

DRAMATIZING PHILOSOPHY: SARTRE AND THE THEATRE

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Introduction: Theatre from the World

When it comes to people we are perhaps best served by asking what they are in the process of becoming through the projects they have chosen and will choose to do. Such an approach with regard to what it means to be human is one that takes it for granted that people are intimately wedded to the world and that to define what it means to be human is to define the world. What is taken for granted here are preliminary ontological conclusions, and, because what follows is commentary on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre we take his ontology as espoused in *Being and Nothingness* as our point of departure.

We learn from *Being and Nothingness* that, because people are conscious, they are never fully disclosed as the psycho-physical structure that they are. That is to say that consciousness, as man's non-being, is what makes him irreducible to any *thing*. Non-being in the form of consciousness allows for negation which in turn grants man the ability to make distinctions. Consciousness is what permits identification in what would otherwise be a wash of pure being. It is because of consciousness that man becomes meaningful while supplying meaning. We will come to recognize this process of generating one's meaningful reality as what Sartre terms *totalization*. Presently it is important to proceed with caution noting that by stating that man composes the meaning of his reality we do not mean that he chooses the significance of all things. Proposing instead that the statement be understood as man creates his own meaningful situation through a novel arrangement of an already meaningful world.¹ Man finds himself situated in the world and this situation remains open ended, taking on meaning only in relation to what he hopes to accomplish next. This is how freedom is introduced. Man has to choose what he does next in relation to how he perceives or understands what he has already done as background for what he is doing. Freedom in this sense is evidenced by a person's ability to

compose their project, what Sartre later terms *praxis*.² “Condemned to be free,” man has to choose the significance of his own situation. He is disclosed through the process of becoming all-that-he-is-not-yet in light of what he has been. He is free, and thereby condemned, to supply meaning to his life. Anxiety over this responsibility is exacerbated by the fact that he finds himself in a world amongst others and is compelled to supply its significance in competition or collaboration with significance supplied by others regarding the world and even himself.

In Sartre’s work ontology discloses freedom and its limits. In doing so it registers moral issues imbedded in human experience; nevertheless, ontology, in spite of its utility in mapping out its coordinates, cannot disclose what ought to be done within *lived* experience. The meaningful or lived reality of a person is centered on what Sartre terms “situation.” Sartrean situation reveals:³ 1) Man is a physical reality among other physical realities; he is a being-in-the-world disclosed by that which he is not. 2) Man is a social individual among other social individuals, he is a being-for-others and by way of others. 3) Man, as temporal being, is more than an aggregate of “past” and “present” because these only have meaning when paired with “future.” For Sartre, man could never be disclosed in isolation. In fact, the possibility of man’s disclosure is only possible because of all that surrounds him (all that he is not) and the degree to which they (man and his surroundings) are extended in time; “[m]an is not the sum of what he has, but the totality of what he does not yet have, of what he might have.”⁴ For Sartre, human beings do not share a ready-made “human nature” that adapts to situations. Instead it is the fact that one always finds themselves situated that is universal. Human psychological traits are not as important to Sartre as how people are limited by their situation and how they relate to those limits.

The idea that people are ultimately inseparable from their situation is a salient feature of Sartre's *oeuvre*. Everywhere we find people imbedded in a project that dictates, and is dictated by, their situation. All situations in Sartre's eyes demand that value judgments be made. Sartre communicates this through his penchant for authoring vibrant examples in his prose and accentuates it by turning to theatre. In *Sartre as Dramatist* David Bradby points out that,

Through an insistence that ethics can be usefully discussed only when taken in the context of a given situation whose controlling factors are known, he is led to devise situations, as a dramatist devises situations, even in his non-dramatic works. Not only is Sartre naturally given to devising dramatic examples in his philosophical writings, but the dramatic urge can be found in the very structure of his ideas: the process of building up a situation towards a *dénouement* seems fundamental to his thought.⁵

Although Sartre turns to theatre to produce dramatizations of the human disposition as being in the world, we are not saying that he simply wanted to endow his style with a dramatic flare, or that theatre was just another medium for him to exploit. Rather it is our contention Sartre meant to emphasize that philosophy itself is dramatic:

I think that philosophy is dramatic... [it] is concerned with man—who is at once an *agent* and an *actor*, who produces and plays his drama while he lives the contradictions of his situation, until either his individuality is shattered or his conflicts are resolved. A play (be it epic, such as Brecht's, or dramatic) is the most appropriate vehicle today for showing man *in action*—i.e. man full stop. It is with this man that philosophy, from its own point of view, should be concerned. That is why the theatre is philosophical and philosophy is dramatic.⁶

Sartre realizes in all of his work that one is always among others and that this directly impacts how one interacts with the world around them. Our task here will be to show how Sartre uses the theatre to allegorize and depict his philosophy and its moral implications. Sartre's theatre is a philosophical expression about human identity, its interdependent relation with others as well as with objects in the world. After all to be is to be communal and theatre is communal both in its production and its viewing.⁷ Although the audience does not participate in a play's production,

there is a sense in which the audience writes the play.⁸ This is because Sartre believes a “play in performance is primarily an object.”⁹ A special object that mediates a kind of playfulness from the piece disclosed on stage to the author, to the audience.¹⁰ A playfulness that discloses intimate truths regarding the human condition, yet, in order for these to be conveyed effectively Sartre needed to first change certain tendencies prevalent in the theatre of his day.

Sartre required a new kind of theatre because the “theatre of characters” that dominated the theatrical landscape between world wars could not serve his purposes. He found that plays centering around character at best only managed to present “psychological studies.” What you had in the theatre of character was the presentation of an unalterable “human nature” regardless of the situation in which characters found themselves. And, as we learn in *What Is Literature?*, the committed work of art, a work presented as art in order to reveal and be recreated by its audience, contains the image of the audience for whom it is intended.¹¹ While it is true that conventional narrative invites us to create characters it is important to admit that good character development involves what a character does while entrenched in a particular situation. This is why Sartre declares that “[a]s a successor to the theatre of character, we want to have a theatre of situations.”¹² The French “caractère” ought not to be confused with the simple English translation “character” as in a character in a narrative. Sartre’s use of *caractère* is much weightier. It is also meant to signify “persona,” “temperament,” “nature,” or a broader sense of comportment attributable to a specific essential characteristic intrinsic to a person. For Sartre *caractère* is not to be revealed but engendered by situation(s). When Sartre asks that we move from a theatre of *caractère* to a theatre of situations he means that, rather than have theatre privilege the revelation of *caractère* through narrative progression, what is instead to be desired

is a theatre where the primacy of situation takes hold because it fundamentally engenders what gets taken for *caractère* by others. Essentially,

The play of situations as it were throws the character outside himself. The character does not come into play as a certain object to be gradually revealed. The character will have to interpret what he “is” from what the other characters tell him he is. His being is perpetually in question. He has to choose himself, he will be what the other characters make him and what his reactions to this attempt at possession will be.¹³

For Sartre theatre staged the ambiguity rooted in human reality. As a medium, it is supremely suited for illustrating the interplay between people and objects in a variety of situations. Each play is a portrayal of a particular situation. Each situation presents the set of choices characters will take up through action. Each action taken increasingly defines the characters and their surroundings. How characters define themselves and their surroundings through action is a portrait of Sartrean situation. Whether a fork is eating utensil or weapon depends on how the situation is measured and enacted by the character immersed in it. The situation defines the character; the character creates the situation. If there are abstractions in theatre they are abstractions that cause movement toward action. This is because theatre exemplifies how ideas are communicated through action. Abstractions have no place on the stage. This is not the same as saying that theatre cannot be used to launch abstractions. Moreover, one of the points of our current project is to show that theatre was attractive to Sartre because it conveyed ideas fundamental to his own projects. Projects that attempt to elucidate human reality.

Sartre doubted that post war France could continue producing plays wherein archetypical characters found themselves in predicaments designed to exalt or preserve moral purity. He was also skeptical of the idea that it would witness the rebirth of the “philosophical play” that could render absolute moral propriety. He rejected theatre that purported to shed light on some would be universal phenomenon on the grounds that it was not as direct or as strong as theatre that

conveyed particular concerns. He rejected the typical apolitical play that outlined some moral imperative or another as too broad, too ambiguous, or merely serving to confirm prejudice. That form of theatre, in Sartre's view, said nothing about anything. He rejected these conservative and conventional instances of theatre especially in reference to his own work stressing that French playwrights like himself, Anouilh, Camus, Genet, and de Beauvoir (who had just written *Les Bouches inutiles*) understood that man was

not to be defined as a "reasoning animal," or a "social" one, but as a free being already committed in the world full of both threatening and favorable factors among other men who have made their choices before him, who have decided in advance the meaning of those factors... That is why we feel the urge to put on the stage certain situations which throw light on the main aspects of the condition of man and to have the spectator participate in the free choice which man makes in these situations... We claim for ourselves the *true* realism because we know it is impossible, in everyday life, to distinguish between fact and right, the real from the ideal, psychology from ethics.¹⁴

Building on the thought that theatrical convention depicts man as thrown into a particular state of affairs Sartre calls for a "theatre of situations" where plot development comes as a result of a character's action in response to experience of their world. That is to say that if there was to be a psychology to a character that psychology was to be supplied by their choices in response to dispositional circumstances. As Sartre put it, "We all know that the world changes man and man changes the world. And if that is not what the basic subject of any play should be, the drama no longer has a subject."¹⁵ In his plays characters typically appear in the middle of an event that will come to define them while said events take on their significance as a result of what characters do. The play serves as allegorical representation of the world. This of course is commonplace in conventional theatrical narrative. What is of interest is the nature of the world represented in Sartre's theatre and how its characters come to terms with their place in it.

Sartre meant to incriminate his characters, and thereby his audiences, by having their respective values, values that were to be called into question throughout a play, be the cause of developments in their world. This was to be done by depicting how each character affirms or condemns values through the choices they make throughout the narrative. This is why Sartre's theatre depicts its characters in extreme situations where they must make choices that will either save or condemn them and/or their community. *The Flies*, for example, was originally produced in France during the German occupation. The situation of the people of Argos was meant to mirror the situation of the audience sitting in the theatre.¹⁶

Through his theatre Sartre communicates that no single or collective set of situations can be said to have a suitable moral approach. One cannot will that everyone act as one does in a given situation because any and every possible situation is uniquely composed. It is uniquely composed by history and the human projects it illustrates. And so we find that every ethical act can be seen as a creative act meant to contribute to a project, or set of projects, within a historical context. If man is to be called into question from an ethical standpoint then it is because his situation demands it. We find ourselves believing Sartre made good on his promise to address questions concerning situated freedom on an ethical plane throughout the remainder of his *oeuvre*. We find evidence of this preoccupation in works like *Anti-Semite and Jew* wherein he exploits notions like bad faith, being-for-others, and freedom in the name of social criticism. We see this in *What is Literature?* where the value of writing itself, as an enterprise for social transformation, is called into question. We see this in his novels like *The Age of Reason* where anxiety regarding the proper choice of action hovers over every page. But it is only through theatre, with all its inherent qualities, that he can demonstrate in a way that calls for emulation. It

is theatre that best punctuates his obsession with ethical values, and their adoption, rejection, or creation.

Chapter 1. Sartre's Conceptual Drama

As readers we have a tendency to desire common grounds with characters portrayed in the novel or questions reflected on in the philosophy essay. We want to go to the theatre and relate to the characters we see on stage or at the very least we want to feel with them, recognize or reject them as possible selves under similar circumstances. In Sartre's theatre we are hard pressed to find sustainable comfortable commiseration with any of its characters. This is because his theatre is not one populated by the hero or anti-hero. Instead what we encounter is the Sartrean protagonist in the form of the "bastard." Careful consideration is paid to the bastard in Sartre's work and we find sustained treatises on what it means to be a bastard in his own childhood (*The Words*),¹⁷ and in his biographical portraits (*Baudelaire, St. Genet, The Family Idiot*). Sartre has a special interest in the bastard insofar as the bastard represents the outsider, the illegitimate subject. Indeed, "Sartre believes that as an orphan he has a special affinity with the bastard; he defines the orphan as a 'false bastard,'" his protagonists are "outsized heroes for him precisely because they are bastards."¹⁸ The Sartrean bastard is a subject who discovers himself in a situation where his actions determine that he hold his identity in question; or better yet, a subject whose situation is one that invites him to take on a role. By such an act the bastardy determines what one is in the world by way of how that chosen role is played out.

Sartre repeatedly introduces us to the bastardy through his plays (*The Flies, The Devil and the Good Lord, Kean*). The bastard decides to appear as a stranger in his hometown only to affirm himself as its liberator (Orestes). The bastard is the assassin choosing to put another man

in his crosshairs rather than himself (Hugo). The bastard is the movement of the malefactor turned altruist turned tyrant (Goetz). Sartre's theatre of situation casts a bastard as an actor playing an actor playing a character on stage (Kean). By the bastardy we do not mean to simply determine some of the situated characters we find in Sartre's plays and novels. The term is also intended to capture an aspect of the subject interrogated in his philosophical work as well as the individual in the general public he addresses. In this sense, our use of "bastard" is intended to capture a component we encounter as a truth of human reality in Sartre's works.

As a way of familiarizing ourselves with Sartre's use of the bastardy let us consider how the bastardy is encountered in his writings. In *The Childhood of a Leader* we meet Lucien, a child wondering if he is a boy or girl on the basis of people addressing him as a girl when wearing a dress. He fears that "people would suddenly decide he wasn't a little boy any more; he would have protested in vain, no one would listen to him, they wouldn't let him take off his dress again except to sleep..."¹⁹ In *St. Genet* we find the child Genet marked as thief when caught in the gaze of an adoptive parent; for Genet, "thief," became a word that would find its meaning on the basis of how he comported himself in reference to it.²⁰ In *The Words* Sartre depicts his own childhood as one marked by feelings of detachment.²¹ The bastardy in Sartre's portrayal of children is meant to emphasize their detached outlook. They were born of, and so belonged with, no legitimate group; although it is true that Genet never knew who his parents were, it is not the question of lineage that Sartre wishes to connote with his use of "bastard" but a sense of disconnection from the world. On the other hand, this is a disconnectedness that comes with a desire to belong in spite of knowledge that one does not because the bastard is illegitimately predisposed.²² All of these examples are of children playing-at a role where the roles are determined by the effect their being played produces in other people. Such role playing is readily

associated with the profession of the actor and it is for this reason that we now turn to Sartre's theatre and the concepts he devises in relation to it.

1. Movement from Actor to Agent through the Bastardy in Sartre's Theatre

We look to the theatre to locate the bastardy because it is there that the movement from play to seriousness is best illustrated. It is there that actors show what it means to lose their “naturalness like a child playing under the eyes of grown-up people.”²³ The plays are helpful when it comes to understanding what the bastard does because if Sartre has a psychology, then it is the behavioral one evident in his plays. For it is in his theatre that we find characters like Orestes and Kean; bastards both by birth and insofar as they are not anchored to the world—they belong to no group and their drama is the struggle to identify who they are by attempting to inject themselves into the world through deed. Orestes becomes heir of Argos through regicidal matricide. Kean recognizes he is playing the part of the actor when he is not on stage and desires to be Edmond Kean, the man, as opposed to Kean, the greatest actor in London. One after the other Sartre's characters are developed as bastards who must dress themselves in identity, address themselves by “the look” the other uses to identify them (a peeping tom), by the way they choose to present themselves to others (a waiter), by the way they choose to interpret themselves to themselves (a lady of virtue rather than a tease), and through the things they do (Orestes, Garcin, Hugo, Goetz, Franz etc.). This is because Sartre means to communicate that despite our assurances or convictions our bodies, as well as our words, betray us. Revealing us in some way or another by the way we act.

Now let us consider what the bastard has to say: Note, the bastard has nothing of his own; he is thrust into a world with nothing and is forced to fend for himself with what he can make use

of. Simply put: “Every pariah—every bastard—suffers from having to use words that are not his.”²⁴ Every subject, that is every bastard, must grapple with how he will arrange his words given that they come loaded with meaning of their own. Every bastard invents his language by rearranging the way language is used, by recognizing how he has been invaded by it. Every bastard, that is every subject, soaks up the world, its beauty and its horrors, and is compromised by way of its influence.

When we act in a way that appears to us as pleasing that act is met with approval on the basis of what we have come to value. When we act in a way so deplorable to us that we feel compelled to reject even the possibility of having acted in such a way the act is rejected because it is not in keeping with what is valued. We go as far as to say that the deplorable act is not our own, that we were “possessed” when it was committed. We comport ourselves in ways meant to bury such acts, to deny them, to purge them. We are weighed down by the acts we come to identify ourselves with, and this is especially the case if we come to understand ourselves as defined by them. To live one’s life through attempts at self defining acts is an adoption of what Sartre calls “the spirit of seriousness,” an attitude that calls for adapting or adjusting behavior in accordance with what is perceived to be a desirable being-for-others. Not everyone is a bastard but everyone is capable of being in the mode of the bastardy toward themselves and the world. The bastardy allows for recognition of inherited tendencies and endorses or rejects them depending on their utility in regard to projects taken up.

The bastardy is the playful aspect of our human condition in that it attempts seriousness when a project demands it, but never to the degree that it forgets itself; that is, never to the degree that it forgets we are only playing at being serious for a desired end. The bastard only *plays at* being serious—a mode of being Sartre compares to death—without fully committing to

the “seriousness” of the roles being played (the bastard plays possum). This allows for optimum novelty and taste in regard to the way we play our roles and the roles we choose to play. It is the bastard who discovers himself as a stranger in a situation and asks himself, “What is my role and how will I play it?” This is a question the actor must address. It is easy to see that the actor at work in presenting a character exemplifies man as being what he is not and not being what he is. And it is in this very sense that she portrays the bastardy. The bastard is the subject in perpetual questioning whether as persona sketched out on the page, as woman on the stage portraying the drama, or as dissenter on the street playing out a human drama authentically or not. The bastardy does not always accompany or yield authenticity because it does not signify full self-awareness since one is never fully disclosed to oneself. The bastardy does not connote authenticity but a promise to remain vigilant regarding one’s acts as well as one’s attempts to honestly reflect on their moral worth. A bastard may want to be swept off for good by the spirit of seriousness but realizes that this is not a possibility for them. When a bastard is serious it is fleeting because it is something that is only temporarily being played at. The bastardy is recognition of the spirit of seriousness as a conventional mode of being resulting from bad faith; a special recognition of perpetual invitation to bad faith. Sartre identifies Flaubert’s laughter (what Flaubert laughs at) to as an ancient defense mechanism in the service of social regulation—a counter-mechanism to the bastardy.

In the second volume of *The Family Idiot* Sartre introduces laughter in terms of he who is laughed at, as having regulative social function. The regulation is in the service of conventionality in that what is laughed at is generally that which is out of step, an act or event that deviates from acceptable social standards. What is intended by laughter is the defusing of an event that is regarded as a threat insofar as it indicates an alternative to the way things are

generally encountered in a given social group. The alternative, being something unknown, is regarded as a threat because it may lead to an uprooting of normative social behavior and established values. In laughing at someone else the laugher identifies that they are not the one to be laughed at. The offender, the object of laughter, is turned into a spectacle rather than a threat. Sartre provides “the drunkard” as an example of an object of ridicule for a group. The drunkard is funny because he attempts to move in a way that conforms to sobriety, having imbibed too much alcohol, he staggers in his lack of dexterity instead. The drunkard takes himself seriously but cannot be taken seriously by others. This spectacle “is still threatening to serious people; it exposes their very seriousness... and demonstrates that gravity is only a posture.” The drunkard is not viewed as dangerous enough a threat by the group and so the group treats him with the “passive activity” of the spectator: That the drunkard is to be rejected but not in a physical way.

