

SARTRE AND HEGEL ON THYMOS, HISTORY AND FREEDOM

Jennifer Ang

ABSTRACT: Hegel's historical idealism traced the dialectical progression of ideas over time – from agonistic encounters between consciousnesses towards a form of universal consciousness as its final end. In his simplistic appropriation of Hegel's thymos and historical idealism, Francis Fukuyama concludes that the Cold War spelt the end of history, with liberal democracy as the triumphant ideology. But for Jean-Paul Sartre, whose ontology of hostile inter-subjectivity has been attributed to Hegelian dialectics, has instead found Hegel's thymos and idealism to be walled up in dogmatism because to him, our human struggle is one against material needs. As such, Marxism for Sartre is “the philosophy of our time” (SM 30). This article sets out to examine these contrasts and nuances between Sartre, Hegel and Fukuyama in three areas: first, a reassessment of Sartre's ontology which was commonly thought to be founded on Hegel's thymos; second, a reconsideration of Fukuyama's conceptualisation of democracy as the end of Hegel's historical progress and Sartre's critique of democracy based on a humanist version of Marxism as philosophy of our time; and finally, a reevaluation of the conceptualisation of freedom through Hegel's universal will and Sartre's principle of universal fraternity.

KEYWORDS: Ontology; Thymos; History; Freedom; Hegel; Sartre

THYMOS AND 'HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE'

Jean Hyppolite explained that self-consciousness was a form of desire for Hegel, a desire towards the unity of the 'I' with itself that can only be found in another desire, or when the 'I' finds another self-consciousness. This is because self-certainty cannot be found in its negation of the natural world, requiring instead the affirmation by other consciousnesses. As consciousness seeks out other consciousnesses to affirm its

self-certainty, self-consciousness comes to exist as the dialectic, or, “the mutual recognition of self-consciousnesses”.¹ In other words, self-consciousness realises that recognition is for-itself, but also exists for other self-consciousnesses. As such, while it struggles to be recognised by others, it also struggles against being circumscribed by others. In this dialectical relationship, Hegel argued that, “the individual who has not risked his life can of course be recognised as a person,” but it is only in the fight for life and death that he is recognised as an independent self-consciousness, or as expressed by Hyppolite, a fight, “to prove to others as well as to oneself that one is an autonomous self-consciousness” (GSH 169).

In similar terms, Alexandre Kojève understood Hegel’s first man as sharing certain basic natural desires with animals, but also desiring the non-material recognition by other men as a man. As a result, the initial encounter between first men will lead to a “violent struggle to the death for pure prestige”, or until either one submits to a life of slavery in a ‘highly unequal relationship of lordship and bondage’, as put across by Fukuyama.² Men, as such, are thus distinguished by their attitude toward violent death because their desire to be recognised overcomes the animal desire for self-preservation, and they thereby attain metaphysical freedom to create a new self. And we find that human history is defined by this struggle to the death to satisfy the desire for pure prestige in the form of wars for recognition.

From this aspect of Hegel’s thymos, most commentators argue that Sartre arrived at the conclusion that ‘Hell is other people’.³ However, we can only find Sartre rejecting Hegel’s ontology of human reality and also his account of hostile concrete human relations in *Being and Nothingness*. First, in addressing the issue of solipsism, Sartre believed that Hegel had misconceived the structure of being-for-others as an ontological relation.⁴ He argued that because Hegel saw the relation of object-ness as the fundamental relation between others and ourselves, he was unable to affirm the existence of others as subjects since they, in their object-ness, do not question us in our being (BN 337-340). In other words, the existence of an Other-as-subject was purely conjectural for Hegel if he was to consider being-for-others as an ontological relation, since all that we can reveal is an Other-as-object. This also suggests that there is an ontological separation between the other as object that we can grasp and the other as subject that escapes us.

¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak & John Heckman, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, pp. 164–5.

² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press, 2006, p. 147.

³ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Huis Clos” in *Huis Clos and Other Plays*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 223.

⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Press, 1992, p. 322.

Sartre further explained in the Look phenomenon that we can never know ourselves in the other because we experience our encounter with the other as ‘being-seen-by-an-other’ from the outside that we are responsible for, and yet, not being it. We are “incapable of apprehending for [ourselves] the self which [we] [are] for the Other” because as soon as we attempt to make ourselves object, we “would already be [ourselves] at the heart of that object which [we] [are]” – “the subject who is looking at it” (BN 326). In short, our object-ness escapes us because it is imposed from the outside. This reveals the ‘ontological separation’ between subjects – that we cannot know ourselves in the Other if the Other is first an object for us, and neither can we apprehend the Other in its true being, that is, in his subjectivity through being an object for us (BN 328).

Without recognising this ontological separation, Hegel saw our encounters with Others as conflicts of consciousnesses where each aimed to transform their self-certitude into truth, but for Sartre, human reality is one that presented “a *truth* of consciousness that does not depend on the Other” (BN 322-3). Thus, contrary to many commentators who seem to think that Sartre subscribed to an ontology of mutual objectification, Sartre rejected an account of human reality based on “a *frontal* opposition” that intends the “reciprocal relation of recognition and of conflict” (BN 331). Instead, he reformulated his account of ontological relation as being one defined by a subject-and-subject relation existing in “oblique interdependence”.⁵ He argued that because our encounters with Others are revelations of their transcendence, our concrete relationships with other subjects cannot have the same ontological structure as Hegel’s master-slave dyad. In fact, our concrete relations with Others have a circular structure between two opposing attitudes for Sartre.

