitory institution, he still denounces the state as authority and force. In its incarnation, it is the ostentation and infatuation with force that neither seeks to insinuate itself nor hunts for converts.[41] Yet, while Bakunin rejects the notion of the state as an abstraction, as we have seen, he adheres to the necessity of society. Outside of society, humans cease to develop; society alone with its human interaction is the catalyst for social development and change. The state, on the other hand, is a 'vast cemetery'

[38] Ibid., p. 31.
[39] Ibid., p. 51.
[40] Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, p. 133.
[41] Dolgoff, 'God and the State', p. 240.

designed only to impede humanity and deny justice. He also rejects the idea that a state represents the common interests of a particular society. Rather, he conjectures that it is the sum of negations of individual liberties of the members of society, or the sum of sacrifices all of its members make in renouncing a part of their liberty in the name of the common good.

When a state takes away an individual liberty in the name of the 'common good', or for the 'safety of the people', Bakunin thinks this tearing apart of a piece of liberty destroys the whole of liberty as well. 'Liberty is indivisible: a part of it cannot be curtailed without destroying it as a whole'.[42] The entire premise of the theory of the state is the negation of human liberty. The abstract and, in his words, violent origin of the state manifests itself in mere slogans such as 'the good of the people', but in reality the state only represents the dominate class.[43]

Interestingly, Bakunin sees the state as the patrimony of some privileged class such as the nobility or the bourgeoisie, but he also thinks that when 'all other classes have exhausted themselves, the class of bureaucracy enters upon the stage and then the State fails, or rises, if you please, to the position of a machine'.[44] This machine-like state can only govern the masses from above through an intelligent and therefore privileged minority that believes it knows the genuine interests of the people better than the people themselves. This machine-like metaphor – first arising in Proudhon's work – becomes an interesting connection to Sartre's analysis of the organized group's functionality, which he describes as a machine-like apparatus. Regardless, for both Bakunin and Sartre, this inherent antagonism leads only to one outcome: state violence. The state, even when dressed up in its most liberal and democratic disguise, emerges as a concealed but no less dangerous despotism based entirely on domination and violence.

One question arises at this point, namely, the relationship of Bakunin's idea of the state, or rather the non-state, with what he takes to be Marx's position. Bakunin's primary remarks about the State occur in his book, *Statism and Anarchy* (1873), written after his clash with Marx during the First International. Therefore, he directly asserts his anarchist/collectivist position against the Marxist/communist. While the conception of the state forms a fundamental point of contention between Bakunin and Marx, there are certainly other divisions between the two.[45] From an overall perspective, Marx and Engels envisioned a future operating from a highly developed, technological industrial base, which takes its commands from centralized institutions managing not only all economic life, but the social sphere as well. On the other hand, anarchist in general and Bakunin in particular articulated a view that placed the 'human scale' in a paramount position both as to production as well as in institutions emanating from their theory of association. As Bakunin says, 'between the Marxists and ourselves there is an abyss. They are governmentalists; we are the anarchists, in spite of it all'.[46] While Bakunin stresses the autonomy and determining factors of culture, all of which provide a greater potential for human development than Marx was

[42] Ibid.

[43] Maximoff, 'The Paris Commune and the State', p. 207; see also, Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, p. 23.

[44] Maximoff, 'Letters on Patriotism', p. 20.

[45] Bakunin's critique of Marx is generally found in 'The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State', 'Letter to La Liberté', and in his book *Statism and Anarchy*. But in 1872 he wrote 'The International and Karl Marx', which is also a lengthy criticism of Marx's authoritarian tactics, as well as Marx's theory of materialism. Of interest in this last piece is Bakunin's comparison of Marx and German chancellor Otto von Bismarck. While he thinks the differences between the two are great, he also thinks they are united by an '*out-and-out cult of the State*'. Dolgoff, 'The International and Karl Marx', p. 315 (emphasis in original).

[46] Dolgoff, 'Letter to La Liberté', p. 277 (written in 1872).

willing to admit, this does not imply a rejection of materialism. It does suggest, as Brian Morris points out, a rejection of Marx's rather monocausal explanations.[47]

With regard to the state, the major difference between Bakunin and Marx undoubtedly lies in their contrasting positions concerning the revolutionary transition. Marx conceived the transition as the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the seizure of state power by the workers. As is well known, what would follow is a dictatorship of the proletariat followed by a state that would eventually wither away. In his response to this notion, Bakunin derides Marx's notion that the ultimate ideal is the creation of a people's state, or more specifically 'the proletariat raised to the level of a ruling class'.[48] If this is the case, Bakunin then asks whom will the proletariat rule? Obviously, another proletariat would have to emerge as the object of this new state, such as the peasant rabble found distasteful by Marx. Moreover, if there is a state, then it will necessarily be one of domination and slavery, but if there is no state and the proletariat rises to a governing class does this not mean the entire nation will *rule*, but in effect, no one will be *ruled*?

Ultimately, Bakunin sees Marxism as culminating in a government of the vast majority of the people by a select or privileged few. Even if the minority consists of workers as Marx suggest, they will be *former workers* 'who, as soon as they become rulers or representatives of the people will cease to be workers and will begin to look upon the whole worker's world from the heights of the state'.[49] Bakunin fears – and here his fear is similar to Proudhon's – that these former workers will no longer represent the interests of the people but themselves and their own pretensions to govern the people. Bakunin also sees the Marxian notion of scientific socialism as proof that the pseudo-popular state will be nothing but the highly despotic government of the masses by a new and very small aristocracy of what he calls 'real or pretended scholars'.[50] Once again, Bakunin expresses his concern over the 'scientific' direction Marxism has undertaken. Marxists counter that the dictatorship is to be short-lived, but if this so and the Marxian state is to be truly a people's state, then why must it be abolished? To this, Bakunin adds that no dictatorship can have any objective other than to perpetuate itself, and it can nurture and engender only slavery in the people who must endure it.

One final topic presents itself whenever one mentions Bakunin's name. In most people's minds, Bakunin seems to be associated with one word: violence. While he recognizes the need for destruction, it is generally a need to destroy the state, religion and economic exploitation brought about through capitalism. In fact, he thinks that the destruction of these three entities will curtail the rampant violence associated with their very being. It is true that he sees his social revolution springing-up from the depths of the human emotion with its unalterable instinct to revolt, but what he really foresees is the power of despair to rouse an individual 'out of his dull, somnolent suffering and at least presupposes a more or less clear awareness that better condi-

[47] Morris, *Bakunin*, p. 120. In a rather important criticism of Marx's philosophy of history, Bakunin asserts 'the political condition of each country is always the product and the faithful expression of its economic situation; to change the former it is necessary only to transform the later. Therein lies the whole secret of historic evolution according to Marx. He takes no account of other factors in history, such as the ever-present reaction of political, juridical and religious institutions on the economic situation'. Dogloff, 'Letter to La Liberté', p. 281.

[48] Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, p. 177.

[49] Ibid., p. 178.

[50] Ibid., pp. 178–9. A very similar analysis occurs in the *Critique*, especially in Sartre's more concrete discussion of Bolshevism.

tions are possible'.[51] Unfortunately, poverty and desperation alone are not enough to spark the revolution. For this to happen, one must invoke a universal ideal. As he explains such a popular ideal,

> which always develops historically, from the depths of popular instinct, an instinct nurtured, broadened, and illuminated by a series of significant events, painful and bitter experiences – it requires a general conception of one's rights and a profound, passionate, one might say religious, belief in those rights. When such an ideal and such a belief are found in a people together with a poverty that drives them to desperation, then a social revolution is inevitable, it is immanent, and there is no force that can prevent it.[52]

Here, Bakunin sees strikes as a vehicle to awaken the spirit of revolt among the workers, but not be just any work stoppage would do. Bakunin thinks only a general strike would 'lead to a great cataclysm, which will regenerate society'.[53] What this ideal represents for the people is:

> first of all an end to want, an end to poverty, the full satisfaction of all material needs through collective labor equal and obligatory for all; then, an end to all masters and to domination of every kind, and the free construction of popular life in accordance with popular needs, not from above downward, as in the state, but from below upward, by the people themselves, dispensing with all government and parliaments – a voluntary alliance of agricultural and factory worker associations, communes, provinces, and nations; and finally, in the more distant future, universal human brotherhood triumphing on the ruins of all the states.[54]

This rather remarkable statement summarizes Bakunin's thought with regard to the ideal, with all its hopes and aspirations for the end of suffering and the ushering in of a revolutionary society. What is of equal importance is his reliance on what he calls a 'cataclysmic event', later adopted by the anarcho-syndicalist, Georges Sorel.

Bakunin's social revolution would be incomplete and, in effect, illegitimate unless it goes beyond a political revolution, that is, coercive state institutions. Yet, Bakunin well understands the need for 'organizations' to formulate the worker's associations. Underlying Bakunin's thought is the fact that no political revolution succeeds unless it is one of the people – urban workers and peasants alike – who join together to destroy the bourgeois state, but this does not mean the entire existing order ceases to exist. Bakunin has in min d only the institutions of property and the state. The social revolution, therefore, does not occur merely in destructive terms, but more as a creative act along the lines of the Hegelian negation allowing for the positive affirmation of existing social units together with their concomitant new forms of association.

Much like Proudhon, Bakunin's thoughts form a significant background and basis – a further linage – to Sartre's social political philosophy. Bakunin follows Proudhon in many respects, especially regarding his collectivist stance, his rejection of hierarchical structures, and his concomitant belief that power must proceed from the base to the summit and not the reverse, as well

[51] Ibid., p. 335.
[52] Ibid., p. 32.
[53] Maximoff, 'Organization and the General Strike', p. 383.
[54] Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, p. 33.

as his understanding that the basis for human relations is reciprocity. However, his analysis of the evils of dialectical materialism or scientific Marxism, as he calls it, is the most original and, indeed, the most important when relating his thoughts Sartre. I shall say more about this as we progress to the *Critique*, but for his entire career, Sartre opposed the scientific inclinations of the PCF, which he thought lost track of the individual in its effort to advance Marxism as a true science. Lastly, Bakunin gives us an account of what he describes as revolutionary discipline with a leadership corresponding to expertise, but with no fixed duration or function. Sartre describes a similar 'discipline' of leadership within the group-in-fusion that eschews the hierarchical predisposition to centralize power as it institutionalizes authority.

Both Proudhon, in his intellectual and dialectical method of analysing human conduct, and Bakunin, with his more action oriented mode of political discourse, share an anarchistic conception of political endeavours. Each was instrumental in advancing the cause of 'anarchy' not only among the masses, but also within intellectual circles so essential to its development and further understanding. We must now turn to Sartre and his political philosophy in order to appreciate how he fits within the discussion and, in fact, within the conceptual framework of anarchy under discussion.

Part Three: Jean-Paul Sartre and Twentieth-Century Anarchism: 1914–1960

Introduction

French Political and Social Life: 1914–1960

As with the nineteenth century, I shall begin Part III with an overall discussion of the political and social atmosphere in France as well as anarchism's role, first from around 1914 to 1945, and then I shall analyse the political and social currents of the post-Second World War period up to 1960. I shall also discuss the development of anarchism during the latter part of the nineteenth century, particularly with regard to the movement's turn from revolutionary political action to economic issues. This later economic move or what was later called anarcho-syndicalism plays an exceedingly important role in the early part of the twentieth century up to the start of the First World War. I also want to point out the changing nature of individualist anarchist activities that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century. As anarchism turned towards the labour movement, the individualists assumed a minority status within the anarchist movement. As a result, their ideology and energy gravitated to involvement in quite advanced social issues for the times, especially issues involving sexuality, gender and race. Unlike some other anarchists' tendencies, the individualists never really abandoned their revolutionary roots, but now they placed their emphasis on the alienation of the human mind and the oppression of the corporeal body.

With regard to the inter-war years, any starting point must embark with the Great War, but it must also emphasize the actions leading up to the war. Only with an understanding of the social and political atmosphere at the beginning of the war can we comprehend the political and social *milieu* that developed in France after the Great War. The inter-war period was a time of great uncertainty that saw the rise of right-wing fascist governments first in Italy and then in Germany. The period also witnessed the popularity of right-wing nationalistic Leagues in France born out of the malaise that seemed to engulf French society, which reached its height during the economic crisis of 1930s. Sartre and his friends came of age during this period, and it plays a leading role in shaping their political philosophies.

The Third Republic

After the defeat of its army at Sedan in September 1870, the French once again determined to establish a republic they hoped would outlast the short-lived First Republic (1789–1804), and the even briefer period of the Second Republic (1848–51). Whether the third attempt at establishing an enduring democratic republic would be successful remained unclear, but key to the politicians who considered themselves republican was a belief that in order for it to endure its essential principles must be inculcated into the hearts and minds of the people. Similar to today's response to terrorist attacks by religious extremists, France of the 1870s looked to the education system, especially its primary schools, to indoctrinate 'French' values into children at an early age.[1] Primary among those French values is the concept of republicanism, which is, as French president

[1] Mark Lilla recently discussed the change in educational policy in France following the jihadist attack on the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo. In his article, Lilla points out that in times of difficulty, France has traditionally

François Hollande recently declared, 'nonnegotioable'.[2] Not part of the political and social scene at the beginning of the Third Republic, by 1905 republicanism also included the notion of *laïcité*, or secularism, advanced as a guarantee against both internal and external strife.[3] It would not be surprising today if most people in France identified themselves as republican, but in the late nineteenth century the term carried with it very definite democratic connotations.

While republicanism certainly guarantees rights, it also brings with it the idea of a strong state designed to provide for the public good. This type of republicanism presumes rights are coextensive with obligations, and that the French ideals of 'liberty', 'equality', and 'fraternity' must be learned through a common educational platform. In effect, one is not born a full-fledged French citizen; one must become so through initiation into republican society through education. Moreover, as Julian Jackson points out, republicanism was not merely a political system; rather, it took on far more cultural significance complete with its own myths, festivals and symbolism.[4] As France moved to achieve a social and political unity, it adopted 14 July as its national holiday, the *Marseillaise* as its national anthem, and the *triclore* as its national emblem.

Anarchism's Development

Anarchism has always gone through what seems like a tortuous developmental process, especially after the Paris Commune of the early 1870s. In fact, in the immediate aftermath of the crushing of the Commune, anarchism developed not in France but along its border with Switzerland in the Jura Federation (*Fédération jurassienne*).[5] Essentially, this part of the labour movement espoused a Proudhonian centred mutualism and collectivism that embraced an anti-authoritarian ideology called 'revolutionary collectivism'.[6] For the Federation, the strike became the revolutionary tool of choice, and during the 1870s the notion of 'propaganda by deed' developed within the Federation; a tactic that embraced the use of violence and assassination to achieve revolutionary goals. Significantly, this period also brought about a change in the type of society anarchism sought. Closely aligned to Proudhon's idea of mutualism, the Federation advocated the collective ownership of property, but the individual ownership of the fruits of one's labour. After 1880, the ultimate goal was communism, but a communism opposed to any authoritarian or State communism. In other words, anarchists envisioned the future society as collective in nature, and based

'treated education as the projection screen for their anxieties and uncertainties'. Mark Lilla, 'France on Fire', *New York Review of Book,* 5 March 2015, accessed electronically at _http://www.nybooks.com_ on 18 February 2015.

[2] Dan Bilefsky, 'François Hollande Vows t o Defend France's Republican Ideal', *The New York Times*, 5 February 2015, accessed electronically at _http://www.nytimes.com_ on 6 February 2015.

[3] Although *laïcité* does not strictly mean the English equivalent of secularism, it is usually translated as such. Generally, the term means freedom of belief and this includes the freedom of conscience, the nondomination of any particular religion over society or the state, and the strict nondiscrimination for religious reasons. It also necessitates the absolute neutrality of the state in relation to any religious practices.

[4] Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy 1934–38* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 2. Symbolism for any nation has always played an important role in how it perceives itself. Interestingly, at the end of the Commune, conservative monarchists still held power in France and would until about 1875. The Legitimists desired a constitutional monarchy with the conservative Henri of Artois, Comte de Chambord (1820–83) as king. Unfortunately for their cause, as the grandson of Charles X (the last Bourbon king), Henri refused to be king as long as the symbol of the nation, the *triclore*, was its flag. He instead insisted that the white *fleur-de-lys* be adopted. Henri associated the *triclore* with the Revolution of 1789 as well as the Orléanist July Monarchy. In this case, a symbol of the nation had a determining factor in the structure of the French government.

[5] Maitron, *Le mouvement anarchist tome I*, pp. 56–66.

[6] Ibid., p. 67.

on the free federation of both producers of goods and consumers. As I have indicated, with the adoption of propaganda by deed, anarchism's tactics changed. Perhaps for the first time, force became a legitimate means to destroy the state.

It was not until the former Communards returned to France under a general amnesty in 1880 that anarchism returned with them, and France once again assumed its role as the centre of revolutionary activity.[7]

The 1890s in France proved to be the high point for the violence associated with propaganda by deed. Anarchists sanctioned the tactic in the belief that the revolution was just around the corner and the only thing lacking to cause it to erupt was a spark, a spark of violence. In response to violent acts by people such as Ravachol (whose real name was François Koenigstein, and who perpetrated three bomb attacks against members of the judiciary), Auguste Vaillant (who bombed the National Assembly in 1893), Emile Henry (who planted a bomb at the café Terminus in the Gare Saint-Lazare killing one person) and others, the French government passed the famous Villainous Laws *(Lois scélérates)* of 1893–4 that were intended to severely repress all revolutionary activity, but in particular anarchists activity. Passed in three parts, the laws made it illegal to advocate any crime, propaganda by deed became illegal even if no death or injury occurred, and lastly the laws made it a crime for any person or newspaper to advocate anarchy or propaganda by deed. As a result, most anarchist newspapers disappeared, and anarchist leaders either faced arrest or went into hiding.

In 1894, the government attempted to enforce its new laws in a 'show trial' of revolutionaries and anarchists in what would be known as the Trial of the Thirty (*Procés des trente)*. Included with the accused were such well-known anarchists as Jean Grave, Sébastian Faure, and Felix Fénénon. In a trial that lasted from 6 August to 31 October 1894, the jury acquitted all of the anarchist defendants. While the trial was a spectacle, after 1894 the terrorist period generally diminished because of the shift in emphasis away from political action, and towards economic issues associated with the labour movement or syndicalism. Overall, as David Berry argues, the violence associated with propaganda by deed had little effect other than to isolate anarchism and create an extremely negative image still haunting the movement to the present day.

The shift to economic issues meant that anarchists played a far greater role in the labour movement, especially through syndicalist groups. The Fédération Nationale des Syndicats (FNS) was formed in 1886, and while its early mission was tightly associated with the revolutionary struggle, by the mid-1890s this changed and the FNS was clearly in the syndicalist camp. Significantly, this period also witnessed the development of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail under the leadership of the anarchists and other anti-socialist groups, which had two significant consequences. From that point on, the labour movement's ideology was far more libertarian in nature, and it marked the decline of individualist anarchism which became a distinct minority tendency by the early twentieth century. It was also during this period that the Confédération General du Travail (CGT) came under anarchists' leadership, which famously insisted that it adopt policies based on revolution together with a creed of strict anti-political participation.

The desire for both social and political unity proved difficult to sustain as the *fin de siècle* saw France torn apart by the Dreyfus affair. Among the left and the right, emotions ran high as to

[7] In a policy declaration having far-reaching consequences for France in the 1950s, in August 1881 the ardent colonialist Jules Ferry announced that Algeria would from that point on be administered as an integral part of France under the 1875 constitution of the Third Republic. Quite unlike any other French colony, Algeria would be treated as sovereign territory under the control of the Ministry of Interior. See, Evans, *Algeria*, p. 19.

whether one was a Dreyfusard or not. Aroused by Émile Zola's article '*J'accuse*' in Clémenceau's newspaper *L'Aurore*, young people, especially those on the left, were seemingly jolted from their intellectual and social slumber and began circulating petitions in protest over the irregularities in the Dreyfus trial. In fact, Anatole France's petition for 'Protest of Intellectuals' brought into the modern lexicon the very notion of the intellectual for the first time.[8]

Interestingly, as Jean Maitron reports, anarchists were largely silent concerning the Dreyfus affair.[9] Between 1894 and 1897 (the first phase of the affair's proceedings took place in a secretive military court) some anarchist newspapers considered Dreyfus guilty of the alleged theft of military documents and their sale to the Germans. After Zola's famous letter to Félix Faure, president of the Republic, on 13 January 1898 anarchists' attitudes began to change, albeit slowly.[10] Even though the *Lois scélérates* closed most anarchist newspapers during the early period of the affair, anarchists generally saw the matter as a bourgeoisie problem not having much to do with the anarchist movement. Couple this aspect with the fact that anarchists were generally anti-military, and it is probably understandable that they felt they had nothing to gain by actively participating. This attitude seemed to change in 1898 when the anarchist newspaper *Le Libertaire* proclaimed, in a rather large headline, Dreyfus' innocence. Still, the anarchists seemed to distance themselves from the debate swirling around at the time.

On the other hand, the right challenged the intellectuals protest with one of its most vociferous critics Maurice Barrès denouncing the signers of the petition as Kantian intellectuals bent on destroying the very fabric of French society.[11] Importantly, the affair spawned political groups that would endure to the end of the Third Republic. On the right, for example, the monarchist, anti-Semitic L'Action Francaise and the Ligue des Patriotes used the Dreyfus affair as a means to attack republican values in general and the democratic regime in particular. Not to be outdone, the left produced its own groups including the League of the Rights of Man, which played a role in the establishment of the left-wing Popular Front government in 1936.

The Great War

The left, perhaps more than the right, believed in unity, especially when any threat, either real or imagined, stared the Republic in the face. But it was the onslaught of the First World War and its call of honour and self-respect, variously based on the French nationalist ideal of *revanchism* for the defeat in 1870 at the hands of Germany, that for a short period brought unity on the right and the left as well. Certainly, the notion of *Union sacrée* and its concomitant mystical ideal of 'vitalism', or in Henri Bergson words *élan vital*, turned war into a religious sacrament intended to reinvigorate the very soul of France from its alleged moral decline and fatigue and, in fact, restore a sense of oneness to a disfigured national psyche.[12] While vitalism concerned itself with the rather all-encompassing notion of the significance of human existence, it essentially

[8] Frederick Brown, *The Embrace of Unreason: France, 1914–1940* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), p. 64.

[9] Maitron, *Le movement anarchiste tome I*, pp. 331–42.

[10] Dreyfus' defence was taken up by his brother Mathieu, who in 1895 engaged Bernard Lazare to defend Albert in the court of public opinion. Lazare was well known in France for his forthright defence of anarchists.

[11] Brown, *The Embrace of Unreason*, p. 64.

[12] *Élan vital* is 'the inner force that cannot be rationally grasped or articulated, which thrusts its way into the empty and unknowable future, and moulds both biological growth and human activity'. Isaiah Berlin, *Georges Sorel, Against the Current* (London: Hogarth, 1979), p. 317. Each side and, in fact, each nationality fighting in the Great War had their own way of extolling their troops to a higher calling of passionate ardour or flair. For the French it was *élan*,

'championed impulses and intuitions over abstract ideas, character over structure, irrationalism over intellect, energy over fixity, soul or will over materialism, 'life force' over inherited forms'.[13] Even socialist leader, member of the Chamber of Deputies, and founder of the socialist newspaper *L'Humanité*, Jean Jaurès – who campaigned tirelessly in the summer of 1914 against the prospect of war, French imperialism, Austrian ambition and Russian deceitfulness – offered to support the war should all his efforts to prevent it fail.[14]

The emotional call to a sacred union of all the French people swept over prominent anarchist leaders as well. Jean Grave and Peter Kropotkin broke with their long-standing principle of anti-war noninvolvement to write and publish the Manifesto of 16 (*Manifeste des Seize)* on 4 March 1916 encouraging all to support the war against German aggression, a position that proved deeply unpopular with many anarchists, especially the individualists, and substantially eroded the post-war anarchist position.[15] While the nineteenth century was a time of development of anarchist activities that started as a revolutionary movement, by the late nineteenth century the movement moved away from revolutionary action and towards the labour movement. This shift, most pronounced within the trade unions such as the CGT, squarely saw its mission to attack both the government and capitalists. By the time the war started, however, it had already moved away from revolutionary tactics and anarchist control. Within the wider anarchist realm, the war itself proved to be the catalyst for wholesale changes within anarchist circles. In 1914, Léon Jouhaux, the leader of the CGT, declared labour's support for the war effort, and after the war the CGT split into a majority moderate group more interested in reform than revolutionary ideals, and a more radical minority the CGTU (or *Unitaire*) affiliated with the PCF after 1922.

The labour movement was not the only organization to support the war effort. Indeed, as I have said, leading anarchist luminaries such as Grave and Kropotkin urged their fellow anarchists to support the allied cause against German aggression. As a result, those anarchists who defended the war effort or '*defensistes'* faced condemnation by the '*réstants'* who rejected the war as a conflict between rival imperialist powers, and remained committed to their revolutionary form of anti-militarism. This split resulted in the isolation of people like Grave and Kropotkin, which was further aggravated by the latter's rejection of bolshevism. The war also had other effects on anarchists' projects and brought about the collapse of libertarian experiments in education, naturalism and other forms of communal living arrangements. Support for the war effort, seen by many within anarchist circles as a betrayal of basic and deeply held principles, greatly added to the sense of disarray.

The overall effect the war had on the anarchist movement, no matter the tendency, cannot be overemphasized. It was a major factor, along with what Berry points out as a failure to explain its own ideology, in the long-term decline of the movement.[16] Only the overthrow of the Czarist regime in Russia shed a small bright light on an otherwise dark period for anarchism, but that

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while the Italian equivalent was *slancio*. For an account of the Italian style of *slancio* see, Mark Thompson, *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front 1915–1919* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p. 229.

[13] Ibid., p. 229.

[14] Brown, *The Embrace of Unreason*, p. 16.

[15] Richard Sonn, *Sex, Violence, and the Avant-Garde: Anarchism in Interwar France* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), p. 3; see also, Jean Maitron, *Le movement anarchiste en France tome II: De 1914 à nos jours anarchism et marxisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), pp. 12–23. The manifesto originally had only 15 signatures, but was later counter-signed by another 100.

[16] David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement: 1917 to 1945* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), p. 327.

too would quickly fade with the failure of the strike movements of 1919–20, and the realization that bolshevism was far from the utopian state anarchists first believed it to be.

As one might expect, the right also looked upon the war as a sacred event, and in the words of one of its militant leaders, Barrès, who agreed with Hippolyte Taine's assessment that 'race' and '*milieu*' accounted for more in assessing human truth than pure reason:

> I have never wished for the terrible lessons of battle, but I have wanted nothing more than for Frenchmen to unite around the great ideas of our race. Well! Blood has not yet rained upon our nation and war has already made us feel its regenerative power. It is a resurrection.[17]

It seems the only antidote to Gallic lethargy was blood; to Barrès and his followers it was human sacrifice to a greater national good that would reconsecrate France, and liberate it from the thrall of barren philosophy and the monotony of peace. As fellow conservative, and leader of Action Française, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle – who carried Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* with him to the front – put it, 'peace ruins people'.

The Inter-War Years 1918–1940

The unity France so craved proved elusive even in time of war, but the allied victory in 1918 rekindled political divisions as the realization of the vast and unimaginable destruction, both in terms of human lives and in terms of economic calamity, gradually sunk in. Old divisions emerged once again, and while the left and right battled each other for parliamentary supremacy during the inter-war years, the anarchist movement in France was, for reason I shall discuss shortly, nearly reduced to extinction.

The inter-war years witnessed political power in France mired in conflict as the nation not only looked for some form of stability, but sought to resurrect a nostalgic France free from endless parliamentary ineptitude, corrupt or inadequate leaders, and a political system that proved unable to meet the needs of the people. Indeed, between 1924 and 1931, no less than fifteen cabinets formed and subsequently disbanded; in the short period between 1931 and 1932, three cabinets came and disappeared; and during the period 1932 to 1940, France experienced an astounding seventeen governmental changes.[18] Yet, political power throughout the inter-war period resided, for the most part, in four main political groups. On the left, three groups vied for power: the Radical–Socialist, the Socialist and Communist. On the right, an amalgam of political groups and Leagues generally came together to rule, at least in parliament. While certain groups can be identified, there was little homogeneity within the left or the right, which caused most governments to be built on coalitions composed mainly of either centre-right or centre-left politicians.

The Left

The left in France was, as I have said, split between three groups who did not achieve real success until the early 1930s. The relative prosperity of the 1920s seemed to accord the more conservative parties in France certain advantages. In fact, when the New York Stock Exchange

[17] Maurice Barrès, '*4 août. – Le jour Sacré*', in *Maurice Barrès Chronique de la Grande Guerre: 1914–1920* (Paris: Plon, 1968), p. 125. All translations are mine.

[18] Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930's* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), p.11.

collapsed in October 1929 signalling the economic depression, the conservatives thought France was in a far better financial position than most countries, since it had large gold reserves and substantial budget surpluses. Unfortunately, strict adherence to classical economic theory of reduced government spending, higher taxes, and an almost maniacal abhorrence of devaluing the franc even after England (1931) and the United States (1933) had devalued their currencies, brought the Depression home to France, where it proved to be deeper and last longer t han in other countries.

All of this gave rise to political discontent as those young people, including Sartre – too young to have fought in the Great War – were now entering their university years. There was a feeling in France, expressed by Paul Valéry just after the war in the pages of *Nouvelle Revue Française*, of '*la crise de l'Ésprit'*,[19] The war not only destroyed the old political regimes of Europe, but also exposed a deep sense of insecurity, an uncertainty and lack of meaning throughout France. This lack of confidence brought on a quest for something new, something that would provide certainty and significance that seemed to be so lacking to a shattered and disbelieving country. To the young, the worn-out ways of their father's generation only produced a decadent pre-war society, the destruction of a senseless world war, and a pervading sense of *ennui*. On the right, various Leagues sought to regain the glory of a past France that in their view was undemocratic and generally monarchist, or at the very least authoritarian. On the other side of the coin, the left discovered Marxism through the newly translated texts of Marx and Engels, as well as the almost mythical representation of the 'new man' of the Soviet Union.

The inter-war years proved difficult for anarchists as they became even more marginalized. Many reasons abound for their decline; most would agree that the horrors of the Great War and the relative prosperity in France in the 1920s together with the rise of bourgeois material comforts helped to diminish anarchism's appeal to the working class. Perhaps, one of the most compelling reasons lay in the political reality that anarchism had to compete with ever more factious and extreme political groups including Action Française's *camelots du roi* on the right and, more importantly, the Bolshevik's on the left. Importantly, the development of bolshevism both aided and hindered anarchism's attempts to build a coherent and stable organizational.

In part, many anarchists saw the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia as the culmination of their political aspirations. As I pointed out, anarchists such as Elisée Reclus and Errico Malatesta saw anarchism gravitating eventually towards communism as its end game so it should not be surprising, then, to see French anarchists lining up behind the red star as a model even though the Bolsheviks were exterminating anarchist in Russia.[20] In fact, in the years immediately following the October Revolution, many French anarchists saw the Bolsheviks in their own wishful terms as decidedly anti-parliamentary and anti-hierarchical. They also viewed the new regime, based on the Russian soviets and workers councils, as decentralizing, self-governing and federative in nature.[21] The Russian revolution had an even more profound effect on anarchists in France. While their misconceived beliefs were to be quickly dispelled as information came to light of Bolshevik authoritarianism, especially in putting down the Ukrainian rebellion and the famous Kronstadt revolt, as Berry points out it opened up a debate within anarchists circles as to the efficacy of joining with other left-wing groups such as the communists to achieve their goals.

[19] Paul Valéry, 'La Crise de l'Ésprit', *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, no. 71 (August 1919), p. 323.

[20] Maitron, *Le movement anarchiste tome II*, pp. 52–3; see also, Berry, *French Anarchist Movement*, p. 97.

[21] Ibid., p. 44.

What stands out in the inter-war period with regard to anarchism is the dominance of the communist anarchists at the expense of the individualists as well as anarchism's increasing involvement with the labour movement. Another factor is equally important, however. Throughout the period, the majority of anarchists were cooperating with other left-wing groups to further their political and social cause.[22] This was probably even more true of the individualists anarchists who did embrace other like-minded groups as allies as they shifted their emphasis to social goals.

There were also internal reasons for anarchism's decline in the 1920s. As Richard Sonn suggests the individualist anarchists focused their efforts on philosophy, the arts, sexuality and other lifestyle issues while the revolutionary syndicalist became bureaucrats who eschewed all risks.[23] Largely, internal strife between anarchism's three main groups – individualist, communist and syndicalist – hampered the growth of the movement.[24] However, anarchism did not die a slow and painful death during this period; rather, as the violence of the late nineteenth-century propaganda by deed gave way to what Sonn terms the praxis of 'ethical anarchism', a different type of anarchism emerged that emphasized the more positive aspect of anarchism's social thought instead of its more violent and destructive past.[25]

With this evolution of anarchist praxis, the most philosophical branch within the inter-war anarchist movement, the individualist, ensured their continuing existence and relevance as they launched themselves into moral causes requiring them to cooperate with other like-minded and progressive social groups. As they immersed themselves into such issues as race and gender, they sought to understand the alienation of the human psyche and the repression of the human body. Still ardently anti-bourgeois, espousing anti-militarism, opposed to any centralized state, and rejecting any hierarchy, these anarchists advocated peace and individual freedom along with individual conscience and control of the self.[26]

With regard to anarchism's revolutionary tendencies, individualist anarchists argued the need for individuals to first free themselves of all authoritarian inclinations before launching any successful revolution. The rise of fascism and communism only served to enforce the individualists' misgivings of power and authority, which meant, much like Proudhon argued, the only hope was an ethical transformation of the individual through education and self-awareness rather than insurrection and revolution. Naturally, these issues tended to appeal to middle-class intellectuals, journalists and teachers, but not so much to the working class.

The Radical–Socialist Party

One of the oldest political parties vying for power during this period was the Radical–Socialist, commonly known as the Radicals, who were hardly radical and certainly not socialist. Their seemingly left-wing name derived from their early existence when they adamantly defended the Republic and opposed the church, which made their position radical at the time. In the inter-war years, as in the nineteenth century, their support came primarily from small business owners, shopkeepers and others who inhabited what was known as the *classes moyennes*. Thomas Flynn points out that in his early life perhaps Sartre's two greatest male influences, his grandfather

[22] Ibid., p.328.

[23] Sonn, *Sex, Violence, and the Avant-Garde*, p. 2; see also, Berry, *French Anarchist Movement*, pp. 118–19.

[24] *Maitron,* Le movement anarchiste, tome I, *pp. 79–136.*

[25] S onn, *Sex, Violence, and the Avant-Garde*, p. 6.

[26] Ibid., p. 8.

and his stepfather, identified with the ideals of the Radical–Socialists. Sartre, on the other hand, viewed the party as attracting only functionaries, anti-clericals and *petit bourgeoisie* elements.[27]

During the 1920s, the Radicals' original political philosophy came into increasing conflict with the socially conservative viewpoint of the electorate. As result, the Radicals formed coalitions with the Socialists, but often broke with their more leftist partners over economic matters as occurred, for example, after the election of 1924. The so-called *cartel des gauches* or alliance between the Radicals and the Socialists won the election and formed a government under the Radical leader Edouard Herriot. The alliance fell apart two years later as a financial crisis caused them to join in a National Union headed by the conservative Raymond Poincaré. In effect, the Radicals became an almost indispensable centrist political party that formed coalitions with either the left or the right in order to exercise political power.

The SFIO and Communists

While the Radicals lack of a definite political agenda – other than, perhaps, being elected – led to instability within the Third Republic, the Socialist also contributed to the volatility. The Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvière (SFIO) or French Socialist Party, formed in 1905, always faced the difficult proposition of how to accommodate its Marxist beliefs within a bourgeois parliamentary system. During the Great War, the Socialists put aside their misgivings and joined the coalition government in order to fight the war. This involvement proved to have deleterious consequences and increased the contempt of some socialists, especially those on the left, for engaging in parliamentary politics.[28] As Eugen Weber remarks, 'if the Communists were dogmatic, Socialists were bureaucratic'.[29] After the war, their historical Marxists rhetoric had increasingly little effect upon their main constituency of teachers, government workers, and skilled labourers, only further exacerbated by the communists who coopted their revolutionary credentials. All of which left them supporting governments while at the same time refusing to vote budgets or military expenditures, a confusing and perilous position at best.

Those on the right in the SFIO, who accepted participation in parliamentary government, got a boost when at its Congress at Tours in 1920 the party split into two groups with about two-thirds of the former Socialists giving birth to the PCF. Later in the 1920s as Comintern took control of the PCF's apparatuses, it turned to increasingly extremist positions.

Perhaps, the policy dividing the left the most was the Moscow dictated 'class against class' decision of 1927 prohibiting all electoral alliances and generally pitting the PCF against anyone and anything not towing the PCF line.[30] Even the socialists faced ridicule as mere 'social fascists'. While this position would last until the rapid rise of actual fascism, especially in Germany in 1933 but also with the increase in fascistic Leagues in France, so alarmed the Comintern that the PCF eventually entered into an alliance with the Socialist Party that gave birth to the Popular Front government. Nevertheless, the period leading up to the Popular Front was precarious to say the least. Some five governments came and went between 1932 and 1934 the result of a failure

[27] Thomas Flynn, *Sartre: A Philosophic Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 285.

[28] Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, p. 4.

[29] Weber, *The Hollow Years*, p. 112.

[30] Before adopting the class against class tactic, the left had aligned themselves in most run-off elections. In France's two tiered election system, if one candidate failed to receive a majority of the votes then a run-off was held. In order not to split the left-wing vote, the left-wing candidate with the most votes in the second round stood for election with all other left-wing candidates declining to run.

of the political parties to agree on any single comprehensive programme to combat the deteriorating economic conditions. A parliamentary stalemate ensued together with an increasingly anti-parliamentary attitude among the population.

Right-Wing Politics

If the left was an amalgam of parties and ideologies, then the right appeared united only in their dislike of any group they saw as 'leftist'. Their political beliefs, such as dislike of liberal democracy, aversion to widespread commercialism, disdain of what they viewed as societal decadence, and for some groups a vociferous antipathy to anyone considered 'foreign', seemed to connect the various right-wing groups together in one form or another. In general, Leagues represented the right who, for the most part, adopted a paramilitary mystic. The largest were the Union Nationale des Combattants and the Union Fédérale des Combattants, but the most well know of the Leagues was the Croix de Feu.[31] This last group of former soldiers of the Great War, organized by Colonel François de La Roque, seemed to model the movement after the torch light parades prominent in Nazi propaganda films. While the colonel was not, at least outwardly, anti-Semitic the same is not true for many of his over 400,000 followers. But as Frederick Brown points out there was no lack of groups during this period for an anti-Semite to affiliate with including the perfume tycoon François Coty's Solidarité Française, which saw parliamentarianism as a devilish inspiration, bureaucracy as repugnant, foreigners as degrading to true French culture, and capitalism as purely a Jewish construct. Other right-wing leagues such as Jeunesses Patriotes, financed by the champagne magnet Pierre Taittinger, were modelled after Mussolini's Blackshirts.[32]

6 February 1934

The left and right often engaged in street battles in the early 1930s, most notably in 1931 when three weeks of rioting broke out over a French adaptation of a German play about the Dreyfus affair. The rioting only stopped when the Prefect of Police Jean Chiappe, known for his right-wing sympathies, halted the play at the request of the Croix du Feu. Any apparent calm was, however, merely the prelude to the storm as 6 February 1934 marked a turning point in French inter-war politics.

In the worst rioting France had seen since the Commune, right-wing groups gathered in Paris' Place de la Concorde directly across the Seine from the Palais Bourbon, the home of the French Chamber of Deputies. The participants protested parliamentary representation as well as the newly formed government of the Radical leader Edouard Daladier. The ever-increasing economic effects of the worldwide depression coupled with what seemed like one parliamentary scandal after another coalesced in the protestors' distrust of the system as well as an open hostility to those in control of the government. In order to understand the importance of 6 February, we need to back-track a bit to the event that provided the spark to an otherwise smouldering poli tical environment – the Stavisky Affair.

In the waning days of 1933, the atmosphere of chronic political corruption reached the breaking point with the financial scandal circling around Serge Alexandre Stavisky who obtained pro-

[31] Brown, *The Embrace of Unreason*, p. 193.
[32] Ibid., p. 193.

tection for his swindles form some leading politicians. Stavisky was best known for promulgating a Ponzi scheme through his ownership of a *crédits municipaux*, which were government authorized lending institutions designed to help municipalities. They could, among their other attributes, issue tax-free bonds. Stavisky offered high rates of return for investments in his scheme, and it was only a matter of time before one of his clients sought to cash in their bonds, which, as with other famous Ponzi schemes, brought the house of cards crashing down.

In the subsequent investigation, Stavisky committed suicide in his hideaway chalet near Chamonix, but the death only fuelled rumours of a cover-up by government officials. Public outrage by both the left and the right quickly placed the blame on magistrates, police, government officials, the moral turpitude of the ruling class, and for the right-wing the Jews. The Stavisky affair eventually brought down the Radical government of Camille Chautemps who greatly underestimated the affair's importance. Chautemps successor, Édouard Daladier, had trouble forming a government, and in order to appease elements on the left he dismissed the Prefect of Police Jean Chiappe. The leagues saw this as an affront. Outraged at the turn of events, the right called for demonstrations for the end of January, but the night of 6 February changed everything.

In the days leading up to the fateful night, right-wing rhetoric in its newspapers was at a fever pitch. Calling on its supporters to protest against the regime of thieves and highway robbers, the right-wing groups posted flyers in the Sorbonne warning that the appointed hour of revolution had arrived. As the number of demonstrators grew rapidly, they became increasingly violent putting a great deal of pressure on the police guarding the parliament building. During the night, shots rang out from both sides. When the demonstration finally ended at about dawn, fifteen people lay dead including one police officer and 1,435 lay wounded.[33] Daladier, given a vote of confidence that night by a frightened parliament, resigned the next day fearing he would be unable to govern. Not since the days of the Commune had street violence forced a French government to resign.

The Popular Front

The right almost succeeded in its attempt to bring down the government in what many on the left feared was a fascist coup. Traumatized by the events the Radicals supported the right-wing National Union government of Gaston Doumergue, viewed by those on the right as the last defence against chaos, to others his government appeared to be the first step towards fascism.

In response to the riots, the PCF called for a rally three days later on 9 February. At the same time, the CGT announced a general strike for 12 February – included among the organizing groups for the general strike was the Union Anarchiste (UA) one of the leading anarchist organizations in France. Not to be left behind, the Socialist decided to hold demonstrations on the same day as the general strike, and, at the last minute, the PCF declared its intention to join the CGT protests as well.[34] As the two left-wing groups – Socialists and Communists – marched from opposite directions towards the Place de la Nation, no one knew if they would join forces amicably or whether violence would take hold between them. When the groups approached the square, in the words of Lèon Blum the leader of the SFIO, they 'melted into each other', but this

[33] *Jackson,* The Popular Front in France, *p. 2.*
[34] Berry, *French Anarchist Movement*, pp. 183–5.

general feeling of comradery and mutual good will faded as quickly as it emerged.[35] Days later, the PCF returned to its class against class rhetoric and once again castigated the SFIO.

The riots of 6 February also caused a reaction from intellectuals in France who were alarmed by what they viewed as the increasing fascistic tendencies modelled after the National Socialist in Germany. A month after the February riots, the Committee of Vigilance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals (CVIA) was formed, which provided a rallying point for those groups seeking to defend democratic principles.[36] The left-wing parties did not overlook the initial success of the CVIA, but Comintern's change in its class against class policy ultimately proved crucial. Only a unified left could mount a credible and sustained challenge to fascism.

At Moscow's urging, in June 1934 the PCF invited the Socialists to unite with them in action against fascism. At first suspicious of the PCF's intention, the appeal proved difficult for the Socialists to ignore and on 27 July the two former adversaries signed a Unity Pact, which essentially formed the basis for the Popular Front government that came to power in May 1936. The only element left to fall into place was the participation of the Radicals who had formed an alliance with the right-wing government of Pierre Laval in June 1935. True to their nature, however, the Radicals' allegiance once again switched when they participated in a huge demonstration organized by the left in July 1935. While not immediately joining the Unity Pact, the Radicals became increasingly dissatisfied with the Laval's policies including drastic cuts in government expenditures and a rather tepid response to the increasing violence of the right-wing Leagues. The Radicals came to see Laval as disinterested in defending democracy, and instead embracing the fascist politics of Nazi Germany, a position he would indeed embrace during the Occupation.

Because of mounting dissatisfaction with Laval, the PCF, the Socialists and the Radicals entered into negotiations that culminated in a Popular Front programme signed on 11 January 1936. Several days later, the Radicals resigned from Laval's government causing it to fall. Elections followed in May and the Popular Front won a resounding victory with the Socialist Party commanding the largest block in parliament. The right was swift in its condemnation of the Popular Front, but it saved its most vocal and vicious anti-Semitic rhetoric for Blum the Socialist leader of the Popular Front who was also the first Jewish prime minister of France.

Even though the Popular Front was a short-lived affair, its accomplishments cannot be underestimated. Within a day of formally taking office, Blum successfully put an end to a paralysing general strike that engulfed France in the months before the election. The so-called Matignon Agreement of 7 June, provided for the immediate establishment of collective bargaining agreements, a general increase in labour wages, and the election of worker delegates in all factories employing more than ten workers. The government also instituted the first ever two-week paid holiday and reduced the workweek to forty hours. Blum's government also addressed the growing concern over the Leagues by ordering their dissolution, even though one of the most important, the Croix de Feu, turned itself into a political party.

Anarchists generally sympathized with the abstract concept of 'popular frontism', but only if it meant a working-class movement organized from the bottom up. The political reality of the actual Popular Front was, however, quite different. Anarchists viewed the Blum government as a distortion of their beliefs because many linked the Popular Front to the recently signed Stalin-Laval Pact. Even though the mutual aid treaty lacked any section dealing with military

[35] Lèon Blum, *l'oeuvre de Lèon Blum IV(1) 1934–1937* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1964), pp. 7–17.
[36] Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, pp. 30–1.

mutual assistance, anarchists saw the treaty as another *Union sacrée* destined to bring on war. In addition, the pact solidified anarchists' dislike of the Communists in general and Stalin in particular. As I pointed out earlier, many anarchists were virulently anti-militaristic, and saw the pact as merely a pretence for Stalin's belligerent foreign policy. Anarchists also saw the Popular Front as a deception foisted upon the working class, since they fundamentally saw parliamentary government as no more than a mollifying institution. At the same time, they reasoned that any alliance with the bourgeoisie only meant the interests of the working class would be identified with those of the ruling class, a position that had always proved fatal in their eyes.[37]

From the outside, the Popular Front appeared unified, but fissures within the parties were never far from the surface. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 probably caused the initial dissatisfaction on the part of the PCF when Blum responded by adopting a policy of non-intervention, a policy adopted by most European countries including Germany and Italy, but clearly in name only.

