

BECOMING L'HOMME IMAGINAIRE: THE ROLE OF THE IMAGINATION IN OVERCOMING CIRCULARITY IN SARTRE'S *CRITIQUE OF DIALECTICAL REASON*

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ABSTRACT: This article attempts to wed together two supposedly disparate works of Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of the Imagination* (1940) and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960) in order to construct a theory of the imagination that will aid progressive political theory in its pursuit of perpetual 'mediated reciprocity'. Often assumed incapable of providing a viable theory of positive intersubjective relations, this article asserts that Sartre's work does in fact have the resources for such an endeavor. Through the continual creation of 'images', the group-in-fusion is shown to be able to sustain a perpetual project of negating original negation throughout the milieu of scarcity. Although 'images' themselves are incapable of creating novelty, they do have use insofar as they are able to reproduce affective impressions that can motivate group *praxis*, which in turn creates new situations of exigence from which apocalyptic moments might arise. Therefore, by tethering the balance between the real and the imaginary, a novel social theory emerges that is both faithful to the work of Sartre and that also pushes it into new, fruitful directions.

KEYWORDS: Sartre; Dialectics; Imagination; Praxis; Radical Politics

Introduction

It would not be an understatement to assert that there has been no philosopher in recent memory that prized the powers of the imagination more than Jean-Paul Sartre.¹ A playwright, novelist, philosopher, and social activist, Sartre often blurred the distinction between that which is generally assumed to be 'real' and that which is 'imaginary'.² However, it ought not be understood that this ambiguity was a result of confusion or inconsistency in his conceptual framework. That's not to claim that there is a perfect streamline of thought that runs from his early phenomenological works to his later ma-

1. Note for instance Thomas R. Flynn's article entitled, 'L'Imagination Au Pouvoir: The Evolution of Sartre's Political and Social Thought', *Political Theory*, vol. 7, no. 2, May, 1979, pp. 157-180.

2. Thomas Flynn, 'Sartre and the Poetics of History', in Christina Howells ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 255.

terialist labors, nor is it to assert that Sartre was not continuously in the process of developing his ideas; but rather is set to mean that such a ‘blurring’ was the *de facto* result of a thinker seeking to tether two intentions—(1) the liberatory powers of imaginative consciousness and (2) material need. While there are others who have sketched theories utilizing the powers of the imagination in seeking social and political change (e.g. Marcuse), the tendency is for ‘secular’ theorists to remain skeptical toward the potentiality of the imagination. Such skepticism is not without merit. For those inheriting the legacy of Modernity, there is an inherent discomfort toward that which could be construed as religious or mythical. There is a spectral presence of the West’s religious past that continually haunts thinkers today, reminding them that that which once was is not so distant as to be impossible. For Sartre, however, the site of the imagination was a space of indefinite possibility; one that possess a creative power. As Mary Warnock has stated, throughout Sartre’s corpus ‘he insists that man’s freedom to act in the world is a function of his ability to perceive things not only as they are, but as they are not’. If one could not imagine her life other than it is then she would have no capacity to intervene in the world. ‘One must have the power of imagining it as well as perceiving it; that is, of imagining it otherwise’.³

Keeping the latter in mind, in what follows we will seek to sketch a theory of the imagination that will aid human *praxis* (in both its individual and group forms) in its pursuit of satisfying need; one that will offer a viable alternative to ‘negative reciprocity’ in its perpetual creation of ‘mediated reciprocity’. Drawing primarily from two supposedly disparate works of Sartre, *The Psychology of the Imagination* (hereafter PI) and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (hereafter CDR), an ambitious effort to resolve the perceived problem of circularity in CDR from series, to group, to series, to group, etc., will lead us to the conclusion that Sartre possessed the necessary tools to escape the endless repetition of alienated social existence in serial collectives within his own theory of the imagination. While Sartre does spend considerable time in *The Family Idiot* discussing the imagination in regard to ‘role shifts’ in the life of Flaubert that could supplement this endeavor,⁴ for our present purposes, we will be content to provide a general framework within which further study might take place. Also, recognizing that Sartre himself did not explicitly make such a connection, sensitivity must be taken to not overstep the material with which we are working. A possible fault is that this project might misrepresent certain Sartrean concepts. Not wishing to dismantle the autonomy of his work, the present effort will seek to remain faithful to Sartre’s laid groundwork while also seeking to make a connection that will press his ideas in new, tenable directions. Fidelity *and* creativity will determine the success or failure of this project.