The first attitude we take when we encounter an Other is to objectify the Other, but we quickly recognise that this attitude is incomplete for our apprehension of the Other. We are immediately prompted to adopt a second attitude, that is, to assume our transcendence without grasping the Other as subject, but by freely becoming an object for the other. But we will also realise that because every attempt at being an object for the Other is a reassertion of one’s subjectivity, we re-adopt the first attitude. A conflict is in this way created between these two opposing attitudes – of assimilating the Other and reducing our transcendence to an object-ness. And according to Sartre,

⁵ See for instance my paper ‘Whither Hegelian dialectics in Sartrean violence?’, *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2009). I demonstrated that Sartre’s rejection of Hegelian dialectics as an ontological relation led him to argue that concrete relations are not necessarily violent, but one where reciprocal cooperation is possible.

“we can never get outside of the circle” because “conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others”.⁶

The problem of the Other is thus a false problem according to Sartre. In a similar vein as Heidegger, Sartre thinks that the Other is not a particular that we encounter in the world, but “a sort of ontological solidarity for the exploitation of this world” (BN 331). In fact, there is no conflict between us with the Other because it is in complete freedom and by our original choice to “realise our being-with in the anonymous form of ‘they’”, somewhat like a relationship of the “we” in a crew (BN 331-2). But Sartre also posed questions to Heidegger’s analysis: What is the unique foundation of our being in this co-existence with others and why is it the fundamental type of relation we have with others? How does an ontological co-existence explain our concrete being-with? Robert Sinnerbrink also considers Heidegger’s account of self-consciousness to be deficient in accounting for the crucial third moment of concrete individuality achieved through the process of intersubjective recognition and hence “remain[ed] stuck at the level of reflection” according to an abstract formalism.⁷ But for him, Hegel’s phenomenology accounted for the spirit existing concretely and historically in the sense that self-conscious individuals work off their natural particularity and inequality by replacing their self-consciousness within historically developed structures of recognition with an “objective and absolute spirit that makes possible the finite self-consciousness of these historically situated individuals” (SG 137).

Thus, unlike Heidegger, Sartre’s phenomenology employed the regressive-progressive method and this is explained in *Search for a Method*. To regress is to reveal our own particular history and the significations of each situation, social structure and collective that our life presents. In other words, regression reveals the reality that is for us. And when we cross-reference our significations with others’ significations, we reconcile and clarify the contradictions that surface between our reality and that of others’ so as to form an encompassing framework of reality.⁸ What these contradictions reveal to us is that our reality forms only a part of the entire reality that marks the time and space we live in. To further understand what and how we define ourselves and are being defined, we have to employ the progressive method. The progressive method looks at the dialectical movement itself because it is focused on the

⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 474–5.

⁷ Robert Sinnerbrink, ‘Sein und Geist: Heidegger’s Confrontation with Hegel’s Phenomenology’, *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, vol. 3, nos. 2-3, 2007, p. 136. Sinnerbrink asserts that Hegel’s account of the role of mutual recognition was successful in overcoming the deficiencies in the Kantian-Fichtean account of self-consciousness that Heidegger had failed in.

⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel Barnes, New York: Vintage Books, 1968, pp. 145-6.

project between the present objectivity and the future objectivity with the aim of producing oneself “in the world as a certain objective totality” (SM 147). This is important for comprehending our existence because individuals are always “*outside of themselves*” intending towards “a field of possibilities, some of which we realize to the exclusion of others” according to our choices (SM 151). As such, we can only grasp the “meaning of a conduct and its value ... by the movement which realizes the possibles as it reveals the given” (SM 152). Only in this “double movement” of regressing and progressing (SM 154) will we be able to comprehend that “[i]t is the work or the act of the individual which reveals to us the secret of his conditioning” and understand his actions by “going beyond the pure present and explaining it by the future” (SM 152). What the regressive-progressive method has achieved is to firstly, reveal the particularity of the individual by situating them as a synthesis of its hierarchized significations in that period (SM 148). And secondly, to comprehend human projects as surpassing the given present towards a future, or put simply, where subjectivity (action) confronts and goes beyond objectivity (material and objective reality) (SM 149). In this way, we can grasp the human subject through each subjective lived experience that constitutes its reality and also grasp how the human subject is constituted by the objective reality, achieving an account of concrete individuality.

With this clarified, we can now see that when Sartre maintained conflict as the original meaning of being-for-others in *Being and Nothingness*, he was not referring to an ontological relationship of mutual objectification between objects, but the conflict that arises between the opposing attitudes we adopt – that of apprehending the other as object and grasping the other as subject – in the way we conduct our concrete encounters with others (BN 475). And in *Search for a Method*, conflict refers to conflict in our particular realities with others that we reconcile in our shared objective reality. Further, in *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre reiterated that our encounters with Others should not be considered “a dialectical necessity as with Hegel, where the first individual relationship is necessarily that of the master and the slave”.⁹

Yet, we find that some readings of Hegel’s thymos bring it closer to this reading of Sartre’s account. Michael Monahan for example argues that there is a need to liberate Hegel’s theory of recognition from the common presumption that recognition can only be achieved by hostile struggles alone. To this end, he sets out to demonstrate that “there [was] an understanding of recognition beyond struggle that Hegel explicitly describes and endorses,” a form of pure recognition without struggle that is often

⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 11.

neglected by commentators.¹⁰ Returning to the idea of a simple universal in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Monahan maintains that the moment of Desire for Hegel was to confront the world as the sole manifestation of necessity and independence for which the rest of the world (objects and people) were tools for use, obstacles to be overcome or to be ignored (RBS 395-6). The independence gained through negation was a never-ending reiteration and revealed the simple fact that there were other independent objects, but more importantly, that the Desire to be the simple universal could never be satisfied because human beings exist both as universal and particular.

