

George Lohthelm, SARTRE, MARXISM & HISTORY (History & Theory, II, 1963) also in Concept of Ideology & Other Essays, Random House, 1967)

I. By way of Introd. GL writes "In postwar France the philosophers were resolved not to interpret the world, but to change it. For a few yrs. it looked as tho the forces let loose at the liberation society & bridge the gap bet. the intellectual elite & the masses. But his refused to be rewritten, the rev. did not take place, & the philosophers returned to their studies. Sartre is the inheritor of this failure." (p. 869) *see what a party when I read p. 40*
says JPS
GL thence tried anew intell. synthesis; aborted revolutions to produce philosophical sanctuaries.

As against B/N which attributed its failure to unite being & consciousness to "L'homme est une passion inutile," in Critique de la raison dialectique deals not with individual but with society., and, as JPS puts it, "reconquer man inside Marxism." (GL here, p. 293 has fn to say finally a Marxist philosopher instead of an existentialist -- M. Louis Althusser -- has since then attempted to do same, Pour Marx, 1966) Merely to introduce why Intro. Question de methode is to be treated as the method which is 1st to be tested by its application in the Critique text itself.

p. 298: "if history is not simply a vis a tergo, it is because consciousness represents the element of freedom which enables the participants to educate themselves through what Marx called praxis". Men anticipate the future by shaping their circumstances in accordance with their desires. The elements of freedom is embedded in the TIME SEQUENCE, inasmuch as men relate themselves consciously (-.299) to their future as well as to their past. JPS (pp. 63-66 n) "The dialectic as a movement of reality collapses if this is not dialectical, that is, if one refuses a certain action of the future as such." This is how JPS expects to integrate his version of dialectic with his version of consciousness as in B/N, thereby grafting Existentialism upon Marxism. In any case it leads back to the traditional themes of ONTOLOGY: existence, essence, freedom, immortality.

JPS's root assumptions that the inherent problems of dialectical reasoning are ultimately ONTOLOGICAL & GL refers you to Part II of Critique, pp. 120-127, where he shows that Marx by inverting Hegel, "laid bare the true contradictions of realism." (JPS's phrase) Marx wanted to retain the dialectic though he est'ed for all that reality is irreducible to speculative thinking. how then, can we be sure that the logical concepts in our heads correspond to something in the structure of reality? Meaning of history must be discovered in the historical process itself, thru an investigation of man's activity, his praxis. CF JPS (Critique, p. 131) about how man not only submits to the dialectic, but makes it. RD: to me the key is in the task, not fulfillment, is stated correctly by JPS when he says dualities of being & consciousness can only be overcome when one lays bare the ONTOLOGICAL structure of reality. This, evidently, is what JPS sets himself to do with Critique, now that we are finally over Method, & down to text, which JPS calls Theorie des ensembles pratiques HIS THEORY OF HIS.

p. 301 But here, instead of plunging into his, "we are made to embark upon an enormous & very wearisome detour into anthropology." Trouble begins with S's concept of the "practico-inerte" by which he ~~designates~~ designates the unrelated practices of human beings caught up in the immediacy of their daily toil. "Only bond that unites is need in an environment of scarcity, the latter designating at once a social milieu and a time sequence from the primitive tribe to presentday society." *interest of cooperating men in nightmarish world for the stult eye Other as enemy*

12842

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D. Paul
Ontological
Praxis
Time as Future
practico-inerte

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unconscious
freedom
such as participants
61.6 called
p. 15

GL

Practice, blind operation, forces confrontation, might be the outcome, their accounts

12843

JPS even says Mx failed to fully consider "scarcity as the negative unity (imposed) by matter via labor & the conflicts of men." (Cr. p. 221) "Violence is the constant inhumanity of human conduct" (sic!)

GL (p. 305) "In fact, his (S's) whole theory hinges on this conjunction of alterite & alienation; it is only because everyone sees in his neighbor primarily the Other that history has developed as it has." GL also correctly calls attention to the fact that the 2 concrete examples are nothing new, but have been often used by historians & economists (1) deforestation of Ch. (2) 17th c. import of gold from Am. thru self-defeating attempts of European govt. to do this without causing a price rise.

Totalization here comes into "its own" (as if dial. was an ind. motive force rather than the dial. of action, thought, etc. p. 308: "As a former Cartesian whose effort of WILL has turned himself into a thinker of the modern post-Hegelian kind, S remains haunted by the Cartesian problem of relating the outside world to the solitary indiv. while at the same time his intellectual conscience tells him that he ought to be thinking about the ongoing historical process." Q Lefebvre: "precisely because he pursues speculatively the search for the foundation, he (S) does not attain anything fundamental."

JPS's theory of state is Hobbesian & occurs at end of work. (p. 586ff) Q S "Produit par la terreur, le souverain doit devenir l'agent responsable de la terreur." (p. 600)

(RD) So Stalinist in his concepts is JPS that nothing stops him from rewriting history as inescapably forevermore Stalinist: "Historical experience has undeniably revealed that the 1st moment of socialist society in process of construction could ONLY (sic!) be ... the indissoluble aggregation of the bureaucracy, the Terror and (sic!) the cult of personality." 9

The last 2 1/2 pp of GL's critique are the most challenging & original in trying to come to grips with both theory & practice objectively so that S as a matter of fact gets more credit than he deserves, but it does show the positive in S's contribution as "original". Thus: (1) p. 303: "Now to say that 'the Whole' is intelligible is tantamount to saying that it has identifiable structure. It also presupposes, if not an 'absolute moment' in time, at any rate a critical moment. Time need not stand still to oblige the philosopher, but there are have to be PRIVILEGED MOMENTS when the process discloses its meaning. In their different ways both Hegel & Marx thought they had lived thru & perceived such a moment."