Thus the problem is how to suppress an unpleasant spectacle without departing from that passive activity of the spectator. You can turn your back of course, but that is a losing proposition; for behind the indignant backs the ridicule of man continues. Laughter is the only suitable response.²⁵

Laughter is related to the bastard because of the bastard’s penchant for acting. The actor is an embodiment of contradictory elements that contribute to the production or adoption of identity. It is the actor that playfully moves to and from the serious. It is the actor who exemplifies the bastardy as a freedom that recognizes the bad faith inherent in the spirit of seriousness. The bastard is he who is laughed at insofar as he is out of step. The bastardy is the object laughter is intended to regulate. Deviation from the norm is difficult when its known consequence is ridicule and public dismissal. It is difficult, for example, to motivate groups to stage disruptive political action when said action results in public admonishment (arrest, police violence) coupled with ridicule (the laughter of the spectator who is often the intended recipient of the positive results such political action may yield). Likewise, if she takes her role seriously, the actor does so in the

spirit of playfulness insofar as she plays at being this or that character. While on stage, the actor is never fully at rest, never fully herself, never fully reducible to her role and so never fully an object of ridicule. Like the bastard, the actor is ill at ease. Unlike the bastard, the actor is immune to the regulative function of laughter. Our choosing to express the way by which the actor exploits the bastardy in Sartre's plays is itself a Sartrean gesture. Sartre himself invites this, for example, with his adaptation of *Kean*.

Following Francis Jeanson in *Hell and Bastardy* we recognize that acting has both a servile and an affirmative function. To a large extent we act in order to please in order to belong. Lucien *plays-at* believing in Père Noël even after he witnesses his parents placing toys in front of the fireplace. Although Lucien is "acting" in this scene, it is done in the service of what is expected. The servile function of acting serves the other as observer in stabilizing the role that is being played, a role that is endorsed when played according to expectation. It serves the other insofar as one regulates their behavior in order to please and nothing is experienced as more pleasant than experiencing the world in a way that conforms to one's knowledge of it. All acting serves others a being-for-others. But the servile function of acting in particular stabilizes roles, and by stabilize we mean the narrowing of liberty with which a role can be played. This is done by playing the role in expected repeated patterns that establish (institute) roles and eventually homogenize them. Acting takes on this servile function when the role is not of one's choosing or when it is not freely created.

In contrast the affirmative function of acting is one in which the actor affirms herself through her act. Acting, in its affirmative function, produces novel renditions of the role being played. The affirmative function of acting also appears as a being-for-others but it is for others as deviation from the norm—it introduces heterogeneity. It does this because the actor creates or

recreates the role and takes ownership of it by identifying the performance as a preliminary and tentative introduction to the character behind the gestures performed. Preliminary because the gesture is how the character discloses itself. Tentative because the preliminary disclosure relies on what the actor does next. The gestures chosen in the service of manifesting the character is the actor composing an act. It is in this way that the character gesturing on stage serves as agent for the actor. The act is the actor's rendition of the character, a rendition only apparent once the performance has ended; we speak of the character as they appear on stage performing out of habit. The character is only determined *after* the play has been performed (and then this determination is only to be had until the next performance). When properly understood the character on the stage is the actor's agent as instrument in the service of an act, "agents really do something, no matter what, but something provocative which causes a real event, no matter of what sort, to happen."²⁶ The actor's choosing a desired objectification or artistic presentation in the form of the act (what-has-been-performed), is how the actor wields their freedom.

When we speak of the character that appears on the stage in a particular production we are actually referring to multiple acts. We begin with an act that captures freedom toward the future to the extent that the act (what-will-be-performed) requires reflection and planning regarding the best presentation of the character in the way that accords with how the actor understands it. Here we have the first act which takes shape prior to the performance as a planning of it on the basis of interpretation. Here the actor makes decisions regarding what the ideal performance of the character should be. This is followed by the act as a series of gestures employed to manifest the character during performance. This is the only act that can and should be taken into account critically as it is the act performed publically. It is at this point that actors can take greater risks by continually denying the completion of the character after each

performance choosing instead to cast it anew by accentuating nuanced gestures during successive performances. This is because there is also the act performed due to what is evident in retrospect. So an actor can use the experience of a previous performance for novel invention, the character is produced as an act before and after performance. The performance itself being a series of gestures by the character in the service of the desired act the actor wishes to produce. The character is forever incomplete as it can be performed over and again in novel ways. That is to say that if there is to be some artistic presentation, some *thing* to be looked at for the purpose of identifying ourselves or something about the world then it is simultaneously understood as incomplete, temporary, and as calling the thing it identifies into question.

What does it mean to call characters or situations into question? For one thing, it means that we can determine the degree to which portrayals are servile or affirmative. But more important to Sartre's work it means we can identify what we take to be the "nature" of a thing or of a person as a creative social project instituted over time. Initial encounters with both characters and their situations are formless and obscene. Through prolonged exposure, or repetitive representation, they become familiar and conventional to the point that we believe we can identify popular characters without too much effort.²⁷ The characters become predictable determinate identities. We do this with characters on the page (the autodidact will never understand his naiveté). We do this with the people we come to "know" ("... That doesn't sound like her"). We do this with ourselves ("how could I have been so stupid?") even if we are aware that nothing is ever wholly given.

Let us distinguish the act from the gesture. Acts are carried out by an actor which we have come to associate with the utilization of Sartre's bastardy. Acts, rightfully considered, are what Jeanson identifies as carrying out the affirmative function of acting. Gestures are performed

by characters, or agents, that are put into play by actors. The gesture is rightfully associated with what Jeanson identifies as the servile function of acting. Actors act in such a way that recognizes how they have been influenced by others while attempting to influence others. Agents are objects “acting on” other objects. As such the “acts” of the agent are reduced to mere gestures. Acts, as previously noted, are initially set in motion after reflection. Gestures are done prereflexively. It will become evident that bastard is to actor as agent is to character. To act is to imprint oneself upon the world. If identity is to be discussed it is to be discussed as taking ownership of an act through recognition of responsibility in a particular situation. To be an actor is to be implicated as owning an act—a set of gestures. What then does it mean to act? The act is what guides gestures set in motion. That is the actor, as character, sets a particular series of gestures in motion. The performance is the act as it develops (the set of gestures being performed). The act is limited by the gestures of other characters and is developed through gestures employed in response to what transpires on stage. Gestures themselves are not performed by actors but by characters or agents. When Kean, cast as Othello, takes the stage he chooses to perform an act. That act is to disappear, to *unrealize*, the actor Kean through the series of gestures that realize the character Othello. It is because of this distinction that we say the actor is a bastard and the character is his agent.

Robert Champigny accurately states that, when it comes to the Sartrean play, “the character will have to interpret what he ‘is’ from what other characters tell him he is. His being is perpetually in question. He has to choose himself, he will be what the other characters make him and what his reactions to this attempt at possession will be.”²⁸ Champigny credits Sartre’s ability to weave characters into situations where they must play off one another in hopes of determining some self-identity as the reason behind his statement. This is helpful to a certain degree but then

what does it mean to “play off one another?” It means that if a character takes shape on the stage it is because the actor as character takes cues from his fellow actors in character. Specifically, each actor slowly pushes the other actors out of the way insofar as they depend on the characters they need to successfully convey their role. This is what lies behind Champigny’s statement because it has the added benefit of emphasizing what Sartre makes of the actor in *The Imaginary*, and, more explicitly, in the first volume of *The Family Idiot* wherein the actor is identified as a *real and permanent center of unrealizaton*.

Recall that we referred to theatre as a “special object that mediates a kind of playfulness.” This is because the object in question, i.e., the performance, is an aesthetic object. As such it is what Sartre identifies as “analogon,” the raw material that prompts an image—of an object absent from the world—in the imagination.²⁹ When an actor takes the stage his act is to present the series of gestures that will evoke the presence of Frantz in a production of *The Condemned of Altona*. The actor serves the function of embodying Frantz’s nonbeing. But, because the play is performed before an audience that recognizes its social act of imagination as determined by Frantz’s presence on stage, the actor himself is “instituted” as Frantz whenever he appears on stage. That is to say that when the audience arrives at the theatre to see a play they imagine the person that walks on stage after the curtain is raised to be a character.³⁰

There is only one way of accounting for this strange behavior: that every dramatic work is phantasmagoric... Regardless of his own opinion about the basic meaning of drama, the actor is bound to reproduce the total work, word for word and gesture by gesture; and this means that he moves in an imaginary universe, which may be true as a whole, but is not true in detail. The Truth is there, however, the word is spoken in the play, and the error of one protagonist and the lie of another are revealed to the audience.

It is in this way that the audience, as social body, recognizes in Frantz an ontological truth to the extent that the being of this performance is considered a permanent incitement toward the imaginary through the unrealizing of the actor thereby revealing Frantz.³¹

Sartre explains that the actor, “indispensable to a collective unrealizing, surely possesses the *maximum of being* when we recall that within the social intersubjectivity, *being* is being-for-others when it is instituted.” Here we recognize the actor in character as object, as a being-for-others. This, as we indicated above, is what it means to perform the servile function of acting as agent. A character can also be performed in a way that demonstrates the affirmative function of acting as making use of the bastardy. This is because, for the actor, “unrealization every evening is an unpredictable dosage of rehearsal and invention; at worst, he approaches an automaton; at best he goes beyond acquired habits by ‘trying out’ an effect.”³² This, to our way of thinking, means we can learn a great deal about bad faith as well as what it means to be authentic from the actor. This is possible because of the way we mean to approach the actor as bastard. We see through the bastardy how we come to fall into bad faith and how such a development does not impede the possibility of authentic behavior. Authentic behavior for the actor involves understanding that as the character takes shape so does his situation and vice versa. The actor may have to employ specific gestures in order to tweak a performance toward a desired ideal act; a performance, in this sense, is an attempt at an act. Every night, if the actor is innovative, the audience should be rewarded by witnessing the actor take risks as subsequent attempts at new acts.

There is a constant interplay between the actor as character and his situation as both remain in constant flux throughout a performance. This is significant because, Sartre’s plays are meant to communicate the metaphysical impact of the situation. To fix the character of the

narrative is to fix their situation. That is to say that if the character is played as a type, i.e., in accordance with how the part has been played in the past, the play would suffer a loss of dramatic quality. The unrealized would be flawed; nonbeing, in the form of character, cannot be realized if the actor does not perform the gestures required to make the character come alive. Yet, we find that audiences want to see a good performance repeated without variation. Never mind the fact that the point of theatre is deviation through repetition and innovation, rehearsal, and invention. The desire for the familiar can be comforting to both the actor and the audience but is always a sign of laziness, cowardice, and a failure to act creatively. Moreover, for Sartre, every situation calls for reflection, vigilance, honesty, and creativity. So we find the bastardy as an awareness of the various choices that pertain to the approach an actor will take for roles at their disposal. Sartre has had much to say in regard to these choices in particular: laziness, cowardice, a failure to act creatively, reflection, vigilance, and honesty; and it is with this in mind that we now turn to *Anti-Semite and Jew*.

2. Anti-Semite and Jew, Bad Faith, and the Theory of Conversion

Let us identify our conception of the bastardy in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. We do this for three reasons. 1) To draw our distinction between bastard and agent more sharply. 2) To maintain uniformity with our working rendition of Sartre's philosophy. 3) To demonstrate how Sartre's philosophy manifests as theoretical backdrop in all his plays. The bastardy is evidenced through the Anti Semite, the Jew, and the Democrat. All three appear as perverted by the social reality, or situation of, prejudice and bigotry. All three are sketched out in Sartrean terms. Their actions, attitudes, and passions are deemed authentic or inauthentic; their psychology results from motives pertaining to the world around them which include self-perceptions, perceptions of

the social body, the intention behind their action or complacency, how they are perceived by others, and how these affect and explain their place in history.³³ It is left to the reader to determine how the work is to be weighed. In this sense, the reader too makes herself a subject of scrutiny insofar as she determines how her approach and judgments regarding the text measure up to its undertaking as an object of study.

Our focus on the bastardy brings us to one passage in particular where Sartre introduces the idea that “the root of Jewish disquietude is the necessity imposed upon the Jew of subjecting himself to endless self-examination and finally of assuming a phantom personality, at once strange and familiar, that haunts him and which is nothing but himself—himself as others see him.”³⁴ The “strange and familiar... phantom personality” amounts to the manifestation of what others take the Jew to be. But we further believe that such a phantom personality “is the lot of all, that each of us has a character familiar to those close to us which we ourselves do not see,”³⁵ this, of course, depends on how one is being rendered by the look of the other. We find that Sartre would agree and point to his description of colonized “natives” in his preface to Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, or “blacks” in *Black Orpheus* or *The Respectful Prostitute*, or “women,” “homosexuals,” “communists,” and so on in comments during interviews as well as in the various texts he authored. All of which include comment on laziness demonstrated by impulses to justify one’s existence through self reduction to some legitimized stereotype or common fad.³⁶

Similarly, cowardice results from a flight toward the familiar due to fear of truth as “indefinite approximation” or the unknown. Fear of change is fear of oneself and of truth. Cowardice operates along side of complacency when one is content with bolstering what passes for human nature “wherein one seeks only what he already found, wherein one becomes only what he already was.”³⁷ This is what it means to fear responsibility.³⁸ A relinquishment of

freedom founded on the belief that one is only free to the extent that they accept responsibility for their situation.³⁹ On the other hand, everything we find in *Anti-Semite and Jew* comes as a result of Sartre employing what he outlined in *Being and Nothingness*. We mean to point out, as Hazel Barnes does in *The Literature of Possibility*, that *Anti-Semite and Jew* explains the conduct of an anti-Semite in a way that “is completely consistent with the philosophical theory of *Being and Nothingness*.”⁴⁰ What is more Barnes cites Lucien, the main character from *Childhood of a Boss*, as an anti-Semite on whom Sartre comments with *Anti-Semite and Jew*. This is appealing to us because she alludes to the idea that Sartre was working out ideas previously held as if he needed to explain the conduct of his characters. It is also interesting in relation to our work because she seems to recognize that Sartre regards the anti-Semite in the way he does a character, i.e., as an agent developed from adopted notions and performed through a series of gestures. We have come to realize at this point that to take oneself as an object is to know oneself as agent; what must be copped to at this point is that this is also what it means to be in “bad faith.” There is, however, a specific dynamic at play in bad faith that we mean to accentuate for the purposes of our current project. It is for this reason that a rendition of bad faith is warranted.

According to Sartre bad faith is an essential attitude of human reality.⁴¹ It is “an *evanescent* phenomenon which exists only in and through its own differentiation.” Moreover, it “vacillates continually between good faith and cynicism,” and is “*metastable*” as an autonomous durable structure.⁴² By meta-stable Sartre means to denote that bad faith is given to “sudden changes or transitions.”⁴³ We take this to mean that bad faith, as a form of self-deception, constantly repositions itself once encountered in order to prolong the deception. The metastability of bad faith involves movements through consciousness such as the one from consideration of self as object to consideration of self as pure transcendence. Consideration of

self as object is to take up identity as in “I *am*” this past action, or this *type* of person, or disposition. Consideration of self as transcendence involves a different objectification as an “I *will be*” that possible self or action or an “I never *was*” reducible to a previous act. It is to consider oneself only as psychic duration completely separate from actions in the world because subsequent actions have the power to negate previous ones.

Another current of bad faith involves the movement between one’s own look and the look of the other.⁴⁴ Similarly, it is a formulation of contradictory self considerations or projections derived from pairing the concepts of being-for-others and being-for-itself. Here Sartre’s use of “sincerity” is useful as the demand to disclose oneself as what one is. Sincerity provides explanation for one’s actions in the form of a human quality, a “phantom personality” that haunts a person, neatly explaining either, or both, past and future actions. The demand, in this form, is at once made in bad faith as it assumes identity to be a stable structure and that such a structure reveals one’s “nature.” Obtaining one’s nature comes with the added benefit of pointing to conduct one ought to adopt in keeping with it. Not only is this a slip into bad faith but a way of securing it since one would merely be acting in keeping with what one is. Such is the evanescence of bad faith. Sartre compares it to falling asleep: “[o]ne *puts oneself* in bad faith as one goes to sleep and one is in bad faith as one dreams.” One slips into bad faith and it is as difficult to remain vigilant against it as it is to remain awake when the body is exhausted because it is an essential attitude of human reality. In fact, there are “many precautions to imprison a man in what he is, as if we lived in perpetual fear that he might escape it,”⁴⁵ and this is what we have been discussing: the ceaseless (re)investment of self in situations through recourse to different forms of bad faith. We discussed this, for example, in the form of the anti-Semite in flight from the contingency of truth. Such continual invocation of bad faith as refuge is a deliberate choice to

altogether ignore, or inadequately attend to, one's situation. Consider the woman who attempts to prolong the enjoyment of the desire she inspires by actively ignoring it when convenient and reinterpreting it she pleases.⁴⁶ Her hand is only what it is—a thing among other things—when her companion takes it; his physical desire for her is not what it is—it is to be understood solely as what lies beyond his word and action. Bad faith is the attribution of fixed qualities to oneself; it plays with consciousness as both facticity—being as all that one is at any given moment, and transcendence—being as all that is possible for one to be. More specifically, “[b]ad faith seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences. It must affirm facticity as *being* transcendence and transcendence as *being* facticity, in such a way that at the instant when a person apprehends the one, he can find himself abruptly faced with the other.”⁴⁷ Further, bad faith is evident through the exploitation of the meta-stability at play within its structure. The impossibility of being wholly an in-itself is “the very stuff of bad faith.”⁴⁸

Now we find ourselves faced with the temptation to discuss authenticity on the grounds of doubting its possibility. We find ourselves tempted in this manner because surely the goal of authenticity, which “supposes a self-recovery of being which was previously corrupted,”⁴⁹ demands that bad faith be avoided. In order to best answer to this objection let us first look at another sense of sincerity in Sartre's discussion of bad faith. This second sense of sincerity appears as the recognition that one is a movement toward nothing as in “I am all that I am not;” moreover, through such recognition one immediately grasps all the ways in which they are anything but sincere. Sincerity here appears as transcendent insincerity, an object in the form of “if I am what I am it is because I can be something else.”⁵⁰ Sartre explains that “bad faith is only possible because sincerity is conscious of missing its goal inevitably, due to its very nature.”⁵¹ Meaning that sincerity can allow for us to pass from one mode of being to another;⁵² that is, if

one is not reducible to an object it is because other possibilities exist for them. If other possibilities exist it is because one is more than what is evident at any given moment. This sense of sincerity leads to “good faith” insofar as one is in good faith to the extent one is conscious of their bad faith.⁵³ Recall that the “ideal of good faith (to believe what one believes) is, like that of sincerity (to be what one is), an ideal of being-in-itself.”⁵⁴ Sincerity that aims at making one pass from one mode of being to another mode of being is “the ideal of sincerity” which is immediately comprehended as unattainable.⁵⁵ Like the ideal form of sincerity, “good faith seeks to flee the inner disintegration of... being in the direction of the in-itself which it should be and is not.”⁵⁶ Sartre, curiously enough, readily admits the impossibility of achieving such ideals. But only to the extent that he can claim: “If every belief in good faith is an impossible belief, then there is a place for every impossible belief... I shall define this impossible belief as my belief. To be sure, I shall not be able to hide from myself that I believe in order not to believe and that I do not believe *in order to* believe.”⁵⁷ If good faith is doubted as possible in one sense it is because it is believed to be possible in another. Such is the “faith” of good faith.

