

Referred Anxieties: Working in Kant's Shadow, and the Problem of 'Success', in Sartre's Search for an Ethics.

Submitted by

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SYNOPSIS

This thesis represents both an attempted 'diagnosis' in philosophical terms of Sartre's difficulties in his repeated attempts to construct an ethical system, as well as a perspective on how these difficulties have influenced subsequent Sartre scholarship and how these might best be resolved. I will argue that Sartre scholars, particularly in the wake of Sartre's death, have tended to construct views of Sartre's authorial intent in his struggle to produce an ethics to suit their own interpretation, rather than allowing Sartre to 'speak for himself' as they claim to do.

I hold that this task of accessing the level of 'authorial intent' demands an examination of Sartre's philosophical relationship with Kant. I am guided methodologically in this intuition by the work of Christina Howells and Sorin Baiasu. I borrow partly from the sentiment of Howells's claim (adapted by Baiasu) that "Sartre's relation to Kantian ethics...seems to reveal what Harold Bloom would call 'an anxiety of influence'". Bloom's view, one based in the field of literary criticism is that there are "revisionary ratios" that a poet [in this context, though, a philosopher] borrowing from a particular style or tradition can adopt, in order to demonstrate that their approach has a clearly delineated identity in its own right in relation to that of their predecessor or predecessors.

I will argue, though, that this conception of the "anxiety of influence" does not address the issue of 'success' as it pertains to Sartre's "anxiety". By this I mean to show that Sartre was not merely concerned with avoiding association with a position to which he thought himself opposed, but rather with the thought that to 'succeed' in traducing an ethical position, may in fact be to reveal certain meta-ethical constraints to which he, or *anyone* seeking to produce an ethical system might be subject.

This discussion will have relevance and ramifications for the study of Sartrean ethics, Kantian ethics and meta-ethics.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Steven Churchill

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Foreword

"I have sufficient courage and judgment to free myself from other masters and critics and to pursue my own path with the tranquil spirit necessary for such an endeavor, but in regard to you, my dependence is insurmountable; and because I know the profound effect a single word from you can have on me, I sometimes strive to put you out of my mind so as not to be overcome by anxiety at my work."

-Hölderlin in a letter to Schiller (20 June, 1797)

Introduction

This thesis aims to provide for an examination of the elements involved in constituting the philosophical terrain that has hitherto served as the backdrop for previous investigations into Sartrean ethics, for both Sartre scholars and indeed, Sartre himself. In particular, a delineation made on the basis of 'possibility' that appears throughout much of the extant literature requires examination¹, since it is primarily responsible for constructing analysis and debate at the level of content. By this I mean that in arguing either that a Sartrean ethics is a viable project that may be based in foundational concepts identifiable in all or some of his works, or else that there are insufficient means to produce such an ethics from Sartre's works in their present state, we are confined to discussion in terms of what we take Sartre to have bestowed to us as readers. In this way, the starting-point for further interrogation may be said to be conditioned by the thought on the one hand, that, 'Sartre never provided us with an ethics. What right have we to intervene any further in the matter?'², or on the other that, 'Sartre *has* provided us with such a foundation, and we need only to understand that it is not immediately discernible as such because of pre-conceived notions of the form an ethics may take'³. The difficulty presented by either of these approaches is that

¹ For further on the way in which 'possibility' has been a driving notion in determining the way in which Sartre himself, and Sartre scholars have structured ethical perspectives, see for instance: Anderson, Thomas. *The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1979

² For an example of such a 'negative' approach, see for instance: Warnock, Mary. *Existentialist Ethics* London: Macmillan, 1967. Here, Warnock understands existentialism as a passing 'mood' that may need to be 'cut out' of philosophical discourse if ethics is to be seriously pursued.

³ By contrast, a more 'positive' approach may be found in: Spielberg, Herbert. *Sartre's Last Word on Ethics in Phenomenological Perspective in Sartre: An Introduction of some Major Themes* (S. Glynn ed.) Aldershot: Avebury, 1987. Here, Spielberg suggests that Sartre's final interviews might finally allow for the possible advent of the kind of 'concrete' theory of integral ethics that, as we will see throughout this

a kind of philosophical infallibility is attributed to Sartre. On these terms, whether one holds that a Sartrean ethics is 'possible' or not, they do so under the assumption that all we have to go on, as it were, is the extent to which we may interpret Sartre *himself* as supporting our own interpretation. This perspective ignores entirely the extent to which Sartre's own definition of the possibility of an ethics arises not inevitably as a kind of natural product of his investigations, but rather as a conditioned result of his view of the matter, and as such one that is no less a starting-point for subsequent study than it is a spur to a further process of questioning. In particular, I hold that the basis for privileging Sartre in this way as having set the bounds of inquiry is itself based on the further assumption that, just as scholars have attempted to attend as closely as possible to his work in arguing for or against an ethics, Sartre too has totally engaged with the possibilities and consequences of his ethical search, and as such has taken his inquiries to their absolute practical limit, at least in terms of having established those bounds. I want to challenge these assumptions, not because I hold that Sartre has been fundamentally disingenuous in his search, or that those seeking to follow the path he has prepared have done so in an inattentive fashion. Rather, I am concerned to show that although Sartre *attempted* to undertake his task in a genuine manner, he did so under the impression that he simply could not take certain of his conjectures through to their rightful fruition, since to do so would be to reveal the outlines of a philosophical position that he thought smacked of a philosophical 'inevitability' he understood himself to be aiming to avoid.

In shifting the focus away from the simple dictum that Sartre's position on the possibility of an ethics is what must be illuminated and then followed according to one's reading of his perspective, I hold that the philosophical mindset Sartre brought to his ethical project had as intrinsic to it a kind of authorial *Angst* in the face of his objective, one

discussion, he had consistently sought. It is to be noted, though, that Spielberg ultimately regards Sartre as not having succeeded. Indeed, the reaction to the *Hope Now* interviews amongst Sartre scholars has been coloured by scepticism. Nevertheless, in at least considering these possibilities, Spielberg looks beyond Warnock's more stringent scepticism.

broadly analogous in form to that of the existential variety he had so vividly described not least of all in *Being and Nothingness* (1943)⁴. Rather than simply baulking philosophically, though, in the face of unrelenting possibility, I take Sartre to have engaged directly with the consequences of the line of inquiry he pursued in the latter part of his career and to have become fully cognizant of where he thought it would lead. However, in reaching this understanding, I hold that Sartre regarded fully grasping this possibility as representing meanings and values that were so inherently Kantian in nature, that this seemed to suggest that certain features of a Kantian perspective were not simply features his view shared in common with Kant, but also features that were *necessary predicates* for an ethical system in general. As such, what resulted, in my view, was not a full-blooded retreat from meaningful ethical engagement, but the thought that fully articulating what he thought the 'end result' of it might be, must necessarily have been antithetical to a view of ethics founded in contrast to previous approaches. In my view, then, Sartre's conjectures strongly suggest that he felt that if he were to avoid ending-up in this position, the central features of a Kantian perspective could only ever be of use to him insofar as they would allow him to define his views in a negative relation to what he took his own conceptions *not* to consist in.

It is important at this point that I make clear the multiple senses in which I regard Sartre as being concerned about articulating a 'Kantian' position. In the first instance, I mean that philosophical resemblances can be discerned between the two philosophers, even when we look beyond the specific concerns regarding such resemblance that Sartre *himself* identifies in this respect, and which I will begin to examine shortly. Consider, for example, comparative studies on choice and action in both Kant and Sartre: Thomas

⁴ All references to the text shall refer to the following English edition: Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (trans. Hazel E. Barnes 1956) New York: Routledge Classics, 2003. Exceptions occur occasionally with respect to Sartre's 'technical' philosophical vocabulary, instances of which appear in *italics* throughout the discussion, and can be sourced from the French edition: *L'Être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* Paris: Gallimard, 1943

Baldwin⁵ has argued that Sartre's position on the notion of 'original choice' - the idea that through one's free actions, one expresses their choice to take up their fundamental project, which will be constituted by and through all subsequent free actions - is remarkably similar to Kant's view of this idea. This similarity, Baldwin holds, is contained in Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*⁶ where Kant maintains that the maxims under which one's actions are determined are grounded by an ultimate disposition that is itself chosen⁷. Whatever we might make of the substance of Baldwin's claim in specific, the point remains that convergences between Sartre and Kant appear to persist over and above his own elucidations of his "anxiety" that to admit to basic similarities with Kant may amount to a form of tacit approval on his behalf, giving his assent to a certain kind of ethics and a certain way of *doing* ethical philosophy, to which he was opposed. This being the case, further weight would appear to be added to the notion that I have begun to advance, that only a shift to the level of authorial intent can provide us with the necessary platform to ascertain whether or not these purported 'limits' to conducting ethical inquiry truly exist in the way Sartre claims they do, at least within the contours of the present epoch of History.

I will return to all of these issues in greater detail later on; what is important to note for the time being is that we have so far identified two senses in which Sartre may be said to be articulating a 'Kantian' position: First, at the level of Sartre's *own* difficulties in grappling with Kant's ideas in attempt to make clear his ethical positions, and then more generally, where these resemblances persist over and above those areas of inquiry Sartre has chosen to pursue.

A third such 'sense' may be found, I argue, if we regard a 'Kantian' position as one vested with certain general ethical meanings, insofar as it may be said to said to

⁵ Baldwin, Thomas. *The Original Choice in Sartre and Kant* "Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series", Vol. 80 (1979 - 1980), 31-44

⁶ Kant, Immanuel. *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (trans. Theodore M. Green and Hoyt H. Hudson 1960) New York: Harper and Row, 1960

⁷ Ibid., 20

represent ethical philosophy of a certain *kind* - an ethics of autonomous action, a system of doing⁸. As I have already noted, I shall approach the question of Sartre's own view of existentialism's place in History in the course of this thesis, but it will suffice for now to note that Sartre's own aspirations for an ethics, although never satisfactorily realised so far as he was concerned, may be encapsulated as an attempt to construct a system of this kind, but not, of course, with the same views as to what philosophical elements would constitute such a system, or as to what kind of ethical 'output' it would produce. Therefore, since it would be incoherent to describe Sartre's proposed ethics as being *synonymous* with Kant's views, and equally remiss to ignore the obvious comparability in terms of philosophical aspiration between Sartre and Kant, we may settle on holding that Sartre was concerned about the extent to which articulating a 'Kantian' position in terms of general goals and objectives may instead be understood as supporting and affirming the content of Sartre's position. In holding that there exist these three, inter-related senses in which Sartre is concerned about articulating a 'Kantian' position, it should be pointed out that I also implicitly (indeed, necessarily) affirm Kant as being the philosopher who is 'at issue' for the purposes of this discussion. It follows that if Kant's philosophical mark is evident when examining Sartre's concerns, then Kant cannot be considered an arbitrary choice as a participant in a kind of hypothetical venture. Rather, I argue, Kant is the identifiable *source* of much of Sartre's difficulty in shaping an ethics, and as such, his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788)⁹ will form the primary basis for my attempts to demonstrate Sartre's conflicted relation to Kant.

I think Sartre was mistaken, however, as to what admitting such a Kantian resemblance, in the context of *any* of the three senses we have identified, would actually *mean* in his search for an ethics. Sartre seems to have regarded an admission of such a resemblance as evidence of one's belief in certain inescapably 'objective' founding criteria for an

⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness : An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* Part 4 - Having, Doing and Being, 453

⁹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason in Practical Philosophy* (ed., trans. M.J Gregor) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996

ethics, and as such, to Sartre's mind, this raised the worry that an "abstract, individualistic [and] authoritarian"¹⁰ set of criteria must be the starting-point for the ethics he might have gone on to complete. I regard this concern as essentially unfounded; the very criteria that we have just seen Sartre define in negative relation to Kant, are in fact precisely those which I understand a Kantian perspective as also seeking intrinsically to avoid. Although I will approach in further detail shortly the specific continuities shared between Sartre and Kant, and the bearing they have upon the coherency of Sartre's stated opposition to Kant's view, it will suffice for now to hold that Sartre's anxiety arose from a misreading of the meaning of Kant's influence upon his project. To admit a Kantian resemblance in support of a basic *intuition* that a system constructed according to such objective criteria may be possible, is not the same as holding that the full philosophical implications of *Kant's* view in and of itself, represent the unavoidable consequence of those criteria coming to their fruition. To put this point another way; the fact that a design-brief for a public artwork, for example, requires a certain colour scheme and the use of certain materials in constructing it, does not preclude the possibility that several artists competing for the contract for the work, might come up with strikingly diverse ways of creating a work within those constraints. Similarly, the fact that philosophers may share a commitment to several ethical *constraints* in the development of an ethical framework does not have to mean that they will end up with the *same* framework.

It is to be noted that comparative studies of Kant and Sartre are rather scant, relative to the broader body of work comprising Sartre scholarship. Although the issues underpinning this scarcity cannot be fully addressed here, this has much to do with the tendency of commentators to understand the divergences between Sartre and Kant as a

¹⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics* (trans. D. Pallauer) Chicago/London: 1992, 46. As was the case with *Being and Nothingness*, all references to the text shall refer to the English edition, except where French terms are used directly, in which case, see: *Cahiers pour un Morale* Paris: Gallimard, 1983. From here onward, I will list the French editions of each of Sartre's works used immediately after the English title.

contest between a morality of principles (Kant) pitted against a speculative set of insights, and thus against an opponent *without* an ethical system, as such¹¹. Nevertheless, those studies that are available to us have proceeded according to something roughly akin to a 'standard' methodology of selecting concepts taken to be present in either (or both) philosophers' perspectives and comparing them, or posing hypothetical scenarios against which Sartre and Kant are compared in their purported ability to solve the ethical quandary taken to be at issue, as we saw was the case with Baldwin's research, for example¹². This is something I seek to challenge. Instead, I intend to explore Sartre's *own* view of the general meta-ethical implications for Kant's perspective. From this basis it can be argued that, in Sartre's view at least, the commonalities they share are seemingly indicative of certain conditions operating over and above the specific detail of their philosophical positions that lead to a seemingly inevitable convergence of perspective, even when specific efforts are made to understand and avoid this possibility, and that these 'conditions' frustrated Sartre in his repeated attempts to construct an ethics.

Just as we have seen to be the case with comparative studies between Sartre and Kant on the basis of their philosophical and conceptual positions, studies that attempt to take into account Sartre's own viewpoint regarding Kant in terms of their convergences and divergences from one another are also available to us. Although we cannot hope to

¹¹ In addition to Mary Warnock's work that we noted at the outset, we might also consider Dobson, Andrew. *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Politics of Reason: A Theory of History* Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993. Dobson holds that we must understand the changes in Sartre's philosophy over time not as the product of changes made to a 'system' of ethics, but rather the product of changes to Sartre's engaged political positions. Of course, due to the diversity of philosophical perspectives underpinning the 'negative' judgement as to the possibility of a Sartrean ethics, no single consensus may be recorded as to what Sartre *did* advance, if it was not an ethical system. We might though, take these scholars as holding that Sartre produced a set of speculations on the possibilities that one *genuinely* formulating an ethics would need to consider.

¹² For instance, Jopling gives a comparison between Sartre and Kant's views on self-knowledge, arguing that Sartre's responses to problems relating to a concept of a Transcendental Ego (including the spontaneity of consciousness in particular) are broadly Kantian inasmuch as Sartre may be understood to have 'radicalised' the notion of 'constituting activity'. Similarly, Jopling holds Kant's unstable concept of self-relation in the flux of experience is taken up and even surpassed by an existentialist perspective. See: Jopling, David Allen. *Kant and Sartre on Self-knowledge* "Man and World", 1986, 1:19, 79-93

make an absolutely definitive foray into this meta-philosophical territory, it falls to us, nonetheless, to attempt to provide a philosophical mechanism that may give expression to the intuition that Sartre's difficulties in articulating an ethics centred primarily on his contentious philosophical relationship with Kant, and as such, his inability to 'break' with Kant's influence to his own satisfaction. More recently Sorin Baiasu (2003, 2010)¹³ has proceeded in a similar fashion to the basic structure of my own argument in holding that Sartre's attempts to engage with Kant reveals an authorial "anxiety"¹⁴ which he in turn borrows from the work of Christina Howells¹⁵, making their combined efforts the most suitable 'candidate', in my view, for a philosophical mechanism to address the basic intuition as to the importance of authorial intent. I will begin to address Howells's particular rendering of this "anxiety" shortly, but it will suffice for now to regard both Baiasu's recent attempt and Howell's original assertion as metaphorically akin, for my purposes here, to the very technique they employ in interrogating Sartre's relationship to Kant. Their efforts, though highly fruitful, fail to go far enough, and capture the precise aspects of authorial intent that I argue must be addressed as part of any such approach, and as I will attempt to show, we are beholden to 'break' with their explanatory mechanism if we wish to achieve a clear vantage-point on the perspective I have begun to sketch out. Under both approaches, discussion of Sartre's difficulties in engaging with Kant are understood in terms of Sartre's purported concern that his arguments against Kant's view of ethics reveal a commonality with them rather than a clearly defined identity developed in negative relation to them. In my view, though, Sartre's concern is in fact much deeper than Howells and Baiasu envisage. Rather than being "anxious" with respect to an inability to clearly define his views in relation (and in this case, largely in opposition) to Kant, I take it that Sartre's laboured attempts at

¹³ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory* "Sartre Studies International", 9:1, 2003 and, Baiasu, Sorin. *Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 (Forthcoming).

¹⁴ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 14 *Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics*, 15

¹⁵ Howells, Christina. *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989

coming to grips with Kantian moral theory in his search for an ethics actually reveal a concern that is based in a more general "anxiety" with respect to what is involved in the production of an ethical system.

To expand upon the building and design metaphor I used earlier, on Howells and Baiasu's reading, Sartre is "anxious" because, in spite of his best attempts to build an original creation, it seems to him as though it somehow turns out looking more and more like his competitor's with each attempt. On my reading though, Sartre is "anxious" because the very materials he is employing seem to have only one essential way of being assembled despite the plans he has in mind to the contrary, and this end result, as it were, mirrors Kant's creation insofar as he is subject to the same basic constraints. The key difference is, however, that it was Kant himself who pre-fabricated the materials along with their accompanying constraints, prior to the design 'contest' taking place. From this perspective, then, the meta-ethical 'inevitability' understood by Sartre to be at issue for them both stems from a polarised view of the sense in which it is meant. Whereas Kant's system is understood by Sartre to be the product of developing and following through an individual ethical 'intuition' in pursuing it to one's satisfaction and therefore an 'inevitable' outcome of such a methodical pursuit, he understands *his* ethical project to have 'mingled' unsatisfactorily in various ways with Kant's as a matter of course rather than any concerted effort on his part. In turn, this contributes to a sense that Kant's system, though developed according to his own specification, is in fact an 'inevitable' fixture, at least to some degree, in any attempt to engage with ethics at the level of autonomous action, regardless of a particular philosopher's individual ambitions for a particular character or identity for their own system. This leads to the related concern of a kind of philosophical 'speechlessness' for Sartre in that if his concern holds true, he cannot fully articulate whatever individual ethical vision he may have in mind, since the only apparent means available for him to do so, already explored and employed previously by Kant, are insufficient for his purpose. The issue of similarity, then, *is* pertinent in my reading of Sartre's "anxiety", but in this case the

concern I take as being expressed is that the similarity is an *inevitable consequence* of engagement, as opposed to merely the undesirable result of a mislaid or misdirected effort on the part of Sartre.

So far, I have introduced a broad view of the essential divisions between Sartre scholars on the question of an ethics, and also outlined the shift in focus I think necessary to move the debate beyond arguments over the sufficiency or otherwise of the content of Sartre's works alone for the purpose, in light of his own difficulties, and also in light of recent attempts to adopt a similar perspective. I divide proceedings from here on into four parts, not because I take these areas to represent the definitive limits of inquiry, but because I regard such a division as most conducive to presenting my own perspective.

Part One - From 'Certainty' to "Anxiety": Sartre's Attempts at an Ethics, and the Flaws of the 'content-based' Approach to Secondary Commentary.

To begin with, I shall detail Sartre's efforts in his search for an ethics, with a special emphasis on how these repeated attempts (and for Sartre, self-described failures) have been received by Sartre scholars. The explanatory model I employ here proceeds in the spirit of Thomas C. Anderson's approach, which divides this search into distinctly discernable epochs¹⁶. The first of these revolved around Sartre's concern to provide a complementary ethical framework for the ontology established in *Being and Nothingness*, and was chronicled, at least to some degree, in the *Notebooks for an Ethics* written throughout 1947-48 and published posthumously. The primary focus here was on individual authenticity, and borrowed from a view of human reality, interpersonal relationships and freedom evocative of Sartre's 'phenomenological ontology', though this time set in 'redemptive' contrast to the relatively fractured world-view presented in *Being and Nothingness*. That is not to say, of course, that the only gesture toward a 'companion' ethics to *Being and Nothingness* (or, indeed, the only such ethical effort by Sartre to engage with Kant) is to be found in the *Notebooks*. After all, in *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946)¹⁷ Sartre employs the philosophical structure of the categorical imperative as a way of considering whether the principles of existentialism, when aligned with the emphasis placed on solidarity in humanistic moral philosophy, can be regarded as a self-consistent moral principle that may be employed to support an ethics¹⁸. For the purposes of this discussion, however, I intend to focus heavily on the *Notebooks*, since Baiasu's adaptation of Howells's remarks shifts discussion almost

¹⁶ Anderson, Thomas. *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity* Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1993, 2ff

¹⁷ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism is a Humanism* (trans. C. Macomber), New York: Yale University Press, 1997/ *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* Paris: Gallimard, 1946

¹⁸ Ibid. 29

exclusively to this text. Nevertheless, I also hold that we can move Baiausu's perspective (along with my accompanying rebuttals and extrapolations) beyond the *Notebooks* and employ it in relation to Sartre's political writings and literary criticism; indeed, these are but a few examples of the possibilities open to us in this regard, and conceivably, they might be applied to any aspect of Sartre's oeuvre. It is for this reason that a section of Part Three of this thesis is devoted to this task, taking in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, *What is Literature?* as well as *Search for a Method*.

To return to a broad chronology of Sartre's works, the second 'half' of Sartre's ethical search had as its landmark the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960)¹⁹ thereby explicitly binding the development of Sartre's political theory to that of his ethical objectives. This resulted in a shift from the level of individual authenticity to a view of ethics promulgated on the basis of an integral view of humanity. Of course, the separation of Sartre's work here into these epochs or 'halves' should not be understood as serving in support of the view (on the part of either Anderson or myself) that Sartre made only two major attempts in the *Notebooks* and the *Critique* respectively, at an ethics. After all, each of these 'moments' were punctuated by fluctuations in his views on what form an ethics might take right up until his death in 1980, when controversy erupted over the publication of the *Hope Now* interviews with young Talmud scholar and some-time Maoist Benny Lévy, who appeared to claim they represented a kind of 'death-bed conversion' to Messianic Judaism by Sartre²⁰. Notable examples of the fluidity of Sartre's views in between these epochs come in the form of other less 'monumental' works that were nonetheless a contribution towards these changes in direction, such as the *Search*

¹⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Critique of Dialectical Reason* Vol. 1: *Theory of Practical Ensembles* (trans. Alan Sheridan Smith) London: Verso, 1982. There also exists a second, posthumously-published volume dealing primarily with the Stalinization of the Bolshevik Revolution: *Critique of Dialectical Reason* Vol. 2: *The Intelligibility of History* (trans. Quintin Hoare, ed. Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre) London: Verso, 1990 / *Critique de la raison dialectique* Tome I, *Théorie des Ensembles Pratiques* Paris: Gallimard, 1960, Tome II, *L'intelligibilité de l'Histoire* Paris: Gallimard, 1985

²⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul and Lévy, Benny. *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews* (trans. Adrian van den Hoven) Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996 / *L'espoir Maintenant: les entretiens de 1980*. Verbatim transcriptions from Sartre appear courtesy of Gallimard (1980), and the French volume itself, including further speculative commentary from Lévy, is published by: Éditions Verdier, Lagrasse, 1991

for a Method (1957)²¹, which began a sketching-out of the difficulties and ambitions involved in a positioning of Marxism and existentialism as compatible and indeed complementary²². Aside from complete published works, Sartre's supplementary writings on ethics include his notes for the lectures he gave for the *Ethics and Society* conference at the Gramsci Institute at Rome in 1964 (the so-called 'Rome Lectures'- never published in their entirety) and notes intended for a lecture at Cornell University the following year, cancelled at the last minute in protest at the war in Vietnam (the so-called 'Cornell Notes' - recently published as *Morality and History*)²³. If we look again to Kant's influence on Sartre's project beyond the *Notebooks*, this second 'half' is surely defined in this sense by the Rome Lectures, or at least the excerpt presently available. Here, Sartre argues that social realities, such as the law, customs and values prescribe conduct and define sanctions in the form of imperatives, and he is deliberately evocative of Kant in using the term 'imperatives'. Yet, he also breaks from Kant, by filtering this at the experiential level through the notion of the *norm* - the socially immersed form of the imperative that gives certain actions, values, and even certain ways of *being* a person in society a certain moral or ethical 'feel' which is then held up to

²¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Search for a Method* (alternatively, *The Problem of Method*) (trans. Hazel E. Barnes), New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1958/ *Question de méthode* Paris: Gallimard, 1957. It is to be noted that this essay was included with the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (Vol. 1) as a preparatory essay.