(2) p. 314: "The thinking that reveals the logic of history at the same time makes transparent the ONTOLOGICAL structure of human existence. The 2 come together IN THE ACT (whereby Man creates himself & his world. History /7/ causa sui. There is nothing 'behind it', neither God nor Nature. Sartre expressly refuses to ground (his) mat. in (dia) mat. There is no dialectic of nature to render plausible the human story as a special case within the universal process. The pour soi has no need of a metaphysic to sustain itself in its flight from the frozen past of the en-soi."

(3) As against B/N JPS here adopts the Marxist position that the unity of being & consciousness can be achieved through his, i.e. thru praxis. p. 315 AS "has at any rate closed the gap in his own thinking about history by incorporating man's praxis in the dialectic of being & consciousness. (4) human nature can be shown to be of such kind that it necessarily sets the historical process in motion, the dichotomy of phil. & science has been overcome, & the world has ceased to be mysterious."

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Praxis
Structure
Historical reality

SARTRE, MARXISM and HISTORY

The Concept of Ideology and other Essays, by George Lichtheim

(P. 301) But Sartre is persuaded that the meaning of history can never be approached by this route. It must be discovered in the historical process itself, through an investigation of man's activity, his praxis. The Marxian antinomies of being and consciousness, which come to light when the Hegelian synthesis collapsed, must be overcome through an effort to lay bare the ontological structure of historical reality. The elucidation of this structure will demonstrate that Man does not simply submit to the dialectic, but that he makes it. This demonstration is the subject of what Sartre calls his theory of the ensembles pratiques; The trouble begins with his notion of the "pratico-inert" by which he designates the unrelated practice of human beings caught up in the immediacy of their daily toil. This is done through a process to whose analysis Sartre devotes over two hundred pages of hairsplitting ingenuity. The "inert practicality" of society - that is, its failure to comprehend itself as society - is traced back to its anthropological ground in the blind activity of isolated beings, each of whom takes itself as the sole center of reference. The only bond that unites them is need in an environment of scarcity.

Praxis
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Historical reality

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(p. 307) .. in Book II he expounds at length a methodological principle best described by saying that he identifies "totality" with structure. Although he makes the point that the "ontological structure of the group" (p. 438) is constituted by human praxis (instead of being "organic" as with the Romantics) the praxis that constitutes the group is precisely the "inert practicality" of Book I, which in its turn exemplified no more than a certain community of destiny imposed by uncomprehended material necessity. Sartre's humans do not cooperate: they are thrown together, or as he puts it "serialized", by danger, by hunger, by external pressure, by group hostility, by machinery, or simply by having to wait for the bus.

Structure
TOTALITY
Praxis

Praxis
Structure
Historical reality

(p. 308) It may seem a trifle harsh to say, as Lefebvre does, that "precisely because he pursues speculatively the search for the foundation, he does not attain anything fundamental," but one sees what his critic has in mind. Notwithstanding some brilliant excursions into applied sociology, Sartre on the whole remains "abstract" in that he rarely succeeds in grasping the historical moment in its uniqueness. "Matter" and "consciousness", when brought face to face, turn out to be linked only by the tenuous bond of his own speculative construction; the transition from one stage to the next is managed only with the greatest difficulty, whereas hundreds of pages are devoted to the analysis of static relationships; and finally the dialectic, from being an intelligible principle of historical existence, becomes an independent motive force. None of this is surprising to the student of his earlier work, or indeed of the literary and philosophical tradition in which he grew up.

Praxis
Structure
Historical reality

(p. 314) What Man experiences in history (and at a remove in thinking about it) is simply his own being as it comes back to him mediated by the time-sequence. The thinking that reveals the logic of history at the same time makes transparent the ontological structure of human existence. The two come together in the act whereby Man creates himself and his world. History is *causa sui*. There is nothing "behind it", neither God nor Nature. Sartre expressly refuses to ground historical materialism in dialectical materialism. There is no dialectic of nature to render plausible the human story as a special case within the universal process. The *pour-soi* has no need of a metaphysic to sustain itself in its flight from the frozen past of the *en-soi*. All it needs is the awareness that it has made the world of history and can never cease to project itself forward in an endless quest for a union that cannot be attained. Compared with *L'Être et le néant* the principal difference appears to be that while in that work Sartre presented human existence as a ~~foredoomed~~ attempt to realize the union of being and consciousness (*en-soi-pour-soi*), he has now adopted the Marxist position that the project is executed in and through history. ^(p. 51) However that may be, he has at any rate closed the gap in his own thinking about history by incorporating man's praxis in the dialectic of being and consciousness. From the opposite standpoint, Sartre's Marxist critics have denounced the attempt to subordinate human praxis to ontology. Conceivably Sartre has overreached himself and fallen between the positions he seeks to transcend. It is nonetheless apparent that his tour de force has created a new situation for the philosophy of history: things are never going to be quite the same again. For whatever he may have failed to do, Sartre has demonstrated that if "historicism" is pushed to its furthest limit, it becomes a self-consistent position and thus has to be taken seriously.

Historic
not Marxist
praxis
en-soi