A far more serious crack in unity occurred over Blum's economic policies. The financial situation was quickly deteriorating causing the government to devalue its currency in August, which resulted in capital flight that, in turn, drove Blum to announce a halt to social reforms. The situation failed to improve appreciably, and when in June 1937 the franc again became unstable, Blum demanded emergency powers to end currency speculation. While the Chamber of Deputies voted to grant such powers, the more conservative Senate refused. A second vote passed the Chamber, but again the Senate rejected the bill. Blum resigned; he held office for just over a year.

The last of the Popular Front governments collapsed in April 1938, which brought Daladier back as the head of yet another cabinet. Daladier's government marked the beginning of more repressive activities directed at anarchists' activities in particular. The government raided known anarchists' properties, banned public meetings and seized anarchists' newspapers. In essence, as Berry points out, the government treated anarchists as enemies of the state, as if France was already in a state of war.[38] During this period, anarchists' organizations were busy with their anti-war efforts as well as providing for the refugees from the conflict in Spain. However, the constant harassment in the days leading up to the declaration of war on 3 September 1939 led to severe financial hardship, and generally spelled the disintegration of anarchists' organizations.

While Maitron portrays the movement as moribund during the years 1938–45 with most of its members either becoming '*attentisme*' or simply leaving the country, Berry argues otherwise. While the movement was seriously weakened from about 1939 onwards – more out of its failure to offer a concrete strategy and because it was simply ill prepared for war or the subsequent occupation of France – Berry thinks most anarchists were engaged in some form of active resistance.[39]

Even so, resistance for anarchists had a different connotation than how one might normally think of the word. Not seen as a temporary problem that would eventually be over; anarchists saw the war as a part of a continuous struggle against capitalism, militarism, imperialism and all forms of authoritarian domination. Typical of individualist anarchist activity during the war were those who entered into relations with various resistance groups and networks, but refused to join any specific organization, preferring instead to be free to define their own responsibilities

[37] Berry, *French Anarchist Movement*, pp. 188–9.
[38] Ibid., p. 283.
[39] Ibid., pp. 284–5.

and level of involvement. This may account for the perception that anarchists never actively resisted the occupation, as did the communists.

French Political and Social Life: 1945–1960

The end of the war brought with it a certain sense of euphoria, but there was little political interest in reviving the moribund Third Republic. Viewed as inept, corrupt and the major culprit leading to the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Germans, the Third Republic would be assigned to the dustbin of history, or so it was thought. The mood in France, at least for the first sixteen months of peace, was one of rejuvenation and political reform; not since the outbreak of the Great War had the entire nation seemed united in its patriotic zeal. The fervour, however, was short-lived. At the outset The National Resistance Council, set up to rule the country until a new constitution could be forged, promised reforms that not only seemed to meet with the approval of the masses but all of the pre-war party leaders as well. Charles de Gaulle, the provisional president, ruled as a temporary dictator, but his authority was such that the country hardly needed a referendum to legitimize his position.

The elation, so pervasive at first, suddenly came to an abrupt end in October 1945 when De Gaulle angrily resigned his so-called dictatorship by consent' The politicians tasked with forging a constitution completed their work, but by then there was little enthusiasm by the majority of the French people. In a relatively short period, the mood changed; now a cloud of apathy and indifference prevailed over the new Republic. Until its demise in 1958, the Fourth Republic endured the vicissitudes of a Cold War, struggles for colonial independence, and the changing face of French identity.

The Fourth Republic 1944–1958

The Left

Post-war politics proved different and yet much the same as the Third Republic. France adopted a new constitution, but in many ways, it resembled the previous one. The war did mean changes in the political parties. On the left, early hopes for a combined front under the Socialist banner quickly came to nothing when two left leaning parties, with seemingly natural affinities to the Socialists, failed to establish a Unity Pact. The left leaning Christian Democrats formed their own party in late 1944 called the Mouvement Républican Populaire (MRP). The party promised social reform and a semi-nationally managed economy, which should have allowed for a union with the Socialists. However, distrust on both sides hampered all talk of an alliance. The other large group to form its own party was a collection of former resisters who created the Union Démocratique et Socialist Party (UDSR) in 1945. They also sought an alliance with the Socialists, but when they refused to adhere to the verbal but empty Marxism the Socialists espoused, all hope of unity ended. Certainly, by 1945 the old fault-lines of the Third Republic began to reappear.

The Communists, the other face of the left, were in a much different position than the Socialists. Their wartime resistance efforts – both real and imagined – meant they enjoyed considerable support among the masses. De Gaulle helped to bolster the image of the PCF when he authorized the return of the party's leader Maurice Thorez from Moscow, even though he deserted the French army in 1939. Also of aid to the PCF was de Gaulle's visit to Moscow at the end of 1944 as well

as the signing of a twenty-year alliance with the USSR. These actions seemed to signal the acceptance of the communists as a truly French political party. The PCF also facilitated its own image by adopting positions viewed as moderate and even patriotic. In fact, by the end of 1945 the Communists demonstrated their burgeoning strength by taking outright control of the CGT.

The end of the war also saw a resurrection of anarchists organizations, most notably the Fédération Anarchiste (FA) formed in December 1945, and composed of members of the former FA and UA. At the time, anarchists wished to start anew by wiping the slate clean of the methods of action from a past and failed age. As a 'synthesizing' umbrella organization that wished to accommodate every anarchist tendency, the new FA adopted more rigorous organizational methods including carrying of membership cards, paying regular dues, and majority rule instead of direct democratic voting, In addition, a second organization emerged, an anarcho-syndicalist trade group organized along the lines of the Spanish CNT, called the CNTF. These two groups worked together and supported a large organization with its weekly *La Libertaire* printing on average 50,000 copies.[40] In just a few short years both organizations would shrink in size and drift apart, mostly because of the international situation at the time, but also because of internal conflicts.

In 1952, Georges Fontenis (1920–2010), took over the FA and focused the movement more on the working-class constituents and less on the mechanistic approach to Marxism espoused, for example, by the PCF. Fontenis eventually evolved the organization into the Fédération Communiste Libertarian (FCL) whose platform was committed to a disciplined organizational approach that allowed for a more focused and efficient slant to the issues of interest to anarchists. While the FCL attracted workers, teachers and technicians to its ranks, it never comprised more than 200–300 members. The organization did publish a journal *Le Libertaire* and a newspaper *Le Monde Libertaire.*[41]

By 1954, those in the FA who objected to the new organization resurrected the old and broader synthesis organization that appealed to less pragmatically oriented individuals and groups. It too published a regular periodical. However, the anarchism of the post-war period hardly resembled that of the 1850s. The anarchist movement no longer controlled the trade union movement and the individualist anarchists were generally ensconced in social issues of the day. In the end, the movement was, at least in France, far too splintered to arise to a popular social movement capable of revolutionary change.

The Right

The right faced a much different task than anyone on the left. Generally discredited because of their wartime collaboration, a vacuum of leadership emerged lasting several years. The Radicals, decimated by the collapse of the Third Republic, weathered a public storm that viewed many of their leaders and positions on public policies as anachronistic. With few choices, many on the right joined the MRP, at least until the Radicals recovered from the trauma of the demise of the Third Republic, and the lingering disaffection over their support of Vichy.

Beyond the political scene, France emerged from the Occupation an economic cripple. Stripped of its natural resources by Germany, facing shortages in food supplies, and saddled with a disastrously inflated monetary system, the French economy essentially operated on a

[40] Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968*, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland: AK Press, 2002), p. 165.

[41] David Porter, *Eyes to the South: French Anarchists and Algeria* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011), p.17.

black market basis. In perhaps one of his greatest failures, proposals to address these economic problems, especially monetary issues, went unheeded by de Gaulle.

Elected in October 1945, the first Constituent Assembly entrusted with drawing-up a new constitution reflected the power of the left. The three main parties of the left – the PCF, the Socialists, and the MRP – won nearly three-quarters of the votes cast, with the PCF winning just over 26 per cent, making it the largest single party. Not only had their strength doubled since 1936 but also their support was more sociologically and geographically diverse than in previous elections. While the make-up of the Assembly seemed to bode well for real reform, disagreement almost immediately thwarted such an effort. De Gaulle was in favour of stronger executive power in the mould of England or the United States, but the PCF argued for an all-powerful single chamber legislature. In the end, they compromised on a system that looked much like the discredited Third Republic with its altogether negative system of checks and balances.

Unhappy with the proposed constitution, the MRP as well as the Radicals, who were once again emerging onto the political scene, vigorously mounted an opposition to the constitution. Their campaign succeeded, and in the May referendum, the draft was defeated. In a second Constituent Assembly in June, the MRP replaced the PCF as the largest party in the Assembly. Rising to the occasion, and in a spirit of compromise, the Socialists and MRP were able to bury their differences just long enough to make sufficient minor changes to the document to gain approval in the Assembly. In the referendum that followed, however, only 36 per cent approved, 32 per cent rejected the proposed constitution, while another 32 per cent did not vote at all. After a rather gruelling gestation period, the Fourth Republic was finally born, but few really seemed to care.

Although the country had a new constitution, the old ways surfaced almost from the start. Not unlike the Third Republic, power was concentrated in the lower house of parliament, the National Assembly. Once again, this led to political instability with cabinets lasting on average only six months.[42] Instead of less parties that would hopefully rule with far more discipline, the legislature ruled by a coalition of centre-left parties for much of the Fourth Republic. There emerged a sort of three-tiered political party structure: in one group the PCF, Socialists, and MRP; in the second tier the Radicals and Independent-Peasants (Independents); and in the third tier a much less organized group of right-wing protest movements such as the Gaullists and the Poujadists.

While the immediate post-war period witnessed the domination of the left-wing parties, this was about to change. There was a steady drift to the right in France since 1945, but in May 1947, after a wa ve of revolutionary strikes and just as the Cold War came into existence, the government ejected the PCF from the coalition, and established a new Third Force (*Troisième Force*) of Socialists, Radicals and MRP. The Socialists eventually withdraw from this new alliance in 1951 leaving control to the Radicals, the MRP and two moderate-right groups.

The Cold War cast suspicion upon the PCF's intentions during this time. Some saw the party's expulsion from the government as a result of the PCF's desire to take over key government positions in order to promulgate a semi-legal coup, as occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1948. Whatever the actual facts, these suspicions were enough to keep the PCF from forming any left of centre

[42] Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), pp. 402–3. The Fourth Republic had 21 Prime Ministers from January 1947 to June 1958.

coalitions that might have been more stable than the cumbersome centrist cabinets ruling the country.

By the late 1940s, the right was once again active on the political scene as the mood in France drifted in their direction, but it was a type of activity fundamentally different from the Third Republic and seemed concentrated in two protest movements. The first such movement centred on de Gaulle who reentered politics in 1947 with the establishment of his Rassemblement du Peuple Française (RPF), which was an anti-system, anti-communist, nationalistic party presenting itself as an alternative to socialism and capitalism. This movement quickly attracted over a million followers and won more than a hundred seats in the 1951 election. Within a year, however, de Gaulle lost control of his followers in parliament who were increasing attracted to the image and programme of the new conservative premier Antoine Pinay. In the end, de Gaulle disowned the party, and, as a result, the RPF ceased to be an effective mass movement.

The other right-wing challenge to parliament originated with a small village merchant, Pierre Poujade, who rallied his town's small businesspersons to protest the government's new efforts to combat the ever-growing problem of tax avoidance. Oddly enough, Poujade believed tax avoidance was necessary for small town businesses to survive. His local protest movement grew into a national Association for the Defense of Shopkeepers and Artisans that demonstrated the depth of feeling underway in a France confronting the fear of modernization. Quite unlike de Gaulle's RPF that attracted both left and right-wing advocates of drastic change needed to modernize the country in order to restore its greatness, the Poujadists were almost the exact opposite. They protested the very change advocated by some Gaullists. However, merely being the head of a protest movement was not enough for Poujade who turned his organization into a national political party and contested almost every district in the 1956 elections.

The election presented the Poujadists with a startling success garnering almost three million votes and more than fifty Assembly seats. Once in power, however, Poujade exhibited scant talent in leading his newly elected followers. Over the next two years, more than half of the deputies left the party to join other right-wing parties as the movement eventually faded away.

Not unlike the Third Republic before it, for most of its life successive centrist governments operating in a state of *immobilisme* ruled the Fourth. Any important issue invariably split the governing coalition and caused it to collapse. Stagnation inevitably enveloped the country. In an otherwise paralysed political environment that was considered the norm, there proved only one exception. The Radical Pierre Mendès-France became premier in 1954 after wresting control of the party from its elderly leadership. Mired in a war in Indochina against Ho Chi Minh's communist forces since a negotiated settlement of the problem broke down in 1946, the war took an ominous turn in early 1954 when Ho's forces successfully defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu. Exhausted by continual conflict, the French sought a negotiated peace settlement and Mendès-France became premier with the conclusion of the war as his major undertaking.

Mendès-France's administration successfully negotiated an end to the hostilities, but fearing open rebellion he also opened up the process leading to independence for both Tunisia and Morocco. On the domestic front, Mendès-France attempted to adopt a programme of economic reform based on the Keynesian model in order to stimulate the economy. Unfortunately, once the war in Indochina ended, his economic reforms met with widespread opposition. Early in 1955, his government lost power and an old-fashioned Radical replaced him as head of another centrist coalition. In many respects, the failure of Mendès-France paved the way for de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic.

The Socialists rejoined the governing coalition in 1956 and their leader Guy Mollet, who governed the Fourth Republic for a record sixteen months, became premier the same year. The coalition proved unwieldy and essentially returned to the immobilization characteristic of the Fourth Republic. The one bright spot helping the political situation was the rapid economic growth the country experienced in the mid-1950s. Although inflation was also a problem, a succession of weak governments was not about to tackle a thorny issue such as this. One should understand, however, that the problems during the decade of the 1950s were not necessarily internal; rather, France's external relations, especially its colonies provoked the worst concerns and unrest. As I have said, the country was engaged in almost constant struggle since 1946; first in Indochina, and soon an even more deadly conflict ripped the country apart as Algeria sought independence.

Shortly after the end of the war in Indochina, revolt broke out in Algeria and even though France attempted to repress nationalist attitudes, the movement gradually gained momentum. France was able to avert revolution in Tunisia and Morocco by granting them quasi-independent status. Algeria presented a very different problem, since it was considered an integral extension of the homeland. The situation was exacerbated by the more than one million *colons* – Europeans (mostly French) who resided in Algeria, some for generations. Initially, Mollet attempted to negotiate a settlement, but on a visit to Algiers in February 1956, an angry mob of *colons* descended upon him, demanding Algeria remains entirely under French control. Afterwards, Mollet changed his position and sent a large expeditionary force of a half million troops in a bloody and ultimately futile attempt to destroy the Algerian revolutionary movement. The conflict was marked by terrorism and atrocities perpetrated by both sides as evidenced in the classic Gillo Pontecorvo film *Battle of Algiers.*[43]

By 1958, France was both torn and tired. What was unthinkable just two years earlier, some in France talked openly of peace. This included Sartre who actively opposed the war and was a signer of Maurice Blanchot's *Delaration sur le droit à l'insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie*, or as it popularly became known as the 'Manifesto of the 121', calling on all French citizens to refuse to take up arms against the Algerians.[44] Because signing the manifesto was treasonous at the time, the c ompany printing *Les Temps Modernes* refused to print the text, but the names of the signatories along with several blank pages for the actual manifesto appeared in the July 1960 issue. During the Algerian war, *Les Temps Modernes* devoted an ever-increasing percentage of its space to articles on Algeria as well as the other French colonies. In fact, between August 1956 and September 1963 Howard Davies reports that two out of every three issues contained material relevant to the colonial struggle.[45] Having said this, the majority of the French at the time probably still insisted that Algeria remain French at all cost. This dichotomy of views set the stage for de Gaulle's return to power.

[43] Among the few first-hand accounts of the violence in Algeria was Georges Mattéï who wrote for Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes* with the intent to bring the realities of the conflict back to metropolitan France, and to shake his fellow French citizens out of their lethargy and indifference to the events taking place in Algeria. As a result, entire issues of *Les Temps Modernes* were confiscated in Algeria, which also occurred in the metropolis but with less frequency. See Georges Mattéï, 'Jours kabyles', *Les Temps Modernes*, 137–8 (juillet 1957): 138–59.

[44] Manifestos in France were commonplace during the post-Second World War period. First begun during the Dreyfus affair, there were 488 manifestos during de Gaulle's presidency from 1958 to 1969. From 1946 to 1969, Sartre was the most frequent signatory to the manifestos followed by de Beauvoir. Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions francaises: manifests et petitions aux XXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), pp. 9–10.

[45] Howard Davies, *Sartre and 'Les Temps Modernes'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 82.

What concerned Sartre, as well as others who were close to him through their association with *Les Temps Modernes,* or just viewed the battle for Algerian independence as a blight upon the character of France, was the belief that French citizens were complicit in torture. Sartre looked upon the war in his usual Manichean manner as the difference between good and evil, but now expressed in terms of *humain* and *inhumain*. Both terms are more evocative and better able to express the systemization of individual conduct within a radically fractured group structure that was France at the time. Torture, for Sartre, is the same as colonialism; it is a system of institutionalized practice, a theme he returns to in the *Critique*.[46]

Generally, anarchists opposed French colonialism, which they saw as repressive and racist. However, differences naturally arose within anarchists circles as to how to respond to so-called nationalist movements, or wars of liberation. Some wished to adhere to classical anarchist ideals without compromising their actions, while others wanted to pursue liberation movements far more aggressively. Again, this was a battle between those who took an active role in the struggle through their writing and protesting, but refrained from any direct action or alliances with other groups, and those committed to direst action with other like-minded organizations.

Regardless of the strategy, the intensity of feelings concerning the Algerian conflict took its toll on many anarchist organizations. In 1956, the Mollet government began a systematic repression leading to the decimation of the FCL. Using its 'special powers' granted by the Assembly, the Mollet government imprisoned militants, confiscated journals, and allowed fascist gangs to operate unchecked. All of which further destabilized an already tense situation.

Rumours of a coup were swirling for some time as the situation in Algeria worsened. Many of the alleged plotters were ex-military who had spent time in Algeria, some for more than two decades. Active military personnel were also sympathetic to their cause and many looked to de Gaulle as the symbolic saviour. Yet, the public at large was mainly ambivalent to any new government headed by de Gaulle.[47] Unexpectedly, events pushed France towards the Fifth Republic. Mollet's government fell in 1957 as did his successor in April 1958. It would be a month before a new coalition could be patched together, which only heightened the tension. On 13 May, when the new premier was supposed to present his cabinet for approval, large demonstrations organized by extremist *colon* leaders broke out in Algiers that eventually ended in street violence. Amid the chaos, the *colons* proclaimed a revolutionary government with a Committee of Public Safety as its leadership organization; a title evoking the Terror and a Republic in imminent peril.

The Algerian crisis seemed to spiral out of control with France close to civil war. Both sides in the conflict hardened their positions while de Gaulle remained generally aloof from the agitation below. Events started to go de Gaulle's way when several military leaders in Algeria gave him their approval, and his agents took control of the Committee of Public Safety. Pressure on the government in France increased when supporters of de Gaulle waged a successful coup in Corsica. Finally, the president of France persuaded the government to resign in favour of de Gaulle who won Assembly approval on 1 June. Technically, de Gaulle was the last premier of the Fourth Republic, but on the same day the Assembly confirmed de Gaulle and granted him full powers; it then adjourned for six months never to reconvene.

[46] Ibid., p. 83.

[47] Wright, *France in Modern Times*, p. 408. Wright says an opinion poll taken in early 1958 showed only 13 per cent of those asked wanted de Gaulle to return to power.

De Gaulle's ascent to power was much like that of Pétain in 1940. In both instances, the members of parliament committed governmental suicide by surrendering power to a single person, all with little or no popular opposition. Like the Third Republic, the Fourth died a slow and agonizing death, but in the end, it was a funeral without mourners. The public ultimately lost faith in the inherent instability of the Fourth Republic and its inability to end the Algerian crisis, which would not conclude until 1962. As Raymond Aron put it, 'eventually a country cannot obey those for whom it has contempt'.[48]

We are now in a position to view Sartre's political philosophy. In the next chapter, I shall commence the process by looking at his very early writings from the late 1920s through the Second World War. In Chapter 7, I shall continue the discussion starting with his post–Second World War works and ending just before the publication of the *Critique*.

[48] Quoted in Jack Hayward, *Fragmented France: Two Centuries of Disputed Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 243.

6. The Early Development of Sartre's Political Anarchism

> 'I have always loathed hierarchies and in some of the present-day antihierarchical conceptions I see a sense of freedom'.
>
> —Interview with Sartre, *Adieux*

The Beginning of an Anarchist Political Philosophy

Despite conventional wisdom and de Beauvoir's assertion that Sartre was not at all political until the Second World War, his political philosophy, I would argue, began to take shape at a very early age.[1] Interestingly, however, Sartre rarely if ever referred to his work in terms of 'political philosophy', even though in his initial writings one can detect an attempt to grapple with a philosophy based on political and social constructs. This is quite evident from his first endeavours at the *École Normale Superieure* to his much more sophisticated political essays of the 1940s and 1950s, and ultimately to the *Critique*. In fact, the *Critique* is less an ontological or phenomenological work in the vein of *Being and Nothingness* as some have maintained, than it is a political philosophy firmly grounded in a sociological anthropology with a heavy emphasis on psychology.[2]

[1] In explaining their position, de Beauvoir says, 'this more or less represented our attitude at the time: events could arouse strong emotion in us, whether anger, fear or joy, but we did not participate in them. We remained spectators'. de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life,* pp. 174–5. Some people rely on de Beauvoir's sentiment and assume Sartre was particularly non-political in the years before the war. This probably misconstrues her point. In her memoir, de Beauvoir contrasts the active political participation in various struggles by friends such as Fernando Gerassi and Paul Nizan to their own political inactivity at the time. While it is true Sartre neither actively participated in the politics of the time nor did he join any political party, it is also true that after the war when he was actively engaged in politics Sartre never joined a political party. De Beauvoir does admit, 'in our youth, we had felt close to the Communist Party insofar as its negativism agreed with our own anarchism'. Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstances*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964), p. 5. I would also point out that in an interview with Sartre de Beauvoir chastises Sartre for feeling that his political activity in the 1930s was 'very vague'. She notes they were both extremists who felt themselves to be intellectual dissenters taking part in the social arguments swirling about at the time. Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*, trans. Patrick O'Brian (New Yor k: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 353; see also, pp. 382–3. This inactivity was not necessarily unusual for many intellectuals at the time including Merleau-Ponty who was also politically inactive before the Second World War.

[2] The argument for a strictly ontological interpretation of the *Critique* revolves around Sartre's notion of need and labour. This line of reasoning asserts that human activity consists in a totalizing dialectical praxis, which is need and labour. *CDR I*, p. 80; p. 90. Based on need and the lack it determines, need organizes though labour the unity of the field of materialization. Ibid., p. 197. Others view the *Critique* differently including, for example, William McBride as well as Hazel Barnes and Mark Poster who call Sartre a 'neo-Marxist'. William McBride, *Sartre's Political Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.131; and, Poster, *Sartre's Marxism*, p. 15. George Lichtheim, on the other hand, thinks that the *Critique* 'presents itself as an attempt to outline the logic of a Marxist anthropology'.

While Sartre's concern with individual reality – and thus the ontological aspects of the *Critique* – is always present in his work, reality is only meaningful in a social setting that depends a great deal on the psychological make-up of the individuals comprising the group. Moreover, even though some argue that the *Critique* is a complete break with *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre reminds us it is difficult to fully comprehend the former without a thorough understanding of the latter.[3] The better view is that the *Critique* is *Being and Nothingness* while at the same time it is much more. In this respect, I note just two aspects where the *Critique* transcends both his earlier work, and at the same time distinguishes the *Critique* from notions of Marxism prevalent at the time.

First, Sartre goes beyond the starting point of his earlier concern with individual praxis by emphasizing the actual mediations that bind individuals to social groups. The individual integrates into the social structure by accentuating the dialectical dimensions of individual praxis inscribed in the integral totalization comprising a society. Secondly, Sartre lays bare the profound dialectical relationship uniting praxis to the materiality of the external world; as he frames the effort:

> I have simply tried to establish without prejudice (the inquiry is not yet complete) the basic relations between *praxis* and the material environment (in so far as it organizes a practical field and defines the relations between men through their objects, and the relations between objects through men) in which a rational foundation for the certainty of dialectical investigations *(l'evidence de l'experience dialectique),* which any reader of Marx can experience, can be found.[4]

The study of the relationship between praxis and the material field in which praxis plays-out is the chief concern for Sartre in his analysis of group activity.

George Lichtheim, 'Sartre, Marx, and History', *History and Theory* 3, no. 2 (1963): 224. Thomas Flynn sees Sartre writing a 'social ontology'. Thomas Flynn, *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism: The Test Case for Collective Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. xii–xiv. With regard to the ontological nature of the *Critique*, Sartre indicates, 'I am not hereby intending to study ontologically the complex structures that constitute this real-being: i.e., the dialectical unity of the human and the anti-human in all their forms'. *CDR II*, p. 301. This, he says, is best left to ontology of History and not to the critique of dialectical reason. Traces of this thought emerge in his *Notebooks for an Ethics* where he states, '…society is a phenomenon immediately deducible from ontological considerations about the detotalized totality. As soon as there is a plurality of Others, there is a society. Society is the first concretion that leads from ontology to anthropology'. John-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellaurer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 117 (originally written in 1947 and 1948). Hereinafter referred to as '*NBE*'. Lastly, Joseph Catalano thinks Sartre rejects any pluralism and instead espouses a 'distinctive monism, one arising not from a traditional a priori perspective on reason or realty, but rather from a recognition of the way institutions, pressure groups, and social and economic relations tie each of us to every other'. Joseph S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume I, Theory of Practical Ensembles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 1.

[3] de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, p. 422. Those who think the *Critique* is a radical break from Sartre's earlier work include, Mary Warnock, *The Philosophy of Sartre* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1965), who believes that the *Critique* is the complete and deliberate rejection of the individual. Ibid., p. 135. Similarly, Walter Odajnyk, *Marxism and Existentialism* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1965), thinks the *Critique* is the work of an 'older man' who has 'renounced his former ideas concerning the individual and his relation to society and has adopted many of the basic principles of Marxism'. Ibid., p. 142. For various reasons that will become evident throughout this work, both of these positions are without merit.

[4] *CDR I*, p. 216.

Sartre's Very Early Writings 1927–1932

Without losing sight of Sartre's main political manifesto, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, there are other texts written prior to the *Critique* that illuminate several important elements of Sartre's intellectual development with regard to his particular concept of political philosophy, as well as his anarchism. I shall first outline some of the main aspects of Sartre's work prior to 1960, which include articles written as early as his student years at the *École Normale Superieure*. In many respects, these essays provide a foundation for the *Critique*, and here a critical point arises: Sartre is not what one would call a non-iterative thinker. Instead, he continuously shapes and moulds his opinions, yet as his thought evolves one is aware of his surprising consistency.[5]

The first essay and, indeed, one of the first written by Sartre dealing with a political issue appeared in 1927 under the title, 'The Theory of the State in Modern French Thought'.[6] The essay presents a window onto Sartre's thinking and the beginning of a process eventually culminating in the *Critique*. The subject matter of the essay concerns theories of law as theories of the state. Specifically, Sartre discusses the distinction between, on the one hand, the classical notion of natural rights inseparably bound to an idealist notion of divine right, and, on the other hand, a creeping notion of realism prevalent since the Great War.[7] Sartre compares three French political theorists of his day, Maurice Hauriou, Georges Davy and Léon Duguit, each of whom believe that law and state are of essential importance, but who are all realist in Sartre's analysis.[8] The crucial issue Sartre seeks to confront is, albeit in its embryonic form, Davy's statement that

> all nations constituted as states assert their sovereignty both in respect to their neighbors and to those who fall under their jurisdiction. And hence come, within each state, perpetual conflicts between individual and collective rights, between the state and the individuals or collective bodies which compose it; and between states, conflicts of national sovereignty.[9]

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[5] In commenting on his own work, Sartre says, 'There is an evolution, but I don't think there is a break [between *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique*] … I think I underwent a continuous evolution beginning with *La Nausée* all the way up to the *Critique de la raison dialectique*. My great discovery was that of the sociality during the war, since to be a soldier at the front is really to be a victim of a society that keeps you where you do not want to be and gives you laws you don't want'. 'Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 12.

[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Theory of the State in Modern French Thought', in *The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre Volume 2: Selected Prose*, ed. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, trans. Richard McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 36. Hereinafter referred to as 'The Theory of the State'. First published as 'La Théorie de l'état dans la pensée français d'aujourd'hui', in *Revue universitaire international* (janvier 1927).

[7] Sartre defines idealism in the following manner: 'Idealism in respect to rights is the intellectual attitude which regards fact and the idea together, with idea supporting fact'. He defines Realism as, 'Realism in respect to rights regards facts only; hence arises the German notion of force, since force is a fact'. Ibid., p. 26. Later Sartre claims, 'Idealism's error is to posit the mind first'. Jean-Paul Sartre, *War Diaries: Notes from a Phoney War, November 1939-March 1940* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 21. Hereinafter referred to as '*War Diaries'*.

[8] René Hauriou (1856–1929) was dean of the School of Law at the University of Orleans from 1906 to 1926. Georges Davy (1883–1976) was a sociologist who taught at the Sorbonne in Paris where he continued the work of Emile Durkheim in the area of law. He was also a member of *l'Académe des sciences morale et politiques*. Léon Duguit (1859–1928) was a jurist who specialized in public law utilizing a method of sociological positivism; he was also a colleague of Emil Durkheim's.

[9] 'The Theory of the State', p. 23. William McBride makes the point that Sartre rarely discusses the law in any of his writings, and when he does, his analysis is extremely lacking. McBride, *Sar tre's Political Philosophy*, p. 21. As with both Proudhon and Bakunin, the law is a suspect category in anarchist thought. Proudhon especially believes law to be merely a reflection of the ruling class, and a means to oppress the proletariat. An argument can and will

In effect, the issue facing Davy and the others is the difficult contradiction between sovereign states thought of as a person – a person having a will determining its own actions solely by itself – and, at the same time, this will having limitations imposed upon its actions. While Sartre's discussion of this complex problem is somewhat superficial, nevertheless, the entire notion of state versus individual sovereignty is of concern to him, as it was for both Proudhon and Baku nin. Indeed, it assumes a fundamental position in the *Critique* where it plays a pivotal role between the freedom of individual sovereignty associated with the group-in-fusion, and the alienating, 'immobilized' quasi-sovereignty of the institution.

Several themes in Sartre's essay are worth illuminating. First, he has a difficult time identifying himself with either realists' or idealists' conceptions of the state that were prevalent philosophical fixtures of the time. Secondly, he expresses some surprise that each of the theorists relegates individual free will (what he later terms freedom) to a decidedly secondary position. Next, Sartre sees a suppressed metaphysical basis (what he later terms 'mystification') for the theories of the state that are premised on 'the moral personality of the State', rather than on the phenomena of lived experience. These last two points are fundamental to Sartre's thinking throughout his life, and intersect with his notion that only an individual is capable of making history, and only concrete lived experience (*la vécu*) accounts for the manner in which history is experienced. Fourthly, while Sartre accepts Davy's assertion that sovereignty emanates from primitive small groups where each is individually sovereign – a position he reiterates in the *Critique* – he rejects Davy's claim that we can adhere to conventional concepts of sovereignty even after accepting this original premise. In Sartre's view, sovereignty historically originated in individuals within groups, but as groups develop and survival depends on the unity within the group, individual sovereignty journeys from its original position to ensconce itself in one individual, the 'sovereign'.

For Sartre, the entire ingrained idea of sovereignty is subject to examination and change; he wants, therefore, to look for fresh ideas about the relationship between rights and laws and their concomitant duties. However, at this early stage of his life exactly how the concept of sovereignty comes to be rethought is left unanalysed; the answer is eventually 'worked-out' in the *Critique,* where individual sovereignty is dialectically opposed to the necessities of the practico-inert's alienating apparatuses.

In contrast to Davy, Sartre is inclined towards Duguit's argument whose theoretical starting point is not political but philosophical. Duguit thinks two false premises ground the legal and political system of the Third Republic: the first is the theory of state sovereignty that regards the nation as both sovereign and a person; the second is the notion of a natural and inalienable right of the individual juxtaposed against the right of a sovereign state. In Duguit's mind, state sovereignty is an imaginary construct that refuses explanation either by resort to some notion of

be made that Sartre also views the system of laws as nefarious, and while he does not direct his attention to law as such, the *Critique* can be seen as a basis for the development of a legal theory, especially with regard to the pledge whose very nature and structure presuppose a system predicated on rights and duties. Where appropriate, I shall draw attention to what Sartre says about law in general and the legal system in particular, since law has a direct bearing on Sartre's analysis of group formations within the organized group as well as his anarchist thoughts. A very interesting discussion of this aspect of the *Critique* is in Nicos Poulantzas, 'Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and Law', in *The Poulantzas Reader*, ed. James Martin (London: Verso, 2008), pp. 47–73. Originally published as '*La Critique de la Raison Dialectique* de J-P Sartre et le droit' *Archives de Philosophie du Droit* 10 (1965): 83–106. Nicos Puolantzas (1936–79) was a Marxist political sociologist. In the 1970s, he joined with Louis Althusser as one of the leading Structural Marxist. He is most well known for his theoretical work on the state.

divine right or to the will of the people – both of which are gratuitous, unproved and, in fact, defy proof. Duguit believes such notions are not subject to human explanation, which is, he thinks, necessary when dealing with law.

Fundamental to Duguit's theory, and in fact the starting point for any investigation of social problems, is his argument regarding need, which he believes originates from a single source: '*solidarity* considered as primordial fact'.[10] For Duguit, we all inhabit a world bearing with us an individual consciousness, diverse needs and our own aspirations – in Sartre's term, our project – together with a role to play in our world. Against this, we grasp our inability to realize any of these without the participation and cooperation of the sociality each of us comprises. Indeed, the interrelations of these functions and more makes up social life, and the only adequate test of either individual rights or state interference with those rights is the discharge of those functions. Duguit further clarifies his position by asserting that in actuality there are no inherent rights at all only duties; our rights consist only in those things necessary for the undertaking of our functions.

Duguit's denial of the right of the state as a person is a radical departure from the liberal attempt in France at merely minimizing state interference with individual rights. The point for Duguit is not how much the state interferes with our liberty but the manner in which it interferes. Thus, the essential undertaking is to rid ourselves of any understanding of the state as somehow a person whose authority is external to us; rather, it is simply a public service.

Later Sartre alters Duguit's terminology and refers to solidarity as unity, but he does not change the effect. As with Duguit, who saw autonomous groups as the normative form of societal organization with each group exercising some degree of disciple over the members of the group but always within their control, group unity for Sartre assumes a primordial 'function' as the group seeks to unify not only its members but its actions as well. Duguit sees solidarity creating diverse functions among individuals; some fulfilled by those individuals and others by groups. Nevertheless, Duguit's concept of function is not arbitrarily established; rather, it comes about through necessity that presides at birth, again, a notion Sartre develops more fully in the *Critique*. According to Sartre's interpretation of Duguit, this means individuals have no rights, they simply possess a certain number of functions to fulfil, which, echoing Duguit, Sartre says comes down to saying, 'my liberty is thus no right; it is a duty'.[11]

Reminiscent of Proudhon, the real source of personality is function; one is a person only to the extent one plays a role in society, and each individual usually plays a multitude of roles. Having said this, however, functions are fungible; someone can always replace another's function. We shall see this theme resurfacing in Sartre's thought in the *Critique* as he moves through the various social formations to the organization where mediated praxis manifests itself as function.

Lastly, Sartre acknowledges Duguit's point that if the individual becomes a mere cog in the machinery of the state, and the state becomes a function with respect to the governed, then the day will come when social need requires the creation of a superior function. Sartre refers to this as a 'superstate' intended to unite all others as a 'function of functions'.[12] This means the state loses its separate and spiritual personality and retains only a national individuality, which also means the state is not 'robbed' of its sovereignty because state sovereignty is non-existent. According

[10] Ibid., p. 33. See also, Léon Duguit, 'The Law and the State', *Harvard law Review* 31, no. 1 (November 1917): 1–192.

[11] 'The Theory of the State', p. 34.

[12] Ibid., p. 35.

to Sartre, Duguit's ideal is one vast European organism made up of interlocking functions, at the top of which is the superstate as a function of functions.

While Duguit's theory envisions a drastically weakened state, the effect is more far-reaching. If the state is not a person, then it is difficult to justify acts of power because it eliminates the otherwise elaborate syst ems of centralized control so prevalent otherwise. Moreover, if acts of power are not justified then the state could hardly validate, for example, unwarranted police actions, executive abuse or legislative power.

It should not be surprising that Sartre displays a natural inclination towards Duguit's theories. Whether Sartre was aware of it or not, in his own time even his colleague Hauriou labelled Duguit an anarchist. Others, including Harold Laski, likened Duguit's remodelling of the state along federalist principles to Proudhon.

While not developed beyond a brief statement, Sartre's discussion falls within two very different camps. Initially, as further evidence of his concern with Stalin in Volume II of the *Critique*, Sartre see Stalin performing a function of a function as his particular function (head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) mediates the praxis of institutions (all the institutional forms of government) that are themselves reduced to mere functions. In this sense, Stalin is a 'superstate' mediating all institutions.[13] Secondly, Sartre seems to recognize a federalist concept along the lines advocated by Proudhon and Bakunin. As both Proudhon and Duguit also recognized, this means state sovereignty does not exist; it is a mere illusion. Regardless of the intent, the *Critique's* rejection of a foundation for sovereignty has its beginnings in Sartre's very early writings.

A second essay, 'The Legend of Truth', published in June 1931 in the journal *Bifur,* shows Sartre as a very different writer, this time a creative storyteller of myth.[14] The essay consists of three parts: 'The Legend of the Certain', 'The Legend of the Probable', and 'The Legend of the Solitary Man'. The Certain represents science and its social construct, democracy. The Probable concerns the field of abstract philosophy, which corresponds to the aristocracy, and as Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka explain, 'the solitary man is clearly Sartre himself trying to go beyond the certain and the probable to discuss the truth through an individual, concrete investigation which led to a social anarchical attitude'.[15]

In the essay, Sartre's natural sympathies lie in the 'wonder workers' who are outside the City of logic and mathematics, and who ramble about by themselves in the wilderness trusting only their own eyes to know the truth. At this time in his intellectual life, Sartre tells de Beauvoir 'he attached great importance to what [he] then called the "lone man." That is, fundamentally the free man, insofar as he lives apart from others because he is free and because he causes

[13] I realize at this stage of his life, Stalin the person is not of concern to Sartre. However, Stalin is, in the sense Sartre eventually portrays him, merely a metaphor or as Sartre says an avatar for what he is attempting to elucidate. In short, Stalin could be and is, quite literally, anyone.

[14] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Legend of Truth', in *The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre Volume 2: Selected Prose*, p. 37. Hereinafter referred to as 'The Legend of Truth'. The published portion of 'The Legend of Truth' was part of a much larger book Sartre wrote, but was rejected for publication. His friend Paul Nizan helped get this smaller portion of the book published in *Bifur* tome 8 (juin 1931): 77–96. For her part, de Beauvoir thought the essay's Platonic myth style was 'a fairly stilted way of writing', de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, p. 136. In his defence, Sartre says the essay was an attempt to find a relationship between literature and philosophy. Later in his life he changed his opinion and thought philosophy could not be experienced literarily. See, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre by Himself,* A screenplay directed by Alexander Astrue and Michele Contat, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), p. 28.

[15] 'The Legend of Truth', p. 42.

things to happen on the basis of his freedom'.[16] In another interview in 1971, with John Gerassi, Sartre says at the time he wrote the essay he was primarily interested in the solitary individual not influenced by scientific absolutism or the philosophical elites in France.[17] In his mythical portrayal, Sartre labels certain Scientific Societies as 'polluted', since their public usefulness is manifested in their strict collective character. In fact, he disdainfully writes that the first members of these communities were undoubtedly fanatical democrats. Sartre chastises the collective nature of these scientists because each individual scientist not only does, but also must depend on another learned individual. These scientists form the common herd whose only thoughts originate from the other's point of view. In Sartre's mythical tale, scientists busy themselves with creating machines whose relation to some natural product he calls 'laws'.

I should note in particular Sartre's reference to machines, or machine-like qualities this mythical science occupies itself with, and the relation of those machines to a juridical structure. He does not expand upon the metaphor, but it forms the foundation for his discussion years later in the *Critique* of machine-like structures associated with analytic reason that take over the organized group in the form of a bureaucracy dominated by rules and laws. In contrast, Sartre's solitary man within his myth sees scientific work carried out in common, in conjunction or in collaboration with others. The solitary truth Sartre seeks emerges 'from the masses, from the common, and faced a world, the given, with no escapes, no help, and no explanation'.[18] Sartre's desire is, exactly like Bakunin's, to disperse scientific knowledge among the people, not concentrate its power within an elite governing power.

This individualistic idea of freedom forms the basis for Sartre's ontological freedom in *Being and Nothingness*, which was highly criticized, especially by Merleau-Ponty. I shall say more concerning this subject, but suffice it to say Sartre never alters his basic concern that regardless of where we are historically situated and whatever the political or social *milieu* we find ourselves inhabiting, it is essential to understand people. This does not imply that he never adjusted his ideas with regard to freedom from a position that envisions human actions as free in all situations to a position he says he really meant:

> One is responsible for oneself even if one's acts are provoked by something external. Every action includes a proportion of habit, of received ideas, of symbols; and then again there is something that comes from our remotest depths and that is related to our primary freedom.[19]

We shall see how this 'situatedness' of human freedom takes precedence over the ontological notion of freedom as Sartre develops his thoughts throughout the 1950s and eventually reaches a crescendo in the *Critique*.[20]

The essay is not only interesting as a precursor to his developing notion regarding individual sovereignty, but also because of the importance Sartre places on the human subject not merely reduced to scientific knowledge. Moreover, and in a very remarkable way, the essay provides a

[16] de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, p. 353.

[17] By elites, Sartre is referring to Léon Brunschvicg.

[18] John Gerassi, *Talking with Sartre*, ed. and trans. John Gerassi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 51–2.

[19] de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, p. 352.

[20] This is probably why Sartre's later biographical studies of Jean Genet, and especially Gustave Flaubert take on a life of their own.

perspective on the ideas of group formation. This latter point is brought out by Sartre's insistence in his mythical narration that when the 'dictator declared war, this awesome power of life and death was granted to him from below'.[21] Sartre sees 'power being passed from hand to hand up to the hand that tore the treaty into bits'. As he further describes the event:

> a long chain of meetings and methodical, concerted actions ended up in a decisive gesture, and the power did not properly speaking belong to any one of them. If anyone had been suspected of possessing it as his alone, he would have been immediately executed. Each was only the delegate of another or of all others; by himself he was nothing but a mineral, a dead stone.[22]

The very notion of power emanating from below is, of course, an anarchist argument.

These first two essays illustrate a certain starting point for Sartre's political philosophy. His developing concern for individual sovereignty – freedom – begins to take shape, but the concern is generally directed towards abstract ideas not necessarily associated with any particular political movement or event. Sartre's direction is, however, unmistakable as he continues to develop his political thoughts in the ensuing decades.

Sartre's Political Positions in the late 1930s

While Sartre's intellectual pursuits continued throughout the 1930s, very little of his writings are strictly political, and, as previously indicated, neither Sartre nor de Beauvoir actually participated in political activities. However, if as Sartre says, 'all writing is political', then we must turn to his literary efforts, which are not so much books about politics as they are political books.[23] For example, completed in July of 1938, *The Wall* is a collection of short stories based on political themes. Two of those stories, 'The Wall', depicting the Spanish Civil War, and 'The Childhood of a Leader', which is not only an attack on anti-Semitism generally but more specifically on Charles Murras' *Action Française*, are political in nature and violent in their portrayal. Having said this, and taking Sartre at his word, during this period he mostly directed his thoughts to other causes, especially Husserl's phenomenology and the study of Heidegger.[24] Before we move on, however, I want to discuss one additional point concerning Sartre's intellectual development, his alleged pacifism.

In his philosophical biography of Sartre, Thomas Flynn observes that Sartre's pacifism probably emanated from Alain (Émile Chartier 1868–1951), a charismatic, pacifist professor at the Lycée Henri-IV. According to Flynn, Sartre's pacifism was both short-lived and superficial. Significantly, Flynn argues, 'it was anti-militarism rather than opposition to violence per se that fed Sartre's "pacifism" '.[25] Flynn's remarks are meaningful, since even in the 1930s, individualist anarchists continued to espouse anti-militarist positions, as occurred with the Stalin-Laval Pact. Anarchists viewed the pact with alarm believing it a disguised prelude to another war. Even though the agreement contained no military provisions, the mere idea was enough to arouse the anti-militaristic ire of many anarchists.

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[21] 'The Legend of Truth', p. 47.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Sartre, *Sartre by Himself*, p. 64. This would also include Sartre's plays, which, for the most part, are highly political.

[24] Sartre, *Sartre by Himself*, p. 30.

[25] Flynn, *Sartre: A Philosophical Biography*, p. 286.

Phenomenology

Even though Sartre engaged in other intellectual pursuits, there is a trace of political thinking percolating to the surface in these efforts as well. The very last pages of his *Transcendence of the Ego* (1936) recognize the social and political nature of phenomenology, which is probably a reaction to what he calls the 'extreme left's' (by which he means the PCF) position labelling phenomenology as merely idealism. His argument centres on the notion that phenomenology, far from being idealistic, is the only method capable of plunging humankind back into the world by giving full measure to human agonies, sufferings, and rebellion.[26] This position, one he champions for the remainder of his life, is also a refutation of dialectical materialism in general, and the PCF's dogmatic acceptance of dialectical materialism in particular. In this sense, it is a highly political polemic having its origins in a book concerning the existentialist theory of consciousness, a theory absolutely fundamental to Sartre's philosophy, but also directly at odds with Marxism's conception of consciousness – a point I want to elaborate.

Theory of Knowledge

In Marx's epistemology, the real world exists prior to and independent of our thought, and remains so after thought replicates it. For the Marxists of Sartre's day, science's task was to reproduce this independent reality in thought with thought's aim corresponding to its object. These abstract concepts must, in turn, be brought together such that by means of their interconnectedness there is reproduced in thought the complex inner structure of concrete reality of which that thought seeks to produce reality as such.[27] Accordingly, Marx's theory of knowledge is essentially a reflection of reality.