Further, Monahan explains that ‘recognition’ bridged the gap between universal and particular. ‘Recognition’ is the moment where individuals experience themselves as situated objects and also independent consciousnesses. And it is in pure recognition that individuals experience themselves as self-conscious for another self-conscious individual as both subject and object (RBS 398). Thus, pure recognition can only work when individuals fully and mutually recognise the other in a reciprocal relationship, but this becomes corrupted when either one or both subjects refuse to recognise the other. He also adds that “Hegel, would, in fact, agree that the Master/Slave dialectic is far from ideal, that the ‘life and death struggle’ is unnecessarily destructive, and that relations of domination and subordination are dehumanising and contrary to human freedom” (RBS 400). In this way, Monahan concludes that “[t]he exclusive focus on the Master/Slave dialectic that so dominates appropriations of Hegel in the philosophy of oppression and liberation” had basically left out a fundamental aspect of Hegelian recognition, that is, pure recognition (RBS 400). In fact, we also find this in line with what Hegel himself maintained in *Philosophy of Mind*: “the fight for recognition pushed to the extreme here can only occur in the natural state, where men exist only as single, separate individuals; but it is absent in civil society and the State because here the recognition for which the combatants fought already exists.”¹¹

Given that scholars have neglected Sartre’s account of original encounters, and over-emphasised the corrupted life-and-death struggle for recognition in Hegel’s ontology, there are good reasons to reconsider versions of their accounts of history characterised by negative reciprocities and combative struggles. For instance, Raymond Aron in *History and Dialectic of Violence* argues that the Sartrean account of inter-subjectivity was essentially a competition between self-interests, and that human history was filled with combats between classes (HDV 172). In so doing, Aron’s reading of Sartre finds its way from Hegel’s hostile intersubjectivity to Marx’s class struggles,

¹⁰ Michael Monahan, “Recognition Beyond Struggle: On a Liberatory Account of Hegelian Recognition”, *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 32 (2006), pp. 389-90.

¹¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 172.

such that history for Sartre was moved “by means of class struggle, [and] by the antagonism of groups where everyone wishe[d] the death of the other” (HDV 187-8). Therefore, in so far as ‘contradiction’ describes the relationship between praxis are mediated by the material world and also negate the material world, Aron’s reading of Sartre may be correct. But to understand ‘contradiction’ as the fundamental nature of ontological inter-subjectivity does not capture Sartre’s account appropriately.

Ronald Santoni, in his recent work, *Sartre on Violence* also shares Aron’s reading of Sartrean ontology as one that is focussed on negative reciprocities only. Santoni argues that Sartre’s “analysis echoes Hegel’s depiction of the Master’s attitude in his demand for recognition from the Slave,” and in *Being and Nothingness*, the same relationship is described in the attempt of For-itself “to absorb or destroy the freedom of the Other (who has “looked” at me) while simultaneously wanting to preserve her freedom to recognise or choose me.”¹² From this perspective, Santoni concludes that Sartre’s emphasis on freedom and liberation in *Being and Nothingness* is now replaced with a focus on violence in his later works on social and political philosophy (SV xi).

What we see from both accounts is that Aron and Santoni over-emphasised negative reciprocity in Sartre’s ontology of inter-subjectivity because they assume it operates within the Hegelian master-slave framework. In doing so, they interpret Sartre’s account of history to be one filled with ‘conflicts’ and ‘contradictions’ between groups and classes of people over material need instead of seeing praxes coming together in ‘conflict’ with the given structure, process, and institution in order to overcome material lack. If we were to reconsider Sartre’s ontology this way, we will see that reciprocity for Sartre and Hegel was not entirely focussed on negative reciprocity alone, but positive reciprocities of cooperation that can also move history.

END OF HISTORY AND HISTORY IN DEVELOPMENT

In Hegel’s grand theory of the human past and human destiny, the substance of history is said to lie in the development of Spirit through time, aimed at a rational end. He argued that the philosophy of history must start with considering its ultimate purpose and not dwell on specifics, unlike the other two methods of history (original and reflective history), which concern themselves with events and individual accounts. To understand where Hegel was coming from, we need to first return to his method of philosophy.

Otis Lee in his 1939 essay, ‘Method and System in Hegel’ summarizes this appropriately. According to Lee, the problem of method in philosophy for Hegel is to

¹² Ronald E. Santoni, *Sartre on Violence: curiously ambivalent*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2003, pp. 24–5.

see philosophy as simply a search for the ultimate. We begin our inquiry with premises and subsequently discard them in light of more adequate knowledge because we see that truth is the outcome of investigation but truth is not the subject of investigation itself.¹³ We thus start our philosophical inquiry with its first principle and deduce a system from it, and in this way, inquiry is explained in terms of system, but not vice versa. The conflict between search and system in such an approach also implies that truth is not the whole but a part of the system. But conceiving philosophy to be both system and method, Hegel attempted to bridge this gap in his approach by approaching history as a philosophy of history. This is because all philosophical knowledge for him must be able to explain doubt as doubt itself is also a kind of philosophical knowledge, and hence, must also be included with the final result of the investigation.

Returning to Hegel's idea of what a philosophy of history is, the contradiction between history and philosophy is clear: '[i]n history, thinking is subordinate to the data of reality, which later serve as guide and basis for historians' whereas philosophy treats history as its raw material but shape it in accordance to ideas that it produces on its own.¹⁴ Hence, we see that for the function of history, the more factual its data is, the truer it is, but the method of philosophy subordinates facts to ideas. Hegel finds that this contradiction between the function of history and method of philosophy can be reconciled in the philosophy of history – the idea that Reason is the basis of history.

But Hegel also explained that the role of Reason for history and for philosophy is different. Reason is presupposed in history because we think that the world developed rationally. For instance, the Greeks presuppose there is reason in historical facts, such as the laws of nature having a purpose and religious truth of the world being controlled by Providence. Here, the subject of inquiry (laws of nature and religious truth) is explained in terms of the method (rational development), and the method explains itself. Hence, Hegel warned us the need to be sceptical of scientific methods in our search for truth:

[e]ven the mere and average historian, who perhaps believes and pretends that he is merely receptive, merely surrendering himself to the data, is not passive in this thinking. He brings his categories with him and sees the data through them. In everything that is supposed to be scientific, Reason must be awake and the reflection applied. To him who looks at the world rationally the world looks rationally back. The relation is mutual (RH 13).