3. Mary Warnock, ‘Introduction’, in Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of the Imagination*, trans. The Philosophical Library Inc., London, Routledge, 1995, p. xvii.

4. For more on ‘role shifts’ and how this relates to the imagination see Robert D. Cummings’ essay, ‘Role-Playing: Sartre’s Transformation of Husserl’s Phenomenology’ in Christina Howells (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

I. THE DIALECTIC: NECESSITY AND CONTINGENCY

A common criticism of Sartre's philosophy is that he is unable to escape pessimism regarding social relations. In *Being and Nothingness* (hereafter BN), this is undoubtedly the case as he describes the human 'project' as consciousness surpassing one's present 'situation' toward the unbounded possibles that might be realized through the radical freedom of the for-itself as the latter seeks to create itself, create meaning, and overcome the viscous nature of the present which continually threatens the for-itself with the impossible—annihilation, death, collapse into the in-itself. Because other free for-itselfs all have the same 'project' (structurally) there necessarily arises conflict in the social sphere as one consciousness seeks its own ends over and against the desired ends of any and every other for-itself. Therefore, the for-itself, in the mode 'being-for-others', is haunted by an unceasing competition with others, as individual consciousnesses transcend/negate other persons in a field of subjective competition. Unlike Taylorist readings of the dialectic, there is no dyadic struggle that results in a 'higher synthesis'.⁵ There is no hope for 'resolution'. Sartre seems to suggest that the conflictual nature of intersubjectivity is irreconcilable—an absolute result of the ontological freedom of the for-itself. It is this pessimism that has led many readers to hone in on various 'soundbites' taken from the massive corpus of Sartre: 'hell is other people'; 'man is a useless passion'; existence is 'absurd'. Taken as definitive characterizations of Sartre's philosophy, such maxims often neglect Sartre's most ambitious work, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, in which (among other endeavors) he develops a social theory that seeks to provide an historical materialist answer to the phenomenological problems of intersubjectivity in his early work.

In CDR, Sartre retains much of the language/structure of his earlier works (the project, the situation, facticity, the primacy of freedom, the field of possibles, intending toward the beyond, etc). However, he modifies their content significantly by turning from consciousness toward human labor to define human existence. The conceptual shift from defining human existence as *consciousness* to *praxis* is profound, primarily because it incorporates the human being completely in facticity. In his later work, Sartre characterized facticity as the entirety of material human existence in a Marxian fashion—identifying the human with labour: '[The] truth of a man is the nature of his work... But, this truth defines him just insofar as he constantly goes beyond it in his practical activity'.⁶ This latter experience of one working, being defined by her work, and surpassing her situation is what Sartre would call one's praxis-project. It is the essential identity marker of human existence. Like the intending, surpassing, negating consciousness of BN, the human as *praxis* is characterized by arising within a given 'situation' of exigence which requires that it be surpassed. This necessity is not an *a priori* mandate derived from 'analytic reason', but arises from the relation between 'men' and their material conditions (i.e. 'dialectical reason'). Comprehending this relation (as do historical materialist theorists) is not done from an external position, but is part of the dialectical process itself—an internal moment of individual and group *praxis*, which by its very exist-

5. Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, parts II and V.

6. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search For a Method*, trans. Hazel Barnes, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1963, p. 93.

tence marks the 'being-past of Being, or the movement by which Being becomes what it has been.'⁷ Rejecting determinist and structuralist readings of Marx alike, Sartre honed in on the paradox of Marx's dictum that 'Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand.'⁸ In Sartre's words, '[Men] make history to precisely the same extent that it makes them.'⁹ The dialectical relationship between 'men' and their material conditions is thus the *source of dialecticity*. Eschewing any notion of a 'dialectics of nature' he located the dialectic purely in the *contingent* historical relation between human praxis and the situation in which the latter finds itself.

Although a *de facto*, *relational necessity*, the dialectic is also comprehended as *contingent*. Arising because of the relationship between 'men' and scarce material conditions, history is always understood in relation to scarcity, 'which explains fundamental structures (techniques and institutions)—not in the sense that it is a real force and that it has produced them, but because they were produced in the *milieu of scarcity* by men whose *praxis* interiorises this scarcity even when they try to transcend it.'¹⁰ For this reason, Sartre remarks that the original contingency (i.e. scarcity) 'shows us... both the necessity of our contingency and the contingency of our necessity.'¹¹ Defined not as *temporally* prior, but as *ontologically* prior to praxis, scarcity is the original situation into which every human being is thrown at each given moment. In other words, human beings are always immersed in a situation characterized by an original negation in relation to need. Therefore, persons are perpetually embattled by transcending their present situation toward a beyond of possibles. This process parallels the for-itself's tendential targeting of its own absolute realization as the in-itself-for-itself in *Being and Nothingness*; a project which necessarily leads to existential angst. Although he implies that perhaps beauty might be that which releases humanity from 'total frustration', beauty must not be conceived as real. Rather, it 'is no more a potentiality of things than the in-itself-for-itself is a peculiar possibility of the for-itself. It haunts the world as an unrealizable. To the extent that man realizes the beautiful in the world, he realizes it in the *imaginary mode* [emphasis added]'.¹² Hastily taken as hopelessness by Ronald Aronson,¹³ Sartre's tending toward the 'imaginary mode' is actually rather positive. Although not recognizable as such until *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, one's praxis-project interiorizes imagined futures, which means that one's praxis-project continually recreates imagined futures through the negation of negation in seeking de-alienation. To this we will return.

7. Juliette, Simont, 'The Critique of Dialectical Reason: From Need to Need, Circularly', *Yale French Studies*, no 68, 1985, p. 113.

8. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trans. D.D.L. [1897], New York, Mondial, 2005, p. 10.

9. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason: Volume One*, ed. Jonathan Ree, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, London, Verso, 2004, p. 97.

10. Sartre, *CDR*, p. 127.

11. *ibid.*, p. 124.

12. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. and ed. Hazel Barnes, New York, Washington Square Press, 1993, p. 195.

13. Ronald Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophy in the World*, London, Verso, 1980.

For now, it must be emphasized that the dialectic is a process from ‘objectification to objectification’. As the human works in a pre-constituted situation her subjectivity is inscribed on the objective world. Matter therefore becomes ‘worked-matter’. By storing human labor, the material world becomes a field of preserved, inert human striving. Called the ‘practico-inert’, this field is the source of ‘negative reciprocity’. According to Pietro Chiodi, the practico-inert is the field produced by the praxis-project as the latter imprints itself upon ‘the inertia of material... which, in escaping the finality of the constituting dialectic, becomes available for insertion into heterogeneous dialectical totalizations whose orientation is counter-final relative to the finality of the constitutive process. The effect of this is to render material external to the project and opposed to it as necessity to freedom.’¹⁴ Through counter-finality, a *serial collective* is formed. Externally objectified by its own product (i.e. ‘worked matter’), the seriality is a collective of *inhuman subjects* insofar as they are robbed of freedom over their product and its finality, as the product is utilizable by others in a field of objective competition. That is, a seriality is characterized by inhuman-actors, whose projects are stifled by the stasis arising from confronting projects in a given horizon which in turn marks each person in *alterity* in relation to one another.