²² Ibid. 8

²³ The 'Rome Lectures', or rather Sartre's original handwritten manuscript for those (along with a typed copy), is held in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and remains unpublished at present in this complete form. It is catalogued there under the title "Conférence à L'Institut Gramsci, Rome, 1964". Transcribed extracts have appeared in various forms, the most prominent being a version originally published in an Italian news-journal, entitled *Determinismo e Libertà* (Determinism and Freedom) which was eventually translated into French. See: *Determinism and Freedom in Selected Prose: The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre* (M. Contat, M. Rybalka ed, C. Mcleary trans.), 241-52 Evanstown: Northwestern University Press, 1974 / *Déterminisme et Liberté, L'Ecrits de Sartre: Chronologie, bibliographie et comentée* Paris: Gallimard, 1970. Another important compilation of extracts, this time in English, is to be found in: Stone, Robert and Bowman, Elizabeth. *Dialectical Ethics: A First Look at Sartre's Unpublished 1964 Lecture Notes* "Social Text" No. 13-14, 195-215, 1986. The 'Cornell Lectures', on the other hand, have been published in their entirety based on the original manuscript as: *Morality and History, Les Temps Modernes* nos. 632-633-634, 268-414 / *Morale et Histoire*. Shorter extracts have been available in English for some time, however. See: Stone, Robert and Bowman, Elizabeth. *Sartre's Morality and History: A First Look at the Notes for the Unpublished 1965 Cornell Lectures* in *Sartre Alive* (ed. Ronald Aronson, Adrian van den Hoven, 53-82. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991

inter-subjective judgement²⁴. As was the case previously, I do not wish to be understood to have neglected the influence of Kant on Sartre's thought throughout the second part of his career, beyond the *Notebooks*. In fact, however, I think it possible to hold both that Sartre's philosophical relationship with Kant remained fluid over time (as was the case with his development generally) *and* that this engagement also pointed to a continuity of the difficulties involved in constructing an ethical system, since the grounds on which Sartre grappled with Kant (abstraction versus the 'concrete', the position of his own philosophy in relation to Kant's critiques and so on) are representative of precisely these general 'flashpoints' at the meta-philosophical level.

So far, then, we have seen that Anderson's approach is useful in terms of both communicating, and helping us to understand and analyse, the marked differences (and similarities) in Sartre's approach to producing an ethics over time. Where I differ in perspective and approach from Anderson, though, is that while I think this division into distinctive epochs useful insofar as it makes clear the significant shifts that spanned the body of Sartre's work, I do not agree that the value in this approach lies in the fact that we can stand back from them, as it were, and behave as though they actually *constitute* a relatively cohesive ethics via a sort of intuitive synthesis on our part as readers, as he claims we can²⁵. Rather, I argue, the totality of these works represents a sort of trend indicator, of a transition from relative certainty with respect to the possibility that an ethics could take root as a 'native' component of Sartre's broader body of work as he had hitherto conceived and understood it, to the unsettling possibility that his line of inquiry may have led him toward an already-discovered area of the ethical terrain he was traversing, and that this was inevitable, in spite of his attempts to fashion an authentically different 'route' for himself. It is this indicatory perspective on Sartre's repeated attempts at an ethics that serves as an initial warning as to the insufficiency of

²⁴ Ibid. *Determinism and Freedom*, 244-5

²⁵ Anderson, Thomas. *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 2. Here, Anderson states definitively that Sartre completed "two moralities", for which he will seek to provide exposition and discussion.

a 'content-based' approach, and also as an explanatory guiding mechanism in examining the negative impact that this has had on subsequent engagement by Sartre scholars.

The course I chart across several decades worth of scholarship is one less concerned to show that either 'side' of the debate on the possibility of an ethics is victorious, but rather that all such attempts rely, at base, on a 'positive' reading of Sartre at the authorial level, since it is he who is ultimately regarded as the litmus test for such efforts. That is to say, secondary attempts at engaging with Sartrean ethics have as their goal a conformity with what is taken to be Sartre's position on the possibility of such an interpretation. Consider, for example, one of the early attempts to speculate as to where Sartre's original promise of an ethics in *Being and Nothingness* might have led, put forward by Hazel Barnes. In *An Existentialist Ethics* (1967),²⁶ although she claimed that her goal was not to attempt to predict or anticipate what the companion ethics might have looked like, Barnes holds that Sartre's notion of the *être-pour-soi* (the 'for-itself' or freely-nihilating consciousness²⁷) as it appears in the present work, combined with his ontology of "radical freedom"²⁸ serves as evidence that Sartre intended to honour his promise in a very direct manner, by simply picking up where he left off, as it were. On this basis, Barnes posits her own 'brand' of Humanistic existentialism, particularly as it may be applied to matters of education, among other topics. Barnes' view that a project proceeding in the spirit of a companion ethics is possible, was thus 'confirmed' through her understanding in turn, that Sartre had already defined this possibility as viable, and further that this represented a platform from which it might be followed through to its conclusion.

Even those of the more recent attempts to show that a Sartrean ethics is not necessarily an immediately viable project on the strength of Sartre's work, rely on a particular

²⁶ Barnes, Hazel E. *An Existentialist Ethics* New York: Knopf, 1967

²⁷ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness : An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* Part 2 - Being-for-itself, 95 ff

²⁸ Barnes, Hazel E. *An Existentialist Ethics*, see in particular Part One, where Barnes demonstrates what she takes to be the possibility of an existentialist ethics, 3-29

rendering of Sartre's own intent. In *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*²⁹ (1992) we find Juliette Simont claiming that such a project is to be understood as a "gamble"³⁰ since Sartre "never produced a completed ethical system"³¹ owing to the fact that he was never truly "willing"³² to do so. Again, the claim is referred back to Sartre himself for verification, even though this relies upon a constructed view of him in terms of his authorial intent. The trouble with both the 'positive' and 'negative' approaches I have described here is that by considering a certain work or set of works by Sartre as definitive of his view of whether or not he saw further ethical inquiry as feasible, Sartre's own difficulty, or indeed "anxiety" in the sense in which I introduced earlier, is referred, unresolved, on to those seeking to interpret his work.

That is not to say, of course, that this 'referral' of the difficulties Sartre signals in his works onto secondary authors necessarily invalidates their work immediately, or that I claim to be somehow exempt from such potential pitfalls in attempting my own analysis. Indeed, it may well be argued that given that much of the Sartrean corpus that now serves as the basis for discussions of Sartrean ethics was only released in the wake of Sartre's death in 1980, any study examining the ethical implications for Sartre's philosophy prior to his death may be said to attain to an historical significance purely on the basis of the pre-emptive imagination required to undertake such a study in those circumstances. I argue only that the best *chance* for such an avoidance will necessarily involve using Sartre's works firstly as the basis for interrogating any "anxieties" at the authorial level that may prevent a full exposition, and that only then may we proceed to construct an opinion as to whether or not Sartre's position is a tenable one. This stands in contrast to an approach whereby one might first construct an opinion on Sartre's

²⁹ *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre* (Christina Howells, ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992

³⁰ Ibid. 178

³¹ *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, 178

³² Ibid. 178

position, and then employ his works (*without* first addressing the authorial level) in order to support that position.

Given that I regard this authorial *Angst* as key to the difficulties experienced initially by Sartre himself and then Sartre scholars in a referred sense, the second part of this thesis is of necessity devoted to further elucidating it.

Part Two - 'Diagnoses' and Solutions: The "Anxiety of Influence" or a Justified Aversion to 'Success'?

As I began to intimate earlier, I borrow partly from the sentiment of Howells's claim (adapted by Baiasu) that "Sartre's relation to Kantian ethics....seems to reveal what Harold Bloom would call 'an anxiety of influence'"³³. Bloom's view, one based in the field of literary criticism and augmented by the Freudian anxiety-principle (at an approximation, and in this context, meaning that a subject betrays their anxieties by holding vehemently to a position ostensibly *opposed* to the position they are anxious to avoid being seen as aligned with³⁴), is that there are "revisionary ratios"³⁵ that a poet borrowing from a particular style or tradition can adopt, in order to demonstrate that their approach has a clearly delineated identity in its own right in relation to that of their predecessor or predecessors. Although Bloom initially invoked these "ratios" in interrogating the stylistic qualities of Yeats³⁶, he also devoted an entire series purely to this "antithetical analysis", beginning with *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973)³⁷. Insofar as a poet adopts one of these ratios, their work manifests this "anxiety" where the differentiation employed actually results in bringing their work 'closer' in style or form, toward their predecessor. They also mark out the 'life-cycle' of a great

³³ Howells, Christina. *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom*, 204

³⁴ Although this very basic notion is present in various 'guises' throughout Freud's works, a specially-prepared lecture designed for lay-audiences on the subject exists. See: Freud, Sigmund. *Lecture XXXII: Anxiety and Instinctual Life*. The English translation I have referred to appears in: *The Freud Reader* (Peter Gay, ed.) London: Vintage Books, 2007. 773-783

³⁵ Bloom holds that his "ratios" are preferable analytic tools to the corresponding notion of a 'defence' as a means of breaking from anxiety taken directly from Freud, since they are evocative of the Hellenistic contest between the Aristotelian-influenced School of Alexandria and the Stoic-influenced School of Pergamon. The school of Alexandria championed the method of *analogy*, where a literary text would be understood as a unified synthesis of meaning, whereas the School of Pergamon championed the mode of *anomaly*. In this case, the meanings of a text arise out of the collision of an interplay of seemingly disparate meanings. Bloom understands himself as continuing the essential claims of the 'anomalists'. For further on the "ratios" see: Bloom, Harold. *The Breaking of Form* in Bloom et. al. *Deconstruction and Criticism* London/New York: Continuum Publishing, 1979, 1-32

³⁶ Bloom, Harold. *Yeats* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970

³⁷ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* Oxford: University Press, 1972. In fact, Bloom went on to complete a tetralogy of works on 'poetic misprision', composed of this volume, as well as *A Map of Misreading* (1975), *Kabbalah and Criticism* (1975) and *Poetry and Repression* (1976)

poet, since for Bloom, they represent the transition from an apprentice-poet's brash *misprision* of their contemporaries in an attempt to vigorously 'break' with previous styles or techniques, to that of a fully-fledged, but now declining poet's apparent 'unconsciousness' of similarity or differentiation in relation to their precursors³⁸. Bloom explicitly names six of these "ratios" or relational attitudes. The first of these is a *Clinamen*³⁹. This Latin term is borrowed from the work of the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius, who used the term (it also appears as *clinaminis* in the genitive case) to refer to a minimal indeterminacy in the motion of atoms, and thus to their capacity to "swerve"⁴⁰ at any given time. In Bloom's terms, a *Clinamen* occurs when a poet attempts to conspicuously differentiate themselves from their predecessor⁴¹. The second "ratio" is a *Tessera*⁴². Bloom employs this term in the sense used by the ancient mystery cults, referring to the way in which a set of tesserae, understood as tokens of recognition, were used in a ritual wherein initiates would use the pottery pieces to eventually produce a cult vase⁴³. Bloom thereby invokes the term to refer to the way in which a contemporary may strive to 'complete' a predecessor's stylistic legacy in some way, by 'slotting-in' a particular aspect of their own work where they believe it would fit in with the predecessor's, just as one might add a final tessera to a vase to complete it. The third "ratio" is represented through a *Kénōsis* (κένωσις)⁴⁴. Bloom uses the term to refer to the way in which a contemporary may undertake to generate a humbling discontinuity with their predecessor, employing the scriptural invocation of the term by St. Paul, who used it to describe Christ's 'emptying' of himself in his acceptance of

³⁸ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 3-5

³⁹ Ibid. 19-49

⁴⁰ Lucretius, Titus Carus. *On The Nature of the Universe* (trans. R.E Latham, John Godwin ed.) London: Penguin Books, 1994. See in particular Book Two: Movements and Shapes of Atoms, 38-67

⁴¹ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 19-49

⁴² Fite, David. *Harold Bloom: The Rhetoric of Romantic Vision* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985, 67

⁴³ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 67

⁴⁴ Ibid. 77-93

human status over that of divinity⁴⁵. On this account, a contemporary pours out admiration for a precursor by humbly demoting his own status in his work, but does this only in relation to the precursor's *own* attempt at such a humbling, meaning that the 'emptying' by the contemporary is not entirely altruistic, as it were⁴⁶. The fourth "ratio" is a Daemonization⁴⁷. Bloom borrows the term from its Neo-Platonic usage, where an intermediary being enters a person in need of their assistance. In this case, a contemporary attempts to claim that the uniqueness of a predecessor's work can be explained-away with reference to the use of general techniques that are not particularly prodigious, and that in adopting these techniques themselves, the contemporary is merely 'borrowing' from a common stock of techniques⁴⁸. The fifth "ratio" is an *Askēsis*⁴⁹, which is rendered directly from the Greek - Ἀσκήσις. Bloom employs the term to refer to what he holds was the Pre-Socratic, shamanistic invocation of the word - a curtailing⁵⁰. On this reading, rather than 'emptying' themselves in humility toward a predecessor through their work, a contemporary gives up part of their poetic technique so as to separate (indeed, isolate) themselves from others, and in particular their predecessor. As with a *Kénōsis*, the curtailing is also performed forcibly upon the predecessor by the contemporary, such that their poetic endowment might likewise be curtailed⁵¹. The sixth and final "ratio" Bloom employs is *Apophrades* (αποφραδες)⁵², which Bloom borrows from the ancient Athenian notion of 'dismal' or unlucky days which were supposedly attended by a return of the dead to their (now newly-occupied) homes. In this context, the contemporary, now in the final phase of his career, 'returns' to a state prior to an understanding of their position in relation to their predecessors

⁴⁵ Of course, Bloom's use of Christ's 'emptying' of himself in this context is by no means uncontroversial; theological debates still rage as to how we ought to interpret Christ's purported divinity or fleshly existence, or some combination of both. In Philippians 2.5-7 (King James Version).

⁴⁶ Fite, David. *Harold Bloom: The Rhetoric of Romantic Vision*, 67

⁴⁷ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 99-115

⁴⁸ Fite, David. *Harold Bloom: The Rhetoric of Romantic Vision*, 67

⁴⁹ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 115-139

⁵⁰ Fite, David. *Harold Bloom: The Rhetoric of Romantic Vision*, 67

⁵¹ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 118

⁵² Ibid. 139-157

and thus the "ratios" involved in their movements in relation to them, such that their poetry now appears as if it were written by the resurrected hand of the precursor, but without the contemporary's *understanding* that this is what has occurred⁵³.

Now, what Baiasu attempts is to take up Howells's original claim, and match-up three of Bloom's "ratios" in relation to each of Sartre's criteria defined in antithetical relation to Kant. This results in the "abstractedness" criterion being coupled with the *clinamen* ratio, "individualism" being paired with *tessera*, and "authoritarianism" with *askēsis*⁵⁴. Certainly, Baiasu is by no means alone in adapting Bloom's "ratios" with a view to comparative study; similar methodology has been employed in the study of psychoanalytic theories by Lacan, for example⁵⁵. Yet, while Bloom's notion coupled with Howells' and Baiasu's Sartrean adaptation goes some way to articulating the difficulty I have already begun to sketch out as applying to Sartre in relation to Kant, it does not give full significance to the role of the possibility of 'success' in this case. By this I mean that Sartre was less concerned with the fact that Kant's perspective might *influence* his proposed ethics, as he was with the thought that the foundations he was attempting to sketch out for his own perspective could not attain to the unique identity and significance he had envisaged for them, and that Kant's view was not in fact simply an *opposing* view to his own, but rather a kind of objective *consequence* of any attempt to follow through on his conjectures, and therefore also the unavoidable consequence of any tangible 'success' in completing an ethics.

We can elucidate this problem of 'success' further if we consider Sartre's philosophical 'behaviour' in relation to other predecessors, even where the issue of the construction

⁵³ Fite, David. *Harold Bloom: The Rhetoric of Romantic Vision*, 67

⁵⁴ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 24
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 208

⁵⁵ Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits: A Selection* (Alan Sheridan trans.) London: Tavistock, 1977, 48. In fact, Bloom states in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* that Lacan's use of the term in describing the way in which linguistic meaning is understood psychically in a highly implicit manner in 'common' use, such that the speaker 'completes' their interlocutor, inspired him in turn to regard Lacan's relationship with Freud as best represented by a *tessera*.

of an ethics was not immediately pertinent. Baiasu's argument, as we have seen, depends heavily on the suggestion that Sartre was concerned primarily with avoiding accusations of conceptual and structural similarities to Kant, in order to maintain an opposition to his views with which he disagreed, when in fact the two coincided conceptually as well as structurally, at least in certain key contexts. Not only does this ignore the thought that even an articulation of Sartre's *own* views (at least insofar as he understood them to be his own) might reveal that both he *as well* as Kant were beholden to acknowledge certain meta-ethical constraints over and above these conceptual similarities, as I have already claimed; it also ignores Sartre's reputation for being able to turn the views of other philosophers to his own ends, as it were. From his earliest essays, Sartre demonstrates an ability to adopt an 'explanatory grid' for his own purposes (that of Husserl or Heidegger, for example⁵⁶), and he did so, I argue, without demonstrating any desire to *conceal* this influence whilst carving out his own philosophical 'identity'. If we look to his earliest published work on the imagination, for instance, Sartre openly lauds Husserl's phenomenological method as out-pointing previous psychological accounts⁵⁷. At the same time, he 'breaks' from his predecessor by renouncing any notion of image understood as an image-object, conceiving of the image, and thus the imagination in general, as the coming-to-be of a posited nothingness⁵⁸. Given that this is so, it seems to me that we must seek to provide an explanation for Sartre's difficulties in engaging with Kant, that moves beyond a reading

⁵⁶ We can roughly divide these 'periods' of influence between the 1930's (what may be seen as Sartre's Husserlean period) and the 1940's (a Heideggerian transition). Although we have already discussed *Being and Nothingness*, the Husserlean period was underpinned by three key texts: Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness* (trans. Forrest Williams, Robert Kirkpatrick) New York: Noonday Press, 1957/ *La Transcendence de l'Ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique* "Recherches Philosophiques" (1936-7), 85-123. *Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology* (trans. Joseph P. Fell) "Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology" (1970) Issue 1, Vol. 2. 4-5/ *L'Intentionnalité: Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl* "La Nouvelle Revue Française" no. 304 (Jan. 1939) 129-131. *Imagination: A Psychological Critique* (trans. Forrest Williams) Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1972/*L'Imagination* Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1936.

⁵⁷ Sartre, Jean Paul *Imagination: A Psychological Critique* See in particular: Part II: The Problem of the Image, and the Efforts of Psychologists to Find a Positive Method, 7-21

⁵⁸ Ibid. Part IV: Husserl, 139-161

of Sartre's authorial intent in terms of a purported concern to avoid association with an unpalatable position, since he had previously been so willing to *grapple* with positions from which he demurred, and indeed, to 'transform' his opponents into useful allies. I therefore argue that Sartre's unwillingness to 'employ' Kant in the service of his own ends with any real conviction centred on a concern as to what such a project, were it to be successful, would reveal about what is (and what is not) necessarily involved in constructing an ethical system. In particular, I take Sartre to have been concerned that the content of any such revelation would include certain elements he thought "abstract, individualistic and authoritarian". On my reading then, Sartre was concerned not to *avoid* that with which he disagreed through overblown protestations or concealment, but rather with what he understood to have *been* revealed *through* his engagement with Kant, leading to an apparent inability to articulate an alternative, of which he could authentically approve. It is *this* view of Sartre's 'anxiety of influence' as applied to Kant - the thought that there was 'no way out'⁵⁹, as it were - that I think more accurately reflects Sartre's difficulties, and may pave the way for their resolution. Understandably, those seeking to situate the critique I have begun to advance within Sartre's own philosophical vocabulary may understand me to have accused Sartre of *mauvaise foi* or 'bad faith' - the self-concealment of one's fullest possibility in exchange for a respite from the *Angst* that confronting one's freedom will necessarily entail⁶⁰. This is not the case; I do not argue that Sartre attempted to conceal from himself the full extent of the possibilities open to him in constructing an ethics, but rather that he stopped short of articulating them to his satisfaction, so as to avoid conclusions he genuinely held to be antithetical to his own views.

⁵⁹ For my own metaphorical purposes, and in the spirit of a 'Bloomian' methodology, I refer here to Sartre's play *No Exit* (alternatively, *No Way Out*). See, for instance: Sartre, Jean Paul. *No Exit (In Camera)* in *No Exit and Three Other Plays [The Flies, Dirty Hands, and The Respectful Prostitute]* (Lionel Abel, trans.) New York: Vintage Books, 1955. / *Huis Clois: Pièce en un acte* Paris: Gallimard, 1945

⁶⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness : An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* Part I: *The Problem of Nothingness*, Section 2: *Bad Faith*, 90

It is to be noted that despite the fact that I have continued to invoke Bloom's notion of "anxiety" throughout this thesis, neither Howells or Baiasu use the term "anxiety" to indicate that some form of psychoanalysis (of the existential variety or otherwise⁶¹) is required to access the level of authorial intent we have so far aimed at. Although, as I have shown, Bloom's use of the term is deliberately evocative of the Freudian anxiety-principle, he does not use it to undertake formal psychoanalytic studies of great poets, as such. Instead, he uses it in a looser sense, such that one is given a sense of the poet's difficulties in delineating their own position from that of their predecessor's, in a way that is evocative of the fraught nature of working in the shadow of one's master as it were⁶². Since I can see no indication from either Howells or Baiasu that they mean to use Bloom's invocation of "anxiety" in a way that *is* explicitly psychoanalytic, I conclude that they mean to employ the term to the same (evocatively metaphorical) end as Bloom did, and as I intend to myself.

I have now established a basic outline of how I intend to structure first an exposition of Sartre's authorial *Angst* as to the way in which this has affected the ongoing 'dialogue' with those commenting on his work, and then to provide a 'diagnosis' of sorts with respect to the philosophical underpinnings of this *Angst*. As such, I return here to a summary of the continuities and differences I take to be at issue for Kant and Sartre in their respective approaches I began earlier. Having made mention previously of Sartre's tripartite set of criteria in objection to Kant and the way in which Baiasu subsumes them into Bloom's perspective in the spirit of Howells's approach, I aim here to examine each criterion in greater depth.