On the other hand, and in direct conflict with Marx's so-called fundamental thesis of dialectical materialism that privileges matter over consciousness, Sartre grounds his epistemology in the primacy of consciousness. Human consciousness not only constitutes the relationship between things, it is the methodological foundation for all knowledge and, as Sartre further explains in the *Critique*, it is the basis for history and its process of totalization. Moreover, it is the reason history is both rational and intelligible. The dialectic derives from human activity, which imbues activity with knowledge. One cannot surmise, therefore, intelligibility from an external viewpoint; one can only discern intelligibility with a subject within a situation whose activity is both freely chosen and contributes to the overall comprehension of the process of historical totalization. Sartre never abandons the individual, even in the *Critique* where he steadfastly maintains that all things begin with human consciousness. This distinction between Sartre and Marx plays a fundamental part in Sartre's relationship with the PCF, and is one of the reasons he never joined the 'Party' because doing so meant repudiating his entire philosophy, a position Sartre –unlike György Lukács – never contemplated.

Returning to Sartre's political activities, de Beauvoir notes that his active political involvement occurred during and after the Second World War. His resistance efforts are well known and somewhat controversial, but one of his undertakings during the war is significant.[28] Sartre's

[26] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*, trans. Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), pp. 104–6.

[27] See generally, Klaus Hartmann, *Sartre's Ontology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 71.

[28] In recent times, Sartre's wartime activities have come into question. In 1985, the newspaper *Libération* published an interview with Vladimir Jankélévitch in which Jankélévitch questioned whether Sartre's post-war political

resistance organization, *Socialisme et Liberté*, a rather short-lived affair by any standard, was organized in April 1941 and disbanded by the end of the year.[29] As a leader of the group, Sartre produced a model constitution of some 100 pages, which he hoped would guide post-war France. While the text has not survived, one of the group's followers and a student of Merleau-Ponty, Simone Debout, recalls that despite its 'anachronistic' overtones, Proudhon's influence is quite apparent. Among its 110 to 120 articles, it proposed the creation of a new currency based on labour, which would establish the value of an object according to the time it took to produce it. He also envisioned a judiciary completely separated from the executive and vast changes to France's military structure.[30]

Dialectical Materialism

Sartre's political beliefs began to coalesce in the immediate post-war period, and it is undoubtedly true that several factors affected his ultimate political maturity. Initially, there was Merleau-Ponty's guiding hand, about which much has been written, and I do not think it necessary to add to that scholarship.[31] Suffice it to say, Merleau-Ponty did have an influence on Sartre's political views, especially in the period from just after the war to the early 1950s. As the unofficial head of *Les Temps Modernes'* political section, Merlau-Ponty wrote or edited most of the journal's articles concerning the political situation of the times, at least until his self-imposed silence.

The second factor affecting Sartre's political situation was his mere stature: by the end of the war, Sartre was famous. He was a much sought after personality who not only co-founded one of the leading intellectual and political journals of his day, but was also the spokesperson for a new and exciting philosophy. Ever since his youth he wanted to be the centre of attention, and politics was where the attention resided. In his autobiography, he remarked, 'I had been convinced that we were created for the purpose of laughing at the act we put on for each other. I accepted the act, but I required I be the main character'.[32] As de Beauvoir describes, being the main character came with a price:

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activity, and especially his groundbreaking work *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1946), was motivated by an 'unhealthy compensation' for wartime guilt. Jankélévitch was specifically referring to Sartre's appointment in 1941 to a teaching position at the Lyceé Condocert formerly held by Henri Dreyfus-Le Foyer. LeFoyer was a Jew forbidden to teach under the occupation, and the great nephew of Alfred Dreyfus. See, Vladimir Jankélévitch, 'la mal de la bivalence', *Libération* (Paris) (10 juin 1985), pp. 34–5. The debate, although highly contested at the time, continues to resurface. In an article in 2000, Ingrid Galster falls short of accusing Sartre of collaboration, but does think he is guilty of hypocrisy. Ingrid Galster, 'Sartre et la "question juive" Réflexions au-delà d'une controverse', *Commentaire* 89 (2000): 141–7. While it is true Sartre must have dep ended on a certain amount of accommodation from both the Vichey regime and the German authorities in order to stage his subversively anti-fascist play 'Les Mouches', and he undoubtedly knew Jews were being expelled from their teaching positions, Sartre was probably typical of the time – neither no more nor no less heroic than anyone else. For more about cultural life and the arts in occupied France see: Alan Riding, *And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

[29] Annie Cohen-Solal, *Jean-Paul Sartre: A Life*, trans. Anna Cancogni ed. Norman Macafee (New York: The New Press, 1985), pp. 164–75.

[30] Ibid., p. 169. Cohen-Solal does not indicate what Debout meant by the term anachronistic

[31] See generally, Jon Stewart, ed., *The Debate Between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

[32] Sartre, *The Words,* pp. 85–6.

> A celebrity and a scandal at the same moment, it was not without uneasiness that Sartre accepted a fame which, exceeding all his old ambitions, also contradicted them. Although he had wanted posterity's approval, he had not expected to reach more than a very small public in his lifetime. A new fact, the event of 'one world', transformed him into an author of world fame; he had imagined that *Nausea* would not be translated for many years; as a result of modern techniques, the rapidity of communications, his works were already appearing in a dozen languages. … And the price of this insane glory was high. … His books, even if they were read, would not be the ones he had written.[33]

One additional factor influenced Sartre's political development, his problematic relation with the PCF. Existentialism and phenomenology were gaining favour within French intellectual circles, especially those of the young, and this caused concern among dogmatic Marxists in the PCF who saw these movements as a threat to dialectical materialism. While Sartre's relationship with the PCF is long, varied and quite complex, in order to understand not only the social and political framework of the period but also to better understand Sartre's position, I shall undertake a discussion of the relationship in the next chapter. In order to aid the discussion, I want to turn to an analysis of a central issue of disagreement between Sartre and the PCF, namely, the concept of dialectical materialism, so dear to the PCF and equally anathema to Sartre.

At stake for Sartre was a central concern that if the dialectics of nature was accepted as Engels contemplated, then dialectical materialism represented, in a unified and coherent form, a detailed ontology based on substantive knowledge in the different sciences. If so, it would immediately become universal and assume a complete philosophy. In short, it is a general conception of the world and hence a reincarnation of philosophy itself. If this is so, then, the real question is not only the efficacy of the formulation of Engels' fundamental dialectical laws of nature applicable across all domains – the inanimate, the animate and most importantly the connection between the two – but also the far more critical role of humankind within such a dialectic. Is humankind merely an 'alien addition' to nature as Engels would have us believe, and, if so, is not Being, as Sartre argues, then reduced to knowledge with humans just objects in a vast array of undifferentiated objects the study of which is no different than the study of rocks?

In Sartre's view, the issue of the existence of a dialectic of nature is so fundamental to his project, and to his view of Marxism itself, that he confronts the topic at the very beginning of an otherwise lengthy text, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. There he establishes one of his most basic and essential concepts having ramifications for the entire remainder of the *Critique*: an individual subjectivity not merely reduced to an object of knowledge. Two reasons ground this position: first, in order to provide a foundation for the discussion to follow, namely the sociological/anthropological formation of groups from collectives through *individual mediated praxis*, Sartre must show the dialectic 'is the individual career of its object'.[34] There can be no preordained schema imposed from without controlling individual development; on the contrary, humans live their history in a situation dominated by a *milieu* of scarcity and necessity, which only dialectical reason makes intelligible.

Secondly, to conceive of humankind existentially as *praxis-project* necessitates the dialectic to be grounded not only in existence, but in order to render the dialectic intelligible, existence

[33] de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstances*, pp. 40–1.
[34] *CDR I*, p. 37.

must necessarily be *human* existence. The polemic surrounding the dialectics of nature, then, is a window opening onto a much larger horizon concerning the tension between Sartre's desire to meld *his* existentialism with *his* interpretation of Marxism, and to ground the relationship in a subjective humanism that runs counter to the predicament of the subservient individual subsumed by the authority of class politics. Because of its importance, I shall focus the discussion on Engels' *Dialectics of Nature*, since this is the origin of the dispute, and occupies the beginning of Sartre's discussion in the *Critique*.[35]

The Dialectics of Nature

The debate between Sartre and the PCF had its origin in the 1930s, when France witnessed an upsurge in intellectual interest in Marxism. It also saw that interest increasingly attached to a Soviet interpretation, especially Joseph Stalin's article on dialectical materialism that effectively canonized the substantive provisions of Engels' *Dialectics of Nature*.[36] Most of the 92 sections of the *Dialectics of Nature* consist of brief notes roughly breaking down into two related lines of thought, which together comprise the definition of dialectics as 'nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought'.[37] In the first line of thought, Engels puts forth a theory antithetical to the then prevailing viewpoint of the '*absolute immutability of nature*'.[38] Engels disputed, for example, the common notion that the planets and their satellites, once put into motion by the mysterious 'first impulse', circled on and on in their preordained ellipses for all eternity.[39] This fixed idea of nature gave way to an idea that

> when we consider and reflect upon nature, … we see the picture of an endless entanglement of relations and reactions in which nothing remains, what, where, and as it was, but everything moves, changes, comes into being and passes away. This primitive, naïve but intrinsically correct conception of the world is that of ancient Greek philosophy, and was first clearly formulated by Heraclitus: everything is and is not, for everything is *fluid*, is constantly changing, constantly coming into being and passing away.[40]

There were no permanent categories; rather, the natural sciences showed that things regarded previously as incompatible or forever separated, such as cause and effect, were clearly connected and essentially merged into one another. The dialectical method not only dissolved these concepts through which thinking functioned, but also showed that what was seemingly immovable invariably developed into something new in objective reality.[41] Engels' notion of development

[35] For a more detailed discussion of the controversy surrounding Sartre, the PCF and dialectical materialism see, William L. Remley, 'Sartre and Engels: The *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and the Confrontation on the Dialectics of Nature', *Sartre Studies International* 18, no. 2 (2012): 19–48.

[36] *MECW 25*, 'Anti-Duhring', and 'Dialectics of Nature'. Hereinafter referred to as '*AD*' and '*DN*', respectively.

[37] *AD*, p. 131; *DN*, p. 492.

[38] Ibid., p. 321 (emphasis in original).

[39] Ibid.; *AD*, p. 53.

[40] Ibid., p. 21; *DN*, pp. 321–3, and p. 327.

[41] Engels defines thought in the following manner: but if the further question is raised what thought and consciousness really are and where they come from, it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain and

held the key to eliminating the previously existing discontinuity between animate and inanimate nature. While individual branches of science such as geology, chemistry and physics already embraced such a notion, the natural sciences as a whole and, in particular, the interface between the inorganic and organic scientific world had yet to account for a unified structure.

Engels felt, and adherents to Marxism believed, a vital new concept of nature presented itself, which was necessary to fill a previously unfilled void. In a statement completely perverted under Stalin, Engels remarked that dialectics knew 'no hard-and-fast lines', there was no unconditional, universally valid 'either – or' connecting the fixed metaphysical differences, instead there was a 'both this – and that' reconciling opposites.[42] From the start, then, Engels presupposed a parallelism or unity between thought and objective reality where the transient and inconsistent nature of reality required thought to work with contradictory concepts that were not mutually exclusive.

Even though reality can be made the object of real knowledge, the order of nature is still mutable, which is not to suggest an order does not exist. At this point, Engels introduced the second major theme. Everything that existed was matter in motion, but this did not mean all motion was the same. The natural sciences illuminated how these various forms of motion merged into one another, and Engels spent considerable time indicating how, for instance, mechanical motion, heat and electricity were not absolutely distinct from each other. They may represent different qualities, but the transition from one quality to another is quantitatively determined.

Engels then put forth the idea that the universe constituted a unit or a whole consisting of matter in constant motion. This was not a uniform motion, but a number of different motions stretching from mechanical motion to the motion delineated in the history of humanity. The transition from one form of motion to another was capable of calculation, but each form displayed its own unique appearance or manifestation. With this much broader concept of form of motion, not only were mechanical, physical and chemical forms of motion converted into each other, but also chemical forms of motion were converted into biological forms out of a given level of development of nature, which, in turn, gave rise to life.

These ideas gained further substance a short time later when Engels introduced the concept of dialectical laws of nature in *Anti-Dühring*. However, it was in his 'Outline of the General Plan' to the *Dialectics of Nature*, originally written before *Anti-Dühring,* that Engels first elaborated specific dialectical laws of nature. Here Engels stated that dialectics was the science of universal interconnections with not three main laws, but four:

> transformation of quantity and quality – mutual penetration of polar opposites and transformation into each other when carried to extremes – development through contradiction or negation of the negation – spiral form of development.[43]

A year later in the main text of the *Dialectics of Nature* Engels dropped the fourth law, positing only the first three as dialectical laws of nature.[44]

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that man himself is a product of nature, which has developed in and along with its environment … Ibid., p. 34. A little later Engels asks if human thought is sovereign. His answer is that human thought is not the thought of individual man, but it 'exists only as the individual thought of many milliards of past, present and future men'. Ibid., p. 79.

[42] *DN*, p. 493.

[43] Ibid., p. 313.

[44] While one can only speculate as to Engels' motivation, it may well be that the law of negation of negation could cover the law of spiral development under the notion that similar configurations recur at even higher and more complex levels.

The first law, the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa, concerned the ability to affect qualitative change only through quantitative addition or subtraction of matter or motion, that is, energy. As Engels explained, the change of form of motion was always a process taking place between two bodies, one of which lost a definite amount of motion of a particular quality such as heat, while the other gained a corresponding quantity of motion of another quality such as mechanical motion, electricity or chemical decomposition. While the same law he ld true for living beings as for non-living things, Engels was only concerned with the latter, since the former '[law] operates under very complex conditions and at present quantitative measurement is still often impossible for us'.[45]

Engels then delineated, within the fields of mechanics, physics and chemistry, the nature of the law of transformation of quantity into quality and its inverse. When he came to a discussion of biology, however, he again repeated his earlier sentiment by saying he preferred to dwell on examples of the 'exact sciences' because the quantities were more accurately measurable and traceable. Importantly, in his written work, especially the *Critique,* Sartre consistently maintains that while a dialectic of nature could possibly exist, science lacks the tools to prove the laws of nature applicable to animate objects.[46] What was true in Engels' time was also true almost eighty years later; thus, I would argue, Sartre was merely agreeing with Engels' earlier conclusion.

At this juncture, the fragmentary nature of the *Dialectics of Nature* rears its head and the discussion of the first dialectical law ends as does any further discussion of the other two laws. However, in *Anti-Dühring,* Engels develops his argument further.

Engels expanded his earlier discussion of quality into quantity with his theory of contradiction. So long as things were at rest and lifeless, Engels argued, no contradictions were present. This position was, however, quite different when motion was considered, since motion itself created contradictions. While Engels refuted Eugen Dühring's assertion denying there was a 'bridge' in rational mechanics from the strictly static state to the dynamic, he also challenged the metaphysical status of the belief of non-contradiction. If the mechanical change of position contained a contradiction at the very simple level, then Engels asserted it was equally true of the higher forms of motion of matter, especially with regard to organic life and its development. Being was 'at each moment itself and yet something else'.[47] Thus, not unlike thought, life was also a set of contradictions present in things and processes themselves, and which constantly originated and ultimately resolved themselves when death stepped in and all the contradictions necessarily faded away.

Engels then moved to the second dialectical law of nature, the negation of the negation, which he described as an 'extremely general –and for this reason extremely far reaching and important – law of development of nature, history, and thought.'[48] Here, Engels turned to nature for an explanation. Specifically, he pointed to a grain of barley that fell on suitable soil and under the proper conditions underwent a change, it germinated. The grain, Engels believed, ceased to exist, it was negated, and in its place a plant arose.

After discussing the law of negation of the negation in the organic world, Engels offered similar arguments for geology, mathematics, history and even philosophy. Nonetheless, Engels admitted that the discussion of the law of the negation of the negation applied in a rather gen-

[45] Ibid., pp. 357–8.
[46] *CDR I*, pp. 32–3.
[47] Ibid., p. 112.
[48] Ibid., p. 131.

eralized manner without a discussion of the *particular* process of development undertaken in the example of the grain of barley. For that matter, Engels never said whether the process in the inanimate world was even remotely akin to the process in the animate world, a seemingly essential fact if his thesis that the dialectics of nature applied equally to both human thought as well as nature was to be borne out.

In his concluding remarks concerning the law of the negation of the negation, Engels asserted that humans thought dialectically long before they even knew what dialects were. Dialectical thinking was, therefore, an unconsciously operative process in both nature and in history, 'and until it has been recognized, also in our heads'.[49] In other words, the dialectic was the proper method or approach to unite the laws of thinking with the laws of the inorganic world.

It is fair to say that dialectical materialism, at least for Marx and Engels, extends over the entire field of organic and inorganic matter such that the laws of human reality cannot be entirely different from the laws of Nature. The dialectical chain of fundamental categories may have, therefore, a universal truth revealing that the concrete dialectic extends to nature. Instead of *a priori* categories of simple classifications, Engels promulgated the idea of a hierarchy of forms of motion undergoing transition one into the other, each connected to the other, yet not reducible to more simple and general forms. Envisioned as a ladder, science consists of many rungs becoming more and more concrete, with each higher level containing ever more rich and complex content.

In 1938, Joseph Stalin restated the dialectics of nature in a short article, 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism', which started out with a rather straightforward claim:

> Dialectical materialism is the world outlook of the Marxist-Leninist party. It is called materialist because its approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and apprehending them, is *dialectical,* while its interpretation of the phenomena of nature, its conception of these phenomena, its theory, *materialistic*.[50]

Stalin essentially provided a highly simplified and schematic summary of Marx's and Engels' thought, which was subsequently deemed authoritative within the PCF, even after the dictator's death.

Concerned that dialectical materialism may be thought of purely as metaphysics – a charge Sartre certainly levelled at his contemporary Marxists – Stalin sought to distinguish dialectical materialism from metaphysics on four main grounds.[51] First, nature was a 'connected and integral whole' in which things and phenomena were organically connected with, dependent on and determined by each other. Secondly, nature was in a continu ous state of motion and change where something was constantly arising and developing, and something was always disintegrating and dying away. The third characteristic of dialectical materialism enunciated by Stalin maintained that natural quantitative change led to qualitative change. As such, the dialectical method saw the process of development not as a movement in a circle, but an onward and upward progression, as a transition from an old qualitative state to a new qualitative state, and

[49] Ibid., p. 130.

[50] Joseph Stalin, 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism' (emphasis in original), accessed www.marxists.org. For a general discussion of Stalin's article see: Paul Blackledge, *Reflections on Marxist Theory of History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 110; pp. 154–61. For a discussion of the relationship between Sartre and Stalinism see, Ian Birchall, *Sartre against Stalinism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

[51] See, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Materialism and Revolution', in *The Aftermath of War (Situations III)*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Seagull Books, 2008), p. 150. Hereinafter referred to as 'Materialism and Revolution'.

as a development from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher. Lastly, dialectics understood internal contradiction s as inherent in all things and phenomena of nature. Thus, the process of development from the lower to the higher took place as a disclosure of the contradictions inherent in things and phenomena, and in the constant 'struggle' of opposed tendencies that operated on the basis of these contradictions, and not as a harmonious unfolding of phenomena.

In the second portion of the paper, Stalin delineated three features of philosophical materialism that fundamentally distinguished it from philosophical idealism. Marx's philosophical materialism held that the world was by its very nature matter, and the multifold phenomenon of the world constituted different forms of matter in motion that developed in accordance with their own laws. Next, Stalin asserted that matter, nature, and being were objective realities existing outside and independent of consciousness, and, in fact, they were all prior to consciousness. Consciousness as secondary and derivative merely reflected matter. Lastly, philosophical materialism emphasized that the world and its laws were fully knowable, and that our knowledge of the laws of nature was verifiable through experimentation. Moreover, science alone makes known those things in the world previously unknown.

While Stalin's expository material is easily understood, it's over generalizations make the dialectical method a blunt instrument instead of a technique to comprehend a subtle yet extremely complex reality. The paper's most significant features fall into two categories: first Stalin separates the dialectical way of thinking from materialism; components Marx ties together in an ultimate synthesis. This distinction undoubtedly led future Marxist theorists to de-emphasize the dialectic while at the same time making too much of materialism. Secondly, Stalin makes no mention of the negation of the negation, a fundamental aspect of Engels' original dialectical laws of nature. In all likelihood, the paper's 'Biblical' standing was attributable solely to the dogmatic and cultish status of its author; in fact, some 300,000 copies sold in a mere nine months after its publication.

At this point, it might be helpful to elucidate Sartre's view on the dialectics of nature, since he staked out his position during this period. For his entire intellectual career, he opposed the theory of the dialectics of nature. As early as 1936, Sartre laid out a general claim in his *The Transcendence of the Ego* 'that a working hypothesis as fruitful as historical materialism never needed for a foundation the absurdity which is metaphysical materialism'.[52] In referring to metaphysical materialism, Sartre means the possibility of knowing about the nature of objects in-themselves, and the necessity to understand human beings based on pre-existing laws.

For Sartre, it is not necessary for the object to precede the subject for 'spiritual pseudo-values' to vanish, and for ethics to find their basis in reality.[53] Somewhat later Sartre elaborates on these points. In the chapter on the body in *Being and Nothingness,* Sartre says:

> the problem of the body and its relation with consciousness is often obscured by the fact that while the body is from the start posited as a certain *thing* having its own laws and capable of being defined from outside, consciousness is then reached by the type of inner intuition which is peculiar to it.[54]

[52] Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, p. 105.
[53] Ibid.
[54] *BN*, p. 401.

Having said this, Sartre is firmly of the belief that such a body is not my body as such, 'but a body-for-others'.[55] The body 'in-itself' is merely a category whose entire foundation is the point of view of the Other who views my body from the outside. As a result, the body itself has no particular laws pertaining to it.

The essential point is to understand that Sartre rejects Marxism's embrace of a universal dialectic of both thought and nature, and he rejects an attitude prevalent among leading Marxist of his day who believe 'dialectical materialism's first step is to deny the existence of any legitimate knowledge apart from scientific knowledge'.[56] In the end, Sartre may agree with Engels that humans are 'alien' to nature, but they are hardly a superfluous addition, as dialectical materialism would have us believe. As I have indicated, Sartre raises this issue again in the opening pages of the *Critique*, which attests to its significance.

[55] Ibid., pp. 401–3.

[56] 'Materialism and Revolution', p. 87, where he is specifically ridiculing Roger Garaudy. In an interview Sartre says that fundamental ontology was what separated him from Marx. He goes on to say that 'what in my eyes represents my superiority over the Marxist is that I raise the class question, the social question, starting from being, which is wider than class, since it is also a question that concerns animals and inanimate objects'. 'Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 14. Roger Garaudy (1913–2012) was a French philosopher who was a leading theoretician for the PCF. In 1970 Garaudy was expelled from the PCF following his outspoken criticism of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. He co nverted to Islam in 1982, and in 1996 published a book denying the Holocaust. The book was subsequently banned and he was sentenced to a suspended jail term.

7. The Evolution of Sartre's Anarchism after the Second World War

'My history with the party [PCF] was always confused and confusing'.
—Sartre, *Talking with Sartre*

Sartre's Relationship with the PCF

Sartre's involvement in the political world took a dramatic turn in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War as the world split into two major camps: one based on the ideals of capitalism, and the other tethered to Soviet style Marxism.[1] The PCF's expulsion from France's post-war government brought an immediate response to close ranks among intellectuals in an ideological solidarity centred on a predetermined formulation of Marxism. Central to this enforced discipline was Stalin's 1938 essay, which the PCF demanded adherence to in its efforts to ensure conformity. This effort to control thought, or at the very least to ensure a dogmatic approach to what the PCF thought Marxism ought to look like, naturally had the effect of diminishing the intellectual vitality of the period, often with rather dramatic results.

One could point to various events in the early 1950s that helped shape the Marxian landscape in France, but one in particular seemed to emphasize the way in which the PCF attempted to institutionalize its thought and reject even the notion of a discussion or discourse of self-criticism. The PCF held a national meeting of intellectuals to discuss two themes: socialist humanism and the objectivity of the laws of nature and society. The leader of the philosophic discussion was Jean-Toussaint Desanti who, while generally attacking the usual suspects namely the bourgeoisie, specifically singled out phenomenology and neo-Hegelianism as reactionary with Merleau-Ponty and Jean Hyppolite as those movement's main functionaries.[2] The rise in popularity, especially among the young, of both of these philosophical disciplines not only threatened the hegemony of Marxism in a general manner, but specifically endangered the PCF's ability to control political discourse with philosophical ideologies. In the PCF's eyes, phenomenology promised an unconditional freedom, an unintelligible history, and nature as a kaleidoscope of human perceptions and interpretations. Considered a disguised attack on the notions of objective laws, Hegelianism fared little better than phenomenology. Desanti argued that the dialectic in the hands of the

[1] For a detailed account of the social/political history of the post-war period, especially with regard to Sartre's evolving political thought see David Drake, *Intellectuals and Politics in Post-War France* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

[2] The title of the conference was: 'L'objectivité des lois de la nature et de la société et ses conséquences – L'humanisme socialiste'. Desanti's talk was titled, 'Pourquoi la pensée bourgeoise nie l'objectivité des lois'. The PCF published a substantial portion of the proceedings in its journal under the title, 'Documents des journées nationales d'études des intellectuels communistes', *La Nouvelle critique* 45 (avril-mai 1953): 125–368. Jean-Toussaint Desanti (1914–2002) was a philosopher of mathematics who taught at the *École Normal Superieure* and the *Sorbonne*. He joined the resistance movement at the outbreak of the Second World War and subsequently became a member of the PCF in 1943.

phenomenologist merely discounted the rational dialectic in favour of a dramatic vision of the adventure of consciousness. Hegelianism, on the other hand, saw the dialectic as a cloak encasing all the vicissitudes of life.

The conference sought to stake the claim that Marxism was indeed a science, and to emphatically blame the bourgeoisie for its failure to perceive it as such. Reports from the conference emphasized that while the bourgeoisie were content to allow some materialism to intrude upon scientific research, they resisted any wholesale attempt to integrate dialectical materialism into a general world outlook. In the PCF's view, the consequences for the natural sciences resulted in a detrimental incongruity to essential research and the long-term viability of knowledge. Under the influence of bourgeois ideology, the social sciences denied any notion of an objective material basis for laws of society. As Michael Kelly observes, the resulting debate over the objectivity of the laws of nature and society became a central focus of the controversy lasting well into the next decade.[3]

After the death of Stalin in 1953, a slow process of revival and a movement to engage in meaningful exchanges with various ideologies prevalent in France at the time began to emerge. French Marxism's polarizing 'friend and enemy' approach gradually turned into a more flexible move towards dialogue. Roger Garaudy, who by then was the PCF's leading philosophical spokesperson, spearheaded this new rapprochement.

While only a few years earlier, the PCF organized a conference solely to discredit Merleau-Ponty, by the late 1950s they sought to engage a wider array of thinkers including Jean-Paul Sartre.[4] Nonetheless, Sartre did not lose sight of his desire to reconcile his interpretation of Marxism with his existentialism, and in his well know essay, 'Marxism and Existentialism', he acknowledged Marxism as the indispensable framework for all contemporary knowledge. At the same time, he envisioned his own existentialism as merely a parasitic ideology of Marxist thought.[5] Sartre did not declare existentialism dead, however, and here was another point separating his notion of Marxism from that of the PCF. For Sartre, Marxism was in the grip of analytic reason with the dialectics of nature playing an integral role. Moreover, the Marxism espoused by the PCF failed completely to assimilate the essential lesson of existentialism, namely the critical role of human subjectivity. While Marxism for Sartre meant embracing the materialist theory of history and Marx's conception of economics, he believed that many of the PCF's Marxist concepts were not just dogmatic they were petrified. He saw the PCF roaring down the wrong path in its

[3] Michael Kelly, *Modern French Marxism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 82. An example of the PCF's approach to the dialectics of nature during the mid-1950s can be seen in an article by Maurice Caveing, 'Marx et la dialectique de la nature', *La Nouvelle critique* 67 (juillet-août 1955): 10–29. Caveing directs his attack at Léon Blum, the leader of the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ourière* (SFIO), but it could have been directed at Sartre just as well. In the attack, Caveing reiterates the importance of Engels' laws of nature and their application to animate life. While the article is better reasoned than most of the period, Caveing still does not offer any evidence for his conclusions.

[4] Organized in November 1955 primarily in response to Merleau-Ponty's book, *Les Aventures de la dialectique*, the conference was appropriately called, '*Mésavetures de l'anti-marxisme: Les malheurs de M. Merleau-Ponty*', and attracted such speakers as Garaudy, Jean-Toussaint Desanti and Henri Lefebvre as well as others.

[5] The essay comprises a portion of the separately published prefatory volume to the English translation of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* known as: Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 8. Later in his life, Sartre reverses his opinion saying that existentialism 'cannot be an enclave, because of my idea of freedom, and therefore it is ultimately a separate philosophy'. 'Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 20. In the same interview, he also thinks his philosophy, while it is linked to Marxism, is not at all a Marxist philosophy. Ibid., p. 20. Moreover, he says that the *Critique* is non-Marxist. Ibid., p. 21.

zeal for scientific purity, and, as it skidded out of control, all Marxism did was eject the human element from a position of primacy and reduce human beings and knowledge to an objective status, which was, according to Sartre, not only illusory, but anti-dialectic. Only existentialism bolted inexorably onto his understanding of Marxist thought could provide the human quality Sartre saw as lacking in the late 1950s.

With this brief but significant background on Sartre's relationship to the PCF, I shall turn now to a discussion of three articles produced in the period from just after the war to the mid-1950s, which further illuminate his intellectual and political progression to the *Critique* as well as his anarchist philosophy. The articles are 'Materialism and Revolution', which first appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* in June 1946; *The Communists and Peace*, originally published in *Les Temps Modernes* in July 1952; and finally, *The Ghost of Stalin*, also initially published in *Les Temps Modernes* over a three-month period in November and December1956 and January 1957.

A More Refined Development of Sartre's Political Philosophy

'Materialism and Revolution'

'Materialism and Revolution' consists of two parts. The first is a discussion of what Sartre calls 'The Revolutionary Myth', in which he reiterates his objections to the dogmatic concept of dialectical materialism embraced by the PCF. For Sartre, the PCF has given the youth of France an either/or decision: either they choose materialism in the form advocated by the PCF, or they embrace idealism. Ultimately, this is an unsatisfactory choice for a philosophy of human existence. The lack of an alternative leads Sartre to his important discussion in the second part of the essay 'The Philosophy of Revolution', which lays out, for the first time, Sartre's concept of revolution and radical politics.

In his analysis, Revolution is an event, as when a change of institutions accompanies a profound modification of the regime in power. Likewise, the revolutionary is a party or person within a party whose intentional acts work towards such a revolution. Significantly, only a group in the guise of a party can be revolutionary, and, as Sartre reiterates several years later, 'the Party is *pure action*; it must advance or disappear; it is the strength of the workers who are at the end of their strength and the hope of those who are without hope'.[6] Individuals acting alone or as atomized organisms – what he later terms seriality – are incapable of revolutionary activity.

While a seemingly simple concept, the entire notion of groups as revolutionary is at the very heart of Sartre's *Critique*, and is a fundamental aspect of anarchists political thought. But, not just any group is revolutionary, 'the organization of that party can be the work only of persons of a determinate social condition. In other words, revolutionaries are *in situation*'.[7] Oppressed persons are the natural revolutionary participants, but not every oppressed person is a revolutionary. Among the bourgeoisie, some of the oppressed share the privileges of the class who oppresses them. Consequently 'the revolutionary is one of those who *work* for the dominate class'.[8] In this respect, Sartre aligns himself more with anarchist thought as opposed to Marx,

[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Communists and Peace*, trans. Martha Fletcher (New York: George Braziller, 1968), p. 59. Hereinafter referred to as '*The Communists and Peace*'.

[7] 'Materialism and Revolution', p. 194 (emphasis in original).

[8] Ibid., p.195 (emphasis in original). The essay also gives an account for the Sartrean difference between oppression and alienation, which will come up again in several instances as he develops his thought. In this essay, Sartre

since Marx sees the revolution emanating from the workers of the cities who then 'instruct' the lumpen proletariat or peasants of the provinces the art of revolution. In stark contrast, most anarchists, including Proudhon and Bakunin, elevate the peasants to the level of true revolutionary, a position Sartre obviously agrees with.

Unlike the *canuts* of Lyon or the workers of the 1848 'June days', who were mere rioters in Sartre's opinion, the transcendence of their situation defines revolutionaries. They go beyond the situation towards a radically new direction they grasp as a synthetic whole or, as Sartre says, they make it exist for them as a totality.[9] This means they realize the situation based on a transcendence towards a future. Moreover, the possibility of rising above a situation to gain a vantage point on it (a vantage point not only as pure knowledge but, inseparably, as both understanding and action) is precisely what Sartre calls freedom.[10] At the very outset, revolutionaries view themselves from the standpoint of history; they regard themselves as historical agents. In a rather unmistakably Kafkaesque image, Sartre remarks, 'it is history which shows some the exits and makes others cool their heels before closed doors'.[11]

By their self-projection into the future, revolutionaries escape the society crushing in around them – what he later calls the practico-inert – and gain a vantage point allowing them to comprehend society. They see human history as inextricably linked to human destiny; a history in which the change they desire to effect is an essential step along the path to the ultimate goal.[12] History, then, is a record of progress, since the revolutionary views the state they desire to lead humankind towards as better than the state they wish to leave behind. Naturally, Sartre sees himself in the role of the revolutionary pushing humankind towards a better future, a position in accord with both the first and second elements of Clark's characterization of anarchism. In seeking the goal of a new state, revolutionaries are people who do not claim rights, but, rather, they destroy the very notion of right because rights are merely products of outdated customs enhanced through force. By this, Sartre means the revolutionary is compelled to 'smash the system'.[13] In his view, the revolutionary is a species being:

> there is a human species, an unjustifiable, contingent phenomenon; the circumstances of its development have brought it to a kind of inner imbalance; the revolutionary's task is to make it find a more rational equilibrium beyond its present state. Just as the species has closed around the men of divine right and absorbed them, so nature closes around human beings and absorbs them: the human being is a natural fact; humanity is one species among others.[14]

concludes that while alienation is a necessary condition of oppression, oppression is a contingent fact of history and not a necessary one. Thus, oppression can be overcome, but alienation cannot. By alienation, Sartre means a certain type of relationship humans have with themselves, with others and with the world, which posits the ontological supremacy of the Other. The Other is not any particular person but a category, a dimension or element. *NBE*, p. 382. This position is obviously at odds with Marxist's thought, which premises alienation on the means of production.

[9] 'Materialism and Revolution', p. 196.

[10] Ibid., pp. 214–15; see also, *The Communists and Peace*, p. 130.

[11] Ibid., p. 80.

[12] 'Materialism and Revolution', p. 197.

[13] Ibid., p. 209.

[14] Ibid.

In this manner, the revolutionary escapes what Sartre thinks is the mystification of the privileged class; the person who knows herself to be natural can never be mystified by recourse to *a priori* moralities.

Sartre is also adamant that Marx's future society, referred to as '*antiphysis*' because its aim is to establish a human order whose laws will be the negation of natural laws, signifies the replacement of the society of laws for the community of ends. The revolutionary, on the other hand, 'distrusts values and refuses to acknowledge that he is pursuing a better organization of the human community: he fears that a return to values, even by detour, may open the door to new mystifications'.[15] At this point, however, Sartre seemingly catches himself and points out that because the revolutionary is willing to sacrifice her own life for a new order she never expects to witness personally, by implication the future order functions as a value, a value that operates as the clarion call for that which does not yet exist. In this sense, Sartre sees the new order in terms of morally premised values.[16]

In this portion of the essay, Sartre espouses a view of an ideal world he thinks revolutionaries desire to achieve; one he views as fully moral. The significance of this position should not be underestimated. Sartre's identification with the revolutionaries he writes about falls within the first element of anarchism. As I pointed out, anarchists hold a view of a fully moral, ideal, noncoercive, nonauthoritarian societ y. Here, Sartre outlines a similar understanding of his revolutionary thinking, which comports with an important element of anarchism.

Significantly, the revolutionary Sartre describes sees human relations from the viewpoint of work, a concept espoused by Proudhon in his anarchist humanism. For both, work assumes:

> a direct connection between human beings and the universe: it is humanity's purchase on nature and, at the same time, a primordial type of relationship between human beings. It is, therefore, an essential attitude of human reality which, in the unity of a single project, both 'exits' and makes exist, in their mutual dependence, its relation to nature and its relation to others.[17]

Essential to Sartre's understanding is that the liberation of the workers can only come about through the solidarity they maintain with one another, and not through the rebel standing alone. The tendency of the upper strata of society to explain the lower in terms of the higher, either as the debasement of the higher or as existing merely to serve the higher, is generally elevated to a universal principle intended to interpret the world. On the other hand, the oppressed adopt the slogan 'from below' because it makes them the foundation of the entire society. This key element is further explained in the *Critique*, but obviously, the entire notion of 'from the base to the summit' derives first from Proudhon and then from Bakunin's 'Revolutionary Catechism' that turns the traditional notions of hierarchy upside down.

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[15] Ibid., p. 213.

[16] Years later in 1972, Sartre defined his moral view in an interview with Michel Contat: Fundamentally the problem for me was to know whether to choose politics or ethics or whether politics and ethics were one and the same thing. Now I have come back. Perhaps somewhat richer, to my original position – setting myself at the level of the masses' action.At present there is a moral question almost everywhere, a moral question that is none other than the political question; and it is on this plane that I find myself wholly in agreement. … Sartre, *Sartre by Himself*, p. 80; see also, de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, p. 25.

[17] 'Materialism and Revolution', p. 197.

In Sartre's view, the intention of revolution is not only to alter the world, but also to re-create our collective situation. In his discussion of this particular period, the noted historian Tony Judt indicates that it is Sartre's 'special contribution' to espouse revolution as a categorical imperative that is 'not a matter of social analysis or political preference, nor was the moment of revolution something one could select on the basis of experience or information'.[18] In a key statement, Sartre argues that praxis accomplishes all of this; action constitutes the authenticity of the individual, and praxis delivers us from the impotency of the practico-inert. Not unlike de Beauvoir's writing of the times that disparage any attempt at progressive reform, Sartre also sees the necessary revolutionary attitude smashing the present system in its entirety.[19] This is a sentiment they both shared with their contemporaries as well as with the anarchists of the previous century who saw an intrinsically evil order lurking in the form of the state, and felt the need to eradicate the state by means of revolution in order to usher in a new world. Probably not emphasized enough, praxis is a foundationally essential element found throughout Sartre's writings. In the *Critique*, it takes on a critical dimension; praxis is the only means available to complete the revolution, and the only manner in which we escape the inert impotency of the practico-inert 'hell'. Furthermore, praxis is, as an immanent movement in the direction of a noncoercive, decentralization of authority and the fulfilment of human freedom, a key component of the meaning of anarchism discussed earlier.

The Communists and Peace

The early 1950s proved to be a transition period for Sartre and his developing political philosophy. Indeed, the events surrounding American General Mathew Ridgeway's assumption of command of NATO, then based in Paris, caused Sartre to swing into action. In late May of 1952, the PCF called on all workers to demonstrate in protest to Ridgeway's arrival. For various reasons, not least of which was the government's decision to engage in mass arrests including the acting general secretary of the PCF and its leader in the parliament (the largest single political party in France at the time), Jacques Duclos, the workers failed to materialize for the mass rally and the strikes failed.[20] In the wake of this failure, a second general strike, called for 4 June, was also unsuccessful, and Sartre immediately set about not only to defend the PCF and its stated goals, but his writings are a further step in his development of specific ideas more fully realized in the *Critique*. In his article for *Les Temps Modernes*, 'The Communist and Peace', Sartre discusses two essential elements of interest for an understanding of the *Critique*.[21] Although still being worked out, the first element is violence, a pervasive theme in his philosophy. His second major element

[18] Judt, *Past Imperfect*, p. 40.

[19] In *Force of Circumstances*, pp. 20–2, de Beauvoir exhibited a rather stern attitude towards the French collaborators of the Second World War arguing they should be dealt with harshly. See her article in *Les Temps Modernes* expressing this opinion, Simone de Beauvoir, 'Oeil pour Oeil', *Les Temps Modernes* no. 5 (février 1946): 813–30.

[20] Duclos was arrested by the police while driving home to his wife for dinner. The grounds for the arrest stemmed from a search of Duclos' car that revealed two pigeons in the back seat. While these pigeons were the object of the evening's meal, the police alleged they were carrier pigeons ready to take messages to Moscow at a moment's notice. Although charged with criminal activity, the president of the *Chambre des mises en accusation* [the Grand Jury] subsequently freed Duclos. Cohen-Solal, *Jean-Paul Sartre: A Life*, p. 328.

[21] The articles were later published in book form, and I shall refer to the book and not to the *Les Temps Modernes* article.

is praxis or action. Both of these components are interrelated, but in their own way, they share a significant role in the *Critique*, and each is an element of anarchist thinking.

Violence is a controversial theme for Sartre, but is apparent in his thinking almost from the start of his life.[22] In *The Words*, Sartre's autobiographical account of his upbringing in La Rochelle, he portrays a childhood dominated by schoolyard violence. He later tells de Beauvoir from that point on he realized a suspicion of violence tinges all human relations, a violence he sees as 'imperative in relations between men'.[23]

Violence is an essential element for Sartre, and as fundamental to human relations, it never disappears from his thoughts, his writings or his philosophy, whether political or otherwise. In fact, it only develops more fully as Sartre's writing matures. From his initial position in *Being and Nothingness*, where all human relations are cast in terms of sadomasochism, Sartre elaborates upon this early notion of violence in his *Notebooks for an Ethics,* which includes the following attempt to define violence:

> Violence is an ambiguous notion. We might define it something like: to make use of the facticity of the other person and the objective from outside to determine the subjective to turn itself into an inessential means of reaching the objective, In other words bring about the objective at any price, particularly by treating man as means, all the while preserving the *value* of its having been chosen by some subjectivity. The impossible ideal of violence is to contain the other's freedom to choose freely what I want.[24]

[22] Sartre has been criticized as an 'apostle of violence' for his depiction of violence not only in the *Critique,* but also in his earlier work, especially his preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. Essentially, those who espouse this view take the position that Sartre's concept of violence is directly premised on the Hegelian dialectic between the Master and the Slave. Raymond Aron reads the *Critique* through such a Hegelian historicist lens. He understands Sartre's dialectic to consist of conceptual opposites – active/passive, praxis/inertia, etc. Thus, at least for Aron, the dialectic means going from one contradiction to another contradiction where praxis negates the situation it perceives by the act of escaping towards a non-existent future. According to Aron, 'dialectics' refers to hostile conflicts in relationships similar to the class struggles of Marx. Aron then suggests the *Critique* ends up totalizing history, or the class struggle, with its priority of oppression over exploitation. For Aron, it is by means of class struggle that everyone wishes the death of everyone else. Raymond Aron, *History and the Dialectic of Violence,* trans. Barry Cooper (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), pp. 168–72. This interpretation is shared by Ronald Santoni in his book, *Sartre on Violence: Curiously Ambivalent* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), where Santoni thinks, 'Sartre's social and philosophical theory transformed a philosophy of freedom and liberation into a philosophy of violence'. Ibid., p. xi (a view also shared by Aron). This view relies almost exclusively on an interpretation of the Master-Slave relationship as well as a Marxian understanding of oppression. However, oppression for Sartre is a situation that does not possess a specific oppressor, which is quite different from the Hegelian Master-Slave dialectic. Rather, for Sartre, the dialectic is a struggle between praxes and not between socioeconomic classes. See, Robert Stone and Elizabeth Bowman, 'Dialectical Ethics: A First Look at Sartre's Unpublished 1964 Rome Lecture Notes', *Social Text*, 13/14 (winter-spring 1986): 200. Aron and Santoni fail to understand Sartre's desires to distinguish himself from dogmatic Marxism by placing praxis at the centre of his political philosophy as the prime mover of history. At the same time, it is obvious that Sartre disdains a deterministic history of class struggle. For a very interesting discussion of this topic see, Jenifer Ang Mei Sze, *Sartre and the Moral Limits of War and Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 18–20.

[23] de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, p. 148; see also, Sartre, *Sartre by Himself*, p. 10; and *CDR II*, p. 23.

[24] *NBE*, p. 204. In the *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre distinguishes between violence as such and defensive violence as well as counter-violence. What he calls defensive violence is distinguished from counter-violence in that the latter 'is a riposte to some aggression or effort to secure a hold maintained by force (State) while defensive violence is a recourse to violence directed against nonviolent processes'. Ibid., p. 207. This brings up another criticism of Sartre's use of violence and that is Hannah Arendt's critique. In her book *On Violence* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1970), she argues that

Even though humans are used as a means to achieve a particular objective, they retain the value of their bei ng chosen by a subjective freedom.

In writing his essay on the strikes and demonstrations that inevitably led to violence, Sartre takes pains to qualify the widely held belief, at least among Marxists, that violence emanates solely from oppression, which in turn springs from class struggle. For the proletariat, the modes of capitalist production succeeded in diminishing the workers strength and 'duped' them into accepting their condition.[25] The worker, it seems, always finds himself 'already committed to and enlisted in a society which has its code and its jurisprudence, its government, its notion of what is just and what is unjust, and (a more serious fact still) whose ideology he spontaneously shares'.[26] Not only does society impose upon the proletariat a destiny; it also enacts limits inflicted as fragmented and semi-automatic tasks. In short, Sartre sees the worker as enclosed in a dull web of repetition designed to rob him of his humanity and, little by little, weave him into a thing.

The contradiction the worker faces – as both human and machine – leads to what Sartre calls the 'original violence', which is not, in his view, oppression. Oppression, for Sartre, merges with justice and order – a view not unlike that of Proudhon. On the other hand, violence is *interiorized oppression*; the oppression lived as an internal conflict, as constraint exercised by one-half of one's self on the other half. In other words, the worker commits the first violence against himself to the extent he makes himself a worker.[27] Suffered violence does not take place unless and until the worker makes himself their accomplice. As I previously pointed out, Sartre's concern for violent relations among humans started at a very earlier age, and continues on to the *Critique*. There he discusses violence, at times still wrapped in the mantle of class conflict, in a somewhat more

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Sartre epitomizes a new direction towards violence primarily because she thinks Sartre's violence is an encouragement for revenge by the colonized against the colonizer. Arendt concludes that Sartre glorifies violence since he argues it has a humanizing effect for the colonized enabling them to create themselves. She further argues that Sartre's account of violence is unlike the Marxist notion of self-creation through labour or the Hegelian notion of producing oneself through thought. Arendt, however, seems to misunderstand what Sartre is arguing. Arendt's approach assumes violence is an inverse relation to power, which means she construes the preface as being addressed to the colonized, since they are the ones without power, and are, accordingly, the ones most likely to resort to violence. Contrary to Arendt's argument, Sartre addresses the preface to the French people whose humanism he castigates as nothing but lies. He characterizes the colonial system as a cycle of violence with the French people complicit in their passivity. Thus, only the French people can stop the violence by putting an end to colonialism. Arendt fails to understand that Sartre is describing the inevitability of counter-violence, which is constitutive as a humanizing process because it rejects the colonized's sub-human status. The French people have the moral responsibility to think for themselves and reject the colonial system. For a more detailed discussion of Sartre's notion of violence especially with regard to the *Notebooks for an Ethics*, see James Dodd, *Violence and Phenomenology* (London; Routledge, 2009), pp. 54–76.