Since therefore the practico-inert is the necessary *negation* of ‘man’, it must itself be *negated*. There must be a ‘reaffirmation of man.’¹⁵ Such occurs through the irruption of the *group-in-fusion*. The group-in-fusion is established by its common praxis in seeking a particular objective. Not united *externally* (as is the serial collective by the necessity of the practico-inert), the group-in-fusion rehumanizes its constituents through an ‘apocalypse’ whereby it freely snatches from worked matter its inhumanizing power of ‘mediation between men in order to confer power on each and everyone in the community, and thus establish itself... as the means whereby the materiality of the practical field is placed again in the hands of free *communized praxis*’.¹⁶ When such occurs, alterity is curbed and the members of the fused group are viewed as Same insofar as they are each *products of the group*.

Through the ‘apocalyptic’ upsurge of group activity in the face of immediate Terror (i.e. the impossible), Sartre espouses a theory of social relationality that is able to skirt a destiny that is bound for mere repetition of alienation. Achieved through ‘mediated reciprocity’, de-alienation occurs through the communized, free praxis of the group-in-fusion. Their primary task being ‘to snatch from worked-upon material its inhuman power of mediation between men in order to confer it on each and everyone in the community’,¹⁷ the group offers a novel social theory in which the irreducibility of human subjectivity is preserved (à la Kierkegaard) and in which concrete objectivity remains part and parcel of the human project (à la Hegel/Marx).¹⁸

However, a pressing question arises: how is such a group able to sustain itself? And

14. Pietro Chiodi, *Sartre and Marxism*, trans. Kate Soper, Sussex, The Harvester Press, 1976, p. 49.

15. *ibid.*, p. 56.

16. *ibid.*, p. 68

17. Sartre, *CDR*, p. 638

18. Sartre, *SFM*, p. 14

this is where we again encounter tinges of Sartre's pessimism. After the initial, free, instantaneous upsurge (the 'apocalypse') the group is then threatened with dissolution into seriality. As Frederic Jameson notes, there are at least three ways the group can dissolve: (1) 'it can... disperse back into seriality', or, by institutionalization, it can develop (2) bureaucracy, and/or (3) dictatorship.¹⁹ Not wishing such a fate, an 'oath' is sworn: 'when freedom makes itself the communal praxis of establishing the permanence of the group by way of producing itself its own inertia in mediated reciprocity, this new *statut* is called *the oath*.'²⁰ Although there is a momentary experience of de-alienated sociality, this 'instant' is fated to fail after the oath (the pledge) is made. In the face of the event, the pre-constituted group was faced with the impossible, which instigated a united front against a violent foe. By negating this violence with violence and revolutionary resistance the moment of apocalypse offered a glimpse of absolute de-alienated communized *praxis* ('mediated reciprocity'). However, after the initial upsurge, the group is faced with simple and sudden dissolution or ossification into a serial collective or an institution because of the 'ontological check'—the practico-inert. Therefore, an oath is made to preserve the group. However, the very effect of the sworn oath produces a 'permanence' which fails to maintain the pure freedom of the apocalypse. In other words, the oath is a 'reflective act', instituted by the group to retain the affective impetus that was initially experienced during the apocalyptic moment. Unfortunately, the reflective act is insufficient in three ways:

1. It is a forced reproduction (representation) of a previous immediate affective experience.
2. It establishes a 'being' of the group, which negates the free 'becoming' of the apocalypse.
3. It creates an 'image' whose object is both absent and present; one that is inert and completely produced by the collective imaginative consciousness of the group; that has no creative capacity in itself (it teaches nothing); and that is devoid of the infinite depth of the real (spatio-temporality).