¹³ Otis Lee, 'Method and System in Hegel', *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 48, no. 4 (Jul 1939): pp. 355-380.

¹⁴ G.W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Roberts Hartman (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall: 1997), p. 10.

Reason is not, on the other hand, a presupposition in philosophy, but a revelation of our human nature as *thinking reflection*. Human consciousness has two realms – Nature and Spirit – and both unite in the form of human nature, according to Hegel. Spirit is to be realised and brought about by humans alone, and together with nature, forms our human nature of *thinking reflection* that is permanent and universal. Reason in philosophy of history is hence

a result which happens to be known to [ourselves] because [we] already know the whole. Therefore, only the study of world history itself can show that it has proceeded rationally, that it represents the rationally necessary course of the World Spirit, the Spirit whose nature is indeed always one and the same, but whose one nature unfolds in the course of the world (RH 12).

As such, in philosophical thought, thought itself is the subject of inquiry and also the system of inquiry. And when we understand history from the perspective of a philosophy of history, we see that the essence of Spirit is Freedom, and Spirit judges its own nature while also making itself (actually) into that which it is in itself (potentially) (RH 22-3). World history can then be said to be “an exhibition of spirit striving to attain knowledge of its own nature”, that is, as spirit comprehending the development of the consciousness of freedom over time and understanding this development as Spirit’s ultimate purpose. Thus, Hegel maintained that in order for us to determine the substance of History, we need to examine the course of development of Spirit in its concrete reality; not only in terms of its intended purpose, but also the actualisation of this purpose in the world as it manifests itself in the struggles we experience in our reality.

According to Hegel, in our immediate existence, the rational aim of Spirit is realised through volitions, interests and activities that are conscious of its purpose, but these seemingly purposeful activities are in actuality driven by our particular subjective needs, instincts, passions, private interests, opinions and subjective representations that may sometimes be unconscious of this higher and broader purpose of the Spirit (RH 31). What this means is that although the purpose of our actions may be particular and private, they are also actualisations of the universal manifested through each particular struggle of human will against fate, and of freedom against necessity. These unfolding human actions, guided by rational ends, demonstrate that what lies in the innermost soul of all individuals is a Spirit aimed at freedom. It lies in a state of unconsciousness, and is roused to consciousness by world historical individuals – heroes whose own particular purposes contain the substantial will of the World Spirit which they put all their energy in (RH 40). But this does not mean that all historical changes will bring about a better and more perfect state of affairs because the transition of its potentiality

is mediated through consciousness and will, and its development is at times hindered (RH 69). The Spirit needs to be in a constant war with itself, carrying out ‘unwilling labour against itself’ (RH 69). However, when it does succeed, it logically moves in three stages – first is the immersion of Spirit in natural life; followed by Spirit stepping out into the consciousness of its freedom; and finally, as Spirit “rising out of its particular form of freedom into pure universality of freedom, where the spiritual essence attains consciousness and feeling of itself” (RH 70-1). The end it reaches for is an end with determined content – that of freedom. In his own words, “(f)reedom is itself its own object of attainment and the sole purpose of Spirit. It is the ultimate purpose towards which all world history has continually aimed” (RH 25).

Fukuyama considers Hegel’s conceptualisation of thymos and the Spirit a more accurate understanding of liberal democracy than Locke or Hume and thought that it could help us overcome the shortcomings of Marxist economism. He maintains that Hegel’s thymotic conception of man gave rise to a Universal history of mankind that “was nothing other than man’s progressive rise to full rationality, and to a self-conscious awareness of how that rationality expresses itself in liberal self-government”.¹⁵ Accordingly, as mankind progresses to higher levels of rationality and freedom, it arrives at a state where it achieves absolute self-consciousness. In human history, this absolute self-consciousness is embodied in the modern liberal state that emerged after the French and American Revolution, and became the final point of mankind’s historic evolution at the end of the Cold War. With Napoleon’s defeat of the Prussian Monarchy at the Battle of Jena at the end of 1806, we are said to have reached the end-of-time because the blind obedience to authority has come to an end with the discovery of the principles of liberty and equality that underlie all liberal states (EHLM 4, 64). And with the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, it spelt the end of history since it is “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” where Western liberal democracy is considered as the final form of human government.¹⁶

Thus, to Fukuyama, our ideological evolution ended when liberal democracy emerged triumphant from its contention with absolutism, Bolshevism, Fascism and Marxism. Liberal democracy is the embodiment of human freedom, and with the democratisation of Asia, East Asia and the former Soviet Union, Fukuyama concludes that we are now living in post-historic times, times where there are no viable alternatives to the Western model of economic and political liberalism as a political ideology and foreign policy. Not only were the ideas of freedom, equality and fraternity actualised, they were also extended universally through a State with a system

¹⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, p. 60.

¹⁶ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”, *The National Interest*, No. 16, (1989), p. 3.

of law that recognises and protects the individual's right to freedom such that it can only exist with the consent of the governed. In fact, he argues that all contradictions that drove history – the pursuit of recognition, the lord and bondsman dialectic, the transformation of, and control over, nature, the fight for universal acknowledgement of rights, and the divisions between proletarian and capitalist – were reconciled. Having said that, the injustice and social problems we experience today do not arise from an internal contradiction in liberal democracy, but are due to the incomplete implementation of these twin principles of economic and political liberalism since “the victory of liberalism has occurred primarily in the realm of ideas or consciousness” and has yet to be completed in the material world (EH 3). Fukuyama had arrived at this conclusion by perfunctorily adopting Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's end-of-time thesis, and this is an example of a simplified Hegelianism that Sartre would have considered static.