[25] *The Communists and Peace*, p. 51.

[26] Ibid. This is a theme Sartre will return to in the *Critique.*

[27] Ibid., p. 53. In his *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre has an extensive discussion of oppression far too lengthy to recount fully here. But he gives a rather succinct account of the conditions of oppression, not, as he says, as a question of economic and social oppression, but as its ontol ogical conditions: there are five of them: 1st, oppression comes from freedom. … 2nd , Oppression comes from the multiplicity of freedoms where each freedom has to be an outside for every other freedom. The fact of oppression is grounded in the ontological relation of freedom to one another. 3d, Oppression can come to one freedom *only* through another freedom – only one freedom can limit another freedom. 4th, Oppression implies that neither the slave nor the tyrant fundamentally recognizes their own freedom. One oppresses only if one oppresses himself. The oppressor is oppressed by the oppressor and by himself. If I fully recognize my freedom, I also recognize that of others. 5th, There is complicity of the oppressor and the oppressed. *NBE*, p. 325 (emphasis in original).

sophisticated manner – violence is the destruction of my freedom in the Other as the original relation between humans through the mediation of matter.[28]

From the notion of interiorized violence, Sartre goes on to describe how the violence exhibited at the very moment of the riot or the strike is not a spontaneous, sudden outburst as it is with Sorel's general strike; rather, in periods of crisis, internalized violence is externalized.[29] The contradiction is inverted: the complacent worker rejects the human lodged within himself, while the rebellious worker rejects the inhuman. Notably, 'this refusal is itself a humanism – it contains an urgent demand for a new justice'.[30] As Sartre recognizes, quite often oppression is not a visible offence because the ideology of the dominate class defines, primarily through its system of laws, exactly what is just and conversely what is unjust. Consequently, nothing is gained without eradicating the existing order, and the worker's affirmation of his own human reality only reveals itself in his eyes as a manifestation of violence.

In his *Notebook for an Ethics*, Sartre points out, 'there never has been any violence on earth that did not correspond to the affirmation of some right'.[31] Violence is a demand on others, and this violence clashes head-on with society's mobilized violence. The police and other instrumentalities of the law change the worker's *milieu*, they get his violence ready for him, and they make sure he pushes it to the extreme. Thus, the workers 'discontent must turn into a strike, his strike into a riot, and the riot into murder'.[32] When the worker realizes that his simple demand for human rights leads him to strike which, in turn, leads him to kill, the repression begins anew. The eventual return to calm, the status quo, is not actually calm and hardly the status quo, but a return to original violence. The primitive contradiction reappears, only this time reinforced. The worker as striker experiences the counter-violence of society, it still acts within him and he reacts to it with two contradictory feelings: fear and hatred. At the same time, he discovers himself and he now knows that 'violence is the law of action'.[33]

At some level, I would argue, Sartre sees violence as imbued in any action undertaken, but he also emphasizes the type of violence occurring because of membership in a group or society. Much like Proudhon theorized in his historical analysis of progressive oppression at the hands of the state and the church, Sartre sees the reactionary, repressive tactics of government becoming more oppressive after the violence of the strikes and demonstrations recedes into the background. Again, this criticism of the existing authoritarian structure of society with its apparatuses merely designed to coerce its members comes within the meaning of anarchism.

Since violence is the law of action, it might be helpful to dig deeper into Sartre's thoughts about praxis, the second element of concern in his essay, and a key component in anarchist thought. Sartre explains that the historical whole determines our powers at any given moment; it proscribes their limits in our field of action as well as our real future. Moreover, it conditions our attitude towards a host of dichotomies: the possible and the impossible, the real and the imaginary, what is and what should be, time and space. At this point, it is up to us to determine our relations with others, or 'the meaning of our life and the value of our death'.[34] It is within this

[28] *CDR I*, p. 736.
[29] See, Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, pp. 119–50.
[30] *The Communists and Peace*, p. 54.
[31] *NBE*, p. 177.
[32] *The Communists and Peace*, p. 54.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p. 80.

framework that our *Self* finally makes its appearance, 'in a practical and variable relationship between here and there, now and forever, formerly and tomorrow, this thing and the universal, a continuously revocable decision on the relative importance of what is improperly called the "individual interest" and the "general interest."'[35] The alternatives for which the collectivity submits to the course of the world or contributes to shaping the world and its history are, in actuality, quite simple and Manichean. Either one takes refuge in the immediate present by clutching what little one has, or one accesses a future extending beyond one's death by risking everything for a cause whose victory one will not live to see. In short, you can adjust your undertakings to your needs, or decide on your needs in terms of your undertakings.

The force separating any potential path is, according to Sartre, *action*. If action takes hold, the worker will believe; it acts as a tonic, a confidence. And why does it take hold?

> Because it is possible: *he does not decide to act*, he acts, he *is* action, subject to History; he sees the final goal, he touches it; the classless society will be achieved in his lifetime. The immediate reality is the future; viewed from the far reaches of the future, private interests are abstract shadows; death itself is not frightening: it is a very personal event which must happen to him in the midst of that Future which he possesses jointly with everyone else.[36]

Action is the future, for without it only the impotence of the practico-inert remains, but action can, and often does, lead to disaster. If it does, the workers, who are the collective subject of history, again become individually its objects; in Sartre's metastable *milieu*, it is a return to seriality.

While Sartre only tangentially explores the idea of seriality in this essay, he is adamant that the future is born of action and turns back on it in order to give it a meaning; reduced to the immediate present the worker no longer understands his history, he is making it. Moreover, the making of history is a call for revolution, 'if he wants to achieve the least reform in anything – from foreign policy to economic conceptions – he has to overturn everything'.[37] Sartre understands his type of revolution, which by necessity goes from the whole to the parts and from structural changes to detailed reforms, may not be thought of as revolutionary in everyone's eyes, especially his contemporary socialists and Marxists who thought the state a necessary part of the post-revolution social structure. Nevertheless, he thinks it is radical.[38] What Sartre sees as the workers' irreconcilable violence, their contempt for opportunism, their Jacobin tradition, their catastrophism, which puts its hope in a violent upheaval rather than in infinite progressive steps, can only be labelled a revolutionary 'attitude'. I would simply add the attitude is also anarchistic.

The demonstrations Sartre uses as the catalyst for his *litérature engagé* visibly show a revolutionary lacking a revolution. Rather than lend credence to the idea of a spontaneous event or object of faith, Sartre thinks the revolution is an undertaking of the proletariat in the daily movement of every worker. Consequently, the revolution can never be a future moment; it must always be a sudden discovery of a future as the infinite task of the proletariat as the justification

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., pp. 90–1 (emphasis in original).
[37] *The Communists and Peace*, p. 84.
[38] Ibid.

of individual existence and the universal dimension of all private behaviour. It is a continual connection between the individual and the class, and between the particular and the universal. The real question is how to unite the proletariat to affect change through revolution, and here Sartre gives us an unusual preview of a discussion he will have in the *Critique*. In his words:

> if a worker in Lens and the one in Amiens could *know each other*; if each, in making himself, made the other; in short, if they participated in the same struggle, each, in his living realty, would depend on the other, and they would resemble each other less and less the more closely they were united; it is by community of action and not in isolation that each person and the sociologist would no longer have either the means or the pretext by which to study individual behaviors separately, since they would all relate to the collective undertaking and would be defined by it.[39]

This ability to know each other only occurs through collective action, though a class, and never in isolation. Collective action or the manifestation of the class is what Sartre calls a '*real* unity of crowds and historical masses' that manifests itself by an operation located in time and referred to an intention.[40] It is movement in the form of action holding together the separated elements. The class itself is a system in motion, but should that motion cease for any reason, individuals then revert to their inertia, to their isolation and to their seriality. Obviously, this discussion should be read in light of Sartre's examples in the *Critique* of third party mediation. Not really worked out in the present essay, Sartre is exploring the entire idea of separate individuals united in the praxis-process of a mediating third.

Sartre's philosophical purpose in writing both 'Materialism and Revolution', and *The Communists and Peace,* was to position human subjectivity in a historical context while maintaining subjectivity within a revolutionary project. As such, Sartre works out what Howard Davies refers to as his synthetic anthropology that seeks to understand history in terms of the dialectic between individuals and groups. He seeks to emphasize resourceful human enterprise at the expense of materialism's scientific orientation that, as Bakunin said, knows people but not individuals. How separate individual acts combine to produce a constituted social world becomes a central undertaking for Sartre; and, as we shall see, the undertaking becomes further complicated when Sartre asks in Volume II of the *Critique*: in a social world where the inhabitants are often in conflict, how do groups collaborate towards a common goal?

The Ghost of Stalin

If the early 1950s was a time of development for Sartre, by mid-decade he assumed a prominent role in the current discussion of politics. His fervent anti-colonialist stance, most notably his opposition to France's war against Algerian independence coupled with his dislike of Charles de Gaulle whom he described as 'a baneful figure in History', thrust Sartre into the spotlight of French politics.[41] During this period, Sartre oscillated with his adherence to Marxism in general and to the PCF's dogmatism in particular. While never accepting one of the PCF's major tenets,

[39] Ibid., p. 94 (emphasis added).

[40] Ibid., p. 97 (emphasis in original).

[41] de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, p. 24. Sartre thought de Gaulle assumed power as a result of a conspiracy and could, therefore, never be thought of as honourable or legitimate. As such, Sartre compares de Gaulle to Napoleon III. Sartre, *Sartre by Himself*, p. 85.

dialectical materialism, Sartre is often thought of as a *compagnon de route.* In May 1950, the PCF turned to Sartre to defend a young naval seaman arrested for distributing anti-war literature at the height of French aggression in Indochina. Sartre was favourably, if not cautiously, disposed towards the PCF. For their part, the PCF always felt the need to attach itself to prominent intellectuals, and Sartre was the most prominent of them all. At least for the first half of the 1950s Sartre obliged the PCF, in a sort of *entente*, as best he could.

However, with the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956, any feelings of solidarity came to an abrupt halt. His response was almost immediate.[42] In a series of articles spaced over a three-month period in *Les Temps Modernes*, Sartre posed serious questions concerning the Soviet's action, questions no one else wanted to ask:

> … Nobody has been willing to understand that the U.S.S.R *defined by its acts* its own socialism and that which its counts on re-establishing in Hungary; nobody has dared to ask himself whether this military action, in reducing the internal relations of the socialist camp to relations of force, hasn't more seriously harmed the cause being defended than would have free elections and neutralization; nobody has seen that the intervention was *the expression of a political policy.*[43]

What brought about the insurrection was, in Sartre's analysis, a population driven to despair by the 'explosive mixture, within the [Soviet Union's Communist] Party itself, of a still aggressive Stalinism and supporters of de-Stalinization; it was the hesitations, the about-faces, the procrastinations and the contradictions'.[44] This struggle led Sartre to title his article 'The Ghost of Stalin'.

Sartre's plan of attack in the article is to reject both Stalinism and capitalism, and, at the same time, reinforce his own anti-colonialist position. In doing so, Sartre refuses to accept the notion of the centralization of the world revolutionary struggle in Moscow. By rejecting Stalin's slogan of 'socialism in one country', Sartre discards any idea of an authoritarian, mechanistic and dogmatic approach to revolution in all circumstances of liberation. Significantly, as Howard Davies points out, after 1956 *Les Temps Moderne's* political posture veers towards the support of revolutionary movements that are appropriate to individual circumstances directed from below, at the local level. While the article contains many interesting and significant ideas, I want to concentrate on the description of Stalin and his function within the Party. Sartre is, I think, setting the stage for Volume II of the *Critique* with this analysis; yet, the foundation for his depiction of sociological group formations in the first volume finds its origin here as well.

Sartre's analysis starts with the Plan.[45] Championed by Stalin, the Soviet five-year plan dominated its economic development. The need to industrialize the cities at the cost of the peasants,

[42] Sartre signed the manifesto, 'Contre l'intervention soviétique', published in *France-Observateur* in November 1956, which protested the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Moreover, in public statements, Sartre said he was breaking with the PCF over their support for the invasion.

[43] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Ghost of Stalin* (New York: George Braziller, 1968, p. 13) (emphasis in original).

[44] Ibid., p. 17.

[45] Much of what Sartre says here regarding the Plan is repeated in Volume II of the *Critique.* Of importance for our discussion is Sartre's description in the *Critique* of the sovereign's leadership. There Sartre says the Plan reveals three important characteristics: first, it is a reversal of Marx's emphasis on the economic and marks a return to the predominance of the political; second, the adoption of centralized planning as revolutionary praxis is designed to carry on the Revolution by other means; third, voluntarism produces itself based on practical exigencies. Sartre sees the effect of subordinating the economic to the political as the same as subordinating the 'is' to 'ought', the effect of which is to deprive planning of all flexibility. Thus the workers' fate, derived from the sovereign in the form of an absolute determination of objectivity, fixes his function on the basis of statistical analysis that defines him through

and their mostly subsistence farming, provide the contradictions Sartre so often concerns himself with. The first phase of the Plan means the masses lose the power to decide on their own needs; experts now make the decision as to what is suitable for them. Thus, technical, scientific control is exerted at the expense of the working class, who at one time controlled the cadres and apparatuses.

As I pointed out, Sartre is critical of this turn to scientific dominance, since it reduces humankind to an object of knowledge, no different from the scientific study of rocks. More importantly, he sees the loss of control at the local level to be disdainful. In both of these concerns – the loss of individual freedom and his distrust of scientific materialism – Sartre is no different than the anarchists of the nineteenth century, especially Bakunin who also argued vociferously against the supremacy of governmental experts and technocrats, or in his word, 'science'. Scientific materialism dominates the Marxist world of Sartre's day, a domination he challenges throughout his life and will again in the *Critique*.

This technological turn forces the leaders to figure out the objective contradictions of the economic movement themselves, which invariably removes them from the conditions of the workers. In other words, leaders assume the role of 'pure discernment of objectivity and authoritarian action' instigated to resolve all difficulties.[46] The effect of this authoritarian action causes the masses to become passive and inert objects of historical contradictions, an effect Proudhon foresaw as well. Just as importantly, Sartre criticizes what he perceives to be the existing order or structure of society and its institutions, the second element of the description of anarchism.

Not only does the turn to a scientific methodology separate workers and leaders, but forced industrialization also brings with it a conflict between the workers themselves. The industrialized workers, forced to migrate to the urban centres for the sake of production, are forever pitted against the rural inhabitants who never cease to resist what they consider an expropriation. From 1930 onwards, the Soviet leaders, already removed from the workers' condition, are compelled to exercise an iron dictatorship on a hostile peasantry. Stalinism, Sartre asserts, is born of this contradiction: it develops a bureaucracy of experts, technicians and administrators who are born of the Plan; the Plan legitimizes their privileges; the Plan totally alienates them from the masses. In short, they are the Plan. This complete alienation allows them to consider their efforts as organs of the universal while the demands of the masses merely play out as particular accidents of a decidedly negative character.[47] It is between these 'organizers' or bureaucrats and the masses that the Party (as institution) claims to play the role of mediator. By purges, persecutions and reorganizations, the Party constantly keeps the bureaucracy in line. As Sartre points out, 'the Party is, itself, the political expression of economic planning; creator of myths, specialized in propaganda, it controls, stirs up, exhorts the masses'.[48] And, even though the Party may unite the masses in a unanimous movement – if only for a moment – it neither reflects the immediate interests of the masses, nor their demands, nor does it understand the daily vicissitudes that keep the masses in tumult.

The contradictions Sartre speaks of cause the regime to create workers elites; these 'heroes of labour', held up everywhere, are in reality an illusion. As Sartre suggests, the necessities of

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the sovereign's calculations as simply a unit of production, which reifies the obedient relation of citizen to sovereign. *CDR II*, pp. 127–8.

[46] *The Ghost of Stalin*, p. 70.

[47] Ibid., pp. 71–2.

[48] Ibid., p. 72.

socialization predispose the leaders to underestimate the revolutionary force of the proletariat; they instead turn to propaganda in order to assert their control. The workers, on the other hand, come to distrust the bureaucracy; they feel governed from the outside; they are no longer the subject of history, instead they are the '*principle object* of administrative solitude and the *essential means* of socialist construction'.[49] At the same time, the bureaucracy relentlessly pursues its unification.

Here, the contradictions within the bureaucratic group cause the factions from the left and from the right to seek acceptance of 'their Plan' at the expense of the opposition's Plan, even though no fixed Plan is meant to exist; it is at best a hypothesis constantly submitted to the control of experience.[50] At the very moment when this internecine warfare permeates and threatens the bureaucratic group, perceived external threats to the very existence of the group erupt. Yet, the rural masses remain hostile but silent. Faced with a direct threat from without and the resistance from within, the leaders recognize the necessity of the indissoluble unity of their adherents. This exact scenario reappears in the *Critique* as Sartre discusses the need for the group-in-fusion to maintain its future existence.

The group of 'organizers' preserve their authority only by first achieving from within their own security. They 'push' their own integration to the utmost limit, even though the limit is beyond reach.[51] At this point, a strange contradiction occurs that Sartre reiterates and develops further in the *Critique*: each person becomes suspect in the eyes of everyone else, but just as importantly each becomes suspect in his own eyes. At the very moment individuals consider themselves to be inessential in relation to the group, the group must go beyond itself and unite in the sacred figure of an essential individual. As Sartre concludes, 'the cult of personality is above all else the cult of social unity in one person'.[52]

The cult of personality revolving around Stalin is not an appointment of one person who represents the indissolubility of the group, but through his *function* (office) he is this very indissolubility and, at the same time, he forges it. As abstract power, function, inextricably linked to individual personality as pure form, constitutes the object of the cult, and it alone is sacred. A key point, and one Sartre emphasizes in the *Critique*, is that Stalin at first does not appear superior to others. Fundamentally, he is the same. He does not represent the dignity of the person; rather, he embodies the social integration of the group pushed to its limits. The indissolubility of the group makes Stalin the sole possible agent of unification.

According to Sartre, Stalin's function identifies with the coercive elements within the group exercising power over its own members. His function requires him to carry out the sentence imposed by the bureaucracy on itself. In the name of all, he distrusts each; but curiously, the group is not distrustful of Stalin for the simple reason that once placed above the group he shows the group the impossibility of collective unity. Each member of the group knows that 'up there', in the form of Stalin, the bureaucratic collective exists under a form of superior integration.[53] Thus, each individual member of the bureaucratic group recognizes their own radical negation of self to the profit of the unity of the group. The ascending movement, from the group to Stalin, represents the total destruction of individuality. At the same time, a descending movement exists

[49] Ibid., p. 73 (emphasis in original).
[50] Ibid., p. 74.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., p. 75.
[53] Ibid., p. 77.

from the top to the bottom; only extreme integration of the group allows Stalin to resolve the problem of integration. Yet, from the top of the ladder to the bottom, the officials' power emanates from Stalin.

All of these essays from the late 1920s to the mid-1950s help to define the parameters of Sartre's political position, and they give us an insight into his developing anarchistic attitude. In these essays, we see Sartre expressing several aspects that align him more closely to anarchist thought, especially to Proudhon and Bakunin. His concern for the sovereignty of the individual at the expense of state sovereignty, as well as his notion of function, was first enunciated in his 'Theory of the State in Modern French Thought'. His 'anarchist attitude', as Michel Contat so aptly puts it, is readily apparent in his description of the individualistic, stoic 'solitary man'.

The three post-war essays illuminate the trajectory of Sartre's political development. Far more sophisticated, less ethereal, and more directed to the immediate than the earlier essays, these later essays bring into focus his belief on several levels. First, only the collective can orchestrate revolution, and only the peasants are the true vanguard of the revolution. Second, Sartre adopts Bakunin's famous phrase 'from the base to the summit'. Third, even Sartre's desire to show that history has meaning – an essential purpose of the *Critique* and central to Proudhon's and Bakunin's concept of history – is first discussed in these early essays. Lastly, Sartre places at centre stage two topics vital to anarchist thought, violence and praxis. It is the *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* however, that solidifies not only his politics, but his anarchism as well.

Part Four: Sartre's Political Manifesto: *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*

Introduction

The Critique of Dialectical Reason

In turning to this rather substantial text, one is struck by the sheer complexity of Sartre's undertaking and the concomitant problems of distilling the contents into something comprehensible, all of which is exacerbated by grappling with an entirely new vocabulary. My approach is first to present an overview of Sartre's project including a number of themes spelled out in the *Critique's* opening pages. This should prove helpful in understanding Sartre's terminology and methodological approach as well as the nature and goal of the project. To some extent, the discussion of Sartre's earlier work underlies much of what he wishes to accomplish, since those works meld into the final project that is the *Critique.*

In the next chapter, I shall analyse how Sartre perceives the formation of groups starting with non-group collectives and travelling through organized groups. This provides a foundation for the formation of the sociological/anthropological as well as psychological praxis at play within the material field comprising the collective and the group.

In Chapter 9, I shall undertake a specific discussion of Sartre's unique notion of institutions that give rise to the incarnated sovereignty of one person. Lastly, in the final chapter of this Section, I shall discuss the institutionalization of society and the state. Each of these discussions naturally entail the other, but they also build upon one another in order to allow a clear understanding of Sartre's anarchistic political philosophy.[1]

Overview of the Critique

While Sartre began writing the *Critique* sometime in 1957, and published the first volume three years later in the spring of 1960, throughout my discussion I show that he 'wrote' the *Critique* for most of his life. Commentators generally see the *Critique* as the culmination of Sartre's political philosophy, but some suggest it was primarily a response to his critics who argued that *Being and Nothingness* was, among other things, incapable of accommodating any concept of mediation. The first claim is, I think, rather obvious and the second may or may not be accurate, but it hardly concerns the present project.

When one looks at the immense workload Sartre engaged in at the time, one comes away with a new sense of respect for his intellectual powers. After all, while writing the *Critique*, he was the main editor of *Les Tempes Modernes* and contributed his own articles to the journal, he engaged wholeheartedly in the Algerian struggle for independence, he wrote plays, articles, a lengthy screenplay on Freud and gave interviews. His literary and intellectual pursuits between 1957 and 1960 take up almost sixty pages in his bibliography. So why undertake the project of

[1] There are very good exegetical accounts of both volumes of the *Critique,* however, neither specifically concerns itself with Sartre's political philosophy. For Volume I of the *Critique* see, Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason.* For a discussion of volume II see, Ronald Aronson, *Sartre's Second Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

the *Critique*, and what did Sartre hope to accomplish by doing so? I shall address these questions in the present introduction.

Methodology

Critical to an overall understanding of the *Critique* is the methodology employed. Generally, all of Sartre's philosophical works start with abstract notions and move towards the concrete, and the *Critique* is no exception. The abstract, represented in Volume I, is where Sartre attempts to show the possibilities of 'exchange, degradation, the practico-inert, series, collectives, recurrence and so on. It is concerned only with the theoretical possibilities of their combinations.'[2] In this sense, Volume I articulates the different means of interpenetration of various sets of totalizations, such as the individual adrift in the inert material world, and the relationship between self and others. As Howard Davies points out, 'different anthropological categories are set up as a result: series, collectives, groups-in-fusion, pledged groups, institutions and classes'.[3] All of these categories are then subject to examination in order to understand whether their origin emanates from, or aids, or resides in individual praxis.

Volume II, on the other hand, illustrates the abstract notions in a concrete manner through a discussion of Stalin's struggle with Trotsky, and eventually to the cult of personality where Stalin alone is sovereign. As Sartre points out, history itself is the intended purpose of the second volume.

The second method Sartre utilizes is the progressive/regressive method borrowed from the French sociologist-philosopher Henri Lefebvre. In Sartre's appropriation, the method of analysis to understand a particular culture under investigation begins with a regressive and synchronic phase followed by a progressive and diachronic undertaking, and this is exactly what occurs in the *Critique*. Volume I is regressive and synchronic while Volume II addresses the progressive and diachronic. With this in mind, let us now discuss what Sartre's project entails.

The Dialectic

Sartre begins his analysis by asking a simple question, a question first asked in *Being and Nothingness*: does history have meaning? If history does have meaning, then, at least for Sartre, its understanding is dialectical with a goal to substantiate an intelligibility of the singular. In other words, Sartre seeks to illuminate the dialectical intelligibility of that which is not universalizable; our history is a singular history. Again, Sartre is referring back to his familiar theme of the singular/universal, and, as the title to the book implies, Sartre's project is to analyse dialectical reason at the expense of analytic reason.[4]

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought', in *Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre* (London: Seagull Books, 2006), p.46 (interview with Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser, Quintin Hoare, and Simone de Beauvoir, originally published in *New Left Review* I/58, November to December 1969, pp. 43–66).

[3] Davies, *Les Temps Modernes*, p. 117.

[4] Sartre defines analytic reason as 'our first machine', that comprehends the process of an agent's act from the outside, as a passive series of inert successions. *CDR II*, p. 375. As such, it is exteriority itself as practical rule of the operations at the level of the inert. It is, in short, a tool for the rationalization of action whose origin and purpose are decided elsewhere. More importantly, this positivistic reason adopts the logic of machines, and regards humans as merely another machine. Dialectical reason, on the other hand, views each action as a part of a creative and totalizing

At the outset, therefore, his critical dialectic is not a solitary dialectic imposing itself upon facts as the Kantian notion of the categories imposes themselves on phenomena. There is no pre determined schema forced on individual progress; rather, the dialectic is 'the individual career of its object'.[5] Nor is the dialectic a God-like, all-powerful force directing History in some behind-the-scene manner. Instead, the premise of the dialectic is on practical individual existence where humans are the direct cause of their own experiences. Those experiences, in turn, represent a project through which humans transcend and supersede the given situation that totalizes the external realities of the world in order to transform the world. Human's practical activity resides in the totalization through human labour of the practical material fields of this activity, which consists in the organization of the world into a structured ensemble by totalizing praxis as the dialectical finality of human activity.[6]

In another sense, Sartre's dialectic is a further development of Marx's general notion of the dialectic into a more precise and well-defined method of dialectical thinking. A key distinction exists, however, between Sartre's dialectic and that of Marx. As I pointed out in the discussion of Sartre's fundamental difference with the Marxian notion of consciousness, Sartre's dialectic, enmeshed in the material world and the human activities affecting that material world, is external to matter and not internal. Marx, on the other hand, argues for an internal dialectic of matter as well as an external dialectic of human interactions with nature and with the material world. While Sartre refuses to grant the validity of the dialectic in the domain of matter or nature, he does maintain that the natural material world reacts dialectically, but only when humans act upon it.

One of the *Critique's* opening themes is a discussion of historical materialism. Sartre does this for the simple reason that unless it is assumed to be true, his project fails of its own accord. He says:

> it must be proved that a negation of a negation can be an affirmation, that conflicts – within a person or a group – are the motive force of History, that each moment of a series is *comprehensible* on the basis of the initial moment, though *irreducible* to it, that History continually effects totalizations of totalizations, and so on, before the details of an analytico-synthetic and regressive-progressive method can be grasped.[7]

All of these issues and more occupy Sartre as he develops the major themes of the *Critique* – obviously some more critical than others. At this early stage, he makes clear the importance of understanding dialectical reason through human relationships. Thus, its intelligibility must

praxis. Consequently, 'human action is effectively irreducible to any other process inasmuch as it is defined as a practical organization of inert multiplicities by an inertia-passion and via an irresistible project to integrate all the elements of the practical field: i.e., inasmuch as it is transcendence, temporalization, unification, totalization'. Ibid., p. 379.

[5] *CDR I*, p. 37.

[6] Sartre expands upon this idea in an interview where he answers the question whether one is a dialectician when one thinks a totality. He replies in the affirmative adding 'a totality with lots of contradictory relationships within the whole and an interconnection of the whole that comes from the shifting of all these particular contradictions'. "Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 19. A little later in the same interview, Sartre is asked if a dialectical synthesis exists. He answers that only partial syntheses exist, and he rejects any notion of an absolute synthesis. However, he then says a synthesis of a historical period could be absolute. Volume II of the *Critique* concerns itself with this issue. 'Our time', Sartre says, 'is its own synthesis within itself'. Ibid., p. 19.

[7] *CDR I*, p. 15 (emphasis in original).

then be experienced independent of any empirical discovery. Since the dialectic is the reason of knowledge, it has a double intelligibility: first, as the law of the world of knowledge, it itself is intelligible; secondly, in order for real facts to develop dialectically, the law of its appearing and becoming must be the pure ground for intelligibility.

Once again, Sartre is arguing with Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* for merely proclaiming dialectical laws of nature, rather than showing that

> the basic intelligibility of dialectical Reason, if it exists, is that of a totalization. In other words, in terms of our distinction between being and knowledge, a dialectic exists, if, in at least one ontological region, a totalization is in progress which is immediately accessible to a thought which unceasingly totalizes itself in its comprehension of the totalization from which it emanates and which makes itself its object.[8]

What Sartre means by the notions of totality and totalization are critical to an understanding of the *Critique*. He defines a totality 'as a being which, while radically distinct from the sum of its parts, is present in its entirety … in each of these parts, and which relates to itself either through its relation to one or more parts or through its relation to the relation between all or some of them'.[9] In actuality, the ontological status to which a totality lays claim is the inert (what Sartre eventually refers to as the practico-inert), or what in *Being and Nothingness* is called the *in-itself*.

In contrast, even though it has the same status as the totality in that each part is an expression of the whole, totalization is a *developing* activity that cannot cease without the multiplicity reverting to its original status. Praxis or action is the unity of the ensembles integrated in the practical field.[10] Consequently, the intelligibility of dialectical reason is the movement of totalization and within this framework of totalization, the negation of the negation becomes an affirmation. The dialectic itself is a totalizing activity whose only laws are produced by the developing totalization, which is concerned solely with the relation of unification and the unified. In actual reality, all of this merely means that Sartre's critical investigation concerns itself with 'anyone's' reflexive experience.[11]

We require one additional element if dialectical reason exists, and that is the totalizing movement must be intelligible at all times and in all places. Sartre envisions two forms of intelligibility: the secondary form occurs when the information available to us is insufficient to make an event

[8] Ibid., p. 44.

[9] Ibid., p. 45.

[10] Sartre defines praxis as nothing more than 'the relationship of the organism, as exterior and future end, to the present organism as totality under threat; it is function exteriorized'. Ibid., p. 83. A little later, he says, 'in so far as body is function, function need and need *praxis*, one can say that *human labor*, the *original praxis* by which man produces and reproduces his life, is *entirely* dialectical'. Ibid., p. 90 (emphasis in original).

[11] By reflexive Sartre means, 'in the particularity of its moments, it cannot be separated from the developing totalization any more than reflection can be distinguished from human *praxis'*. Ibid., p. 49. Refection is not parasitical or distinct from consciousness; it is a distinctive structure of consciousness. As such, any developing totalization in a particular region of reality will be a unique process occurring under unique conditions, which, epistemologically, produces the universals that explain the concepts and individualize those concepts by interiorizing them. Accordingly, the critical investigation is only a moment of this process, which apprehends the individual moment through reflection. This means the particular moment gives the act a reflexive structure. By the term 'anyone', Sartre has in mind the following: if the historical totalization exists, then any human life is the direct or indirect expression of the totalizing moment, or the whole. Ibid., p. 50.

accessible, but we can still guarantee intelligibility through our investigation of the event. The second form, primary intelligence, consists in reducing the laws of the dialectic to moments of the totalization. Thus:

> instead of grasping certain principles *within ourselves, a priori* (that is to say, certain opaque limits of thought), we must grasp the dialectic *in the object* and understand it – to the extent that each of us, simultaneously individual and *the whole* of human history, *produces* it from this double point of view and is subject to it in producing it – as the totalizing movement.[12]

What Sartre is ultimately driving at in his investigation is the fundamental identity between individual life and human history – the singular/universal. This relation, as the identity of two totalizing processes, needs substantiation. For instance, as I grow older and my life takes on the attributes of History, it reveals itself as the free development of the historical process, which means that it rediscovers itself at an even more complex level of understanding as the freedom of necessity and as necessity of freedom. The critical interplay in Sartre's schema is that the totalizer is *always* the totalized, 'even if, as we shall see, he is the Prince in person'.[13]

With regard to the notion of necessity, a particular goal of the *Critique* is to prove, as the clearly established struc ture of the dialectical investigation, necessity resides neither in the free development of interiority nor in the inert diffusion of exteriority. Rather, necessity asserts itself as an inevitable and irreducible moment in the interiorization of the exterior and the exteriorization of the interior. This enquiry leads to a fundamental theme of the *Critique*: an examination of individual praxis shows that it interiorizes the exterior while, at the same time, praxis intentionally exteriorizes interiority through labour. As my practical life dissolves itself into sociological or historical totalizations, my subjectivity appears as the 'verdict which compels [me] to carry out, freely and through [myself], the sentence that a "developing" society has pronounced upon [me] and which defines [me] *a priori* in [my] being'.[14] It is here, Sartre says, one encounters the practico-inert.

At this point, Sartre focuses on one of the first of his abstract notions before he continues to the concrete, but before embarking on a specific discussion of need I want to reiterate that Sartre generally moves from the abstract to the concrete in all of his major philosophical and literary works. In the *Critique* there are, however, some very specific reasons he adopted the technique, and they have a great deal to do with his running argument against dialectical materialism espoused by certain Marxists within the PCF at the time.

As he explains, the habit of skipping the abstract discussion of human relations and moving immediately to life centred, and indeed anchored, in a world of productive forces gives unwitting support not only to liberalism but analytic rationality as well. According to these Marxists,

[12] Ibid., p. 57 (emphasis in original).

[13] Ibid., p. 70.

[14] Ibid., p. 71 (quotation slightly altered). Sartre defines the practico-inert as the basic mode of sociality. As such, it is a collective composed of effectively separated, albeit ostensibly united, individuals forming the practico-inert field. In its operation, the practico-inert acts as anti-praxis or anti-dialectic making history possible, but at the same time it makes an overriding master impossible. The group, on the other hand, arises on the basis of the negation of the practico-inert, but it is at the practico-inert level that seriality is produced in humans by things as a bond of materiality that transcends and alters individual human relations. The bond of materiality as the practical ensemble is the collective. See, Ibid., p. 193.

individuals are *a priori* neither isolated particles nor directly related activities. Rather, it is up to society to determine which they are through what Sartre calls the totality of the 'movement and the particularity of the conjecture'. The consequences involve a complete acceptance of liberalism's position, and it requires only one concession for the individualistic bourgeoisie position: the individual passively submits to relations conditioned in exteriority on a multitude of forces.[15] As a result, these Marxists are free to apply the principles of inertia and positivistic laws of exteriority to human relations.

Pursuant to this viewpoint, it does not matter whether individuals really live in isolation or in highly integrated groups; a point completely at odds with Sartre's position not only in the *Critique*, but also in all of his philosophical works**.** This is an ongoing discussion for Sartre and one that underlies the *Critique's* foundation: human history is essentially the story of human development in all its phases, contradictions, ramifications, successes and failures, and Sartre's unfettered concern is for the human individual, which not only sets him apart from French liberalism and Marxism, but brings him closer to anarchism.

Need

As Sartre continues the discussion of individual praxis, he turns to the concept of need in his quest to answer the question: if individuals exist, who or what totalizes.[16] In a partial but critical answer, Sartre asserts that the entire historical dialectic rests on individual praxis because it is already dialectical. If this is so, what happens to the dialectic if only particular individuals exist, each of whom is dialectical? The answer lies in the real rationality of action, and that is need. In fact, need is the first totalizing relation – both univocal and of interiority – between the material human beings and the material ensembles of which they are a part. As a lack, need is the first negation of the negation, but there are positive aspect since material being tends to preserve itself through need. It is the organism living itself in the future through present disorders as its own possibility and as the possibility of its own impossibility. Need is, therefore, a function, which posits itself for itself, totalizes itself and ultimately poses a threat to any organism with the ultimate possibility of death. This common theme – the myriad ways in which the material universe is hostile to human existence – plays an exceedingly important role, especially in Sartre's discussions of violence.

[15] Sartre illustrates his position in his book, *Anti-Semite and Jew,* trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), pp. 55–7, where he states that liberal democracies universalize all of humanity, and thus recognize neither distinction nor origin, In other words, there is no Jew, there are just bodies in a collective making up human nature. In the end, the Democrat saves the man and annihilates the Jew.

[16] Ronald Aronson criticizes Sartre, saying he starts out with the concept of need as an explanation of everything, and then returns to it in Volume II to provide a foundation for historical materialism. Aronson argues that a schism occurs in Sartre's work when after his analysis of the concrete evolution of the USSR up to the mid-1950s, Sartre returns once again to the topic of need. Aronson does not see the return as a dialectical unveiling of an evolved truth, but rather as a radical indication of the impoverishment of Sartre's thought; a tautology that underscores an abrupt change from the brilliant analysis of the history of the USSR to a dull and repetitious rehash that, according to Aronson, indicates Sartre's sudden realization of the impossibility of his project. Ronald Aronson, 'Sartre's Turning Point: The Abandoned *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Volume Two', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, pp. 685–708. One commentator has challenged Aronson's position. Juliette Simont, 'The *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: From Need to Need, Circularly', *Yale French Studies* 68 (1985): 108–23.

In the abstract and regressive method, the mundane existence of the isolated individual is the origin for the development of collectives and groups. In general, Sartre sees isolated individuals as the violent negation leading to praxis, which then passes into physical generality as *exis*, or as an inert void to which the organism tries to adapt by degrading itself into a neutral gear to curtail its exigencies. For Sartre, relations between individuals are always the dialectical result of their activity in as much as they arise as a transcendence of dominating and institutionalized human relations. Humans exist only in given circumstances and under certain social conditions, such that all human relations are historical.

The Third

This brings us to another essential theme in Sartre's political philosophy. If all human relations are dialectical, then completely isolated individuals – whether as a result of institutions (which assumes an important role in our later discussion), social conditions, or, as he says, are purely inadvertent – seem to possess a relation of absolute exteriority, but in their very separation their concrete and historical bond is one of interiority. In a deceptively simple example, Sartre introduces the 'third' as the party of mediation, with all of its complex ramifications.

If the example is seemingly straight forward, the consequences are anything but: Sartre is standing at a window overlooking a walled-in garden adjacent to a road. Peering out the window, he notices a gardener busy tending her flowers, and, separated by the wall, a road mender equally at work repairing the highway. As the *mise en scène* unfolds, the wall is adequate in its height and bulk so the two workers are completely unaware of the other's existence just as they are unaware of Sartre's voyeuristic gaze. Initially, Sartre defines his relation to the two workers as negative, since he is a bourgeois intellectual and not of their class. However, the negation Sartre speaks of has a double character: first, it is perceived against the situation each is located; secondly, and this is the essential point, every negation is a relation of interiority, that is, the Other's reality affects my reality deeply for the very reason that it is not my reality.

Each of the workers represents a point of rupture of the object that qualifies Sartre objectively in his subjectivity, and, as he says, 'that is how they are linked at first in my perception, that is to say, as two centrifugal and divergent "slips" (*glissemen ts*), within the same world'.[17] Because it is the same world, the universe unites everyone as a whole. The simple fact of seeing what the other does not see establishes, in Sartre's perceptual field, a relation of reciprocity transcending his perception. The mutual ignorance of the gardener and the road mender only come into being with Sartre's (as the third) mediation. Standing in his window, he constitutes them in a reciprocity of ignorance, which is not a subjective impression. The two workers are not ignorant of each other *because* of Sartre, they are ignorant of one another *through* Sartre to the same extent he is ignorant of them *through* them; each is for the Other an implicit reality. In Sartre's abstract analysis, each of the workers, through their work, produce themselves as a certain exposure of the world that objectively makes them the product of their own product. They each affirm the unity of the world by inscribing in it through their work and through the particular unification

[17] *CDR I*, p. 102.

this work brings about. In effect, each 'discovers' the Other as an object actually present in the universe within one's own situation, since ignorance becomes reciprocal through the third.[18]

Sartre's example highlights his notion that the organization of the practical field in the world determines a real relation for everyone. This means unification only comes about through praxis and everyone is unifying to the extent their acts determine a dialectical field, which is itself unified within this field by the unification of the Other, or as Sartre puts it, in accordance with the '*plurality of unifications*'.[19] This new moment of the contradiction between the unifying unity of praxis and the exteriorizing plurality of human organisms Sartre labels the reciprocity of relations. In the *Critique's* more sociological discussion of organized groups, we shall see how the organization unifies reciprocal relations through function. Each of the three parties in Sartre's example stands as a centre in relation to the Other as a point of escape, and as an other unification. Importantly, while this is also a negation of interiority, it is not a totalizing unification. The emphasis here is the assertion that the foundation for all human relations is the immediate and perpetual determination of everyone by the Other, and by all.

The relationship of the third is indispensable to Sartre's analysis in the *Critique*, especially when we talk about sovereignty. At this point, however, some may wonder about the dyadic relationship so crucial in *Being and Nothingness*; is it still viable, or has Sartre made a radical turn? In a very brief paragraph, Sartre seems to be aware of the concern. As reciprocity becomes isolated as a human relationship, it presents itself as a fundamental concrete bond. As I locate myself in the social world, I realize that both binary and ternary relations abound. The latter are constantly disintegrating while the former, since they arise from a turning totalization, at any moment may integrate themselves into a trinity. Nevertheless, Sartre dispels any notion that a temporal process begins with a dyad and ends in a triad:

> A binary formation, as the immediate relation of man to man, is the necessary ground of any ternary relation; but conversely, a ternary relation, as a mediation of man amongst men, is the basis on which reciprocity becomes aware of itself as a reciprocal connection. … But this trinity is not a designation or ideal mark of the human relation: it is inscribed *in being*, that is to say, in the materiality of individuals. In this sense, reciprocity is not the thesis, nor trinity the synthesis (or conversely): it is lived relations whose content is determined in a given society, and which are conditioned by materiality and capable of being modified only by action.[20]

[18] Sartre makes clear that once this relationship of reciprocity co mes into being, it closes in upon itself. As a result, if the triad is necessary for relations 'stranded' in the universe, and actually linking two individuals who are ignorant of each other, it is, at the same time 'broken up' by the exclusion of the third party as soon as people or groups either help one another or fight with one another. The human mediator transforms the elementary relations whose essence is to be lived with no mediation other than matter into 'something else'. What this something else is becomes clear as Sartre progresses through his analysis of collectives and groups. Even in the event individuals are face to face with each other, the reciprocity of their relation is actualized through the mediation of the third, and is immediately closed off from itself. Ibid., p. 106.

[19] Ibid., p. 104 (emphasis in original).

[20] Ibid., p. 109. Sartre defines reciprocity as 'a permanent structure of every object; defined as things *in advance*, by collective *praxis*, we transcend our being by producing ourselves as men among men and we allow ourselves to be integrated by everyone else to the extent that they are to be integrated into our project'. Ibid. (emphasis in original). A little later, Sartre says reciprocity 'implies, first that the Other is a means to the extent that I myself am a means, that is the Other is the means of a transcendent end and not *my* means; second, that I recognize the Other as praxis, that is to say, as a developing totalization, at the same time as integrating him as an object into my totalizing project; third,

Most accept Sartre's movement to the triadic as a further development of the dyadic relationship first encountered in *Being and Nothingness*, once humans enmesh themselves in social relationships.[21]

In fact, Sartre returns to the dyadic structure when he continues the discussion of reciprocity, since, as he says, it is the simplest. Regardless of what the third party does or does not do, and while there is a spontaneous mutual recognition of two complete strangers once they have met, it is only the actualization of the relation that is given as having already existed as the concrete and historical reality of the two that has been formed. Each of the two strangers produces their being in the presence of the Other, but always within a human social world. Therefore, reciprocity takes on a permanent structure of every object defined by collective praxis, which allows the integration *of* everyone *by* everyone to the extent of their integration into the other's project. Reciprocal ternary relations are, consequently, the basis for all relations between humans whatever form they may subsequently take. Essentially, this means that the fundamental and structural human relationship is a relation of interiority. At this stage, relations of reciprocity as well as ternary relations are not totalizing; rather, they are multiple adhesions between humans that, as Sartre says, keep society in a 'colloid' or gluttonous state.

Scarcity (*la rareté*)

While I have discussed several key elements including Sartre's methodological approach, the dialectic, need, reciprocal relations and the mediation of the third, there is, perhaps, nothing more fundamental than Sartre's concept of scarcity:

> It is not the dialectic which forces historical men to live their history in terrible contradictions; it is men, as they are, dominated by *scarcity* and necessity, and confronting one another in circumstances which History or economics can inventory, but which only dialectic reason can explain.[22]

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that I recognize his movement towards his own ends in the same movement by which I project myself towards mine; and fourth, that I discover myself as an object and instrument of his ends through the same act which constitutes him an objective instrument of my ends'. Ibid., pp. 112–13 (emphasis in original).

[21] The concept of the third originates in Part III of *Being and Nothingness* as a development of 'Being-for-Others'. Sartre introduces the third after a discussion of the alienating gaze of the other that objectifies me through the Look, which is at best a duality of mutually objectifying consciousness. At this point, we discover the third as the alienating presence who objectifies two lovers by the look, and fixes their relationship into a dead possibility. Sartre then proceeds to a discussion of the 'us-subject' where every situation, as an engagement in the midst of others, is experienced as 'Us' once the third appears. This means so long as humanity exists as a detotalized totality, it will always be possible for a plurality of individuals to experience themselves as 'Us' in relation to all or part of the rest of humanity, whether they are present in the flesh or whether they are real but absent. *BN*, p. 543, but see the entire discussion from pp. 534–56. In fact, Sartre illustrates his point by saying, 'it is not necessary that all the patrons at the café should be conscious of being "we" in order for me to experience myself as being engaged in a "we" with them'. Ibid., p. 536. For a further discussion see, Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason*, pp. 101–3; however, the dyadic relation of *Being and Nothingness* is not discussed within the context of the mediating third**.** Thomas Flynn, on the other hand, sees the change in Sartre's thinking as evolving from an 'alienating third' in *Being and Nothingness* to a 'mediating third' in the *Critique*. Thomas Flynn, 'Mediated Reciprocity and the Genius of the Third', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 345. For a discussion of the third as a radical departure from Sartre's previous work see: Glen A. Mazis, 'The Third: Development in Sartre's Characterization of the Self's Relation to Others', *Philosophy Today* 24, no. 3 (fall 1990): 249–61.