Sartre does not address authenticity directly in *Being and Nothingness*; in fact he makes it explicit that a discussion of authenticity has no place in that project.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, we have discerned that, by Sartre’s estimation, the inability to believe that one could be authentic is good reason to reflect on its possibility since “every belief involves not quite believing.” Besides, we have already hinted that Sartre not only believes that authenticity is possible but that he puts the concept to use in works like *Anti-Semite and Jew*. There he explains that,

If it is agreed that man may be defined as a being having freedom within the limits of a situation, then it is easy to see that the exercise of this freedom may be considered as authentic or inauthentic according to the choices made in the situation. Authenticity, it is almost needless to say, consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate.⁵⁹

Here we see that authenticity can manifest through particular acts within a given situation. We see also that it is tenuous and requires a heavy and courageous investment. This is because situations overlap and can only be examined by what is given to consciousness at a particular instance—situations traverse time and converge while we remain limited in our conscious scope of their landscape.⁶⁰ People slip in and out of authenticity and bad faith at every turn but one can be conscientious of how they stand, either authentically or in bad faith, regarding a particular situation whether it is a question of prejudice, religion, politics, or human relations in general.⁶¹

Sartre's discussion of bad faith as an attitudinal movement in regard to others yields that the interrelation of consciousnesses is one of perpetual conflict. But this development comes with the disclaimer that such "considerations do not exclude the possibility of an ethics of deliverance and salvation," adding that, "this can be achieved only after a radical conversion," even if the advancement of such an ethics is not to occur in *Being and Nothingness*.⁶² This disclaimer is one that is often either altogether ignored or taken as obscure by commentators. Often this is done in the service of imposing a "radical break" in Sartre's thought that cleaves his earlier work (e.g., *Transcendence of the Ego, Being and Nothingness*) from his later one (e.g., *Search for a Method, Critique of Dialectical Reason*). Mary Warnock, for example, claims that Sartre found himself at an impasse because "morality means the accommodation of one person to the interests of another, and this is exactly what Sartre has ruled out in *Being and Nothingness*."⁶³ Predictably, she comes to terms with Sartre's later work by regarding it as a "radical way out" in that Sartre abandons the individual in favor of the group and existentialism in favor of Marxism. She makes this claim in spite of admitting she found his later work unintelligible;⁶⁴ meaning the reader is to believe the Dame could make sense of the work to a degree necessary for declaring it

Sartre's repudiation of his earlier work. At any rate she is not alone when it comes to such claims.⁶⁵

As indicated in our introduction, not only do we find that Sartre does not repudiate his early work with his later work, we regard radical differences between them as indicative of modifications he felt necessary for accommodating the aforementioned "conversion" necessary for outlining a truly *situational authenticity*. We find ourselves in good company in our view, despite the difficulties inherent in holding it,⁶⁶ as it is held by commentators like Hazel Barnes, David Detmer, and even Sartre himself:

I wrote *Critique of Dialectical Reason* to show to what extent I am modifying certain notions in *Being and Nothingness*, and to what extent I stand by the whole of that book. I still uphold the realism of *Being and Nothingness* and its theory of consciousness.⁶⁷

There is one such modification in Sartre's work that we consider fruitful in determining the trajectory of his work. As Detmer explains, it is a decisive increased emphasis on *need* rather than *desire*:

For the earlier Sartre, with his emphasis on desire, the point is to renounce "the spirit of seriousness," and to invent values through the activity known as "play." This is the ethic of "You are free, therefore choose—that is to say, invent." For the later Sartre, on the other hand, with his emphasis on need, there is little call for invention of values. Rather what is needed is the bringing to realization of such discovered values as food and clothing.⁶⁸

Barnes goes further and provides some reasoning behind Sartre's later preference to discuss human reality in terms of needs:

Desire suggests the possibility of unrestricted movement, of a freedom which may change the objects of its desire at will. Need brings in something from the outside, a necessity which man cannot ultimately escape, no matter how much he may vary his reaction to it.⁶⁹

Though there is a shift from desire to need there is no cause for discussing these as separate projects rather than specific concerns within Sartre's system. Further, need actually does

require invention and we have seen this throughout our discussion of the actor who has to convey character while restricted by scripted words. Although we are in agreement with Detmer that much hinges around Sartre's focus on need, and that need supersedes desire in his later work. We do not subscribe to the implication that Sartre traded in desire for need. Opting instead to understand Sartre as accentuating need as a way of addressing situations from which the freedom to create values stems. Far from abandoning his concept of freedom Sartre seeks only to give it content,⁷⁰ proclaiming, "I discovered suddenly that alienation, the exploitation of men by other men, undernourishment—these make metaphysical unhappiness a luxury and relegate it to second place. Hunger—now that is evil."⁷¹ Authenticity then, is not to be discussed in terms of achieving being (the desire to be *causa sui*) to do so would be to discuss it in terms of bad faith, i.e., as man's desire to be God; or, in Sartrean terms, as man's desire to make of himself a being-in-itself-for-itself. Conversion to authenticity begins as a discovery of self in the midst of a situation. This is the backdrop of Sartre's question: "[w]hen the Communists set down as part of their program 'the radicalization of the masses,' when Marx explains that the proletarian class *ought to be* conscious of itself, what does that mean if not that the worker, too, is not at first authentic?"⁷² Or "what is needed in order to tend to what is desired?" Authenticity is to be discussed in terms of how one lives. How one responds to the question: "what is to be done given the present situation?" as if there were a precondition that makes this question universally appropriate. But is there such a universal precondition to human reality that allows for a Sartrean ethics that precludes us from designating all free acts as morally equivalent?

Sartre pitted the notion of play against the spirit of seriousness where play represented the freedom to create values and the spirit of seriousness objectified those values and identified them as embodied by the self. Here freedom is likened to a desire to invest oneself into the world as a

way of encountering oneself—a way of achieving identity. This shows a movement of freedom destined for bad faith—the freedom to squander freedom. Sartre anchors freedom as beholden to what is necessary, that is, to the content of our material lives. This in our view is done in recognition that the best illustration of freedom is one that tears itself away from its restrictions by appropriately attending to those restrictions. This relation is evident in our discussion of the bastard as actor when one considers that in a performance you have the words that restrict the actor who then liberates herself through the gestures she chooses to bring a character to life. Sartre is inflexible when it comes to allowing man to either flee from their material disposition as if it were not the root of their responsibility, or to flee from freedom through an act or role that identifies them as that which they truly are: “Those who hide from [their] total freedom, in a guise of solemnity or with deterministic excuses, I shall call cowards. Others, who try to show that their existence is necessary, when it is merely an accident of the appearance of the human race on earth – I shall call scum.”⁷³

In *Search for a Method* Sartre states that “ideas do not change men. Knowing the cause of a passion is not enough to overcome it; one must live it, one must oppose other passions to it, one must combat it tenaciously, in short one must ‘work oneself over.’”⁷⁴ Sartre equates morality with “permanent conversion” a permanent tearing away at oneself in order to determine the proper course of action. This idea of “working oneself over” is an idiosyncratic concept in Sartre’s work that manifests time and again. It is the root of Roquentin’s adventure as he seeks self-justification. It is the attempt to escape bad faith which requires action in the authentic attitude. Still, we grant that an authentic advancement toward the future through self-deprecation allows for slips into bad faith when viewed retrospectively. The reason for this is that in hindsight we assign specific causes for our actions as stories we tell ourselves about ourselves.

The stories we tell ourselves are dependant on bad faith insofar as they are generated through the “spirit of seriousness.” By spirit of seriousness here we mean an attempt to find salvation through a refusal of our contingency in the service of anchoring ourselves to the world. We grant that attempts at authenticity are given to slips into bad faith because such is the nature of bad faith as evanescent and meta-stable structure. Bad faith is, after all, an essential attitude of human reality. Such slips are the reason why conversion is not a stable as in a state one passes through but perpetual as in a mode of being toward oneself.

In light of the ground we have covered we are in a position to claim that conversion is possible by localizing needs according to a situation and realizing the task at hand as something that must be lived according to those needs as an exercise of freedom. We see plainly now that if Sartre reaches for Marx it is because

When Marx writes: “Just as we do not judge an individual by his own idea of himself, so we cannot judge a... period of revolutionary upheaval by its own self-consciousness,” he is indicating the priority of action (work and social *praxis*) over *knowledge* as well as their heterogeneity. He too asserts that the human fact is irreducible to knowing, that it must be *lived* and *produced*; but he is not going to confuse it with the empty subjectivity of a puritanical and mystified petite bourgeoisie. He makes of it the immediate theme of the philosophical totalization, and it is the concrete man whom he puts at the center of his research, that man who is defined simultaneously by his needs, by the material conditions of his existence, and by the nature of his work—that is, by his struggle against things and against men.⁷⁵

Sartre subsumes his philosophy under Marx’s because he finds that the Marxist project is one that must be realized in order for man to fully grasp human reality.

It is in human reality that authenticity is linked to acts of bravery and creative innovation through careful and honest reflection on one’s needs as dictated by their situation. Such a choice is one readily open to what we have identified as the bastard. It is as bastard that one recognizes and deviates from acting in bad faith because, as we explained in our consideration of subject as

actor, performing a role marks transitions from bad to good faith. When we seek to define the subject in conversion we find the bastard. This is because the bastardy allows for the undertaking of multiple projects at once in recognition that one is composed by what came before along with present overlapping situations. Much of this will be made clear as we look at some of Sartre's plays. This is because it is in theatre that seemingly contradictory Sartrean concepts are synthesized. In theatre man is a synthesis of facticity and transcendence (script and performance), seriousness and play (character and actor), desire and need (freedom and content). It is of little wonder why Sartre turns to theatre. Theatre is live and as such accentuates events as played out in the world. It is "a presentation of man to men by means of imaginary action."⁷⁶ The actors in Sartre's plays play actors playing roles. Sartre the dramatist supplies the tools for their roles as a play's situation, or set of situations, unfolds. Since the theatre of situations aims at disclosing elements of human reality Sartre means to communicate the situated disposition. In order to understand this more clearly we have conducted some preliminary work.

Thus far we have looked at the role that the bastardy occupies within Sartre's philosophy. We have bolstered its significance by showing that the bastardy is related to the actor's performance. Moreover it has been explained that the bastard is useful when it comes to understanding how a subject may wade through bad faith while slowly producing his own salvation through minor authentic accomplishments. Now we are sufficiently prepared to benefit from an intimate engagement with Sartre's theatre. In the following section we will look at how some of the concepts we have been discussing are treated in Sartre's theatrical works. We will make use of specific plays that highlight related concepts while adding commentary to concepts that may be in the background thereby building on what came before as we go. We will take note

of gestures performed by characters in his plays that may be taken as being authentic or in bad faith.

In the following section we will follow themes that run through some of Sartre's plays noting how they develop the concepts that have been in discussion. This analysis is not exhaustive and will, of course, focus on some plays rather than others. Nevertheless, Sartre's work is such that every theme developed in the following section could just as well have been developed through any of Sartre's others plays. That said, though the focus will be on plays that seem to highlight or stress the particular themes and concepts relevant to this project, other plays will be discussed along the way. We will, for example, look at freedom and responsibility as communicated through *The Flies*, and *Dirty Hands*. We will identify, among other things, being-for-others, the look, and bad faith in *No Exit*, conversion and authenticity in *The Devil and the Good Lord*. We will concentrate on what has been identified as the bastardy in our discussion of *Kean*, and will round things off with a look at *The Condemned of Altona*.

Chapter 2. Actors and Agents

1. The Flies, Dirty Hands, and the Devil and the Good Lord: Expositions on "Why Theatre?", the Progressive-Regressive Method, Playing "Loser Wins" and Conversion in Sartre's Plays

What is Sartre's theatre? His plays have been taken up here as philosophical contemplations in the form of ethical exemplars, not as prescriptions of right and wrong but as expositions on the exigencies and efficacy of right and wrong, good and evil, the political, the moral, in their dependency on given contexts—the human character shaped in situational context, theatrical context. Sartre's ethics in particular does not permit straightforward answers; briefly put, and in keeping with what was stated previously: man is born a criminal and in order to get things done

in the world he has to get his hands dirty.⁷⁷ This is exactly what is communicated with the bulk of his plays, concomitantly, the thematic arch of these works revolve around a central problem in the form of the question: “What am I?”⁷⁸ This problem, revealed here in its simplistic form (a question), involves the explication of a complex series of concepts developed out of Sartre’s concerns regarding human activity, space and time, social engagement, and their significance. There is no harm in considering Sartre’s theatre philosophical propaganda;⁷⁹ moreover, such a consideration is invited by the plays he wrote, and his commentary on theatre whether on theatre in general or in regard to his own contributions. As such, Sartrean theatre is a projection of situations wherein we find the exercise of freedom. His characters are all obsessed with action (action to be undertaken, action that has been taken, inaction as action) because action is always regarded as revelation.

The Flies

In Sartre’s view, man discovers himself through the action he takes, or fails to take, in the world in which he finds himself. Identity then is a process of discovery that requires recognition of both how one is situated in the world as well as the collection of free acts one has chosen to interpret as the factors that bind them to the situation at hand. One then has to choose to act in ways that either confirm a pre-established role⁸⁰ (through the servile function of acting) or redefine the role—thereby establishing a new one—that reconfigures the situation entirely (through the affirmative function of acting). Freedom can then be seen as the ability to author, and so take up responsibility for, one’s orientation as a situated disposition. This is made explicit in the opening of *The Flies* where we find Orestes playing the part of being uncommitted, the part of the traveler, stranger to Argos who goes by the curious name of “Philebus.” But the

audience is aware that he is not uncommitted to Argos because by his third line he has twice repeated that he was born there.⁸¹ This is significant because the event of his birth made him both a son of Argos as well as heir to it as Agamemnon's son. The fact that he does, however, find himself a stranger to his country is something that should be taken up as his realization that there is an open invitation for establishing the kind of relationship he is to have with it. Such an invitation can only be answered by the act he commits himself to. Stay in Argos or flee from it to parts unknown. His intentions in this regard are clear, in fact, the play opens with Orestes and his Tutor in the public square attempting to learn the whereabouts of Aegistheus, murderer of Agamemnon. The choice to stay sets gestures in motion it is the beginning of an act that is completed only when Orestes kills Aegistheus and Clytemnestra, an act for which there is no remorse. There is no remorse because he regards his act as a necessary one required by the world he inhabits, i.e., the state of Argos under Aegistheus. This is why he explains Electra's remorseful suffering as not of his doing but of something coming from what she erroneously believes identifies her—something from *within*, remorse or guilt for an external act, that supplies her with justification—something that, for Orestes, requires exorcism. Let us look at how all of this develops in the play.

From the onset Orestes enters an Argos drowning in remorse because its people cannot escape how their lives have been tainted by the murder of their former king. Orestes declares the gods unjust when he learns Zeus is indifferent about Agamemnon's murderer sitting on the throne of Argos. To which Zeus replies, "...Don't blame the gods too hastily. Must they always punish? Wouldn't it be better to use such breaches of the law to point a moral?" It is not until the play's end that we realize that Zeus was hinting that what occurs in the mortal world, including a god's presence, only attains the value that people bestow upon it. Hence one of the things to be

determined in the course of the play is man's relation to morality as well as to the divine. Consider how Sartre ties the fly-attracting festering guilt of Argos to original sin by making it an organizing principle. An Old Woman claims to have raised her grandson in a "spirit of repentance" that dictates he never "plays or laughs, for thinking of his original sin." Indicating what we do, or fail to do, not only carries a responsibility to our contemporaries but to our successors as well. When Sartre has Zeus point to the Old Woman declaring, "we have there the real *thing*, the good old piety of yore, rooted in terror,"⁸² he means to identify man's fear of the responsibility that comes with self-determinacy.

The citizens of Argos choose to identify conformist behavior as the best way to live. Remorse is the normative social convention in Argos. Its people have serialized themselves as a result of cowardly impotence; this is expressed by adherence to preordained patterns of behavior. Marking their complacency, the citizens are stuck in ritual, adhering to thoughtless acts of superstition despite what their best interests. In fact, Zeus cites the pleasure that came to Argos because of Aegistheus and Clytemnestra's regicidal act; the citizen's complacency in the face of the scandalous act is their complicity. Thus their lot is to live in fear and repentance for the act committed by the tyrannical king Aegistheus. Apparently, "a whole city's repenting on his account" and it is in this manner that Argos identifies itself. The city's situation at the play's opening is thus revealed as engendered through enacting inaction. In failing to act the citizens of Argos have chosen to define themselves in light of an event by which they perceive themselves as a fixed identity, an object among objects, in relation to their inability to take up the burden of freedom.

Contrary to Walter Kaufman and Denis Hollier's interpretation, Orestes' murder is *not* an act by which Orestes attempts to justify his existence. It is the final gesture in a series of gestures

that punctuates the act whereby he recognizes he has been engaged with the world. The double regicide is the completion of an act was set in motion when, in spite of Zeus and his Tutor's request to the contrary, Orestes decided to stay in Argos and inquire about its curious state of affairs. Once Orestes completed the act Electra, who believes herself complicit by proxy, finds that they are weighted down by "the remorse of the whole city;" she finds that they are seeped in bad faith. Recall Aegistheus' words at the top of Act II scene 2: "I am tired. So tired. For fifteen years I have been upholding the remorse of the whole city, and my arms are aching with the strain. For fifteen years I have been dressing the part, playing the scaremonger, and the black of my robes has seeped through to my soul." Now Electra at the end of Act II, and having taken Orestes' hand: "...Dear hand! It's whiter than mine. But how heavy it became to strike down our father's murderers!" Orestes, self assured that he did what needed to be done, has cleaner hands than Electra who wanted to kill the King and her mother the queen but could not bring herself to do so. When asked by Aegistheus if he felt remorse Orestes responds,

Remorse? Why should I feel remorse? I am only doing what is right... ..Justice is a matter between men, and I need no god to teach me it. It's right to stamp you out, like the foul brute you are, and to free the people of Argos from your evil influence. It is right to restore them to their sense of human dignity.

Meanwhile, Electra's complicity in the deed is a passionate one, tainted by the hatred she bore for Clytemnestra. Orestes has seized himself through the completion of the act he had set himself. The flies transform into furies. Surveying the literature on this play one finds little to nothing made of this significant event in the play. The torment the furies attempt to unleash upon Orestes and Electra marks the temptation to regard the killings as the event that justifies them. Orestes loses Electra to these fiends as under their sway she becomes guilt ridden and remorseful like the rest of the citizens of Argos; Unfortunately, the furies held sway over Kaufman and Hollier as well because they see Orestes as actualized by his deed and they focus on this deed as

the defining incident for both Orestes and the play itself. It is after all the only way to quiet the furies; the only way to make them flies in exchange for the carrion they make of one's life. But there remains another decisive act Orestes makes by play's end. The furies attempt to make Orestes remorseful; they do their best to get him to bow to the conventions ordained by the Gods. When it is clear that he will not yield Zeus himself appears on the scene. Even the god of Gods has no sway over the free Orestes:

ZEUS: So you take pride in being an outcast, do you? But the solitude you're doomed to, most cowardly of murders, is the solitude of scorn and loathing.

ORESTES: The most cowardly of murderers is he who feels remorse.

ZEUS: Orestes, I created you, and I created all things... return to your saner self; the universe refutes you, you are a mite in the scheme of things. Return to nature, nature's thankless son. Know your sin, abhor it, and tear it from you as one tears out a rotten, noisome tooth...

ORESTES: ...Your whole universe is not enough to prove me wrong. You are the king of gods, king of stones and stars, king of the waves and the sea. But you are not the king of man.

ZEUS: Impudent spawn! So I am not your king? Who, then, made you?