⁶¹ Certainly, the implications for Sartrean theory of psychoanalysis deserve an entire study dedicated to them, but we may summarise Sartre's approach as both an appreciation for Freud's methodology and a deviation from it, insofar as he distains what he regards as the deterministic implications of Freudianism. A very substantial study on the implications for Sartrean psychoanalysis is given in: Cannon, Betty. *Sartre and Psychoanalysis: An Existentialist Challenge to Clinical Metatheory* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991

⁶² Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 3-5: Prologue: *It Was A Great Marvel That They Were In The Father Without Knowing Him*

I take Sartre's claim that a Kantian ethics is "abstract" to refer to Kant's perceived inability to develop moral precepts to guide our actions as situations arise that demand such action of us. For Sartre, this inability arises out of the lack of a mechanism that would allow Kant to 'zero-in', as it were, on the specificity of a person and their situation⁶³. The second criterion, that Kant's system is "individualistic", it seems to me, refers to Sartre's reading of the role played by a categorical imperative. In Sartre's view, such an imperative implies a relationship between free individuals as *constitutive* of it, such that Kant's perspective is one conceived in 'bad faith'. For Sartre, Kant reduces what is necessarily a result of an interpersonal relationship to that of an intra-personal process of decision, while holding that this constitutively necessary relationship is in fact in place⁶⁴. The third epithet Sartre uses in relation to Kant's moral theory is that it is "authoritarian". By this he refers to its criterion of morality as a universal and unconditional law, seemingly postulated by Kant as evident, which for Sartre suggests that he makes use of a moral authority founded without any such evidential basis⁶⁵. This appears to Sartre to contradict the notion of freedom that he understands as supposed to underpin a Kantian perspective. Now, I have held so far that Sartre's *Angst* in relation to Kant stems from the thought that although he disapproves of the structure and implications of Kant's system, he nonetheless feels forced to concede that there may in fact be no further direction he might posit as an alternative, thereby suggesting a kind of 'terminal' point for the limits of inquiry into the very production of an ethics generally. Yet, Sartre does not seem to have fully comprehended the extent to which this rather bleak picture was constructed by and through his understanding of Kant. If it can be coherently demonstrated that the points on which Sartre takes himself to disagree with Kant are in fact the product of misunderstanding rather than intractable opposition,

⁶³ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 21
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 169

⁶⁴ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 21
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 207

⁶⁵ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 22
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 208

then it may be the case that Sartre need not have understood himself to have reached certain (to his mind, negative) conclusions about the structural limits of an ethics, the articulation of which would contradict or otherwise undermine the position he took himself to be envisaging in contrast. Following from this, it may also be the case that Sartre's view of Kant's system as representing a genuine, though regrettable, 'sign-post' marking the outer limits for the possibility of an ethics becomes open to question. If Sartre's view is not, in fact, in direct opposition to Kant's but nonetheless founded on basic structural tenets they both shared in common, then it would seem that it *was* open to Sartre to proceed in deviating from Kant in asserting the particular 'identity' he foresaw for his ethics, rather than regarding it a kind of stopping-point for his inquiry as an inevitability.

On the basis of both of these potentially positive outcomes, I take it that the initial steps toward a 'resolution' of Sartre's authorial *Angst* may be available to us, and it is for this reason I devote the third part of this thesis to an attempt at showing how it is that this might take place. I shall now attempt to summarise how we might 'radicalise' the various manifestations of Sartre's "anxiety" as discerned by Baiasu, so that they more accurately reflect its fundamental character. That is to say, as an "anxiety" based in a concern regarding the meta-ethical 'limits' of ethics as potentially demonstrated if in fact one takes Kant's account to be correct. This stands opposed to a reading of Sartre as concerned to avoid revealing a similarity to a key predecessor and opponent. Following from this, I offer a demonstration of how it might be resolved, by elucidating Sartre's ethical 'voice', where it is suppressed to a degree, due to what I argue is an inability to overcome this fundamental concern and *confront* these meta-ethical limits. Once Sartre's positions are clarified in contrast to Kant, we may be better able to adjudicate on the viability of his ethical project.

Part Three - Sartre's Three "Negative Criteria" Reviewed: Fear of Similarity, or Fear *for* its Philosophical Repercussions?

I now attempt to represent each of Sartre's criteria for an ethics, defined in *negative* relation to Kant and coupled with Baiasu's Bloomian "ratios" for each. Following each of Baiasu's critiques is a defence of Sartre's position, at least insofar as I attempt to draw out a positive conception from Sartre, rather than holding that his attempts at differentiation from Kant merely reveal a similarity to him that he wished to avoid. At the conclusion of my critique of Baiasu's 'criteria/ratio' couplets, I acknowledge the extent to which the essential aspects of Baiasu's explanatory mechanism are highly useful, especially insofar as they promise access to the level of 'authorial intent' in Sartre's attempts to address ethical problematic, even when the philosophical figure of Kant is not directly implicated as it is in the *Notebooks*, for example.

"Abstractedness"/ Clinamen

With respect to the "abstractedness" claim, Sartre locates Kant's moral theory within a broader "analytic"⁶⁶ tradition, which he places genealogically in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at an approximation⁶⁷. It was around this time, according to Sartre, that philosophers seeking to articulate ethical problematic moved away from a methodology based in an understanding of the ethical agent's immersion in their immediate circumstances as a basis for such propositions, and instead employed a perspective founded on an act of projection toward a universal community. It is crucial from Sartre's perspective that when ethical philosophers conceived of this projection, they did *not* do so with a view to retaining ethical agents identities as constructed in their originally concrete social surrounds, and thus within a space where inter-personal

⁶⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 88

⁶⁷ Ibid. 88

grounds for ethical relations were inextricably bound up in the 'unfolding' of those relations⁶⁸. Instead, the projection rendered all ethical agents as the same generic person, a sort of cut-out template. As a result, Sartre holds, the immersive totality of a concrete community with an intrinsic basis for inter-sociality was denied to individual persons. Of course, this "analytic" view continued to seek a greatly impoverished version of this totality, by relating agents to this universal community instead, but, according to Sartre, this attempt resulted in a hypothetical relation to infinite repetitions of agents, insofar as they had become just as generic through projection as anybody else⁶⁹. On this account, actions and their accompanying circumstances assume this same generic form, leading ultimately to an ethical machinery that produces what is, for Sartre, patently the *wrong* question as the basis for subsequent ethical engagement: Namely, 'What ought I to do in this particular circumstance?'⁷⁰. This fundamental error is indicative, in Sartre's view, of an underlying assumption that one's conduct is a reaction to events which are already imbued with meaning. That is to say, the 'circumstance' at issue here is taken to derive its meaning as events unfold, but for Sartre, such a perspective on the events in question neglects the significance ethical agents *give* the circumstances of their actions (and therefore, inevitably, the actions themselves) as they act⁷¹. Although the wide applicability of circumstances selected from a sort of 'common stock' of ethical scenarios may seem appealing initially, Sartre warns that precisely because they are in some sense relevant to everybody, they are ultimately relevant to nobody, insofar as the 'everybody' at issue is so abstracted that it cannot be applied with any real force of meaning⁷². Ultimately, this leads to an inexorably greater abstraction at the 'meta-ethical' level as well, since, according to Sartre, Kant's moral theory becomes more and more suited to an over-arching

⁶⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 46-47

⁶⁹ Ibid. 88

⁷⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 46

⁷¹ Ibid, 138

⁷² Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 139

characterisation as a set of imperative statements, with little or no intrinsic moral character or connectedness⁷³.

It is not just the case, however, that ethically 'empty' imperatives are formulated under the auspices of Kant's view. When taken together with the remarks on the shift from a 'concrete' community to an abstract universal one, we are effectively presented by Sartre with the almost comically absurd situation of meaningless imperatives being formulated for generic (and thus entirely *impersonal*) persons, and all at a level of abstraction unsuitable for the perception of their very significance by ethical agents. Since human reality is compatible only with the performance of 'concrete' actions, Sartre concludes that "Kantianism does not teach us anything"⁷⁴.

It may be thought that all that would be required to bring Sartre's perspective on the formulation of imperatives into line with Kant's, would be a change in perspective, such that the over-arching, 'birds-eye' characterisation of imperatives as a mere code might be scrutinised, so as to engage with their ethical substance. For Sartre, though, this 'bird's-eye' view is not simply a perspective on *Kant's* categorical imperative. Rather, it is one taken up in response to the general structure of an imperative itself, which as it happens, according to Sartre, is simply *intensified* in Kant's particular invocation. Sartre's initial rendering of an imperative emphasises what he regards as a simultaneous positioning of both the purpose or end willed by the imperative, and the ethical agent in relation to it. On the one hand, no actual circumstance constitutes a sufficient excuse for not reaching the imperative's end as defined. Yet, on the other hand, holds Sartre, the ethical agent cannot be separated from the circumstances in which they live, meaning that though the end in question is essential, the ethical agent becomes fundamentally *inessential*, since their 'groundedness' in their situation is incompatible with the inflexibility of the imperative⁷⁵. In other words, the imperative is formulated in

⁷³ Ibid. 146

⁷⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 7

⁷⁵ Ibid. 426

ignorance of the situation of the ethical agent, such that a goal that is postulated as inescapably essential, is simultaneously, inconsequentially, superfluous as far as the ethical agent is concerned. Sartre's reading of the imperative and his opposition to it is intensified in relation to Kant, since he regards the Kantian imperative as both commanding against the circumstances a person is in, and also against the sensible characteristics of the person, such as sentiment and desire⁷⁶. On Sartre's reading, whereas a 'general' formulation of the imperative commands against circumstance in ignorance of an agent's situation, Kant's perspective moves into a further stratum of abstraction, by commanding against circumstance *in the absence of* a situated agent in 'concrete' psycho-emotional terms⁷⁷.

Of course, it is open to Kant, and Kant scholars in his stead, to argue that Sartre's interpretation of Kant is most uncharitable, or perhaps simply inaccurate. A categorical imperative presupposes the freedom of an individual *from* their situation, and so cannot be said to have been formulated in ignorance *of* their situation. After all, to presuppose freedom from something requires that the 'something' in question be formulated as in some sense fundamentally 'tangible', in order that the freedom at stake may have genuine ethical significance and force. Further, the categorical imperative understood in Kant's terms also addresses itself to freedom, meaning that the ethical agent *is* rendered as a 'concrete' subject, since it is precisely the freedom *of* the agent, to which the imperative addresses itself⁷⁸. Yet, Sartre replies, to understand freedom in this way is to deny the extent to which it is constructed by Kant as a kind of 'ultimate' definition of freedom, when in fact it is but one possible understanding, and one with negative consequences for an ethics at that. Sartre argues that freedom conceived as "generosity"⁷⁹, in the sense in which he uses the term, is able to take root in the

⁷⁶ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 26
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 171

⁷⁷ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 17

⁷⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 154

⁷⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 138

surrounds of the 'concrete' situation, because it affirms itself in relation to the ethical agent, as they exist in their situational surrounds. By contrast, the kind of freedom Kant posits is for Sartre, freedom of a purely negative kind; it defines itself in negative relation, and therefore in opposition to, the ethical agent *in situ*⁸⁰. On this account, Sartre's invocation of "generosity" would seem to refer to the way in which, on his rendering, freedom only *is* insofar as it actively gives itself over, as it were, to the 'concrete' surrounds in which it is to count as ethically significant. This may be contrasted with the way in which Kant's perspective, which in the spirit of Sartre's terminology we might call 'miserly', refuses to have anything to do with situatedness as such, and only begins to have significance of any kind once the 'concrete' situation is done away with. Therefore, Sartre concludes, Kant's moral system ultimately comes to represent a code of particular principles rather than rules for concrete action, and the 'freedom' affirmed by it is in fact provided only through the obliteration of the agent's 'concreteness'. The outcome of this obliteration is that of a reduction of the agent to their pure, universal freedom, once again returning our perspective to the position of ethical agents as members of a 'universal community', given that this universal freedom occurs in one agent in the same way that it does in any other.

After all that I have said so far in an exposition of Sartre's critique of the "abstractedness" of Kant's view, it may be thought there is little to be said for a view of Sartre's ethics in terms of a swerve *away* from Kant, since his position may seem in polar opposition to Kant's from the outset. Yet, Baiasu argues precisely on this basis that Sartre executes a *clinamen* in relation to Kant, since he holds that Sartre's attitude coincides with Bloom's claim that in executing this manoeuvre, a poet (in this context, though, a philosopher) "...implies that [their predecessor] went right up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction [Sartre's philosophy] moves"⁸¹. Baiasu's evidence for this claim is centred initially on *Being and Nothingness*,

⁸⁰ Ibid. 139

⁸¹ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 14

where Sartre lauds Kant's moral system as the first great ethical system of doing⁸². By the time of the *Notebooks* in particular, we can discern a Sartrean perspective that attempts to proceed in precisely the spirit of this remark, as evidenced by the heavy emphasis placed on the 'concreteness' of actions as giving them their substantiveness, as we have already seen. On Baiasu's interpretation, Sartre is in accord with Kant up to a point in terms of a respective focus on action, but differentiates himself from Kant when he realises the extent to which he fails to "swerve" towards an ethics founded on genuine practicality⁸³.

Now, Baiasu holds that Sartre's execution of the *clinamen* reveals his "anxiety of influence", since his criticisms of Kant can in fact be translated into terms fitting Sartre's perspective. This convergence is revealed in the two 'couplets' of "abstractedness" that Baiasu defines as the crux of Sartre's critique. The first of these is the two *aspects* of Sartre's critique that are taken to be abstract; the formulation of practical rules and the formulation of practical principles⁸⁴. The second of these is the two *senses* in which Baiasu understands Sartre to have found Kant's account abstract; it cannot account for the 'concrete' circumstances in which a person is in, and it cannot account for the 'concrete' characteristics of a person⁸⁵. His interpretation of Kant rests on a "two-step"⁸⁶ perspective. First, Kant's system requires an exposition and justification of the categorical imperative as a moral criterion. Then, the imperative is able to be specified. That is to say, different maxims are firstly disqualified or legitimised, having been subjected to the rigours of the imperative. Next, moral maxims are applied in 'concrete'

⁸² Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 26
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 207

⁸³ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 27
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 207

⁸⁴ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 30
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 207

⁸⁵ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 30
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 207

⁸⁶ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 29
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 215

situations with the aid of our faculty of moral judgement⁸⁷. On this reading, Baiasu argues, the two aspects of Kant's moral theory that Sartre regards as being "abstract", and the two senses in which he regards it as being so, are both able to be addressed. Effectively, this constitutes a resolution of Sartre's "anxiety" as it is manifested with respect to "abstractedness", through the *clinamen*.

Yet, this approach, it seems to me, relies just as heavily on a misunderstanding of the source and nature of Sartre's "anxiety" as Baiasu attributes to Sartre himself. To assess this claim, we must return to Sartre's praise for Kant in *Being and Nothingness* as putting forward the first great moral system of doing, since Baiasu identifies this 'moment' in Sartre's thinking as the point where he announced his appreciation for Kant, but did so in such a way that an air of retrospectivity could be attached to Kant, thereby paving the way for what would become a full-blown *clinamen* by the time of the *Notebooks* in particular. According to this interpretation, Sartre foresaw this issue of the similarity between his own ethical perspective and that advanced by Kant, and in the case of the "abstractedness" criticism in particular, posited an uncharitable and even inaccurate view of Kant's philosophy, such that his 'concrete' phenomenology of action could not be coherently compared to Kant's ghostly universal persons as part of a similarly ethereal universal community.

Of course, for Baiasu, Sartre protests too much; his attempt to conceal this similarity simply reveals it in sharper relief. While I agree that Sartre is certainly heavy-handed in interpreting Kant, I think that a different form of "anxiety" is in fact revealed through his interpretation. Rather than this being simply a case of having foreseen similarities with Kant that he needed first to distance himself from and then attack outright, I regard Sartre's struggle with Kant as encompassing separate domains of ambition and constraint. On the one hand, at the level of philosophical intuition (understood in an

⁸⁷ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 30
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 207

'everyday' sense as a kind of hunch as to the philosophical possibilities at hand, as opposed to Kant's use of the term) I think Sartre's statement in praise of Kant reveals the thought on his part that while his proposed ethical position would owe a debt of gratitude to Kant, it would also be able to be articulated as a position of his *own*. By the time of the *Notebooks*, however, I hold that Sartre found it increasingly difficult to confront the task of having to express this intuition using the philosophical 'architecture' available to him, since this produced a result too similar to Kant's position to give the kind of differentiation he sought. This is the "anxiety" I regard Sartre's critique of the "abstractedness" of Kant's system as revealing, insofar as I take him to have had in mind a genuinely separate phenomenological perspective, not captured by Kant's 'reply' that we saw above. It will suffice for now to say that simply holding that a study of a person's 'concrete' characteristics, and the application of appropriately-defined maxims in 'concrete' situations is provided for by Kant's account, is not enough to bring it into convergence with Sartre's account. After all, Sartre specifically mentions that discussions for any proposed system of ethics as put forward by him, will come to nothing if not framed explicitly in terms of "work and struggle"⁸⁸. By this I understand him to mean that we cannot sketch-out a 'concrete' person by studying the meanings inherent in their characteristics as they present to us, at a distance, in the style of a portrait painter. Further still, a maxim, even one formulated to suit 'concrete' situations, cannot account for the meanings accrued and lived-through in the very midst of a socio-political context (particularly one driven by political convictions on the meaning and benefit of struggle). The only level at which this distanced view of the person and their situation can be countered is at the level of what Sartre calls *la vécu* - roughly, that which is 'lived'.

It may be thought that the task of such phenomenological description would be aided by close study *of* experience as it is lived in terms of both persons and situations, but

⁸⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 17

even this is remains too abstracted for Sartre. It is only 'in the doing' of action that ethical meaning is secreted, meaning that the existing vocabulary available for descriptive purposes, framed ultimately in the form of imperatives, seems to begin to defeat his purpose as soon as it is invoked. Let us look to one of Sartre's own examples of the compression involved in invoking ethical imperatives, both as a means of differentiating himself from Kant, and also as a kind of rumination on their shortcomings. Sartre gives the example of the rule "You ought not to give away this piece of information" as being a means to the end ultimately contained within the broader principle "A Frenchman ought not to collaborate with the Nazi regime in 1940"⁸⁹. Now, Sartre initially uses this example to examine the difficulties involved in deriving 'concrete' actions from rules framed in the imperative voice, thus contributing to their seeming inapplicability owing to their supposed universal applicability. Yet, he also uses this example to show that, even if we were to try to describe the ethical situation in a 'lived' manner (the scene of the potential Nazi-collaborator's interrogation or their meeting with the enemy, for example) this merely 'compresses' the ethical implications of the scene in the same way that "You ought not to give away this piece of information" implicitly contains or 'compresses' the principled 'end' to which it serves as a means, namely, that a Frenchman ought not be collaborating with the Nazi regime in 1940 . It is for this reason, I think, that Sartre resorts to such stringency in critiquing Kant; to prevent any possibility of having his position lumped-together with Kant's, since even advancing his alternative based in phenomenological description necessarily involves invoking certain categories - the 'person', the 'situation' and so on, that are liable to association with Kant's perspective. In this case, criticism is preferred to the risks involved in buying into the realm of philosophical vocabulary he views as the dominion of his 'competitor'.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 7

The position I am now attributing to Sartre in relation to Kant has much bearing on discussions relating to the limits of ethical philosophy in general, since Sartre seems to suggest that as soon as one attempts to philosophise *about* ethics, we move further *away* from the possibility of an ethics founded in experiential meaning, rather than closer to it. Yet, even if we were to accede to Sartre's concern that Kant's ethics might represent the 'limits' of ethics as expressed in academic philosophical terms before we reach the point where we must abandon this occupation for direct political action, this need not mean that Sartre's ethical perspective, could not allow him to ascertain and approach these so as to provide the question of the bounds of ethical enquiry with new philosophical significances in turn. It is this 'reassurance' based perspective, where what is only hinted by Sartre in terms of a 'concrete' philosophy of action would be brought out in sharper relief, that I hold would be more effective in resolving Sartre's "anxiety" in relation to the "abstractedness" criteria in specific, than is the case with Baiasu's approach. Rather than simply demonstrating that Sartre has misread Kant and then resolving that misreading, I argue for a specific view of why he did so, supported by what I take to be his view of where any view of ethics proposed by him would 'fit' in relation to Kant and thus what he understood to be the 'limits' of ethical enquiry. I will now move to Sartre's second claim, that Kant's moral system is "individualistic".

"Individualism"/ Tessera

According to Sartre's interpretation, a morally valid imperative as it is expressed in Kant's ethical system, comes to us in the form of a demand. The demand has intrinsic to it an impersonal character, since while imperatives are said to have their genesis in the autonomous choices of individuals, this would require an inter-personal basis for which Kant's ethical system does not allow. Now, Sartre holds that this impersonal rendering of imperatives as they appear as demands, is in fact an instance of *mauvaise foi*, because Kant attempts to hold that he is still providing for the possibility of imperatives

founded on a genuinely *inter*-personal level, when in fact he is formulating demands, on Sartre's reading, which can only ever have *intra*-personal significance at best⁹⁰. Sartre holds that this artificial intra-personal character of the demand, disguised as an imperative, resides in the way in which it is employed as a test. In this capacity, the 'imperative' is held up as moral law as the expression of one's autonomy, but in order for it to *be* a genuine expression of autonomy, Sartre argues the intra-personal perspective must be transcended.

In order to clarify Sartre's views on the inter/intra-personal as he takes the terms to be applicable to Kant, we must look to his account of consciousness advanced in *Being and Nothingness* to provide a basic analogy. It was here that Sartre argued for a clear distinction between our consciousness as reflected-on by us (so-called "impure" reflection⁹¹) and the consciousness of another (that is, of course, another *pour-soi*)⁹². The mistake Kant makes, according to Sartre, is that instead of rendering a consciousness reflected-on as in a dialogue with another *pour-soi*, he subsumes an artificial rendering of the *en-soi* (the 'in-itself', or the items in the world that comprise the backdrop against which we undertake our transcendence⁹³) and the *pour-soi* so that the 'dialogue' taking place on these terms can only ever be between our consciousness and a sort of emaciated, generic version of it. On this account, when I submit to the test of the categorical imperative, I in fact submit only to a kind of hypothetical *envisagement* of inter-relating with others in my ethical deliberations as I go about discerning the legitimacy of the maxim in question. Thus, the distinction drawn between an 'imperative' and a 'demand'. Sartre holds that a demand is predicated upon *making* one obey, which requires only that I discern a generic command (e.g. 'I must do X') that is effectively 'dispensed' by an automatic knowledge of this constructed *envisagement*

⁹⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 256

⁹¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Part 2: *Being-for-itself*, Section 2: *Temporality*, 153

⁹² *Ibid.* 153

⁹³ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Part 1: *The Problem of Nothingness*, 25

of the inter-personal consequences of the maxim in question; after all, it is my *own* consciousness that is involved in both the 'dispensing' of the demand and my implementation of it. The demand *is* a demand and not an imperative because it simply cannot *be* anything else; it is formulated in advance by me, such that the submission of it to the categorical imperative is a mere intellectual formality - I circularly obey the demand *made* of myself, having *given* it the status of a demand through constructing it entirely within the contours of my own reflective capacities, and thereby only lending this process some vague authenticity through a synthetic, intra-personally constructed Other⁹⁴. Whereas, a truly autonomous expression of moral law, as is supposed to be contained in an imperative, presupposes distinctly *separate* ethical agents inter-relating. As we begin to explore this objection from Sartre in greater detail, the sense in which he employs the term "individualism" in relation to Kant becomes clearer. Rather than using the term to refer to an ethics predicated on the primary importance of individuals - evoking notions of 'self-reliance' and so on - Sartre takes issue with the way in which the parameters of Kant's system *claim* as intrinsic to them an over-arching inter-sociality, when in fact, their deliberative basis exists as an entirely 'self-contained' process within the bounds of the ethical agent's discernment.