Presently, it is the last of these insufficiencies that is most pertinent. The reason is that we must understand how the 'pledged group' necessarily initiates its own death knell by creating an inert image of itself but how Sartre's conception of the imagination is yet useful in constructing a theory of perpetual mediated reciprocity that resists dissolution and/or institutionalization.²¹

II. THE IMAGE AND THE REAL

In *The Psychology of the Imagination (L'Imaginaire)*, Sartre outlines a phenomenological theory of the imagination. Viewed in terms of intentionality, the imagination is not a

19. Frederic Jameson, 'Forward' in Sartre, *CDR*, p. xxxii.

20. Sartre, *CDR*, p. 439.

21. To be clear, not all forms of institutionalization are to be resisted. There will always be some form of institution when dealing with social relations. Those to be resisted, according to Sartre, are those that lead to bureaucracy and/or dictatorship.

supplement to consciousness, the image is not ‘in’ consciousness, but rather imagination is a type of consciousness—an ‘imaginative consciousness’.²² As such, it is always directed toward an object. Thus, the object of the image is *not* the image itself, but that ‘real thing’ the image presents. In the case of non-fictive objects, there is an actual material object that is sought by the imaginative consciousness. Being both present (as an object of the image) and absent (as not physically present) the object of the image is ‘intended’ by the spontaneous emergence of the imaginative consciousness. In fact, both the image and the imaginative consciousness arise together—they are understood as co-constituting;²³ the former being the relation between the latter and the object intended. But it must be remembered that the image is *not* an existent for its own sake—it is only an *analogue* of the real object sought. As such, it is deemed unreal. ‘It is no doubt present, but, at the same time, it is out of reach. I cannot touch it, change its place: or rather I can well do so, but on the condition that I do it in an unreal way... to act upon these unreal objects I must divide myself, make myself unreal’.²⁴ Thus, the real desire, the ultimate desire, is to realize the material object (the real) in perception. Of course, the latter is impossible. Therefore, there is a deferral of desire/intentionality from the real toward the unreal.

This process is both satisfactory and frustrating: satisfactory because the object is partially presented in its absence as a phantom which gives minimally that which the real could give infinitely; and frustrating because the image is an already constituted unreal existent that will only play at satisfying desire²⁵—because it has no autonomous capacity, it teaches nothing, and it is finite insofar as it is a product of the intending imaginative consciousness. The result is that consciousness is constantly surrounded by phantom objects, which provide us with a ‘perpetual evasion... from actuality, from our preoccupation, our boredom, they offer us an escape from all worldly constraints, they seem to present themselves as a negation of the condition of being in the world, as an anti-world’.²⁶ In other words, they provide an escape from that which is. However, this ‘anti-world’ is a world constituted by inert, unreal objects that can do nothing by themselves; therefore, any attempt to base *praxis* off such a world will only provide episodic expressions of positive affect. The extreme of such an effort is what Sartre labels schizophrenia.

To prefer the imaginary is not only to prefer a richness, a beauty, an imaginary luxury to the existing mediocrity *in spite of* its unreal nature. It is also to adopt ‘imaginary’ feelings and actions for the sake of their imaginary nature. It is not only this or that image that is chosen, but the imaginary state with everything it implies... This unnatural, congealed, abated, formalized life, which is for most of us but a makeshift, is exactly what a schizophrenic desires.²⁷

22. Sartre, PI, p. 5.

23. *ibid.*, p. 9.

24. *ibid.*, p. 141.

25. *ibid.*, p. 142.

26. *ibid.*, p. 155.

27. *ibid.*, p. 169.

This does not deny the importance or the power of the imagination *in toto*, but merely demonstrates how living in an ‘imaginary state’ is a flight from reality, and thus hardly a mode that would provide the sort of real life liberation that so concerned Sartre.