For Sartre, Hegel understood history as totalised by first objectifying human beings in history as knowers, and then locating them in history where they appear as the known.¹⁷ This is because Hegel saw human beings as no longer movers of history but with freedom that was already constituted, and hence history became totalised objective Knowledge without a need to prove itself. In this way, Sartre considered Hegel to have reduced existence to an object of knowledge by not recognizing the separation between the subjectivity of Being and the process of knowledge. This resulted in a totalised understanding of history that lapsed into idealism. As far as Sartre is concerned, Hegel's historicism started at the beginning of the end of History, and as such, his history was finished and complete providing a prediction of the past, and with no doctrine of action, it could only guess the future.¹⁸

Marxism, in this regard is different because it emphasises human subjectivity – of human struggle over *need* – and has “demonstrated that History *is in development*” according to Sartre (CDR 23). He argued that, for a philosophy to be complete, it needs to be a dialectical movement where the subjective meets the objective or where practice meets theory and the real meets Knowledge. Hence, unlike Hegel's idealism, the dialectical movement must consist of the structure of the real and of our praxis (CDR 20), and dialectical knowledge should be a constant totalising process and not a totalised form of abstract ideology. Our knowledge of history therefore should not be an objectified past and a collection of our thought processes, but a constant dynamic grasping of the past in the present and also acts on the future by totalising present-day

¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 9.

¹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason Vol. 1*, trans. Alan-Sheridan-Smith, Jonathan Rée (ed.), London: Verso, 1991, p. 23.

Knowledge. This is because dialectical knowledge not only “sets free captive thought and permits it to attain its full development,”¹⁹ it also “stimulates ideas; even when it defines the practical perspectives of an exploited class” (SM 17). For this reason, Marxism is “the philosophy of our time” (SM 30) and takes the form of a social and political weapon that can galvanise the masses into a “collective instrument of emancipation” capable of transcending the very circumstances that engenders it (SM 5-6).

In fact, the key function of philosophy for Sartre was “to be simultaneously a totalisation of knowledge, a method, a regulative Idea, an offensive weapon, a community of language” that is itself a movement that acts upon the future (SM 5-6). From Sartre’s perspective, we see that Hegel’s philosophy by contrast has ceased to serve or achieve any practical purpose and hence has lost its relevance in creating and driving history. And when we turn to Fukuyama’s conception of Hegel’s end-of-history thesis, the lack of practical relevance is obvious given that he considers there to be no other viable alternatives to liberal democracy. This method of grasping freedom in human projects by looking into the past instead of grasping them as projects in the future was not only a key contention of Sartre’s against Hegel, but also distinguished Sartre’s conception of freedom in his humanist version of Marxism from Fukuyama’s version of democratic freedom.

Sartre considered Marxism to be a theory of human existence concerned with the interrelations between human subjectivity (how humans live their lives in relation to others and the external world) and objective reality (of needs and worked-over objects). It is a philosophical totalisation, contemplative and practical at the same time, and situated in a material context (SM 14). History is about human beings’ struggle against things and against humans because human beings are defined simultaneously by their needs, and also by the material conditions of their existence and the nature of their work (SM 14). Hence, for Marx and for Sartre, ‘men make History to precisely the extent that it makes them’ rather than being mere vehicles of inhuman forces.²⁰ And this “struggle of [humans] on all planes and on all levels of human activity” not only “set[s] free captive thought and permit[s] it to attain its full development”, it also forms the “very movement of History” rather than thoughts alone.²¹ But even so, Sartre would have to admit that humans create history through reflective consciousness for without reflective consciousness, the dialectical function in philosophy of History would not be possible. He would also have to agree with Hegel that History is moved

¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 8.

²⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason Vol. 1*, p. 97.

²¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 8.

by the achievements of the human will against the given, and of human freedom against necessity since he also shared a similar understanding of the human condition as characterised by human struggle even if it is a struggle against situations of lack. In this way, Sartre's conception of freedom in human history not only left him critical of democracies, but also of dogmatic Marxism. More importantly, Sartrean politics sees positive reciprocities as drivers of history towards the achievement of concrete instead of the abstract freedom that democracies propagate, and hence, closing the gap between theory and practice. This is to lay the grounds in justifying for a revival of radicalism of the Left in his brand of socialist humanist ethics to curb democratic excesses.

UNIVERSAL WILL AND UNIVERSAL FRATERNITY

It is noteworthy that Sartre's notion of freedom echoes Hegel's conception of the role of positive reciprocities in achieving freedom. In the *Philosophy of Mind* Hegel asserts,

Only in such a manner [of pure recognition] is true freedom realised; for since this consists in my identity with the other, I am truly free when the other is also free and is recognised by me as free. This freedom of one in the other unites men in an inward manner, whereas needs and necessity bring them together only externally. Therefore, men must will to find themselves again in one another.²²

Similarly for Sartre, an ethics of freedom in *Existentialism is a Humanism* involves a kind of inter-subjectivity because our freedom depends upon the freedom of others and the freedom of others likewise depends upon our freedom.²³ We find that our existential responsibility to choose freedom goes beyond our responsibility to ourselves because in making our choice we are also choosing for humanity "an image of man such as man believes he ought to be" (EH 29). Thus, this is a "complete and profound" choice which we make as an obligation "to will the liberty of others at the same time [that we] will [our] own" (EE 58). And this social dimension is also emphasised in the *Notebook for an Ethics*. Sartre maintained that "ethics is not possible unless everyone is ethical,"²⁴ and hence we need to "deal with all the other persons as ends" (NE 58). The socialist humanist morality he developed later argued for the transhistorical principle of universal fraternity. In his final interviews with Benny Lévy, transhistorical universal fraternity describes the ethical relationship that brings Humanity into being, where every person can say that "they are all bound to each other in feeling and in action" for "a future based on common action", whilst also realising that it will be "a future

²² G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 171.