It is of course incumbent upon Sartre to show exactly how the moral 'weight' of an imperative rests on the presupposition of an interpersonal grounding. To that end, Sartre distinguishes between the respective significances of an imperative's normative force, and the ideality of values. In the case of an imperative (which we recall as being transmitted as a demand), the perspective at issue produces ethical statements framed in the first-personal. It is *I* who am the means to the purpose espoused by the imperative, and the validity of the imperative persists whether or not I actually *realise* it as an end through my choices; this is because the demand imposes a *duty* upon me, which Sartre distinguishes from a *requirement* to choose⁹⁵. By contrast, the projection of

⁹⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 198-201

⁹⁵ Ibid. 250

a value does not involve this same distinction between duty and requirement. Instead, what is involved in this process is the choosing of one of the possibilities open to me, and the taking on of this choice as an end to be realised⁹⁶. The end entailed by the chosen value being projected, is not a purpose to which I am the means, but it is *mine* nonetheless, insofar as I pursue its possibility against the backdrop of the means necessary for me to realise it as an end⁹⁷. I have already made mention of the *ideality* of values in contrast to the normative force of the imperative. To clarify, the ideality of a value refers, in this context, to the way in which the value in question reveals itself as a possibility to which I might aspire to pursue. In this sense, the ideality of a value is somewhat analogous with 'everyday' renderings of the term - for example, 'that job would be *ideal* for me'. Insofar as my perspective on the possibilities revealed by a value may alter over time (such that I come to regard those possibilities represented by the value as no longer worth pursuing, for example) the value effectively disappears from my ethical landscape, as it were. In this way, the ideality of a value is given a kind of 'shelf-life'⁹⁸. As we have seen, a demand's purposefulness carries no such threat of expiry; I am transformed into a vehicle *for* that demand's purpose, whether or not I ultimately choose to actively recognise it as such. Sartre therefore holds that the normative force of a demand, and as such the demand of an imperative, cannot be 'grounded' in the individual as an ethical agent. This is because they cannot necessarily be relied upon to actively recognise their duty or obligation as imposed upon them by the demand and to take it up as intrinsic to their identity *as* ethical agents, whereas a motivational driving force is *presupposed* in the agent's pursuit of the possibilities contained in values, since it is *they* who have projected those values as in some sense beyond their grasp, in order that those possibilities might be pursued. Moreover, the very instantiation, and persistence of values as ideal, is a state of affairs defined by the

⁹⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 240

⁹⁷ Ibid. 246

⁹⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 246

agent, meaning that they may take on this role on a 'casual' basis, whereas a 'full time' ground is required to provide and maintain the normative force of an imperative⁹⁹.

Having rejected what he regards as the individual's improper role with respect to acting as a 'ground' for the normative force of the imperative in Kant's system, Sartre offers a perspective on the origin of demand as a starting-point for an alternative. Duty, as imposed by the demand of an imperative, has its origin in the demand of a person, insofar as it is made *vis-à-vis* another¹⁰⁰. Immediately, Sartre attempts to differentiate his ethical position from Kant's, in that duty is not to be understood, on his account, as universal and unconditional. Rather, it is located in the 'concrete' specificity of the "living categories of the For-Others"¹⁰¹, and in them alone. Kant's perspective initially appears well-suited to an attempt at handling Sartre's claimed differentiation. Since Kant argues for a view of moral action where the ethical agent's will is determined by the lawgiving form of a maxim, and is *not* shaped by sensible inducements from desire, there is an important sense in which his system places the will beyond the world of sensible experience. Given that the will cannot be determined by the noumenal realm (the realm of 'things-in-themselves') if we are to avoid a contradictory state of affairs where the will simultaneously *is* but cannot be experienced, the determining 'ground' for the will must remain 'self-contained' in precisely the manner and form to which Sartre here objects¹⁰². Yet, Sartre holds that the freedom upholding the normative force of the Kantian imperative *is* in fact noumenal¹⁰³. The basis for this claim rests in Sartre's interpretation of the role of projection in Kant's account, which as we saw earlier is held responsible for the 'abstractedness' of Kant's system, given that for Sartre, a Kantian projection involves abstraction at the level of the agent *being* projected, and also at the level of the universal community *to which* the agent is projected. It is pertinent here

⁹⁹ Ibid. 250

¹⁰⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 238

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 258

¹⁰² Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 174-5

¹⁰³ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 32
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 12

that we recall that when we submit to the categorical imperative, Sartre claims that we in fact project the Other "...into the noumenal world"¹⁰⁴. The "individualism" of Kant's system, then, is to be located in this projection into the noumenal realm, such that when Kant claims the will is somehow 'outside' the sensible realm, he is in *mauvaise foi* on Sartre's reading.

Rather than suggesting that Kant is simply incorrectly locating the normative force of the imperative, Sartre in fact holds that his system initially accommodates the correct interpretation, but is deliberately reconfigured to produce his desired perspective. Sartre claims that the true complexity, and indeed difficulty, involved in Kant's projection-based approach is revealed by Kant himself in *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and also to a lesser extent in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)¹⁰⁵. It is here that Kant distinguishes between two perspectives from which a person may apprehend themselves; the first of these is from my position in the world of sense, placing my actions potentially under the auspices of heteronomy, whereby influences beyond me may negatively influence the moral 'tone' of my actions¹⁰⁶. The second perspective is from my position insofar as I belong to the intelligible world, under the auspices of reason alone¹⁰⁷. Yet, reason not only distinguishes us from other sensible beings in marking us out as *human beings*; for Kant it distinguishes us from *ourselves* as well. When we are "affected by objects"¹⁰⁸ in Kant's phrase, we are given to understand ourselves as distinct from the sensible world, thereby opening the way for further introspection as to our respective positions in the sensible and intelligible worlds. Sartre argues that the self-legislative reason that 'grounds' our consciousness of the moral law in Kant's terms, consists in the projection of oneself, as we have already

¹⁰⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 139

¹⁰⁵ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 174-5. Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals in Practical Philosophy* (ed., trans. M.J Gregor) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 48-108

¹⁰⁶ Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 99

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 99

¹⁰⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 99

seen. These distinctions between 'modes' of self-apprehension, though, allow him to exploit what he regards as an ambiguity in the definition of human reality, and to argue that on Kant's account, we in fact project ourselves into the noumenal realm as an 'Other', in order to facilitate our consciousness of the moral law¹⁰⁹. Sartre holds that since a demand is based on an interpersonal relationship, and since this is replaced, on his reading of Kant, with a relationship between a projected Other and two aspects of the same person, a sort of 'tight-rope act' is required to hold these features together. On the one hand, argues Sartre, Kant had to *suggest* that a genuinely interpersonal relationship underpins the force of the imperative, whilst at the same time balancing this against an *intra*-personal duality that was of sufficient strength, so as to avoid undermining a person's unity¹¹⁰. A system predicated on the normative force of the imperative 'grounded' in a will projected into the noumenal realm, then, is one that for Sartre precludes the possibility of a genuinely free choice and its attendant *Angst*, whilst also attempting to maintain the illusion of freedom¹¹¹.

The incoherent outcome of this philosophical 'sleight-of-hand' can be observed, claims Sartre, when we try to apply it to precisely the kind of 'concrete' situation he envisages as the basis for his own perspective. To begin with, I choose ends that are in fact my possibilities for realising a fundamental project. For example, I choose to participate in direct and specific political protests against war-time atrocities committed in a particular country as but one of several possibilities open to me (writing political pamphlets, joining leafleting campaigns, writing to members of parliament, for instance) that I might employ towards the realisation of a broader fundamental project, in say, positioning myself ethically as an opponent of war-time activities in breach of certain international conventions. Yet, as soon as I try to justify those ends by appeal to an 'absolute' purpose - for example, I protest for the purpose of promoting international

¹⁰⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 255

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 255

¹¹¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 257

peace and harmony - the value of those ends is transformed¹¹². I am no longer able to act as the *creator* of my ends, grounded as they are in my free choice, and thus to take up the role of a *begetter* of action. Instead, I merely *participate* in the realisation of ends independent of my free choices¹¹³, since none of the ends open to me can serve as my possibilities to be realised; I cannot 'concretely' realise a fundamental project at the level of the 'absolute' purpose¹¹⁴. For Sartre, the fundamental project (or simply, the project¹¹⁵) refers to the underlying 'aspiration' that underpins the multiplicity of related projects that one may undertake, and which the agent may not even be fully aware of. For example, it may be that the various projects a person undertakes aim at marking them out as 'inferior'. As such, they take on work at which they cannot succeed, and invite the judgement of others to this effect. In order to understand that this is so, the person will have to 'unravel' the significances of each of these projects to realise the underlying project that has been driving them. If we attempt to conceive of such a fundamental ground at the level of 'absolute' purpose, it quickly becomes obvious that such reflection on the 'concrete' projects at issue is rendered impossible. This situation serves as a direct analogue for Sartre's 'individualist' critique of Kant; the will understood as 'grounded' independently of my free choices cannot serve as the foundation for action driven *by* the agent, but instead can only serve as *that which* an agent may partake in, as a supporter of the over-arching 'absolute' purpose providing the justification for the realisation of the ends at issue.

In appealing to an 'absolute' purpose, the ethical agent is in some sense attempting to provide a justification for their actions. In so doing, they implicitly affirm that this purpose is itself justified in turn, and also that the implicit choice underpinning their

¹¹² Ibid. 257

¹¹³ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 257

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 257

¹¹⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness : An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* See in particular Part 4: *Having, Being and Doing*, especially Section 2.1: *Existential Psychoanalysis*, 578

commitment to that purpose was free¹¹⁶. Sartre holds that the 'absolute' purpose is based in freedom, but crucially, not in *my* freedom; it is the freedom of the Other that is at work, since I merely avail myself of the justificatory 'weight' taken to be vested in the Other. Naturally, this is constitutive of *mauvaise foi* for Sartre, since to hold that one has acted in considered freedom, while at the same time 'off-loading' that freedom by grounding it at the level of the 'absolute' is an act of self-deception. Yet, this particular incarnation of *mauvaise foi* also serves to underscore Sartre's 'individualist' critique of Kant, in that although the ethical agent *purports* to vest their freedom in the Other at the level of the 'absolute', they are once again, reduced to a mere projection, participating in the realisation of an end with 'others' crafted entirely within the bounds of reason alone.

Such self-deception cannot be said to have any other motive than to spare the ethical agent from having to engage from a 'first-person' perspective, as the locus of their own ethically-guided actions. Sartre acknowledges that this 'individualistic' abdication provides a "discharge" for the attendant "anxiety"¹¹⁷ of freedom, since the 'freedom' one participates in at the 'absolute' level facilitates decisions on one's ends in a projected sense; this projected ethical 'personality' effectively makes decisions in the 'concrete' agent's place¹¹⁸.

In view of the foregoing criticisms levelled by Sartre, and since in Kant's system categorical imperatives are justified on the basis of an individual's freedom, it is not only the ethical agent who acts in *mauvaise foi* by having decisions with respect to their ends made through projection. Kantianism, holds Sartre, is *itself* mired in "mystification"¹¹⁹. As was the case with his accusation of Sartre having executed a *clinamen* in relation to Kant, Baiasu now claims that Sartre's critique of Kant's 'individualism' is based on his

¹¹⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 257

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 257

¹¹⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 257

¹¹⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 253, 256

execution of a *tessera* in relation to Kant. He holds that Sartre's attitude coincides with a paraphrasing of Bloom's claim that in executing this manoeuvre "a [philosopher] antithetically 'completes' his predecessor, by so reading the [parent-philosophy] as to retain to its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough"¹²⁰. Baiausu's initial evidence for this claim resides in what he understands as Sartre's adoption of Kant's term "transcendence" and his reinvestment of it with new meaning. So far as Baiausu is concerned, whereas Kant uses the term to refer to the noumenal realm of things-in-themselves, Sartre shifts the focus to produce a notion inherently connected with our situatedness in the world¹²¹. Further, Baiausu holds, Sartre then does the same with Kant's notion of 'otherness' in relation to the demand of imperatives. To begin with, Sartre admits that "Kantian freedom...with its notions of temporality and atemporality...does a good job of depicting the structure of obligation"¹²², thus acknowledging that Kant provides for a perspective whereby the demand of an imperative is made of *another*, beyond the person on whom it is imposed¹²³. Where he tries to 'extend' or 'complete' Kant's view, argues Baiausu, is that rather than rendering the Other as the same person potentially regarded from two different standpoints, Sartre takes the Other to refer to another person altogether¹²⁴. Therefore, Baiausu's accusation of Sartre having executed a *tessera* is essentially a 'double-pronged' one with both the term transcendence and Kant and Sartre's invocation of 'otherness' called into question, but ultimately these concerns are brought under the auspices of a primary claim; namely, that Sartre re-invests Kant's terminology with new meaning in order to bring them to a satisfactory fruition, for his philosophical purposes.

¹²⁰ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 14

¹²¹ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 34
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 38

¹²² Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 253

¹²³ Ibid. 253

¹²⁴ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 34
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 38

For Baiașu, this *tessera* again represents Sartre's anxiety of influence in relation to Kant, also ultimately based in a *misprision* of Kant. Recalling that the central issue here is Sartre's re-investment of Kant's terminology, we must look to the way in which both transcendence and the Other play a role in Sartre's conception of the key dualities he understands as being at issue in Kant's moral theory. In turn, this will allow us to ascertain whether Baiașu's rendering of the *tessera* is in this case justified, and therefore whether the "anxiety" also taken to be at issue really does manifest in the form and manner Baiașu claims.

The initial broad outline of these dualities, holds Baiașu, is discernable through Sartre's distinction between values and imperatives, which as we have already seen is a source of comparative tension between Sartre and Kant. The distinguishing factor that separates the two is centred around their normative 'weight' or 'force'¹²⁵. In the case of values, I must *choose* a value as my possibility, in order that it might motivate my *realisation* of that possibility. Thus, a value derives its normative 'force' insofar as I choose it, since without the initial determination on my part that a possibility before me is one I might take up as truly *mine*, it cannot motivate me to act, nor serve in a deliberative capacity as a kind of 'counter-point' in weighing it against the other values I have taken on previously¹²⁶. By contrast, an imperative derives its normative 'force' regardless of my choice, and so exists as a *moral* imperative whether or not it comes to figure in my selection of the possibilities open to me¹²⁷. What really underlies these distinctions for Sartre then, at least according to Baiașu, is a distinction between a purpose viewed from a standpoint positioning it as a *descriptive* account of action, and a purpose viewed from a standpoint positioning it as *prescriptive* account for action¹²⁸. As

¹²⁵ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹²⁶ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹²⁷ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹²⁸ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35

such, Baiașu holds, when Sartre claims that the end of a value is "to be realised"¹²⁹ if I in fact choose it as my possibility, he describes the necessary conditions for a person to act against (indeed, in spite of) the backdrop of one's 'concrete' circumstances¹³⁰. By contrast, on this reading, when Sartre asserts that the end of an imperative is similarly to be "realised" over and above (and perhaps even against) my free choice, he describes the formulation of a condition for how a person *ought* to act¹³¹.

These dualities necessarily bring the meaning of "transcendence" and "otherness" into play, as Baiașu argues that Sartre in fact uses these in *mauvaise foi*, by employing them in a seemingly divergent manner from that of Kant, when in fact their positions are compatible to an extent he would prefer not to admit. Baiașu holds that rather than arguing that we transcend our current standpoint and therefore regard ourselves in hypothetically different 'lights' from an over-arching perspective in order to consider our ethical situation and the possibilities it presents us with in entering into these *descriptive* or *prescriptive* 'attitudes', Sartre claims that we do not simply transcend our situation for the purpose of passively evaluating the 'attitude' we might take up¹³². Instead, it is *in* transcending our situation, he asserts, that we assume either attitude; the deliberative process is inextricable from the ethically 'active' response given by us and interpreted by others in the world¹³³. As such, on this account, a person can be *interpreted* by others in the world as acting in pursuit of a value chosen as their possibility, and therefore described from the vantage-point of the circumstances necessary for them to act, and in which they now do so - for example 'she's really passionate about conservation; she's always going to meetings and making donations

Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹²⁹ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35

Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹³⁰ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35

Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹³¹ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35

Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹³² Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 36

¹³³ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 170

toward the cause'¹³⁴. Or, similarly, a person can be *interpreted* as subject to the normative 'force' of an imperative, over and above their choices, and even against those choices they might have previously made - for example, 'he's always staying out late; he should be at home with his children'¹³⁵. The point here for Sartre, says Baiausu, is that although *others* can apprehend us from different angles depending on the 'attitudes' we might assume, we *ourselves* cannot truly undertake to 'split' our 'attitudes' hypothetically, as this was bound up in our original transcendence when we undertook to do so. In fact, the phenomenological structure of this simultaneous 'splitting' of the 'attitudes' a person *could* have assumed as against the ones they actually implemented, along with an evaluative judgement in light of their choice, can be discerned in the example statements I have just used. When we examine the assertions 'she's really passionate about conservation; she's always going to meetings and making donations toward the cause', or, 'he's always staying out late; he should be at home with his children', we note that each statement has as implicit to it an over-arching acknowledgement that the person in question might have acted otherwise but did not, and so has produced this state of affairs through their actions, which are now being evaluated. Particularly in the case of the second statement, it is clear that the person in question is judged through the prism of the 'attitudes' he might have taken up, and therefore the different perspective that each would necessarily involve. If he had made it clear through his choices and accompanying actions that he was committed to meeting the obligations expected of him in his role as a parent, the perspective from which he was ethically apprehended would change, given that he would be *described* as in pursuit of the values that accompany a designation as a capable parent, just as the person in the first example was *described* in pursuit of her conservation-centred values.

¹³⁴ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 37
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 286

Baiausu does not actually employ these examples; I am using them to give experiential sense to his exposition of reflecting perspectives here.

¹³⁵ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 37
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 286

In his case, though, he is upbraided and the actions deemed appropriate are articulated from a perspective where they are imperatively *prescribed*, since they are taken to persist over and above the choices he has made to *not* fulfil those obligations¹³⁶. Now, Baiausu claims that this leads to a particular conception of 'otherness' for Sartre, where as was the case with transcendence, it is made implicit that Kant's use of the term is insufficient for Sartre's purposes. Since transcendence is the adoption of an 'attitude' in pursuit of a value, or in fulfilment of an imperative, and is made in both cases by a 'concrete' ethical agent *in situ*, it must be that this cannot be facilitated by a sort of hybridised envisagement of a 'concrete' agent as potentially taking up a different 'attitude' despite presenting differently at present¹³⁷. Instead, Baiausu continues, it must be that when Sartre talks of a person in pursuit of a value, or as subject to an imperative, he is referring to a completely separate individual in each case¹³⁸. In this sense, Baiausu concludes, Sartre's position is heavily contradictory, in that he at once claims that Kant's terms are insufficient while retaining them (at least as labels or container-terms) and then attempts to conceal the extent to which his purportedly *new* meanings might be regarded as completely beyond Kant's original scope of intent, rather than a re-working in genuinely thoughtful response to Kant. Furthermore, argues Baiausu, when one actually digs beneath the surface, so to speak, of the 'new' meaning whose significance Sartre attempts to conceal, it is actually *in accord* with Kant and not really in opposition to him at all, thus definitively revealing Sartre's "anxiety of influence"¹³⁹.

¹³⁶ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 37
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 286

¹³⁷ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 37
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 286

¹³⁸ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 37
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 286.

Here, though, Baiausu also acknowledges that Sartre's reading of Kant in this respect is not necessarily unjustified. He cites the *Groundwork* in particular, where Kant distinguishes between the subject as a 'sensible' being, and a 'transcendent' being. (See: Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 116)

¹³⁹ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 37

With respect in particular to the second part of Baiasu's criticism, namely that Sartre holds to a position that is in accord with Kant rather than divergent from his position, this perceived compatibility is considered by Baiasu in the context of the respective mechanisms both philosophers provide for 'self-regard' as a basis for motivation in either pursuing a value as one's possibility, or being subject to the 'force' of an imperative¹⁴⁰. This purported compatibility, argues Baiasu, can be demonstrated firstly through Kant's requirement that an ethical agent not only *choose* a maxim that suits the 'concrete' dimensions of the situation they are presented with, but also that they must evaluate *why it is* that they adopted the maxim they now take ownership of¹⁴¹. On Kant's account, as we have seen, when seeking to determine how an ethical agent ought to act, we must first position the agent themselves as the primary driving-force or begetter, in charge of their pursuit of ethical autonomous action¹⁴². Necessarily, this leaves them beholden firstly to take stock of the 'concrete' nature of their situation and circumstances, and then to take stock of themselves as a 'concrete' person with certain capabilities and limitations. Then, and only then, the ethical agent's chosen maxim is subjected to a formulation of the categorical imperative, and the moral imperative fashioned by and for the agent themselves is overlaid directly onto the 'concrete' situation at hand¹⁴³. Kant cautions us, though, that if a maxim produced by this process is adopted purely in virtue of its "object", then the maxim in question cannot attain to the status of a practical law¹⁴⁴. That is to say, if an ethical agent adopts a particular maxim simply because they choose its purpose as an end to be realised - for example, they resolve not to engage in dishonest business practices *purely* because the purpose of this maxim is seemingly inseparable from their chosen end of market domination - then it cannot serve the agent in the way Kant intends. This is not to say that an

Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 286

¹⁴⁰ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35

¹⁴¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 167

¹⁴² Ibid. 167

¹⁴³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 167

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 167

objective such as taking a dominant market share in the corporate world is, in and of itself, necessarily immediately precluded under a Kantian perspective. Rather, the example is designed to show that one cannot adopt a maxim exhorting the various elements of ethical business practices, for instance, without first having clearly understood why it is that they did so, and this will necessarily involve ensuring that one has distinguished carefully between initially adopting a maxim in the service of ethical action *generally*, as against adopting a maxim in the *belief* that its "object" is what is really at issue for one as an ethical agent. Even if the 'spirit' of a formulated maxim happens to coincide happily with the ends pursued in service of such an "object", if the agent's attentions are directed toward only a perceived advantage in their pursuit in taking up that maxim, then it will in effect 'dissolve' for the agent as an ethical tool, and they will no longer be able to apply to their 'concrete' situation coherently on Kant's terms¹⁴⁵.

For Kant then, it seems, a truly *moral* action is one attended by a properly-formulated maxim, that has in turn been properly, indeed, introspectively, evaluated prior to application. Now, Baiasu argues that insofar as Sartre determines whether or not an end is to be "realised" by an agent through a process of introspection to determine the 'authenticity' of the choice underpinning the adoption of the end as one's possibility, he does not require that we 'unpack' the actual choice *itself*. On this account, the normativity of an end (and therefore its substance as a value able to be chosen as one's possibility) is provided through the accompanying necessary and sufficient conditions *for* that normativity - namely that the end chosen was chosen freely and not in any way mired in *mauvaise foi*¹⁴⁶. Of course, Sartre's rendering of imperatives do not have free choice as a necessary condition for their purpose; indeed, we have seen that they may be required to persist in exacting *their* normative 'force' as a check *against* certain choices. Similarly, Kant provides that moral imperatives require a certain kind of *reason*

¹⁴⁵ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 167

¹⁴⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 397

in order for them to be adopted, that will persist in an unblemished state beyond the vagaries involved in 'concrete' situations. We may summarise this similarity, then, in terms of the difference in introspective reflection both philosophers posit in order that imperatives might be shown to exist *as part* of a moral 'apparatus', and yet *apart* from the introspective structures that the ethical agent uses to reflect *upon* their relation to that 'apparatus'¹⁴⁷. On both Sartre and Kant's accounts, when an agent takes on an end as one "to be realised", they do so in virtue of the fact they have chosen that particular end or principle; they therefore *regard* themselves as an agent *lacking* the end or principle they now seek to realise¹⁴⁸. In the case of imperatives, once again, both Sartre and Kant are in agreement that an imperative is normative to the extent that the agent in question lacks that purpose, *regardless* of whether or not they regard themselves that way¹⁴⁹. Insofar as both accounts are compatible at the level of imperatives, Baiasu argues that Sartre's accusation that Kant's critique is "individualistic" belies the extent to which his own account provides an introspective mechanism, occurring as a 'self-contained' phenomenon at the individual level, in order to facilitate a distinction between the way in which an agent understands themselves to be acting when in pursuit of an end, or when they are subject to an imperative. For Baiasu, Sartre's critique thus represents an elaborate means of avoiding comparison with Kant at the level where there similarities are most apparent - mechanisms for self-reflection, particularly with respect to imperatives¹⁵⁰.