In contrast to the image stands the real. The real for Sartre is that which is given in perception. In *PI* and *BN* it is the ‘in-itself’. The in-itself has an infinite depth of being in relation to perception, as the latter is incapable of exhausting all being-in-itself has to give.²⁸ Therefore, the real has infinite possibilities that both confront the subject as the site of viscous absurdity and offer potential for overcoming one’s situation as she creates herself by her radical freedom for herself.

In *CDR*, the real is still understood as materiality. However, the material world is that field of inertia that captures human labor, thereby alienating humans from the finality of their project(s). As the group seeks ‘to snatch from worked-upon material its in-human power of mediation’ it constitutes subjects according to ‘mediated reciprocity’ in which each subject remains individual but also an individual-for-others; and each other (i.e. third) does the same. Therefore, the human as constituted in the group is freed from the negative reciprocity that necessarily arises from the dialectical relationship between the project and the situation. As mentioned earlier, it is this process of de-alienation that most concerns Sartre.

III. THE IMAGINATION AND PERPETUAL REVOLUTION

It is also conceivable... that human thought (in so far as it is itself praxis and a moment of praxis) is fundamentally the understanding of novelty (as a perpetual re-organisation of the given in accordance with acts explicable by their end).²⁹

If it is the case that the circularity from series, to group, to series, to group, etc. is a necessary result of scarcity and the dialectical relation between praxis and situation, and if the image (i.e. the relation between consciousness and the intended object) only offers finite, momentary satisfaction and/or glimpses into that which might be, then in what way can the imagination aid us in constructing a broad social theory? Let me suggest that what needs to be explored is the way in which the imagination functions as a moment of praxis, as the ‘transcendental condition’ of the ‘project’, and as the site of the perpetual creation of novelty. Returning for a moment to *PI*, Sartre notes that there are two ways in which we can conceive of the future: (1) the living future and (2) the imagined future. The former is the ‘temporal ground on which my present perception develops, the [latter] is posited for itself but as *that which is not yet*.³⁰ The living future is part of ‘real existence’, which ‘occurs with present, past and future structures, therefore past and future as essential structures of the real are equally real, that is, they are correlatives of a realizing theme.’³¹ But the imagined future is posited by oneself, for oneself, as

28. Sartre, *BN*, p. xlvii.

29. Sartre, *CDR*, p. 61.

30. Sartre, *PI*, p. 211.

31. *ibid.*, p. 211.

an absence (a nothing, an unreality) that is desired. In the case of the group-in-fusion, the oath pertains to the 'imagined future' in that it 'recollects' a past moment of reality and seeks to recreate the exigence of that moment by the positing of an image, an image of the impossible. The problem is that while such recollection can indeed drudge up part of the affective impetus of that past, it is not able to reach the real of that moment by virtue of the inert nature of the image. Thus, by reflection (i.e. the pledge) the group will never be able to sustain itself and prevent dissolution into seriality or alienating institutions. Referring to the time after the fusion of the group and at the beginning of the pledge process Sartre remarks,

We may speak here of *reflection*, in the strictly practical sense: the group, waiting for the attack, looks for positions to occupy, divides itself so as to man all of them, distributes weapons, assigns patrol duties to some, and scouting or guard duties to others, establishes communication... and in this way, in the free exploitation of places and resources, it constitutes itself for itself as a group.

He would continue on to say,

It is impossible to deny that [the group] *posits itself for itself* once it has survived its victory. Or, to put it another way, there is a new structure to be explained: *group consciousness*... Furthermore, the problem of the *surviving group*... suddenly becomes connected for us with the problem of *being*, that is to say, of *permanence*.³²

Seeking permanence, the group imposes an inert mode of mediated reciprocity from within. Enter the pledge. However, the pledge, as a reflective act of 'group consciousness' locks the group into a *statut* of permanence that does not allow the group to reshape itself freely. Thus, freedom is negated and necessity reigns.³³

