

Shane Wahl
Honors Thesis
Kit Christensen

Sartre and Marxism: Bridging the gap with mediation of the “Third”

Marxism and existentialism are two of the most influential philosophical perspectives of the last 150 years. These two schools of thought are seemingly at odds with one another both in fundamental principles and method of approach, especially regarding the human condition and the individual's situation in the world. There has been a substantial amount of debate between the two theories, especially in the middle of the twentieth century in France where Jean-Paul Sartre, the existentialist “philosopher of freedom” tackled the problem of reconciliation between the two perspectives. Sartre's attempts received a large amount of criticism from many French Marxists and existentialists, but it is my position that Sartre has developed a framework that provides a firm common ground on which a theory of social relations coherently incorporating both orientations can be developed. While it is not my objective in this analysis to elucidate a thorough social relations theory, I will try to demonstrate how Sartre was able to provide a starting point that can be utilized to bridge the gap between Marxism and existentialism. He does this with the use of a “mediating Third” (sometimes referred to as a “regulating Third”) that makes explicit the solidarity of individuals in the social world, and fosters an objective perspective in which individuals are seen as engaging in a common undertaking.

First, it will be important to get a grasp of both Marx's view of the human condition and the traditional existentialist view. Next, I will briefly summarize Sartre's view of the human condition and Sartre's view of both Marx's thought in general, and

Marx's view of the human condition in particular. With this preliminary analysis complete, the next step will be to explore the problem of reconciliation that Sartre faced, define what Sartre means by "mediation," and also what he means by the "Third." Finally, I will show how the mediation of the Third can be used to bridge the gap between Marxism and existentialism by providing fertile ground for the possibility of solidarity and Marxist class-consciousness.

Two Positions on the Human Condition

According to Marx, the basic activity for humans is labor, or active commerce with nature. One's life is founded on the physical interaction with nature, which is labor. It is a necessity by the very nature of the human species to produce the material means of life. Humans produce their means of subsistence---the food, clothing, adequate hydration, etc., that are required to maintain physical existence. The human condition is founded in the relation humans have with their material environment.

Marx also believed that humans were distinct from other animals because humans produce beyond what is necessary to meet their physical subsistence needs. Humans create art, build furniture, write books, etc., because they are creative animals. People express themselves through their work; they project themselves into their creations so that their creations reflect something about themselves. The way humans creatively interact with their world is such that the created object is a "manifestation of the human world" (Tucker (ed.), p. 87, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*). The object reflects an aspect of human reality. The object is a confirmation of the creator's "forces of being," his or her essential creative energy (Ibid, p. 88).

According to Marx, since humans interact with their environment from material need, they also interact with other humans. People interact with one another through each other's active contact with nature. This interaction with others also provides a means of expressing individual life. "Activity in direct association with others, etc., has become an organ for expressing my own life, and a mode of appropriating human life" (Ibid., p. 88). An individual's relations with others become a means of individual expression. People can build mutually affirming relationships that can enhance their individuality. For Marx, it seems that what a human being essentially is, is not merely the sum of one's actions and productive labor, but also the sum of one's relations with other people.

Traditionally, existentialists have held very different views regarding the human condition. There are no objective values to be discovered "out there" in the world, so it is up to each individual human to create his or her own values and try to lead a life of meaning in a meaningless world. Although philosophers like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche dealt with these issues in their writings in the 19th century, existentialism really developed into a philosophical movement in the 20th century during the desolation caused by two world wars. It appeared to be a very paradoxical time. In Europe, in a time of rapid technological progress and the growth of democratic systems of governing, fascism rose up as a political ideology, technology and mass culture served to depersonalize existence, and war and genocide shaped the continent. To some intellectuals of the time this seemed absolutely insane that a land of "high culture" could foster these atrocities, so they turned inward to explain and escape the objective world, focusing on individual

existence and meaning. The question for existentialists was “How may a person find meaning in a world where there are no objective values?”