As was the case with Baiasu's accusation of the *clinamen*, I argue that his claims of a *tessera* here are equally overly-concerned with demonstrating a purported 'self-

¹⁴⁷ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 45

¹⁴⁸ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 38
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹⁴⁹ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 38
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹⁵⁰ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 38
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

centredness' on Sartre's part, a desire to escape comparison of his own potential designs for an ethical system with Kant, on whose shoulders he does not wish to be seen to have stood. As before though, I argue that Sartre's relationship with Kant's efforts is one beset by a more general concern; that if Kant *has* been successful in laying out his account, in so doing he has revealed fundamental meta-ethical foundations whose inadequacies will present stumbling-blocks for *any* ethically-inclined thinker seeking to put forward an account, at least insofar as it is to be contextualised within the Western, continental/analytic-inflected perspective on what an ethics might look like as a finished product.

In this case, I take it that Sartre is concerned *not only* to show that Kant's system *itself* may be too "individualistic" in the way in which it posits these introspectively reflective mechanisms, but also to warn us of the way in which these structures will necessarily have to be included in the foundations of any ethical system. Of course, it is open to Baiasu to reply that Sartre does not entirely 'practice what he preaches' by attempting to circumvent their role in his ethical picture. He still proceeds to attempt to posit reflective structures of his own, in the sense that imperatives fall outside of their auspices, even if the 'body' of the reflective structures themselves are not as fully-developed as in Kant's system. From the perspective I advance, though, this stands as a regrettable demonstration of precisely the "anxiety" I take Sartre to be dealing with. Despite attempting to differentiate his approach in arguing that transcendence can occur at the level of the 'concrete' person *in situ* such that we would not have to 'ascend' to an abstract level of contemplation where we see ourselves as 'split' between two possible modes (oneself understood as lacking the end or principle that may be chosen as one's possibility and thus *valued* as such, versus oneself understood as lacking an end or principle that persists in spite of our choices), Sartre is still beholden to account for the persistent quality of imperatives. This persistence requires at least some degree of abstraction in order for it to function coherently, since such persistence has its

'essence' in residing apart from the changeable nature of 'concrete' situations. In the end Sartre concedes that they exist, in some sense, 'beyond' our free choices, and therefore outside of any introspective reflection. Naturally, this leads to a further requirement to sketch out exactly *what it is* that imperatives persist outside *of*, thus leaving him beholden to at least consider the very structures present in Kant's account, which he has spent considerable philosophical effort on trying to leave behind¹⁵¹. In fact, at one point, Baiasu's commentary actually *supports* my more 'fundamental' interpretation of Sartre's "anxiety". He admits that "the distinction between these two reflecting perspectives is necessary if ethics is to play any role"¹⁵².

In light of Baiasu's comments, it seems inadequate to suggest that 'resolving' Sartre's "anxiety" in relation to Kant is a matter of pointing out these similarities and then asserting that they can in fact co-exist. After all, if even Baiasu admits that the same essential difficulty, emanating from the reflecting perspectives understood as "necessary" for ethics, will form a universal part of any attempt to produce an ethics, then surely we ought to pay more attention to the *way in which* we formulate them to begin with, so that the potential difficulties they pose may be addressed in some form, especially given that they *must* be dealt with in order for the ethical enterprise to be viable in any genuine sense.

Throughout his commentary on Sartre's "individualist" critique of Kant, Baiasu makes much of the fact that Sartre points to what might be referred to as 'capacity' problems in Kant's rendering of transcendence. That is to say, Baiasu comments in what might be seen as a somewhat derisive manner on Sartre's position that a 'concrete' person regarded as *either* in pursuit of a certain end to be chosen as their possibility and valued

¹⁵¹ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 38
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 153

¹⁵² Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 45

by them as such, *or* as subject to the 'force' of an imperative, can only ever be lived-through by a single 'concrete' person at any given time. The 'Other' in Sartre's schema is understood by Baiausu as a clumsy, *inter*-personal rendering of what is for him a nuanced *intra*-personal schema advanced by Kant, and is in fact *needlessly* so as far as Baiausu is concerned, since he contends that Sartre's essential objective is in fact *in accord* with Kant. I argue, though, that this view of Sartre's position ignores the extent to which this is a *demonstration* of a perceived incoherency of Kant's account. Sartre does not any stage claim that this schema is one that he himself would implement in his own ethical framework¹⁵³. Rather, his claim is that if we were to attempt to hypothetically enact Kant's schema, whilst at the same time preserving the structural integrity of the 'concrete' ethical agent (something Sartre *does* want to achieve), the reflective mechanisms would have to be rendered, at the phenomenological level at least, as a capability only able to be wielded by a single agent, producing only one reflective 'mode' in transcendence at any given time. This is not to say, of course, that the agent could not transcend their situation at another stage and therefore take up the other 'mode' available. For instance, an agent could conceivably choose performing charitable acts as their possibility in seeking to realise their end of contributing to the alleviation of homelessness in their particular locality, and then come to view themselves as subject to an imperative not to spend the charity funds they have collected towards their end on frivolous items¹⁵⁴. On Sartre's reading, the agent does not have to lead a 'binary'

¹⁵³ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 36
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 45

Baiausu claims here that since Sartre's view in the *Notebooks* that this difference in reflective perspectives (the agent as *they* judge versus the agent as *they are* judged) differs between the *Notebooks* and *Being and Nothingness*, he must also acknowledge that his view now represents a variation on Kant's, where the Other becomes a separate individual, as we have already seen. However, as I have already begun to show, I take Sartre to be *rejecting* Kant's view, whilst also holding that something *resembling* Kant's position may be fruitful. I take it, then, that Sartre is not bound to hold to the 'content' as well as the form, of Kant's view.

¹⁵⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 140. Sartre notes here that a distinction between our being-for-others understood from the subjective perspective of the for-itself, and our being-for-others understood from a position of 'exteriority'. In this case, Sartre is focusing explicitly on the consequences of imposing 'rights' for Jewish and African-American persons, whereby he believes genuine inter-subjectivity is traded for relative abstraction. Nevertheless, he raises the contexts of civil rights and Semitic activism as suitable grounds for the *use* of such a schema, rather than as the *only* ones in which it could be used. I take it then

ethical existence where we swap definitively between an either/or selection of these modes; the agent may indeed *conceive* of themselves in both 'modes' at once¹⁵⁵. The point is, for Sartre, that if we want to *represent* this process in an *external* descriptive fashion, we can only ever sensibly depict an un-bifurcated agent, and that Kant's account, while perhaps more adept at describing the way in which we conceive of ourselves *in the midst* of our deliberations, would have to be delineated in this way in order to preserve the undifferentiated 'feel' of personhood. That is to say, Sartre holds that if we were to translate Kant's *intra*-personal 'modes' into phenomenological description, the only way to maintain the integrity of the 'concrete' agent (as Sartre envisages them) would be to distinguish between two *separate* agents involved in two *separate* 'concrete' situations. This does *not* have to mean that the Other in Sartre's reflective schema actually refers to another person entirely; instead, Sartre's position is to warn of what his schema *would* look like at the descriptive level, *if* he was left with no option but to take up Kant's basic reflective foundation as his starting point¹⁵⁶.

It seems to me, then, that Baiasu has Sartre's message confused; rather than taking this 'compartmentalised' view of the ethical agent he holds Kant's system to ultimately produce as a demonstration of the pitfalls of self-reflexive structures in ethics with a Kantian foundation, Baiasu takes Sartre literally, asserting that this schema is in fact one he advocated for his own ethics. If we proceed with the interpretation of Sartre's view I have advanced, though, what we are left with is in fact a kind of strategy designed to work *against* a mirror-image of the very accusation Baiasu has levelled at him. Rather than merely retreating from aspects of his own proposed schema that he finds unpalatable, Sartre actually seeks to expose what he understands to be a contradiction in Kant, where a purported mechanism for intra-personal reflection is actually shown to

that Sartre regarded this interiority/exteriority distinction as a generally-applicable phenomenological (as well as ontological) schematic.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 140

¹⁵⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 253

be unworkable when subjected to the introduction of what Sartre regards as the very basis *required* for such reflection; namely the 'concrete' ethical agent¹⁵⁷. In Sartre's view, then, Kant attempts to conceal this purported flaw, by claiming that intra-personal reflection presupposes the very kind of 'concrete' agent Sartre envisages. Yet, Sartre argues, when we attempt to render this phenomenologically, the initially nuanced-seeming structure advanced by Kant, splits apart.

Resolving this particular "anxiety" that Sartre appears to have in relation to the possible impact of Kant's perspective on subsequent attempts to theorise the role of introspection in ethics is of course no more definitively possible than was the case with the "abstractedness" charge. Yet, I take it that there is merit in trying to draw out of the possibilities Sartre considers, a potential means of rendering the agent as phenomenologically 'concrete' while leaving the flexibility of being able to assess people from multiple vantage-points intact.

To return to Sartre's account of transcendence that is intended to operate in contrast to Kant, it seems to me that Sartre's divergence from Kant here is based in his insistence on symmetry between phenomenological description and the construction of an ethical ontology. If we attempt to 'pick up' this thought where Sartre leaves off, the outcome of this insistence is a particularly 'discreet' rendering of the introspective mechanisms that allow for the two necessary reflective vantage-points. Whereas Kant's account allows us to describe the process of transcendence through which we engage with this mechanism, Sartre's comments, as we have seen, are focused on an understanding of transcendence that remains centred on choosing a possibility as one's end and resolving to 'grasp' and pursue it as such, as one exists *in situ*. This means that although Sartre *acknowledges* this mechanism, he does not explicitly describe his own rendering of its

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 139

ontological 'anatomy'¹⁵⁸. This is because if Sartre were to do so, this would result in him having to alter the 'concrete' person in experiential descriptions in order to keep the ontological structures synchronously intact. As we have seen, he understood such a manoeuvre to lead unavoidably to having to sketch separate agents in each 'mode'. Yet, this need not result in a silence from Sartre on what an alternative might be. It remains possible to conceive of an introspective structure underpinning an ethics where although the twin reflective 'modes' themselves are not articulated in an explicitly substantive way, they are nonetheless present in the meanings secreted through 'concrete' transcendence¹⁵⁹. When an agent transcends their situation in selecting and living-through their selection of the possibilities they are presented with, we may render experiential descriptions of them in a very 'concrete' manner, as we saw with the two opposing examples of the conservationist and the father derelict in his duties previously, and this description will have as intrinsic to it a certain 'angle' (rather like a film-makers particular approach to the filming of a scene) which will then stand as a 'concrete' marker for the vantage-point taken up by the agent in either their pursuit of a value or their subjection to an imperative¹⁶⁰. In this way, a reflective foundation sharing the 'bi-modal' quality of Kant's system is produced in a mutually-sustaining relationship with the 'common-sense' qualities of phenomenological description, which allow Sartre to account for the fact that envisaging a person in either 'mode' will necessarily impact on any project seeking to put forward a 'concrete' agent of the type he envisages.

It is of course open to those who would defend Kant to argue at this point that the account Sartre begins to sketch out here, and which I have attempted to take up here in his stead, relies very heavily (indeed, perhaps too heavily) on his ambition to produce a

¹⁵⁸ Although Sartre does not explicitly state in the *Notebooks* that he abhors any such description of the abstracted process of selecting from the possible modes of transcendence, we have already seen him describe this level as 'mystical'. Furthermore, the only time he describes the phenomenological aspect of this process is when he seeks to decry its consequences, as I mentioned in an earlier note, with respect to the interiority/exteriority dichotomy.

¹⁵⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 140

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 246

means of ethical reflection that would be neatly contained in a very particular phenomenological construct: The 'concrete person'¹⁶¹. After all, it may be argued, Kant provides an equally robust conception of the ethical agent, along with his schema for introspection, and also external reflection upon the possible ethical 'attitudes' we may take up *in situ*, that does not require the dissolution of their 'personal' embodiment in any sense. The dedicated conservationist or undutiful father that we have employed as exemplars need not be 'bifurcated' at all under Kant's account, as they are simply being *considered* from a different standpoint rather than requiring any alteration to suit¹⁶². Similarly, with Kant's account of transcendence Sartre is again rather heavy-handed, since Kant's claim is not that we somehow mystically *ascend* our situation and contemplate the respective vantage-points that we may come to be regarded as we act. The two vantage-points simply allow Kant to represent introspection in a way that schematises what may obviously be understood as being *experienced* in a far more 'compact' manner. Further, as we have seen, the actual *substance* of what the ethical agent undertakes to transcend is not at all mystical. Maxims are formulated by the agent in terms that are designed to function in a reciprocal manner with the 'concrete' situations they are to be employed in¹⁶³. Kant's defenders may therefore conclude, and not without reason, that Sartre's claim to 'improve' this structure is based in an insistence on importing phenomenological 'vividness' into a structure that in fact provides precisely what he attempts to *re-create* employing different means.

Yet, Sartre's position need not be construed as purely a form of philosophical 'meddling'. After all, his determination to inject phenomenology into the ethical domain is not simply an arbitrary 'thought-experiment'; the idea that outward descriptions of the ethical agent could function simultaneously as a site of 'lived' meaning that could

¹⁶¹ Sartre uses the phrase many times throughout the *Notebooks*, but several prominent references may be found at 138, 255 and 258 in particular.

¹⁶² Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 45

¹⁶³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 167

then be employed philosophically *as* the description of the agent is being built, has well-established precedents. Indeed, Sartre's own works stand replete with attempts to render embodiment in such a way as to unite experiential immediacy with more schematic underpinnings. In *Being and Nothingness* for instance, though, Sartre stresses that such a 'concrete' perspective would *not* entail simply emphasising the *corporeality* of the Other's body: "...the body...is not the primary encounter; on the contrary, it is only one episode in my relations with the Other..."¹⁶⁴. It becomes clear, then, that embodiment need not employ the physiological body as its 'flag-ship' idea, and indeed, may not always be suited to it. Further, even if we *were* to directly transpose the 'body-for-others' as it appears in this account onto Sartre's ethical sketching, we would still have to account for its situatedness in what was, by the time of the *Notebooks* in particular, intended to be taken on in a different sense¹⁶⁵. At the same time, it is to be remembered that Sartre deliberately brings himself into conflict with Kant by insisting that his schema would require separate descriptions, thus unavoidably bringing the bodies of each subject depicted, into consideration. This is the dilemma then that faces Sartre: How to provide a conception of embodiment that does not emphasise the corporeal such as to conflict with his original ontology, whilst also acknowledging the new ethical 'setting' at issue and allowing phenomenology a foundational position.

Of course, Sartre himself *did* attempt to speculate on how this might be achieved, by invoking a form of embodied expressivism as part of schematising the various senses in which *mauvaise foi* might be discussed. Joseph Catalano argues that Sartre's conviction that we are always in bad faith is true only in a 'weak' sense, namely that we cannot avoid role-playing. When we exit one pre-defined social role, we inevitably enter

¹⁶⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*, 339

¹⁶⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 140. Sartre holds here that an ethical proposition founded in 'exteriority' will necessarily be founded in an ignorance of the body, not only in terms of 'lived' corporeality, but also in terms of its ontological significance for an ethics. Since for him our being-for-others is our surpassed transcendence *and* our body, the role of transcendence in ethics cannot rightly be described if it is philosophically absent.

another one. Catalano also identifies a 'strong' sense of bad faith in Sartre's writings, however, which involves accepting and being complicit with our social roles so that we hide from our fundamental freedom in a more active way. In *Nausea* (1938)¹⁶⁶, writes Catalano, "Roquentin does not, at the end of the novel, return to the same bad faith that he was living in at the beginning of the novel. At first, he was hiding from his freedom, and living a life characterized by a strong sense of bad faith. At the end of the book, he does indeed return to a role, as we all do, but there is a basic difference. Now he is no longer hiding from his freedom"¹⁶⁷. Catalano's identification of a 'strong' notion of bad faith in Sartre's thought seems to imply more of a social dimension to bad faith than the concept is usually credited with. If an individual not only passively accepts their social role but actively identifies with it, then it would seem that they are not just stoically bearing the burden of being inauthentic but willingly buying into a social value (for example the idea that a taxi driver, or a bourgeois person, etc. should think and behave in a certain way) which is, as it were, greater than themselves, that is, which transcends their individual subjectivity¹⁶⁸. In terms of embodiment, then, it seems to me that when bad faith or *mauvaise foi* is invoked in this 'strong' sense in particular, it functions so as to render the 'concrete' aspects of the agent as synchronous with the choices underpinning their actions (though they are inauthentic) as well as the outward socio-political apprehension of those actions by others. On this reading, when an agent takes on the idea that a taxi-driver should think and behave in a certain way, their internal process of reflection, albeit an inauthentic one, will function in reciprocity with those thoughts and behaviours, *as* they are enacted in the world. It would seem reasonable to suggest that this theoretical 'intersection' of embodiment and *mauvaise foi* could well serve as Sartre's reply to an 'individualistic' interpretation of Kant, since the 'concrete' integrity of the agent would seem to be preserved through this

¹⁶⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Nausea* (trans. Robert Baldick 1965) London: Penguin Classics, 2000/*La Nausée* Paris: Gallimard, 1938

¹⁶⁷ Catalano, Joseph. *Good and Bad Faith: Weak and Strong Notions in Perspectives on a Sartrean Ethics* (J. Catalano ed.) London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 1996, 125.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 125

mechanism, and the idea of bodily expressivism (which I have applied so far only to cases of 'bad faith') seems entirely applicable to authentic action as well. Yet, since Sartre, by the time of the *Notebooks*, was still grappling with these unresolved issues, I am forced to conclude that he must have viewed it as unsatisfactory.

Indeed, it would seem there is evidence enough to support the view that Sartre's difficulty in providing a phenomenological means of synchronising the ontological significance of ethically-oriented transcendence and 'concrete' attitudes and behaviours stretched well beyond the *Notebooks*. Paul Crittenden demonstrates¹⁶⁹ that even by the time of the 'Rome Lectures', Sartre was still struggling with this very task. Although he stressed the need for a (now explicitly Marxist) ethics that would function to address concerns "on the street"¹⁷⁰ and "in the home"¹⁷¹, he never fully followed-through with this thread of argument, and Crittenden stresses that this omission is "unhappily"¹⁷² a noticeable feature of Sartre's discussion. Of course, the consequences for a lack of 'concreteness' in Sartre's Marxist ethics *in specific* are best left to close study of the particular qualities of this period in Sartre's development. Nevertheless, an examination of Sartre's difficulties in constructing an ethics beyond his engagement with Kant's views allows us to understand the extent to which a more general "anxiety" was at issue for him in this respect.

I take it that Sartre's inability to articulate this rendering of the 'concrete' agent is again symptomatic of the broader "anxiety" I have already attributed to Sartre across my critique of Baiasu's rendering of both the *clinamen* and the *tessera*; namely, that if the 'terrain' mapped out by Kant proves to be accurate, there will simply be no room for what Sartre would regard as a *genuinely* phenomenological perspective, since Kant's

¹⁶⁹ Crittenden, Paul. *Sartre in Search of an Ethics* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. See in particular: Chapter 6: Towards a Dialectical Ethics, 93-113

¹⁷⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. Sartre. *Determinism and Freedom*, 241

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 241

¹⁷² Crittenden, Paul. *Sartre in Search of an Ethics*, 111

alternative appears sufficient to account for the central reasons one might seek to employ phenomenology in an ethical context.

Despite the rebuttals (or perhaps more apt in the terms of this thesis, *reassurances*) able to be provided in Kant's defence, it would be unfair to hold that Sartre has nothing other than obstructionism in mind in his determination to argue for his particular conception of the ethical agent. At the very least, he provides us with good reason to think that 'embodiment' may be reconsidered for his purpose here, and therefore also re-employed to new effect. To clarify, I made mention earlier of Sartre's envisagement of a 'self-contained' view of transcendence, where the necessary introspective structures are rendered synchronously at the phenomenological and ontological level, without requiring any further intuitive 'splitting' or restructuring in order to mark them out as structures of introspection¹⁷³. Further, these structures are 'synthesised' in the midst of the deliberations necessitated by the demands of one's ethical situations, such that they are made an *implicit* part of the agent's broader presentation¹⁷⁴. Now, if we take together all of these features of Sartre's conception and draw them out a little in spite of his concerns, I take it that we are presented, in effect, with an *ethical* body-for-others. In this form, Sartre's previous injunctions against reducing the body to mere physicality are preserved, while at the same time a new 'aspect' of the ontological conception of the body is given precedence for consideration. If there is to be any tangible potential for 'resolving' Sartre's "anxiety" in relation to his "individualist" critique of Kant, it does not lie in merely showing that they may be rendered compatible through a *defence* of Kant. Rather, the ambitions Sartre has for his *own* ethical perspective, one that would occur entirely within the bounds of the individual without simultaneously positing structures that may, in fact, *contradict* a genuine view of the

¹⁷³ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 35
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 45

¹⁷⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 253

individual as an ethical focal point (as he is concerned Kant's view might) must be shifted away from tentative speculation, and brought forth as truly in *contrast* to Kant.

I now move to Baiausu's view of Sartre's third critique, that Kant's moral system is "authoritarian".

"Authoritarianism" / *Askesis*

Unlike the "abstractedness" and "individualist" critiques so far offered by Sartre, the "authoritarianism" designation is unique, in that it raises the substance of the discussion to the very meta-ethical level I have suggested as having influenced Sartre throughout. Having established Kant's distinction between rules of action, leading to moral maxims (and thus practical principles), and the criterion of morality as expressed by and through the categorical imperative, it may be thought that the categorical imperative escapes any charge that it represents a rigid rule of action, or that it postulates ethical maxims that are *themselves* rigid insofar as they are conceived as having an inherent universality¹⁷⁵. Yet, Sartre remains concerned that it may nevertheless be the case that the categorical imperative, understood as the 'ground' for Kant's moral system in an over-arching sense, results in that system being fixed as a sort of historical monolith, given the emphasis the imperative places on universality and unconditional validity in particular.

Sartre's overall perspective on Kant, therefore, is tinged with this concern, and he in fact contrasts Kantianism *positively* in this respect, holding that "after Kant, morality is set forever in the tenor of reason and the orientation of science...Existentialism does not give itself out to be the end of History, or even as a form of progress. It simply wants to

¹⁷⁵ Baiausu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 38
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 207

give an account of the absolute each man is for himself within the relative"¹⁷⁶. The substance of Sartre's concern is clarified here, in that if Kantianism has in fact *benefited* through being positioned in an historical sense so as to 'monopolise' the possibilities for an ethics, then this does not bode well in Sartre's attempt to mark out his *own* position on the philosophical landscape¹⁷⁷.

In this sense, Sartre may be seen as something of a 'fundamentalist' in his view of the relationship between history and philosophy, since for him all 'true' philosophy ought to aim to *put an end* to History, since this aim will, as we have seen, be oriented by science and set to the tenor of reason. As such, it will discover what is, and therefore also what is possible and what is not, all in a manner proceeding in the spirit of the perpetuity assured by the categorical imperative¹⁷⁸. In Sartre's view, therefore, existentialism is *short of* the necessary philosophical 'equipment' required for it to aspire to such a 'transcendence' of its historical situatedness¹⁷⁹. This is because, according to Sartre, existentialism describes its philosophical view of what is possible and impossible, and what it is, from a vantage-point conditioned by a permanent relation to the 'concrete' person's freedom in creating their projects¹⁸⁰. As such, it turns the *historicised* perspective on possibility and philosophical identity toward *personal* interpretation and possibility. By contrast, Sartre holds, the 'scientific' nature of 'true' philosophy, conditioned by its relation to the *a-historical* qualities of epistemology and thus their ability to be understood as ontic structures of the real, allows for possibility to be properly understood firstly as a 'pure' epistemic concept, requiring a witness to its veracity, or as belonging to certain ontologically-centred beings as their possibility¹⁸¹. It must be understood that on this view, even though an epistemic view is compatible

¹⁷⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 92

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 92

¹⁷⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 92

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 92

¹⁸⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 92

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 92

with assessments of the veracity of possibility as located ontologically within the real, possibility does not *belong* to Being, as such. It may be laid before us to be interpreted (indeed, witnessed) in terms of its epistemic veracity or located in the real and verified in that way, or it may be made *ours* when we take it on as such¹⁸².