ORESTES: You. But you blundered; you should not have made me free.

ZEUS: I gave you freedom so that you might serve me.

ORESTES: Perhaps. But now it has turned against its giver. And neither you nor I can undo what has been done.

ZEUS: Ah, at last! So this is your excuse?

Orestes: I am not excusing myself.

ZEUS: No? Let me tell you it sounds much like an excuse, this freedom whose slave you claim to be.

ORESTES: Neither slave nor master. I *am* my freedom. No sooner had you created me than I ceased to be yours.

Orestes makes his choice. He rejects Zeus. He does so despite, and in agreement with, Zeus' warning: "...Your vaunted freedom isolates you from the fold; it means exile." But there is a special significance to Orestes' departure:

ORESTES: Foreign to myself—I know it. Outside nature, against nature, without excuse, beyond remedy, except what remedy I find within myself. But I shall not return under your law; I am doomed to have no other law but mine. Nor shall I come back to nature, the nature you found good; in it are a thousand beaten paths all leading to you—but I must blaze my trail. For I, Zues, am a man, and every

man must find out his own way. Nature abhors man, and you too, god of gods, abhor mankind.

ZEUS: That is true; men like you I hold in abhorrence.

ORESTES: Take care; those words were a confession of your weakness. As for me, I do not hate you. What have I to do with you, or you with me? We shall glide past each other, like ships in a river, without touching. You are god and I am free; each of us is alone, and our anguish is akin. How can you know I did not try to feel remorse in the long night that has gone by? And to sleep? But no longer can I feel remorse, and I can sleep no more.

ZEUS: What do you propose to do?

ORESTES: The folk of Argos are my folk. I must open their eyes.

ZEUS: Poor people! Your gift to them will be a sad one; of loneliness and shame. You will tear from their eyes the veils I have laid on them, and they will see their lives as they are, foul and futile, a barren boon.

ORESTES: why, since it is their lot, should I deny them the despair I have in me?

ZEUS: What will they make of it?

ORESTES: What they choose. They're free; and human life begins on the far side of despair.

Orestes realizes his freedom as a condition of his existence. He knows that Zeus has no power over him or any other man. He acknowledges that truth is a difficult burden for anyone who cares to see it for what it is. The burden is knowledge of one's contingency as it coincides with their freedom. Zeus has everyone in Argos shackled to a remorse that brings with it faithfulness and allegiance to the gods. The flies symbolically allude to the quieting of the furies through subservience to their remorse. They act in conformity to their remorse and are the living dead that feed themselves to the flies. The play ends with Orestes' departure, furies in tow.⁸³ It is not a pessimistic ending. The people of Argos now have to decide what is best for them. Zeus predicts that the burden would be too great for them and in a sense chastises Orestes for his decision. Yet Orestes' choice connotes that he pays the people of Argos the highest regard. It is commonplace to think of Act II of *The Flies* as the weakest section of the play because it is open ended:

one would like to know what happened to Electra, to the Burghers of Argos, to Orestes himself. He has destroyed the old order, defeated the old Jupiter, and freed the town of the flies and its tyrant, but what of the new order, the new

community, the new beliefs? To this the spectator who wants readymade solutions is given no satisfactory answer.⁸⁴

But it is plain that to make such a claim misses the point of Orestes' second act and the character of Sartre's philosophical projects (all of which are open ended). Orestes has won and Sartre is telling us that no worthwhile fight leaves one unscathed. With this ending Sartre has introduced us with his favorite game, a game repeated throughout his theatrical works, the game of "loser wins."

Orestes can be understood as an example of how one works toward an identity through activity. As well as how one imbues their activity with significance. Orestes and Electra have repeated Aegistheus and Clytemnestra's crime. Moreover it was Aegistheus and Clytemnestra's act that set the stage for Orestes and Electra's act. But Orestes is not Aegistheus. His act, though predictable, has different motives beyond the command of a god. Contrary to popular interpretations of Sartre's work, reasons for action, motives, are as important as acts. Fredric Jameson makes a similar claim and makes use of the same play to demonstrate the degree to which motives color Sartre's world. He opts to emphasize Sartre's innovative use of the simile in references to the "ghosts" of Argos:

From time to time in *The Flies* a different kind of reality rises into sight from beneath the older form: "This look burns into you, invisible and pure, a look more immutable than the memory of a look." Within this description of the effect of the ghosts on the people of Argos, an astonishing tautology trembles. For the ghosts do not exist, they are brought to life by the living and fed with the irrevocable memories which are all that remain of the dead. The disguise which the comparison wears ("more immutable than") delays a sudden transparency in it, for the look of the people of Argos feel upon them *is* the memory of a look; the reproachful staring that troubles the conscience of the living is brought to life by the strange ceremony, projected out of memory into the real world and received back with all of its original force.⁸⁵

"The ghosts of Argos" is a reference to Aegistheus' speech to the people of Argos regarding the ancestors that must be revered and atoned for. Aegistheus' historicist account forces the people

of his present Argos captive. The meaning supplied to historic events petrifies the past into an object and thereby petrifies the present moment as a necessary immutable condition. This gesture can be taken even further by viewing it as symbolized by the flies that buzz about the city-state. The historicist view, adopted by the people, takes the form of the plague of flies. Later the flies transform to furies. But why does Sartre have the flies grow into furies? Surely it is because the present is no longer like the continued re-evocation of a single event. History is not evident in the present like the gradual petrification of a rock. Rather it is a synthetic unity of a series of events, what Sartre regards as a totalization, or, in regard to the oversimplified description of historical materialism we offer here, a collection of activity in progress.⁸⁶ The flies, i.e., the historical moment petrified over time, transmute to furies—they are dislodged or released from their previous form—by Orestes' act (the gestures set in motion from his introduction to Argos to the slaying of Aegistheus and Clytemnestra). He remains committed to his act and bears its weight alone; as indicated by the furies that descend upon him as he leaves Argos. It is a burden he commits himself to in the final monologue:

I had come to claim my kingdom, and you would have none of me because I was not of your kind. Now I am of your kind, my subjects; there is a bond of blood between us, and I have earned my kingship over you. As for your sins and your remorse, your night-fears, and the crime Aegistheus committed—all are mine, I take them all upon me. Fear your dead no longer; they are *my* dead. And see, your faithful flies have left you and come to me. But have no fear people of Argos. I shall not sit on my victim's throne or take the scepter in my blood-stained hands. A god offered it to me, and I said no. I wish to be a king without a kingdom, without subjects.

Orestes radically changes life for the people of Argos. Though an act has been repeated (Aegistheus and Clytemnestra killed the king Agamemnon, Orestes and Electra killed the king Aegistheus), its significance has not. To act is to mold a situation and answer the call of responsibility. To act is to imprint oneself on the world and acquire it in one stroke. With Orestes

Sartre exemplifies the “committed act.” Though one cannot help but take up an identity, a role dictated by circumstance—one is, to a certain extent, identified by what is done with that role up to and including its rejection or redefinition. To self identify is to take ownership of an act within a situation. More to the point, it is to take responsibility for the situation as a whole (but responsibility does not end there; it too changes because acts are followed by subsequent acts). We have thus arrived at a new, more robust, rendition of the Sartrean situation. Here situation is discussed as a human product forged through *praxis*, that is, the purposeful activity that involves man in the world (Orestes’ self discovery through his actions). The result of which extends man toward the horizon of his responsibility (Argos becoming *Orestes’ Argos*). The play, in this sense, can be seen as what Sartre terms as a *totalization*.

Another idea developed through *The Flies* is Sartre’s notion that man makes himself without knowing himself as part of his ability to move beyond his situation. That although our activity, or better yet *project* (activity with purpose), does not appear to us as an entirely alien preoccupation it nevertheless renders unforeseen outcomes. Among these outcomes we encounter ourselves redefined, i.e., we become other than what we initially believed ourselves to be. Argos’ landscape as a structure is modified upon Orestes’ arrival, that is, a new body (Orestes) has entered a larger body (Argos) and thereby modified it. Whatever action takes place in Argos modifies Argos. Modifications to Argos are modifications to its inhabitants. Commentators on this play stress the significance of Orestes freedom to change the condition of Argos. But forget to mention that the condition of Argos changed Orestes in ways he could not foresee. Such is the case with Sartre’s progressive-regressive method, a method evidently easily identified in Sartre’s first major play. The convention established by the limited number of commentaries on Sartre’s plays is that concepts and developments from *Being and Nothingness*

(1943) are the appropriate ones to identify in the narrative of *The Flies* (1943). But likening *The Flies* to themes found in *Search for a Method* (1957) and *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960) shows the degree to which Sartre's early preoccupations lend themselves in their nascent forms to his overall project. The production of a project (*The Flies*) adds new dimensions to Sartre the writer. Through it Sartre the writer is redefined. What we are doing is looking at *The Flies* as a picture of

a systemic theory that aims to comprehend the whole range from individual phantasy, interpersonal relations, socio-technical systems, to inter-group relations. Sartre aims to be systematic, without pretending to present a closed and finished system; this totalization in progress perpetually abdicates any pretensions or intentions to finished totality.⁸⁷

This is an appropriate description of what is done with *The Flies*. It is an appropriate description of what is done with any of Sartre's plays. To be sure it is an accurate description of Sartre's philosophical project; the quoted statement is commentary to that effect. What we have with Sartre's plays are microcosms that capture a sense of the whole of his work. Each play is a totalization working its way through Sartre's philosophical system; another totalization. Such a rendition of Sartre's project reflects that project's commentary on human reality: that it is a series of totalizations generated by, and passing through, each other.

Orestes' adventure in *The Flies* exemplifies how the Sartrean hero moves toward an affirmation of selfhood through praxis. But how is this arrived at? The hero of *The Flies* "takes up" an identity, a "role," by way of his acts and the significance ascribed to those acts by the characters in the play and by the audience. What is more, this is true for the character of the play as well as the actor playing him. In *I've Done My Act: An Exercise in Gravity*, Denis Hollier draws attention to this very point by focusing on Sartre's use of italics in the script. Rather than indicating stage direction, Sartre italicizes specific words in the dialogue as gestures the actor

must convey in character. This is insightful insofar as these gestures assign significance to Orestes' acts through acting cues. They oblige the actor to play Orestes as committing himself. The actor has to choose how to relate the significance of emphasized words (in this case possessive pronouns) through verbal and physical gestures. Thus Sartre puts the actor in the precarious situation of having to take up responsibility for realizing Orestes in hopes of seizing his identity as an actor. A feat accomplished only by conjuring the character's identity which is secured by the curtain's fall at the end of the play.

This identity begins to take shape via the method of gesturing the actor assigns himself; as the actor dissolves the character comes into focus. In fact as the play progresses the character takes on a weightier presence—one hardly registers the actor. At the onset Orestes haunts the actor who plays him because of the gestures performed to conjure him. The actor's words are and are not his own. Sartre makes this more explicit with a later play, *Kean* (1953), but *The Flies* is already drawing attention to the idea that the actor's identity is tainted by his role; he commits himself by committing Orestes. Hollier notes:

The paradoxical status of being an actor is formulated not in the terms of Hamlet's soliloquy, "to be or not to be," but rather in those of the actor playing the role of the psychasthenic prince: to be and not to be, that is in fact the Sartrean solution to the *paradoxe du comédien*—or, according to the terms of phenomenological ontology, to-be-in-the-mode-of-not-being. For one should not say in the fashion of Diderot, that because he pretends to feel them, the actor himself does not feel the sentiments he expresses. Undoubtedly, he does not really feel them. But that precisely because he feels them unreally. "It is not the actor who is realized in the actor," Sartre writes in *L'imaginaire* and elsewhere, "it is the actor who is unrealized in the character."⁸⁸

Alternatively one recognizes that one is always being *and* non-being and that the actor instantiates this reality in his movement toward unreality evidenced by every performance. It is by enacting the gesture that realize the character that the actor nihilates himself. The character is

a series of gestures in the service of acts he chooses as well. Orestes affirms himself as he takes responsibility for *his* actions in *his* situation, by taking ownership of *his* Argos, Orestes manifests on the stage. On the other hand it is done before and because of an audience whether it is the people of Argos or the theatre goer. When a situation becomes an attribute of the subject, as the subject takes up responsibility for it, the result is an interim identity as question as an object for reflection, a transition from subjectivity to transcendent objectivity. Orestes exits Argos but will forever carry it with him. His act liberates the people of Argos by condemning them with the choice to take up responsibility. On that note, his act liberates the audience as witness.

Dirty Hands

With *The Flies* Sartre communicates, as has been shown, that motives and actions leave their stain upon the subject in history. In reference to Aegistheus' murder of Agamemnon Orestes claims Aegistheus appeared before the people of Argos with "his arms red to the elbows, gloved in blood." Electra remarks on her own dirty hands in comparison to Orestes as a result of Orestes' murderous act. In *Dirty Hands*, Hugo, an assassin sent by a political party to kill Hoederer, one of its own leaders, is faced with having to decide how to regard his past actions—to decide whether or not his hands are dirty of a crime of his own doing. Hugo wants to commit an act that defines him as a man; additionally he wants to undo the damage his father has done in subjecting Hugo to his rants that portrayed acts toward a future social good are for the young and naïve. At a meeting at Olga's house Hugo solicits asks for job that would get his hands dirty from Louis, a party leader. The job sends Hugo, along with his wife, to Hoederer under the pretense of being his new secretary. Hugo is basically assigned to gain Hoederer's confidence to get close enough to kill him.

The majority of the play involves Hugo grappling with his task. His wife, Jessica, constantly aggravates the situation by evoking the routines they play within their relationship. The routines involve emasculating Hugo to his face and in front of others in a way that gets him worked up enough to take some sort of action. Jessica continually pushes Hugo to get the job done in their little games as she realizes that Hugo is stalling. Hugo protests that he cannot kill Hoederer without knowing exactly why he is doing so. In bad faith Hugo says “he won’t follow idiotic orders” while following orders insofar as keeps his mission concealed. Jessica accuses him of being a clown or a corpse until he gets the job done. The exasperated Hugo finally asks, “Can we ever stop playing,” but what is it that they play? This question is answered by Hugo’s fate at the play’s end and provided its name by Leni in *The Condemned of Altona*, “[h]ere, you know, we play loser wins.” This “game” evident in every one of Sartre’s plays is a condensed version of the master-slave dialectic that he applies to inter-subjective relations. This dialectic is recast in different forms depending on the matter at hand, but in his plays the game of “loser wins” takes the following form:

the intention of the winner is to reduce the other to the inessential (in this case there is a taking up of the challenge), we have the structure properly speaking of the challenge, that is, that my act takes place and is done by me as mortgaging the other’s future. Abruptly, I introduce a new and objective (transcendent) possibility into the other’s field of possibilities. It has a subjective face in that it is *his* possibility and objective face in that it is a possibility that has come into his field of possibilities by way of me and is upheld in existence by me. I was free. At present, I have to demonstrate that I am free. My freedom is called into question. And if I cannot demonstrate it, then automatically I fall into inessentiality, I belong to an essential world in front of the other’s freedom.⁸⁹

Sartre goes on to explain that the challenge is both a risk and a game. It is a risk because freedom is expressed by subordinating the external world while simultaneously accepting the contest. That is, one does not go “up in smoke” as soon as they are challenged, but rather one establishes “the climax of freedom that is set up on the ground of Being precisely because it *calls itself in*

question... because it is not part of the domain of Being... because it is an essence, as we have seen, the pure possibility of losing itself.” It is a game because it deviates from the spirit of seriousness.⁹⁰ In short, in order to win a game of loser wins one must destroy themselves as what they purported themselves to be. They must become something else. Playing loser wins, however, does not necessarily result in authentic conversion, though it can and does, for Hugo. In a way Jessica is right Hugo’s act cannot be completed until he finally kills Hoederer, until then he is simply playing assassin without a target. Hugo must take action, where action is considered as:

[T]he setting out of means in view of some end. The end is given as the nonexistent beyond that illumines the totality of what exist. It is in light of the end that I comprehend the world. At the same time, it is a future that determines the present and it is perpetual surpassing of what is. Man is a being who posits ends. Action is an operation and work. It consists in introducing changes in the external world in such a way that the totality of changes brought about is equivalent (a totality where some elements will cancel out one another) to the realized end. The end obtained is a new figure of the universe (a bridge, a new social regime, a work of art, etc.).⁹¹

Now it is clear that what Sartre has termed means here we have considered as gestures in Chapter 2. In the act as we have conceived it there is the planned series of gestures (the set of means) set in motion in the attempt of completing an act. Hence an actor determines the end and the means to achieve it, i.e., he plans the act. He then is servant to that end as an agent performing the gestures required in the series that lead to the end in mind. The end, being in the future is not always met by the foreseen gestures thought to bring about its realization. So the agent must adapt, create. The bastard in his capacity as actor creates the plan in a playful manner by separating himself from the spirit of seriousness that permeates the world and then reinserts himself as agent in the service of the desired end. Sartre dramatizes this in *Dirty Hands* by having Hugo, after deciding he wants to show his commitment to the cause through an act, after

having executed all the means that lead up to the final gesture that completes the act, change his mind. The act was a failure (the totality of means was not transformed into an end). A new act is set in motion in a world where Hoederer is still alive and Hugo is responsible for all that that means for the party and for the world.

But then Sartre complicates things further by having Hugo discover Jessica in Hoederer's arms. Caught in the moment Hugo fires his revolver killing Hoederer. Now the second act has failed. Gesture's set in motion when Hugo chose not to kill Hoederer will never be transformed into the end of having Hoederer live so that the party may adopt his plans even though he was opposed to those plans. In Hugo's mind the party should accept no compromises. But Olga reveals that Hoederer's plans were put into effect after all and that he has now been targeted for assassination. She also reveals that she struck a deal with the party: If she can determine that Hugo is "salvageable," that he can still be of use to the party, the party will let him live. But Hugo believed that the party was right to target Hoederer in the first place because he planned to compromise with its enemies and hide it from the rank and file. Now Louis, the very man who sent him to assassinate Hoederer, has become party leader and made the very same compromises he opposed and lied to the party about the true nature of said compromises. Still, after years in prison for the crime Hugo admits that he does not know why he killed Hoederer.

Yes. I really drew my finger back. Actor's do that too, on the stage. Look here: I cock my finger. I aim at you. [*He aims at here with his right hand, his forefinger coiled back.*] It's the same gesture. Perhaps I wasn't real. Perhaps only the bullet was... ..I thought I was too young. I wanted to hang a crime around my neck, like a stone. And I feared it would be too heavy for me to carry. How wrong I was! It's light, horribly light. It has no weight at all. Look at me: I've grown older, I spent two years in the cooler, I've been separated from Jessica, and I shall lead this life of senseless puzzlement until your pals take it upon themselves to rid me of it. And all this comes from a crime, isn't that right? And yet it has no weight, I don't feel that it's there. It's not around my neck, nor on my shoulders, nor in my heart. It has become my destiny, do you understand? It controls my life from the outside, but I can't see it or touch it, it's not mine, it's a fatal disease that

kills painlessly. Where is my crime? Does it exist? And yet I fired. The door was open, I loved Hoederer, Olga... It's not my crime that tortures me but the fact that he's dead. So there you are. Nothing Happened. Nothing.⁹²

It is one thing to have dirty hands and quite another to know why they are dirty. To offer a justification for one's actions is to understand the action as an object and to choose the purpose the said object serves. For Sartre some people, like Hugo, have moments in their lives where they realize they have been accomplices to forces acting to own detriment. That is they come to realize they have dirty hands but do not exactly know why. What is someone supposed to do in this situation? Orestes' act was heavy and anchored him to the world. Hugo was light and without real definition. If one is to take Hugo's case as exemplary then one realizes that meaning to past actions, if their significance is in question (i.e. the series of gestures have not been settled so the act remains open ended), can be salvaged. Hugo had to see his act as meaningful. He came to understand that Hoederer's life, having belonged to great man he came to know and admire, required significance. Giving that act meaning would give his life meaning. He is aware that he must create the value of his act and the end of his new act is to die committed to that meaning. He sets the gestures in motion refusing to leave, refusing to take a revolver to defend himself, and knowing party assassin were lying in wait just outside, Hugo kicks the door open and for his final gesture shouts: "unsalvageable!"