The individual must come to grips with this lack of meaning and struggle to define who he or she is. For most existentialists, this struggle is not made any easier because of the existence of other human beings. Society is something that should be rejected since the values of society are often seen as contributing to individual alienation because of society’s tendency to generalize and oversimplify the intricacies of subjective existence. It is very rare that one can really build meaningful relationships with other people.

Sartre’s view of the human condition

Sartre was the most influential existentialist in the 20th Century and came to be known as the “philosopher of freedom” for his assertion that humans are free to choose whom they are no matter what condition they are in. In his major work of the first half of the 20th century, *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre described human consciousness as being “placed” in the world without justification and without a determined essence. Humans are “condemned” to their freedom in this way. Humans are left to make the best of the situation they are placed in, yet there is nothing in the objective world that humans can discover for meaning and justification, no reason to be found for existence. An individual is “abandoned” in the world. “Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world---and defines himself afterward” (*Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 28). For Sartre, with his focus on consciousness at this point in his philosophical career, a human being, in essence, was the sum of his or her choices.

Sartre's social theory in his early writings focused primarily on the dichotomy of the individual and the "Other". For Sartre, "being-with-others" always implies "being-for-others". For example, an individual makes eye contact with another person and the individual experiences "the Look". The Other gives the individual the Look, which posits the individual as an object for the Other, who is a subject. The Other, generally speaking, puts a limit on the individual's freedom by positing the individual as an object whose meaning is created by the Other's gaze. That is, the Other is acquainted with the individual solely as an object for the Other and attributes meaning to the object as an object, not as a subject. The Other knows what the individual *is*, as a being, not as a subject who is always becoming someone through the individual's constant re-choosing of him or herself. This is the source of alienation for the individual in relation with other people. Sartre himself, later states that "the origin of my concrete relations with the Other . . . are wholly governed by my attitudes with respect to the object which I am for the Other" (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 473). While this does not let the individual escape from being an object for the Other, it does, in a sense, give the power back to the individual to take whatever attitude he or she chooses. While the dyad of individual-Other appears to restrict many potential relationships because of the objectification of the individual by the Other, Sartre seems to think there is potential for true social union with others. True social union implies that people can build meaningful, mutually affirming relations with other individuals. Sartre does not really demonstrate how these mutually affirming relations are even possible until he introduces the Third as a mediator.

Sartre's view of Marx and the Marxist view of the human condition

World War II had a dramatic effect on how Sartre viewed freedom and the human condition. "A simple formula would be to say that life taught me the power of circumstances" (*Between Existentialism and Marxism*, p. 33), and "I concluded that in any circumstances, there is always a possible choice. Which is false" (Ibid. 34). Sartre believed that Marx was, generally, right in his analysis of human history and the class struggle, and that the philosophy of Marxism really could not be denied. He summed up the Marxist theory of historical development as, "the forces of production and the relations of production, their consequences and their conflicts" (Ibid. 54).

Sartre particularly paid attention to Marx's analysis of class society and class struggle. According to Marx, because of the necessity for humans to produce the means of subsistence there eventually developed distinct socioeconomic classes, each of whom had particular class interests that differed from those of other classes. One crucial distinction between the dominant class and the subordinate class is that the dominant class owns the means of production and controls what is produced and how it is to be produced. Over time, the means of production (technology and tools) progress too rapidly to maintain the status quo relations of production (the class structure). The subordinate class, or classes, comes to recognize that their interests are not compatible to those of the dominant class, so the lower class or classes rise up and instigate a social revolution to transform society. This recognition is Marx's notion of "class consciousness".

Another thing to note is Sartre's shift away from a philosophy of consciousness as such. Instead he places individual praxis as the foundation of the human essence. Speaking in his common gender-biased language, Sartre says, "there is no reality except in action . . . he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions" (*Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 40). Praxis is understood as an activity with some goal or end in mind. The primacy of praxis in Sartre's philosophy is an important step toward bringing objectivity into human life, and therefore crucial for reconciling existentialism and Marxism.