²³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Essays in Existentialism*, New York: Citadel Press, 1988, pp. 57-58.

²⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, p. 9.

based on materiality”.²⁵ It hence follows that we establish a fundamental relationship with others that goes beyond the bonds of production, one that is based on the fact that we are all human beings belonging to the same species (HN 86).²⁶ This principle of universal fraternity informs our acts and is transhistorical because it does not belong to history nor appeal to an explanation of the origin of humanity in history.²⁷

Sartre’s version of a socialist humanist morality characterised by this transhistorical principle of universal fraternity is expressed in his principles of Left-wing radicalism. Described as revolutionary ethics in his 1964 Rome Lecture Notes, Sartre observed that established values and norms alienate us from our present concrete situation, and hence, our first step in reaffirming our humanity is to reject these norms. This is because history prescribes us with norms of what we *ought* to do and we are expected to repeat and reaffirm these values and norms of our time rather than focus on what we *can* do in our current concrete situations.²⁸ Thus, for Sartre, it is by dissolving alienated morality through rejecting all “*repetition* in the name of the unconditioned possibility of *making man*” that *true* ethics is born because *true* morality necessarily requires constant reinvention for it to be applicable in our particular situation (DE 203).

To achieve *true* ethics, Sartre attempted to revive the stagnant Left by arguing for the need to revolt against existing democratic norms. He first maintained that if we practice constant criticism of the revolutionary group, such that it is capable of changing leadership, the masses will have the possibility of going beyond what their own leaders advocate.²⁹ This is because the leaders will be forced to see that they need to recreate themselves by aligning themselves to groups and isolated struggles in order to remain relevant to their historicised circumstances. Without doing so, they will be reduced to a product of history and irrelevant to their current circumstances.

²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre & Benny Lévy, *Hope Now: The 1980s Interviews*, trans. Adrian van Deb Hoven, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 91.

²⁶ To quote Sartre at length here: ‘What does it mean to be human, and to be capable – along with one’s neighbour, who is also a human being – of producing laws, institutions, of making oneself a citizen by means of the vote? All Marx’s distinctions among superstructures are a fine bit of work, but it’s utterly false because the primary relationship to individual is something else.’

²⁷ Lévy was to suggest in his interview with Sartre in *Hope Now* that he is relying on a Platonist form of mother-earth mythology to explain ‘fraternity’ as a ‘relationship of being born of the same mother’ and later as fraternity as being born of violence. See *Hope Now*, pp. 87–95.

²⁸ Robert V. Stone & Elizabeth A. Bowman, “Dialectical Ethics: A First Look at Sartre’s Unpublished 1964 Rome Lecture Notes”, *Social Text*, no.13/14 (1986), pp.195–215.

²⁹ Robert V. Stone & Elizabeth A. Bowman, “‘Socialist Morality’ in Sartre’s unpublished 1964 Rome Lecture: A summary and commentary”, *Sartre and Existentialist: Existentialist Ethics*, ed. William McBride, New York: Garland Publishing Inc.: 1997, pp. 286–320.

Sartre gave the USSR as an example of the constituted dialectic in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason Vol. 1*.³⁰ After the revolutionary forces took over the bureaucracy, it ensured unity by institutionalising personality cult as a form of sovereign power so as to prevent any dissolution of the organisation that could arise when individuals assert their sovereignty.³¹ Such institutionalisation based on the use of terror to enforce unity brought on the Reign of Terror and Sartre was critical of the subsequent terror and sub-human situations that were created. What we see here is that instead of creating history based on the principle of universal fraternity, the revolutionary group posited itself as the sovereign under the leadership of Stalin and pursued only class objectives. From this example, Sartre maintained that to ensure revolutionary groups do not reproduce alterity for the purpose of perpetuating their own unity, revolutionary leaders need to carry out practical reflection so that they do not turn away from their original goal of reaffirming universal fraternity.

In the second volume of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre elaborated that for the revolution to achieve its aim of ensuring that workers have permanent and integral control over the process of production, a common ownership of the instruments of labour is necessary. And to do so, the State must progressively wither away because “every other order is inhuman, to the (variable) extent that things govern man” since the socialist man is human only when he governs things.³² But in reality, social stratification became the means to achieving economic growth for an underdeveloped USSR with no other means of enticing the masses in production. The State thus needed to play a unifying role while creating “a hierarchical society with widening wage differentials and multiplying honours”, and the State itself functioned as an “institutionalised sovereign” with power that is objectivised and determined by the fact that it is at the apex of the hierarchy it created (CDR 134). Taking the circumstances of USSR, the State becomes a constitutional dialectic that required a revival of radicalism to overcome the excesses.

If we take Sartre’s perspective, we see that Fukuyama failed to highlight that while the French Revolution realised the consciousness of freedom for all human beings, it had also created a constituted dialectic. In fact, Hegel himself maintained that though the French Revolution succeeded in moving the world towards absolute freedom, it failed because at the same time it realises the general will, it also gave rise to Terror in the process. With absolute freedom, each specific will was transformed into the will of the citizens where the society as a whole was aware that they have risen above being

³⁰ Sartre explained that the terror of the bureaucracy and cult of personality in USSR were the reasons why the withering of the State never occurred for the dictatorship of the proletariat to take root.

³¹ Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason Vol. 1*, pp. 590-591.

³² Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason Vol. 2*, p. 125.

alienated in their individual consciousness to form a universal consciousness in everyone. But failure is inevitable, as Hyppolite puts it, because when man as universal will, installed absolute freedom, “the concrete and objective work vanishes together with alienation” such that “all that remains is an abstract, and therefore purely negative universal.”³³ Thus, absolute freedom does not produce positive work or positive action, but only negative action and destruction, and that is an inevitable dialectical consequence (GS 459). To restore positive work, it will require a new organisation of society with some sort of social strata rather than a classless society because the revolutionary government that expresses the universal will in actual fact only represents the winning faction and will quickly transform into the specific will of its leader.