[22] *CDR I*, p. 37 (emphasis added). Sartre thinks that all human struggles are conditioned by scarcity as the negation of man by earth being interiorized as a negation of man by man. *CDR II*, p. 13. In Volume II of the *Critique*, Sartre further

Just as Proudhon argues, Sartre sees the human *milieu* in terms of a perpetual state of scarcity, not just the dearth of time as Marx believes but scarcity of everything. Scarcity is the initial structure of the world and, as Fredric Jameson adds, it is the 'experience of lack and desire, of hunger and thirst; it is also the primal way in which we organize the *en-soi* (being-in-itself) into a situation'.[23] Scarcity giv es rise to individuals refusing to serve the Other's end, while at the same time each recognizes their own objective being as a means within the adversary's project. As a material condition of scarcity, struggle ensues where everyone reduces themselves to their materiality so as to act on the Other 'through pretences, stratagems, frauds and manoeuvres everyone allows himself to be constituted by the Other as *a false object, a deceptive means'*.[24]

Sartre argues that at the level of primitive human existence, History has a dreadful and depressing meaning; 'it appears as though what unites men is an inert demonic negation, taking away their substance, that is to say, their labour, and turning it against all men in the form of *active inertia* and totalization of extermination'.[25] This peculiar relation, as well as the alienation resulting from it, produces its own intelligibility, since for everyone this relationship is a univocal relation of interiority. Sartre places this relation of interiority in human History as a particular and contingent form, since the story of human development is a hostile struggle with scarcity. Even though scarcity may vary from region to region, Sartre still thinks it is a universal problem. Despite its contingency, it is the basic human relation both as to Nature and to humans; in fact, it produces humans as these particular individuals living-out this particular History.

As Sartre points out in his discussion of the third, individuals unite with other individuals indirectly through a series of adhesions, all without having the slightest idea of the presence of one another. In an environment of scarcity, other members of the group exist collectively for one another, but they all pose a threat to everyone's well-being. Moreover, the totalization effected by scarcity is circular in nature: it is not the absolute impossibility of humans surviving; rather, scarcity turns the passive totality of individuals within a collective into an impossibility of 'co-existence'. Consequently, the mere existence of all others results in the constant danger of non-existence of everyone. Yet, the concern is much deeper because scarcity and all its ramifications cause humans to be other to humans as well as Other. Humans exist, therefore, for everyone as non-human or as an alien species, such that as we travel through life we face all others as if they were non-human beings and treat them without humanity.

This brings up an interesting point. If, as Sartre maintains throughout his entire life, human nature does not exist, how are we to understand this inhumanity? Sartre answers by saying our inhumanity is born out of a relation among humans and not some part of our innate inner self. Sartre expands upon this entire concept in the *Critique* in his discussion of interest, which lays

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delineates what he means by scarcity when he says it is scarcity of 'time, scarcity of means, scarcity of knowledge'. Ibid., p. 9. Later he will add one more element to the list and oddly it is the scarcity of people, but here Sartre is talking about the situation in bureaucratized institutions where a particular function requires ability. In this instance, individuals with ability are scarce. Ibid., p. 219. He goes on to say these indices of scarcity 'are *grounded* upon a more *fundamental* scarcity which conditions and grounds the conflict [i.e., the boxing match] – right back to its deepest sources – in the opposing interest, in the violence which brings the combatants into confrontation. …' Ibid., p. 9 (emphasis in original).

[23] Fredric Jameson, 'Forward', in *Critique of Dialectical Reason volume I*, p. xvii.

[24] *CDR I*, p. 113. Sartre defines Other as, 'simply a particular relation which manifests itself in precisely those circumstances which also engender the attempt to destroy it; besides, everyone is Other in the Other'. Ibid., p. 596. For Sartre, integration-terror is supposed to eliminate the Other but, in reality, the Other is indestructible.

[25] Ibid., p. 123 (emphasis in original).

out his ideas of 'human nature' as an essential element of anarchism. For now, scarcity as the univocal relation of each and all to matter, assumes an objective social structure, which everyone interiorizes so that each becomes a person of scarcity.[26] Consequently, humans constitute themselves as non-humans, and this non-humanity manifest itself in praxis as the perception of evil as the structure of the Other. All of this is to say that humans constitute themselves not only by their struggle against the physical world, but also by their struggle with the people inhabiting that domain.

The appearance of strangers presents us with both a bond of interiority (as we have seen) and a bond of absolute exteriority (which we will see). Again, need determines the degree of aggressive behaviour exhibited towards strangers. At the level of need, scarcity expresses itself in practice as Manichean action, and, in order to confront that action, the ethical takes the form of a categorical imperative: evil must be destroyed. Here violence, always expressed as counter-violence, destroys the inhumanity of the Other, but at the same time each of us realizes the Other's inhumanity in themselves.[27] My aim, regardless of the method I select, is to exterminate alien freedom as an inhospitable force. Simply stated, I destroy the others to prevent them from destroying me.

The development of praxis further complicates the relations of exteriority, which reestablishes reciprocity in the negative form of resentments. Once the actual struggle commences, the conflict fluctuates between two extremes: one renders the fight into a Manichaean struggle, while the other reduces it to more human proportions. When all possibilities for mediation and reconciliation are exhausted, the struggle turns to violence as the means to resolve the conflict. For Sartre, as well as for our discussion, it is essential to understand that no matter the conflict, in principle praxis transcends the reifying inertia of the relations of scarcity. The point, here, is to emphasize the morality of Manichaeism as an inert radical evil presupposing a suffered distance, a lived impotence, and, most significantly, the discovery of scarcity as destiny or the complete domination of humankind by the interiorized material environment. This is not, however, a rigid, permanent structure remaining at any given level of human destiny; rather, it is a certain moment in human relations, constantly metastable, since at every instant it is transcended and partially destroyed, and continually reborn. In the end, Sartre declares, 'we are united by the fact that we all live in a world which is determined by scarcity'.[28]

While scarcity determines each of us, interiorized scarcity, acted-out as the constant non-humanity of human conduct, makes people view one another as Other, which Sartre labels the principle of Evil.[29] Even though the economy of violence does not have to be visible, the relations

[26] In fact, Sartre sees scarcity as giving rise to the first moment of ethics in that it is praxis explaining itself in terms of a given circumstance. The first movement of this ethics is, at least for Sartre, the constitution of radical evil and of Manichaeism as it values and evaluates the breaking of the reciprocity of immanence by interiorized scarcity by conceiving of it as the product of the Other. Ibid., p. 132.

[27] Sartre explains that violence is really counter-violence or a retaliation against the violence of the Other (who is evil). The violence of the Other is not an objectively expressed reality other than it resides in all humans as a universal motivation of counter-violence. It is, therefore, the manifestation of a broken reciprocity and a systematic exploitation of individual humanity for the destruction of humanity. Consequently, counter-violence is the same thing. Only counter-violence is also a process of restoration and provocation. 'If I destroy the non-humanity of the anti-human in my adversary, I cannot help destroying the humanity of man in him, and realizing his non-humanity in myself'. Ibid., p. 133.

[28] Ibid., p. 136.

[29] Ibid., p. 149.

of production generally establish themselves within an environment of fear and mistrust by individuals who believe the Other is an anti-human member of an alien species. We witnessed this strain of thought in Sartre's analysis of oppression in *The Ghost of Stalin*, and he again utilizes the same notion as he explores the sociological formation of collectives and groups from seriality to institution. As a result, it is primarily this tension, born of scarcity that inflicts extreme dangers on the members of society by the diffuse violence in everyone, and by 'producing the possibility for everyone of seeing his best friend approaching him as an alien wild beast'.[30] Such a reality imposes a perpetual state of aggression against every individual and group; after all, 'scarcity, as a mortal danger, produces everyone in a multiplicity as a mortal danger for the Other'.[31]

At this point, I think it appropriate to expand upon Sartre's concern with violence so intricately intertw ined with his notion of scarcity. For Sartre, the contingency of scarcity is reinteriorized in the contingency of human reality. In short, it is situational. Within my contingent reality, I soon realize the possibility of myself being objectively produced by the Other as a mostly dispensable object, which means the intelligible and threatening praxis of the Other must be destroyed. We witness this idea taking shape within all the levels of Sartre's sociological collective and group formations, but it is especially pertinent in pledged groups. Importantly, this praxis as my means to satisfy need manifests itself as the free development of action in the Other, and this freedom as my freedom in the Other becomes the subject of violence. Consequently:

> at the most elementary level of the 'struggle for life', there is [*sic*] not blind instincts conflicting through men, but complex structures, transcendences of material conditions by a *praxis* which founds a morality and which seeks the destruction of the Other not as a simple *object* which is dangerous, but as a freedom which is recognized and condemned to its very root.[32]

This is what Sartre calls violence as the only conceivable violence: freedom pitted against freedom. In many respects, this is not unlike the gaze of *Being and Nothingness* where my objectifying look at the other is my attempt to appropriate the other's freedom. Here, however, we go beyond the dyadic structure to enter the realm of the social.

Sartre's notion of scarcity demands a violent society, and, in order to ameliorate violence – but never eliminate it altogether – Sartre investigates how individuals 'stake' out their existence through social group formations; yet, existence itself becomes violent as the group-in-fusion moves to the institution and ultimately to the cult of personality. In all of the group formations within the *Critique,* Sartre implicitly addresses the notion of coercion and authority, whether it is the example of the authority of the king, or the institutionalized state.

While Sartre's critique falls within the first two elements of anarchism, his ultimate critique of authority is not the mundane disdain for any type of coercion based on authoritarian institutions; it is far more complex. In effect, any development of a group is, once it begins the process of organizing itself, the inevitable outcome of all human development; it is not likely to be any other way. It is not entirely true that Sartre sees 'no exit' for society, but surely an exit proves quite difficult.[33] In the end, society has to experience drastic reductions or even the elimination

[30] Ibid., p. 150.

[31] Ibid., p. 735.

[32] Ibid., p. 736 (emphasis in original).

[33] Sartre addresses this issue by saying, 'man is violent – *throughout* History right up to the present day', a condition he premises on scarcity. He is also guarded in his belief that this condition will ever cease to exist when he

of scarcity, and even though Sartre thinks this could happen, it is doubtful at best. Importantly, scholars disagree with Sartre's notion that scarcity is ultimately an evil state of being. For instance, Ronald Aronson thinks scarcity may be a good thing, since it stimulates need, which, in turn, stimulates human invention and innovation.[34]

While Sartre understands the so-called positive aspects of scarcity, he also doubts need either has or will eliminate scarcity altogether. On the other hand, even though everything may be scarce, it does seem to overlook the fact that the newest model smartphone may be in short supply and, in reality, they may be 'scarce', but that does not mean I would engage in a struggle to possess one (I hasten to add that unfortunately people often do). I agree with Michael Monahan who thinks the real question is what my relation is to the scarce object. If my relation is one of absolute necessity as it is for all Others, then a struggle for survival is inevitable, and, at least for Sartre, the Other is dispensable. That is, the Other 'threatens my life to precisely the extent that he is my own kind; he becomes inhuman, therefore, as human, and my species appears to me as an alien species'.[35] Taken at face value, Sartre's concepts of scarcity and need are probably more radical than most anarchist thinkers, even though, much like Sartre, Proudhon also sees violence and conflict arising out of scarcity. As I have indicated, Sartre's discussion clearly places him within the first two elements of the meaning of anarchism; it also transcends Clark's analysis with a far richer and complex understanding of the nature of scarcity as a foundation for a wide range of deleterious effects.

Interest

I want to move to another aspect discussed in the early portion of the *Critique*, Sartre's notion of interest. While I have laid the foundation for his analysis of human nature in an earlier chapter, in this discussion we encounter Sartre's argument regarding the third element of anarchism, 'human nature', as a quality allowing humans to live together in peace and harmony. The discussion assumes considerable importance as Sartre redefines the contours of anarchist thought.

What Sartre calls one's interest, and others refer to as 'human nature', is important for two reasons. First, it gives us insight into how individuals come together, at least at the outset, to form groups presenting the possibility for significant progress in human development. Secondly, from a definitional point of view, it affords an important basis for his anarchism. What Sartre means by one's interest is simply 'being-wholly-outside-oneself-in-a-thing, in so far as it conditions praxis as a categorical imperative'.[36] While every individual has desires and needs and realizes his ends through work, Sartre thinks, in an abstract sense, this is at most a fictitious state. What Sartre calls interest is, quite simply, a relation between humans and things in the social sphere.

Sartre is attempting to think about – and here I should probably say rethink – our relation to our environment within a materialist dialectic where the relation reveals itself through property.

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says, 'until the elimination of scarcity, and should that ever occur, and occur *in particular circumstances*.' Ibid. What those particular circumstances are is left unsaid. It is fair to say the inauguration of an anarchical based socialist society would go a long way in ameliorating the effects of scarcity, at least in Sartre's thinking.

[34] Aronson, *Sartre's Second Critique*, p. 215; see also, Michael Monahan, 'Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and the Inevitability of Violence: Human Freedom in the Milieu of Scarcity', *Sartre Studies International* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 59.

[35] *CDR I*, p. 736.

[36] Ibid., p. 197.

Accordingly, the origin of interest is a univocal relation of interiority that provides the connection for the human organism to its environment. This connection reveals itself in the practico-inert as far as humans constitute themselves in the exterior *milieu* within *a particular* practico-inert set of worked materials that establishes practical inertia within the real person. Subjectivity, then, appears as an abstraction and, as I have indicated, as a judgement requiring us to carry out the commands that society pronounces upon us and, in turn, defines us as *a priori* in our being.

Sartre's example is compelling: property becomes the first moment of the identification of the owner with the things one possesses as one's material ensembles. We simply need to remember that from our earliest ages we are, depending on our gender, attired in either blue or pink to understand what Sartre is attempting to explain. These things confer 'human interiority'; they define our thoughts by the inert and changing relations between ourselves and our 'various pieces of furniture'.[37] As Sartre says:

> Thus the individual finds his reality in a material object, conceived initially as an interiorizing totality which functions, in effect, as an integrating part of an exteriorized totality; the more he tries to conserve and increase the object which is himself the more the object becomes the Other as dependent on all Others and the more the individual as a practical reality determines himself as inessential in his molecular isolation, in short as a mechanical element.[38]

Individual interest involves a massification of individuals who communicate through antagonisms and affinities of the matter that represents them.

Sartre illustrates these abstract notions with resort to factory owners in a competitive field of the 1830s, who introduce automated machinery only because the machinery is Other and conditioned by Others. Imposed as an exigency of competition, the decision to install the machine causes interest to shift: the owner's own interest, that is, his subjection to his being-outside-himself is the factory. Now, the interest of the factory becomes the machine; the machine determines production, and the machine forces the owner to disrupt the old equilibrium and seek new markets. Demand no longer conditions supply; exactly the opposite occurs: supply now stipulates demand. While Sartre describes this process as occurring with a single owner, one must also imagine our single owner in direct competition with every other owner as Other. In any given sector of an economy, each manufacturer determines the interest of the Other to the extent he is an Other for this Other, and each determines himself by his own interest to the extent this interest is experienced by the Other as the interest of an Other.

In a later section of the *Critique*, Sartre furthers this explanation with a discussion of class consciousness brought about by the introduction of automated machinery. Referring once again to scarcity, for the factory owner, scarcity expresses itself in terms of 'temporalization as *urgency*; dispersal, poverty of means, and the resistance of matter constitute impediments which threaten to slow down a production which the exigencies of demand require to be considerably accelerated'.[39] The antagonistic activity of the Other, in threatening to increase these impediments, appears as the praxis of an anti-human. For example, the technical changes invading the factory floor produce a certain idea of the working class, but in reality, class-being is unacceptable and

[37] Ibid., p. 198.
[38] Ibid., pp. 199–200.
[39] Ibid., p. 739.

unrealizable by industrialists' praxis unless workers simultaneously represent a different human species, that of an anti-human. Here, Sartre makes a key statement:

> It is absurd to attempt to settle the question by referring to egoism or by declaring that the employer 'pursues self-interest' blindly. For his interest – as being-outside-himself-in-the-factory – is constituted in and by the developing transformations. … *As for egoism the word is devoid of meaning*. First, it would have some semblance of significance only on the hypothesis of absolute social atomism (a creation of analytical Reason at the time of Condillac). And in any case, it cannot explain anything here, for it is not true that the employer was unconcerned about his workers and their situation; on the contrary, he concerned himself with them constantly, in that he incessantly took precautions against theft, sabotage, strikes and other 'social troubles'.[40]

In his rejection of egoism, especially Stirner's, Sartre aligns himself with both Godwin's and Proudhon's notion of egoism.

In this context, interest is not our subjective, interior decisions concerning our existence; it is our discovery of our being-outside-ourselves as worked matter. In language reminiscent of *Being and Nothingness,* where consciousness is thoroughly situated as being in the world, at every moment of History in which interest appears, our interest first manifests itself to us to the extent it is the Other. Consequently, I must negate it in the Other (as the Other's being-outside-himself) in order to realize my own being-inside-myself. Interest is, therefore, 'the negative life of the human thing in the world of things in so far as man reifies himself in order to serve it'.[41] For Sartre, freedom means to be free in relation to our given materiality. Thus, consciousness always discovers and negates the self that it sees, but the way in which I see myself is never the self others see me as. At this abstract level, the self is not a being-outside-itself, since even though freedom demands objectification, it does not require our objectivity to be a self as other-than-ourselves. This is what occurs in the relation between us and matter, within our history. The world makes demands upon us as categorical imperatives that ultimately give us our interest and our destiny.

Much like Proudhon theorized, the social environment affects human character differently causing humans to be mere role players upon the social scene. Sartre thinks once ensconced within a *milieu* of scarcity and alterity, the freedom of others acts upon us, and arranges and structures our personality. This, in turn, causes us to rearrange and restructure our personality in order to become conscious of our freedom in the 'hell' of the practico-inert passivity. Interest is, therefore, one's personality within the objective complex of things determining the practico-inert field, and, perhaps the most fundamental 'shaper' of personality is our deeply structured family complexes as Sartre painstakingly shows in his biography of Gustave Flaubert, *The Family Idiot.*[42]

[40] Ibid., p. 740 (emphasis added).

[41] Ibid., p. 203.

[42] While Sartre uses the example of property to illustrate his point, he thinks it would be improper to limit interest to property alone, Interest is, quite simply, a negative practical relation between humans and the practical field, mediated by the thing that humans are outside of. Conversely, it can be a relation between the thing and other things in the social field, mediated by its human object. Ibid., p. 204. One example may illustrate Sartre's point: For Sartre, language carries the project of the Other into me just as my words carry my project into the Other. Ibid., pp. 98–9.

In the end, the choice is limited to two options: either everyone follows their interest much like Stirner preached, or the mode of production that engenders divisions among humans, makes interest appear as a real moment of the relations between humans. Sartre rejects the first option, and in accepting the second believes the entire motive force arises out of conflicts of interest:

> If conflicts of interest are *a priori* then relations of production are determined by them rather than by the mode of production; in other words, the mode of production is not *praxis* objectifying itself and finding the basis of its contradictions in its o bjectification, that is to say, in its becoming-matter; instead it is a mere mediation through which individual interests determine the type and intensity of their conflicts. In effect, the immediate consequences of the law of interest (or the Darwinian 'struggle for life') is that human relations are *a priori* antagonistic.[43]

These conflicts of interest occur through the relations of production either as struggles to regain hegemony over those relations, or to wrest control of those relations from the Other. In short, struggle 'is scarcity as a relationship of man with one another'.[44]

This struggle is also the negation of the practico-inert being of matter and of individuals in so far as the destiny of the Other constitutes being for everyone. Remember, humans and their products, their 'furniture', are interchangeable within the medium of the practico-inert. The contradiction of interest arises when the individual or collective seeks to rediscover their original univocal bond of free constituent praxis between themselves and matter. Since destiny and interest are contradictory statutes of being-outside-oneself, and because destiny and interest always exist in tandem, they necessarily mark the limits of the practico-inert. Interest is, therefore, the passive inverted image of freedom, and the only manner in which freedom produces and becomes conscious of itself.

Sartre obviously thinks there are no fixed essences within us directing our actions; rather, we are at all times situationally determined by the other – an especially significant and pervasive concept – and, in the *Critique,* the Other is the mediating third party. Sartre agrees that humans possess certain abilities, most notably language; yet, we cannot forget that experience and history help to condition and mould our very ability to communicate.

The discussion of Sartre's purpose in writing the *Critique*, and his use of these more abstract concepts in the early part of the *Critique,* allows us to move forward with a discussion of group formation. Many of the concepts we have been discussing reemerge throughout the ensuing analysis, and are, therefore, essential to an understanding of the *Critique* as a whole, and for an appreciation of Sartre's concept of sovereignty in particular. In order to fully comprehend his idea of sovereignty, we must first look to how isolated individuals come together to form groups, and most importantly the consequences of those actions.

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[43] Ibid., p. 217 (emphasis in original). See also, *CDR II*, pp. 51–7. Sartre first declares, 'conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others in *Being and Nothingness* where he described the relationship with the Other'. *BN*, pp. 474–5. There he says the Other is always trying to free himself from the hold in which I attempt to enslave him, but the Other is also seeking to enslave me. Thus, my relation to the Other is not unilateral but a reciprocal moving relation. This naturally means all concrete relations must be viewed from the perspective of conflict.

[44] *CDR II*, p. 14.

8. From Collectives to Groups (and Back Again)

> 'Broadly speaking, Critique de la raison dialectique sets forth the theoretical bases for the political line that advocates mass revolutionary democracy and rejects all forms of organization, control mechanisms and management apparatuses as being deviations from the collective liberation currently underway. It considers that these structures, already ineffective and institutionalized, will be used against the proponents of the collective praxis. One could therefore say that this book is prophetic.'
>
> —Sartre, *Sartre pour lui meme*, 1972

Collectives

The analysis of collectives begins with the most basic entity, inorganic beings possessing a collective structure, which fundamentally resides in inorganic materiality. That is, they belong to the practico-inert field. Nevertheless, collectives form the foundational basis for all group formations. Having said this, groups come and go, they disintegrate and die, they ossify without dissolving into more generalized socialities. They are, in a word, metastable: structured ensembles of groupings that are both praxis and practico-inert constituting any social field. Each, in turn, exists in a dialectical relationship constantly capable of cancelling one another out.

While their being delineates collectives where all praxis is *exis*, their undertakings define groups with their constant movement of integration that tends to turn them into pure praxis by endeavouring to eliminate all forms of collective inertia. As such, when Sartre moves to a discussion of group formations within society, he begins with a description of seriality as the contrast between the fundamental human relationship of reciprocity viewed as a relation of interiority and the isolation of the individual as a relation of exteriority. This relationship conditions the tension between multiplicities, and is transcended or merged into a new type of external–internal relation by the action of the practico-inert field that transforms the contradiction in the *milieu* of the Other into seriality. In order to understand the nature of the collective, it is necessary to see that, as a material object, it realizes the unity of individuals as beings-in-the-world-outside-themselves to the extent the collective structures human relations in accordance with what Sartre calls the rules of series.

I should make it clear at the outset that the moments in the structuration of the social – series, collective, group-in-fusion, statutory group (pledged group), organized group, institutionalized group – do not represent stages in a general historical evolution or in the evolution of a particular type of society. They coexist as particular instances of a given social totality superimposed within a single totality. In any given social ensemble, there exists the practico-inert in either its serial, or collective form, or in the group. The serial or collective exists in every similar ensemble and

constitutes the initial substratum, the passive determination by socioeconomic facts of every form of sociality, with groups representing the 'erosion of seriality'.[1]

Absorption into the practico-inert is a constant threat to praxis. For example, a social class has characteristics of both the serial and the collective as far as it is a passive mass of interest imposed as chance by the external realities of socioeconomic materiality. Similarly, it pertains to the group-in-fusion to the extent it establishes itself as unorganized common praxis, to the statutory group as diffuse power of authority, to the organization in, for example, a political party, and in the institutionalized group to the extent it becomes the dominate class, with its own institutions. Consequently, the practico-inert is ever-present, even if the group is also present.

For Sartre, waiting in a queue for a bus exemplifies the structure of serial behaviour.[2] His concern here is with a plurality of isolations. The queue constitutes everyone in their interchangeability with the Other, where the social ensemble produces each individual as united with his neighbour. In such an environment, the unity of the group lies outside itself in a future object where everyone is determined by a common interest (the destination where the bus takes them), and where the only differentiation from others is through one's own materiality.

Sartre describes our normal, mundane everyday experiences whether it is in a teeming subway car or an equally congested elevator, no one cares about the others, no one looks at the others, and certainly no one speaks to the others. To look directly into the face of the Other, or even a lingering glance may be seen as suggestive, aggressive behaviour; it is simply not condoned. One has little choice but to adopt the ever-present vacuous stare of oblivion in order to avoid attracting attention. Each person waiting for the bus lives their isolation as the impossibility of uniting with Others, a condition Sartre labels 'semi-unawareness', as my existence of being-in-the-inert; it is my interest.[3]

At this stage, human relations are neither one of conflict nor one of reciprocity; they are abstract moments of identity when common interests become manifest. Sartre argues that material objects (the bus, the subway car, or the elevator) determine serial order as the social reason for the separation of individuals: simply stated, there is not enough room on the bus for everyone in the queue. The scarcity of space is a systemic problem and, unlike a Marxian understanding where there is generally just enough, for Sartre there is always too little. Why does the scarcity of space not lead to the violence of 'pushing and shoving' in the effort to 'get on the bus?' Sartre points out that except for cases of panic where everyone fights himself in the Other, a relation of reciprocity emerges and dies away, then re-emerges again establishing an interchangeability as the impossibility of deciding which individuals are expendable.

Practices arise whose sole purpose is to avoid conflicts and arbitrariness by creating a system of order. In Paris, a machine dispenses a ticket indicating my order of arrival at the bus stop, which concomitantly designates the order of my entry onto the bus. This means I remain in the terrain of common interest, and implicitly accept the impossibility of deciding who is expendable in terms

[1] *CDR I*, p. 564.

[2] Sartre defines series as, '*a mode of being for individuals both in relation to one another and in relation to their common being* and this mode of being transforms all their structures. In this way it is useful to distinguish serial *praxis* (as the *praxis* of the individual in so far as he is a member of the series and as the *praxis* of the whole series, or of the series totalized through individuals) both from common praxis (group action) and from individual, constituent praxis. Conversely, in every non-serial *praxis,* a serial praxis will be found, as the practico-inert structure of the *praxis* in so far as it is social'. Ibid., p. 266 (emphasis in original).

[3] Ibid., p. 256.

of someone's 'intrinsic qualities'.[4] While the ticket imposes a serial unity as my common interest, it also destroys all opposition. The seriality of the queue is, therefore, not a structured reality; it is a gathering with a contingent number of participants where everyone becomes themselves as Other in so far as they are other than the Others, and likewise, in so far as the Others are other than themselves. No matter the ordering procedure used, seriality derives from practico-inert matter, again our so-called furniture, as an ensemble of inert equivalent possibilities. Sartre outlines what he calls the 'formula of t he series', which he defines as:

> a dynamic scheme which determines each through all and all through each. *The Other*, as formula of the series and as a factor in every particular case of alterity, therefore becomes, beyond its structure of identity and its structure of alterity, a being common to all (as negated and preserved interchangeability). … the Other is me in every Other and every Other in me and everyone as Other in all Others; finally, it is the passive Unity of the multiplicity in so far as it exists in itself; it is the reinteriorization of exteriority by the human ensemble, it is the being-one of the organisms in so far as it corresponds to the unity of their being-in-themselves in the subject.[5]

The formula of the series incorporates elements from Sartre's fundamental philosophy, including his notion of interest. Essentially, everyone determines everyone else; but each is determined in his passive unity of the multitude through a process of interiorizing the exteriority of the human ensemble.

What holds the series together is a bond of impotence, since it is the other who decides whether my action remains individual, or whether it becomes the action of the group. In the crowded elevator, no one reaches over or between a multitude of unfamiliar, protruding arms, legs and backpacks to be the first to push the button. The Other always decides, and the Other determines whether my actions remain an individual initiative of abstract isolation or whether they become a common action of the group.

While one might think this impotence is incapable of violence, Sartre asserts it is possible to become unorganized violence simply because I am impotent through the Other, and, as such, the Other becomes an active power through me. Just as my shame knows no difference whether I merely hear the footsteps in the hallway or if someone actually sees me peering into the keyhole, there is no difference between scandal and the fear of scandal. Alterity, in Sartre's mind, fashions its own laws: what everyone believes of the Other is what the Other conveys in so far as they are Other. Impotence is simple seriality as negative totality. Serial being, as a practico-inert reality, is then a process of development, caused by a force of exteriority, which results in actualizing the series as a temporalization of the multiplicity in the fleeting unity of a violence of impotence.

Sartre applies his argument to the concept of the series and class being. He understands any economic system as a collective, as such, he sees the worker who toils for wages and produces goods as a negative common object. In addition, the common interest of the working class can only be the negation of this negation, or the practical negation of a destiny suffered as common inertia. In order to save the worker from this destiny, human multiplicity must be permanently

[4] Ibid., p. 261. Proudhon rejects current legal systems, since they do not take into account an individual's intrinsic qualities.

[5] Ibid., pp. 266–7 (emphasis in original).

changed into group praxis. The necessity of common action, therefore, can arise only out of an existing link between humans.

An essential element to the collective is Sartre's notion of collective praxis. With all objectified praxis, the practico-inert field becomes its negation in favour of passive-activity as a common structure of collectives. At this stage, there are two distinct dialectics at work: individual praxis and the group as praxis. In this situation, the practico-inert becomes the anti-dialectic contained between two radical negations. The first is individual action, and the second is the unification into groups that occurs in collectives as a rejection of seriality. In this field, everyone's actions disappear and are replaced by what Sartre terms a 'monstrous force'.[6] The practico-inert force tries to appropriate individual freedom by a transformation that it imposes on objects; in other words, by the transformation of free praxis into *exis* or passive-activity.

The practico-inert field surrounds us and conditions us; we need only look out the window to see the hundreds of exigencies rising up to greet us: road signs, pedestrian walkways, notices, prohibitions, exact positions for buses to stop and lanes prohibiting taxicabs. This field operates on a different level as well. In many respects, Sartre is following both Proudhon and Bakunin when he says the practico-inert includes both the seen and unseen apparatuses of the state and government as institutions. Upon entering this environment, we become their thing. In fact, the constraints of need, the exigencies of the worked thing, the demands of the Other, and my own impotence are all revealed to me and interiorized by me.

My free activity lived as my freedom takes upon itself everything surrounding me: oppression, exploitation, my exhausting work schedule, my fear of economic disaster should my job no longer invite me to return. In short, my freedom is the means chosen by the thing and by the Other to crush me and transform me into a worked thing. As a result, freedom does not engender the possibility of choice, but the necessity of living these constraints, these exigencies through praxis. It would be wrong to interpret Sartre as saying that humans are free in all situations as he asserts in *Being and Nothingness*. In fact, he means quite the opposite: 'All men are slaves in so far as their life unfolds in the practico-inert field and in so far as this field is always conditioned by scarcity'.[7] The practico-inert field represents a real servitude to 'natural' and 'mechanical' forces and to 'anti-social apparatuses', where everyone struggles against an order that literally and figuratively crushes them and which sustains itself by the very struggle against it.

Sartre is quite specific here and with a much more detailed description of the situation, which always limits human freedom, than he was in his earlier work. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre famously argues that humans are condemned to be free in all of their actions. As Zeus proclaims in Sartre's play *The Flies*, 'The bane of gods and kings. The bitterness of knowing men are free'.[8] As I have pointed out, commentators at the time believed this an absurdly absolute standard rendering the entire notion of freedom unintelligible, since it, in effect, detaches freedom from any particular action so as to destroy the very notion of action. Merleau-Ponty, for instance, argues if every action I undertake is free and all of us are absolutely free in every moment in a uniform manner, then the very concept of freedom is meaningless inasmuch as a free act would be impossible. As Merleau-Ponty frames the criticism:

[6] Ibid., p. 320. Sartre defines monstrous forces as the necessities and counter-finalities of the various systems or apparatuses of collectives to which individuals subject themselves or find themselves subject to.

[7] Ibid., p. 332.

[8] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Flies', in *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), p. 100.

> If indeed it is the case that our freedom is the same in all of our actions, and even in our passions, if it is not to be measured in terms of our conduct, and if the slave displays freedom as much by living in fear as by breaking his chains, then it cannot be held that there is such a thing as free action, freedom being anterior to all actions.[9]

In this analysis, freedom conceived as it is in *Being and Nothingness* rules out the possibility of isolated acts, since every act is an act of freedom. Yet, when every action counts for a free act, then by virtue of the fact that freedom is synonymous with consciousness or existence, the idea of freedom becomes empty. There must exist, if Sartre's theory is to make sense, a sphere of non-free actions against which the free ones stand out as free in the first place. Moreover, there must be stable factors or intelligible structures in our behaviour through which we can perceive our actions are free.

This argument is only partially correct, since Sartre does recognize the problem later in his life when he tells de Beauvoir he carried with him a naïve Stoic concept of the solitary individual as the true seeker of knowledge and, thus, the truly free man.[10] We saw this side of Sartre in his article 'The Legend of Truth'. We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that *Being and Nothingness* operates not with just an 'ontological' concept of freedom where we are always fundamentally free in our thoughts, and which characterizes us as human beings as our way of being-in-the-world, but it also espouses a type of freedom in a situation or 'contingent freedom'.[11] This type of freedom occurs when we choose the means for a given end that always takes place in a situation determined and created by that end. Sartre never denies there are obstacles to freedom; in fact, in his account of the situation in *Being and Nothingness,* he specifically says the existence of obstacles is necessary for the very concept of freedom. Since my situation is my place, my past, my environment, my fellow human beings and my death, it is rather all encompassing. Human reality everywhere encounters resistances and obstacles not of its own creation, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning only in and through the free choice which is human reality.

Perhaps, the greatest shift in Sartre's position between *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique* is how he views contingency. While his earlier ideas of contingency, or the situation, are ahistorical, in his later writings contingency is historical with all the weight precedents imply, which simply means freedom is not seized immediately as it appeared to be in *Being and Nothingness*. That is to say, my ontological condition is freedom; yet, the situation I find myself in always conditions this freedom, which means it is, 'in "escape" if you will, from certain conditions of history, which in some instances is given, and which actually can be found only in relationship to these circumstances'.[12] Here, Sartre further qualifies ontological freedom by conditioning free-

[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), p. 507. See also, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The War has Taken Place', in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), pp. 41–54. Merleau-Ponty does not criticize Sartre's contingent freedom, or the situation first introduced in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre develops this type of freedom in the *Critique*, and Merleau-Ponty describes this notion of human freedom as our 'sedimentation in the world', or as he puts it, 'freedom … must have a *field'*. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 509.

[10] de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, pp. 351–2.

[11] See the section titled: 'Freedom and Facticity: The Situation'. *BN*, pp. 619–707.

[12] Sartre, *Sartre by Himself*, p. 58.

dom upon the practico-inert's things and objects, but not rejecting the concept altogether. This is the negative aspect of praxis, since 'the motive force for everything is *individual praxis*'.[13]

At this point, Sartre makes a special note of his desire to maintain a concern for the individual even though the main thrust of the *Critique* rests on social relations inherent in human existence. Criticized for only dealing with individual subjectivity in *Being and Nothingness*, and thus losing all sight of intersubjective relations, the *Critique* is a book about individual praxis, but the third always mediates that praxis.[14] Inasmuch as Sartre's approach to social problems situates the *individual* in relation to the *ensembles* under consideration, the epistemological starting point must always be '*consciousness* as apodictic certainty (of) itself and as consciousness of such and such an object'.[15] I must caution, however, even though consciousness provides the launching pad, Sartre's concern is not with interrogating consciousness about itself as he did in *Being and Nothingness*; here, consciousness' object is life, the objective being lodged within the world of Others. In other words, the emphasis is no longer ensconced in a rationalist philosophy of consciousness, but in *le vécu* – lived experience. The importance is, as it is for all anarchists, quite apparent. The fear Sartre has is the 'disappearance' of the individual into a totality such as a state, a party or even a group, a concern that comes into full perspective as Sartre moves to a discussion of the institution and sovereignty where the individual drowns in a sea of sameness.

For Sartre, seriality, characterized by its otherness, is the fundamental type of sociality. Naturally, any social group that forms stands either in opposition to or as expressions of practico-inert seriality. Sartre points to two basic forms of seriality in the *Critique*, first the collective and later seriality returns in his discussion of the institution, but in a much different form. The collective is the paradigmatic construction of unity in exteriority, since the collective object constitutes our exterior unity. In this situation, relations between humans are not those of true, positive reciprocity; rather, they are essentially what in *The Communists and Peace* he terms the 'mass', where the collective reacts like a thing mechanically producing material stimuli. Serialized individuals within the collective are just that: isolated, superficially connected individuals existing in a state of atomization. As we shall see, Sartre's second degree of sociality – the group – occurs when the mass of individuals unifies through their participation in a common project. The act of 'fusion' marks the movement from seriality to group as the birth of social freedom, and here I want to make a key point: this movement grounds Sartre's claim that humans are freer in society than alone. In the group, everyone is sovereign, just as everyone is impotent in seriality.

Groups

From his more general (abstract) discussion of collectives, Sartre moves to elaborate upon groups and their formation. Even though a group need not emerge, the gathering presents the conditions for the possibility of forming a group through its serial unity. We have seen how the inert gathering with a structure of seriality is the basic form of sociality, but when a common danger or need arises that defines itself through a common objective and determines its common practice, then groups will invariably form. This leads, however, to a vicious circle: neither common need nor common objectives defines a commun ity unless it makes itself into a commu-

[13] *CDR I*, p. 322 (emphasis in original).

[14] See, for example, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 504–30.

[15] *CDR I,* p. 51; see also, p. 56.

nity by realizing individual need as common need, and by projecting itself towards objectives produced in common.

The Group-in-Fusion

Storming the Bastille provides an example of Sartre's thought. Before the act, the crowds live their lives in serialty where the bond between them is one of alterity, or the immediate discovery of oneself in the Other.[16] They may inhabit the same space – *Saint-Antoine* – but in their quasi-reciprocity they neither know each other in any concrete sense nor do they act as a 'community'. Everyone sees their own future and discovers their present action in the Other, but as inert movements. To overcome this inertia something more is required, and the act of taking up arms against a perceived attack by the king's troops galvanizes the gathering and transforms the passive reactions of serialty into an Apocalyptic, revolutionary praxis.[17] Freedom, so important to Sartre's work, manifests itself as the necessity of dissolving necessity in the 'simple positive determination of *praxis* organized on the basis of its real objectives (defense against the troops of the Prince de Lambesc)'.[18] After all, the Bastille is where the guns are and urgency is the new necessity – the enemy may arrive at any moment.

This dissolution of the series into the group-in-fusion is, however, still amorphous, still unstructured. In fact, because it is a work in progress as 'fusion', it is still a series negating itself in re-interiorizing exterior negations. The group-in-fusion emanates from the collective because its structure is a temporal development where the exact situation determines the speed and duration of its existence. The impact is quite clear: at the moment of Apocalyptic 'fusion', there is no distinction between the group-in-formation and the series-in-dissolution; yet, this event completely transforms social relationships, and inaugurates social freedom.[19]

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[16] *CDR I*, p. 353. Joseph Catalano is, I think, correct in stating the title to this section, 'The Storming of the Bastille', is a misnomer. The actual theme is not the storming of the Bastille, but the entire city of Paris as a *groupe en fusion*. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason*, p. 169, no. 2. As Sartre says, 'the city [Paris] was a fused group'. *CDR I.* p. 358.

[17] The notion of Apocalypse Sartre is referring to comes from André Malraux's *Days of Hope*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and Alastair MacDonald (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1938). In the novel, the revolutionary crowd in the Spanish Civil War (meaning the Republican side that included its share of communists and anarchists) is defined as the 'Apocalypse of fraternity' that works on one's emotions. Malraux thinks they are one of the most moving things on earth, and one of the rarest. He also says 'that fervor spells certain defeat, after a relatively short period, and for a very simple reason: it's in the very nature of an Apocalypse to have no future. … Even when it professes to have one'. Malraux, *Days of Hope*, p. 117. Sartre first elaborates his own idea of the apocalyptic moment in his *Notebooks for an Ethics*. There he asserts human freedom constantly bursts apart ideology and rituals as it realizes liberation through new ideas and behaviour. This is, he says, the moment of the Apocalypse, but as it projects itself from itself into the element of the Other, it gives way to order. Moreover, the ethical moment is that of the Apocalypse as the liberation of oneself and all others in reciprocal recognition. Paradoxically, Sartre adds, it is also the moment of violence. *NBE*, pp. 413–14. A very recent example of what Sartre is referring to is the start of the events in the Middle East known as the 'Arab Spring', which can be traced to the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia on December 17, 2010. Bouazizi was the target of continual harassment by the police and municipal officials, and when his small cart containing about $200 worth of fruit – all purchased on credit – was confiscated he had no way to make even a meagre living. His death was not a major event in any sense of the word, but not unlike the empty crates of muskets delivered to the Hotel de Ville by Flesselles at the start of the French Revolution, it was just enough to cause the masses to rise up against a regime perceived as corrupt, indifferent to the needs of the people, and all too authoritarian.

[18] *CDR I*, p. 357.

[19] Ibid., p. 358. Howard Burkle outlines what he calls six essential 'marks' of fusion: (1) The first is *action*, which is essential to the unity of the group as coming together to achieve a common aim. (2) The fusion brought about

There is a key element to this fundamental stage of group development. The district of *Saint-Antoine* is still a practico-inert structure even though it realizes synthetically, and as a material exigency, an objective relation of differentiation within the group-in-fusion. The practico-inert structure not only makes the group-in-fusion, through everyone, the unity of all, but also makes it a structured unity through its suggestion of an initial differentiation of function and division of labour. Just as the nascent group is about to coalesce, albeit in its metastable form, the conditions necessary for preventing the group-in-fusion from falling back into an impotent collective are also emerging. Sartre's example of the group coming into existence by the liquidation of an inert seriality under pressure from material external circumstances does not, however, ensure that the group becomes, in Sartre's words, totalizing totalities. Before the attack, the people of Paris inhabited the same city, but afterwards the residents of *Saint-Antoine*, who may just as likely live their lives as collective, are now an 'alter-ego' for the other by the external action of another organized group.

It is not enough, however, that groups emerge from gatherings due to some apocalyptic event. Sartre's analysis requires much more, since the possibility for unity is only one quality, it is also necessary that the instruments for snatching it from recurrence should be present. The concept Sartre inaugurates seems quite similar to one discussed earlier: everyone is a third party for everyone else. In its application, however, this seemingly simple concept asserts an enormous impact. For Sartre the third party is structured *a priori* as the Other, and through the third party practical unity, as the negation of the threatening organized praxis, reveals itself through the 'constellations of reciprocities'.[20]

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by action must also result in a fusion of *consciousness*. In other words, the unity of the group-in-fusion arises from everyone seeing themselves as united in a group. Unity is, therefore, the mutual consciousness (active and not merely contemplative) of seeing everyone together. (3) The third element is that of *polarity*. Freedom here is achieved through opposition much like Sartre espoused in *Being and Nothingness* for individuals. This is the contingent freedom Sartre spends so much time developing in the *Critique*. (4) A fourth element of fusion is *interiorized multiplicity,* where individuals identify themselves with the acts of others, if only for the moment. Each member of the group-in-fusion interiorizes the others through their shared goals in the face of the common enemy. This form of unity preserves and enhances the pluralistic base. Importantly, Burkle adds it is this element whereby the free person voluntarily uses the free decision of others to regulate his own choices. (5) The next element of the group-in-fusion is the coalescence of *ubiquity* and *singularity*. Here, Sartre argues that the genuinely individual choice which agrees with the genuinely individual choices of others is simultaneously here and everywhere. In other words, space is overcome, competition ceases to exist and opposition is curtailed. (6) Lastly, the group-in-fusion is characterized by its *novelty and spontaneity*. For Sartre, the unity of fusion emerges spontaneously form seriality. Burkle also points out that the unity of the group-in-fusion endures only so long as the process continues. Otherwise, it fades away and solidifies as unfreedom and the alienation of the condition of competitive opposition from which it came. Howard Burkle, 'Jean-Paul Sartre: Social Freedom in *Critique of Dialectical Reason'*, *The Review of Metaphysics* 19, no. 4 (June 1966): 747–9. I think these six elements indicate adequately all that is involved in the movement of fusion of the group. However, one should not think this is necessarily a linear progression, and that a group-in-fusion may not at any point in time fall back into the pratico-inert, regroup only to fall prey to the practico-inert once more. The group-in-fusion involves several anarchistic elements. First, it requires action or praxis, certainly an element of Clark's methodology. Secondly, a form of human nature is present in that each member of the group interiorizes the other members through shared goals. Lastly, the group is characterized by it spontaneity, a decidedly anarchist concept.

[20] *CDR I*, p. 367. In a small but extraordinary book, and as a sign of the importance of social media, hundreds of tweets from Twitter accounts have been published from the participants protesting in Cairo's Tahrir Square. The Egyptian Revolution took place from 25 January 2011 to 11 February 2011. During the formative stage of the Revolution, planning discussion took place on Tweeter, using the hashtag #Jan25 to enable anyone to join the conversation with activists directly replying to one another using the @ reply function. After the start of the Revolution, the protestors used Twitter to announce new initiatives, and to boost the morale of those taking part in the demonstrations. The

Returning to the Bastille once again, Sartre says the residents of *Saint-Antoine* totalized their district, but at the same time, their real membership in the district is serial, manifested in inertia of alterity. Sartre maintains that only action is able to transcend this contradiction.[21] Whether out of political zeal or mundane curiosity, the residents venture into the streets and gather about, still in a mode of seriality but now with a quasi-intentionality. At this stage, Sartre limits his comments to the French Revolution, but what he is expressing is restricted neither to any particular historical event nor to any specific period. In fact, Volume II of the *Critique* abandons all discussion of the French Revolution and its obvious successor Napoleon in favour of an analysis of the aftermath of the Russian revolution, and the internecine conflict that occurred in the Bolshevik Party, an already constituted group.

Moreover, Sartre's claims are just as relevant to contemporary events as they are for past periods. For instance, for almost thirty years Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak headed a dictatorial regime that used its powers to suppress all opposition. The uprising occurring in January 2011 witnessed the residents of Cairo, who gathered in Tahrir Square during the 'Arab Spring', forming groups through their internal relationships. To be precise, in all instances, the *object* of the gathering overcomes the malaise of seriality by practically integrating everyone in praxis. Integration of the protestors' praxis manifested itself through a single aspiration, the resignation of Mubarak from office.[22]

The concept of the third party becomes essential not only for Sartre's later discussion of sovereignty, but because the third is praxis; yet, the third is also sovereignty as 'nothing but freedom positing itself for itself'.[23] It is the third who no longer grasps the serial structure of escape; rather, the two contradictory aspects of Other and the third party are now directly opposed in an indissoluble unity of praxis. The third becomes sovereign through praxis, and as the organizer of common praxis. One does not wish this eventuality; it just happens; the situation designates the outcome. At that very instant, the third party unifies the gathering multiplicity and makes it a totality. At the same time, through the group, 'I indicate myself as a *necessary culmination* of the totalizing action; but this operational indication never actually has its effect'.[24] I am neither totally integrated into the group that has been realized through praxis, nor am I totally transcendent. Much like the abstract notion of the third in his ignorance of others (gardener and street mender), Sartre has in mind the situation where I see my immediate neighbouring protestors as we march along the street, but I cannot see everyone who is protesting. Through my very act of protesting, however, I synthesize the protesting of everyone wherever they may be.