Sartre, in a sense, saw existentialism as providing Marxism with the correct perspective and direction for enhancement. He believed in the truth and necessity of the dialectical progression of human history, yet he believed that Marxism needed to be revised in the 20th Century, and that existentialism with its focus on freedom and individual meaning would provide the correct revision. He sought to establish the ground for a revolutionary alternative to the status quo in the 20th century. He believed that this could be done on the "basis of alienation . . . in short, on the reconstruction of the individual and freedom" (Ibid. p. 129). Sartre sought to develop a Marxist theory of the human condition that was grounded in existentialism. This theory would reaffirm the truth of much of Marx's thought, extending through and beyond Marxism to provide an adequate basis for social revolution and a reorganization of society. Sartre thought that many Marxists were not dealing with the correct issues, nor taking the right approach to developing the theory as a plausible theory of revolutionary social change.

What is needed to bridge the gap?

If existentialism and Marxism are to be reconciled there are some issues that have to be addressed. First, there is the question as to whether or not progress is possible at all. Existentialism traditionally does not posit history as developing into anything---there is no progress, only human events happening after another. By asserting that the Marxist view of human history was correct, Sartre has resolved this dilemma. In fact, he believed that an existential foundation to Marxism would provide the means for this progress by way of revolution. That is, this foundation would reveal the true nature of human freedom within objective material conditions and this knowledge would be crucial for any attempt at social change.

Second, there is the dichotomy involving objectivity and subjectivity. Marx gives precedence to the objective conditions of material existence and the historical determinism (inevitability) of social change and progress, while existentialism traditionally places precedence on the subjective experience of the individual. A reconciled view would need to situate subjectivity in the development of history, so that there are objective conditions that “contextualize” subjective, individual experience in such a way that although the individual is free, this freedom is restrained by the material conditions in which one is situated.

The third condition involves the relationship between the social and the individual with regard to human activity and productive work. Perhaps the most important value for most existentialists is freedom. With the Marxist view of group *praxis* (goal-oriented activity or labor), how can individual freedom be protected from the demands of the

community? Is it possible to maintain individual freedom while serving to benefit society as a whole? A view that seeks to bring Marxism and existentialism together must posit at least some group activity as being an enhancement of individual activity and individual freedom. Individual freedom cannot be usurped by society and the will of some group.

The fourth condition involves the possibility of social union with others. Sartre's individual-other dyad does not provide good ground for overcoming the natural conflict between people and the alienation that results from relations with others (because of objectification and the "look" experienced by one when one is "for others"). The dyadic relationship does not escape the alienating nature of interaction with the other that objectifies the individual. Some other theory of basic social relations and the formation of groups is necessary. This theory must allow for the true possibility of developing mutually affirming relations with others and for the possibility of individuals banding together for a common cause.

Finally, the means of revolutionary change as a goal must be addressed. This issue is related to the other conditions, certainly. The possibility of social union with others has an effect on potential class-consciousness that is necessary for a communist revolution. How can individuals in the same socioeconomic class be "awakened" to realize that they are united as a group of individuals with the same interests? A reconciled view must break through the existential separation of individuals and outline the means for breaking through the social apparatus that keeps people apart.

In Sartre's major work of the latter half of the century, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre appears to provide adequate resolutions to these problems of reconciliation although he certainly was not done with his overall project of merging the two. Sartre is able to achieve this primarily with his introduction of the "mediating Third".

Thomas Flynn, in his book, *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism*, also believes that the mediating Third is the key method for the means of resolution. Flynn uses the mediating Third to demonstrate that Sartre's Marxism creates "collective responsibility" without a "collective subject" (Flynn, 173). I believe that this path requires a more in-depth analysis of Sartre's ethics and, in fact, requires a moral theory beyond Sartre's to provide an adequate means for reconciliation.