The only section in 'Volume One' of CDR where Sartre mentions the imagination is in the section 'Totality and Totalisation'. Tersely, the former is a creation which is present in its entirety, whereas the latter is a 'developing activity'. It should come as no surprise that Sartre classifies totality as 'the correlative of an act of imagination'.³⁴ This means that any totality is merely an *analogon*. Totalisation on the other hand is the correlative of *praxis*; it is a perpetual dialectical ordering. Favoring totalisation, Sartre devises a theory of individual and group *praxis* that, at moments, is able to embody freedom. But this freedom is only momentary because once the group's objective has been achieved there is no longer an immediate and exigent situation that requires common *praxis*. The result is that the group must pledge itself for itself and to itself by imposing inertia upon itself in the form of a reflective act (i.e. an *analogon*). This *analogon* is set to remind the group of the possibility of the violent foe's imminent return. Structuring itself by an image of 'fraternity-terror', the group therefore negates its own free *praxis* in favor of a totality ('we *are* x'). Seeking to recreate the affective purity that arose initially at the moment of 'apocalypse', the 'pledged group' views itself in its past victory by creating an

³². Sartre, *CDR*, p. 414.

³³. It is important to keep in mind that 'freedom' in CDR no longer means the ability to create oneself and meaning indefinitely but rather is the 'dialectical reorganisation of the environment'. Sartre, *CDR*, p. 406.

³⁴. *ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

image that will stir up the affective impression from that previous event. Successful in part, this effort is doomed to fail as the group permanently settles into this new order by institutionalizing itself.

Therefore, what needs to occur in order to prevent this ossification is that the group needs to take a *progressive* approach and turn its gaze *forward* to the field of possibles. That is, the group must resist the urge to rest assured within the fraternity-of-terror and instead conceive of ways in which new events can be produced. That way, the non-reflective experience of the apocalypse might be perpetuated by the will of the group. Such 'productive mythologizing' would arise in situation and seek to surpass such conditions as it imagines and seeks to produce possibilities that are as yet impossible. The question arises: will such imagined futures *produce* the desired *result*? No, they won't. It is not the imagination that produces the apocalypse. Such is a spontaneous upsurge of non-reflexive praxis in situation. Nor does it produce a final result at all. The imagination's role is merely to create an image of that which is not yet in order to *motivate group action* through affective possibilities that arise therefrom. As stated in *PI*, at times, an image is created 'for no other purpose than to arouse the feeling'.³⁵ Regarding the dialectic, the imagination is the essential first moment of *praxis* by which the *constituted group* envisions its next step in overcoming the conditions of scarcity and negative reciprocity. Then, through labor, the situation is modified thereby creating new conditions that must be overcome.

The reason this forward-looking approach has validity is that the pledged group's primary error is that it is seeking to preserve that which once was, through representation and reproduction of a past moment of pure freedom into a permanent state; whereas the desired approach would be one in which individuals and/or the group arise out of a given set of exceptional conditions but that continually create and produce new images. Therefore, creative imagining never settles and thus never ossifies into seriality and/or institutionalization. Of course, there will be moments when the group's particular task is accomplished, or when the apocalyptic moment ceases. But if scarcity is universal and undeniable (as Sartre claims) then there will never be a shortage of situations of exigence that need to be *identified* and *transcended*. This means that the group from one situation of exigence to the next is not the 'same' as it was by virtue of the previous apocalyptic moment. The group must continually recreate itself in light of each given situation of exigence in order to resist ever settling into *being x*. There is an openness that must come to characterize the social order, one that connects both the real world and the imaginary state. That is, human *praxis* must tether that balance between that which is and that which might be, with the hope that by preferring the former but simultaneously tending toward the latter a constant creation of affectivity will actually force the creation of the novel in new unforeseeable directions. In this way, we might call for a derealization of the political, or positively, we ought to revel in the imaginary with the hope that by the powers of the imagination we will be able to press the process of totalisation into presently unforeseen situations that will allow us to appropriately respond as we seek universal liberation.

35. Sartre, *PI*, p. 163.

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