At this point, the group is not a binary relation of individual to community; it is a ternary relation. Indeed, I see my group of protestors as my common reality, and, at the same time, as

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Mubarak regime blocked the internet on 28 January, but by then it was too late. See, Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns, eds, *Tweets from Tahrir* (New York: OR Books, 2011), pp. 2–21. Interestingly, the internet remained down during the most decisive battle between protestors and the state's Central Security Forces (CSF) on 28 January and the Million Man March held on 1 February. But, as the editors report, 'there was no need to organize events online because people were spending every day face to face on the streets. The demands and tactics of the Revolution were being determined by the spontaneous chants of the people'. Ibid., p. 21.

[21] *CDR I*, p. 369.

[22] See, Holger Albrecht, 'Authoritarian Transformation or Transition from Authoritarianism? Insights on Regime Change in Egypt', in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*, eds Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012), p. 264.

[23] *CDR I*, p. 187.

[24] Ibid., p. 373.

a mediation between myself and every third party. Even though relations of simple reciprocity exist within the common action of my group, these relations, though transfigured by their being-in-a-group, are not constitutive. The reason lies in the fact that all members of my group are third parties, and, as such, each individual member totalizes the reciprocities of all the others.

This is what Sartre terms mediated reciprocity, which is both the mediation of the group between third parties and the mediation of each third party between the group and other third parties. Sartre further maintains that reciprocity contains two moments of mediation. The first such moment is praxis: while mediation occurs in the practico-inert field, Sartre tends to 'degrade' its significance because its mediation is passive. The mediation of the third party by the group is different: when I join the group, my bond is, as every other third party, one of interiority. This internal, synthetic constitution of me by the group is really totalization returning to me in order to give me my first glimpse of the collapse of seriality, and it bestows this quality upon me as power. Thus, the third party comes to the group as a constituent and constituted power. Naturally, I view the other third party who is approaching me as my power, since he transcends me towards his projects as far as I transcend him towards mine.

For example, should my friend Charley join the group at the exact moment that I do, he too is mediated by the group but he is neither the Other nor identical to me; he is the Same.[25] Here, Sartre sketches out what he terms a new structure of mediated reciprocity: 'I see myself come to the group through him, and what I see is merely the objectification of what I realize at the time as him; he is my lived objectivity'.[26] This new structure resides in the fundamental characteristic of mediation, for the mediator is not an object but praxis. The group itself is an action where both Charley and I are mediated by the action of every third party as far as Charley's action produces multiplicity and makes each of us a third for the other.

Mediated praxis is never solipsistic; it is always regulated by the third. Within the group, I am not alone in carrying out the totalizing operation; in integrating the ensemble of individuals into the group and in revealing by my action the unity of praxis I produce, and also produces itself, every third party tends to become a mediation between the group and any other third party. Accordingly, I am integrated into the common action of the group when the common praxis of the third party posits itself as regulatory, which is Sartre's second moment of mediation; it seems everyone follows the totalizing third party.

> The process Sartre describes is a shifting unity of synthesis, which again is metastable What we have seen emerging, at the expense of the collective, and under the pressure of circumstances and through a hostile *praxis* which expressed its project of totalizing destruction through the synthetic significations of the practico-inert field, is not an actual totality, but a shifting and ceaselessly developing totalization.[27]

[25] Sartre denotes the Same or 'Sameness' into two categories: singularity and ubiquity. The first characterizes the agent as a unique totalizing praxis that precludes the group developing into a hyper-organism where complete integration is impossible, and which allows for persistent alterity even in the group-in-fusion. The group is, therefore, an instrument for individual praxis, which is freely chosen. Yet, the individual is not an instrument of the group as subject. Ubiquity means common character conferred on a multiplicity of individual actions by virtue of their being interiorized as means to a common end. Thomas Flynn thinks that by resolving sameness into singularity and ubiquity Sartre arrives at a practical, non-substantial 'We'. Thomas Flynn, 'Mediated Reciprocity and the Genius of the Third', p. 357.

[26] *CDR I*, p. 377.

[27] Ibid., p. 384.

However, the group does not constitute itself-for-itself; rather, Sartre sees the motivational force behind the group as terror. Those in *Saint-Antoine*, just like those in Cairo's Tarhir Square, or Benghazi's Freedom Square, or the squares of Tunis in Tunisia would not depart from their collective structure and embrace the unknowns of the group, if terror had not surrounded them.

The group-in-fusion manifests itself in the free constitution of individual praxis into common praxis, which is simply an opening to the future that sovereignly affirms its own possibilities. For example, the people in Cairo were aware of the demonstration planned in Tahrir Square for 25 January through social media, but more as a kind of 'acephalous decentralized preparation to mobilize crowds for a day [that] relied more on neighborhood-level interpersonal networks than hierarchical organization'.[28] As the protestors gathered in Tahrir Square, they became an undertaking unto themselves as 'they coalesced into a multitude, a *sháab* ('people') with a new-found sense of collective solidarity and togetherness'.[29] This undertaking transforms success into a structure of practical freedom. The freedom of protest reconstitutes itself as common violence against the practico-inert necessity of the established regime, and its future objectification is, as Sartre says, 'the free violence of men against misery and impossibility of living'.[30] As their ranks swell, those gathering in Tahrir Square face escalating violence and resist violence with counter-violence against the practico-inert necessity of a moribund regime, and this double structure of sovereignty and violence is characteristic of freedom as a common praxis. The protestors' violence is not merely a display of defensive violence against the violence of the regime; it is, as sovereignty, violence against necessity or against the practico-inert field, 'in so far as it is constituted by Thing-destines and by enslaved men'.[31]

For Sartre freedom is, as the sovereignty of individual praxis, not violence but the dialectical reorganization of the environment. When alienation is unmasked, freedom assumes the structure of its own impossibility in the form of necessity. Here, in the group-in-fusion a sliding scale of freedom and alienation emerges. At the level of the group-in-fusion lies a type of freedom, which in Sartre's analysis is the least alienating. A key element is that the group-in-fusion emerges from serial impotency, or our lives lived in anonymity. Once the Apocalyptic event occurs and the fusion of the group commences, Sartre says the task is at hand whether it is storming the Bastille or protesting in Tahrir Square. If the goal is achieved, the participants may return to their seriality,

[28] Sheila Carapico, 'Egypt's Civic Revolution Turns "Democracy Promotion" on its Head', in *Arab Spring in Egypt*: *Revolution and Beyond*, eds Bahgat Kornay and Rabab El-Mahdi (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012), p. 213. The author provides a first-hand account of the events that took place in Tahrir Square, and breaks them down into 5 stages that she labels the following: mass rallies from 25 to 27 January; storming the barricades on 28 January; occupying the commons from 29 January to 2 February; self-protection from 3 to 6 February; and persistence and determination from 7 to 11February.

[29] Ibid.

[30] *CDR I*, p. 405.

[31] Ibid., p. 406. For Sartre, the basic experience of necessity is that of a retroactive power eroding my freedom from what he calls the 'final objectivity to the original decision'. The negation of freedom in the domain of complete freedom is sustained by freedom itself, and is proportional to the very completeness of this freedom. As such, it is the experience of the Other, but only in so far as the Other's dispersed praxis turns back on me in order to transform me. What Sartre describes is alienation in that I eventually return to myself as Other. However, he makes an important distinction here: in the Marxian sense, alienation begins with exploitation, for Sartre it does not. Sartre thinks humans objectify themselves in a *milieu* that is not their own, and thus they treat inorganic totality as their own subjective reality. Thus, humans designate themselves as the ensemble of products that reproduce life. As soon as this happens, humans find themselves as Other in the world of objectivity, as totalized matter, as inert objectifications perpetuated by inertia, or, in effect, non-human or even anti-human. Ibid., p. 227.

which would be quite natural and very much in tune with anarchist thought.[32] Even the radical egoism of Stirner saw individual egos coming together for some purpose only to retreat to their solipsism once the effort was complete. This is also true of mutualist society that works towards a common goal while still maintaining a strong emphasis on individual development.

A return to the serial is of no interest to Sartre, however. His enquiry focuses on the case where the individual members of the group do not disband but stay together. The consequences of those actions absorb Sartre's thoughts as the group asks itself a key question: should the group survive what would it look like? At this exact moment, the scale starts to tilt in another direction towards alienation at the expense of freedom, a movement that appears to be unstoppable and ultimately causes the destruction of freedom. As we shall see, Sartre's concept of sovereignty explains this loss of freedom and the rise of alienation.

The Pledge (the Statutory Group)

The victory of the protestors in Tahrir Square brings with it a new reality: what do we do now? How can the group survive? As with the Bastille, the conquering of the fortress, the taking of its guns – however few in number – represents a victory for the people of *Saint-Antoine*, but the moment it passes it represents merely a preservation of the past-being of the group. At this moment, with the pressures that caused the liquidation of seriality temporarily nowhere in sight, the regulatory third party has little to regulate. The urgency that once helped fuse the group together now dissipates, breaking down group behaviour. The group begins to envision itself in its past glory; it takes itself as its own end, first implicitly and then explicitly. The group itself becomes the common objective for everyone and not the Bastille. The permanence of the group becomes imperative, and the unity of the group takes precedence over all other considerations. Just as Proudhon did before him, Sartre gives voice to the structure of the unity of group formations, but, more importantly, the consequences they invoke.

Sartre sees the actual conditions of survival of the group driving it back into a contradiction: the common praxis is freedom itself doing violence to necessity. If the group is to continue, it must comprehend that

> *Praxis* is the only real unity of the fused group: it is *praxis* which creates the group, and which maintains it and introduces its first internal changes into it. In the moment of the *praxis* of organization and anticipation, it is the group which guarantees that every separate action is a common action or, to put it differently, it is the group as a reality which produces the unity of the common *praxis*.[33]

The fear of dispersal, fuelled by distrust and suspicion, is internalized as the danger of seriality, which means the ontological statute of the surviving group is initially the practical contrivance of free, inert permanence of common unity in everyone. When freedom emerges as common praxis, it provides the foundation for the group's permanence by producing its own inertia through itself

[32] Arguably, the group-in-fusion in Tahrir Square did return to its serial impotence immediately after 11 February. As Holger Albrecht argues, the single goal of the protestors was the removal of Mubarak. But, 'after the pharaoh fell, the united Tahrir movement quickly disintegrated and gave way to the specific grievances of its constituent groups'. Holger Albrecht, 'Authoritarian Transformation or Transition from Authoritarianism? Insights on Regime Change in Egypt', p. 264.

[33] *CDR I*, p. 418 (emphasis in original).

as well as through its mediated reciprocity in a new statute: the pledge *(le serment)*.[34] While it can take many shapes, the pledge is still mediated reciprocity; however, it is not a social contract. Unlike Hobbes, Sartre is not describing the basis for particular societies; rather, he is explaining the necessary transition from the immediate form of the group in danger of dissolution to another form, which is reflexive as well as permanent. The pledge is an inert determination of the future, not as a possibility, but a practical device. My act of swearing an oath consists in my free participation in asserting that the dispersal of the group in the future is an inert impossibility. Furthermore, through its creation of a fictitious inertia – the pledge is behaviour as immediate praxis, and is mediated praxis whether spoken or silent – the group freely makes itself a tool to guard against seriality threatening its very existence.

The curious part about the pledge is that I give it freely out of fear, both of the third party and of me. At this stage, my fear is isolation from the group as well as from every other.[35] When 'I swear' the oath, it makes an objective claim upon me of a guarantee that I will never become Other. Likewise, when my friend Charley gives me his pledge he does so to protect me from the danger that Being-Other may come to me from the Other. At this level, our reciprocity is mediated: I give my pledge to all third parties, including Charley, as forming a group of which I am a member, and the group enables everyone to guarantee the statute of permanence to everyone. The pledge brings with it a sense of community as the still nascent group transforms itself from an unorganized, rudimentary praxis into what Sartre calls a statutory group, and at the moment the pledge is given, one captures the juridical emerging. The pledge is the bedrock of a diffuse power of jurisdiction of all over all that manifests itself in reciprocal rights and duties, and, as we shall see, continually reaffirms itself whenever group unity tries to break down. 'The *common* characteristic of the individual (or his being-in-the-group) becomes everyone's juridical power over individuality in himself in every third party'.[36]

The framework of the pledge provides the multitude of rights and duties of third parties:

> Now, all these abstract moments of concrete exigency are given together in my way of acting, of realizing my function through my action and of basing my action on my powers: the right which the group has through me over all, and the duty towards the group as defined by all, the reciprocity of right (I have the right that you should assert your rights), that of duty (my duty is to remind you of yours), that of right and duty (I have the right that you should allow me to do my duty), that of duty and right (I Have the duty to respect your rights) – the infinite complication of these reciprocities … these lines of force may appear, as a form, against the synthetic background of all the others; but if they are not all present, the group will break up.[37]

For Sartre, law is the mechanism of cohesion of the social group organized for its permanence through the pledge, which demands a level of predictability of practices on the part of its mem-

[34] At one point, Sartre says pledges are: 'A free attempt to substitute the fear of all for the fear of oneself and actualizes violence as the intelligible transcendence of individual alienation by common freedom'. Ibid., p. 433.

[35] When Sartre uses the term 'freely' in the *Critique* he is referring to, 'the dialectical development of individual praxis, born of need and transcending material conditions towards a definite objective'. Ibid., p. 422. In Sartre's example, desertion and betrayal brought about by fear is free praxis as organized behaviour in response to an external threat, and thus is freely motivated action.

[36] Ibid., p. 449 (emphasis in original).

[37] Ibid., pp. 451–2.

bers, and necessitates a differentiation of tasks in order to achieve a common goal. At the same time, and seen from a different point of view, Sartre recognizes that

> the law is a response to certain social disturbances or to a strike that has just taken place. It shows, at this precise moment, the given (and singular) relationship between the various fo rces. … Moreover, it singularizes and realizes on a specific point the conception of the State that the sovereign formulates: i.e., in the last resort its political praxis; and this in turn reflects in depth the historical conjuncture (i.e., once again the relationship of forces, but envisaged in the light of economic and social 'whole' and the direction of socio-economic changes), which is – at its own level – equally singular. Thus the decree or law has this dual character of determined … indetermination[38]

As a relationship of forces, law fashions apparatuses of state and sovereign authority in a determined and, at the same time, undetermined manner designed merely to enforce the sovereign will. I shall say more about Sartre's concern with law later, but for now I merely want to say his portrayal of the juridical aspects of authority is similar to those expressed by Proudhon and Bakunin.

Through my regulatory actions, the pledge becomes a modification of the group. When I swear an oath, through my mediated reciprocity, I guarantee the others will also swear and thus not abandon the group. There is also a second aspect to my pledge: I swear in order to protect myself against myself in the Others, as such my pledge is not a mere free act describing my future behaviour. Moreover, any third party, such as my friend Charley, constitutes my pledge by basing his own pledge upon mine. My pledge is already the untranscendable and inert negation of any possibility that I may change my mind regardless of the circumstances.

While the two fold structure of fear is the origin of the pledge, in reality the problem no longer emanates from the original danger that brought the group together in the first place; Mubarak, after all, resigned. The present danger is the gradual disappearance of the common interest – the ouster of Mubarak – and the reappearance of individual antagonisms or serial impotence – the vast number of special interest sub-groups participating in the main group. The pledge itself provides the answer to the dilemma facing the group: by pledging one to all and all to one, the group recreates its project by substituting 'a real fear, produced by the group itself, for the retreating external fear, whose very distance is deceptive'.[39] What emerges now is terror as the common freedom violating necessity to the extent that necessity exists only through the alienation of freedom.

The sociological portrayal of group formation takes another dark turn at this time. The regulatory third party reveals that the diminishing fear of external danger is the real threat to the group's existence; the only remedy is an increasing fear of destroying the group itself. Regardless, the ultimate goal is to protect the common interest, but at present, there is no material pressure requiring concerted action; the troops have left the square, the guns have gone quiet, and an uneasy, eerie calm has settled among the protestors – should we disperse and go home, or should we stay.

[38] Ibid., pp. 191–2.
[39] Ibid., p. 430.

The only course left for the group is to produce itself as a material pressure on its members. Here again, violence comes into play. The very act of pledging is itself the common production of violence through mediated reciprocity: once I pledge myself, the group must guarantee my freedom against necessity even at the cost of the life of another member. Sartre elaborates by saying 'everyone's freedom demands the violence of all against it and against that of any third party as its defence against itself (as free power of secession and alienation)'; in short, to swear is to say as a common individual: 'You must kill me if I secede'.[40] The aim of the pledge is, therefore, to instil terror within myself as a free defence against the fear of the enemy, while at the same time assuring me that my friend Charley, who is also a member of my group, will be equally confirmed by the same terror. The pledge serves to remind us both that violence is the diffuse structure of our group-in-fusion. In the end, my death is a certainty should I decide to transcend the limitations of being-in-the-group.

Sartre justifies this violence by saying transcendence is present in the pledged group as an absolute right of all over every individual. As members of a group, the pledge does not present a mere practical formation we provisionally adopt in order to suit our present circumstances. Rather, it is posited by everyone's freedom as a demand of the pledge and of all third parties against the pledge and against the failings of the Others. Once I transcend the pledge, I grant to anyone an absolute right to enforce the sentence of death. This absolute right stems from freedom's affirmation of itself as justified violence against the practico-inert. The free attempt to substitute the fear of all for the fear of oneself and of the Other in and through all the members of the group further justifies the need for violence within the pledge, but only in so far as the pledge suddenly reactualizes violence as the intelligible transcendence of individual alienation by common freedom.

This does not imply, however, that the structures of freedom and reciprocity disappear, quite the contrary. They take on their full meaning once they appear in the material movement of terror. My pledge is still a guarantee for the other third party, but it is a guarantee whose meaning is violence. I guarantee Charley against my free betrayal by the right I have bestowed upon him, as I have upon every third party, to eliminate me in the event of my failure. Likewise, this guarantee deprives Charley of any excuse in the event the group disperses, which means Charley can freely guarantee his own solidarity with group, which also means he freely demands terror for himself. In a word, the fundamental statute of the pledged group is terror.

Does this mean a terror so thick that death at the hands of the group's members of those who transcend the group is not problematical but certain? Well, not exactly. Sartre maintains terror is situationally determined. That is, if circumstances are not 'especially restrictive' I remain at the level of exigency and untranscendability. I perceive the exigency as my committed freedom in the other and as the exigency of myself towards the Other. However, if the pressure increases, either from external or even internal sources, I still freely consent to my own 'liquidation' as free constituent praxis. I freely consent, therefore, to the right of the group over my praxis.[41]

[40] Ibid., p. 431.

[41] Sartre is explicit here in asserting that the pledge carries with it the right of the group to eliminate me physically, by which he means not merely exiling me from the group, but eliminating me altogether. Moreover, it does not matter if the right of death arises out of a duty to the group, or whether it is conceived as a power of the group to which I have freely consented to the taking my life if I do not act in accordance with a given directive. Furthermore, for Sartre, this is not a moral issue. As he says, 'the important point is that within itself, and implicitly, the concrete

Only the group itself can arguably decide if one of its members transcends its boundaries, but as we progress this factor alone becomes murky, especially as the group seeks to institutionalize itself. It is worth noting, what constitutes an act of betrayal – a transcendence of the group's praxis – is by no means explicit. Even though Sartre seems somewhat ambiguous at this point, his ambiguity mirrors anarchist positions we discussed previously.

The statute of the pledged group is crucial to an understanding of the *Critique* in general. In a fundamental way, the pledge elucidates 'the original *practical, and created* (and constantly re-created) relation between active men within an active community'.[42] The permanence of the group-in-fusion, constructed in concrete circumstances, is never reduced to natural occurrences, spontaneous acts or immediate relations. The permanent group only arises when external circumstances occasion a reflexive praxis within the surviving group. As a result, the members of the group establish themselves as a community acting on itself; subjective praxis conditions us all. We do not relapse into seriality for the simple reason that for each third party this Other-Being is the same Other-Being as for his neighbour, but this also means that violence as terror is at all times and in all places the initial common statute.

Uniquely, however, terror unites instead of separates:

> indeed, in so far as these men have constituted themselves by their pledges as *common individuals*, they find their own Terror, in one another, as *the same*; *here and everywhere* they live their *grounded* (that is to say limited) freedom as their being-in-the-group, and their being-in-the-group as *the being* of their freedom. In this sense, Terror is their primary unity in so far as it is the power of freedom over necessity in everyone.[43]

Being-in-the-group is, therefore, the intermediary step between free common praxis and the statute of serial impotence. In effect, it is the statutory guarantee that I will not relapse into the practico-inert field, and that individual action escapes alienation to the extent it becomes common. As Sartre reminds us, as a reflexive construction, this guarantee is everyone's solicitude for everyone, even if this solicitude is a bearer of death.

While it may be difficult to believe, there is a positive aspect here and it is highly significant: through this solicitude and as a common individual I am created as a new entity. The fundamental relation between all third parties within the pledged group is one where they create themselves 'together from the clay of necessity'.[44] On this basis, relations of reciprocity form: I recognize the violence in Charley as an agreed-upon impossibility of returning to the practico-inert, and as the perpetuation of the violent movement that created Charley as a common individual.

Even though Charley and I emerge from the clay at the same moment, our common being is not an identical nature; rather, it is a mediated reciprocity of conditioning. By this Sartre means I do not recognize my inert essence manifested in some other instance, instead I recognize my complicity in the act that not only moves but also moulds Charley and me from the clay. We unite in a bond of brotherhood; as brothers, Charley's essence is not other than mine but approaches

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duty contains death as a possible destiny for me; or, conversely, that the right of the group determines me, in so far as it is *agreed*'. Ibid., p. 434 (emphasis in original).

[42] Ibid. (emphasis in original).

[43] Ibid. (emphasis in original).

[44] Ibid., p. 435.

me as my existence and, at the same time, depends on my existence as mine depends on his. Our group-being is lived as a nature of freedom within a fraternity, which establishes itself as the real bond between common individuals in the form of untranscendable reciprocal obligations. As Sartre frames it:

> This is fraternity, that is to say the fundamental, practical structure of all the reciprocal relations between the members of the group. What is latter called comradeship, friendship, love – and even fraternity, using the term in a vaguely affective sense – arises on the basis of particular circumstances and within a particular perspective, for a given reciprocity as a dialectical, practical enrichment, as a free specification of this original structure, that is to say, of the practical, living statute of the sworn members. This constituted group is produced in and by everyone as his own birth as a common individual and, at the same time, everyone can grasp, in fraternity, *his own birth as a common individual* as having been produced in and by the group.[45]

Although Sartre couches his notion of fraternity in agreeable terms, such as friendship and love, it is slightly misleading. Fraternity is very much the right of all through everyone and over everyone. We should not lose sight of the fact that the origin of fraternity is violence, and it is unmistakably violence reaffirming itself as a bond of immanence through positive reciprocities; it is what Sartre labels 'Fraternity-Terror'.

In a very odd manner, the positive reciprocities Sartre is thinking about are exemplified as those between the traitor and his executioners. In picking-up on Sartre's example, we might speculate that even though Charley decides to transcend the group and thus betray it, exclusion from the group is not an option. In fact, it is not possible. Charley remains a member of the group as far as the group reconstitutes itself by eliminating Charley. The group, in effect, discharges '*all its violence* into him'.[46] Charley's abuse and execution will occur in the name of his pledge and the right he grants to the others, including myself as a member of the group, over his being. Sartre argues that the execution of Charley is still an act of fraternity between the executioners and the executed, since the premise of the execution is the positive affirmation that Charley is a member of the group right up to his very last breath. Moreover, during the act of execution, Sartre sees everyone feeling at one with everyone else in the practical solidarity of the risks borne out of the common violence:

> I am a brother in violence to all my neighbors: and it is clear that anyone who shunned this fraternity would be suspect. In other words, anger and violence are lived both as Terror against the traitor and (if circumstances have produced this feeling) as a practical bond of *love* between the lynchers. Violence is the very power of this lateral reciprocity of love.[47]

[45] Ibid., p. 438 (emphasis in original).

[46] Ibid. (emphasis in original). An example of what Sartre is talking about is the character Hugo in his play 'Dirty Hands'. Even though Hugo has been jailed for his acts, the group (here the party) seeks to eliminate him both while he is in jail and upon his release. Yet, Hugo does not attempt to escape the group, his fear is quite the opposite – not being part of the group. In this sense, Hugo has never left the group and the group (including Hugo's own actions) decides his fate.

[47] Ibid., p. 439 (emphasis in original).

For Sartre, this allows us to comprehend the intensity of the group's action arising from the equally powerful external threats to the group's existence. If the perceived real danger no longer exists, even though it probably does, then the passion shared by the members of the group dissipates. In such a case, the group resorts to the artificial substitute of Terror.

The Organization of the Group

The pledged group, with its ontological structure of Fraternity-Terror, gives rise to the organization. In Sartre's lexicon, the word organization refers both to the internal action by which the group defines its structures and to the group itself as structured activity. Simply put, an organization is a distribution of tasks among individuals, and through which the group defines, controls and constantly corrects common praxis. What interests Sartre is the relation between the action of the group on itself, and the action of its members on the object of the group. This undertaking leads Sartre to a new definition of the common individual, which allows him to examine the 'logistics' of organized systems and further describe their structures.[48] The result is an articulation of a new human, social product: *active-passivity*.

At the level of the group-in-fusion, the common individual appears as an organic individual as far as he interiorizes the multiplicity of third parties and unifies that multiplicity through praxis. As we have seen, the common characteristic of the individual's being-in-the-group is everyone's juridical power over organic individuality in himself and in every third party. This is still an abstract power, however. Only at the level of organization does this abstract and essentially negative power become concretized and acts as a positive force as it defines itself for everyone in the context of the distribution of tasks. In a word, it is *function*.[49] As function, it is still an inert limit of the freedom of the third party and remains Terror. In organized activity, either the entire group assigns function to the individual or some organ of the group makes the determination. In any case, the assigned function carries out a certain task and only that task. In one sense, function retains its negative purpose: I have a certain role in the organization, but that does not mean I can perform any role within the organization.

Sartre's example of function is a football (soccer) team. Each player occupies a certain position and performs a certain function. A goalkeeper's function is to prevent the opponent's on-coming kick from entering the goal and thus scoring a point; it is quite different than, shall we say, a forward; yet, both of their functions are, for the most part, predetermined. Not only the player's height, weight, agility and speed, determine his position, but the rules of the game decide how his position is played. This is also true of the common individual produced by the group. His function is now a technical bond with a particular instrument. Through training and professional instruction, that instrument exists as an *exis* or habit. Thus, the meaning of any particular undertaking lies in the use made of it elsewhere in the undertakings of other members of the organization. The question becomes whether this is a further indication of increasing alien-

[48] In the second volume of the *Critique*, Sartre describes these structures as the totalization-of-envelopment.

[49] In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre thinks our functions are one of the thousand ways in which the for-itself tries to wrench itself away from its original contingency: 'We insist on our individual rights only within the compass of a vast project which would tend to confer existence on us in terms of the function we fulfill' (*BN*, p. 624). But, adds Sartre, our efforts to escape our contingency by relishing our function – 'I am the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals', for instance – succeed only in further entrenching this original contingency.

ation and decreasing freedom. As I have pointed out, Sartre seems to think this might be a form of social alienation, but this may not quite be the case.

At this level, my action within the organization develops on the basis of common power launched towards a common objective, the actualization of the power and the objectification of the praxis is still that of free individual practice. This individual practice is a self-suppressing mediation, which negates itself for the sake of being transcended by a third party. In Sartre's football example, each player exercises individual free praxis; I have a choice, 'shall I go left, or shall I take the ball straight down the field'; 'shall I kick the ball myself, or pass it to another who is in a much better position to score'. Sartre thinks this transformation of practical power into isolated freedom is only a moment of the metamorphosis leading up to the disclosure of common objectifications:

> and this culmination is *precisely the meaning* of the transition to isolated freedom; this freedom is expressly designated as a mediation between the common individual (who is nevertheless defined fundamentally by an inert limit, to be reactualized in freedom) and the common objectification which realizes itself *at the same time as* the individual action (a reorganization *around* the passing of the ball) and reflects the common objective back to the common individual. Through the mediation of everyone's individual praxis, the common individual *objectifies himself* as a common individual in the common objectification which produces him and which is produced by him. The moment of freedom has to be passed over in silence, since it would negate the team if it were to posit itself for itself.[50]

My sovereign freedom to decide the simple path the ball takes is merely an ephemeral moment, which, as Sartre indicates, must be relegated to silence.

In Sartre's analysis, as an integrated member of the group, the common individual is dependent entirely on the mediating moment of organic praxis. Thus, the process of organizing the group itself is a real operation the group performs on itself as a distribution of tasks among its members in accordance with common praxis. The common praxis Sartre speaks of is the mutual or successive conditioning of functions as far as the multitude of human actions actually inscribes those in a finite situation. Played out in the form of action on its members, the group's main purpose is its perpetual organization and reorganization. As a result, function determines the right-duty tension, since 'function defines itself both as a task to be carried out (an operation defined in terms of the transcendent object), and as *a relation* between each common individual and all the Others'.[51]

Because this right-duty tension exists strictly as a human relation of interiority, the group passes from one sustained by fluid homogeneity to one of regulated heterogeneity. Within the community, alterity reappears once again, and within the organized group, the alterity of its members is both created and induced by them. In actuality, function denotes authority, and is a type of authority anarchists generally find repugnant. As Alan Ritter points out, the authority rejected by anarchists is of the type granted to an official operating in a designated function.[52]

[50] *CDR I*, pp. 459–60 (emphasis in original).
[51] Ibid., p. 463 (emphasis in original).
[52] Ritter, *Anarchism,* pp. 66–71.

Even though a flexible and reciprocal group may maintain order, the concentrated authority of a definite office or fixed function curtails individual freedom, and must be denied.

Once I take the pledge, every third party remains the same as all the other third parties so that part of what I am agreeing to undertake is to ensure the negating of any possibility of alterity, whether from my own actions or from any *exis* whatsoever. By reintroducing alterity to the group, Sartre borrows from Claude Levi-Strauss to emphasis his point: the function of the pledge is 'to exercise terror over the Other and, making a clean start, to establish the dictatorship of the Same in everyone'.[53] Alterity is, in Levi-Strauss' terms, suppressed as Nature and returns as Culture. Individuals create 'Alterity-Culture', as a means of preserving the free group when the group is able to unite two disparate approaches: it both affirms the radical lack of differentiation and absolute equality of its members as common individuals through the operation of the pledge, and maintains itself as producing functional alterities on the basis of this perfect equality.

As an example of what Sartre is driving at, as I stand on the platform awaiting the arrival of my subway train, I am a member of a series, and, as such, I have no means to comprehend why the unknown person standing so closely next to me is other. As a member of an organization, however, I understand that Charley is a practical and signifying creation of '*us-as-the-same*'. His relation to me is comprehensible as the means, the object and the principle of all understanding in the organized group. From the point of view of the common objective, Charley is other because it is necessary that he be so in order to accomplish whatever the objective may be. At the same time, Charley's alterity to me conditions the possibility of carrying out my assigned task.

In the pledged group, the pledge first produces the bond of sociality, and as common praxis this is freedom. Now, in the organization, freedom creates concrete forms of human relationships. Every function is, as the relationship between Charley and me, negatively defined as a reciprocal limit of competences, and positively defined as the action that makes my action necessary and possible. The implication is a transformation from function as common individual, defined as everyone's being-in-the-group, to the new level of the organization where being-in-the-group is no longer an abstract, multi-faceted determination of human relations; but the organized relation uniting me to Charley and all others.

The 'cost' of this *human relation*, Sartre observes, may be quite high: an inert rigidity within the group emerges. The members define limits with the aim of leaving nothing undetermined. At the first meeting, the group elects Charley the leader, and I am passed over for any position; hierarchy now defines relations within the group. More importantly, the group determines competences, which means, as a functional individual, I will never have a certain type of relation with Charley again. While this may cause consternation between Charley and me, within the organized group, I have freely accepted these limits of human relations. There is, however, a positive aspect to my group's hierarchal structure. As one of inferior to superior, my relation to Charley avoids internal ruptures (insubordination) by positive actions (obedience). While the aim of the parties to the pledge may be urgent, it is also vague. The unity of the organized group is always defined by its concrete objective. Thus, the relations between myself as common individual within an organization, and Charley who leads the organization must be constantly created within the limits dictated by the concrete tasks ahead of us, and solely with a view to the success of our efforts.

[53] *CDR I*, p. 464.

Sartre's portrayal of the pledged group is not unlike Proudhon's own assessment of role-playing. A concomitant feature of the hierarchy is the establishment of roles for each of the group's players. The role I assume locates me in a hierarchy that is both concrete and representational, and in this sense – regardless of whether I reside at the top, in the middle or occupy the bottom like most of my fellow group members – I will never be outside the hierarchy. The role I play initiates me into the group, it imposes the group's mechanization upon me as structure, it requires sacrifice of me, but fundamentally my role seeks to construct a behavioural unity within the group as I, along with all others, seek to identify our very self's with the role we now play. Even if my role is mundane and commonplace, I should not forget – and here Sartre is echoing Proudhon's fear – that to live without a role is not to live at all.

The organized group is, as we have seen, a complex circularity of mediated reciprocities. In comparison, the group-in-fusion's mediated reciprocity emerges from praxis itself in the generating movement of the group. I see the beginning of myself in Charley as far as Charley sees the beginning of himself in me. In this sense, Charley and I become both constituent and constituted third parties for each other. At this point, a new level of reciprocity emerges; the pledge itself is reciprocity:

> Only reciprocity can produce in me a free limitation of my freedom: … I rediscover myself in myself as Other-Freedom in so far as, for the Other, I am his guarantee of always being the Same as myself; and in so far as the Other's pledge is for me a guarantee of being the Same as him.[54]

This is what Sartre terms *worked* reciprocity, since it allows inertia to affect practical freedom. Each pledged member of the group uses mediation by the group to transform the otherwise free spontaneous relation appearing earlier. Once the pledge is given, reciprocity becomes centrifugal. Instead of being a lived bond between two individuals, it now is the bond of their absence. Whether in my isolation or as a member of a sub-group, I derive my guarantees and imperatives from the inertia affecting common individuals whom I no longer see. As a result, reciprocity is not the living creation of bonds, but a reciprocal inertia. At the level of the pledge, I may rebel against the separating power of inert materiality, but I will also interiorize it. My reciprocity, as an inert limit on my freedom, comes to me from the outside and exists in me as worked matter.

Up until this point, Sartre has examined the *conditions* of common action but not common action *itself*. That is, action is not only singular as individual action; it is singular with regard to the objective as well as temporality. But, are individual praxis and common praxis homogeneous? Sartre argues they are: it would not be possible for the individual to understand either his own common action in terms of the totalizing praxis of the group, or a group external to himself, if the structures of common praxis were of a different order than those of individual praxis.[55] The common aim of the group is always doubly common: it is the aim of everyone in the group, and its signifying content is necessarily common. To put it another way, there is an interest defining the group as valid only for this particular group and is, accordingly, only accessible through it.

When the sovereign individual undertakes to rearrange the practical field and form the human multiplicities as a group, he tries to produce an instrumental system united and governed in accordance with a structure and rules. This rearrangement differs from inert systemization

[54] Ibid., p. 470.
[55] Ibid., p. 509.

because the complexity of organized groups is usually connected to the complexity of the mechanical relationships that the members of the group are capable of devising at any historical moment.[56] Surprisingly, the homogeneity of individual and common praxis presents Sartre with an aporia described as an impotence of the dialectic: inasmuch as the group is, as an interiorized multiplicity, profoundly different from the organic individual, how can the group produce common actions whose fundamental structure is the same as individual actions. In order to explain this apparent aporia, Sartre examines the organization, not as a real constitution of a being-in-the-group based on the pledge, but as a distribution of tasks as function.

Sartre begins by acknowledging the common method of contrasting the centralized, authoritarian tendency of an organization emanating from above with a democratic, spontaneous tendency growing from the base. The first organizes the masses into a hierarchal group from the outside, while the second realizes groups through the free, common action of the masses themselves. Much like the Arab Spring protests, and not unlike Proudhon and the other anarchists before him, Sartre claims it is of critical political, as well as social importance, whether organization is imposed from above or produced from below. Equally important, is whether the group as a popular movement chooses its leaders as a temporary expression of its praxis and reabsorbs and transcends them through the development of this praxis, or whether the group detaches itself from the masses, specializes in the exercise of power, and arranges its tasks in an authoritarian manner. Having said this, however, Sartre quickly points out that the mode of regroupment and organization is not fundamentally different in either case. This may seem an abrupt change in Sartre's thinking, and certainly at odds with anarchist thought generally, but Sartre qualifies his statement by saying, 'it should in fact be recognized that the habit of speaking of dialectical transformations of the masses is always *metaphorical*'.[57]

What Sartre is trying to avoid is the tendency to absolutely categorize a revolutionary structure, either after the fact or contemporaneously with it, by resort to some 'Gestatlist' description of the event, as if it arose rather magically and spontaneously out of one solitary organizing meeting. The people in Tahrir Square did not all meet in one large room the night before and decide how they would organize themselves. Nor is it possible for the group-in-fusion to demand everything all at once, but it would be an even more serious mistake to think their demands take the form of some long-term project.[58] In the initial stages of fusion, 'the organization selects its organizers'; it may reject or reabsorb them, but it undeniably preserves them in their role by means of the pledge that supports functions by adopting passivity.[59]

As an illustration of his thinking, Sartre describes the role of the popular agitator in the revolution as the individual who, although not a leader of the group as such, is nevertheless essential. He does not issue orders, yet the masses rally around him and organize their praxis through him as a regulatory third party whose activity assumes the role of function on the tacit basis of the pledge. He represents the possibility of the democracy of the popular organization. This possi-

[56] Ibid., p. 513.

[57] Ibid., p. 520 (emphasis added).

[58] *CDR II*, p. 152. In this regard, it must be repeated that the group-in-fusion demonstrating in Tahrir Square had only one objective – namely Mubarak's removal – but they had no short-term or long-term programme for political, social or economic reforms. See, Holger Albrecht, 'Authoritarian Transformation or Transition from Authoritarianism? Insights on Regime Change in Egypt', p. 264. This is also clear from the tweets emanating from Tahrir where no mention is made of any such goals once Mubarak was deposed. See generally, *Tweets from Tahrir*.

[59] *CDR I*, p. 522.

bility of democracy comes with a note of caution, however; it is really Fraternity-Terror based on violence. In addition, because of pledged inertia of function, the organizer–agitator remains, at least for some time, the means through which the group defines its praxis, and, more importantly, creates its own organization. Sartre sees the eventual leader as a medium through which the group issues orders because only individuals carry out the reorganization; *his* exhortations and *his* gestures indicate the common objective. Popular praxis, created, understood, and organized by individuals means the group defines its common action only through the mediation of an individual designation.

The events in Egypt provide a stunning example of Sartre's 'organizer–agitator'. Prior to the uprising in January 2011, a seemingly inconsequential event galvanized opposition to the Mubarak regime. In June 2010, a young Egyptian residing in Alexandria, Khaled Said, died from a beating at the hands of the police. Because of this horrific murder, over 300,000 people joined the Facebook page, 'We are all Khaled Said'. Launched in the summer of 2010, this particular Facebook page played a significant role in the events that occurred in Tahrir Square a short time later, often announcing mass protests, providing a forum for information, but also playing the role morale booster. Yet, the Facebook page and its anonymous administrator played a much more significant role later in the Revolution as it continued to agitate but never lead.

In the very early days of the Revolution, police arrested a young Google marketing executive, Wael Ghonim, after he gave an interview to a prominent television host. While the regime detained many activists, Ghonim's case became a symbol. During his captivity, he admitted being an administrator of the 'We Are All Khalid Said' Facebook page that had agitated and helped to organize the first demonstrations. Released after eleven days in captivity, he immediately gave another interview; this time Ghonim expressed himself with raw human emotion that touched the very heart of those who witnessed it. The second interviewer showed Ghonim pictures of those killed in the protests, at which point he broke into tears and immediately left the set.

The tone of the interview electrified the nation, and those on Twitter lost no time in responding. One person tweeted: 'Everyone is crying, Everyone'. Another: 'Egyptians everywhere are crying with/for both Wael and Egypt. Show that you care, that the current state is not acceptable. Tahrir tomorrow!'[60] And, turnout they did. The next day, 8 February, saw the biggest crowds not only in Tahrir Square but also in protests throughout Egypt. While neither Wael Ghonim nor his Facebook page led the Revolution, both rallied the masses around them, which effectively organized group praxis. In short, both were regulatory third parties – Ghonim not only in his individual capacity but also as the anonymous individual behind the Facebook page – who represented the possibility of a democratic Egypt.

While the group may define its common action through the individual, Sartre is quite explicit in his ultimate belief in the power of the organized group. Very much as Proudhon argued with his theory of collective forces, Sartre thinks:

> the organized group obtains results which no individual could achieve alone, even if his strength and skill were doubled; moreover, organization as practical being is normally constituted in a more complex and better adapted way than any organism.[61]

[60] *Tweets from Tahrir*, p. 172. Just to show Revolutions can have their not so serious moments, one protestor going by the handle NotHosniMubarak tweeted: 'Suddenly starting to think that releasing Wael@Ghonim was probably not such a good idea'. Ibid., p. 173.

[61] *CDR I*, p. 524.

Even though Sartre begins his analysis with the individual, he always moves in the direction of concerted regulated praxis aimed at a certain goal. While the individual is always the instrument of praxis, only the individual situated within the group effects social change. This is obviously not a new idea raised for the first time in the *Critique*. We will remember Proudhon's collective forces and Sartre's agreement with that concept in his essay 'Materialism and Revolution' where he asserts that individuals acting alone or in seriality are incapable of revolutionary activity.[62]

In this regard, the organization of the group into functions is not necessarily a bad thing. Quite possibly these functions look more like the 'discipline' Bakunin spoke of in *God and the State*, or the fulfilment of a need for some organization of the group to effect social change as Proudhon envisioned. This is why Sartre points to the role of the agitator within the organizing group, but he also makes a strategic move as he recognizes the group tends to have more in common with a machine, and those who use them, than with practical human individuals. Moreover, there can never be what he calls a 'social machine' because it eventually becomes a massified plurality of organisms, perhaps like today's 'Occupy' movement. On the other hand, the group's actions take on the appearance of a machine as integration advances, or as the group, through the organization of its structures, increasingly produces itself as a function. The effect of this *machine-like* statute is apparent:

> Within the apparatus, everyone is transformed with and through all the others, and the common individual as a structure of the totalization appears as the highest level of integration which the group is capable of realizing in its attempts to produce itself as an organism; but the group can be comprehended only as a particular dissolution of the practico-inert field at a certain degree of depth. … The important point here is that the common *praxis is both an action and a process*.[63]

Common action becomes a directed process where process and praxis, each dialectical, are defined by their movement and their direction, their particular determination of the field of possibilities, and where both are 'violence, fatigue, wear and a constant transformation of energy'.[64] The differences lie in the following: praxis is directly revealed by its end through a project where at each moment of the action, the agent produces himself in a particular posture along with a specific effort towards a future objective. Process, on the other hand, is constituted by the directed action of a multiplicity of individuals, which is then modified by passivity. This means that the praxis-subject of a pledged community maintains itself in being as a process-object.

This section of the *Critique* shows Sartre working his way through the question of how and importantly why individuals come together to form groups characterized by reciprocal social structures. Just as critical are the consequences of our organizing activities. Not unlike Proudhon and Bakunin, Sartre thinks humans are naturally social, but he also sees sociality capable of bringing about the alienation of its members through successive and ever-increasing modalities of oppression. These monstrous forces curtail human freedom and require adherence to the group, its goals and ultimately its leaders. Sartre is anxious to expose the troubling side of group formations, complete with pledged and organized structures. Yet, as we shall see, the institutionalized group exemplifies anarchist fears of the inherent dangers posed to individual freedom in any group where functions are institutionalized.

[62] 'Materialism and Revolution', p. 193.
[63] *CDR I*, p. 547 (emphasis in original).
[64] Ibid., p. 549.

We must now ask where the process leads, or does our group merely remain in the realm of organized functionality. While this is possible in Sartre's scheme, equally possible is the disintegration and return to the impotency of the practico-inert of the organized group, but I have already shown this is unlikely. Quite likely, the organized group continues to develop, and Sartre now enters into the structured environment where alienation overtakes freedom as the organization strives to unify itself by institutionalizing itself.

9. The Institution: Sartre's Concept of Sovereignty

> 'If one reads my books, one will realize that I have not changed profoundly, and that I have always remained an anarchist'.
>
> —Sartre, *Sartre at Seventy, interview 1975*

Back to the Practico-Inert

As Sartre moves from the organized praxis of the group and enters the realm of group institutionalization, we witness the disintegration of common, individual sovereignty. The group must survive, and Sartre continues our journey back to the impotency of the practico-inert, as sovereignty comes to reside in a single individual who alone takes on the role of the untranscendable third. The road back to the impotency of seriality within the institutionalized group is not exactly the same, however, as it was when standing in the queue waiting for the bus.

Within the institutionalized group, the term 'atomization' does not convey the correct situation of individuals dispersed and alienated by institutions. As an individual, I cannot be reduced to the absolute solitude of the atom even though institutions attempt to replace their concrete relations with people of tangential connections. Even within a group structure – the institution – a collective can still emerge. Simply put, it is not possible to exclude me from all forms of social life at this stage of sociological development. Like everyone I ride the subway, I buy groceries, and I work and interact with other people. Even so, the collective structure, represented by the institution, addresses me as a member of a series – the series of subway riders, the series of grocery shoppers, the series of workers. Individuals, then, become identical with all the other members, differing only by the serial number assigned to each in whatever form.

At this stage, the being-in-the-group undergoes another transformation or, as Sartre describes it, we again discover a new statute of intelligibility as the organization, whose foundation is the pledge and whose structure is the heterogeneity of function, moves towards institutionalization. Those of us who are now members of the organized group have a reciprocal relation to the other that is, at this level, already organized and functional, since we have ostensibly come together in order to produce a given result through our organized group praxis. Consequently, but unlike my membership in the group-in-fusion, the other's regulatory act or their common individual behaviour does not arise in me. My acts remain regulatory because of my reciprocal understanding of the common field, and because my actions occur in a signifying totalization the meaning of which appears to everyone within the organized group.