The Devil and the Good Lord

When we first meet Goetz as a general at war in *The Devil and the Good Lord* we find a "monster," a man who betrays his comrades and kills the innocent as he intends to force his way through the world in a deplorable manner in order to remain thoroughly "evil." He claims he wishes to do evil because good has already been done by God and that in order to be evil one is

forced to invent. Because Goetz recognizes that God has set out a plan as mandated and institutionalized by society, be it through the church or otherwise, because he is a man outside of society, indeed as a self-identified bastard, he must invent in order to leave his mark upon the world.⁹³ This changes when a priest, Heinrich, convinces him that it is far more difficult to do “good” in the world. Goetz wagers that despite whatever difficulties may lie ahead as a result, he will perform a *conversion* from “monster” to “saint.”⁹⁴ He then sets out as prophet to perform only good deeds. He gives his lands away. He humbles himself before others. He preaches non-violence and love even in the face of certain death;⁹⁵ in fact, toward the end of the play, the people of “The City of the Sun” are wiped out due to their loyalty to his good ways. In the end, however, Goetz returns to being a ruthless general after concluding that there is no God and his acts were his alone, served him alone.⁹⁶

To say that Goetz returns to his status as ruthless general at war at the end of the play is not to say that he has reverted to his old self. The general at the end of the play is ruthless but he is ruthless in the service of a path he chooses in the historical development of a situation. The general in Act I performed ruthless acts for the sake of being evil. He was radically evil insofar as he was committed to doing evil for evil’s sake. General Goetz at the end of the play must perform deplorable acts but does so for the sake of a human cause. What Sartre offers with *The Devil and the Good Lord*, among other things, is commentary on the politics of humanism:

...the play’s unmistakable message is that the politics of humanism must renounce the ethics of non-violence which belongs to the politics of religion and contemplation and quietism, the politics of the world to come. The politics of humanism is the politics of this world; and because this world is so deeply touched with evil (the consequence, on Sartre’s view, of scarcity), to master it one must be ruthless, one must (for Sartre is not a man to mince words) soil oneself with crime.⁹⁷

There is an important allusion to *St. Genet* here insofar as in that text we find the criminal opposed to the saintly. The criminal is markedly human and the saintly inhuman. As we have already indicated, in *The Devil and the Good Lord* we see monster in opposition to saint while that which is criminal remains purely human. Let us see if we can make use of these distinctions.

What is of special interest to us regarding the aforementioned brand of humanism is what had to transpire for the production of such a political outlook. It is for this reason that we must bring our attention back to the “conversion” Goetz undergoes in Act I. Here Goetz is tempted to do good because Heinrich points out that it is far more difficult than doing evil, claiming that, “If you want to deserve Hell, you need only remain in bed.”⁹⁸ Goetz realizes that no one has ever done good.⁹⁹ It is for this reason, the appeal of such an impossible challenge, that Goetz wagers he can and will live righteously for a year. He proclaims, “I turn my coat and wager I can be a saint.”¹⁰⁰ And, with the throw of the dice, Goetz presumably converts from doing evil to doing good in the world. This takes Goetz through a series of trials that end with a revelation that strikes him so ridiculous, given his experiences since the toss of the dice, that he regards it as a colossal joke: “God doesn’t exist”¹⁰¹ Which brings with it the added revelation that he must bid farewell to monsters and saints because there “is nothing left but mankind.”¹⁰² This results in Goetz appearing to revert to his old ways through a decision to be a soldier once more. But what we have instead is an authentic radical conversion.

The first presumed conversion was in bad faith insofar as it is simply an oscillation from one form of self justification to another; it is the movement from monster to saint, from one positing of self-as-object to another positing of self-as-object. This, as we know, is what it means to be in bad faith; and so is not a radical conversion at all, at least not in the authentic sense. If Goetz undergoes an authentic radical conversion, he does so in the last two scenes of the play.

This is marked by two developments: The first being Goetz's awareness (an honest inventory of his situational disposition) of his being in bad faith. This is evident in Scene X when Goetz admits:

...I alone. I supplicated, I demanded a sign, I sent messages to heaven, no reply. Heaven ignored my very name. Each minute I wondered what I could BE in the eyes of God. Now I know the answer: nothing. God does not see me, God does not hear me, God does not know me. You see this emptiness over our heads? That is God. You see this gap in the door? That is God again. Silence is God. Absence is God. God is the loneliness of man. There was no one but myself; I alone decided on Evil; and I alone invented Good. It was I who cheated, I who worked miracles, I who accused myself today, I alone who can absolve myself; I, man. If God exists, man is nothing; if man exists... ...God doesn't exist... I have delivered us. No more Heaven, no more Hell; nothing but earth.¹⁰³

This development is sealed with Heinrich's murder for which Goetz awaits to be judged by the peasants. The second development is denoted by an act that posits an alternative (authentic) conception of self that engenders a new situational disposition. This is evident in Scene XI when, upon deciding to lead the army of peasants against the barons, a skeptical captain declares he rather die than obey Goetz's orders. Goetz's response is "Then die brother!" as he stabs him. His conversion is complete as he declares:

...listen to me! I take up this command against my will, but I shall be relentless. Believe me, if there is one chance of winning this war, I shall win it. Proclaim immediately that any soldier attempting to desert will be hanged. By tonight, I must have a complete list of troops, weapons, and stores; you shall answer for everything with your lives. We shall be sure of victory when your men are more afraid of me than of the enemy...the kingdom of man is beginning. A fine Start!¹⁰⁴

The two murders are significant because without God, murder is a transgression by man against man and so it is not a sin but a crime. The criminal act is seen here as the most human one. If Goetz must serve a purpose, he will serve a purpose of his choosing; if he is a servant, then he serves himself. With this second development the audience witnesses a return to man in a more

significant sense as through it Goetz makes the aforementioned announcement that the world of man is a criminal one—it is born in crime.

Among commentators of Sartre's theatrical works Robert Champigny provides the most developed exposition of what he identifies as Goetz's "conversion" in *The Devil and the Good Lord*.¹⁰⁵ He identifies it as Goetz's awareness of his being in bad faith, an awareness that manifests through the realization that there is no God. This, auspiciously, coincides with what we have identified as Goetz's honest inventory of his situational disposition. But what of the second development we have indicated as marking Goetz's conversion? For Champigny, Goetz's resignation from his former self was completed by his declaration that he was misled, that there is no God and that he alone decided "good" and "evil."¹⁰⁶ In Champigny's view, this is enough for the spectator to understand Goetz's conversion. That, "Goetz has ceased to play hide and seek with himself, has ceased to set up screens—God, the devil, evil, the good, being, nothingness. The judgment scene has the effect of an exorcism. The travestied monsters disappear from the ballet." Our contention on this matter¹⁰⁷ is that Goetz's declaration alone cannot count as a "radical conversion." This should be obvious as we are now well aware, that for Sartre, action puts us in the world. One cannot be judged as having forsaken previous actions without acting in such a way that calls the previous actions into question. To "work oneself over" requires taking stock of previous acts in order to forge ahead with subsequent acts meant to endorse or condemn previous ones.

It is also of value to us here to note that Champigny makes associations we reject outright. He cites what he counts as Goetz's conversion as the play's *subjective denouement*. We find this extremely problematic because it implicatively rests on Goetz's "reconciliation" with himself.¹⁰⁸ The problem is made obvious with a closer reading of the passage cited from

Champigny's book wherein he believes Goetz's conversion complete insofar as "Goetz has ceased to play hide and seek *with himself*."¹⁰⁹ In no way does Goetz have a pre-established "self" to hide or seek in the play; note that if a self is sought it is sought as a question, a possible self, in God's view, e.g. "[e]ach minute I wondered what I could BE in the eyes of God." In fact to say that Goetz has a pre-established self misses an important element of the play: the reason we follow Goetz on an adventure where he shifts identities—which he affirms through action—from war mongering evildoer to ascetic do-gooder, from ascetic do-gooder to huckster prophet, and from huckster prophet to war mongering leader of the peasants. If there is a subjective aspect to the play's denouement it is because Goetz comes to terms with the fact that he is solely responsible for his actions and whatever values those actions engender. What is more Champigny views what we have identified as the second development marking Goetz's radical conversion as significant. Only he refers to this development as a second denouement—an *objective denouement* that places Goetz in a collective enterprise. We too recognize Goetz's return as leader of the peasants as a denouement; in fact we see it as the only one in the play. Our rendition of Goetz's radical conversion helps us see the denouement on far more characteristically Sartrean terms. This is because we recognize that both the conversion and denouement are sealed with a gesture (murder). Moreover, by our account, Goetz's conversion at once provides both the objective and subjective thrust Champigny longs for.

It is plain that Goetz is a bastard. He is repeatedly identified, even self-identified, as a bastard throughout the play. The theme of the bastardy is, in fact, a common but undeveloped theme in various commentaries on the play. Cranston for example writes that the hero of the play is:

Goetz, a nobleman's bastard... Sartre believes that as an orphan he has a special affinity with the bastard; he defines an orphan as a "false bastard"; and Genet,

Kean... and now Goetz are outsize heroes for him precisely because they are *real* bastards.¹¹⁰

He then drops the subject completely. Take Anthony Manser's reference to the bastardy in his discussion of the same play: "Goetz, the hero, is a bastard, a man who has no natural place in the world, and hence no proper sense of his own identity."¹¹¹ Both passages note the importance of the term, the concept: bastard; neither offers explanation nor suitable discussion regarding even their own use of the term.

2. Kean, No Exit, and The Condemned of Altona: Expositions on the Role as Identity, The Bastardy, The Self Inflicted Wound, and Madness in Sartre's plays

Previously it was stated that "the actor's words are and are not his own," that the actor in performance is an example of a man who is clearly not what he is while being precisely what he is not. Even in his early plays, as it has been shown, Sartre drew attention to the idea that the actor's identity is tainted by his role; that he commits himself as an actor by communicating the role. Such portrayal of the work to be done by the actor is also akin to what is proposed by Constantin Stanislavski. In *Creating a Role* Stanislavski suggests that the actor ought to convey a "sincerity of emotions, feelings that seem true in given circumstances."¹¹² He stresses the exercise of preparing specific situations in order for the actor to have instinctive emotional responses. To summarize, he believes such exercises engender an unconscious to be held in reserve until called upon for the purpose of executing a moment within a role. The goal is to merge on an emotional level with the character of a play in such a way that makes narrative moments intimately real for the actor during performances. In chapter one Sartre's portrait of the actor was disclosed in its association with his theory of the imaginary, i.e., the "image function" of consciousness that unrealizes (nihilates) the world in the service of the imaginary; further, to

grasp the imaginary world is to enter into the field of the possibilities as a transcending of the real world.¹¹³ In short, the actor is unrealized as the character is realized on stage. Stanislavski has a remarkably similar take on what occurs on stage. He posits that actors utilize “passive imagination” and “active imagination” in the service conjuring the character. Passive imagination refers to the actor’s effort to put herself in a setting as a way of producing or building the world of the play out of the real world. Passive imagining allows the play and the facts of the play to take shape as the actor lets go of her world outside the play. Active imagination then takes on a perspective from within the world of the play. Active imagining is how the character comes to life.¹¹⁴ The convergence between Sartre and Stanislavski’s understanding of the actor’s process is obvious: Sartre’s unrealizing of the actor is equivalent to the work passive imagination does in Stanislavski’s method. The same relation is evident between Sartre’s realization of the character and Stanislavski’s active imagination. The area of convergence is important because it: 1) emphasizes the movement from the real to the imaginary as a key component of what must convincingly occur on stage; and, 2) it also stresses the use of the real as a necessary conductor that transfers the actor from the real into the imaginary—this, of course, is done in the service of ushering the audience to the imaginary.

In spite of this notable area of convergence Sartre’s interest in the function of the actor is a portentous concern in his oeuvre. Unlike the written words of the author, or the song that can be replayed on a café phonograph, the actor’s work is short-lived insofar as their portrayal of a role cannot endure past the performance itself. The actor uses her body as instrument to communicate with the audience. The actor’s function is to enact a role as a synthetic unity of a series of gestures in order to realize the character in the situation of the play. The play and its situation is lived through her body through the carefully chosen gestures she uses to unrealize

herself, to realize a character; the actor's becoming character is a deterritorialization of her own life through engagement with the imaginary, an engagement that reterritorializes it as the living character. That is Sartre goes further in that his investigation of the actor function is not just intended to show that man moves from the real to the imaginary but also to show the degree to which the imaginary and the real are interlaced. In a sense, this is related to Sartre's view of the possible and probable as imbedded within the actual as evidenced in his discussion of emotion as a transformation of the world.¹¹⁵ This development is revisited in his later work as it pertains to the relation between the individual and the group (the absorption of individual praxis in the social body) and the interrelation of groups (history as a totalizing group project). But what is of specific interest to us here is that if Sartre gives special consideration to the actor it is because in his view man is alienated from himself, i.e., his role, essence, behavior. He is distanced from his acts, and, in this sense, places himself "in the same relation to his own emotions and emotional behaviors as the audience is to the play."¹¹⁶ Sartre dramatizes this with *Kean*.

Kean

Edmund Kean, the great actor, is so convincing in his portrayal of characters that he finds he never leaves that space where the actor and character converge. On stage, the actor finds himself unable to recognize who has been unrealized; is he the actor or he as character? Kean then finds himself offstage contemplating what it means to be Kean the actor given that his gift as an actor is to vanish on stage:

I've been thinking. To act you must take yourself for someone else. I thought I was Kean, who thought he was Hamlet, who thought he was Fortinbras... ..Yes. Hamlet does think he is Fortinbras. Sh! It's a secret. What a series of misunderstandings! Fortinbras doesn't think he is anyone. Fortinbras and Mr. Edmund are alike. They know who they are and they say only what is. You can

ask them about the weather, the time of day, and the price of bread. But never try to make them act on a stage... ..When man himself is a sham, everything is a sham around him. Under a sham sun, the sham Kean cried the tale of his sham sufferings to his sham heart.¹¹⁷

From the very beginning of the play, in the discussion between Amy and Elena, the question is posed, “Kean? Is there such a man as Kean? The creature I saw last night was the Prince of Denmark in person...” Sartre’s statement that the man on stage during the performance of Hamlet, who calls himself Hamlet, is, in fact Hamlet is understood as alluding to a context such as the one at play in the discussion in *Kean*’s opening scene.

Kean is by his own account, not a man but an actor. The quality of Sartre’s writing is in full force as he blends the content of Kean’s speeches between adventures the actor experiences on stage and adventures he experiences offstage. For example, when clearing his name of a rumored indiscretion with a woman to the Count and his wife Elena (with whom Kean is having an affair) in the presence of his friend (and secret competitor for Elena’s affection) the Prince, Kean complains to the Count about being an actor in the following way:

You have no idea of the situations our authors imagine; sometimes I declare my passion to my brother, not knowing he is my rival, and he hears me in silence, as you are doing now. Another time, the woman I love believes me false, and I must prove my innocence before her very husband. Yesterday, the King of Denmark—your country, Excellency—decreed my banishment and death. I escaped his vengeance, though it was this same king who killed my father...¹¹⁸

Their encounter is a humorous one, but note that Sartre is using every opportunity (this one in Act I) to communicate a progressive tension at work on Kean’s psyche. The fact of the matter is that this very speech is a summary of the play within the play. By the play’s end Kean is banished (narrowly avoiding a lengthy prison term). The speech ends, “Our playwrights plunge me into a false situation every night—but every night they extricate me. I shall know how to get us out of this one as easily as all the others.” As if a summary of the play and plays within the

play coupled with actors playing actors declaring they are acting like actors were not enough, Kean declares from the stage that, given his experiences playing other characters, he will escape whatever situation the author, Sartre, concocts. Indeed this speech reads like a veiled reference to Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.¹¹⁹

Perhaps a fruitful way of looking at this is through Sartre's use of free indirect discourse in *Kean* to convey the gradual nihilation of the actor in the service of the surfacing character. Before we look at a dramatization of free indirect speech let us look at a good example readily available in Sartre's prose. The following is the opening of *The Childhood of a Leader*:

"I look adorable in my little angel's costume." Mme. Porter told mamma: "Your little boy looks good enough to eat. He's simply adorable in his little angel's costume." M. Bouffardier drew Lucien between his knees and stroked his arm: "A real little girl," he said, smiling. "what's your name? Jacqueline, Lucienne, Margot?" Lucien turned red... everybody thought he was so charming with his gauze wings, his long blue robe, small bare arms and blond curls...¹²⁰

"Mme. Porter told mamma," leads the reader to think the words of the opening line are the words of the narrator. How many children are present? If the first line is spoken by a character who is also the story's narrator then there is a second child, Lucien, who is lifted by M. Bouffardier. This is gradually destabilized when the reader reaches the description of Lucien in the angel costume and realizes there was only one child being referred to all along. Once the ambiguity registers (an ambiguity further punctuated by the question regarding Lucien's gender) it is because the reader finally answers the question: "who spoke the first line?" Such is the case in *Kean* when eventually Kean suffers a breakdown on stage and has to ask himself: "who was speaking?" and "in who's service?" He has to consider the possibilities, "Was it Othello?" "Was it the actor Kean?" "Was it the man Mr. Edmund Kean?" Kean loses it when he becomes aware that the Prince is wooing Elena during his performance of Othello, "Silence!" he yells from the stage breaking character. "Where do you think you are? At court? In a boudoir? Everywhere else

you are prince, but here I am king, and I ask you to be quiet, or we will stop the performance,” he insults the prince; but was this insult not already a break in the performance? Who is speaking? Is it Othello or the great actor Kean who is king on the stage? Soon Kean manages some measure of composure but cannot continue with the scene. In the middle of the scene where Othello is to strangle Desdemona Kean admits to the audience, “This man is not dangerous. You were wrong to take Othello for a tragic cuckold. He... I... am a co-co-comic cuckold.” He turns to the prince, “You see, sir, I was right. Now I am in a real rage, I can only stammer.” Then to back to the audience:

...I thought you really loved me... But who were you applauding? Eh? Othello? Impossible—he was a sanguinary villain. It must have been Kean. Our beloved Kean—our dear—our national idol.” Well, here is—your beloved Kean. [*He drags his hands over his face, smearing the make-up.*] Behold the man. Look at him. Why don’t you applaud? Isn’t it strange. You only care for illusion... ..By the way, I was wrong just now to mention Kean. Kean the actor died very young. [*Laughter.*] Be quiet, murderers, it was you who killed him. It was you who took an infant and turned him into a monster. [*The audience is silent.*] That’s right. Silence—a silence of death. Why were you booing just now? There was nobody on stage. No one. Or perhaps an actor playing the part of Kean playing the part of Othello. Listen—I am going to tell you something. I am not alive—I only pretend.¹²¹

The stage directions have been purposely left in as they indicate that the audience is to laugh at Kean; to regard him as a threat that does not require them to take action so they indicate this through their passive action of laughter. Why does one laugh? Recall that it is to say “I am not like that thing being laughed at.” Recall too the drunkard who takes himself to be sober, to be like everyone else. Kean, like the drunkard is funny because he takes himself to be a person like everyone else. He is not inebriated but is undergoing a crisis that casts him before his gaze as a person without identity and thereby revealing something to the audience about themselves, “Listen—I am going to tell you something. I am not alive—I only pretend,” he discloses something they do not care to acknowledge. Kean’s outburst goes too far and the guards move to

arrest him, to evict him from the group, but the Prince intervenes—subjecting the audience to his truth. But *Kean* is a comedy and in this scene the audience watches an audience reacting to Kean. *Kean* is a funny play, the audience has been laughing, sometimes with and sometimes at Kean. Like the audience in the play, the viewer in the world has been laughing at Kean's crisis throughout the play. But suddenly the laughter becomes concern and empathy. By the play's end the viewer may have a grin of pleasure but the laughter is gone. They have enjoyed themselves, but leave the theatre amused by their own resemblance to Kean the character who played an actor that played characters before an audience before an audience. It is in this way that *Kean*'s audience has digested Sartre's formula for laughter.