Despite the deficiencies he perceives in existentialism in relation to 'true' philosophy, Sartre does evaluate it positively in terms of its attitude toward what might be considered the hallmark of any philosophy given the status of a 'true' philosophical system: The ability to formulate an absolute end¹⁸³. Since existentialism re-values this as a central deficiency, existentialism *itself* is also re-valued by Sartre, at least on this score, in positive antithesis to *all* 'true' philosophy¹⁸⁴. On this reading, all philosophy is to be looked upon with a tinge of regret, as it were, since each philosophical system declares itself as the end of History, insofar as the absolute ends formulated *through* these systems are necessarily *beyond* being conditioned by historicised responses to the questions surrounding possibility, impossibility and philosophical identity, as we have already seen. Therefore, while existentialism is understood by Sartre to fall outside of 'true' philosophy, he also understands it as having avoided the imperative put upon all such philosophy to proclaim an end to History as located on its 'horizon' - the absolute end formulated for, and through it - meaning in turn that it does not fall into the trap of understanding *itself* to be the end of History as a 'self-contained' entity. This would otherwise result in its isolation from precisely the epistemic 'tools' taken to be necessary for it to collapse its specific boundaries and acknowledge the *real* absolute

¹⁸² Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 38
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 216

¹⁸³ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 92

¹⁸⁴ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 38
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

end that should be focused on, namely elevating discourse *above* the futility of living progress through History *as though* this actually constituted such a solution¹⁸⁵.

Sartre also opines, again with an apparent wistfulness, on the lack of support among lay-audiences for attempts by public intellectuals to posit an end to History as their goal, even at what he understands to be the 'superficial' level offered by 'true' (and thus for Sartre, insular) philosophy. This emanates in turn from a more basic psycho-social premise, namely that every human being feels disgust to some degree at the thought of an end of History, since they would prefer to go about self-creation in a manner that is ignorant of any kind of 'horizon', whether this happens to be the thought of their own mortality, or even an 'absolute end' towards which a particular system would have them believe all things might tend¹⁸⁶. As we have seen, Sartre remains tentative, therefore, as to whether a *genuine* end to History, conditioned by a 'scientific' view of epistemic and ontological perspectives on possibility and impossibility as well as philosophical identity, that would collapse the boundaries set in place in order to accommodate the *false* absolute ends of 'true' philosophy, would be desirable or even conceivable against the backdrop of such resistance from the public¹⁸⁷.

As may well be expected, Baiasu is quick to locate the "authoritarian" criteria offered by Sartre amongst the "abstraction" and "individualism" ones before it, as criticisms that are able to be settled by reading Kant with what Baiasu holds is a more accurate interpretation in mind¹⁸⁸. For him, all that needs to be shown is that Kant's ethical 'architecture' is, in fact, no more abstract or individualistic than the ethics Sartre seeks to produce¹⁸⁹. It is simply the case, Baiasu holds, that the various criticisms Sartre levels

¹⁸⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 92

¹⁸⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, 92

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 92

¹⁸⁸ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 40
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

¹⁸⁹ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 40

at three 'pillars' of Kant's system are refutable by examination alone; the categorical imperative is misunderstood where it is painted as a mechanism through which unconditional standards are fed to produce actionable commands for ethical agents, and nor does it try to hide its supposed 'real' interpersonal structure, by masking it as one 'self-contained' within the individual¹⁹⁰. Furthermore, Baiasu maintains as he has throughout that Kant's ethics actually *foreshadows* the one Sartre intends to produce, and that therefore, his criticisms merely delay his having to confront the extent to which this is in fact the case¹⁹¹.

It is to be noted, then, that Baiasu contends that Sartre's third critical criterion of "authoritarianism" in relation to Kant is really a culminating perspective on the first two, in that it offers an over-arching view of the categorical imperative as it is applied to the ethical agent. Building on his distinction between existentialism as incapable of promulgating absolute ends, and 'true' philosophy which claims for itself the status of facilitating an end to History *through* the promulgation of such ends (thus functioning as the main philosophical 'artery' running through all such 'true' philosophies), Sartre now paints the categorical imperative as a fixed law which in fact carves a universal moral path for all ethical agents¹⁹². This rendering of Sartre's view of Kant's "authoritarianism" conforms to Baiasu's attitude towards the others, in that it is indicative of a further "anxiety", this time articulated by, and through, Bloom's third ratio, the *Askēsis*. On this account, in his attempt to escape his "anxiety", the later philosopher "yields up part of his human and imaginative endowment, and he does so in order to separate himself from others, including the precursor, and he does this in his [philosophy] by stationing the [parent-philosophy] as to make that [philosophy] undergo an askēsis too; the

Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

¹⁹⁰ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 39
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

¹⁹¹ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 39
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

¹⁹² Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 40
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

precursor's endowment is also truncated"¹⁹³. Proceeding in this way, Baiasu implores us to understand Sartre's critique as correct to an extent, but disingenuously founded. The 'truncation' taken to be at issue here occurs first with regard to Sartre's denial of the capacity for existentialism to set absolute ends, despite his simultaneously holding this is at the core of any 'true' philosophy¹⁹⁴. Further, and also simultaneously according to Baiasu, Sartre renders Kant's 'systematic' morality as precisely fixing the moral 'destiny' of moral agents, and in so doing, he denies it the deserved degree of clarity to discern what is precisely the most laudable feature of Kant's system - the space it reserves for the autonomy of rational agents¹⁹⁵.

Because of this doubled 'curtailing', argues Baiasu, Sartre is left stranded when interrogating the processes and output of the categorical imperative, between positive concessions to Kant in relation to his own system that deprive us of the chance to set the full 'suite' of systemic possibilities that existentialism could provide, and negative appraisals of Kant, which are, as was the case previously, readily refutable *once* 'correct' interpretational perspectives are adopted. The distinctions Baiasu draws in order to demonstrate the 'symptoms' at issue here are made between Sartre's purported views of several 'layers' of Kant's theory, taken as stemming from the categorical imperative, as we have seen. The first of these is between the categorical imperative as formulating a universal and unconditional obligation for ethical agents, and its subsequent 'unfolding' to reveal rules of action understood as 'commands' to be followed¹⁹⁶. According to Baiasu, Sartre is right to hold that Kant's categorical imperative formulates a universal obligation for all limited rational beings¹⁹⁷. Where he misinterprets Kant,

¹⁹³ Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 15

¹⁹⁴ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 40
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

¹⁹⁵ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 40
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

¹⁹⁶ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 41
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

¹⁹⁷ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 41

though, is that he fails to fully appreciate the difference between the 'cognitive' validity of a maxim as subjected to the imperative, and its 'practical' validity as subject to same¹⁹⁸. For Baiașu, this distinction means that we can differentiate between a *literal* universality for maxims at the 'cognitive' level, and a *restricted* universality at the 'practical' level¹⁹⁹. On this reading, we may conceive of maxims subject to the categorical imperative as applicable to all rational beings, but this does not mean that they will then be *actually applicable* in any and all morally problematic contexts, and nor will they carry the moral 'weight' of applicability to all ethical agents actually *in situ*. Therefore, a maxim formulated to guard against the improper use of public funds, for instance, will not carry a universal obligation that it be applied in all subsequent 'sites' of moral contention in future. Instead, understood at the level of 'practical' validity, it will apply, and will carry the universal moral 'weight' such that it *ought* to apply, in any and all cases where the moral 'shape' of the situation fits that of the maxim formulated as appropriate to it²⁰⁰. By contrast, rules of action are even more heavily 'regulated' on Baiașu's reading, since they take into account the capabilities and other relevant features of the 'concrete' agent, meaning that they cannot be properly interpreted as mere 'commands' for action as Baiașu holds Sartre does²⁰¹. Ultimately then, Sartre's criticisms of the categorical imperative as a universal and unconditional obligation, and then as a dispensary of moral 'commands', come to be understood by Baiașu as an incorrect subsumption of morally valid maxims and rules of action, into the categorical imperative *itself*²⁰². While the imperative is, in and of itself, supposed to apply for *all* rational beings in *all* morally contentious situations, in *both* the 'cognitive' and 'practical'

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¹⁹⁸ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 41
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

¹⁹⁹ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 41
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

²⁰⁰ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 691

²⁰¹ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 41
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

²⁰² Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 41
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contexts, the maxims and rules of actions *subject* to it do not have as intrinsic to them the same structural solidity²⁰³.

The next distinction Baiasu draws is between the categorical imperative understood as imposing a universal and unconditional purpose that agents *must* follow, as against this purpose being understood as having been designed in this way so as to persist whatever an agent *chooses* to do in spite of its presence²⁰⁴. Baiasu begins by arguing that Sartre is *right* to hold that Kant's position imposes both unconditionality and universality, but not simply in order to impose a kind of singular ethical pre-destiny upon an ethical agent. After all, unconditionality and universality precede the purpose of *any* practical principle, and this refers us ultimately to the very purpose (or object) of pure practical reason *itself*²⁰⁵. Therefore, Baiasu contends, Kant's motivation in positioning the categorical imperative to make this 'imposition' is simply an acknowledgement of the reciprocal relationship that will need to obtain if practical principles are to derive their moral 'weight' from unconditional universality, and practical reason itself is to have these as its object, which will then allow it to act in turn as the 'ground' for the formulation of subsequent practical principles²⁰⁶. In turn, the effect of having unconditional universality as the sole object of pure practical reason is that this object is 'translated' into the ancient universal of the good. This universality could not obtain if the object were, say, the presence of pleasure in the absence of pain, since this depends entirely on the subjective constitution of the 'concrete' person²⁰⁷. Again, therefore, a reciprocal perspective is at issue on Baiasu's reading, in that the good could not attain to

²⁰³ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

²⁰⁴ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 277

²⁰⁵ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
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²⁰⁶ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²⁰⁷ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
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the status of pure practical reason's object, were it not for the 'calibration' of practical reason *toward* this object as its universal and unconditional end, and the turning of practical reason toward this end would not take place if the good *itself* was in some sense non-universal or conditional²⁰⁸. As far as Baiașu is concerned, then, Sartre's reading of the categorical imperative in this case, is broadly correct, but misdirected, since it does not impose unconditional universal requirements for how one ought to live. Rather it provides for a mechanism that will create itself with practical reason, and thus the good, as its object, thereby providing the grounds for an ethical agent to live their situation in pursuit of the ends contained in practical principles formulated by and through this very same mechanism, meaning that these principles themselves converge ultimately upon a pursuit of the same good²⁰⁹.

Naturally, this brings us to the question of the origin of the good, and for Kant, this origin is articulated through an expression of the moral law²¹⁰. Since the moral law is an expression of the necessary condition for the moral goodness of a principle, and therefore also its validity for use in a moral context, the very notion of the good is to be defined starting with the moral law, just as the object of pure practical reason was traceable to the good itself. Earlier, I made mention of the way in which Kant's positing of 'the good' as the object of practical reason is evocative of ancient philosophical positions. Baiașu distinguishes Kant here, though, in arguing that the ancient philosophers defined the good *first* and *then* the moral law, having vested the good with the value of supreme (and/or eternal) happiness, goodness or perfection - perhaps even all of these in combination²¹¹. Since placing this value in sources such as these was meant to provide for a mutuality, whereby the principles *derived* from this source of

²⁰⁸ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²⁰⁹ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²¹⁰ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 164

²¹¹ Baiașu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 42
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

value would serve as practical principles such that it would be constituted *as* the agent acted, the origin of the good is placed in a position too closely connected with the vagaries of the ethical agent's subjective attachment *to* the sources, especially if these sources of value are to be contained ultimately in a centralised 'value nexus' such as the will of an almighty God²¹². This is a case of confusion, Kant argues, between the good as a principle of virtue and the pleasant, as a principle of happiness²¹³. As was the case with his previous reading of the categorical imperative's unconditional universality as necessary in order that it may persist *over and above* the complexity of human existence rather than *controlling* it, then, Baiasu's claim here is that the same conditions create the necessary 'environs' for pure practical reason to take the good as its sole object. In providing in this way for the possibility of the creation of practical principles with the very same object, Kant does not *limit* the possible actions open to the agent to undertake; rather he simply ensures that if an agent seeks to formulate such practical principles, they will have as intrinsic to them the object of the good as a 'principle of virtue', as it were. A key difference here, then, is made between principles preceding actions with a certain *object* in view, and principles preceding actions with a certain *objective* that must be attained to²¹⁴.

The *nature* of Kant's envisagement of the good is as important for his purposes as its *origin* has so far been. Kant resists the notion of a synonymy between happiness and virtue, holding that these are relatively independent; happiness does not automatically entail virtue, and vice-versa²¹⁵. Instead, the two contribute to a whole, or perfect good - the *summum bonum*²¹⁶. With its nature thereby filled-out, Baiasu names it explicitly as the universal and unconditional purpose that is posited by the categorical imperative,

²¹² Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 42
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²¹³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 231

²¹⁴ Ibid. 232

²¹⁵ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 232

²¹⁶ Ibid. 232

and thus as what is attacked by Sartre is in his "authoritarian" critique of Kant²¹⁷. Again, Baiasu uses this to refute Sartre's critique, since the good at issue is taken to have been revealed not as one that serves as a pre-determined, ethical *telos* with a particular actionable outcome to which all ethical agents must attain, but rather a 'perfect' good, whose refusal of a simple mutual entailment for virtue and happiness ensures an undifferentiated status of goodness, such that the diverse possibilities taken on by ethical agents as they formulate practical principles in pursuit of these ends may all attain to this *same* goodness, rather than their being a *single* course of action alone which is *deemed* good. On Baiasu's reading, Sartre fails to distinguish the latter interpretation from the former²¹⁸.

The central problem facing Kant in defining the nature and origin of the good is the very antimony we have just seen that he creates through attempting to conceive of the *summum bonum* as a unitary purpose constituting these two goals of virtue and happiness, respectively²¹⁹. Given that one will not admit immediately of the other, we cannot coherently conceive of realising the aspirations contained in the *summum bonum* by attempting to 'reach' it directly from either of the two divergent paths²²⁰. As such, the action which has happiness as its end cannot be considered moral on Kant's terms; this action will be merely pleasant²²¹, and a moral action is not necessarily pleasant as has already been shown to be the case, since in a moral action one is supposed to be concerned primarily with how 'well-formed' a maxim is (that is, whether it has been correctly subjected to the correct test of the categorical imperative, whether

²¹⁷ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 42
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²¹⁸ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 42
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²¹⁹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 231

²²⁰ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 42
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²²¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 232

it has been correctly applied and so on), and *not* the 'substance' of the maxim, which in this case refers to the happiness anticipated by, and through, its being enacted²²².

The way in which Kant seeks to resolve this antimony is through the notion that the *summum bonum*, conceived of as the supreme end of a will appropriately conditioned by the moral law, may be realised if the relationship between happiness and virtue is understood as one unitary purpose driven by causality²²³. That is to say, Kant considers that virtue *may lead* to happiness, but that at the same time, the perfectness of the *summum bonum* cannot be guaranteed in a 'concrete' sense. It is, however held out as a purposive culmination of sorts, to be realised to the limited extent possible from the perspective of the rational agent²²⁴. In a partial concession to the broad thrust of Sartre's criticism that Kant's moral system lays out an overly-rigid 'ethical destiny' for ethical agents to then have to live out, Baiasu acknowledges that Kant may be interpreted as assuming that there *actually is* a categorical imperative or a moral law, and that a person's will may thuswise be determined by the apparent stricture of his 'moral ontology'²²⁵. Kant's reply is that he is, in fact, able to reveal these structures as existing in an *a priori* context and therefore not devised, but defined, by him²²⁶. In particular, Kant begins by defining the "keystone"²²⁷ of a system of pure practical reason - that freedom is "real"²²⁸ - which he claims will unveil in turn the *idea* of freedom, with this unveiling itself facilitated by the moral law²²⁹. If we therefore trace each connecting element of the Kantian architectonic back to the source, so to speak, we find that proving the existence of the moral law is the ground for these subsequent 'discoveries', such that this aim is itself the *philosophical* end Kant pursues through *The Critique of Practical*

²²² Ibid. 232

²²³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 189

²²⁴ Ibid. 232

²²⁵ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 42
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²²⁶ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 139

²²⁷ Ibid. 139

²²⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 139

²²⁹ Ibid. 139

Reason. Yet, Baiasu does not allow Kant the final say over Sartre, and indeed, he here acknowledges a more distilled version of Sartre's criticism. That is, that the existence of the moral law is understood by Kant to be demonstrated through a "fact of reason"²³⁰, which in turn represents "consciousness of this fundamental law [i.e. the moral law]", which "one cannot reason...out from antecedent data of reason...because it instead forces itself upon as a synthetic *a priori* proposition that is not based on any intuition"²³¹. This declaration from Kant forms the essential underpinnings of Sartre's criticism, since the apparent "authoritarianism" at issue here would seem to stem from the fact that Kant not only posits a universal and unconditional purpose at the base of his ethics, but then moves to define and justify its reality through the 'fact' of an *a priori* proposition which is itself based on a datum that cannot be justified through the usual assurances provided through intuition, such that its authority may be thought to have seemingly been 'gifted' to it²³². Yet, the fact of reason is not only responsible, on Kant's account, for proving the existence of the categorical imperative, but also the practical 'weight' of pure reason, and therefore its licence to command action, purely on the basis of the imperatives themselves²³³.

Baiasu acknowledges that this schematic requires an agent to make an implicit presumption of the validity of the categorical imperative. Certainly, it is possible to conceive of the process of questioning the ends of one's actions in order to determine how one ought to act, as a process of transcendence that does not necessarily employ an explicitly Kantian 'vocabulary', as we saw with Sartre's various attempts to re-figure ethical introspection as based on a genuinely inter-subjective schema and thus the status and *form* of the 'concrete' ethical agent. Yet, even if we attempt to circumvent Kant in this way, Baiasu argues, we must still make some sort of attempt to adopt a

²³⁰ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 139

²³¹ Ibid. 164

²³² Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 42
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²³³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*, 165

moral agent's ethical perspective - to step into their shoes as it were. When we do this, we assume that it is possible to determine which actions and principles of action are right and ought to be adopted and followed, and this means that we take it on as a morally valid principle; a morally valid principle or rule of action is to be valid for *all*, implying that both the 'concrete' agent *in situ* and all rational agents in general, should be able to firstly will it, and then follow it²³⁴. Of course, for Baiasu, this merely brings us full-circle, and whether we approve of the Kantian architectonic or not, we are confronted with precisely the condition *imposed by* the categorical imperative²³⁵.

In this way, Baiasu is able to support a view for the categorical imperative as *not* having been dogmatically imposed in support of the revealing of the moral law, since this perspective can be arrived at, even when we attempt to take another argumentative 'route', as it were²³⁶. This means that Baiasu accepts in turn that we may challenge the argument being put forward, and therefore Kant's positing of the universal and unconditional purpose as contained in the *summum bonum* for all rational agents in general²³⁷. Yet, Baiasu holds that in order for us to *conceive* of this as an argument that we might attempt to address from a different 'route', we must also hold that there is a 'right' and 'wrong' position to be taken on the matter, and insofar as we begin from this position, we have already revealed ourselves as rational agents, thus supporting what is possibly *the* key element of a Kantian perspective, and in Baiasu's mind, strengthening Kant's claim for the other elements in turn.

²³⁴ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²³⁵ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²³⁶ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

²³⁷ Baiasu, Sorin. *The Anxiety of Influence: Sartre's Search for an Ethics and Kant's Moral Theory*, 43
Kant and Sartre: Rediscovering Critical Ethics, 292

For the moment, I shall forego an immediate adjudication on Baiasu's position on Sartre's "anxiety", because this first requires a perspective on his position regarding the 'special' nature of the third "authoritarian" criterion, insofar as it comprises a critique of Kant's ethical 'technique' as a whole.

While Baiasu is of course justified in viewing the "authoritarianism" criteria offered by Sartre as one addressing Kant's ethical system in general, he understands it as simply a mirror-image, built alongside the criticisms Sartre has offered previously, and therefore as addressable in terms of a culmination. If we rejected the "abstract" and "individualistic" criteria, Baiasu argues, then surely we must reject all three criteria presented as a whole. Yet, this is to misunderstand Sartre's argument; he does not hold that his view of Kantian ethics as "authoritarian" is a distillation of the other two criticisms combined with a third. Instead, this criterion serves as a distillation of the ethical 'tone' of the other two criticisms, raised to a new height in the third. In relation to the abstract and "individualistic" criteria, I have attempted to show that Sartre's "anxiety" does not stem merely from an attempt to differentiate himself from a philosophy he does not wish to be seen to support, but instead from a concern that even in locating himself within the relative philosophical 'privacy' of his own Existentialist and phenomenological perspectives, it may simply be the case that certain inescapable meta-ethical obligations must be pursued, whether it be Kant, Sartre himself, or indeed any other ethical philosopher. Now, if we look to the "authoritarianism" criteria, what we are presented with is essentially a condensed version of this essential concern; the ethical agent is moved to act morally in accordance with a universal and unconditional purpose 'up ahead' of them, and in many respects this is representative of the notion that this path, though regrettably constrictive, may be all there is for us to tread, so to speak. That is not to say that the "authoritarianism" criteria does not stand on its own as a legitimate criticism, since as we have seen, even Baiasu acknowledges that legitimate arguments can be made for a questioning of one's

purposes and ends *outside* of the 'ethical vocabulary' that is necessarily imported when we invoke the categorical imperative, in particular. In this sense, the "authoritarianism" criterion put forward by Sartre is conceived neither in isolation from his previous criticisms nor as entirely dependent upon them, but is instead a 'self-contained' criticism, conceived in the same 'spirit' as the rest, and because of its over-arching perspective, it is finally brought into contact with the broader narrative I have espoused for Sartre's "anxiety" all along, namely, that it is more meta-ethical than parochial in its attitude to Kant's influence.

If we return to the 'substance' of Baiasu's accusation of "anxiety" against Sartre in the context of Kant's "authoritarianism", having now examined his view of Sartre's 'holistic' methodology in the case of this criterion, we find that his insistence on viewing the third criterion as a culmination of the other two remains problematic. Just as was the case with the previous criteria, Baiasu claims that Sartre attempts to 'escape' the influence of Kant's project on his own plans for an ethics in undertaking the *askesis*, and that this is verifiable through the way in which it can be shown that even if we approach the issues involved in a different fashion, we are eventually confronted with precisely the position Kant advocates. Yet, it seems to me that this is just as plausible a set of 'evidence' for the meta-ethical "anxiety" I have advanced in contrast to Baiasu. After all, if it is in fact the case that the 'force' of something like the categorical imperative is an undeniably persistent presence in any discussion of transcendence of one's position in order to take stock of the chosen ends underpinning their actions, then surely this is an indication of the 'state of play' with respect to constructing an ethics in general, rather than an indication of a decisive 'victory' for a Kantian perspective over that of Sartre's view. This being the case, we ought also to reconsider Sartre's purported "anxiety of influence" in relation to Kant, as being less about a philosophical prejudice from the former philosopher against the latter, and more about what Kant's philosophy might *represent* for the study of ethics, were his position taken to have withstood opposing criticisms.

While it is certainly true that Sartre's concerns about the meta-ethical bounds one must confront when seeking to formulate an ethics is revealed in sharp relief when considered in the context of his philosophical attitude toward Kant, we can also discern similar concerns arising from Sartre's other works, even where Kant himself does not figure explicitly. In Sartre's literature, literary criticism, political essays and so on, the central issues that Baiasu identifies and I have expanded upon - that any attempt to philosophise about ethics may be judged in relation to certain criteria (in this case, that any such attempt not be too abstract, give insufficient weight to the phenomenal ethical agent, or restrict choice and possibility for agents) - remain pertinent. I will now preview a means of addressing Sartre's ethical "anxieties", whereby they persist beyond his explicit engagement with the intellectual figure of Kant as we have witnessed through the *Notebooks*, but retain remnants of that contest nonetheless.