I am formed, trained, and equipped in such a way as to foresee my future action in the action any other undertakes. All of us are situated in a common field, based on a common objective and, in fact, under common conditions, making each of our individual actions regulatory for the other.

Under these conditions, the structure of our regulatory acts, while complex in nature, provides a limited affirmation of sovereignty. And, by sovereignty Sartre means:

> in effect, I mean, the absolute practical power of the dialectical organism, that is to say, purely and simply its *praxis* as a developing synthesis of any given multiplicity in its practical field, whether inanimate objects, living things or men.[1]

Sartre alluded to this definition when he talked about the third party, but now he expands upon it by saying sovereignty is simply, 'freedom itself as a project which transcends and unifies material circumstances which give rise to it and because the only way to deprive anyone of it, is to destroy the organism'.[2]

Once again, Sartre poses sovereignty in terms of absolute and total freedom under conditions where through my actions a material transformation of the internal configuration of, what he terms the field, occurs as I rearrange an otherwise diverse field into a totalized field. This notion of absolute freedom is, however, transitory. Sartre illustrates his point with a return to the soccer match where my possession of the ball 'resembles' absolute freedom, if only momentarily. That is, until I pass the ball to another player or someone steels the ball from me and the field is reorganized. Once again, in this situation each player's sovereignty defines the mode of integration of the other into the group by means of his regulatory action.

This does not mean that the exercise of sovereignty is complete; if that were the case, the sovereign would necessarily lie outside the group. Sartre posits the limit of sovereign synthesis as the reciprocal bond existing between the other and myself, since my practical field is the same as the other and, in effect, it constitutes both of *our* practical fields. The limits of sovereignty prove to be its very reciprocity, but Sartre does not think that no one is sovereign. In fact, all others, including myself, are sovereign over the sovereignty of all the others in the group, and at the same time, we are the organized object of all the other's practical synthesis because we are both quasi-sovereign and quasi-object. The group itself is a quasi-totality, which is, as a regulated multiplicity of quasi-sovereignties, always in a state of perpetual detotalization. The relation between the other and me is a simple modality of intersubjectivity; as such, it is the other who integrates me into the group as I integrate the other; we are each other's *alter-ego*. Again, everyone is determined in his inessentiality in relation to the group through his integrating sovereignty of the other. In order for this to occur by means of the *alter-ego*, everyone posits themselves in their irreducible essentiality as the guarantor of the Other's membership in the group by means of the pledge.

When I take the pledge, through my regulatory action I am the object of a mediated integration by the other that, in turn, constitutes my group as detotalized. Through my obedience to the group, I produce the other as quasi-sovereign as well as quasi-excluded from the group. At the very moment I ground this quasi-sovereignty through mediated recognition of my powers and the other's functions, I produce myself as regulatory and so realize myself as quasi-exile or quasi-sovereign. As members of the group, we are all beings-in-the-group manifested through a double failure: each of us is as unable to depart the group, as we are equally unable to integrate ourselves into the group. However, our being-in-the-group does actually exist, since the group unites us through our 'pledged inertia'. My freedom is other through the mediation of any Other.

[1] Ibid., p. 578.
[2] Ibid.

Sartre thinks the untranscendable conflict between the individual and the common naturally establishes new contradictions within the organized group. Where the previous pledge gave rise to the institution, these new contradictions help to transform the institutionalized group into a hierarchy. Within every organization a certain malaise surfaces, which carries with it an uneasiness that tends to strengthen the i ntegration of the group. This leads to the common individual who is, as a group individual, defined by the practices of all the members of the group in terms of a determinate function, power and competence. Much like Proudhon argued, where each has a role to play, Sartre is essentially indicating the common individual assumes a juridical and ceremonial status just as the group devolves into a system of rights and duties (in the form of a legal system) in its quest to become more and more institutionalized.

At this level, the group operates quite differently than it did as an organization. In fact, each function performed by the common individual is now inessential or merely 'relatively essential'. Sartre explains:

> no individual is essential to a group which is coherent, well integrated, and smoothly organized; but when anyone realizes the mediation between the common individual (who has no real existence except through the organic life of the agent) and the object, he reaffirms his essentiality *in opposition to the group*.[3]

For example, if I deem my function and thus myself to be essential to the group, I remove myself from it. On the other hand, if I remain inessential as the common individual I neither betray the pledge nor transcend the group, I merely perform my function. There is a slight 'catch', however. Even when I remain inessential, a new fear arises within me as a common individual, since in a way I transform myself through my powers and responsibilities into a new isolation. The fear Sartre speaks of this time is not the fear encountered in the group-in-fusion that spawns the pledge out of concern the group may dissolve by default; rather, the fear is now dissolution through excess – I may be in the group today, but I may be outside the group tomorrow. In this situation, the pledge is powerless to ameliorate the fear as it did before for the simple reason the fear arises from pledged fidelity itself. This means the group maintains itself through ritual recognition of others within the group, which leads to a way of living one's own being-in-the-group as a constant but disguised separation.

The group seeks, therefore, the protection of a space or a barrier, a protective wall that identifies its being as what Sartre describes a 'container'. This container creates in the common individual an interiority as a spatial bond between the container and its contents – between myself and all the others in the group – as a mystification. Once again, I may be inside the container now, but I am afraid I may be outside at any moment. In grasping the full extent of my quasi-sovereignty, I am fearful the social organization, whether it is large or small, may expel me for whatever reason or no reason at all.

Even though Sartre often talks about an actual death the pledge implies, the death I subsequently suffer is more like a death of exclusion, which in many ways is more insidious than actual death itself. Simply put, physical death presents a finality lacking in mere exclusion from any group – I will always seek a return to the group in order to exonerate my actions. In Sartre's analysis, we are all fundamentally social beings who yearn for nothing more than to interact with other social beings. Carried to its extreme, our fear of exclusion is as much a real fear as it

[3] Ibid., p. 584 (emphasis in original).

is a psychological fear. However misanthropic one may be, in the Sartrean world, isolation is not a condition readily accepted.

Sartre emphasizes this development as a key to understanding his notion of sovereignty, since once freedom, and here Sartre is denoting freedom as the free dissolution of inertia in everyone, becomes afraid of itself,

> and discovers in anguish its individual dimension, the dangers of impotency and the certainty of alienation which characterize it, and the regulatory third party has become a regulated, integrated, third party, integration by the Other will be revealed to it by dislocated reciprocity both as a danger to sovereignty (through the reification of the group within the practical field of a single individual) and the danger of exile (which means a danger of being killed – for the third party seen in his implicit secession – as well as a danger of betrayal).[4]

At this level, freedom gives way to the fear of alienation and removal. My being-one of the group depends on my individual freedomv, which constitutes itself now as the movement of exclusion, physical liquidation and betrayal as real possibilities for me. As suffered inertia, my separation from the group only reinforces pledged inertia as it increases the tension between sovereign exile and impotent dependence. The organized group, through its own freedom, develops a circular form of seriality. As it does so, the 'group creates itself in order to create, and destroys itself by creating itself'.[5]

The fear of separation-secession causes the group to react with new practices as it transforms itself into the form of an institutionalized group whose very organs and functions become institutions. The group seeks a new type of unity by institutionalizing sovereignty so that the common individual once again transforms himself into an institutional individual. For Sartre, we have reached a decisive point: the community becomes 'degraded', since the origin of the group, founded on the effort of individuals to gather together in order to dissolve seriality in themselves, now produces *alterity* in itself as it freezes into the lifeless inorganic. In a startling turn of events, Sartre describes a journey that has come full-circle: we have retreated towards the practico-inert from which Freedom-Terror removed us. The reasons why this occurs, but more importantly the effect of this movement, will largely occupy the remainder of the *Critique*.

Conflict within the Pledged Group

Sub-groups and Counter-Finalities (the first dialectical moment)

Within any pledged group, the distribution of tasks falls not on individuals but to specific sub-groups. Such a structure oftentimes gives rise to violent disagreements. In Volume II of the *Critique,* Sartre studies these conflicts in the concrete reality of Stalin and Trotsky, and there he explores the question of how groups violently opposed to one another collaborate towards a common goal. I shall say more about this issue later, but for now, we must first understand the dynamics of sub-groups and their attendant antagonisms.

[4] Ibid., p. 586.
[5] Ibid., p. 590.

The first question Sartre addresses is whether sub-groups act as mere agents of destruction, which eventually abolish the common unity, or as individuals taking responsibility for the contradiction of the group existing through the conflict. In answering this question, Sartre initially notes, 'every internal conflict takes place between pledged individuals and against the synthetic background of fraternity-terror'.[6] Moreover, the conflict itself arises in the name of group unity each opposed party claims to represent exclusively. As a result, the conflict pits common individuals against each other, transformed by the pledge, who exist harmoniously but for the dispute itself. In Sartre's analysis, contradiction is the only real form a group-in-activity embarks upon, but the underlying cause of the contradiction may be as simple or banal as a dispute over competency within the group.

As we saw in the discussion of the organized group and its initiation of functions, each sub-group is defined by the task assigned to it to be carried out, which imposes a right-duty obligation wherein one sub-group has both the right to perform the function as well as the duty to carry the function out. Should one sub-group claim authority over the function thought to be the domain of another sub-group, conflict arises. The cause of the conflict either results from a lack of specificity as to whose function is responsible for the object of the dispute, or an indeterminacy of competencies within the group.[7] Even though functions may be indeterminate, contradiction will not necessarily always appear. After all, neither sub-group may pursue its claim against the other. Only at the exact moment, 'when *the same matter* is claimed by each sub-group *against the other*' will the conflict ignite.[8]

The conflict over function produces the contradiction between the sub-groups, and, as a result, individuals themselves decide if they can coexist with other individuals. Yet, at this stage, and for as long as the struggle continues, there will be within the sub-groups a notion that the conflict is resolvable. This notion proves illusory, since it derives from the decisions made by free individuals whose free acts of transcendence are executed pursuant to a non-transcendable pledged inertia. As Sartre says, 'this very inertia, as a material product of a free pledge, is constituted as a destiny of impossible coexistence.'[9] As a result, the struggle between the two competing sub-groups takes on a dual character: first, it freely realizes conflict and, at the same time, it mediates between the two contradictory terms of non-transcendable inertia. Secondly, and as a direct result of the first characteristic, the common determinations derived from the group's external actions and internal consequences are now lodged within the common individual.

The key to understanding the issue between the two sub-groups revolves around the group's unity: each group sees its action as ensuring the unity of the group while at the same time each sub-group sees the action of the other sub-group as detrimental to the very same unity. In essence, each sub-group claims to produce the same unity. Does this indetermination of function have the power to rupture the internal structure of the group? In a word, yes. The members of the sub-

[6] *CDR II*, p. 52.

[7] Sartre wants to make it clear that the indetermination of function does not arise from the structural basis of the group, although historians may subsequently determine it did. Rather, the indetermination concretely and initially manifests itself as behaviour. Ib id., p. 55. Sartre's position seeks to maximize the role of praxis and, in turn, minimize the role of structures. Obviously, this should be seen as an attack not only on Marxism, but also on the structuralism prevalent at the time.

[8] Ibid., p. 56 (emphasis in original).

[9] Ibid., p. 57.

groups may at one time have been the same within the group, but the contradictions and conflicts transform the relationship of identity and turn it into a threat:

> the identical *is the Other*, in a milieu *where there are no Others*. But it is a particularly hateful and dangerous Other: each sub-group, inasmuch as it is identical to another, discovers the other as its own reality become alien praxis. And the practical existence of that other is a danger *not just for the identical and opposed sub-group*, inasmuch as identity contests the uniqueness of its relation to the totality in the course of totalization, *but also for the totalization-of-envelopment* – i.e. for the whole group, its efficacy and its aims.[10]

Even though each sub-group seeks the death of the other based in part on need, emotion and self-interest, the unity of the group ultimately validates the action of the sub-groups:

> It is unity that engenders the duality of the epicenters; it is unity that – in them and in all – is produced as the absolute exigency of transcending the duality; it is unity, finally, that is incarnated in each epicenter as liquidatory violence.[11]

While mediation of the conflict may take place, especially if the sub-groups reside at a lower level of the hierarchy, it does not necessarily have to. When the sub-groups confront each other, more likely one group eliminates the other, and in that event, it is critical to know whether the subsequent victory itself has meaning.

Sartre answers this question in the following manner. First, the victorious sub-group transcends itself by transcending the defeated sub-group. As he often does, Sartre uses very descriptive language to portray exactly what the victorious party does to the loser; and here the victor 'liquidates' the other. As is usual for Sartre, there is no middle ground. He takes this path because he sees the unity of the group as paramount, and to leave a remnant behind invites a recurrence of the conflict.[12] Next, the new unity assimilates the tasks and functions of the defeated sub-group. Lastly, Sartre considers the liquidation of one of the parties who caused the disunity in the first place as a transcendence only if the praxis of the whole group is transcended towards a moment of tighter integration and greater effectiveness towards the ultimate objective. However, this does not actually answer the question as to whether the victory expresses a

[10] Ibid., p. 64 (emphasis in original).

[11] Ibid., p. 68.

[12] Ibid., p. 73. Ronald Aronson, in his study of Volume II of the *Critique*, asserts that the victorious sub-group absorbs the vanquished group including some of its members. He also thinks the victorious sub-group, even though it is accorded an elevated status, must also 'represent' the interest of the defeated sub-group within the newly formed sub-group**.** Aronson, *Sartre's Second Critique*, p. 93. While I think this is true as far as it goes, Sartre's understanding of this 'reabsorption' is that the victor necessarily interiorizes the praxis of the other group in order to make use of it for its own purposes, all in the name of unity. This is why Sartre thinks the victor, and here he has in mind authoritarian rulers or the Communist Party, become at once both the left and the right. What this does not mean, however, is that the left (left of the Communist, that is) or the right (Liberal Democrats) will have any actual political standing within the group. *CDR II*, pp. 74–5. The defeated group may appear in the reorganized group, but it does so 'in another form'. Ibid., p. 89. Sartre is, I think, adhering to a type of 'battle of annihilation' between sub-groups as the only approach that can possibly lead to true victory. If, in fact, the defeated group is absorbed into the victorious group as Aronson believes, he is, perhaps, forgetting that Trotsky was assassinated some thirteen years after being 'absorbed' by Stalin. Ultimately, the need to eliminate and not just incorporate the defeated group is what Sartre is driving at. This may indeed support the claim that once inside the group, one can never be outside the group, but it also shows the need to eliminate members who transcend the group long after being forced outside the immediate container of the group.

progress from the standpoint of common action. In order to further the discussion, Sartre enters into a complex theoretical argument oscillating back and forth between the positive and negative aspects of struggle. The discussion begins by suggesting that if the victory has meaning it too indicates progress, but at the start, he outright rejects attitudes of optimism and pessimism as merely dogmatic presuppositions.

The victory by one sub-group results in a general reorganization of perspectives by the ensemble of individuals reappearing as unity. From this point of view, the victory by liquidation is dialectically intelligible because it produces the reunification of an otherwise disassociated unity. This does not mean, however, resistances are not evident. In every twist and turn, there exist passive resistances related to the practico-inert, but the impotence of the institutionalized group directly corresponds to the apparatuses of coercion controlled by the sovereign to prevent such resistance. The victory is a transcendence by a diffuse mediation of the entire group; in fact, the entire group – not as a group, but as individuals within the group – decides.

Sartre believes his general discussion might lead some to think that his account is overly optimistic. While victory comes about through the mediation of the entire group, which incarnates a moment of the tot alizing activity as praxis-process, this does not necessarily mean it realizes a progress towards its ultimate goal. Only the circumstances of the praxis and its material conditions can tell us if progress is achieved. As Sartre rightly points out, the deep conflict does not have to be over one's function or valid perspective, it can occur over 'myths and absurd "opinions," or over articles of dogma'.[13]

This mythologizing of the conflict's object expresses itself on an abstract level through the clash of fetishized symbols, which are highly important to the nature of the conflict. These symbols produce themselves 'by producing the prison which encloses it'.[14] Accordingly, the operations of either of the sub-groups is intelligible based solely on the profound movements that engender them, but, at the same time, those operations become bogged down and eventually the entire conflict is led astray. Fetishes, then, not only lead to alienation, but struggle and victory are necessarily alienated through these various fetishes.

In rejecting both optimism and pessimism, Sartre asserts that the conflict is intelligible only on the basis of totalizing praxis, which is the actual assumption of the inert oppositions produced as counter-finalities of praxis. In this sense:

> unity is the conflict's *matrix and destiny* (at least for the historian who studies it in the past); and the solution as a practical reunification contains within it, in the guise of inert and reorganized structures, *all* the oppositions previously reproduced and humanized in the binary movement that has engendered the reciprocity of antagonism.[15]

The comprehension of the struggle lies in its understanding as mediated opposition where unity itself not only produces conflict but maintains it as well.

[13] Ibid., pp. 86–7.
[14] Ibid., p. 87.
[15] Ibid., p. 90 (emphasis in original).

The Purge (the second dialectical moment)

The conflict between the sub-groups means the victorious group is the only one left at the top of the hierarchy, but not all conflict ceases. As an institutionalized group, any disagreement among its members – either real or imagined – gives rise to suspicion that is ultimately deemed a threat to an otherwise maniacally sought unity. In order to further its own view of uniformity, the group undergoes a purge; it is the only course of action open to the group if it is to re-establish internal homogeneity. In reality, however, the purge manages only to replace a quasi-structured heterogeneity with diffuse one. Once the purge occurs the survivors are, in Sartre's words, the *same again*, but they are also simultaneously and secretly Others.[16] Consequently, alterity becomes the hidden truth of unity for everyone, and, as far as everyone attempts to realize the group as a unified praxis, each individual strives to liquidate the Other. Here, the Other is everyone as Other, which means fraternity must be imposed by violence. But, while integration-terror should eliminate the other, the Other turns out to be indestructible.[17]

Once the purge commences, my bond with my fellow brothers in the group is terror. The regulatory action by which the other unites me to all gives me a reprieve for myself because the group constitutes me, but the other also determines my bond as residing at the limit of interiority. As a result, the other's regulatory action highlights the infinitesimal gap between the regulatory movement of my quasi-sovereignty in the common praxis and the true sovereignty of the absolute Other. We are, Sartre says, united but threatened. As an arbitrary member of a group:

> I perceive, in the two forms of my praxis (regulated and regulatory), freedom, the *non-being of the future* which has to be made, as an indication of the *group non-being*. And my individual terror behavior consists in consolidating inertia within myself in so far as this reciprocal practice of consolidation is also realized in the other third party through the mediation of all others.[18]

Here, the pledge is a necessary but insufficient basis for common unity, but this inert unity Sartre describes is different from the serial inertia we talked about previously, since it is the struggle of freedom against an internal revival of seriality.

While the common individual in the group-in-fusion is not inessential because he is the same in all, the degraded group displays the common individual, in his negation of his own freedom, as inessential with regard to his function. At this stage, function is the very concrete determination of the common individual. Freedom, therefore, conceived as a common transcendent subject denies individual freedom and expels the *individual* from function; thus, function posits itself for itself and produces individuals who perpetuate function in the form of an institution.

The Inertia of Institutionalization (first transformation)

At this point, Sartre thinks two transformations of the organized group operate simultaneously. One is abstract, the other a concrete act of differentiation. Initially, the institution possesses

[16] *CDR I*, p. 593.

[17] Ibid., p. 596. Sartre defines the Other as, 'simply a particular relation which manifests itself in precisely those circumstances which engender the attempt to destroy it; besides everyone is Other in the Other'. Later on, he indicates that the world of the Other is the world of government. Ibid., p. 656.

[18] Ibid., p. 598 (emphasis in original).

contradictory characteristics of both praxis and thing. With regard to its praxis, its objective end is now obscure either because the institution is a mere skeleton, or because those who are institutionalized are incapable of articulating the real aim of the group. The teleological characteristics of the group are a paralysed dialectic of alienated ends. Coupled with these alienated ends, the institution possesses a considerable force of inertia as it posits itself as essential, while, at the same time, delineating its individual members as the inessential means to its perpetuation.

Inessentiality does not arise, however, from the individual to the institution or vice versa; it takes place because of new human relationships based on serial impotence. As a member of the institutionalized group, I regard the institution as sacrosanct; it is not alterable because my praxis is incapable of changing it; my impotency derives from my relation to everyone in the institutionalized group as circular alterity. Once more, terror descends on all who dissent, and everyone lives mistrust as reciprocity of impotence. I am suspect in the other's eyes when I seek to modify some structure, practice, or power and ask the others to join with me in some certain endeavour. Behind closed doors and in hushed tones, the others remind me, for my own well-being (to say nothing of theirs), I should be quite leery of making any proposals or taking any initiative. Since all others are Others, neither the others nor I know how any such proposals will be taken; they may be misconstrued and turned against not only me but the others in order to destroy us all. The others repeatedly tell me it is better to remain silent.

Once the group assumes a degraded status, every proposal is divisive and threatening, and its proposer suspect. Sartre also argues that if I am suspect, it is because I am offering a very glimpse of my own freedom that at best is a fleeting occurrence. The group tells me it is too bad if I disagree, I have to come to terms with it; after all, since nothing can change it, I might just as well go along. This attitude, lived in a concrete mode of impotence, alters the group giving rise to the institution by the mere fact that alterity erodes the long sought after unity, which becomes powerless to change it without a complete disruption of itself. As an institution, its real strength comes to it from 'emptiness, from separation, from inertia, and from serial alterity; it is therefore *the praxis as other*'.[19]

Sartre considers the institution a 'declining group' transforming from the *active-passivity* of pledged inertia to the *passive-activity* experienced in the practico-inert. Produced as a bond between its members, the being-of-the-institution is the non-being of the group where the unity of the institution as the unity of alterity replaces the absent unity of the group. A new statue of power emerges. I have a duty to do my best in order for me to have my duty recognized. In short, what is required is the creation of the 'institutional man' who receives recognition by means of two opposed practices. In the first instance, he liquidates the Other in himself so as to liquidate it in the others. In the second instance, and at the very moment institutional man exercises his power, he immediately constitutes himself as the absolute Other. In his style and manner, he bases the firmness of his power on institutional-being, which is, in realty, inertia. At this point, mystification sets in with the institution remaining a practice within an undissolved group.[20]

[19] Ibid., p. 603 (emphasis in original).

[20] The question of mystification and myth is important for Sartre and has certain connections with other writers on the subject such as Hans Blumenberg who focused on the element of fear in his theory of the 'absolutism of reality'. In his theory of myth, humanity exchanges the fear of an unordered and chaotic nature for the fear of something of their own making because it is more certain and identifiable. Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. Robert Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985). Although it is arguable that Sartre reverses the Hobbesian notion of the state of nature as an atomized environment of the war of all against all, since the serial impotence of the bus queue does

The institutional system emerges as a relational totality of synthetic determinations of grouped multiplicity. Eventually, what Sartre refers to as the 'power-man' reveals himself as institutional-being through which the organized individual comes to believe himself integrated into the group through the institutional ensemble. The power-man's freedom is, at least for the individual who acknowledges his power, a pure mediation between the inertia of the institution and the inertia of the particular order. At this moment, freedom is completely hidden or inessential and becomes an 'ephemeral slave of necessity'.[21] In effect, what happens is the systematic self-domestication of man by man:

> The aim is, in effect, to create men who (as common individuals) will define themselves, in their own eyes and amongst themselves, by their fundamental relation (mediated reciprocity) with institutions. More than half of this task is carried out by circular seriality: everyone systematically acting on himself and on everyone else through all, resulting in the creation of the strict correlate of the man-institution, that is to say, the institutionalized man.[22]

Sartre refers to this behaviour as the ossification of ossified praxis, which in the institution is the result of impotence that constitutes for everyone reification. The result is a common degradation where everyone seeks to expel freedom from themselves in order to realize the endangered unity of the declining group as a thing.

The Rise of the Leader: Authority and Sovereignty (second transformation)

If Sartre's first transformation of the institutionalized group concerns itself with institutional inertia, his second transformation is more concrete and even more destructive of freedom: the institutional system, based in exterior inertia, necessarily reinteriorizes inertia as authority. Authority, by its very nature and as a guarantee of institutions, incarnates power as power over all powers, and over all third parties through these powers. However, sovereignty (as the quasi-sovereignty of the regulatory third party after the stage of the group-in-fusion) grounds authority, and Sartre further explains that the leader emerges at the same time as the group itself and produces the group that produces him.

Our earlier discussion of how certain individuals become agitators, especially in periods of revolution, should be kept in mind. These people, who are not really leaders, are able to constantly organize and reorganize groups, if even for very brief periods. In turbulent circumstances, the masses trust and coalesce around the agitator, but Sartre does not discuss or introduce his concept of authority at that point, since power, as reciprocal quasi-sovereignty, does not entail authority

not seem to involve its inhabitants in the behaviour that so concerned Hobbes. In fact, in order to initiate violence one would have to break out of serial impotence and resort to praxis. Sartre says that within the institutionalized group, individuals exchange their unordered fear for something of their own making through the mystification of one individual. Ultimately, as Hobbes came to realize in his book *Behemoth*, political authority is more akin to captivity of the mind than bodily coercion. Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[21] *CDR I*, p. 606.

[22] Ibid.

as such. In its early stages, the revolution is hardly ever splintered; only when the 'poetry' of agitation ceases does authoritarian leadership begins to take hold. Sartre points out that the emergence of a common relation of everyone to each and to all, which he describes as Fraternity-Terror or the power of life and death over the traitor, is the basic determination of sociality. This basic structure of coercion necessarily determines sovereignty as authority.

In the movement towards an understanding of the basis for authority, Sartre thinks from the moment the regulatory third party becomes the pledged holder of the power of regulation as function, and when the regulatory third party concentrates the internal violence of the group in the form of a power in order to impose his particular regulation on the group, everyone's quasi-sovereignty is 'immobilized'. In a sense, it is suspended or bracketed. This immobilized quasi-sovereignty becomes authority as a specific relation of one particular individual to all the rest. While this relation appears at the level of the organized group, it does not come to full fruition until we reach the institutionalized group. What is necessary for authority to blossom is the rebirth of seriality and impotence allowing the establishment of power where the institution, through its permanent mystification, presents itself as the only real unity of the group in decline.

Clearly, Sartre thinks authority – a concept so anathema to all anarchist – comes into full existence only within an institutionalized group. However, he does not think once authority is constituted, individual freedom is eliminated forever. He distinctly says it is merely immobilized, which means it could arise again should the individuals within the group shed their serial impotence, and reformulate their actions as a group-in-fusion. Here, Sartre not only criticizes existing institutions within society, but is also providing a view of an ideal, nonauthoritarian society, all within the concept of anarchism. As I have said, while Sartre could have taken us in the direction where praxis reformulates the group-in-fusion, he does quite the opposite and for a simple reason. Sartre wants to show exactly what happens when praxis fails to materialize and serial impotency reigns supreme. In this situation, my immobilized quasi-sovereignty becomes incarnated in the body of a particular individual as sovereign.

While authority is a nefarious problem not only in the minds of Proudhon and Bakunin, and Sartre as well, Sartre is unusual because he sees something useful in the concept: it fulfils a definite function. Very much like Proudhon admitted, authority is a synthetic power of a single individual to gather-up the multiplicity of institutional relations and give them the unity of a real praxis. The leader preserves institutions to the extent he produces the institution as an internal exteriorization of his interiority. Sartre acknowledges the need for some level of authority within any particular group, but as it was for Proudhon, a balance must occur between the level of authority exerted and the degree of freedom attainable within the situation. Arguably, this may be a positive development, at least for institutions themselves, but not for individual freedom. However, at this stage, Sartre's paramount concern is the authority exercised by the sovereign in the form of brutality with the ultimate aim of preserving the group now organized as an institution, and not for the solitary freedom of individual praxis.

We should ask at this point, is the sovereignty Sartre talks about similar to other notions that attempt to ground the individual sovereign in some legitimate foundation based on legal considerations. For instance, Carl Schmitt observed in his *Verfassungslehre* that there is an absolute identity of people, state, and constitution:

> A proper understanding requires that the meaning of the term 'constitution' be limited to the constitution of the *state*, that is, the political unity of a people. In this

> limited meaning, 'constitution' can describe the state itself, and, indeed, an individual, concrete state as political unity or as particular concrete type and form of state existence. In this instance, it means the *complete condition* of political unity and *order*.[23]

The constitutional order Schmitt identifies with the state must form some sort of unity within which to achieve a plurality. Schmitt does not want the constitutional order to become, however, a modus vivendi in which any one group conspires to seize power form another group.[24]

Schmitt's solution to the problem is his concept of the 'state of exception' made famous in his book, *Political Theology*. Indeed, the exceptional situation calls for the emergence of a potentially all-powerful sovereign who must not only rescue the constitutional order from a particular political crisis, but also charismatically deliver it from its own constitutional procedures. As such, the sovereign is the one who not only decides on the state of exception but also determines the solution to the impending crisis brought about the exception in the first place. While the decision to decide may be premised on the constitutional order, as it was in Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, once the decision is made the sovereign is outside the very constitutional structure that binds the people and the state as a unity of order. Again, once the decision is made, the sovereign is as free to uphold the constitutional order, as he is to disregard it altogether.

Sartre sees it quite another way. For him, Schmitt's concern for sovereignty is not relevant. Sovereignty requires no foundation and it poses no acute problem, since Sartre views sovereignty as:

> simply the univocal relation of interiority between the individual as *praxis* and the objective field which he organizes and transcends towards his own end. … In other words, sovereignty is man himself as action, as unifying labor, in so far as he has a purchase on the world and is able to change it. Man *is sovereign*.[25]

Sovereignty, for Sartre, is not caught up at the level of the nation-state; rather, just as it was for Proudhon and later for Duguit, sovereignty resides below in the individual. The only limitation on individual sovereignty over all Others is reciprocity. Unlike Schmitt's concern, Sartre's notion of the sovereignty of the leader can only be quasi-sovereignty; if this were not the case the sovereign would cease to be a regulatory third party and his bond of interiority with the group would be broken. The implication arises that the primary relation of authority is a quasi-sovereignty of interiority as violence.

More precisely, the bond between power and the regulated third party, based primarily on the transformation of total sovereignty into quasi-sovereignty, occurs in spite of the failure to challenge the sovereignty of the leader. At all times, the leader is unifying, reshaping and repressing the group, but always operating from inside the group and not outside like some Leviathan or Schmitt's sovereign once the decision is made. Moreover:

> at the moment in which the group constitutes itself, under the pressure of circumstances, from the first stirrings of the crowd which liquidates its own seriality, to the

[23] Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Seitzer (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 59 (emphasis in original). Originally published in 1928 as *Verfassungslehre* (Munich: Duncker and Humbolt, 1928).

[24] Carl Schmitt, ‚Staatsethik und pluralistisher Staat', (1930), in *Positionen und Begriffe* (Berlin: Duncker and Humbolt, 1994), pp. 144–5.

[25] *CDR I*, p. 610 (emphasis in original).

> last avatars of a group in the final stages of petrification, everyone makes himself quasi-sovereign and this determination in interiority of the regulatory third party, as a transition from the Other to the Same, is a structure of *praxis* as community.[26]

Sartre concludes that it is not sovereignty that must concern us or even be explained. On the contrary, what deserves our attention is why and on what basis does the circular reciprocity of quasi-sovereignty suddenly grind to a halt, and why is the common individual, at the material point at which circular reciprocity is blocked, defined as sovereign.

The problem is often obscured by assuming the sovereign's power is always already there from the outset, and by ascribing some positive force that arises or reflects a collective sovereignty. To do this requires us to overlook the fact that quasi-sovereignty is, much like mediated reciprocity, characterized by its ubiquity and not by some synthetic virtue combining all the powers of the group. Quasi-sovereignty is not, and can never be, a totalized power of the group over its members. While quasi-sovereignty reveals itself in every third party as the synthetic power of reorganizing the practical field, it also manifests itself as a membership of the rearranged group, and as the same in everyone. Thus, common praxis is realized everywhere at the same time, and is both means and ends. In contrast, a particular statute the reality of which is negation defines the sovereign. No one can claim to be outside the group, and thus no longer a third party. As institution, sovereignty designates the common individual who assumes the function of the sovereign as a non-transcendable third party, as other than everyone. Eventually a common individual who, while still a member of the group, is other than all because he can no longer become a regulatory third party constitutes the group. This untranscendability – this point is of upmost significance not only from an abstract point of view, but also for the concrete role Stalin plays – means the existence of the sovereign is founded negatively on the impossibility of every third party becoming directly regulatory again.

Sartre is clear, this does not mean every reorganization or every initiative of the group emanates from the sovereign; it does mean mediation is no longer the free mediation of all by all. Now, it passes through a single mediator – the sovereign – so as to be reinteriorized by him, and, through him, appear to the group as a new orientation. In an effort to preserve the group's unity, the sovereign becomes the insurmountable mediator in the external relations of seriality grounding the relations of all the group's members. Because of the pledge, every third party obeys the new orientation, and in obeying the Other as Other everyone becomes other in so far as they are the same. This basic structure of obedience, realized in the *milieu* of Fraternity-Terror, is always set against the background of violence.

Sartre points to is the impossibility of refusal, since that would dissolve the group. Action here is the interiorization of an 'other will' that introduces an induced passivity carrying with it an untranscendable sovereignty without reciprocity. This means the refusal to dissolve the group legitimates common violence in the form of repressive terror that means the pledge is now an act of submission to the individual decisions of the untranscendable third party, and to his quasi-sovereignty as violence without reciprocity. At this level, freedom 'becomes alienated and hidden form its own eyes',[27]

Sartre thinks two additional transformations take place, one at the level of the group and the other at the individual level. With regard to the first, the common individual is still within a

[26] Ibid., p. 612 (emphasis in original).
[27] Ibid., p. 615.

reciprocal organization, but that organization takes the form of univocal rearrangements without reciprocity. In the second transformation, at the level of my own individual activity, freedom is 'stolen from me' and I become the actualization of the Other's freedom.[28] The untranscedable Other is other than all precisely because he is the only one capable of being himself.

Here, the true function of sovereignty emerges: the institutional reinteriorization of the exteriority of institutions, or the institution of one person as mediator between institutions. This is, indeed, a stunning concept Sartre has been crawling towards in his discussion. Most theorists, for example Hobbes, see the sovereign as a mediator between individuals, and not between the institution and authority that the group becomes. The impact of Sartre's analysis reveals, as institution, the sovereign is in no need of group consensus simply because the members of the group freely abandoned their freedom and are now impotent to respond. The centralization of authority in the form of one sovereign directly negates reciprocal relations between individuals, and renders them impotent. Because of my impotence, it is impossible for me to enter into a contract with my fellow individuals to appoint a sovereign representative and abandon the war of all against all at the expense of my freedom.

There is, however, one thing the institution of authority is incapable of preventing and that is the dispersal of institutions, since it is strictly homogeneous with all the others. At this level, every action reinteriorizes the institutional system such that only the sovereign is free. The sovereign alone produces his actions as moments of free dialectical development, so for any member of the group there exists only one freedom that, nevertheless, can only rise to an ambiguous freedom, since it is both the common freedom and the sovereign's individual freedom in the service of the collective. As organizational freedom, it rearranges the group by issuing orders having the effect of detaching everyone's free praxis and submerging it beneath institutionality. While the ambiguity of the now obedient third party indicates the function of the sovereign, it also points out the failure of sovereignty to act as a point of unity for the institutionalized group.

In essence, embodiment emerges as a fact of sovereignty. The group produces itself in the form of a particular body with these characteristics and these qualities. Certain members of the institution sport moustaches, if the sovereign has one as well, and in so doing a particular style is adopted; naturally, it is the style of the sovereign. The sovereign is the living *one,* the universal mediation who reveals common unity in the 'half-dead' group as a synthesis of the human body in his body. Once again, Sartre analogizes the situation to a machine.[29] The sovereign's praxis exerted upon the group is expressed in two forms. First, some type of mechanical unity, set in motion by the sovereign, articulates the goal of the group. Alternatively, the group defines itself as an extension of the sovereign. Either way the group witnesses the institutionalization of the freedom of a single individual as an institution.

When the organized group views its own survival as paramount, Sartre brings us face to face with the reality of institutionalized praxis and its nefarious attributes. When the freedom of quasi-sovereignty becomes afraid of itself, the sovereignty of one person emerges. Along with the rise of the leader, we also witness the presence of authority designed to assure the permanence of the institutions mediated by the sovereign. Throughout this discussion, Sartre points out how human need for group unity solidifies the institutional powers of the ruling class, which results in the degradation of individual freedom. His arguments are not unlike those of Proudhon or

[28] Ibid., p. 616.
[29] *CDR II*, p. 347.

Bakunin one hundred years earlier. What Sartre shows us is the power of individual freedom within groups to negate itself in the perverse desire to protect itself. Next, Sartre illustrates how sovereignty manifests itself in a plurality of groups we call societies and states.

10. Institutionalized Soveriegnty: Societies and States

> 'You, who cannot conceive of unity without a whole apparatus of legislators, prosecutors, attorneys-general, custom house officers, policemen, you have never known what real unity is! What you call unity and centralization is nothing but perpetual chaos, serving as a basis for endless tyranny; it is the advancing of the chaotic condition of social forces as an argument for despotism – a despotism which is really the cause of the chaos'.
>
> —Proudhon, *Revolution 19th Century*

Societies

Sartre's concept of sovereignty within groups is straightforward, but the ensembles in which sovereignty manifests itself in its full development and power are societies. In Sartre's political schema, however, societies are not groups; rather, there are only collectives signified as both 'the matrix of groups and their grave'.[1] As the indefinite sociality of the practico-inert, they both nourish and maintain groups while transcending them everywhere by their indefinite multiplicity. In Sartre's often Manichean world, where more than one group exists, the collective is either a mediation or a battle ground.

Society, in the Sartrean sense, has a formal structure; yet, at the same time, it is indeterminate. One thing is clear, however, there can be no such thing as society unless there are human multiplicities divided by historical developments into groups and series, which are ultimately united by a container whose social relation – as production, consumption or defence – is that of groups to series.[2] What is termed the state is, therefore, never the product of the totality of social individuals, since these social individuals operate in seriality, and would have to liquidate themselves as a series in order to assume the role of a large group. While some may believe sovereignty is diffused within a large group (that is, it resides in various institutions or, more likely, institutions within several branches of government), Sartre argues that there is no such thing as diffuse sovereignty. Instead, as he asserts throughout the *Critique*, the individual is sovereign in the abstract isolation of his work. At the same time, he is also an alienated being, since the practico-inert operates as an alienating force completely denying juridical and institutional power. Consequently, and this is critical, inert gatherings have no ability to resist the power of a state.

[1] *CDR I*, p. 635.
[2] Ibid.

States

Unlike most theorists, Sartre views the state as neither wholly legitimate nor wholly illegitimate: within the group it is legitimate because it arises from faith manifested in the pledge; however, within the collective it is not because the Others have not pledged themselves to anything. As long as the Others do not constitute a group, there is no need to assert legitimacy, since the impotency of the series renders them incapable of either establishing or contesting legitimacy. Groups appear to establish their own legitimacy through the mere fact of 'acceptance' by the Other of an awareness of impotent recurrence. The state is, therefore, 'primarily a group which is constantly reorganizing itself and altering its composition by means of a partial, discontinuous or continuous, renewal of its members'.[3]

In practical terms, my fellow group members may have convinced me to heed their advice and follow a path of obedience, but my acquiescence plays an altogether different role as well: it confers pseudo-legitimacy on the sovereign. The sovereign's powers to not only command my loyalty but demand it proves, at least in my eyes, his power is different from mine; in effect, he is freedom. In the end, this 'realist element' predominates, and I quickly realize the futility of change.

When we turn to the state, we find it does not integrate human praxes, but is a specific group with its own internal unity that tends to perpetuate itself by dissolving the unity of the other social groups. Consequently, the state seeks to reconcile social classes, even though their differences are irreconcilable, by breaking the internal bonds existing between members of the dominated class – in essence by reducing the class as a group to a class as a series – in so far as those conflicts run the risk of weakening it in the face of the dominated class.[4] Simply, Sartre thinks the ruling class produces its own state as the means of practical suppression of class conflicts within the national totalization. Thus,

> the State belongs to the category of institutionalized groups with a specified sovereignty; and if, amongst these groups, we make a distinction between those which work directly on an inorganic common object, those which are constituted to struggle against other groups, and those whose objectification demands the manipulation of inert serialities, etc., it is obvious that the State belongs to the second class.[5]

The state is, therefore, a means of oppression of the dominated class at the hands of the ruling class.

Even though the state emerges from a type of seriality of the dominate class, it only remains heterogeneous with that class because its strength is built upon the impotency of its members. Sartre thinks – and here he is in complete agreement with Proudhon – the state appropriates its power from the dominate class as a means to control other classes by interiorizing power and transforming it into a juridical right. As a means of domination, these juridical relations appear prior to the state as its condition of possibility. Once the state embodies and premises its socio

[3] Ibid., p. 637.

[4] Sartre explains that 'classes are a shifting ensemble of groups and series; within each class, circumstances occasion practical communities which attempt regroupment, under pressure from certain specific emergencies, and which finish by relapsing, to some extent, into seriality'. Ibid., p. 638.

[5] Ibid., p. 640.

economic structures, it institutionalizes rights and duties through a series of laws and regulations with concomitant duties, which henceforth assume a historically determinate relation with the state. The result is a juridical system not completely reduced or absorbed into social relations, but instead mediated by state institutions. The contradiction of the state is that it is both a class apparatus pursuing class objectives, and at the same time positing itself as the sovereign unity of all, or, as Sartre says, 'as the absolute Other-Being which is the nation'.[6]

As I have indicated, there is very little commentary on Sartre's use of legal theory in the *Critique*; yet, it is fair to say his embrace of anti-statism is similar to Proudhon's. Moreover, I would argue that Sartre espouses an anti-legalism much in line with Proudhon. Similar to Proudhon, Sartre sees the juridical as merely a reflection of the ruling class' morals, virtues, and idiosyncrasies all of which are designed to control the masses and exact certain duties in exchange for illusory, and quit e often ephemeral, rights such as 'fraternity', 'equality', and 'liberty' in their most mythical connotations. This becomes clearer as we end our discussion of institutions.[7]

The result of Sartre's analysis is, 'it is necessary and sufficient that every Other should make himself completely other, that is to say, that he should direct his free *praxis* onto himself so as to be *like the Others'*.[8] As I pointed out when discussing Proudhon's concern for living up to other's expectations as a means to mould personal convictions into prevailing norms, Sartre borrows from David Riesman's classic study, *The Lonely Crowd*. Riesman presents a sociological basis for group recognition where each third party presents himself as inner-directed in that his powers and actions are determined for him based on an interior limitation of his freedom. At the same time, however, it is necessary that I be like the Others. In other words, every Other directs his free praxis into himself so as to be like all Others, which is what Riesman terms 'Other-direction'.

Because of reciprocity, the Other figures in my pledge as pledged inertia even though my own praxis is produced from within. In essence, it is not strictly necessary to either do or be like the Other; what is necessary is that I remain the Same. Because serial thinking resides within me – thinking that is not my own, but that of the Other – my thinking becomes the 'thinking of powerlessness'. For example, the years before the events in Tahrir Square were not devoid of opportunity for demonstrations and protest, or, for that matter, revolution. But, the 'social peace' brought on by the oppression of the regime gradually establishes a serial relation among

[6] Ibid., p. 642.

[7] Poulantzas takes the opposite view with regard to Sartre's anti-legalism. He says, however, Sartre's anti-statism is in the tradition of 'Proudhon and Marx', a position that certainly seems contradictory. Poulantzas, 'Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and Law', p. 70. Poulantzas' argument is quite lengthy and involved, but briefly he contends that Sartre argues once the state is formed it institutionalizes rights and duties into historically determinate relationships with the state. Consequently, the juridical cannot be completely reduced into social relationships. Yet there exists, according to Poulantzas' reading of Sartre, an 'adjoining' juridical sphere external to the state, and that is the pledged groups' relations escaping stratification. On the other hand, even though the state overdetermines the pledged group that underlies it, the state is not able to reduce the pledged group to seriality. In the end, Poulantzas argues that the *Critique's* theory of law and the state is designed to adhere to Marxist interpretations, which Poulantzas says Sartre 'subscribes unreservedly … [and] according to Sartre, his analyses are productive and operative only to the extent that they are considered in the framework of dialectical materialism'. Ibid. Since Poulantzas neglects to reference Sartre's alleged remarks, it is entirely unclear where Sartre makes such a statement and it seems unlikely that he did understanding his total disagreement with dialectical materialism. While I find much in Poulantzas' article worthwhile, I disagree with him regarding Sartre's anti-legalism. Poulantzas aligned himself with Althusser and, like many at the time, tried to 'fit' Sartre into a Structuralist Marxist framework of dialectical materialism. As I have indicated elsewhere this position is not sustainable.

[8] *CDR I*, p. 643.

the people, which means any protest or action requires a regrouping. Yet, serial thinking vigorously opposes the first signs of group thinking where all the separatist arguments represent the thinking of the Others and not the people themselves. Unless some apocalyptic event occurs to bring the people out of serialized impotence, it is unlikely the regime will encounter serious obstacles to its chosen path.

The praxis of the sovereign group conditions everyone by acting on the Others, but Sartre thinks more is required to create the passive unity of other-direction. In order to realize this other-directedness, every Other must fixate on an illusion: the totalization of alterities as the totalization of the series. Sartre sees this as the trap of other-direction:

> the sovereign intends to act on the series so as to extract a total action from it *in alterity itself*; but he produces this idea of practical totality as a possibility of the series totalizing itself while remaining the fleeting unity of alterity, whereas in fact the only possibility of totalization for the inert gathering consists in dissolving seriality itself.[9]

Once again, Sartre points to the only available option for the group to escape the other-directed trap: praxis to dissolve serial impotence.

Sartre's example of other-directedness is the American radio broadcast of the top ten recordings of the week that was extremely popular in the 1950s. While certainly designed to increase radio sales, the weekly hit parade involves much more. One buys the top record simply because someone designates it as such, and if I buy the top record, then my friends will have to buy it. There is, however, an even more intriguing aspect to the top ten: the experts who designate the top ten records.

Sartre returns to a familiar theme, one he first raised in *The Ghost of Stalin*; the role of the experts who make the decision for us. The quality of being an expert is sovereignty in the *milieu* of alterity expressed in the specific act of choosing an object, a choice that 'flows' into the object and becomes a power over an element of serial individuals. Much like the experts who live the Plan, and decide what individuals should produce and consequently what they should consume, the music experts function in a similar manner. Through whatever method – the means are not relevant – they choose the top record, they create the demand for the object, all of which assures its consumption. Sartre's discussion, again, mirrors Bakunin's distrust of 'experts', who mould and guide desire for what he deems nefarious purposes.