Discovering himself as a fraud in both his professional and his private life, what, according to our current project is Kean to do? He can return to the façade he has built a life on or he can have an authentic conversion as possible through the bastardy element he employs as an actor, an element he can now utilize toward the creation of a new life.¹²² Hazel Barnes put it in the following way:

Realizing that throughout his career he has been playing the part of The Great Actor away from the footlights as thoroughly as he played Hamlet in the theatre, Kean resolves simply to be himself, Mr. Edmund. But one further step is necessary. Who is Mr. Edmund? Only what Edmund Kean decides to make him. Rather subdued, Kean decides that at least he can "imitate the natural until it becomes second nature." In the final resolution Kean shows that even as an actor he has learned to distinguish between roles which are in bad faith and acts which are in good faith.¹²³

Kean is able to make this conversion because he is a bastard through and through. He never considers himself to be "his own man" but a man made by authors on the stage and by others off it. As stated previously, it is difficult to discover oneself in bad faith given that the goal of bad faith is a form of self-deception in the name of avoiding the vertigo, fear, nausea, of grasping

oneself as utterly superfluous. That reflection has always resulted in realizing how we are created by others (or create ourselves along with others) rather than discovering ourselves. Kean's words to the Prince put it in the following manner:

You, and all others. We believe that men need illusion—that one can live or die for something other than cheese. What have you done? You took a child, and you turned him into an actor—an illusion, a fantasy—that is what you have made of Kean. He is a sham prince, sham minister, sham general, sham king. Apart from that, nothing...

This discovery is made precisely because he is a bastard, ill born and an actor to boot—an outsider—like Orestes. Continuing:

...Oh, yes, a national glory. But on condition that he makes no attempt to live a real life. In an hour from now, I shall take an old whore in my arms, and all of London will cry "Vovat!" But if I kiss the hands of the woman I love, I shall find myself torn to pieces. Do you understand that I want to weigh with my real weight on the world? That I have had enough of being a shadow in a magic lantern? For twenty years I have been acting a part to amuse you all. Can't you understand that I want to live my own life?¹²⁴

Kean the bastard is forced to confront his bad faith and his ability, through the bastardy, to act—not as an actor—but as a bastard rather than agent in the world. He must choose. For what is the committed act or the responsibility of the actor? As Barnes sees it Kean the actor becomes Mr. Edmund Kean the man by authentic affirmation of alternative possibilities for himself.

In *Kean* there is a constant wrangling of people's intentions in service of putting on airs (publically violated by Kean from the stage), preserving pretences of propriety (Elena and her husband the Count), and in order to cater to the desires of the desired (Anna for Kean). The characters continually reign each other in whenever any one of them ventures to far from the game that is at play; whether it is the rivalry between Kean and the Prince, for example, or providing Kean with his "needs" so that puts on a desired performance, for another. Sartre has

his characters constantly rope each other in. This was device he perfected with *No Exit*, and builds on in subsequent plays. In fact, in Act V, there is an exchange between Kean and Elena that could have been in *No Exit*:

Listen—we are three victims. You, because you were born a woman—he, because he was too highly born, and I, because I was a bastard. The result is you enjoy your beauty through the eyes of others, and I discover my genius through their applause. As for him, he is a flower. For him to feel he is a prince, he has to be admired. Beauty, royalty, genius; a single and same mirage. We live all three on the love of others, and we are all three incapable of loving ourselves. You wanted my love—I yours, he ours. What a mix-up.

It is because of this dynamic at play that all three “are alienated from the dominant society,” and why “none can easily achieve authenticity.”¹²⁵ This dynamic of mediating to self through others marked by a wrangling, and purposeful entanglement of, motives, by vying for authoritative interpretations of ourselves and other people is the very topic of discussion in the subsequent sections.

No Exit

No Exit communicates the drama of negotiating between the identity one wishes to have (or have had), versus the identity one has forged through what they have done in the world. Sartre situates the characters (Garcin, Estelle, Inez) of his play in a drawing room in the afterlife. He also employs a device in the form of providing the characters with the ability to see how the world gets along *with their absence* from it. Looking back upon her life Estelle, comments on the disdain she harbored for what others expected of her, she claims that she had always done the opposite of those expectations in response. Inez then points out that Estelle had only managed to act in accordance with her own thoughts regarding the expectations of others. That Estelle had only acted according to what she presumed others thought and without knowledge of what was

actually expected. This becomes a theme for the play as the characters continually grapple with how they want to be perceived by others in the face of how they are perceived by others, how they wish to be remembered on the one hand and how they are remembered on the other. This theme functions as the engine by which their conduct is produced. Sartre provides us with a rendition of others as one tends to relate to them in the world. People's projects are complicated by the projects of others. If hell is other people it is only because sometimes a free act employed to enter into commune with others results in a dynamic one becomes accustomed to. Relationships, once established, have the tendency to instill safety and comfort and thereby bar one from producing a second act that opts out of those relationships when necessary. This, of course, is over reductive as is any claim that purports to explain "hell is other people" that is not titled *Being and Nothingness* (followed by a lifetime of novel reiterations of the play's famous tagline). The fact of the matter is that we can never be what we were and can never truly see how others see us. So we are condemned to interpret ourselves and others in terms of what we were, what we could be, what others were, what they could be.

But what does it mean for Garcin, Inez, and Estelle to be trapped in hell if not that each is a torturer for the others? This brings us to another viable option present to the bastard. He can choose to free himself of an entanglement or thrust himself into one. We call the bastard's leap into a fray the "self-inflicted wound," a violent gesture toward oneself meant to communicate incarnation as a particular object, a symbolic, though futile, gesture meant to make them part of a group. In *The Age of Reason*, Ivich and Mathieu drink at a night club. Ivich complains of the propriety, the air and posture people put on for others. When she finds she has offended a woman by drinking to excess Ivich wonders how the woman will deal with the sight of blood, takes a knife, and slices her palm open. She refuses Mathieu's help because he is just as despicable, just

as proper, as that awful woman at the next table, “I ought to have guessed you would find it too much for you,” she taunts him. “Too much for me?” he responds before plunging the knife into his own hand, leaving it there with the handle in the air. “You see... anybody can do that.” The pair, becoming aware of both, the stupidity of the gesture, and their complicity in such stupidity, that is the fact that Mathieu’s response has brought them closer together, then clasp their hands together with a smacking sound.

She was looking at him with an affectionately fierce expression...

“That’s the mingling of blood,” she explained.

Mathieu pressed her hand without saying a word, and felt a stinging pain; he had the feeling that a mouth was opening in his hand.

“you’re hurting me,” said Ivich.

“I know.”¹²⁶

In *The Devil and the Good Lord* Goetz the ascetic becomes Goetz the prophet by stabbing the palms of his hands and presenting them to the crowd as stigmata. Consider Roquentin’s jab at his palm and his allowing the blood to soak into the paper. In reference to the self-inflicted wound this is Sartre elucidating on the view that the subject has past selves that can be taken as objects for reflection in the sense of a drop of blood they are no longer composed of.¹²⁷ Another aspect of the self-inflicted wound is to show that one is *the* object, as in the object of choice. One chooses to make themselves an object in the eyes of the other for the other. The problem of being an object for others is that, in order to be, one must be something for someone else.

For Sartre our existence is irredeemably bound up with that of others. It is not a question of social contract that the individual makes with others in renouncing certain individual pleasures so as to derive the benefits of community. Solipsism is never a question since I find the other before I find myself—indeed I find myself through the other. Thus the mode of my existence is dependant on the other.¹²⁸

The desire to be desired, for example, may have it that one attempts to be “everything” for the other. One comes to accept the gestures they must perform in order to be fully whatever is

perceived as expected, desired, by the other. In this sense the goal to be desired is only realized, i.e., feels justified, once it appears as if they are desired. On the one hand, the other's desire has to be read into their actions, while on the other hand the desirer, in a sense becomes self-less, i.e., nihilated by choosing to carry out their desire by identifying with the object they have made of themselves as a way of acquiring the other's desire. This is only part of what is at play between the characters in *No Exit* but it is enough to show that a self-inflicted wound can take a psychological, as well as a physical, form. Torture and treachery are oft repeated themes in Sartre's work and early in *No Exit* Garcin and Inez find themselves suspicious of one another upon meeting because they realize they are in a situation where they may serve as each others torturers.

GARCIN: I beg your pardon. Who do you supposed I am?

INEZ: You? Why, the torturer, of course.

GARCIN: ...A torturer indeed! ...do you *really* think I look like a torturer? And by the way how does one recognize torturers when one sees them? Evidently you've ideas on the subject.

INEZ: They look frightened.

GARCIN: Frightened! But how ridiculous! Of whom should they be frightened? Of their victims?

INEZ: laugh away, but I know what I'm talking about. I've often watched my face in the glass.

GARCIN: In the glass? How beastly of them! They've removed everything in the least resembling a glass...

When coupled with what Sartre does with the laugh in *The Family Idiot* regarding to Flaubert's laugh this exchange takes on new significance. One laughs because one is threatened. One laughs out of fear. One laughs at the unknown when they sense it but do not want to take action against it because taking action against it acknowledges its presence, its reality. But what of Garcin's question? What does the torturer fear? Sartre makes the fear that possesses the torturer the same as the fear that possesses the laugher. For when the laugher is not laughing he is either evicting the laughed at from the group or beating them to submission.¹²⁹ What if the

object of ridicule cannot be evicted and cannot be beaten as is the case in the afterlife, the setting for *No Exit*? Everyone in that room is turned into a torturer. This is especially the case because each of them is questioning their own lives in the presence of one another. They are revealing things about each other as they reveal things about themselves. Inez for example accuses the others of attempting to paint decent pictures of the lives they lead in spite of the fact that they find themselves with her in hell. Inez is a reflection of the state of the other two. “laugh away, but I know what I’m talking about,” Inez warns, “I’ve often watched my face in the glass.” There are no mirrors in hell except in the eyes of the other.

A mirror is a consciousness in reverse. To the right-thinking man, it reveals only the appearance he offers to others. Sure of possessing the truth, concerned only with being reflected in his undertaking, he gives the mirror only this carcass to gnaw at. But for the woman and for the criminal, for all relative beings, this carcass is what is essential. If Genet looks at himself in the mirror, it is not primarily out of homosexual coquetry; he wants to understand his secret. He will later define the soul as “that which escapes from the eyes, from the tousled hair, from the mouth, from the curls, from the torso, from the penis.” Let us take this to mean the psychic meanings perceived objectively in the movements of the body. The soul is the *visible* body and, at the same time, it is the being in the back of consciousness.¹³⁰

The mirror is as personal as the eye because one wishes to be seen as a subject rather than an object by the other. One needs the other to exist, “when I can’t see myself I begin to wonder if I truly exist.” To come to know oneself, only the other offers a reflection worthy of the work required for behavioral adjustment.

INEZ: ...look into my eyes. What do you see?

ESTELLE: Oh, I’m there! But so tiny I can’t see myself properly.

INEZ: But I can. Every inch of you. Now ask me questions. I’ll be as candid as any looking-glass.

ESTELLE: Are my lips all right?

INEZ: Show! No they’re smudgy.

ESTELLE: I thought as much. Luckily [*Throws a quick glance at Garcin*] no one sees me. I’ll try again.

INEZ: That’s better. No. Follow the line of your lips. Wait! I’ll guide your hand. There. That’s quite good.

ESTELLE: As good as when I came in.
INEZ: Far better. Crueler. Your mouth looks quite diabolical that way.
ESTELLE: Good gracious! And you like it! How maddening, not being able to see for myself! You're quite sure, miss Serrano, that it's all right now?
INEZ: Won't you call me Inez?
ESTELLE: Are you sure it looks all right?
INEZ: You're lovely Estelle.
ESTELLE: But how can I rely on your taste? Is it the same as *my* taste? Oh, how sickening it all is, enough to drive one crazy!

One never properly sees an other. The attempt to see one's self as others might is equally futile. Estelle regards Inez, at her request, as an object, a looking-glass. But in her role as "looking-glass" Inez takes the opportunity to cast Estelle as she prefers to see her, an object that Estelle regards as unappealing to Garcin. It drives Estelle crazy to recognize that she can never find herself as she intends to project herself for others. Inez then asks Estelle to tame her as Estelle wishes to tame her own reflection. Inez's wish to be "tamed" by Estelle has the hidden agenda of getting Estelle to be more intimate with her. If Inez were to succeed, Estelle would come to regard herself only as Inez reveals her to be and risk losing herself to Inez in the process.

In *Saint Genet* Sartre tells us, "A dead person is a being who no longer exists for himself, that is, through others' opinion of him."¹³¹ The living dead are a constant reference point throughout Sartre's theatre; references appear in *The Flies*, *Men without Shadows*, *The condemned of Altona*, *The Devil and the Good Lord*, and *No Exit* is the dramatization of this point of reference. As such, the play serves as a fruitful image to conjure whenever the living dead are referenced in the other plays. With *No Exit* Sartre explains that when all hope is lost, when one chooses not to walk out an open door that leads to a new way of living, one is doomed to simply apply the passive function of acting when real (the active function) is called for. Ready made roles—the roles of social convention—are adopted because the actor feels "he can never take on an authentic identity: he is condemned to be free. He can never achieve the solidity and

massiveness of a rock without playing at doing so.”¹³² This theme should be taken as cautionary and not as denoting what Sartre thinks humanity is destined for.

If such pessimistic interpretation of Sartre should enter the mind one should note that the walking dead are always referenced in the pejorative or with pity. To be sure some of the characters that remark on the walking dead that populate their literary reality end up becoming like them, but the point is to realize that human reality involves compromises of this nature, that one must get their hands dirty if they want to live, that winning involves losing. In Sartre’s short story *Erostratus* Paul Hilbert, intent on killing people at random in the street remarks, “why must kill all these people who are dead already?” And then he shoots a man three times in the belly. Was he dead like the others? Was he different? How so? Recall that the flies transformed into a real menace for Orestes, no longer pests but servants of the dead ready to carry him off into the hell that is convention, tradition without change, that is, conformity to values that are not of his making. Orestes is successful in keeping them at bay though they haunt him. If he must get “dirty”—become an agent—he, like Goetz, will be one for himself and not for a god. Garcin, Inez, and Estelle cannot make anything more of themselves. Any trauma, psychological or physical, that causes injury to oneself is a self-inflicted wound and in a very real sense is related to “working oneself over” it is treachery in the form of self betrayal.

The residents of that poorly furnished room in *No Exit* represent only the dead trapped forever in bad faith. Sure, Garcin at times appears to see where he has gone afoul, and perhaps if he were still alive he would take the opportunity to make something better of himself, to undergo conversion in an authentic manner. Instead, he realizes he cannot step through the door when it is suddenly flung open; that door is for the living and is not a real option for him, he was dead long before he was introduced to the room. The living retain the possibility of transcending their acts

in order to forge new ones (Hugo *kicks the door open* in *Dirty Hands*); “thus specifying, altering, rectifying their significance, while the three characters in the play are hypothetically cut off from the real world.”¹³³ Unlike Hugo who could ascribe new significance to his act and set about a new act (series of gestures) in accordance with it so as to reinforce it, Garcin, Inez, and Estelle are dead. What the reader can take from this is that when filled with the compulsion to regard *No Exit* as a summary and primer to Sartre’s philosophy they should have an alarm go off in the head that screams in defiance—“but the characters are all dead!”

The Condemned of Altona

With *The Flies* Sartre answers the question whether one should kill in the name of justice. His answer is a definitive yes regardless of the burden it places on the hand that wields the sword of justice. With *Dirty Hands* He reiterates the previous statement adding that it is also important to take heed of the eyes that history casts upon our deeds, that we have a responsibility to those that may look to our deeds. In *Devil and the Good Lord* Sartre goes further still, insisting by the end of the play that we create our values and that such values may be hard won and may even require the blood of others. In *The Condemned of Altona* Sartre turns his attention to the question of torture. This play is commonly referred to as one of his best and is just as commonly dismissed (with few notable exceptions) as obscure. For that reason its description will be slightly more detailed while concepts and themes are made clear through the narrative which centers on the von Gerlach family. Franz the eldest son of the house of Gerlach has sequestered himself in a room for thirteen years. His only visitor is his sister Leni who provides him with his needs including news of the outside world that coincides with the one he has predicted for it. Werner,

the youngest son of the house, has moved into his father's home with his wife Johanna and is poised to take over the family business due to his father's throat cancer.

Slowly Leni, Werner, and their father reveal to Johanna that Franz is not really, as their story to others for his absence has it, dead but locked away in a room on the upper level. It is clear from the very beginning of the play that the Gerlach's, like the hapless souls in *No Exit* commune only to torture one another. They play sick games with one another focused on the very weaknesses of each member of the family. Once again Sartre stages the "play" of inter-relations in the way that he does with his other plays; the idea being that intimate relationships tend to fall into routine destructive game play. Johanna the newest member attempts to stay out of their entanglements but is slowly baited into their game of "loser wins."¹³⁴ In fact, Leni confirms her as a Gerlach when she begins to show signs of cruelty. Like the dead Garcin, Inez, and Estelle, the von Gerlachs quickly reveal themselves as living out of habit. Moreover, Father von Gerlach makes the others swear oaths on the bible in his attempt to keep everyone playing loser wins in predictable ways. But there is no way of telling the outcome of freely chosen paths. Gerlach knows that promises only go so far and that, anyway one looks at it, every worthy success comes with a measure failure—winning is the surest way to lose.

The oath in this play is used to connote that promises are meant to bind one to a presentation of self as object. The power of the promise is in full force as it is the root of shame, guilt, and forlornness. Leni professes that she is not bound by oaths but attempts to keep others bound by theirs throughout the play. Werner on the other hand takes his oaths quite seriously and so bounds not only himself but Johanna whenever he takes one. Soon enough it is apparent that although Franz has been locked away for thirteen years, he is in control of the family as their entire identity relies on keeping his state a secret. They have entangled themselves to a point of

criminality in keeping Franz's existence in the house a secret and it is for this reason that they remain in the house and in each other's grip. Johanna wants desperately to leave but Werner cannot leave the Gerlach game. Besides, as Leni points out Johanna is as strong willed as Franz. Werner would simply be trading in one game for another if he and Johanna chose to leave—"some marriages are funerals," after all.