While a detailed moral theory is necessary for reconciliation, in my view, it must come from a detailed analysis of social relations and intersubjectivity, along the lines of, but extending beyond, the work of French phenomenologist, Emmanuel Levinas. Flynn does not dive into the moral realm when he discusses collective responsibility. My objective is to show how the concept of the mediation of the Third can be used to meet the necessary conditions of reconciliation that I outline above. The mediating third provides the necessary means for resolving the objectivity-subjectivity dilemma (with the shift from consciousness to praxis, as well), the question of individual freedom versus group activity, the potential for social union (through solidarity and fraternity), and the means for revolutionary change (the achievement of class-consciousness).

“Mediation” and “the Third”

To mediate, is to be a medium between two entities. Mediation is to become acquainted with something through something else, that something else is what mediates (to learn about the French Revolution I may listen to a teacher’s lecture or read a book, the lecture and the book are mediators). A mediator is that which one thing relates *through* when it is related to another thing.

The “Third” is a more difficult concept to grasp. The Third appears in *Being and Nothingness* as the “existential Other writ large” (Flynn, 93). The Third posits the relationship between the individual and the Other as conflict. The Third in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is different. It is a third-person perspective that unifies the praxes of individuals or groups in a dyad. This Third is not the third person that encounters the dyad and makes conflict between individuals the basis of relations, the Third is placed in actual historical context with the members of the dyad. Sartre himself describes the Third as the “practical power of unifying any multiplicity within his own field of action, that is to say, of totalizing it through a transcendence toward his own ends” (CDR, p. 368). The person who takes up this third person perspective makes the activities of the others objective and unified through his or her own activity.

Mediation of the Third in situation

Sartre gives a phenomenological account involving a road-worker and a gardener in the *Critique*. The two are on opposite sides of a wall and do not see each other. Sartre is looking out his window and can see both, although neither one of them can see him.

Sartre is the Third. His first reaction is a negative one. He does not belong to their economic class and would not know how to do what they are doing.

After this initial reaction, Sartre sees them as they, in a sense, create themselves through their activity. He is watching each of them engage in an individual activity, or praxis. He “rediscovers” their life itself. He sees the necessities of their existence as workers and the social and economic divisions that characterize their class. The Third sees the two people “both as objects situated amongst other objects in the visual field and as prospects of escape” (Ibid., p. 102). They are understood by the Third as productive workers amongst objects and as goal-driven individuals with their own aims and ends. The Third then constitutes their relation to each other as a “reciprocity of ignorance.” The one does not know that the other exists, they are ignorant of each other. By discovering them, the Third sees that each one’s activity “displays the world, as the objective envelope of his work and his ends . . . the objective and the subjective are indistinguishable” (Ibid, p. 104). Each worker is engaged in an activity that produces him, but within a particular material setting, which is objective.

Through the perspective of the Third each worker inscribes himself in the world through his work, the other worker could potentially discover him as an object within his own situation if there was no wall. Sartre realizes that since he has the objective perspective of the Third, “my mediation suffices to uncover the real routes which might bring them closer---separation, ignorance, and simple juxtaposition in exteriority appear as mere accidents” (Ibid. p. 104) which hide the fundamental possibility of mutual discovery and the grounds for the development of a human relation.

So, it is through the activity of another (or at least the results of that activity) that one can discover the other as objectively present in the world “within situation”. Of course there is still a wall that separates the two workers, but the Third could easily intervene in this situation and point each one to the other. Each worker would see the relation he has with the other worker. There is reciprocity in the relationship. However, it is the Third that makes this reciprocity explicit (even if in this situation it is only the Third who is aware of this), and demonstrates that the two worker’s activities coalesce. It is because of this mediation of the Third that it is realized that they are doing the *same thing*. They are acting on the world, engaging in activity (praxis) that expresses themselves, yet in the context of being workers, being of the same class. The mediation of the Third “exposes the many levels of connectedness between the two” (Matarrese, 2001, p. 45).