While Sartre discusses how the sovereign reacts on seriality, he leaves the opposite discussion – seriality's effect on the sovereign – to the end. This discussion, quite short but essential, illuminates his theory of sovereignty. Sartre first summarizes the ensemble of the sovereign with its complex system of apparatuses whose role is to manipulate the other-directedness of Others. The passivity of the masses preserves the other-directedness Sartre discusses:

> because for those who are other-directed they themselves become the embodiment of the standard lists, solidified exigencies, etc., and, in the unity of a single petrification, the representatives of the law – that is to say, of sovereignty-as-an-individual in so far as this produces itself as a universal power.[10]

[9] *CDR I*, p. 644 (emphasis in original).
[10] Ibid., p. 655.

Through this petrification, change is sought to be eliminated, and needs are determined and satisfied, for the most part, from outside by scientists and experts in their field regardless of any specific demand.[11] In the world of the Other, which Sartre now denominates as the world of government, violence and riots often break out, but never last for any considerable period of time – they tend to be repressed. Nor do these moments of civil unrest serve as 'lessons', or as indications of the mood of the populace for the simple reason it is the Other who rebels, but this time the Other is the trouble-maker. In every society facing some form of civil strife, the government always condemns the violence it itself perpetrates on outside agitators or 'foreigners' in the broadest sense of the term. In the Arab Spring each entrenched regime, almost as if reading from a script, blamed the initial violence unleashed at the public squares on outsiders, terrorists, but certainly no one native to the country and eventually, as if to pander to the fears of the West, on various terrorist organizations.

Sartre directs our attention to the common situation where the relation between the sovereign and the masses is non-existent. The serialized hoard never communicates to the local leaders, and in their serialized impotency, such communication proves impossible. Consequently, there is nothing to communicate further up the hierarchy. The masses are the 'suffering individual who is paralysed by alterity', and only a reversal of fortune to a group can save them from their fate.[12] Within the hierarchy, each successively higher echelon treats the lower as inorganic objects governed by laws:

> This means that throughout the hierarchy, objects which are governed by laws of exteriority govern other objects which are placed beneath them, according to these laws and other [in-]organic laws; and that the combination of laws which, at each level, makes it possible to move the material on the inferior level is itself produced within the leaders on this level by a combination of *their* laws which was created above them.[13]

In the end, the system enters a state of paralysis with the sovereign alone unaffected.

This new transformation of the group means that at all possible levels of the hierarchy everyone is a possible sovereign for those who reside at a lower level. Yet, everyone denies these possibilities because mistrust is the common statute. Importantly, the structure of sovereignty is apparent at every level as an institutional reinteriorization that dissolves all vestiges of individuality by demanding complete integration. I merge with my peers in an indissoluble bond with the sovereign, but with no guarantee for my individual existence other than the free individuality of an other.

This tripartite relation of other-directedness of my interior multiplicity, the mistrust and serialized terror existing among my peers, and the annihilation of my individuality through my

[11] A political example of what Sartre is pointing out is the decision by Soviet planners not to produce the otherwise ubiquitous fashion staple, the denim blue jean. Originally conceived as a utilitarian garment of the working class, which should have sealed the garments proletarian credentials, Soviet planners determined blue jeans to be a symbol of the rock and roll decadence of capitalism, and, therefore, should neither be manufactured nor worn. This of course did not stop a large underground market for this fashion necessity. See, Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: the West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), pp. 240–50.

[12] *CDR I*, p. 657.

[13] Ibid. (emphasis in original).

obedience to a superior sovereign leads to only one thing: bureaucracy. It emerges from the notion of sovereignty itself when the sovereign is but an institutional moment of the group, but now a bureaucracy takes on a different structure: it asserts, 'itself as a total suppression of the human, except at a minute point at the top of the hierarchy, as a result of inertia at the bottom'.[14] Here, Sartre gives full weight to Proudhon's belief that the masses fail to act out of impotency. Throughout this discussion, lies Proudhon's oftentimes expressed concern of the inability of the masses to act because no one called them to do so. This is why he favoured 'natural groups' performing nearly the same function as Sartre's group-in-fusion and organized group. In Sartre's analysis, the impotency of the masses only lends support to the sovereign who, in turn, manipulates the masses through laws, the necessary implication being a 'mineralization' of individuals at every level of the hierarchy except the highest. This mineralization asserts itself as the opposite of freedom, and the state composed with a bureaucratic structure acts as a constraint on freedom.[15]

Interestingly, as Sartre goes through this discussion, he lashes out at what he thinks is the absolute petrification of the sovereign group in the form of the police by suddenly interjecting:

> the *scintillating* life of the fused group will either reject the old worm-eaten sovereignty of the bureaucracy, or if it has already manifested itself, as a permanent danger, it will prevent the sovereign from being constituted … .[16]

Once again, Sartre goes back to the group-in-fusion as the only means capable of preventing or restraining sovereign actions. Much as the group-in-fusion in Tahrir Square, through their

[14] Ibid., p. 658.

[15] Another important point regards Sartre's thoughts on representative democracies – what he calls non-directorial governments – and especially their election processes. First, let us recall Proudhon's position on elections. Proudhon criticized elections because he felt the will of the People could never be fully realized. Once the elections were over, the representatives became the masters and the constituents only obey. While the *Critique* does not discuss non-directorial forms of government, in an essay written on the eve of national elections in France in January 1973, Sartre explains his almost identical distrust of democratic elections. See, Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Elections: A Trap for Fools', in *Life/Situations*, pp. 198–210. In the essay, Sartre explains the polling both, standing in some school lobby, is a symbol of the act of betrayal an individual commits against the group he belongs to. The anonymity of the voting process means one can vote as one pleases and later lie about it. Moreover, the notion of suffrage itself is suspect, since it acts to atomize or serialize individuals – everyone who votes is identical with one another. No one takes an interest in any individual's concrete problems arising out of their family or socio-professional groups. The process of democratic representation confronts individuals, in their abstract solitude, with groups in the guise of political parties soliciting their votes. While they believe they are merely delegating their power to one of those political groups, in order for this to occur the series formed by the institution of the vote necessarily has to possess a modicum of power. But, as Sartre indicates: 'Now, these citizens identical as they are and fabricated by the law, disarmed and separated by mistrust of one another, deceived but aware of their impotence, can never, so long as they remain serialized, form the sovereign group which, we are told, all power emanates – the People'. Ibid., p. 203. In Sartre's analysis, representative democracy as much as directorial forms of government bestows universal suffrage upon the people only for the purpose of atomizing them and keeping them from forming groups.

[16] *CDR I*, p. 659 (emphasis added). The Egyptian Central Security Force (CSF) or police was the main instrument of the government's repression. Mubarak's political party, the National Democratic Party (NDP) authorized legislation prohibiting gatherings of more than five people, the police exercised searches of persons without warrants, and wire taps were common, again, without warrants. The police regularly beat and arrested people oftentimes when no crime was committed. Amnesty International concluded that torture was 'systematic in police stations, prisons, and SSI [State Security Investigations] detention centers and, for the most part, committed with impunity'. Amnesty International, Annual Report for 2010, accessed electronically at: _http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/egypt/report-2010_, on 6 June 2013. Unlike other nations experiencing the Arab Spring, Egypt's military refused to attack the protestors.

mediated praxis, prevented the sovereign from utilizing the elements of force to destroy their freedom, so the group-in-fusion is the only mechanism capable of both restraining the sovereign, and deposing him as well. Without fail, each government in the Arab Spring uprisings first turned to the police to quell the demonstrations of freedom they termed terrorism, often with violent and bloody disregard for human life. In many cases, however, the police refused to fire upon their fellow citizens, and instead joined the ranks of the group-in-fusion.[17]

In summarizing his position, Sartre thinks when a sovereign group monopolizes the group by integrating every single practical grouping within itself, and when this 'group of groupings' understands itself as holding direct power over passive serialities and its practices of other-directedness, and when class does not determine the sovereign but the sovereign produces its own legitimacy, then the 'sovereign pyramid' turns upon itself in a struggle against itself and, in fact, it is its only struggle.[18] Sartre sees this struggle as the process of bureaucratization, and, in a direct stab at Marx, and in agreement with Proudhon, Sartre says no one could believe the initial moment of the socialist revolution realizes the dictatorship of the proletariat. In fact, he thinks the 'very idea is absurd', since it is merely a compromise between the active, sovereign group and passive seriality.

In Sartre's schema, where a perpetual state of emergency exists, a revolutionary group institutionalizes itself and produces its own legitimacy as sovereign by monopolizing the possibilities of grouping. As such, it sets in motion and ultimately controls the arrangement of serialities by the very practices of other-direction. The first moment in the construction of socialist society, 'could only be the indissoluble aggregation of bureaucracy, of Terror and of the cult of personality'.[19] Moreover, as he argued in the organization, every group whose totalizing movement contains the abstract possibility of establishing its own sovereignty constitutes itself either outside the state by positing the autonomy of its praxis, or it exists in opposition to the state through a practice of disobedience, passive resistance, abstention or revolt.

In response to his own complex structuration, Sartre asserts that only *debureaucratization*, *decentralization* and *democratization* where the sovereign renounces its monopoly of the group, overcomes the internal contradictions of the situation.[20] Rather than a dictatorship of the proletariat, Sartre sees the real problem as the gradual withering-away of the state in favour of a broader regroupment of other-directed serialities. In this sense, Sartre aligns himself with Proudhon's similar concern and the latter's promotion of a mutualist federation. This very brief but telling portion of the *Critique* reinforces Sartre's anti-statism, and his desire for decentralization of power and authority to limit the possibility of bureaucratic institutions depriving humans of their sovereignty as well as their freedom.

Sartre continues the discussion of institutionalized sovereign ty in Volume II of the *Critique*, but much of what he says there has already been discussed in an abstract manner. His desire is

[17] Even though the group-in-fusion may dissipate in the wake of its victory as its members return to serialized impotency – much as they did in Egypt – they are still capable of re-forming and asserting themselves once again. For evidence of this phenomenon, one need only look to the events in Egypt where Tahrir Square once again was the sight of mass demonstrations protesting newly elected President Morsi's self-granting of near dictatorial powers. Morsi backed down, but only after the protests. See, 'Egypt's Morsi Annuls Orders Giving Him Sweeping Powers, but Keeps Dec. 15 Constitution Vote', *NBC News* (8 December 2012), accessed electronically at _http://www.worldnews.nbcnews.com_, on 8 December 2012.

[18] *CDR I*, p. 660.

[19] Ibid., p. 662.

[20] Ibid., p. 661.

to put a human face on the abstract reality he has illuminated, and this he does with reference to Stalin. For our purposes, and for Sartre's anarchism, we need not analyse in detail how Sartre sees Stalin progressing from party member, to the incarnation of sovereign praxis, and finally to cult. There are, however, aspects of Volume II that bear considerable weight for our discussion, and it is those aspects I wish to turn to now.

From the Abstract to the Concrete: the Incarnation of Sovereign Praxis

Sartre's concern, evidenced in Volume I, is readily apparent in the second. After experiencing the 'scintillating' intensity of human freedom in the revolutionary apocalyptic moment of the group-in-fusion, Sartre leads us to the ultimate (but not necessarily irretrievable) degradation of alienation as the group seeks to stem its dissolution, all of which plunges us once again into the seriality the group was formed to combat.

As I have said, Sartre places a human, historical figure before us in the form of Joseph Stalin to illustrate what was mere theorizing up to this point, but there is more to the analysis than just this particular person. Unlike his discussion in Volume I, Volume II deals with an already organized group – the Bolshevik Party – one that is swiftly on the road to institutional bureaucratization and the incarnation of one human freedom, the sovereign. Sartre explores the contradiction within this successful revolutionary group through the conflict between sub-groups illustrated by the intellectually inclined, universally oriented 'Perpetual Revolution' advocated by Leon Trotsky, and the 'particular radicalism' of Stalin; a conflict played out against the background of the forced collectivization and industrialization occurring in the late 1920s.

Sartre utilizes several significant themes throughout the second volume, some of which he touched upon in the first volume. The discussion of incarnation, which first comes to light in the final pages of Volume I, is an example of what I have in mind. As we shall see, however, the second volume's most important theme is what Sartre terms the totalization-of-envelopment of sovereign praxis.

At the beginning of Volume II, Sartre picks up where he left off in the first volume by asking an overall question: is the struggle that grounds human relations intelligible. Stitched into the answer, and underlying Sartre's entire project, is his desire to establish a fundamental concept claiming, 'there is *one* human history, with *one* truth and *one* intelligibility'.[21] The task falls to Volume II to confirm that while there may be many histories, there is only one History. The second volume provides the entire *Critique* with a perspective grounding the first volume's abstract and synchronically regressive concepts in a concrete reality, both progressively and diachronically oriented in time. His concern is very explicit, and even towards the end of Volume I he provides the context for this future discussion:

> We have seen how the mediation of the third party realizes the transcendent unity of positive reciprocities [that is, how individuals each engage in the same practice form themselves into a coherent single group in fusion through their mediation of a third person engaged in the same activity]. But is this unity still possible when each action is aimed at destroying that of the Other and when the observable results of this

[21] Ibid., p. 69 (emphasis in original).

> double negation are nil or – as usually happens – when the teleological significations which each adversary has inscribed in it have been partly erased or transformed by the Other, so that no trace of concerted activity is any longer to be seen?[22]

Intertwined with this analysis is Sartre's fundamental question: whether two praxes in conflict with each other are comprehensible as a single history. In developing this theme, Sartre turns to the example of the boxing match with its praxis-process of conflict that construct unities as contradictions. This implies that individuals, common individuals or sub-groups in conflict, must be viewed 'as the transitory determinations of a larger and deeper group one of whose current contradictions was actualized in their conflict'.[23] It also implies that the group in conflict endeavours to transcend the struggle to achieve a new synthetic reunification of its practical field coupled with a reorganization of its internal structures.

In summarizing this aspect of Volume II, Ronald Aronson suggests no matter how fierce the struggle between the adversaries, the real secret of their melee lies in the group's self-progress.[24] If this is so, then Sartre's three characteristics of dialectical intelligibility – the first expresses a contradiction, the second particularizes it and the third totalizes the group – is applicable to struggle itself.[25] For Sartre, contradiction is action expressed as a progression through ruptures as well as a negation of these ruptures in the unity of their transcendence. As I noted earlier, within pledged groups antagonistic reciprocity is a bond of immanence between adversaries, since each participant totalizes and transcends the totalizing action of the other. A second element is at play here, Sartre's concept of anti-labour. Not brought out in volume one, anti-labour is a dual or twofold antagonistic activity producing objects resulting from negative *collaboration,* which the adversaries fail to recognize as their own.

I pointed out in my earlier discussion that when a group is beset with violent conflicts and divides into sub-groups, oftentimes every project promulgated by one faction is immediately rejected by the other. At the same time, third parties attempt to mediate the dispute by melding the competing opponent's projects into yet another project. At this point, the resulting *mélange* bears little or no resemblance to the intended goal. While certainly wrapped in negative connotation, 'anti-labour' also has a productive element: the struggle to destroy the object produced by the other not only is a reciprocity of labour, but also objectifies itself in an ensemble of products occupying the internal field of the common group and contributes to inflecting its action.[26]

As I discussed in an earlier chapter, the National Workshops, introduced in the midst of the events of 1848, are an example of what Sartre terms anti-labour. Altered by political conflict in the National Assembly, the original proposal of the Workshops was ultimately u nrecognizable. Sartre points out,

> The *product* – in so far as it is at one and the same time an inert result of anti-labor and a means integrated into a new action – presents itself as a reinteriorized objectification of the conflict and, consequently, as a negative (through worked matter) yet practical (through its reintegration into praxis) unity of the dual. Or, if you prefer,

[22] Ibid., p. 816–17.
[23] *CDR II*, p. 11.
[24] Aronson, *Sartre's Second Critique*, p. 45.
[25] *CDR II,* p. 4.
[26] *CDR II*, p. 95.

> the product of anti-labor is neither more nor less signifying, in relation to the reciprocity of antagonism, than is the tool – a product of common labor – in relation to the reciprocity of mutual aid.[27]

Sartre concludes that the conflict and its ensuing struggle make the object of the struggle into a 'monstrous and deformed reflection' of the original project that completes the cycle of inhumanity.[28] These two themes, contradiction and anti-labour, provide the focus for the problem Sartre addresses in Volume II: if history is to make sense, then it is necessary to understand that individuals and groups engaged in struggle are also engaged in *collaboration* pursuant to a common undertaking. Accordingly, since Sartre sees history as class struggle, the product of history and, indeed, its progress most likely will occur exactly as the National Workshops.

Once more, Sartre illustrates his point through the concrete study of the boxing match, which also introduces another of his important concepts, incarnation. The philosophical exploration of the boxing match seeks to delineate, through the praxis of opposed individuals, the relationship between a single individual's specific project and the surrounding sociality giving the project its meaning. The fight between two boxers is understandable only through boxing in its entirety, including every fight ever fought:

> Thus the boxing match appears *to all* as a single event – which elapses irreversibly and pits singular individuals against one another – and as all of boxing, present and implicated in this same event. In every fight boxing is *incarnated*, realized, and elapses as it is realized.[29]

The hierarchy of the night's boxing schedule – the champion always fights last – the techniques involved, the training, the promotion, the rules, the entire world of boxing is present or incarnated into the single confrontation. Sartre makes clear that the two combatants are who they are through the social whole, but they also define the social whole in their fight. In order to explore this 'whole' of boxing, Sartre gives further shape to his concept of incarnation by saying:

> precisely in so far as, in a synthetic unification, the part is a totalization of the whole (or of the overall totalization), incarnation is an individual form of totalization. Its content is the totalized ensemble, or the ensemble in the process of being totalized. And by this we do not mean that it is a symbol or expression of the latter, but that it realizes itself in a very real and practical sense as totality producing itself here and now. Every boxing match incarnates the whole of boxing as an incarnation of all fundamental violence.[30]

This passage embraces three critical aspects of what Sartre means by incarnation. First, the fight itself encloses the fundamental violence Sartre speaks of; it is the real substance of the fight,

[27] Ibid., p. 97 (emphasis in original).

[28] Ibid., p. 96.

[29] Ibid., p. 22 (emphasis in original).

[30] Ibid., p. 27. Sartre expresses this view in *Being and Nothingness* in the discussion concerning the existence of others. There he declares the Other can be defined only by a total organization of the world and that the Other is the key to this organization. As such, the Other is a centre of autonomous and intra-mundane references in what Sartre calls 'my world'. *BN*, p. 391.

and not just in the fighters themselves – it is 'directly here and everywhere in the hall'.[31] Even the spectators retotalize the diffuse violence on the basis of organizations and groups. Sartre also points out that fundamental violence, premised on scarcity, is a socially cleansed violence posited as 'a disinterested virtue' in the form of spectacle.[32] Secondly, unlike the world of professional wrestling, this violence is not imaginary – our boxers are not scripted, they are not acting; rather, the violence is 'a perfect realization'.[33] If we assume, therefore, violence in the guise of 'manly sport', then the individual (exactly like the group) accepts manly strength as a duty, so that the violent game incarnates society in the form of fundamental violence.

Sartre's last point, that incarnation is a form of totalization, is slightly more complex. Sartre develops his concept of incarnation by describing the efforts of groups to stabilize themselves by institutionalizing their common being in the person of a sovereign individual.[34] The production of the group is, as we have seen, always in the form of a particular person, with these specific characteristics, and these particular qualities, which ultimately takes us to the cult of personality where the deteriorating group seeks to re-establish itself through the flesh of one individual who assumes the role of integrating organ of the group.

Sartre's purpose in his discussion of incarnation is to make clear how the social, universal and the general are singularized. Thus,

> the bout is a singular process, based on the singularities of the boxers, through the simultaneous, contradictory incarnation of the different forms that present-day society imposes on the latter. This incarnation is not simply a production of dialectically opposed specifications. Inasmuch as it is realized by the ensemble of participants, it is defined at the same time by its ambiguity.[35]

By this, Sartre says the participants to the bout give themselves the determinations of the collective or group along with their reciprocal antagonisms, and through their membership in a class they produce the same event with a multitude of incompatible meanings. This is why a concept can never express the synthetic meaning of the event. At the end of Sartre's critical investigation, he says, 'each struggle is a singularization of all *the circumstances* of the social ensemble in movement; and that, by this singularization, it incarnates the totalization-of-envelopment constituted by the historical process'.[36] We shall see how Sartre's concern for incarnation relates to

[31] *CDR II*, p. 27.

[32] Ibid., p. 24.

[33] Ibid., p. 25. Sartre makes clear that totalization is individuated, since the boxing match defines itself as a singularity and, through its singularity, it is filled with unique events that are irreducibly individual. While the clash is all violence, it is also other that cannot exist as anything but a particular event. However, Sartre does not think the fight bears the same relation to fundamental violence as the individual does to the concept. This may be true for analytic reason where the concept is a schema, but Sartre wants to dispel any notion that a quasi-Platonic world of universals exists independently of a particular world composed of a multitude of singularities whose meaning can be accessed independently of action. Ibid. pp. 28–9. Consequently, incarnation is never contemplation it is always praxis or praxis-process, and as Sartre says, 'an act of violence never has a *witness*'. Ibid., p. 29 (emphasis in original). When we are spectators at a boxing match, we too create the bout. In essence, we are complicit – itself an act of praxis, since we witness the bout but do not intervene – with an internal but not external relationship to the act of violence.

[34] In Volume I of the *Critique* Sartre uses the term embodiment to describe what he calls incarnation in Volume II.

[35] Ibid., p. 48 (emphasis in original). Ronald Aronson thinks Sartre rejects all notions of the universal and espousing a radical particularism. Aronson, *Sartre's Second Critique*, p. 56.

[36] *CDR II*, p. 49 (emphasis in original).

another of his terms, the enveloping totalization in more detail, but at this point it is fair to say that every singular totalization is enveloping as totalization, and is enveloped as a singularity.

Incarnation, intended to specify a relationship of ind ividuals to a greater human reality and social whole, includes a swarm of layers such as violence, scarcity, struggle, capitalism and even boxing. In many respects, Sartre not only reiterates his discussion of the mediating third, but also embellishes it in the concrete world of human existence (*le vécu*), which grounds his theory in the actuality of praxis-process, in human activity, in violence played out at all levels, and in totalization as exemplified by the boxing match.

Incarnation of Incarnations as Totalization-of-Envelopment

If the Russian revolution incarnated the working-class revolution, then Stalin was the incarnation of that incarnation. But, was Stalin himself the totalization-of-envelopment? To this question, Sartre answers no, since the totalization-of-envelopment is neither a being, nor an existent, nor a rule imposing itself on the singular adventure. A totalization does not mean a totality; rather, it belongs to the category of praxis-process.

In discussing Stalin, Sartre introduces a new term, the totalization-of-envelopment. As the editors of Volume II point out, it is 'rash to seek here to fix the meaning of this concept', since Sartre never concludes as to its meaning.[37]

Even though the totalization-of-envelopment lacks specificity, throughout Volume II, it is the animating intuition shaping Sartre's discussion of the intelligibility of History, and, as such, it needs some clarification. Sartre's use of the term is contingent; it depends on the reality of the situation under consideration. In the case of an organized group, totalization-of-envelopment is the 'integration of all concrete individuals by praxis'.[38] Yet, totalization-of-envelopment differs from the practico-inert, since it is the unfolding totality of praxis as deviated by its products; it is:

> *autonomous* praxis asserting itself as such, *inasmuch* as it produces, undergoes, arbours and conceals its own heteronomy as the passive and reactualized unity of its own by-products. In this sense, the totalization-of-envelopment reveals itself as a dialectical link between the intended result (with its foreseen consequences) and the unforeseeable consequences of that result, inasmuch as its incarnation in the totalization of the practical field has to condition from afar all the elements of that field, including the agents themselves.[39]

It is, therefore, the dialectical connection between the intended result and the unforeseen consequences of that result. The totalization-of-envelopment represents a moment in time when a particular agent – in the concrete it is Stalin who, despite his success or more likely because of it – loses himself in the act that produces him, derails him and deviates itself through him. As Sartre describes, 'it is *the act overflowing the man* that is totalized'.[40] In simple terms, praxis takes a detour as the individuals tasked with implementing praxis become other people occupied in

[37] Ibid., p. 459.
[38] Ibid., p. 86 (emphasis in original).
[39] Ibid., p. 242 (emphasis in original).
[40] Ibid., p. 238.

achieving other goals through other means, and they are not even aware of it; it is the absorption of human praxis into, and domination by, the practico-inert *milieu* that praxis created but no longer controls.

No matter the size or complexity of the society in movement, the totalization-of-envelopment arises as soon as a 'system' comes into existence, which collects all the attributes of the praxis-process understood in its totality. As Sartre stresses in his discussion of the boxing match, the present incarnation is not a particular concrete case subject to an abstract concept, which means the totalization-of-envelopment is not a mere rule ensuring the temporalization of particular events from outside. It is realized as a singular incarnation, at a given moment, and in a given action. One additional point needs emphasis, in the appendix to Volume II, Sartre describes totalization-of-envelopment as the interior limit of immanence. He then asks what this could possibly mean, and simply writes, 'that it is impassable'.[41] But, the notion of totalization-of-envelopment and, more importantly, the question of the type of reality this synthesizing concept possesses, inaugurates the discussion of Stalin.

Specifically referring to Soviet society, Sartre sees local praxis as an incarnation of totalizing praxis and the overall process. He thinks as soon as a system arises within a society, it collects within itself all the features of the praxis-process grasped in its totality. The practico-inert – the product of counter-finalities of praxis – eventually turns back to the sovereign as an inert synthesis, the very action through which a practical field exists. Just as he did in Volume I of the *Critique*, Sartre asserts that since everyone determines the other through the interiorization of relations with everyone else and through sovereign praxis, Soviet society realized a singular incarnation at a distinct moment in time. Here, the sovereign is merely the practical unity of the project, but interestingly this unity is one of living immanence characterized in interiority through the objective content of the law as manifestations of sovereign idiosyncrasies.

The totalization-of-envelopment points to the movement of circularity allowing one to pass continuously from the being of the act to act of being, and from the practical signification of destiny to the destiny of praxis. Sartre says, it is the impossibility of considering the organized ensemble as a passive object, just as it is the impossibility of totalizing the results of action 'without being referred back by these very results to *their* results at the heart of the practical temporalization – sedimentations, deposits, concretions, strata, deviations'.[42] All of these constitute the mode of knowledge appropriate to the totalization-of-envelopment, and the type of objective reality that defines it. The practical effect of this movement of circularity on human character is quite profound:

> It transforms them into other men discovering other results, but believing they have attained their goals since they have transformed themselves at the same time as these. In short, men realize themselves by objectifying themselves, and this objectification alters them (of course, in the abstract hypothesis of a complete totalization, one not capped by other syntheses coming from elsewhere).[43]

Since all produce it, the totalization-of-envelopment is exhaustive because no element of the practical field lies outside it. The workers who toiled under the Five Year P lan made the Plan

[41] Ibid., p. 448.
[42] Ibid., p. 244 (emphasis in original).
[43] Ibid.

a reality, but they did so in their serial impotence under transforming pressures, and through social reorganizations that eliminated their power in order to create hierarchies. In the end, they were the victims of a systematic enterprise Sartre calls 'possession' by the sovereign individual who created a new man.

The question then becomes, if society is not some hyper-organism that Sartre disdains, then what holds together the multiplicity of free practical organisms under conditions where there is but one freedom, the sovereign. Unity is imposed from three sources: first, by labour of integration performed by the leadership through the apparatuses of coercion and violence by the police. By labour, Sartre means the physical aspects of tracking down and arresting dissenters, beating them, dragging them off to jail, or merely putting them under surveillance. Second, the creation of a coercive force that transforms for everyone the *milieu* of his life into a spatio-temporal determination of the sacred field of the sovereign. Third, by a process of incarnation in which individuals absorb, singularize and re-exteriorize the imperatives of the sovereign imposed indiscriminately on all. Sartre concludes, 'the totalization-of-envelopment is found in every enveloped totalization as its signification; i.e. as the integration into everything'.[44] We can now see how Sartre's discussion of incarnation is essential for understanding how the totalization-of-envelopment (as the whole) becomes individualized.

In summary, Sartre lays out five characteristics of the totalization-of-envelopment: first, it is always a human process; 'the very structure of its development – the temporalization – is specifically human'.[45] Second, the reality of the deviation imposes a constraint on comprehension such that the things that produce humans also create humans who necessarily have a false consciousness of themselves, their past and their future objectives. Third, even though the totalization-of-envelopment points to the practico-inert as a means to recondition the agent, this does not mean the agent is incapable of understanding this complex process. Sartre always believes individuals are capable of re-forming into a group-in-fusion to arrest the sovereign tyranny of their situation. Again, one need only turn to the events in Egypt where the masses returned to Tahrir Square to protest the usurpation of power by Mohamed Morsi. Fourth, Sartre's comment on comprehension brings him to a comparison between individual action and sovereign totalization. On the individual level, circularity is a structure of all constituting praxis. Thus, the deviation of praxis is not uniquely linked to common actions. Sartre points to the example of human fatigue as deviated praxis forcing the agent to modify his action. This shows, 'the indissoluble unity of the human and the anti-human manifests itself at every moment of daily life, and in all the individuals we encounter'.[46] Lastly, Sartre understands the totalization-of-envelopment as a situated comprehension where objectivity is not some absolute reality independent of human action; instead, it is a human product.

While Volume II is a dense treatise on the concrete reality posited abstractly by the first, it also provides new insight into the effects of sovereignty incarnated in one individual. Importantly, while practico-inert realities always pull us towards our natural state of impotent seriality, other factors, other forces are also at work further complicating otherwise institutionalized human relations. In the end, Sartre shows the consequences of our desire to unify our actions; they can

[44] Ibid., p. 263.
[45] Ibid., p. 281.
[46] Ibid., p. 291.

only lead to a centralized, bureaucratic, institutionalized form of government denigrating human freedom as it instils its particular form of alienation and violence.

Sartre starts our journey of sovereignty by showing the inherent dangers in human relations commencing as well-intentioned, but invariably leading to unintended consequences. The group, united through its pledged inertia, entrenches itself in a hierarchical structure. Its malaise assures the group that it will seek – at all costs – its elusive sense of unity. The common individual, defined by his function or the very role he plays experiences a new fear, the fear of exclusion brought about though excess. In order to protect the group, and at the same time insulate and isolate it, a 'container' is constructed effectively removing the leadership from the masses and further instantiating the bureaucratic, institutional structure of the expert.

At this moment, Sartre asserts freedom becomes afraid of itself, but at the same time, the group undergoes conflict as particular sub-groups attempt to invade the function of rival sub-groups. The resulting battle sees the destruction of one group while the victorious sub-group integrates the defeated, but never really assimilates them. Despite winning the battle, the members of the victorious group still exhibit the predominance of mistrust and suspicion as the group descends to the status of a 'degraded group'. This suspicion gives rise to a purge of the group's members as it again seeks to unify for a common purpose.

Sartre brings us to an end point as he describes the rise of the leader that gives way to authority and sovereignty of one person. In Sartre's portrayal, sovereignty grounds authority, which means everyone's quasi-sovereignty is immobilized. Authority, lodged in the relation of one individual to all the rest, can only come to full fruition in the institutionalized group. The institution designates the individual who assumes the function of the non-transcendable third party. The common person's impotency and return to seriality allows power to constitute itself, even though Sartre emphasizes this does not necessarily mean freedom is lost forever. Sartre holds out hope that the group-in-fusion comes alive once more as it did in Tahrir Square and reconstitutes itself, that the common individual will re-enter the square of the public sphere everywhere to reject the bureaucratic structure as a permanent danger to freedom, and individual praxis will prevent or restrain sovereign actions.

Sartre the Anarchist: A Conclusion

> 'I have always been in agreement with anarchists, who are the only ones to have conceived of a whole man to develop through social action and whose chief characteristic is freedom'.
>
> —Sartre, *interview 1975*

Sartre's political philosophy, often thought of in terms of Marxist ideology, is far more complex than previously claimed. Most of the discussion surrounding Sartre's political thought generally takes on one of two distinct forms: either it assumes a Marxist foundation, or it goes through a rather tortuous process to make it seem more true to Marxists norms. Few look beyond the veil of Marxism to enquire whether Sartre really adheres to fundamental Marxist tenets, and if he did not what then did he espouse. In this discussion I endeavoured to show that Sartre's political philosophy must be viewed in terms not necessarily couched in Marxist ideology but rather in light of anarchism, especially that of the nineteenth-century thinkers Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin. The question remains, however, does Sartre's political philosophy conform to anarchism as I lay out? In order to complete the discussion, we must initially return to Clark's methodology first encountered in Chapter 1.

The first element characterizing anarchist political philosophy is a view of an ideal, nonauthoritarian society. This element entails a vision of an ideal society for which anarchists not only endeavour to achieve, but just as importantly, believe it to be morally correct to do so.

In his essay, 'Materialism and Revolution', Sartre first enunciates his belief in an ideal society brought about by revolutionary activity that realizes the situation based on a transcendence towards a future. This revolutionary activity is designed to escape the oppressive society crushing individual freedom by means of the practico-inert's apparatuses and exigencies. Yet, the revolutionary desires to lead humankind towards a condition seen as better than the state they wish to leave behind. Moreover, Sartre sees the revolutionaries willing to sacrifice their own lives to establish a new order they, perhaps, will never witness. This future ideal functions as a value, a value that is, as we have seen, morally premised.

In the *Critique*, Sartre follows his previous discussion of revolutionary activity with an analysis of the basis of authority. In his view, the moment the regulatory third party becomes the pledged holder of the power of regulation as function, and when the internal violence of the group is concentrated by the regulatory third party in the form of power designed to impose the will of one person, then everyone's sovereignty becomes immobilized. This relationship of authority only comes to full fruition in the institutionalized group, but what is necessary for the relationship to take on its full meaning is a rebirth of seriality and its concomitant impotence. The institution in Sartre's understanding represents the only real unity of the group in decline, and it does so through permanent mystification. While it is important to understand that Sartre thinks authority can only reach its full impact within the institutionalized group, it is equally

important to realize that even in this 'dire' situation individual freedom is not vanquished forever. In Sartre's words, it is merely immobilized, which means it can always rise again should individuals within the group shed their serial impotence and reformulate as a group-in-fusion directing their praxis towards an ideal. Sartre is not only criticizing the existing state of political affairs, but is providing us with an ideal, nonauthortarian society.

Clark's second element is a criticism of existing society and its institutions based on the nonauthoritarian ideal of the first element. This element centres on the notions of coercion and authoritarianism anarchists find unacceptable in many institutions. In general, the state and centralized authority receive the most scrutiny. As Clark points out, anarchists do not view the state as the equivalent of government. Instead, they tend to see the state as a sovereign body imposing demands upon its citizens. Anarchists' arguments against the state fall into two categories: the first argues that the state is illegitimate and has no right to exist; the second, a more generalized attack, sees the state as the harbinger of a multitude of social evils, only abolishment can cure. Yet, as we have seen, anarchists do not see all functions of the state as unnecessary; rather, the state envisioned by anarchists comprises established organizations designed to accomplish specific collective goals.

Almost from his earliest writings, Sartre criticizes existing society. In his essay 'The Legend of Truth', Sartre sees his mythical Scientific Society dominated by experts whom he labels 'fanatical democrats'. They are the herd whose only thoughts are those of the other, and whose only task is creating machines whose relation to anything natural is what he calls laws. This machine metaphor is important for Sartre, since he later associates machine-like structures with analytic reason that overtake the organized group in the form of bureaucracy dominated by rules and laws. In each case, Sartre lays out the foundation for the criticism of existing society. Again, later in 'Materialism and Revolution', Sartre criticizes existing society in order to provide a foundation for his revolutionary praxis. This notion is brought to life in his discussion of the violence occurring in the strikes mentioned in *The Communists and Peace*. There he acknowledges the insidious nature of oppression, not always visible in the hands of the dominate class. His solution is the eradication of the existing order, but his real criticism revolves around established society's mobilized violence. The apparatuses of the dominate class – the police and law – only become more harsh as the counter-violence of society is marshalled against the actions of the protestors.

Even in his discussion of the Soviet Five Year Plan, Sartre criticizes the turn to scientific dominance, but this does not necessarily apply strictly to the Plan. Taken in its wider context, the discussion of the Plan in *The Ghost of Stalin* is a criticism of society's attempts to both reduce humankind to an object of knowledge and to centralize all authority at the expense of local control.

When we move to the *Critique,* we realize that throughout the entire discussion of group formations Sartre is implicitly addressing the notion of coercion and authority as the group becomes more structured, organized and eventually institutionalized. Sartre's interest is, however, the degree of such coercion and not the coercion itself. Thus, his analysis of the practico-inert field takes on special significance for his criticism of existing society because the practico-inert surrounds and conditions human existence in its seen and unseen apparatuses. The practico-inert represents a real servitude to mechanical forces and the 'anti-social apparatuses' designed to crush each individual. In his discussion of the state, Sartre explicitly says it merely acts as the means of oppressing the dominated class for the benefit of those who rule. Once a state is embodied and

premised on its socioeconomic structures, it institutionalizes rights and duties through a series of laws and regulations that assume a historically determinate relation with the state.

When we turn the discussion to anarchists' notion of human nature, Clark's third element, we do so in the context of the justification for making significant progress towards the envisioned ideal society. We see Sartre's notion of interest allies him with this position. What anarchists look to is not some concept of innate ideas, but rather qualities allowing humans to live together in a condition of peace and freedom. For some anarchists, this means the human capacity for mutual aid, cooperation, respect and communal relations.

In addressing this important element, we need to start with Sartre's early writings. In his 'The Theory of the State', Sartre argues only individuals are sovereign, which is a position he maintains in the *Critique* as well. While the individual is sovereign, Sartre also views human relations from the viewpoint of work; work acts as a direct connection uniting humans and the universe. As such, it is an essential attitude of human reality existing for every 'project' in its mutual dependence upon one another as well as nature. Yet, the foundation for all human relations is the Other who immediately and perpetually determines everyone. In Sartre's analysis, the third determines the other, but regardless of what the third party does or does not do, only the actualization of the relation is given as having already existed. Every stranger produces their being in the presence of the Other, but always within a human social world. Consequently, reciprocity takes on a permanent structure of every object defined by collective praxis. In effect, everyone integrates everyone else to the extent they are part of the other's project.

Sartre's discussion of interest encapsulates his anarchist notion of human nature. Sartre thinks every individual has desires and needs and realizes his ends through work, but he also sees one's interest as a relation between humans and things in the social sphere. Interest is, therefore, a univocal relation of interiority that provides the connection for humans and their environment. On the other hand, subjectivity is merely an abstraction cast as a verdict compelling everyone to freely carry out the commands pronounced by society. And, it is the things we possess – our property – that confers human interiority upon us; they define our thoughts by the inert and changing relations between us and our 'various pieces of furniture'. Sartre also takes pains to dispel any thought that he adheres to a notion of egoism. He, in fact, thinks the word is devoid of meaning.

For Sartre, interest is not our subjective, interior decision concerning our existence; rather, it is our discovery of our being-outside-ourselves as worked matter. There are no fixed essences, no wheels in the head as Stirner explained, directing our actions. Instead, at all times we are situationally determined by the Other who is the third party. This concept of interest coupled with Sartre's complex formation of the role of the third plays the crucial role in his effort to define a human nature conducive to collaboration with a group situated within a sociality. Even though two sub-groups engage in struggle, Sartre still sees them as collaborating towards a common goal.

I want to turn now to the fourth element, and that is a strategy for change involving the immediate institution of noncoercive, nonauthoritarian and decentralized alternatives. In essence, this is a practical proposal for change, or a social/political theory embracing, among other things, a notion of praxis. Included within this movement are the decentralization of political and economic authority, worker self-management, and freedom of expression among others. It is not difficult to place Sartre's political philosophy within this last criterion. There are many consistent themes throughout Sartre's philosophy and a theory of praxis has to count as one of the

most important. One of the foundational aspects of the *Critique* is Sartre's desire to expose the profound dialectical relationship uniting praxis to the materiality of the outside world. But, if we again go back to Sartre's earlier work, 'Materialism and Revolution', we see he believes revolution is intended not only to alter the world in which we live, but to re-create our collective situation. In order to accomplish this task, praxis is necessary, since praxis constitutes the authenticity of the individual, and praxis delivers us from the impotency of the practico-inert. As such, praxis is a foundational element throughout Sartre's writings, and in the *Critique* it assumes a critical role. Sartre champions praxis as the only means available to complete the revolution.

But what is the praxis Sartre talks about? While the concept is somewhat nebulous, Sartre presents an outline of the contours of action so necessary to his political philosophy. In *The Communists and Peace*, Sartre explains that the historical whole determines our powers at any given moment as it conditions our attitude towards an entire plethora of dichotomies such as the possible and impossible. This occurs because it prescribes the limits of our actions as well as our possibilities for a future, which simply means it is up to each individual to determine their relations with others. For Sartre, the choice for which the collectivity submits to the course of the world or contributes to the shaping of that world are rather direct: either one hides in the immediate present, or one accesses a future extending well beyond one's death by risking everything for a cause. The force separating these paths is action; action causes the worker to believe because the worker is action who no longer fears death, but sees it as an inevitable event that happens in the midst of the future possessed jointly with everyone. In this sense, action is the future because without it the impotence of the practico-inert remains.

As we move to Sartre's discussion in the *Critique,* we realize one of the essential themes Sartre wishes to analyse is an examination of how individual praxis interiorizes the exterior while, at the same time, praxis intentionally exteriorizes interiority through labour. This merely means as individual life dissolves itself into sociological and historical totalization, subjectivity appears as the verdict and sentence imposed by society and defines us *a priori* in our being. In order to overcome this inertia, Sartre points to the action of the residents of *Saint-Antoine* who armed themselves in the face of a perceived threat at the hands of the king's soldiers. In the apocalyptic moment, freedom manifests itself as the need to dissolve necessity in the simple but positive determination of praxis organized on the premise of real objectives. As I have also shown, the same applies to the protestors in Tahrir Square as it does to other revolutionary movements at any given time.

Sartre's discussion of praxis goes beyond the simple storming of the Bastille, however. What emerges in Sartre's important analysis is the concept of the third that is structured *a priori* as the Other. Through the third practical unity, in the form of the negation of otherwise threatening praxis, reveals itself through the constellation of reciprocities. What Sartre graphically points to is action as the only means for the residents of *Saint-Antoine,* or of Cairo, or of Tunisia to break their serial alterity resulting in inertia. The third is praxis who casts aside the serial structure of flight and fear, and unites with the Other in an indissoluble bond of unity of praxis. Sartre sees a new structure emerging, mediated reciprocity, but the mediator is not an object, it is praxis. Most importantly, Sartre sees praxis as the only real unity of the group, since praxis alone creates the group and maintains it.

Sartre's political philosophy appears to align itself at least with an understanding of anarchism generally. As I have argued, his theoretical anarchism comes into better focus when judged against the anarchists of the nineteenth century, especially Proudhon and Bakunin. I shall not

attempt to discuss every point that places Sartre in the lineage of the nineteenth-century French anarchists thought, but there are several key points I want to emphasize. Sartre's thought comes closest to Proudhon whose entire theory of history, with its heavy emphasis on state (as well as religious) hierarchies, only leads to one outcome – oppression – exactly the conclusion Sartre reaches in the *Critique*. In a fashion very similar to Proudhon's analysis, Sartre wants the *Critique* to investigate the root causes of oppression and human conflict in order to understand human behaviour and fundamentally to effect change. Each emphasizes the deleterious effects social hierarchies play in the group's never ending quest for unity. Likewise, they both see human history as a constant struggle where group structures develop, fall back upon one another, and reformulate themselves once again in a constant but metastable condition of dialectical conflict. According to Proudhon, dogmas, mystification, and authority provide the foundation for group unity. Sartre too puts forth similar arguments as he describes the transformation of the organized group into the bureaucratically dominated institution with a sovereign embodied in one person – a political reality also premised on struggle, conflict, dogmatic ideologies, mystification, and violence. There is an additional critical element both Proudhon and Sartre share; a belief that human conflict does not arise out of some innate human quality for aggression as Hobbes argued, but more likely, such behaviour is the result of need brought on by a condition of fundamental *scarcity*.

While Sartre discusses at length the formation of social groups within a society, Proudhon does much the same thing. Moreover, when discussing the concept of sovereignty, both Proudhon and Sartre adopt the very important concept of individual sovereignty. Interestingly, each recognizes that individuals left to their serial, existential condition are in no position to act; they will always remain subordinate to the apparatuses of the state. Only the group, with its multiplicity of reciprocal relations along with its attendant problems, is the solution. Proudhon's 'natural group' brings together the multitude possessing common interests who bind themselves one to another in a contract of mutuality. Sartre looks to the group, and particularly the group-in-fusion, to express similar feelings of freedom and individual sovereignty.

As we turn to Bakunin, we find Sartre's inheritance is more limited, but it is equally important. In Bakunin's recognition of the need for what he calls 'discipline', the anarchists revolutionary movement adopts a certain structure where leaders emerge and fall away, but importantly no function remains fixed and petrified. For Bakunin, no fixed hierarchies lead to centralization and authority. Sartre takes up the entire issue of leadership in his extended discussion of the French Revolution where he advances the notion that the leadership of the group-in-fusion is metastable; the leader of today yields to the leader for tomorrow.

Bakunin's famous dictum advocating an economic as well as social structure issuing from the base to the summit according to the principles of free association finds its place in Sartre's work as well when he recognizes the value of the lowest classes to foment revolution. In his words, the oppressed adopt the slogan 'from below' because it makes them the foundation of the entire society.

Nevertheless, Bakunin's critique of science probably binds him to Sartre in a concrete manner. As I have discussed, Bakunin felt that science only grasps the general significance of real facts and not their material, individual elements that are rich with reality and life. Science's necessary abstraction interests Bakunin as he warns about the so-called knights of science who create an ideal social construct into which they desire to force the life of every generation no matter the expense. As is well known, Sartre opposed dialectical materialism his entire life, which echoes

Bakunin's problem with analytic reason that seeks to study humans as if they were rocks. This is why Sartre opens the *Critique* with a discussion of Engels' *Dialectic of Nature;* he must discount the theoretical underpinnings of dialectical materialism in order to advance his own more anarchistic concept of the political.

I have endeavoured to show that Sartre meets the full meaning of Clarks' four-pronged approach to understanding anarchism, and his political philosophy is in a general lineage with Proudhon and Bakunin. I also think it is important to recognize that throughout his life Sartre often referred to himself as an anarchist. Despite his self-proclamation, very few were interested. My goal in undertaking this discussion is to shed a different light on an important aspect of Sartre's politics. In essence, to view his political philosophy through the lens of anarchism, not necessarily driven by twentieth-century concepts of the term, but rather anchored in the past, a past associated with the revolutionary spirit of the nineteenth century, and embodied in the writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin.

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William L. Remley
Jean-Paul Sartre's Anarchist Philosophy
2018

<www.bloomsbury.com>
ISBN 1350048267, 9781350048263

Bloomsbury