When the father gives in and begins to tell Franz's tale, Franz "materializes" on stage visible only to the audience and to his father. Franz tells of his experience as a Nazi soldier and the men in the concentration camps, "they are no longer men... no one would make me like that." This is significant in that, according to Sartre, in order to laugh at someone, in order to torture them, they must be made subhuman even if they believe they should be taken for a subject because they are the scapegoat, they are the target that the group uses to vent their frustration when they can no longer be tolerated with laughter. As Sartre explains it laughter is for the privileged group member:

The scapegoat must not laugh, for he is subhuman permanently affected with the illusion of subjectivity; he must persevere in his false seriousness, and he is droll when he is beaten and seeks in vain to protect himself, when he is down, when he cries, when he tries to save a little of that human dignity he wrongly believes he possesses, when he is bewildered by jokes and carefully laid tracks; but precisely for that reason it would be dangerous to grant him a right reserved for true men.¹³⁵

Franz's father then has a breakdown and admits that it was he that caused the whole state of affairs. Before joining the war Franz had attempted to save a rabbi. Sure that his son would get caught, von Gerlach used all his pull as a rich industrialist to get his son off. The soldiers came to arrest the Rabbi and beat him to death in front of Franz. Franz went unpunished on condition he enlist and never forgave himself. Soon he was wearing a lieutenant's Nazi uniform. Johanna concludes accurately that Franz's chance to count for something, his attempt at self justification, was stolen from him. Betrayed by his own father Franz counted for nothing.

Learning Franz's story Johanna once again pleads with Werner to take her away. He refuses and she threatens to leave. Sartre captures the theatrics people play out of despair. Von Gerlach comments on Johanna's pleas: "Theatrical threats. Resentment brought out the actress, and the actress had to have her exit. Sartre makes it obvious that von Gerlach prefers appearances to truth, convention, routine, rather than anything uncertain, anything he cannot control. This way he is safe. He refuses to investigate any alternatives to the way things have been done because he recognizes there exists other possibilities that may not coincide with the ones he accepts for his own position. He prefers to remain uncertain of the uncertain. Von Gerlach sells land for concentration camps and builds munitions for the countries military forces. As a man of business it matters little to him who is in power and what they do with that power. He spies on everyone and catches Johanna spying on Leni as she enters Franz's room after a secret knock. He teaches Johanna the knock and asks her to visit Franz.

Enter Franz. Act II takes place in Franz's room while Johanna pays Franz her first visit. Franz's speech immediately strikes the listener (Johanna and the audience) as obscure. He speaks of the living dead outside while clanging oyster shells to communicating with crabs in the ceiling that watch him from the thirtieth century. The crabs are chroniclers of history and have entrusted Franz with communicating his century to them. The character Franz fulfills the wish for certain critics who wanted to see Orestes after leaving Argos. But Franz's free act was not as noble as the liberation of a city. Franz's act was freely choosing to torture and order the torturing of people during his two years of service to his country. Franz has lived in his room for thirteen years justifying his actions to the thirtieth century. He has sequestered himself so that he may carry on with the belief that Germany has been destroyed despite all his efforts, which included the torture of others, to save it.¹³⁶ It is the "murder of Germany" that must be atoned not his

torturous acts while “following orders.” Of course Franz and the rest of the family conveniently hide his identity as a torturer during the war from Johanna who believes his ailment to be his father’s doing. Johanna pleads with Franz to return to “come back to life.” But realizing that this would mean he would have to rely on his father for help, Franz refuses. In his mind his father’s help was what got the Rabbi killed. His father’s help is what put him in the war. His father help made him torturer of the innocent. His actions as torturer caused the von Gerlach’s to hide him and fake his death. Their role in his sequestration has made them slaves, in their having to care for him, and criminals at once. Franz lives in his room far removed from the realities that would incriminate him. Franz, in this sense, is the synthesis of the torturers Clochet, Pellerin, and Landrieu in *Men without Shadows*. Not in the sense that torture itself is turned into a game of “loser wins” but in the sense that the responsibility for their acts is placed on the tortured members of the resistance, men who give orders, or the dire state of the losing German forces. No von Gerlach is ever held accountable for anything by others so they never hold themselves accountable for anything, “*Les Séquestrés d’Altona* is therefore not a drama using psychological causality or determinism to explain the von Gerlach criminal behavior, but a play portraying five people who neglect to exercise their freedom for responsible actions”¹³⁷

Since the war Franz has learned a few things, however, for one that he would not return to Johanna’s world of the living even if he could because that world is just as mad as the one in his room. Franz explains, “I was like you. I was a failure. I was decorated in front of the whole army.” What he is pointing to is what passes for the proper way of living and even success in a chosen field is more deplorable than his sitting in his room tossing oyster shells at a portrait of Hitler. This view is bolstered by von Gerlach’s commentary on the Nuremberg trials throughout the play. For Franz, returning to Johanna’s world would mean he would have to contribute to it

by believing its justifications for its situation, i.e., wars, famine, etc. To join her world Franz would be endorsing that world. He would have to pretend to ignore the truth he has seen with his eyes and pounded onto the living flesh of people with his hands or through the hands of others by command. That fact that Franz is convinced that nothing would change if he comes out of his room is simply something Franz can not endure. Johanna now has a hand to play in the von Gerlach family's game of loser wins. She sees Franz and his father has to plead with her to give him an audience with Franz. This audience is eventually granted in exchange for Werner's release from his oath to stay in the house.

Johanna, like Leni, begins to play Franz's game. She reinforces for him the "fact" that Germany has been destroyed, that its children have been roasted alive, and he reinforces her beauty. Johanna learns what it means to live under the judgment of the crabs during daily visits with Franz. Johanna discloses to von Gerlach that she, like Leni, lies to Franz, that she comports herself in accordance with the reality of his room. This is incomprehensible to him. Johanna attempts to explain that Franz speaks his own language now. That the normal speech of the world outside of the room does not apply within its walls. The play itself exemplifies that if one wants to speak to Franz then that person has to learn how. Familiar words have unfamiliar meanings. Johanna's world itself begins to crumble under the strain as her lies to Franz are truths in one way but remain lies in another. She now lives two lives with two languages (each unintelligible in the world it does not belong to. Johanna is living in terms of Franz's reality and a word could kill Franz if it reveals that Germany is not dead. Johanna begins to fear for her sanity:

JOHANNA: I believe in his crabs more than he does.

WERNER: Because you love him.

JOHANNA: Because they're true. Madmen often speak the truth, Werner.

WERNER: Really. Which truth?

JOHANNA: There's only one: the horror of living. I can't stand it! I can't stand it! I prefer to lie to myself. If you love me, save me. (*Pointing to the ceiling*) that lid is crushing me. Take me to some town where they all lie to themselves...

Johanna admits that she had gotten over a fascination with death and madness before arriving to the house. Now Franz's world has forced her to run from conventionality which is all she craves—it is what she wants to run toward. Her sense of what counts for sanity has been scrambled. Franz refers to Johanna as Delilah and says he is Samson carrying the burden of centuries. Franz does not understand that he needs to be accountable for his own actions first. Instead he has burdened himself with all of the ills of history which diminishes his own act. Even then he would never fulfill his responsibilities given that he will have his Delilah to blame for his inability to do so. As stated previously, it is the summation, the synthesis, of individual praxis in history that places a person where they stand.

Johanna begins to see herself as an instrument of torture. Which makes sense since Franz's world has been infected by her (Johanna entered Franz's room like Orestes entered Argos) by her feeling and thinking and cavorting with the outside world whenever she is not in his room. He realizes that the real world is creeping in as she "subjects [him] to ordinary laws." He wants to lock her in with him so that she would transform to crab along with him. Franz's room is in many ways the room in *No Exit*. Not only does he not walk out the door, he bolts it from the inside. The play has been compared to *No Exit*, most notably by Dieter A. Galler, as he has it the convention of flashbacks and sequestration is prevalent in both plays. There is, however, a difference that deserves to be noted and bridged. Characters in *No Exit* have the power to see what is happening in the world of the living. This difference is bridged in *Altona* by Leni and Johanna who bring Franz news of the world. While the audience is treated to interpretations of the world as supplied by characters in order to hide their underlying

wretchedness in *No Exit*, Johanna and Leni mediate the world in a way that Franz wants to see it so as not to disrupt his fragile state. His state, like that of Garcin, Inez, and Estelle's, results from past actions in another world, actions he cannot bear to look at for what they are, actions he cannot change. One does not need Sartre to state that this play is *No Exit* with five people. One is aware of this through the character's words as Franz asks Johanna if she is afraid of dying:

JOHANNA: I wouldn't want Werner to be left alone.

FRANZ (with a short laugh, summing up): We can neither live nor die.

JOHANNA: We can neither see each other nor leave each other.

FRANZ: We're in a hell of a fix.

When Johanna says that they are happy in hell Franz explains that if they keep it up he will be destroyed because his madness is falling apart. Johanna tells Franz she never lies to him. Franz understands her to lie because she is not really alive, i.e., all he has ever seen of her are a series of performed gestures. If this is his view he is correct because as we have explain it: if Johanna performs gestures they are performed in the service of the act meant to save him from his "illness." So in Franz's view her gestures reveal her as not joining his madness but rather pretending to in the service of an alternative act. The goal of her act is to get him to join her rather than she join him.

He realizes this and finally admits that his world was meant to protect him. The future/god/crabs are meant to judge his life and he does everything toward having the judgment be a positive one. Johanna has fallen in love with Franz and he believes that he will lose her love when she discovers his acts as a soldier. He does. And she reveals the nature of the game she has been playing with him. She reveals him as a "practico-inert" insofar as he is no longer a man but a product that produces and regulates the conduct of others. Indeed the whole family and even she had fallen under his ordering machine. Earlier in the play Franz's father compared Franz to a machine, and indeed he is. Franz then has a flashback where a woman who knows him as

torturer says “god won’t judge you by your deeds, but by what you haven’t dared to do.” Franz realizes what many a “philosophical” anarchist, communist, socialist, or other would-be do-gooder fail to realize: that he condemned deplorable actions in spirit to hide the fact that he was committing them in the flesh, that “there are crimes along all roads.” Franz finally realizes the act he could not bring himself to complete though he was always free to do so. He then sets himself to it by granting his father the audience he has so desperately desired. The result is a double suicide.

Conclusion: Theatre of the World

This essay is a rendering of Sartre’s philosophy. It remains like Sartre’s works, ultimately unfinished. It is not meant to be all encompassing, or to be a final word on any of the themes or concepts covered; rather it is meant to elucidate them. It is meant to be an investigation of Sartre’s rendition of human reality and as such surveys his literature with specific interest in his theatrical works. This was not an arbitrary decision. This was a decision Sartre himself made when surveying the state of philosophy in his own time, a state of affairs that compelled him to reach for a connection between philosophy and literature. An act that seems to have left its mark in twentieth century literature:

Philosophy has long sought an understanding of man and his relationship with the universe; latterday existentialism has subverted the traditional alliance between philosophy and science in favour of one between philosophy and literature. The appropriate “science” for describing human reality cannot be the statistical quantification of the given reality, although this is itself an expression of that reality. The world of literature, however touches far deeper bases than do statistics—the time is reflected through its literature and through the artists’ sensitive response to the prevailing reality.¹³⁸

One need only recall that Sartre's original enterprise was to write. That in writing prose he often felt he had to get ideas out of the way, philosophy continually intruded on his prose and compelled him to settle ideas in a way appropriate to their content. Simone de Beauvoir in *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* comments he needed to connect Stendhal and Spinoza, to "connect art and truth," to express ideas in their beautiful form.¹³⁹

If literature holds any special privilege, it is that of standing particularly close to that free imagination which Sartre claims to be, not an accidental property, but an essential structure of consciousness. Literature shows man an image of himself as he really is—one who invests reality with his freedom so that the world outside becomes his world.¹⁴⁰

Or better yet, Sartre's theatre has been regarded here as a possible goal for literature and,

from this point on we may conclude that the writer [Sartre] has chosen to reveal the world and particularly to reveal man to other men so that the latter may assume full responsibility before the object that has been laid bare.¹⁴¹

The answer to the question: "why should philosophical import be attributed to Sartre's plays?" Is one that should register alongside the one that answers for Platonic dialogue. Unlike Plato Sartre also writes modern philosophical texts that further explain ideas found in his plays or vice versa. In order to understand Sartre's terms one must consider the various ways in which they are employed. Following his views, what constitutes knowledge is history (or a special dialectic of history) through the interplay of concepts and events. Whether what is meant by dialectic takes the form of Hegelian idealism or dialectic in the form of Marxist historical materialism is not of primary concern. It should suffice for our purposes to say that by dialectic we mean the interplay of concepts and events. Dialectic is evoked here for the purpose of showing how the fact that we, in Sartre's view, constitute others is part of our social reality. The idea is that we create collectivities whether in bad faith ("If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him") or authentically and seek to make these collectivities, these totalizations,

permanent. Given that Sartre admits to putting ethics on an equal footing with literature¹⁴² the position that he abandoned his work on ethics is untenable. Instead it should be readily admitted that Sartre actually never deviated from his work on the ethical. His earlier investigations of the imagination, consciousness, emotion, etc. were, without exception, contributions to the works he composed for the remainder of his life. His recasting of humanity in dire situations filled with moral or ethical ambiguity show that he wrote in accordance with his suggestion that:

the theatre will be able to present man in his entirety only in proportion to the theatre's willingness to be *moral*. By that we do not mean that it should put forward examples illustrating the rules of deportment or the practical ethics taught to children, but rather that the study of the conflict of characters should be replaced by the presentation of the conflict of rights... theatre does not give its support to any one "thesis" and is not inspired by any preconceived idea. All it seeks to do is to explore the state of man in its entirety and to present to the modern man a portrait of himself, his problems, his hopes, and his struggles... if it is to address the masses, the theatre must speak in terms of their most general preoccupations, dispelling their anxieties in the form of myths which anyone can understand and feel deeply.¹⁴³

In *Nekrassov* Sartre depicts a world gone off the deep end due to the adherence to propaganda. The world has gone mad and makes its own truth out of its anti-communist fervor. *Nekrassov* is a play that supposes a world where the end justifies the means and so authenticity is off the menu. But what if the propaganda were philosophical in nature? Sartre's literary works certainly are just this very form of propaganda. Ironically, Sartre chose a play to show the ills of propaganda, when the play posits a value as philosophical propaganda meant to bleed out into the world through its audience. Chronologically, Sartre wrote what is perhaps his most pessimistic play *Trojan Women* last. Commentators, like Lucien Goldmann for example, have taken this as indicative of Sartre having lost faith in positive value.¹⁴⁴ But the fact of the matter is that there is no clear indication that Sartre ever lost that faith. Rather what seems to be the issue is that such faith never had the character of advocating or glorifying any single position in toto,

nor of outlining some general criterion, a rule of thumb, for comportment—Sartre found such notions oversimplifications of the difficulties of acting in situations that entrench man in his reality. To act is to unrealize one thing and realize another. When Goetz becomes the general in the final scene of *The Devil and the Good Lord* for example, he unrealizes Goetz the prophet by killing a captain. This is not an act but a gesture, the act was going to war against the Barons, everything between going to war and winning it is a gesture. The act is waging and winning the war. Goetz as actor in a situation converts himself into an agent of war. To be sure the act may not be completed as originally imagined but what was imagined was a certain possibility. The possibility was made probable goal by Goetz's act of making himself an object in the service of winning the war. For Sartre, freedom is meant to be practiced in theatre by participants on stage and by those observing what transpires. Sartre meant to create situations so general that everyone can feel as if they have experienced themselves as having been or possibly being in a similar situation. Sartre couples this with his control of tension in that his plays are built to or are enmeshed in extreme circumstances. He creates a tension so extreme that it pushes the idea that one ought to act as a character; he makes the situation so general that it brings the audience closer to the action. Close enough, hopefully, that they leave the theatre with that idea ringing in their ear "one ought to act."

Sartre's earlier works serve as a description of man's world, they set the stage. His later works identify the text, the roles that are to be played if there is to be some form of "salvation" from the man's self imposed scarcity, and the text was Marxism. It is Marxism then that one has to reflect on in order to discern the role one is to play in history. Man has to find a way to creatively engage the world so as to introduce values that will reshape it. But how can man do this when he is entrenched with his facticity, situated in the space he occupies in history? In

answer to this question we have been looking to what Sartre does in theatre, specifically the description and special position occupied by the actor in his work. Through the identification of the bastardy in man, as evidenced through the actor, a description of possible ways for recreating the world is rendered. The actor recognizes the perilous tightrope they walk in the form of choosing to stay in character (to break character is to destroy it) while playing with the role's restrictions. This involves courageous risk taking and is akin to "working on oneself" as perpetual conversion.¹⁴⁵ The claim is not that every person is an actor but that the actor is a good model for the themes and ideas that preoccupy Sartre's attention when attempting to capture his concerns regarding man's relation to the world, his human reality, his historical development.

What we have shown is an internal unity to Sartre's thoughts as expressed through his intellectual habits. If there is originality to the work presented here it comes as a result of (and in keeping with one of Sartre's habits) synthesizing component ideas readily available as a result of their contribution already present, for example, in the works of David Detmer, Denis Hollier, R.D. Laing & D.G. Cooper or Hazel Barnes. One marked difference between the works produced by these authors and this one is the introduction of theatre as deradicalizing what is commonly viewed as a radical shift in Sartre's thought. The shift hinges around the that need, given scarcity, is something that should be addressed prior to desire as presented in *Being and Nothingness*. The "earlier Sartre" in this sense has the interplay of "play" and "the spirit seriousness" that results in one's being free to invent value given a situation. The "later Sartre" is commonly viewed as anchor this freedom to the content, i.e., human reality, out of which it is being expressed. But through the use of Sartre's theatrical works Sartre is shown as having always recognized that "play" is anchored to "the spirit of seriousness" and vice versa, that neither escapes the other.

This is evidence in the theatre as the creation of character moves from the script to the stage, i.e., a synthesis of content and play that transpires in the course of a theatrical production. The context of the play, its parameters, its full range of possibilities, is a projection of human reality; a totalized situation. The significance of the play itself only surfaces at its conclusion and is the synthesis imposed of what has transpired between curtains. This is the role of the audience, the audience's responsibility as observer is to act as accomplice, perhaps unwittingly, to the theatrical event. During the show the audience attempts to make sense of the play as it is identified. Because it is an object in perpetual development its meaning is a provisional progression in constant check and revision. As the play unfolds on stage the audience confers or negotiates its collected events in light of possible events yet to be collected for scrutiny. It is only at the end that the play is totalized. It is totalized because it is determined to the degree where the plurality of events that unified it as a completed narrative can now be surmised to meet a particular interpretation. A production's significance is only to be had upon arriving at its conclusion. Once the curtain closes the theatrical event is an in-itself, a constituted object to be judged. Yet, as an event between curtains the play is an unfolding, a totalization in progress. This is because the theatrical event is the presentation of a series of events, a situation, as it unfolds; its progression simultaneously fabricates its significance. Assigning significance to a production is a communal endeavor; it is an acquisition of contributions from the writer, the production assemble, and the audience. As an indefinite approximation, a question in the collective mind, the narrative of a play moves toward its end where it acquires determinacy. Key, in terms of regarding the play as totalization in progress, is the human element in Sartre's plays. The script, the actors who communicate it, its setting. In order to understand what we mean by totalization it is important to understand that the Sartrean hero is situated. The Sartrean hero in his situation is

provided with choices that, once made, engender the nature of the situation at play. The hero, in turn, is also created by his world as it unfolds, for he creates its form through his actions in it. This process is what we refer to as a totalization in progress; it is the dialectic of form and content—the lived situation.

Footnotes

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), p. 592.

² Both “totalization” and “praxis” will be discussed in greater detail below.

³ My rendition of the Sartrean “situation” loosely follows the one supplied by Robert Champigny in his introduction to *Stages on Sartre’s Way*.

⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, “On ‘The Sound and The Fury’: Time in the Work of Faulkner,” in *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, (New York: Collier Books, 1955), p. 86.