The mediation of the Third gives Sartre what he calls and “objective situation form” that, through the Third, discloses the relationship between the two individuals as one of equivalence and reciprocity. The two are seen by the Third as engaging in individual praxes that come together to form one praxis. As a methodological or structural viewpoint the mediation of the Third is “the human mediation through which the multiplicity of epicenters and ends (identical and separate) organizes itself directly, as determined by a synthetic objective” (CDR, p. 367). Through the Third, the purposive activities engaged in by individuals in a particular material field coalesce into a unified praxis. That is, the Third becomes aware that within a particular practical field of work

the praxes of individuals are connected.. The objective situation in which the individuals are working is made explicit by, and to, the Third.

One concept that arises in the phenomenological description given by Sartre is reciprocity. Reciprocity implies equality between individuals. The two workers see each other as a individual praxis. That is, each sees the other as involved in the practical field to the same extent that he is. Also, each worker realizes that to the same extent that the other is an object for his own ends, he is an object for the ends of the other (CDR, p. 113). Each understands the other as a part of his own project, while also understanding that the other incorporates him into his project to the same extent. Each worker is acting on the material environment within a given practical field, in essentially the same way as the other is.

This reciprocity is usually only brought about because of the Third, which mediates between the two. The third person perspective may be “taken up by anyone, including one of the two members of the dyad. An individual can take a look at the situation he or she is involved in objectively and see that his or her project and the other person’s project come together as a unified project.

It is apparent that Sartre has shifted from the individual-Other dyad of his earlier works. Now the Third is a “unifying force . . . in the most diverse situations” (McBride, p. 129). This shift away from the dyadic model of relations allows for an objective assessment of the situation in which the two individuals are working.

The mediating Third provides the objectivity needed for a resolution of the objectivity-subjectivity problem discussed above. The Third is a type of distanced

viewpoint that locates the two individuals or groups of individuals in situation, acting within the practical field, and realizes that the two projects come together in a single, objective, synthetic praxis. Sartre then moves on to show how mediation of the Third is involved in the formation of groups.

The Fused Group

The formation of groups is based on the motive “to liberate serialized praxes from the alienating mediation of the practico-inert, supplanting it by the practical mediation of the praxes themselves” (Flynn, p. 109). This sentence, with its Sartrean terminology, means that individuals form groups to obtain more human control over their material environment through the mediation of their own activities. Instead of simply being mediated by inorganic matter, the activities themselves mediate the individual praxes as well. The group as a unity mediates the individual praxes of the members of the group.

Sartre gives another phenomenological description here. This is his account of resisters reacting against the police during the storming of the Bastille in 1788. It also is an example of the Marxist notion of class struggle. After a gathering of people formed in the street to protest, there is a dispersal of individuals as the authorities turn on the gathering. There is a regrouping of some of those in the gathering behind a shelter. On his way to this shelter to join the resisters, he happens “to be in the practical field of another third party . . . who is approaching the same group with the same purpose” (CDR, p. 375). They see each other as a third party joining the group. If the group has 98 members before he and this other person join then each joins a group of 100 through the other. Each is the 100th of the Other. The group is the mediator here because it is

through the group's number that each individual is a particular number upon joining the group. Through this mediation by the group, it is apparent that each comes to the group in the same way, with the same praxis, "he is the same as me . . . I see myself come to the group in him, and what I see is merely lived objectivity" (Ibid., p. 377). Each sees the other as an object within one's practical field. Each incorporates the Other as an object within one's own praxis. There is reciprocity involved indicating equality between individuals and very similar objective situations that each individual shares with the others. One sees the objectivity of the other third party *as his own*.

One's praxis is integrated into the group praxis. The group has formed with a common objective. One's own praxis is seen as identical to the group praxis, yet this common praxis is in fact conditioned by every individual praxis, in that each individual realizes that it is "my own freedom recognizing itself as common action in and through my individual action" (Ibid., p. 378). What the group praxis is defined as, is determined by the free praxis of every individual. The group gives greater strength to the amount of choices one has, and thus the possibilities that can be achieved through individual praxis increase as well. That is, if an individual tries to counterattack against the police, for example, this possibility is only possible because of the group praxis itself, as a group with a relative amount of power due to its size. Yet, once again this is done based on the freely chosen individual praxis. "Free totalizing praxis allows itself to be conditioned in reality and in practice by the totalization it has just brought about" (Ibid., p. 394). Thus, while the group praxis is conditioned by what each individual praxis does, the individual praxis is conditioned by the group praxis it has brought about and so on.