Despite showing similar concerns over the dialectical consequence of absolute freedom, Hegel and Sartre differed regarding their views on material needs. The motive for historical action mainly lies in material need which presents itself as a lack that demands to be satisfied. Human praxes are hence struggles against material lack and driven towards creating a humanity where needs are satisfied according to Sartre. But because needs are largely satisfied in this advanced capitalist world (with only a marginal group of people falling out of this class), Sartre aimed to reveal the exploitative nature of capitalism instead.³⁴ In his view, modern men not only exhaust themselves to earn enough to afford products they create, the capitalist system also exploits them by providing them with goals within their reach so as to lead them to hold a false impression that they have needs (BME 125). We need to be awakened to the fact that the system not only cannot satisfy our elementary needs but when it can, it is to satisfy our imaginary needs. And above all else, it is essential to reveal our alienation that is disguised by capitalist techniques of integration (BME 125). As a response to this alienation, Sartre argued that there is a need to unify serialised individuals by demonstrating to them the tension between these new needs and the role of the workers advanced in a capitalist system (BME 129). Furthermore, we need to see that humanity is an alienated by-product of a system rather than being its own product because the property right ethic of the capitalist class will always subordinate humans to things.³⁵ To do so, a rejection of the current capitalist system guided by the transhistorical principle of fraternity is necessary.

Hegel’s conception of movements in History on the other hand, only accounted for the struggle of life and death between master and slave, and this constrained

³³ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, p.458.

³⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, “France: Masses, Spontaneity, Party”, *Between Marxism and Existentialism*, New York & London: Verso Books, 2008, p. 124.

³⁵ Stone & Bowman, “Socialist Morality”, pp.178–9.

further meaningful appreciation of the struggle against material circumstances. Hegel had perceived material as shaped by man's historical consciousness of it, and not a material condition that can shape man's historical consciousness. Fundamentally, thoughts move History. And Fukuyama's understanding of Hegel's struggle as conflicts between consciousness and ideas further limited a more holistic appreciation which Sartre was sensitive to, that is, that "the struggle of [humans] on all planes and on all levels of human activity" also moves History.³⁶ But Fukuyama seemed to think that liberal democracies have resolved all contradictions that characterised earlier forms of social organisation and hence brought the historical dialectic to a close.³⁷ In Fukuyama's modern-day example, the move away from central planning in the 1980s in China and the Soviet Union were powered by the consciousness of the elites and leaders who chose "the 'Protestant' life of wealth and risk over the 'Catholic' path of poverty and security".³⁸ The contradiction that Fukuyama saw was fundamentally a contradiction between ideas, which resulted in the victory of one idea over another, in the same way the ideals of the French and American Revolution won by defining our consciousness today.

But this abstract freedom ungrounded in materialist and systemic contradictions does not help us better actualise concrete freedom. Sartre's historicism saw History as a revolutionary process where human beings, having acted upon material reality, create conditions and situations that resist and limit future possibilities and also give rise to the need to overcome these given objective conditions and situations.³⁹ By refusing and rejecting what they have created, human beings constitute a project of surpassing given situations through creating their own possibilities.⁴⁰ In short, "[o]nly the project, as a mediation between two moments of objectivity" can account for history (SM 99). From this perspective, it is obvious that Fukuyama and to some extent Hegel, are opened to a more severe criticism. In subscribing to the idea of a post-ideological world, we necessarily limit not only our conceptualisation, but also the actualisation of concrete human freedom. Freedom for them is effectively an abstraction rather than praxis, which created a reality that further hinders the attainment of concrete freedom. We already find this in advanced economies of today, where capitalist interests fuel the promotion of the liberal democratic model. Their account will hence limit the possibility of developing and achieving concrete freedom

³⁶ Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 8.

³⁷ Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, p. 64.

³⁸ Fukuyama, "The End of History?", p. 5.

³⁹ Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason Vol. 1*, p. 15.

⁴⁰ Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 91.

in the future if we were to conceive the liberal democratic version of freedom as the optimal end without resolving material and systemic contradictions.

Sartre, on the other hand, envisioned a revival of Left-wing radicalism aimed at highlighting the ethical problems of both capitalism and bureaucratic socialism. His first contention with democracies is that they kept the masses serialised, isolated and impotent. As someone who saw freedom in terms of inventing possibilities, he considered the libertarian definition of rights abstract. His 1973 article, 'Elections: A Trap for Fools' pointed out that the voting process substituted legal power for legitimate power because by separating the voters and individualising their votes, it maintained the citizenry in seriality. And when serial individuals are isolated and separated, each vote will be identical to another and united only by a common external situation but impotent in terms of defining and achieving their ends. This atomisation of each individual is further reinforced by other "social forces – work conditions under the capitalist regime, private property, institutions, so forth – bring[ing] pressure to bear upon the grounds they belong to, breaking them up and reducing them to the units which supposedly compose them".⁴¹ And they are further serialised when they internalise such serial thinking by separating themselves from others in the values they maintain and externalising them in their interactions (LS 198-210).⁴² As such, the vote has little value because it expresses only the choice of party the voter chooses to obey, and hence, leading Sartre to conclude that indirect democracy is a hoax.

And the severity of the situation is compounded by the fact that the Left-wing radicals have also disappeared. First, Sartre argued that what was known as the revolutionary left no longer exists as it has now taken on a standard republican behaviour, that is, electioneering through party politics. In doing so, it renders "the very idea of a great and total change" quite impossible.⁴³ Second, he maintained that the "insurrectional aspect of leftism has also disappeared" (HN 75). Unlike the 1960s and 1970s, strikes and street demonstrations no longer achieve the same impact and have more often than not, become simply violent power clashes between insurgent groups and the police.