⁵ David Bradby, “Sartre as Dramatist,” in *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mary Warnock, 260-283, (New York: Doubleday, 1971), p. 263

⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Purposes of Writing,” in *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, trans. John Matthews, 9-32, (New York: Verso, 2008), p. 12.

⁷ See Jean-Paul Sartre, “Theatre and Cinema,” in *Sartre on Theater*, trans. Frank Jellinek, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.), p. 59

⁸ See Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Author, the Play, and the Audience,” *Sartre on Theatre*, p. 68.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁰ More will be said on the art object as a “special” object insofar as Sartre identifies it as “a center of unrealization.”

¹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1949), pp. 44-46.

¹² Jean-Paul Sartre, “Forgers of Myth,” *Sartre on Theatre*, p. 36.

¹³ Robert Champigny, “Comedian and Martyr,” in *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Edith Kern, 80-91. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1962), p. 89.

¹⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Forgers of Myths,” in *Sartre on Theatre*, p. 35, 38.

¹⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Author, the Play, and the Audience,” *Sartre on Theatre*, p. 70.

¹⁶ This was also the point to Simone de Beauvoir’s, *Les Bouches inutiles*. Both *The Flies* and *The Useless Mouths* offered critiques of the quietism that washed over the people of France during the occupation. It is as if the authors, through their plays, actively seek to implicate their audiences and thereby invite them to take up the task of acting differently in regard to their situation after leaving the theatre. In regard to de Beauvoir’s *Les Bouches inutiles* Virginia M. Fichera communicates this in the following manner: “The play almost seems to be in search of enlightened men, men who have a sense of honor which includes women. It is conscious of power in society, of who has it and who does not, and it seems to be asking those who have it not to abuse it.” See Fichera, Virginia M. “Simone de Beauvoir and “The Woman Question”: *Les Bouches inutiles*,” in *Yale French Studies* 72, pp. 51-64 (1986), p. 54. Of course this quote is taken out of context and so it should be noted that the statement is made because the play paints a rather disparaging picture of men, and their treatment of women, in society. The position that Sartre made use of *The Flies* for commentary on France’s disposition during the Second World War is commonplace among Sartre scholars.

¹⁷ Sartologists who have made headway on the “bastardy” (Francis Jeanson, John Gerassi, Douglas Kirsner, Catherine Savage Brosman, Maurice Cranston) tend to interpret Sartre’s childhood in such a way that makes him an honorary bastard. Whether this is a legitimate interpretation on their part is not the topic of this paper. Still, their work remains a valuable contribution to what can be discerned regarding the bastardy in Sartre’s system. Since such

commentators utilize *The Words* to cast Sartre as a bastard their work is listed here as viable literature on the bastardy.

¹⁸ M. Cranston, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 106.

¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Wall and Other Stories*, trans. Lloyd Alexander, (New York: New Direction Publishing Corporation, 1969), p. 84. It is significant that Lucien has similar questions regarding his mother's gender identity as he fears that she too was dressed as a girl as a child and was never let in on the fact that she is male; in fact, he fears the monstrosity she might become should her moustache suddenly grow out. Later Lucien has a similar anxious curiosity toward his sexuality and his role in various groups before finding security as a tyrannical factory boss. The quoted passage is also related to Sartre's own childhood experiences as evidenced in Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words: The Autobiography of Jean-Paul Sartre*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, (New York: George Braziller, 1965), p. 103.

²⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), p. 26, 60-61.

²¹ See, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, p. 33.

²² In an experimental theater workshop for children Dan Cheifetz documents how children develop and communicate through play acting. In fact the book chronicles various "breakthroughs" when it came to children alleviating aggressive or anxious behavior through acting. It also highlights the extent to which children act "off stage" in order to appease others. See, Dan Cheifetz, *Theatre in My Head*. See also Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert 1821-1857. Vol.2*, trans. Carol Cosman, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 19-24.

²³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Baudelaire*, trans. Martin Turnell, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1967), p. 23.

²⁴ Francis Jeanson, "Hell and Bastardy," *Yale French Studies* 30, 5-20, (1963), p. 14.

²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot Vol. 2.*, pp. 155-156.

²⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Myth and reality in Theatre," in *Sartre on Theatre*, p. 145.

²⁷ This localizes what Sartre calls the "practico-inert" within the process of acting. As with the theatrical, things in the world (objects, people, situations) are frequently and conveniently adopted as "familiar and conventional." The play *No Exit* following a popular production, for example, can be seen as generating a conventional Garcin in subsequent productions. The impression is that contingent and metastable subjects become stabilized and stagnant objects. All actors become a specific agent. The human product (the play) produces specific human conduct (the character Garcin) that is likened to a model (Michel Vitold's rendition of Garcin) and thereby engenders specific human types. These objects can, however, always be reactivated—made unfamiliar—in such a way that would require new approaches thereby engendering creative invention through interpretation in the service of new ideals in the form of ideal acts. The ideal act will be introduced as the planning stage of an actor's work.

²⁸ Robert Champigny, *Comedian and Martyr*, p. 89.

²⁹ Sartre describes this particular noetic attitude (i.e., imagination as an attitude of interrogation that provides the basis for experiencing the world as other than what it is) in Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot Vol. 2*, pp. 130-131. See also Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary*, trans. Jonathan Weber, London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 20; 187-191. For additional commentary see also Hazel Barnes, *Sartre & Flaubert*, pp. 103-108.

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- ³⁰ This is, of course, provided that the play is a traditional narrative that puts the familiar image (a situation) into the unfamiliar object (a narrative in progress) in order to establish its meaning.
- ³¹ See Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot vol. 2*, p. 130, I have made use of Sartre's sentence where he explains this in reference to the Venus de Milo as opposed to the role of Frantz. His sentence reads: "Society recognizes in it an ontological truth to the extent that the being of this object is considered a permanent incitement to derealization by unrealizing the marble as Venus."
- ³² Ibid., p. 131.
- ³³ In other words they are defined as being "in a situation." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker, (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 59.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 78.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
- ³⁷ Ibid., pp. 18- 19.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 27.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 32.
- ⁴⁰ Hazel Barnes, *The Literature of Possibility*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), p. 66.
- ⁴¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 87.
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 90.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 90, note 2.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 100.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 102.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 96-98.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 98.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 106.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 116, note 9.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 108, 110-111.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 111.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 110.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 89.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 115.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 110.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 116.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 115.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 116, note 9.
- ⁵⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 90.
- ⁶⁰ Recall that the whole of Being is incomprehensible.
- ⁶¹ This also seems to be Hazel Barnes' understanding in her analysis of bad faith in the chapter "Bad Faith and the Serious World," in *The Literature of Possibility*, pp. 48-154.
- ⁶² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 534, note 13.
- ⁶³ Mary Warnock, *The Philosophy of Sartre*, (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1972), p. 134. See also p. 130.
- ⁶⁴ Mary Warnock, *The Philosophy of Sartre*, p. 135.

⁶⁵ The list of commentators with similar views includes, among others, Arthur C. Danto, Colin Wilson, Walter Odajnyk, Thomas Molnar, Thomas Busch, and Alisdair Macintyre.

⁶⁶ Katherine Morris, for example, explains that she concentrates on Sartre's early work in her book due to the complications involved in explaining the continuities she sees at play between what we are calling his earlier and later works. See her *Sartre*, p. xii.

⁶⁷ Max Charlesworth, "The Existentialists and Jean-Paul Sartre" accessed 20:43; 3/ 27/ 2011. [http://www.sartre.ch/Max %20Charlesworth.pdf](http://www.sartre.ch/Max%20Charlesworth.pdf).

⁶⁸ Detmer, *Freedom as a Value*, (LaSalle: Open Court, 1986), p. 205.

⁶⁹ From Hazel Barnes' Introduction to Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel Barnes, (New York: Vintage, 1963).

⁷⁰ Detmer, *Freedom As A Value*, p. 205.

⁷¹ Taken from Hazel Barnes, *An Existential Ethics*, (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 31 where it is cited: "Jean-Paul Sartre s'explique sur 'Les Mots,'" an interview with Jacqueline Piatier published in *Le Monde*, April 18, 1964.

⁷² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, pp. 90-91. This question shows that this line of thought is evident in Sartre's work long before the *Critique*.

⁷³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, accessed 21:53; 3/ 27/ 2011.

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>

⁷⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p 14.

⁷⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Theatre and Cinema," *Sartre on Theatre*, p.62.

⁷⁷ Sartre's words to this effect: "Christian doctrine says: Act with charity, love your neighbour, deny yourself for others, choose the way which is hardest, and so forth. But which is the harder road? To whom does one owe the more brotherly love, the patriot or the mother? Which is the more useful aim, the general one of fighting in and for the whole community, or the precise aim of helping one particular person to live? Who can give an answer to that *a priori*? No one. Nor is it given in any ethical scripture. The Kantian ethic says, never regard another as a means, but always as an end. Very well; if I remain with my mother, I shall be regarding her as the end and not as a means: but by the same token I am in danger of treating as means those who are fighting on my behalf; and the converse is also true, that if I go to the aid of the combatants I shall be treating them as the end at the risk of treating my mother as a means. If values are uncertain, if they are still too abstract to determine the particular, concrete case under consideration, nothing remains but to trust in our instincts... You are free, therefore choose, that is to say, invent. No rule of general morality can show you what you ought to do: no signs are vouchsafed in this world." Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism Is a Humanism," accessed 21:53; 3/ 27/ 2011. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>

⁷⁸ In his book, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, Anthony Manser identifies this question as the question all Sartrean heroes are engaged with. See Chapter XIV, "Action and Identity: Sartre's Plays," in *Sartre: A Philosophic Study*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1966), pp. 224-247.

⁷⁹ Lucien Goldmann, for example, does this in "The Theatre of Sartre." *Tulane Drama Review* 15, 102-119, (1970), p. 109.

⁸⁰ We define a role as the set of acts (behavior) one is expected to carry out within a given situation. The idea here is that one is always playing at being a waitress, a traveler, a student, a professor, etc.

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- ⁸¹ The interpretation that “Orestes only plays the part of being uncommitted” runs contrary to interpretations supplied by commentators like Walter Kaufman and Denis Hollier.
- ⁸² Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Flies” in *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and Lionel Abel, (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 54. Italics are my own. Self identification with an act is the theme of the play and as with the Old Woman so with Electra, Clytemnestra, Aegistheus, and even Orestes. Each of these characters possesses nuances particular to the character that are meant to convey Sartrean freedom in a different ways.
- ⁸³ Lucien Goldmann’s take on the furies at the end of the play is that they convey Orestes as having gone mad. There is no reason why this interpretation should be adopted. No reason offered by Goldmann himself. See Lucien Goldmann, “The Theatre of Sartre,” p. 139.
- ⁸⁴ Theophil Spoerri, “The Structure of Existence: The Flies,” in *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. Edith Kern, 54-61 (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1962), p. 60.
- ⁸⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Sartre: The Origins of a Style*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961). See pp. 139-142; for the quoted passage see p. 140.
- ⁸⁶ For a more detailed, yet concise, description of what is being offered here see Walter Benjamin’s, “Theses on The Philosophy of History.” For Sartre’s rendition of historical materialism see *Search for a Method*; for how it relates to “totalization” see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reasoning Volume One*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (New York: Verso, 2004), pp. 19, 45-49, and especially pp. 64-69.
- ⁸⁷ R.D. Laing and D.G. Cooper, *Reason and Violence: A Decade of Sartre’s Philosophy 1950-1960*, (New York: Pantheon, 1971), p. 9.
- ⁸⁸ Denis Hollier, *I’ve Done My Act: An Exercise in Gravity*, p.94.
- ⁸⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 374. See also p. 375.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 375.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 435.
- ⁹² Jean-Paul Sartre, “Dirty Hands,” in *and Two Other Plays*, trans. Kitty Black, (New York: Vintage, 1960), Act VII.
- ⁹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Devil and the Good Lord,” *The Devil and the Good Lord and Two Other Plays*, Act I Scene II and III.
- ⁹⁴ It is rather striking that Sartre chooses to the word “conversion,” loaded as it is with religious connotation, and actually employs it in *Being and Nothingness*, only there it retains much of its religious connotations. This is relevant insofar as the conversions evident in *The Devil and the Good Lord* are not too far afield from Constantine’s conversion, or that of the people of Gaul, both of which are due to the simultaneity of causes and impulses. See *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 575-576.
- ⁹⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Devil and the Good Lord,” Act II Scene IV to Act III Scene IX.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Act III Scene XI.
- ⁹⁷ Maurice Cranston, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 110.
- ⁹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Devil and the Good Lord,” p.63.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.63.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.64.
- ¹⁰¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Devil and the Good Lord,” *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- ¹⁰² Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Devil and the Good Lord,” *Ibid.*, p. 142.
- ¹⁰³ Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Devil and the Good Lord,” *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

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- ¹⁰⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Devil and the Good Lord," *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.
- ¹⁰⁵ Robert Champigny, *Stages in Sartre's Way*, pp. 110, 123-124.
- ¹⁰⁶ Robert Champigny, *Stages in Sartre's Way*, *Ibid.*, pp. 123. Champigny uses the same passage cited as note 82 above.
- ¹⁰⁷ We have other reservations concerning Champigny's statement and will address them in the course of this discussion.
- ¹⁰⁸ This is implicative because in *Stages in Sartre's Way* Champigny commonly associates "denouement" with "reconciliation." But in the case of *The Devil and the Good Lord* he does not point to the denouement but simply states that the subjective denouement has occurred after outlining what he counts as Goetz's conversion. See pp. 118-124. Similarly, when discussing the denouement of *The Flies*, Champigny points to the reconciliation of Aeschylus' Oresteia between Orestes and Athens as referencing the situation in 458 B.C.E. Athens. He then drops the discussion of an actual denouement in *The Flies* other than saying that it must be "interpreted with reference to the situation of France in 1943." Fortunately, though somewhat obscurely, he returns to a discussion of *The Flies*' denouement in the middle of the section on *The Devil and the Good Lord* but does so in a way that leaves it in the form of a question for the audience. See pp. 118-119. In all three cases "denouement" is associated with "reconciliation" because, Champigny displays a gift for finding some form of closure in the conclusions to Sartrean narratives. Such tidy conclusions are, however, of no use for our purposes here.
- ¹⁰⁹ Italics added.
- ¹¹⁰ Maurice Cranston, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 106.
- ¹¹¹ Anthony Manser, *Sartre: A Philosophic Study*, p. 235.
- ¹¹² Constantin Stanislavski, Stanislavski, Constantin. *Creating a Role*, trans. Robert Lewis (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1971), p. 9. Stanislavski's books on acting, it should be noted, are less rewarding, in terms of developing the craft, than his autobiography.
- ¹¹³ See Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary*, trans. Jonathan Webber (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 187.
- ¹¹⁴ See Constantin Stanislavski, *Creating a Role*, p. 20-25.
- ¹¹⁵ See Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*, trans. Bernerd Fretchman, (New York: Citadel, 1948), pp. 53-62.
- ¹¹⁶ James M. Edie, "The Philosophical Framework of Sartre's Theory of the Theater," *Man and World* 27, 415-444 (1994), p. 438.
- ¹¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Kean," in *The Devil and the Good and Two Other Plays*, Act V scene two.
- ¹¹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Kean," Act I.
- ¹¹⁹ It is a "veiled" reference because the reference is made obvious upon a second viewing or reading.
- ¹²⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Wall*, p. 84.
- ¹²¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Kean," Act IV Scene Two.
- ¹²² Sartre's proclamation that theatre should evolve to the point where it rejects the text and becomes fully situational is dramatized in *Kean*. One would think that Peter Grotowski's "Poor Theatre" serves as a good model for advancements in this direction.
- ¹²³ Hazel Barnes, *The Literature of Possibility*, p. 209.
- ¹²⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Kean," Act II.
- ¹²⁵ Catherine Savage Brosman, "Sartre's Kean and Self-Portrait," *French Review* 55:7 (Summer 1982): 109-122.

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- ¹²⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Age of Reason*, (New York: Knopf, 1964), pp. 219-222.
- ¹²⁷ See Kenneth Douglas, "The Self Inflicted Wound," in *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Edith Kern, 29-46 (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1962), pp.39-46. What has gone ignored in Douglas' account is that such gestures can be psychological as well.
- ¹²⁸ Douglas Kirsner, *The Schizoid World of Jean-Paul Sartre and R.D. Laing*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1977), p. 78.
- ¹²⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot Vol. 2*. pp. 155-164.
- ¹³⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet*, p.86.
- ¹³¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet*, p.83.
- ¹³² Douglas Kirsner, *The Schizoid World of Jean-Paul Sartre and R.D. Laing*, p. 22.
- ¹³³ Francis Jeanson, "Pessimism and Optimism in Sartre's Thought," in *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mary Warnock, 176-185 (New York: Doubleday, 1971), p. 178.
- ¹³⁴ *Loser Wins* was the title of the play in the original English translation.
- ¹³⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot Vol.2*, p. 164.
- ¹³⁶ Although it is readily acknowledged that Franz is commonly seen as the symbolic stand in for the nation of France and its colonization of Algeria this will not be the focus of this section. Had it been the focus of this paper a novel addition to the small body of literature on the subject would have been the representation of ethnic cleansing through Franz's incestuous relationship with his sister. This seems to be an allusion to Thomas Mann's short story "The Blood of the Volsungs" which was meant as a criticism of the nationalist fervor Mann saw in Germany.
- ¹³⁷ Dieter A. Galler Galler, *Freedom and Guilt in Les Séquestrés d'Altona*, Studies in Existentialist Philosophy and Literature, Essays 6, 9-142 (Washington D.C., 1976), pp. 66-67.
- ¹³⁸ Douglas Kirsner, *The Schizoid World of Jean-Paul Sartre and R.D. Laing*, p. 11. See also R. Cumming, "The Literature of Extreme Situation" in M. Phillipson ed., *Aesthetics Today*, pp.408-409.
- ¹³⁹ Anna Broschetti, *The Intellectual Enterprise: Sartre and Les Temps Modernes*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985), p. 29.
- ¹⁴⁰ Hazel Barnes, "Literature as Salvation in the Work of Jean-Paul Sartre," *American Catholic Philosophical Association Proceedings Vol. 39*, 53-68 (1965), p. 68.
- ¹⁴¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?* p. 15.
- ¹⁴² Hazel Barnes, *An Existentialist Ethics*, p. 30.
- ¹⁴³ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Forgers of Myths," *Sartre on Theatre*, pp. 38-39.
- ¹⁴⁴ Goldmann qualifies his position in the following way: "In the absence of literary and or philosophical texts, it is difficult to know whether the great historical turning point marked by the worldwide student movement led Sartre to rediscover faith in positive values, to go beyond nihilism and reapproach leftism under one or another of its forms, or if, on the contrary, it is due to this same nihilism—the refusal which, for him, remained the only valid position in the face of barbarism—that he once again took a stand against oppression, for the right of expression." This query in Goldmann's exceptional work on Sartre's theatre is unfortunate because, if taken at face value, it fails to recognize the spirit of Sartre's plays. Sartre never prescribes action in his theatre. He shows it. Choices are made; responsibility for the consequential developments of those actions is taken or rejected; some choices are fortunate, others unfortunate, but they always come at an unexpected price. Further, the motives behind the action are always either left in question or justified by a character. The statement Sartre makes with his best characters—that we invent our values and act accordingly—is same one Goldmann makes about Sartre with his closing

statement. Lucien Goldmann, "The Theatre of Sartre," *Sartre and Existentialism: Existentialist Literature and Aesthetics*, p. 139.

¹⁴⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, p. 156. Stanislavsky's method attests to the infinite possibilities of the role and promotes the text as a "living play" (what does it mean to live a play?).