"Abstractedness" in Anti-Semite and Jew

Just two years prior to the publication of the *Notebooks*, Sartre had already begun to grapple with the difficulties posed by the potential for the spectre of abstractedness in discussing ethics. In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre is confronted by the possibility that idealism taken to extremes may actually equate with an ethics *without* ethical content as it were. Here, Sartre defines authenticity as "having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks which it involves"²³⁸. Of course, this definition evokes Sartre's criticism of Kant that an ethics with no real 'concrete' definitions underpinning the terms that define an ethical position, such as definitions of 'authenticity', 'risk', 'responsibility' and so on, risks floating into the philosophical ether, as it were, being both unreachable for those seeking to employ it in a 'concrete' fashion,

²³⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew* (George J. Becker trans.) New York: Schocken, 1948, 90/*Réflexions sur la Question Juive* Paris: Paul Morihien, 1946

and then unusable even for those who might hypothetically have attempted to employ it²³⁹. One could hypothetically envisage, for example, a mass-murderer with a true and lucid consciousness of their situation as they went about slaughtering innocent persons, having later taken on the risks and responsibilities of their crime in later confessing it to the authorities, for instance; it would seem to be the case that the mass-murderer would constitute an *authentic* subject based on this definition²⁴⁰. Now, Sartre quickly realised this major difficulty in his initial definition for an engaged authenticity, and this played a crucial role in spurring him to draft the *Notebooks* in the first instance²⁴¹. Yet, as we already know, Sartre would therein reconstitute this dilemma, albeit with Kant as his foil this time around. The crucial difference in the case of *Anti-Semite and Jew*, however, is that Sartre's struggle as to how he might put forward a 'concrete' ethics is not played out against a perceived abstractedness in a philosophical competitor such as Kant, but against a definitional framework that is, or at least is understood by him to be, 'self-contained', and therefore arising within the bounds of his own existentialism. If we now bring together Sartre's self-perceived lack of success in combating abstractedness as we have witnessed it in the *Notebooks*, combined with a similar sense of definitional failure in *Anti-Semite and Jew* as a spur to the latter text, then we are faced with the disconcerting prospect of non-resolution, despite the change in tactics from a purely existentialist perspective to the explicit employment of Kantian meta-ethics as a means of 'pushing off' from a predecessor in order to gain the necessary leverage required to construct an ethics. Yet, while we cannot hope to definitively *resolve* the "anxiety" expressed by Sartre in *Anti-Semite and Jew* any more than we could have for that found in the *Notebooks*, I take it that we have at least shown it possible to move beyond Sartre's apparent inertia across both texts. As such, there would seem to be an opening presented to us here to engage with two 'sides' of Sartre's "anxiety", and in so doing to provide for a reconsideration of both as a kind of continuum of perspective, moving

²³⁹ Anderson, Thomas. *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 55

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 55

²⁴¹ Anderson, Thomas. *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 55

from a concern about the limits of ethical possibility as contained in existentialism, to a much broader and deeper-running meta-ethical concern.

While it is indeed the case that in *Anti-Semite and Jew* Sartre advocates for a view of authenticity that is beyond the 'concrete' realm of socio-political change insofar as one could well attempt to claim the mantle of authenticity put forward in the text *despite* the particulars of their political views²⁴², we would be mistaken in taking the view that Sartre's apparent inability to articulate a more substantive view is due purely to a disconcertedness on his part with respect to where this would position him in relation to those other thinkers' on the oppression of particular peoples, particularly as manifested through Anti-Semitism. Rather, Sartre's seeming "anxiousness" not to fall into the pitfalls of abstractedness in defining authenticity in opposition to human relations predicated on inauthentic conduct undertaken in *mauvaise foi* and thus providing an environment conducive to *oppressive* relations, is driven by an inability to confidently wield the existentialist ethical 'machinery' available to him at this point in his career. If we look, for instance, to Albert Memmi's criticism of the work, Sartre is held to have defined Jewishness "negatively"²⁴³, insofar as Memmi understood Sartre to have moved discussion of Anti-Semitism as it occurs *in situ* from the level of 'concrete' socio-political oppression, to the explicit claim that the nature and form of Anti-Semitism is such that the Jewish people as a whole actually *constitute* an abstracted, ahistorical community, whose 'concreteness' they will have to reclaim piece by piece in order to have any kind of enfranchisement²⁴⁴. Understandably, Memmi remained sceptical about making an ethical claim for Jewish emancipation that was doubly abstracted, first in its invocation of 'ahistorical-ness' as the defining difficulty facing the Jewish people, and then its claim that this difficulty is demonstrated in experience

²⁴² Ibid. 55

²⁴³ Memmi, Albert. *The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon* "Massachusetts Review" (Winter 1973): 9-39

²⁴⁴ Haddour, Azzedine. *Sartre and Fanon: On Negritude and Political Participation in Sartre today: A centenary celebration* (eds., Adrian van den Hoven, Andrew N. Leak) (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005, 296

through a Jewish person's membership of an *actual* abstract 'community'. Indeed, the 'community' invoked here by Sartre would appear to share much in common with the ethereal universal community derided by Sartre in the *Notebooks* as a Kantian flaw. Yet, it does not seem likely that Sartre's strategy in carrying out his discussion at this level is grounded in a desire to shirk the need for 'concrete' analysis. After all, the accompanying possibilities Sartre foresees *in light* of this recognition of a purported exclusion of Jewish identity from the socio-political institutions defined within 'history' recorded and understood from the perspective of oppressive ideology, *are* of a 'concrete' kind, even if the motifs used by Sartre to sketch-out Anti-Semitism's exclusionary effects are not.

This commitment to a space for the Jewish people to act out a resistance *as* 'concrete' ethical agents is demonstrated by Sartre's envisaged 'paths' for Jews who act in accord with his initial definition of authenticity, thereby deviating from Memmi's accusation of a purely negative view of Jewish identity. The first of these 'paths' is for the authentic Jew to assert his or her identity *as part* of the French nation, but in such a way as to avoid a complete subsumption of the customs and beliefs that have hitherto constituted the more *abstracted* Jewish identity Sartre now attempts to offer a way out of, into an identity conditioned by the politics (in Sartre's own historical context) of French nationalism and thus the politics of assimilation²⁴⁵. It seems clear enough that this first 'path' does not constitute merely an abstract theory of identity politics, since it can be located in the context of what remains an ongoing debate, with 'concrete' actions undertaken in the context of both representational politics, as well as 'grass-roots' activism on both sides of this debate. Perhaps even more evocative of current-day politics is Sartre's second offering of a path for authentic Jewish identity, that of campaigning to found an autonomous Jewish state. Of course, the founding of the State of Israel only a short time after Sartre composed the work merely confirms the extent to

²⁴⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 65-66

which the second of Sartre's 'paths' was immersed in precisely the kind of 'concreteness' that he felt his definition of authenticity lacked, spurring him to turn to Kant in order to better engage with a 'system of doing'²⁴⁶. Indeed, the apparent solidity of the picture of authenticity given in *Anti-Semite and Jew* (once the initial definition is 'unfolded' to reveal the two paths of action) was endorsed by the response to his work from those theorists inspired by the possibilities offered therein. To return to Memmi, he was inspired to investigate the particular Existentialist-Zionism offered by Sartre, despite the fact that he renounced certain of its features pertaining to the original 'negative' definition of authenticity, as we have seen. Even Frantz Fanon, who took a decidedly different trajectory to the one both Sartre and Memmi envisaged (to varying degrees) by rejecting Zionism and suggesting a place for Jewish people among a French national identity that respected Jewish custom, while at the same time denying the right of French Jewish citizens to engage in religious practice that over-stepped the bounds of the French nationalist context they found themselves located in, was inspired by the second 'path' put forward by Sartre²⁴⁷.

It may be thought that the ability of authors with an inherently political (and therefore in Sartre's terms, 'concrete') vision for their work to carry Sartre's vision to its fruition in various ways would constitute sufficient reason to pause before immediately moving from the 'abstract' definition of authenticity in *Anti-Semite and Jew* to one that encompasses a broader range of possibilities for conceiving of the ethical agent in the *Notebooks*, as Sartre ultimately did. Yet, even if we accept fully Sartre's concerns about the seeming vacuousness of his account of authenticity at that particular point in the development of his existentialism, it seems to me that we can preserve the important political and ethical features at issue without having to rely on the inter-subjective participation of Sartre's readership to give it greater ethical 'clout'. Previously, I

²⁴⁶ Anderson, Thomas. *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 55

²⁴⁷ Haddour, Azzedine. *Sartre and Fanon: On Negritude and Political Participation*, 296

suggested that we might overcome Baiausu's accusation that Sartre's critique of Kant's 'abstractedness' represents a *clinamen*, by looking beyond the 'outer layer' of his "anxiety" represented by a fear of similarity with Kant alone, and instead questioning why it was that he chose to soften points of genuine differentiation from Kant, and to consider how we might best draw out these foundational ideas. Now, what we see here is the related, but distinct notion of considering one's work to be too 'abstract' *not* on the basis that this would reveal an affinity with a thinker whose ideas one finds too abstract for their purposes, but rather that one's *own* philosophical perspective, when filtered through the 'machinery' offered by a particular position (in this case existentialism) might appear much less substantial than intended. It seems to me, therefore, that adopting a similar approach to that employed against Sartre's specifically Kantian "anxiety" would allow us to address both the initial 'internal' concerns Sartre had with respect to existentialism's ability to give full scope to his view of authenticity (particularly in a political context) and then the concerns he encountered, as we have seen, when attempting to address these concerns with recourse to an 'external' ethical source - in this case, Kant.

Returning to Sartre's criteria for authentic action, it must be remembered that the specific political context provided in *Anti-Semite and Jew* can be properly understood as interchangeable in its intended scope. By this I mean that although the text is designed to address existential authenticity as it might apply in the case of Jewish identity, it also sits alongside the development of Sartre's existentialism and his politics *in general*, such that it may readily be transported across to the broader context explored in the *Notebooks*, while remaining open to the implications of the contributions of Memmi, Fanon and others. To demonstrate, we may invoke the concept of "situation" as it appears here, recalling that this is what Sartre's definition requires "a true and lucid consciousness" of, in order that we might assume the "risks and responsibilities" involved. Now, if we first re-value "situation" as a kind of flexible outline into which the

phenomenal content of a socio-political context may be added, rather than the potentially over-generic marker it may at first seem to be, then we may introduce the dual 'path' narrative that Sartre has sketched out for us. Proceeding in this way, we are in effect provided with a much more robust definition that is dynamic in its scope and effect, since in order to have a true and lucid consciousness of the "situation" entailed by a 'concrete' support for Zionism and thus the State of Israel, or alternatively for the assimilation of Jewish identity into the French national identity, will require an intimate knowledge of each of these contexts, that will in turn require varied ethical judgement across a spectrum of possibility, beyond that entailed by the previous example of the mass-murderer. Whereas the mass-murderer's lucidity of consciousness would seem to be synonymous with mere self-awareness and possibly to some extent, self-reflection, the 'plugging-in' of a highly particular political "situation" to this set of criteria also requires that a certain attitude *toward* it be taken up by the agent, which will necessarily involve deliberation and reflection on their political positions, weighed against their general ethical attitude toward the various actions that may be entailed by them, thereby invoking the "risk and responsibility" criteria. If we look once more to the account given in the *Notebooks*, we are presented with a very similar call for the ethical agent to be understood as immersed and acting within their 'concrete' context, although on this occasion, "situation" is rendered in such a way that the general flexibility I have just suggested could be *added* to *Anti-Semite and Jew* is already present, without the need to posit particular political contexts. Nevertheless, the contention remains that Sartre's "anxiety" with respect to the possible 'abstractedness' he perceived in his account of authenticity as it appears in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, which then led him to attempt to infuse engaged existentialism with a Kantian aspect that was itself never realisable to his full satisfaction, may not have been as necessary a part of his search for an ethics as Sartre appeared to hold.

In terms of how we might re-value Sartre's transition from *Anti-Semite and Jew* to the *Notebooks* as a genuine *development* in his presentation of an ethico-political framework rather than as a kind of rear-guard action in response to failure (as Sartre himself regarded it), it seems to me that if Sartre's initial definition of authentic or 'concrete' action in *Anti-Semite and Jew* can be shown to function effectively when properly considered in light of the political contexts which it is designed to address, then the account pursued in the *Notebooks* may rightly be understood as both a new perspective *on* the same basic issues, as well as a continuation of Sartre's discussion *of* those issues. This is in sharp contrast to the notion of two separate projects, united only by the thread of Sartre's 'failure' to establish a non-abstract ethical framework, and given that this is the case, asserting the 'self-contained' merit of the texts, as well as positioning them on a progressive 'continuum' of thought would seem the best way to resolve Sartre's "anxiety" in this instance.

"Individualism" in What is Literature?

If we now proceed similarly in locating examples of the difficulties Sartre faced in giving an account of inter-subjectivity as part of constructing an ethics, we find that the 'individualism' criteria and Sartre's "anxiety" in relation to it, is just as present in his works where Kant is not explicitly discussed as we have seen to be the case with the 'abstractedness' claim. In *What is Literature?*, for example, Sartre struggles with attempting to make clear his distinction between *inter*-subjectivity (which Sartre considers to be the truly 'authentic' grounds for ethically-oriented interrelations) and *intra*-subjectivity (which Sartre considers to be an instance of *mauvaise foi*, a concealment of a reflexive relationship with various aspects of one's *own* subjectivity as if it in fact constituted an inter-subjective relationship). In the case of this text, produced, as we have seen with *Anti-Semite and Jew*, around the same time as the *Notebooks*, there remains a preoccupation for Sartre with 'authentic' action understood

as being at once the precondition for, and the product of, such inter-subjectivity. On this occasion, though, Sartre's discussion is framed explicitly in terms of the literary-aesthetic relationship between the writer's subjectivity imbued with their authorial intentionality (necessarily taking into account their critical perspective on their own work as well as their readership), and of course the readers *themselves*, who necessarily bring to this relationship *their* creative subjectivity, providing for a 'mirrored' critical perspective on the writer's work. In so doing, they undertake a speculative 'projection' as to how the writer might view them as readers in turn²⁴⁸. Having set in place a skeletal outline of a relationship entailing two separate instances of *intra*-subjectivity (the writer set against an 'image' of their reading public, the reader set against the writer's 'public image') joined in ambiguity by a genuine *inter*-subjectivity between the reader and the writer as lived vicariously through the literary object, it remains for Sartre to imbue it with a socio-political context and force. So far, we have witnessed two of these attempts; the *Notebooks* present subjectivity and authentic action as enmeshed in a 'generalised' ethical ontology designed as a counter-weight to the initial sketching-out that took place in *Being and Nothingness*, whereas *Anti-Semite and Jew* seeks to specify a highly contentious political context. It may be said that in the case of *What is Literature?* that a kind of middle path is attempted, in that although the context here is understood as initially aesthetical, it develops an intrinsic ethical possibility when understood as a metaphor that positions art as necessary for life - in particular, a *considered* existence.

According to Sartre, when the artist (referring in this context to a writer especially, though not necessarily) undertakes to create, they instantiate not only the worldly 'object' associated with their craft and now made present for their own particular purpose - for example, a writer's typed manuscript, an illustrator's sketches, a

²⁴⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *What is Literature?* (trans. Bernard Frechtman) London: Methuen, 1950/ *Qu'est-ce la Littérature?* in *Situations, II* Paris: Gallimard, 1948, 63

songwriter's taped demo recordings - but also a microcosm, a world in which the creative substance of the work dwells, thereby sustaining its artistic value beyond its worldly 'incarnation' alone²⁴⁹. The lives of the characters depicted in a novel, for instance, may continue to 'exist' for us long after we have finished reading it; indeed, we may even do so with the imagined sense that their situations continue to unfold, even when we no longer 'perceive' them by reading of them. Sartre holds, therefore, that our position as the begetter of such worlds, or as the sustaining power responsible for their enduring qualities, is imbued with purpose and value. We are thereby made *essential* to these worlds, and this feeling of essentialness is what constitutes aesthetically-driven joy. Insofar as we exist in the 'art-scape' in our capacity as creators or spectators (with one role intermingling with aspects of the other) we are insulated from experiencing our existence as a mere contingency. Our existence becomes the necessary foundation and 'first cause' of the imaginary universe at issue²⁵⁰. When one considers that this aesthetic joy represents a kind of ideal analogue for the position sought after by the ethical agent posited by Sartre in the *Notebooks* as they shift from the world currently punctuated by fractured relationships, sadomasochistic implementations of sexuality, toward a 'redeemed' existence attended by human fulfilment and love²⁵¹, it seems obvious enough that artistic creativity represents an act of transcendence. The artist posits themselves as the 'centre' of the particular microcosm at issue, placing them in a position of necessity and therefore positioning them as the driver of possibility and as being in the ideal situation to take up those possibilities²⁵². In undertaking this initial transcendence, the artist further 'divides' themselves by seeking to commune and collaborate with the reader's subjectivity in sketching out a hypothetical situation where the ethically-informed world they envision may be understood as one that may be taken up by the readership with a view to applying to the 'real world', whether as a cautionary

²⁴⁹ Ibid. 65

²⁵⁰ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *What is Literature?*, 65

²⁵¹ Anderson, Thomas. *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 81

²⁵² Sartre, Jean-Paul. *What is Literature?*, 65

tale, forewarning against a certain course of action or simply as a means to take stock of the current ethical quandaries facing humankind²⁵³. Similarly, the spectator acknowledges the artist as the begetter of their imaginary universe, but also simultaneously takes account of the 'concrete' applicability of the ethical views developed therein; if a sense of verisimilitude is lacking, any claim the artist has to having imbued their work with value may be voided²⁵⁴.

Although *What is Literature?* raises the fascinating possibility that the world of art, most prominently conceived of here as that of literature, may serve as both a metaphor for the role of the agent and inter-subjectivity in an ethical ontology closely mirroring that of the *Notebooks*, as well as operating in its own right as a guide to the ethical role of the literary object, along with that of the writer and the reader, Sartre is faced with the same difficulties we have surveyed in the *Notebooks* themselves. That is, how to account for the role of *both intra-subjectivity and inter-subjectivity* in matters of ethics, thereby giving full scope to the ontic structures underpinning transcendence, whilst simultaneously preserving the 'concrete' experience of transcendence as occurring within the bounds of an inherently *personal* (that is un-abstracted) conception of the ethical agent. Of course, these difficulties, insofar as they are made manifest in *What is Literature?*, do not occur in the context of a direct contest with Kant. Indeed, as we saw with *Anti-Semite and Jew*, the perspective put is relatively 'self-contained', meaning in this case that it occurs within Sartre's own socio-politically inflected view of aesthetics, without the same need to position a philosophical figure (such as Kant) as a direct argumentative foil. Nevertheless, the same "anxiety" as to the possibility that the 'ethical vocabulary' available to him may not suffice to provide the kind of schematic of subjectivity he was searching for, remains palpable, given that much of the philosophical 'architecture' at issue in *What is Literature?* would ultimately be pronounced as

²⁵³ Anderson, Thomas. *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 57

²⁵⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *What is Literature?*, 65

insufficient to furnish an ethics by Sartre, since the two texts were essentially to be held to account as a single entity when he abandoned the central project of a 'redemptive' ontology after the *Notebooks* were completed²⁵⁵. It must be remembered that *What is Literature?* was published virtually simultaneously alongside the writing of the *Notebooks*, and as such, the two texts represent what may be understood as not so much a progression of thought, but rather a re-investment of the central concepts at issue with a new purpose, in the service of the ethical implications of aesthetics. As such, any insight that we might have gained as to how to address its shortcomings by looking back to Sartre's personal perspective on the transition from *Anti-Semite and Jew* to the *Notebooks* is not immediately applicable here; these two texts do not resemble a continuation of 'failure' in spite of renewed effort when placed in comparison. Rather, they spring from the same basic authorial intent. Further, we cannot provide a 'resolution' for Sartre's "anxiety", as we attempted with the *Notebooks* and *Anti-Semite and Jew*, by promoting the 'self-contained' merits of the texts while viewing them as an 'evolution' of Sartre's ethical project, since as we have seen, the texts are the almost-identical 'offspring' of Sartre's project at a particular point *in* its progression, rather than being individual representatives *of* progression; *What is Literature?* does not see Sartre asserting that the ontology presented in the *Notebooks* is in some way critically lacking and then offering us a drastically new perspective, as he re-employs it to this different end. Yet, although the *Notebooks* and *What is Literature?* cannot be understood in terms of a cycle of attempt followed by failure or defeat that may be re-valued as a transition, they may nonetheless be understood as containing insights that blur the distinction between similarity and difference for the concepts involved, sufficient to allow them to be augmented, such that the concerns expressed by Sartre may at least be addressed, if not overcome. The understanding that I intend for these texts represents something of a departure from previous comparisons; while it is of course the case that the *Notebooks* and *What is Literature?* remain deserving of a commentary

²⁵⁵ Anderson, Thomas. *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 57

purely on the basis of their status as 'related works' given their closely-spaced position in Sartre's chronology²⁵⁶ (as was the case with the *Notebooks* and *Anti-Semite and Jew*) I hold that they may also be understood as inviting a conceptual, indeed, philosophical reciprocity.

Earlier, in addressing Sartre's critique of Kant's 'individualism', identified by Baiasu as symptomatic of a *tessera*, I suggested that the success or failure of his phenomenologically-driven 'concrete person', conceived in opposition to what he understood to be a bifurcated intra-subjective agent masquerading as a united locus of genuine inter-subjectivity, depended heavily on his ability to demonstrate that he was not simply re-creating Kant's conception of the agent using different terminology, or in fact depriving his own conception of the benefit of Kant's insight. In turn, I asserted that this project would be greatly aided if a synchronicity were to obtain between the ontological structures posited as underpinning the agent's transcendence and the phenomenological 'output' of that transcendence. While I noted that Kant could reply very rigorously indeed to Sartre's charge that his envisagement of transcendence represented something akin to a mystical 'ascension' by the agent, I also asserted that there was merit in the basic thrust of Sartre's argument here; that the ontological aspects of transcendence should function in a mutually-sustaining relationship with any phenomenological account of transcendence, such that a kind of 'supervenience' might obtain between the two. Whatever we might now make of Sartre's attempt to advocate such a project, in beginning to sketch-out how this might be rendered philosophically, *What is Literature?* may be employed here as a means of articulating the speculative mechanism for keeping the 'concrete person' phenomenologically as well as ontologically 'intact' when invoking transcendence, that Sartre was searching for.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. 57

Given that *What is Literature?* posits what may be understood as an equally bifurcated conception of both artist and spectator, united in a seemingly tenuous thread of creative inter-subjectivity, it may seem as if Sartre's account simply shifts the negative features he perceives as residing in Kant's account to a different domain. Yet, if we pause to consider that Sartre's critique of Kant in terms of the 'individualism' criterion involved a crucial distinction between the normative force of imperatives and the ideality of values, then it seems the analogy drawn between creative effort and transcendence in undertaking ethically-imbued action may in fact provide the means to move beyond the difficulties Sartre found in surveying this area. The ideality of a value, as we have seen, consists in the fact that it contains no impositional weight, and instead reveals itself as a possibility which I may choose as my own, rather than being contained in a demand to which I am made accountable. We have also seen that this lack of imposition carries the threat of transience, in that insofar as it is open to me to choose a value as my possibility, the 'life-span' of that value is dependent on my continually 'refreshing' my ownership of that value, since when I cease to regard it as applicable to my situation with its attendant projects, it will 'disappear' for me as an option to pursue. There is, though, another important sense in which we may come to regard values as 'ideal'; although I must continue to 'own' values as my possibility *once* I have chosen them, this does not mean that the values *themselves* are in any way diminished in terms of their ethical 'weight' if I invoke them outside of a context based around my actions alone. Values are 'ideal', precisely because they persist in their ethical relevance over and above their implementation in a particular 'concrete' situation, so long as I continue to endorse it and endeavour to realise it eventually in that particular situation when it arises. If I choose as my possibility acting to reach out to a friend in lonely isolation as contained in the value of companionship for example, and I express this value in a letter to them as a precursor to visiting them, the value is still 'live' as it were, provided I continue to pursue its realisation by gearing my projects toward such an outcome. In the case of the view of transcendence presented in *What is Literature?*, then, although

the artist transcends their present situation to furnish a creative microcosm with values such that they are 'split' between an immersion in this situation and a concern for, firstly, how this constructed 'universe' teeming with value may be rendered in their chosen art-form so as it is received as clearly as possible by their spectators, and secondly, speculation as to exactly how this reception might play out, the values expressed at the microcosmic level, and those pursued by the ethical agent in the 'real world' are *of the same kind*.