⁴¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Elections: A Trap for Fools", *Life/Situations: Essays Written and Spoken*, trans. Paul Auster & Lydia Davies, New York: Pantheon Books, 1977, pp. 198–210.

⁴² Also in *Hope Now*, Sartre reiterated that '[v]oting is a fragmentarily act that has no connection with one's work or with the totality of one's personal concerns. That's not at all how the vote was considered in 1793; it was not an isolated act in a person's life. It was the act for the sake of which one was politically involved, for which, in a sense, one existed. The significance of the vote has changed, which is why we are not beyond the French Revolution but losing momentum with respect to it.' See Sartre & Lévy, *Hope Now*, p. 84.

⁴³ Sartre & Lévy, *Hope Now*, p. 75.

Hence, from Sartre's perspective, there is a need to assume and assert our freedom over our situations, by inventing an end for ourselves as masters of our own lives. In doing so, we produce humanity in our own terms for there to be concrete freedom. We can achieve this by creating a "revolutionary counter-system" in order to revive radicalism. This needs to be guided by universal fraternity – where we reject our historicised situation of abstract freedom and redefine rights, liberty and duties. For practical considerations, Sartre also explained that the intellectuals need to play a leadership role because the masses do not possess spontaneity since they were serialised in most aspects of their lives and only formed a fused group at work. Class consciousness as such cannot be achieved because groups that have been produced by circumstances can only create themselves according to their particular demands that arose from the specific situations of exploitation they have experienced rather than rely on some kind of spontaneity (HN 120-3).

In other words, Sartre saw the immense potential of revolutionary praxis in achieving concrete freedom by giving Marxism a humanist twist – where Humanity "entails the satisfaction of needs instead of scarcity; self-production instead of alienation; novelty instead of repetition; group instead of serial action; and praxis guiding, instead of being guided by, the practico-inert".⁴⁴ And because revolutionary praxis guided by universal fraternity addresses the lack at present and replaces it with a new order, revolutionary praxis could be the viable alternative that Fukuyama has overlooked because he has not considered freedom as the freedom to invent and make history. Thus, whereas Fukuyama popularised liberal democracy as the ideal by appealing to Hegel's universal will to achieve freedom, Sartre's universal fraternity took centre stage as a principle that all government forms must adopt to free themselves from excesses. But we can perhaps also argue that Sartre recognises that revolutionary praxis is needed for actualising the freedom of the Spirit Hegel mentioned, except that for Sartre, the actualisation of freedom requires the leadership of the Left.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to accounts that emphasised Sartre's ontological debt to Hegel's concept of *thymos*, this article has shown how Sartre and Hegel each developed an ontological structure of intersubjectivity consisting of both positive and negative reciprocities, with Sartre perhaps more successful than Hegel in explaining the encounters between subjects and subjects. Sartre was also able to demonstrate how History can develop

⁴⁴ Stone & Bowman, "Socialist Morality", p. 175.

through the use of ideas as a galvanising force of action which is mediated by material circumstances, and founded on the ethical motive of universal fraternity compared to pure thoughts alone as suggested by Hegel. In so doing, Sartre returns us to the important role of humans as *making and remaking history* and it is this understanding of the role of humans in the processes of inquiry, critique, and continuous struggles situated in material historicity that are essential in achieving concrete freedom. From this perspective, we need to overcome Fukuyama's constituted post-historic liberal democracy by grasping history for the purpose of transcending the present through the invention of alternative possibilities. Being able to do so, Sartre successfully closes the gap between theory and practice.

SIM University
jenniferangms@unisim.edu.sg

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aron, Raymond, *History and Dialectic of Violence*, trans. Barry Cooper, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975.
- Ang, Jennifer Mei Sze, 'Whither Hegelian dialectics in Sartrean violence?', *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2009).
- Fukuyama, Francis, "The End of History?", *The National Interest*, No. 16, (1989).
- _____, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press, 2006.
- Hegel, G.W. F., *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Roberts Hartman, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall: 1997.
- _____, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Hyppolite, Jean, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak & John Heckman, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974 .
- Monahan, Michael, "Recognition Beyond Struggle: On a Liberatory Account of Hegelian Recognition", *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 32 (2006).
- Sanoni, Ronald E., *Sartre on Violence: curiously ambivalent*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2003.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Press, 1992
- _____, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

-
- _____, _____, *Critique of Dialectical Reason Vol. 1*, trans. Alan-Sheridan-Smith, Jonathan Rée (ed.), London: Verso, 1991.
- _____, _____, *Critical of Dialectical Reason Vol. 2*, trans. Quentin Hoare, Arlette Elkaim-Sartre (ed.), London: Verso, 2006.
- _____, _____, *Essays in Existentialism*, New York: Citadel Press, 1988.
- _____, _____, *Between Marxism and Existentialism*, New York & London: Verso Books, 2008.
- _____, _____, *Life/Situations: Essays Written and Spoken*, trans. Paul Auster & Lydia Davies, New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.
- _____, _____, “Huis Clos”, *Huis Clos and Other Plays*, London: Penguin Books, 2000.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul & Lévy, Benny, *Hope Now: The 1980s Interviews*, trans. Adrian van Deb Hoven, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Sinnerbrink, Robert, ‘Sein und Geist: Heidegger’s Confrontation with Hegel’s Phenomenology’, *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, vol. 3, nos. 2-3 (2007).
- Stone, V. Robert V. & Bowman, A. Elizabeth, “Dialectical Ethics: A First Look at Sartre’s Unpublished 1964 Rome Lecture Notes”, *Social Text*, no.13/14 (1986).
- _____, _____, “‘Socialist Morality’ in Sartre’s unpublished 1964 Rome Lecture: A summary and commentary”, *Sartre and Existentialist: Existentialist Ethics*, William McBride (ed.), New York: Garland Publishing Inc.: 1997.