Everyone in the group is seen as a third party by every other third party. Each totalizes the reciprocities of others. Each person can stand in mediation between any individual and any other individual, or the group itself, and objectively see how the two praxes coalesce into a unity. There is an equality present here once again. Every other person is another “myself”. Everyone is engaged in unifying praxes. There appears an “us” as a practical relation between the individuals. There is the potential for the realization of a “we,” a group that is bonded together in a given situation.

Free, individual praxis can “objectify itself in everyone, through the totalizing situation and in the totalized object as free, common praxis” (Ibid., p. 395). If one runs behind a wall, one is objectifying the situation as a mediating Third because one is telling the others in the group to do the same thing. The individual has made an objective determination that unites the praxes of individuals into a common praxis of running behind the wall. Thus the mediating Third in the fused group “renders possible ascriptions of collective predicates to individuals-in-relation” (Flynn, p. 116). What is said of the group can also be said of the individuals who comprise the group.

Sartre places a lot of emphasis on the fact that the individual is not lost in the herd of group praxis, but instead, individual praxis is enhanced by the existence of the group. The “common praxis . . . realizes itself in everyone . . . as the free intensification of his effort” (CDR, p. 402). Group activity does not swallow the individual. Individual praxis is maintained as the free praxis of the members of the group.

Also, there is always the possibility of leaving the group. One is not bound in chains to the “fused group”. “Real individuals, however, can always leave the group, or

distance themselves from the praxis of the group” (Matarrese, 2001, p. 47). There is always the threat of an internal dissolution of the group by the non-participation of individuals in the group. The group is constantly being re-evaluated by the individual praxes that condition it. This is the nature of the dialectical process of the formation of the group and its internal dissolution.

By introducing the mediation of the Third in the formation of the fused group, Sartre has resolved another one of the problems of reconciliation between traditional existentialism and traditional Marxism. That is, he has resolved the question of individual freedom in praxis versus the praxis of the group. Individual freedom is maintained. First, the existence of the group can actually enhance one’s freedom within the group. Because of the existence of the group itself, the individual may be able to realize more possibilities than he or she could do alone. Individual praxis is intensified through the group praxis. Second, one is always free to leave the fused group and join up again through one’s own praxis and free choice.

The Pledged Group

There are two conditions left to be met. The first, is the possibility of social union with others. While some sort of social union results from the fused group, the pledged group (a group that forms around a type of oath regarding the maintenance and objectives of the group) provides the real means for solidarity. The solidarity of a group is made intelligible when (through the perspective of the Third) “one limits the freedom of others and allows for one’s own freedom to be limited” (Ibid, p. 47). People in solidarity with one another can unite around a common cause and organize themselves for this cause.

Also, people in solidarity with one another can realize that together they form a unified whole that can lead to class-consciousness and the radical transformation of society that both the Marxists and Sartre desire.

For the group to remain a group there needs to be an assertion of permanence of the group. This comes from the pledge. The pledge distributes certain rights and duties to the members of the group. While the fused group was unorganized because of its spontaneity (reaction to police), the pledged group requires more structure and organization because it is formed not in reaction to something spontaneously, but formed after the original praxis of the fused group is completed. Some amount of structure and organization is necessary for the group to remain in existence for a significant amount of time. With the fused group there is always the possibility of dissolution of the group if the immediate threat (for example, the police or a militia) is no longer there. The fused group was formed rather spontaneously as a group of individuals came together to resist something immediately threatening. When the activity of the fused group has been carried out and there is no longer an immediate threat, there is potential for the group to disintegrate, leaving just a bunch of serial individuals.