Since the structure of the role and form of values persists across both contexts, it could well be argued that the distinction made by Sartre between the 'pseudo-ontology' of the aesthetic realm and the ontology based around the pursuit of values is designed to demonstrate sameness rather than difference. That is to say, although we may *initially* describe with phenomenological vividness the perceived differences between the two 'worlds', implicit in these descriptions is the same 'skeletal' outline of transcendence in pursuit of values. Now, in order to render this mechanism correctly in ontological terms, we must not duplicate it, since it is in fact the *same* mechanism described as functioning in a different context. This means that when we come to render the ethical agent, our description may continue to incorporate a sense of bifurcation or 'splitting' in order to describe the various perspectives from which an agent may be regarded, or may regard themselves. Yet, because the structures underpinning transcendence remain the same in spite of these re-orientations of perspective, the ontological and phenomenological 'layers' at issue are absolutely synchronous with one another, such that the ethical agent remains 'concrete' across both the artistic and ethical contexts discussed in *What is Literature?*. Indeed, this potential means of overcoming the inter/intra-subjective distinction as it appears in Sartre's work may be applied to the *Notebooks* themselves, since just as the microcosm created by the artist and the 'real world' may be united ontologically through reference to value such that the agent's 'concreteness' may be fully preserved, so too may we conceive of the ethical agent in transcendence as they

appear in the *Notebooks* on the same terms. Of course, as I have already attempted to show, Sartre advocated for achieving this synchronicity by constructing a particular conception of the agent (in contrast to Kant's conception) where the distinction between phenomenological and ontological matters would be dissolved through a mutually-sustaining relationship between descriptions of action and the values 'secreted' through those actions. Since Sartre's multiple attempts at giving consideration to such a resolution were never fully resolved to his satisfaction, however, employing the ideality of values as a sort of binding-agent would appear to represent a useful means of moving beyond this stagnation.

Rather than arguing (as I did regarding the relationship between *Anti-Semite and Jew* and the *Notebooks*) that Sartre's "anxiety" in *What is Literature?* with respect to the best way to give full scope to inter-subjectivity is best addressed by viewing it as a direct progression in Sartre's thought, I have argued that it is better viewed as a variation or adaptation upon the key themes of the *Notebooks*. In this way, we are free to view the account given in *What is Literature?* as a creative analogue for the creation and pursuit of one's values, and for their persistence across the boundaries of creativity and 'everyday' existence. In turn, this allows for values to be understood as compatible only with precisely the kind of un-bifurcated, 'concrete' agent Sartre is searching for.

As we have so far seen to be the case with regard to Sartre's critique of Kant in relation to the 'abstraction' and 'individualism' criteria (and therefore, according to Baiasu, his execution of the *clinamen* and *tessera* "ratios"), we can discern areas of Sartre's broader corpus where Baiasu's methodology becomes applicable, thereby also allowing for the expansion and 'generalisation' of his view that I have advocated throughout this discussion. If we now look to Baiasu's third criticism of Sartre in relation to Kant, that his attitude toward his own philosophy and that of Kant, represents an *askesis* or mutual curtailing of aspects of their respective philosophies, we can similarly refer to other of

Sartre's works where a similar concern as to how the role played by History may affect the role of freely-chosen action (a characteristic emblematic of existentialism) in ethics.

"Authoritarianism" in Search for a Method

In *Search for a Method*, Sartre attempts to posit an existentialist-Marxist reply to his self-formulated question that seeks to condense both the ethical and political significance of human existence, and a view of History itself, conditioned by the Marxist view that its rightful tendency is geared toward the fulfilment of basic human need. That is, "...do we now possess the materials for constituting a structural, historical anthropology?"²⁵⁷. The difficulty here for Sartre is spread across multiple fronts, with each of these marked by an antagonistic relationship between History and philosophy. First of all, there is the opposition between idealist approaches to structuralist accounts, and dialectical materialism's response, to be considered. On the one hand, Sartre is concerned to show that although "dogmatic" or "old-fashioned" materialism²⁵⁸ (for Sartre, typified by Hegelian approaches to structuralism), is an important "myth"²⁵⁹ that assisted in the fostering of a "revolutionary attitude"²⁶⁰, it could not aspire to being imbued with scientific rigour. Further, a revolutionary philosophy founded on an idealist perspective cannot, according to Sartre, account for the possibility of an agent transcending their situation and grasping it in a synthesis of intention and action²⁶¹. On the other hand, Sartre holds, Marxism too is lacking in relation to its ability to capture a broad view of human beings understood in their social context and in the broad sweep of history, since even Marxism's explicitly anti-idealist, dialectical materialism that calls for and acknowledges human-kind's capacity for free action, still cannot adequately capture a sense of transcendence. This time, though, the issue is not that of having

²⁵⁷ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Search for a Method*, xxxiv

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 33-34

²⁵⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Search for a Method*, 33-34

²⁶⁰ Ibid. 33-34

²⁶¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Search for a Method*, 157

ignored material conditions as the basis of action as before, but rather of being too *un*-idealistic, such that it cannot posit human-kind's movement from their present situation toward one that is in-tune, so to speak, with History's tendency toward human fulfilment, in opposition to the *inhuman* moral qualities perceived in other systems with an interest in constituting a 'totalised' view of human-kind, such as various religious creeds, and anti-Marxist strands of thought²⁶². I argue, though, that in attempting to overcome this division, Sartre actually displays an "anxiety" similar to that understood by Baiasu as typified in the *askesis*, since he 'curtails' Hegelian idealism in order to extol the virtues of a 'concrete' perspective, while then similarly 'curtailing' *that* perspective by depriving it of Hegel's potential idealistic insight. I forego an immediate comparison to Sartre's 'authoritarian' critique of Kant and a suggestion as to how it might be addressed in terms specific to the political context of *Search for a Method*, since this resemblance to the *askesis* actually runs to a two-fold extent in this text. I shall now detail the second 'half' of Sartre's difficulties in managing the relationship between philosophy and History for the purposes of his existentialist-Marxism.

This secondary instance of Sartre's "anxiety" is really a consequence of the first rather than simply a variation of it, in that rather than pitting Marxism's dialectical materialism against 'old-fashioned' idealist dialectics, Sartre instead compares the positions of existentialism and Marxism in terms of where they fit in an account of the philosophic and scientific progress of the present epoch. To that end, Sartre initially holds that existentialism is the expression of the philosophical imperatives of the present epoch, but must be considered as a separate line of enquiry, until Marxism sheds its connection, however pragmatic it may be, with the materialist "myth"²⁶³. Meanwhile, although Marxism has the potential to ascend to the level of the imperatives of a scientific discipline, it must first predicate itself on the human situation with a rigour

²⁶² Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Search for a Method*, 133-5

²⁶³ Ibid. 181

equal to that of existentialism²⁶⁴. In this way, existentialism is first 'curtailed' or 'truncated' in terms of its historical import by Sartre, since it cannot yet ascend to the status befitting a 'true' philosophy such that it would formulate absolute ends, bringing about an end to History as it is implemented in the present epoch. At the same time, though, Sartre 'curtails' Marxism's historical importance equally, since it cannot yet provide a suitable basis *for* the union existentialism presently seeks, and which would provide it with a basis of its own that would free of the stifling 'dogmatism' Sartre rails against. I argue, then, that rather than allowing for the possibility of a sublimation of Marxism and existentialism, Sartre instead methodically highlights in the respective systems of thought their *lack* in relation to the other, thereby depriving them of the respective endowments that might otherwise have allowed for discussion of an inter-relationship. For instance, rather than holding that existentialism is precluded from being considered genuinely in relation to Marxism by the way in which the latter is still overly-tethered to idealism, existentialism might be better understood in this case in terms of what it might *bring to* Marxism immediately, rather than what would have to be 'excised' from Marxism in order to make the two compatible. Ultimately, this particular manifestation of Sartre's "anxiety" represents what I take to be a more fundamental encapsulation of his difficulty in reconciling existentialism with the potentially 'authoritarian' character of a Marxist view of history, and therefore also a more fundamental example of what Baiasu might regard as an *askesis*. Before we proceed to address a solution to it in depth, let us return to the example of Sartre's critique in relation to Kant's 'authoritarianism', in order to gather together the necessary resources for it.

When assessing Sartre's critique of Kant's 'authoritarianism', identified by Baiasu as symptomatic of an *askesis*, I explored in some detail Sartre's appraisal of Kantianism

²⁶⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Search for a Method*, 181

(often spilling over into an appraisal of 'philosophy' in general) set against existentialism, with both being caught up, he argued, in the broad sweep of History, providing once again for an antagonism between each. I noted there that Baiasu had rightly identified a 'doubled' *askesis*, with Sartre having denied the capacity for existentialism to set absolute ends, despite this supposedly being the mark of a 'true' philosophy. Further, Sartre renders Kant's 'systematic' morality as precisely fixing the moral 'destiny' of moral agents, and in so doing, he denies the autonomy of moral agents. Now, although we are again dealing with a 'self-contained' comparison of Sartre's work in *Search for a Method* and the *Notebooks* as opposed to a comparison between Sartre and the intellectual figure of Kant, we may similarly employ the substance of my discussion of how we might overcome Sartre's "anxiety" to the present issues confronting us. In critiquing Baiasu's suggested approach whereby we might understand Kant's moral theory not as advocating a kind of pre-destination but merely as the 'natural outcome' of any such enquiry, I argued that Baiasu misinterprets the extent to which this, in fact, is the very criticism that Sartre is engaging in with Kant, and indeed has been all along. That is to say, I take it that Sartre is not concerned by the thought that *Kant's view*, and the categorical imperative in specific, is itself responsible for a sense of pre-destination when we attempt to orient his view toward the 'unfolding' of history. Instead, I argued, Sartre is concerned that Kant has formulated the imperative in this way in response to the 'environment' in which his perspective was formulated, specifically, *in inevitable response* to History's propensity to render all 'true' philosophy (philosophy that can set absolute ends) as an 'end to History'. It is the attempt by virtually all ethical philosophers to 'interact' with History, according to Sartre, that necessarily results in a sense of pre-destination, since they cannot hope to set absolute ends without regard for where this will leave the agent historically situated. Ultimately, the logical conclusion of this difficulty is that the ethical agent will *themselves* feel subject to pre-destination because of the "disgust" Sartre holds we universally feel when forced to contemplate such a possibility, even if the philosopher (in this case, Kant) does not intend for such an

understanding to be reached. In response, I argued that Existentialism's inability (at least, according to Sartre) to set absolute ends need not, in turn, call into question the role of autonomy in Kant's schema and therefore his own, since we can coherently distinguish between an inevitable *outcome* of a certain kind for an agent, and an inevitable *persistence* of certain moral principles over the course of a certain epoch in History, with a particular agent's situation potentially caught up in its broad sweep. Since (as Baiasu rightly points out) Kant provides for a distinction between moral principles that we are actually *directed* to obey, as against moral principles that will persist as *ethically* incumbent upon us *to obey* in spite of what we may choose to do, its status as a 'true' philosophy seems to me to be no good reason to deny Kantian autonomy or to diminish its role in Sartre's philosophy for that matter. Nor, it must be said, does there seem to me to be any good reason for Sartre to deny the capacity to set absolute ends to existentialism, since this would allow for its ethical impetus to 'interact' in a persistent way with History, provided it possessed an appropriate mechanism for distinguishing between such persistence and mere ethical pre-destination.

If we now apply this perspective to Sartre's position in terms of the relationship between existentialism and Marxism, it seems to me that the very same central issues are present. Existentialism's inability to attain to Marxism's 'status' in the present epoch of History is not simply a question, so far as Sartre is concerned, of having one rise to the level of the other by adding or removing features deemed either necessary or undesirable, since otherwise, his own 'truncations' would have been sufficient. Rather, Sartre's vision for their sublimation would require that Marxism predicate itself on Man rather than Nature - that is, on anthropological, indeed, psychoanalytic grounds, rather than on any kind of materialist conception, whether dialectical or otherwise²⁶⁵, placing existentialism in position as a prime candidate for a viable partner, to be effectively dissolved into a synthesis encompassing anthropological, sociological and political

²⁶⁵ Ibid. 157

imperatives. An obvious problem here for Sartre is his conception of both of these unrequited 'strands' depends upon a certain view of their historical situatedness; if the present epoch produces its 'true' philosophy in an 'authoritarian' way, such that it can only produce an 'authoritarian' outcome for autonomous agents owing to its characteristic ability to formulate absolute ends, then we can have no such satisfaction. Equally, although existentialism is absolved of this ability, since it is *not* a 'true' philosophy, it cannot 'meet' with Marxism under its own power and must instead wait for Marxism's voluntary relinquishment of what Sartre regards as its vestigial connection to materialism. It seems to me, though, that we can apply the distinction between principles that we *must* follow that may be construed as 'authoritarian', as opposed to principles that will be morally incumbent upon us to follow, to the perspective on History Sartre has so far advanced, just as we did previously with Sartre's "anxiety" in relation to Kant's 'authoritarianism'. If it is the case that the present epoch is capable of formulating only the kind of 'true' philosophy that has at its core a propensity to formulate 'authoritarian' absolute ends, then perhaps History must be re-conceived in relation to philosophy as formulating the *conditions* for its production in this form regardless of how we might employ them philosophically, but not as automatically 'dispensing' the impositional *necessity* for it. In this way, it may be that the distinction between 'true' philosophy and that formulated outside of a consideration for absolute ends would be relinquished. If we apply this to existentialism and Marxism in specific, such relinquishment would seem to allow for the possibility that existentialism would be made 'accessible' to Marxism. Of course, this leaves us situated in the current epoch's construction of Marxism as dialectical and therefore still, at least in some sense, tied to materialism. Yet, it also appears that if Marxism were at least in 'proximity' to existentialism, then the anthropological, psychoanalytic qualities possessed by existentialism would seem to allow for an intrinsic re-predication upon Man as opposed to Nature, facilitating its ultimate subsumption.

Clearly, each of the 'instances' of Sartre's "anxiety" that I have identified *beyond* his explicit commentary on Kant in the *Notebooks* are representative of a highly speculative approach, along with each of the corresponding 'solutions' I have offered. Yet, as well as providing for interesting perspectives on each of the texts as well as the *Notebooks* themselves, I take it that this approach also highlights a contention I have sustained throughout this discussion, namely that Sartre's "anxiety" is based in a 'generalised' concern that discussing ethics (whether through political texts, literary criticism, or indeed any other genre) involves employing an 'ethical vocabulary' comprising all previous meanings and connotations that have accrued around the subject in question. This means in turn, that, at least to some extent, the author will have to implement certain philosophical structures which do not give full scope to the views they in fact intend to express, and may even produce a resemblance to ideas and sentiments they directly oppose - as I have argued is particularly evident for Sartre in relation to Kant.

Interlude

We began this thesis with the thought that basing a view of whether or not Sartrean ethics represents a viable philosophical project on the immediately related question of whether or not we regard Sartre as having provided us with the necessary 'permission' in his extant works, was insufficient. This insufficiency, we have seen, stems from the fact that a concern with Sartre's *own* philosophical position on this possibility, replete with a sense of difficulty, anxiety, and also certain strongly-held convictions, is diminished by this approach. In undertaking to 'trouble' this relationship between content and the authorial level, we gave the philosophical tension at issue a specific form, giving prominence to Kant in particular as having been understood by Sartre as playing a central role in mapping-out (and also constraining) the possibilities for the form discussions of ethics might take. Having given Kant this prominence, we looked to Howells's assertion, filled-out further by Baiasu, that the relationship between Sartre and Kant is representative of a Bloom-inspired "anxiety of influence". Though this approach provides us access to the level of authorial intent, it does not completely fulfil the requirements of the task we have set, since it attempts to show us only that Sartre was concerned to differentiate himself from Kant, often at the expense of Kant's added insight and to the detriment of his *own* contributions to ethics, purely because he did not want to be associated with a mode of thought to which he thought himself opposed. Naturally enough, Baiasu holds in response to this construction of his "anxiety" that Sartre need not have been so "anxious"; his similarity to Kant can be 'uncovered' whilst still preserving Sartre's own insight. As we have seen though, to hold that Sartre *need not* have behaved this way philosophically is to ignore the clear extent to which *he* felt such manoeuvring to be urgently necessary, and so we were forced to continue searching for an explanation framed in terms of what Sartre thought fully 'following through' with views of a 'Kantian nature' would mean for the possibilities of his own ethical investigations, as well as for the possibilities of ethical philosophy *itself*.

In taking up Baiasu's assertion that Sartre's contest with Kant is at the meta-ethical level, we executed a 'deviation' of our own, in predicating the debate upon 'success' rather than similarity, and in doing so raised the following question: If one successfully sketches-out the 'outer limits' of ethical philosophy in seeking to formulate one's own view in contrast to one's predecessors, and in this way finds that they must 'bend' to conform to them such that their view ends up resembling their predecessor, ought one hold that the efforts of one's predecessor are responsible for creating these 'limits', at which point one has begun to imitate them, or is it instead the case that these 'limits' *precede* both oneself *and* the predecessor, having been determined by the powers of philosophical expression available to us presently? Having now attempted to re-predicate a 'solution' to Sartre's "anxiety" on a foundation of his own *assurance* as to the 'limits' of ethical inquiry, rather than simply attempting a *reassurance* that these could be talked of openly without jeopardising insight, and also to show that it runs throughout his work even when Kant is not made philosophically 'present', I take it that we may regard Sartre's "anxiety" as consisting in a tentative response in the affirmative to the latter of these two possibilities.

I have now previewed a means of responding to Baiasu's particular conception of Sartre's "anxiety", and of expanding discussion of it beyond a set of parameters drawn directly from his engagement with Kant. In the following and final part of this thesis, I offer a final note on the benefits I take this perspective to potentially provide to both present and future discussions of Sartrean ethics, as well the methodological limitations of the mechanism I have attempted to develop in interrogating Sartre's efforts at the authorial level.

Concluding Remarks

The final part of this thesis represents an attempt to show that, just as we have understood Sartre to have held that meta-ethical 'limits' necessitated a certain attitude in constructing an ethics, any genuine attempt to engage with Sartrean ethics at the level of authorial intent rather than re-constructing that intent in the image of our reading of the sufficiency or insufficiency of Sartre's extant works for the purpose, must likewise take into account certain procedural boundaries.

I have repeatedly stated throughout this discussion that Sartre's own views in 'positive' contrast to those of Kant (that is, those where he advances a perspective without simply attacking Kant when their views in fact coincide) can be elucidated, provided that we re-predicate the "anxiety" we attribute to him *away* from Baiasu's account, and hence the various 'solutions' I have provided all proceed as variations upon this fundamental point. Now, at first, it may seem that I have reneged on my stated aim as not to argue definitively either for or against the viability of a Sartrean ethics. After all, if I am taken to have succeeded in suggesting several mechanisms that might clear a path for the flourishing of Sartre's 'positive' offerings, then it may seem that I *am* in fact arguing in support of such a project. Yet, this is not the case. What I have instead tried to make clear is that if we are to have a debate with all the facts placed on the table, so to speak, then we must first be able to draw out these 'positive' conceptions, so that we can decide whether we regard Sartre as having provided us with a sufficient foundation to continue. Since the 'content-based' approach, as I have named it, may lead to the circular projection of Sartre's intent in order to support a positive or negative judgement *of* that intent, I have argued that it is only through an attempt to draw out the potential Sartre sees for constructing an ethics, as well as the difficulties he encountered in doing so, that we may assess these possibilities. Once we have done so, it is perfectly conceivable that one may find Sartre's 'positive' conceptions entirely unpalatable or not

useful, and this would of course be an acceptable path to take under the auspices of the view I have advanced. We must, however, accept that any view of Sartre's authorial intent requires an understanding of his perspectives advanced in contrast to Kant (or where Kant is not directly implicated, in contrast to the general ethical implications he took Kant's position to represent) and in order to do so, we must also hold that Sartre withheld these due to concerns emanating at the meta-ethical level. Otherwise, we risk being able to hold only (as we have seen Baiasu attempt to do) that Sartre was concerned not to appear as a sort of pale imitation of Kant, with the 'solution' in that case being to hold only that he need not have behaved in this way, and from this standpoint we can no longer draw out Sartre's own 'positive' conceptions. That is to say, if we hold that Sartre has merely been 'stonewalling' against Kant, and that the two philosophers agree after all, there would seem to be no need to draw out points of difference. The inadequacy of such a view is revealed in its over-emphasis on 'similarity'. Even if we accept that Kant's view was not more "abstract, individualistic and authoritarian" than Sartre's *own* when the two philosopher's views on ethics are compared, the fact remains that Sartre felt Kant's account *generally* inadequate, even if his own perspective was not able to improve on Kant's view to his satisfaction.

Of course, the two-step process I have been advocating throughout this discussion, whereby Sartre's "anxiety" in relation to Kant would be 'resolved' through an elucidation of his more tentative ethical theses in contrast to Kant before a final (and not *necessarily* positive) adjudication on the viability of his project, cannot function in ignorance of his broader corpus. Particularly in terms of the second step, only an acknowledgement of the totality of Sartre's works will enable an over-arching adjudication. Within the context of the present study, I have been relatively circumspect on this front, since Baiasu's focus on Sartre's tripartite set of 'negative' criteria is for him, to be grounded primarily in the *Notebooks*. A reliance on this text alone from Sartre, and the *Critique of Practical Reason* from Kant, is insufficient material for such an over-

arching adjudication. It is to be remembered that Sartre abandoned work on the ethics represented in the *Notebooks* and did not attend to ethics as a 'stand-alone' project distinct from his other political and literary efforts for over a decade, and indeed, he was never entirely satisfied with *any* of his subsequent attempts. Nevertheless, I have tried to show here that it is possible to construct a 'portable' version of the re-valued version of Baiausu's critique I have argued for, so that the same basic mechanism can be applied even in those of Sartre's philosophical, literary and political works where Kant does not figure directly as an argumentative foil for Sartre. The three texts I have speculated on apart from the *Notebooks* - namely, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, *What is Literature?* and *Search for a Method* - are only a start towards a more in-depth project. I take it that the comparative perspective I have established here is broad enough in scope to handle even Sartre's more monumental efforts, such as the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Indeed, it may well be that criteria beyond "abstractedness, individualism and authoritarianism" are able to be identified as defining Sartre's concerns as to the structure and form of an ethics, though I regard these as a solid foundation.

In essence, then, we must begin with the thought that a picture of Sartre's 'positive' ambitions for an ethics across several areas of contention (transcendence, the ethical agent, the position of the agent and the study of ethics in History and so on) may be established, and this picture must *itself* be understood as arising in response to concerns as to the fundamental possibilities open to (or precluded from) those seeking to philosophise about ethics. Once this picture has been sketched-out, the opinionative component of any discussion, where the possibility of a Sartrean ethics is ruled upon, as it were, will admit of both negative and positive assessments, and in this way, they will be able to be made with the fullest possible knowledge of *both* Sartre's ambitions as well as his difficulties in constructing an ethics.

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