. According to Sartre, the pledge must involve an order whose purpose is to involve third parties. "I offer myself so they can offer themselves; the offer of my services (my life etc.) is already the *same* as theirs" (CDR, p. 427). The pledge results in reciprocity between the individuals, "mediated by the third party" (Ibid., p. 427). It is through the perspective of the Third that this reciprocity becomes apparent.

Each individual takes the pledge as a free choice and recognizes that everyone else in the group has done the same. Each pledge given by every member forms the objective claim “that no one will be the cause of the disintegration of the group” (Matarrese, 2001, p. 48). This claim is the objective unification of every individual’s pledge. Everyone in the group mediates this claim, as Thirds, in that it is apparent that an individual’s pledge not to betray the group is reciprocated by every other member of the group. The narrow perspective of each individual is widened by the Third. The individual no longer sees the pledge as merely his or her relation to the group, but the pledge is everyone’s relation to the group in the exact same way.

The basis of the pledge, according to Sartre, is fear. This fear is the fear of death. To break the pledge is to be willing to die at the hands of the other members of the group. Therefore, this fear essentially is the fear of the other members of the pledged group. Individuals can choose to leave the group, but to go against the group is, in effect, to join what the group is fighting against. This is why breaking the pledge means punishment. While this is a very strong statement, and one that would seem to be shaky ground for any group to be based on, Sartre points out the unifying feature of this pledge. The pledge, as the fear of death, is “freedom’s affirmation of itself as justified violence against the practico-inert” (CDR, p. 432), and is a “terror which unites rather than a terror that separates” (CDR, p. 434). That is, the pledge represents the freedom of every individual who takes the pledge to fight against certain conditions within one’s material environment, and insofar as it is everyone’s pledge, it unites the individuals instead of

creating antagonism based on this fear. The other members of the group limit one's freedom because of the pledge, but every other individual's freedom is limited in the same way. The fear of death is mediated by the Third, so it is apparent that the fear is everyone's fear. Everyone has the potential to be executed, and everyone has the potential to be executioner.

An important thing to note is the potential danger and institutionalization of the group. The Reign of Terror is an example of this. The group collapsed into relations of separation once again. They were no longer united with a common objective. Groups seem to always run the risk of succumbing to internal dissolution when individuals in the group manipulate other individuals in the group (for example, Stalin within the party in the Soviet Union).

However, the individual in the pledged group becomes more aware of his or her individuality and his or her belonging in the group. While in the group, the individual can take up the perspective of the Third and see one's involvement in the group objectively. "One transcends the group insofar as one totalizes the group and stands outside of it as regulatory; but one's relation to the group is also immanent insofar as one is totalized by some other third party" (Matarrese, 2000, p. 49). One sees oneself as an individual through one's ability to take up the third-person perspective and understand the group at a "distance" as an individual, yet one is understood as being in the group by other Thirds. The fear of death that the pledge brings about does not reduce an individual's uniqueness as an individual. Mediation of the Third preserves the

individuality of the members at the same time it serves to unite the group as individuals in reciprocal relations.

Solidarity and Fraternity in the Pledged Group

The pledged group goes beyond the fused group in the way it reveals the bonds of relations between individuals in the group. It is in the pledged group that the notion of solidarity really takes shape as a concrete relation between individuals. In the pledged group, there is a clear distribution of rights and duties that reflect the common interests and aims of the group. There is a bond of solidarity in the pledged group because there is a fellowship of individuals devoted to a common cause with shared responsibilities toward the group. "Solidarity consists in becoming a common individual along with every other individual as everyone submits themselves to the limits of the pledge" (Matarrese, 2001, p. 48). There is an equality of every individual within the group in that the individual has the same duty as everyone else to try to preserve the group. Each individual is committed to the permanence of the group---that is, the maintenance and well being of the group---which is a result of the pledge.

By revealing the objective nature of the pledged group, the mediating Third makes the bonds of solidarity explicit. It is only through the Third that one is aware of the commonality of the individual members of the group. That is, the perspective of the Third is the perspective through which it is apparent that each individual is in the same relation to the pledge and is engaged in a common cause with every other member in the group.

Class-consciousness

Class-consciousness is the awareness of the members of a class that they *are* a class with specific interests and aims. Class-consciousness is a prerequisite for a communist revolution. The working class must become self-aware and realize its own interests differ from the interests of the ruling class. Yet, the working class must be able to embrace the “fringes” of its particular class, that is, the poor peasants below it and some of the bourgeoisie above it.

I believe that the awareness of solidarity amongst the members of the pledged group has the potential to bring about class-consciousness through work. There is a meaning behind the collective praxis of the group that is implicit, and can be made explicit. The members of the group have formed the group *for a reason*. For there to be common praxis it seems necessary that there is a common motivation behind the action, a motivation that is based on the recognition of similar interests and goals.

It is true that the pledged group is a concrete group that forms within a particular setting and is not based on the pledge of an entire class, which includes members separated by actual geographic distance. The class is comprised of individuals who have never seen most of the fellow members of the class. However, Sartre provides a definition of class-consciousness that sheds light on its potential actualization. Class-consciousness “is only born in struggle: class struggle only exists insofar as there exist places where actual struggle is going on” (*Between Existentialism and Marxism*, p. 123). The fused group and the pledged group form in those places where there is a struggle. It is not necessary for the class as a whole to become self-aware, there only needs to be

groups who are self-aware and are engaged in common praxis. Groups can form in different locations at different times, but can do so, with a common objective. Class-consciousness only needs these groups to “set an example,” to struggle for their common objective in situation. These groups need to “do their part,” by resisting class oppression within their given material setting and engaging in a common praxis to overcome this oppression.

The perspective of the Third is crucial here once again. Through mediation of the Third the interconnectedness of various groups who rise up against certain conditions of existence can be made explicit. Just as the Third exposed (to the Third himself) the interconnectedness of individuals (in individual praxis, the gardener and the road-mender), and made explicit the interconnectedness of the fused group and the pledged group, so it can also expose the interconnectedness between groups of individuals. This awareness must be an objective awareness of intersubjectivity. That is, the subjective experience (for example, encounter with the enemy, motivation behind resistance, and group praxis) of each of two different groups-in-situation can be made objective by taking up the third-person perspective.

Conclusion

Marxism and existentialism are not incompatible. While they seem to contradict one another with regard to fundamental beliefs and principles, there is fertile ground for reconciliation and even enhancement of both theories through this reconciliation. Sartre, although he received much criticism in his attempt, has provided this fertile ground with his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. What enables him to do it is primarily his

introduction of the mediating Third (the shift from consciousness to a praxis orientation is very important too). This mediating Third enables subjective situations to be revealed objectively in the activity of praxis and the formation of groups. Mediation of the Third gave Sartre the objective form to put subjective experiences in context. It also provides the possibility of social union with others and the formation of groups engaged in a single, unified praxis that does not trump individual freedom, but rather has the potential of actually enhancing individual freedom through the group. Finally, a potential means to class-consciousness is outlined because of the concrete solidarity individuals have with one another when engaged in common praxis. The perspective of the Third could make explicit the individual motivations that are, in fact, *shared* amongst people in similar material circumstances (socioeconomic class).

The Third exposes how connected people are with one another and this connection is something that must be explored. This implies moral evaluation geared toward understanding one another's experience. I believe that if people understood why someone is the way he or she is, they would see how similar they are to the individual, and the divisive elements that separate common individuals (particularly those of a similar socioeconomic class) would have much less effect. People could come together and work to transform how *life is lived* in a way that more genuinely reflects the interests of all.

It is necessary to go beyond Sartre's ideas to further elucidate the interconnectedness of individuals. Sartre, however, provides a solid framework from which to work. This framework is the mediation of the Third which can make the

“findings” of intersubjectivity (how people understand one another) explicit. Sartre and Marx both shared the view that truly human life was found in a non-alienating environment where the values of freedom and equality are realized. It is the task of others who believe the same thing to come together and change the world.

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