THE VULNERABILITY OF THE RELATIONAL SELF:

G. W. F. HEGEL, SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR, AND NISHIDA KITARŌ

MEET PATTY HEARST

by

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Title: The Vulnerability of the Relational Self: G. W. F. Hegel, Simone de Beauvoir, and Nishida Kitarō Meet Patty Hearst

This dissertation examines relational models of selfhood cross-culturally through the work of G. W. F. Hegel, Simone de Beauvoir, and Nishida Kitarō. In the master-slave section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel states that the self becomes aware of itself only through the presence of the Other. In this encounter, consciousness discovers that the Other can be a source of recognition (*Anerkennung*). I turn to the work of Beauvoir and Nishida because they further develop Hegel's notion of recognition through their insistence that the face-to-face relationship that incites self-knowledge is mediated by social-historical events and discourses. Fundamentally, they make Hegel's notion of recognition more concrete, thus giving the reader of the master-slave dialectic an idea of the broader implications of Hegel's view. While Nishida uses few examples to illustrate the determinacy of the historical field of relations, Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is full of such descriptions, thus offering the reader of Nishida an illustration of the "historical world" that includes dimensions of constituted and constituting forces. Nishida's metaphor of the self as a place of interaction, or *basho*, in turn, is useful to the reader of Beauvoir who attempts to picture a self that is a project "toward the other." Moreover, their discussions of agency are weighted toward the perspective of the self in the case of Beauvoir and toward the side of the world for Nishida. Ultimately, this difference can be

viewed as grounding the distinct ways in which the authors conceive of ethics. Lastly, both authors attribute ethical action to self-surpassing. However, for Beauvoir, the surpassing of one's individuality leads to the transformation of self-other relations through the mutual recognition of freedom, while Nishida's self-surpassing entails seeking a new locus of ethical action, i.e. absolute nothingness.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On February 4, 1974, Patricia Hearst was kidnapped at gunpoint from the

Berkeley apartment that she shared with her fiancé by three members of the Symbionese

Liberation Army. She was held captive in a closet for over two months and given a new

name, "Tania." Ten weeks after her capture, she willfully participated in a bank robbery,[1]

for which she later served twenty-two months in a federal prison.[2] Hearst's case is held

up as an example of Stockholm Syndrome, in which the victim, isolated from all other

human relations and forced to pledge utter allegiance to the captor, comes to

traumatically bond with him or her. Cases of "traumatic bonding" are more easily

identifiable in situations of extreme captivity, like Hearst's, concentration camps, or

prisons, but they also occur in religious cults, brothels, and relationships of intimate

partner violence.[3] Such behavior defies common understanding of the way that we react

to violence through flight or fight responses. How could Hearst, held against her will,

blindfolded in a closet and subjected to sexual abuse, come to sympathize with the cause

of the perpetrators? The answer lies in the way that her sense of self was slowly worn

away in captivity. Hearst describes how her initial resistance to the new name and beliefs

that the SLA members presented her with eventually gave way to her assuming this

entirely new identity:

> In time, although I was hardly aware of it, they turned me around
> completely, or almost completely. As a prisoner of war, kept blindfolded

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[1] William Graebner, *Patty's Got a Gun : Patricia Hearst in 1970s America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1-4.

[2] Ibid., 102.

[3] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 74-75.

in that closet for two long months, I had been bombarded incessantly with the SLA's interpretation of life, politics, economics, social conditions, and current events. Upon my release from the closet, I had thought I was humoring them by parroting their clichés and buzz words without personally believing in them. Then. . . a sort of numbed shock set in. To maintain my own sanity and equilibrium while functioning day by day in this new environment, I had learned to act by rote, like a good soldier, doing as I was told and suspending disbelief. . . Reality for them was different from all that I had known before, and their reality by this time had become my reality.[4]

What does it mean to be "turned around almost completely"? How does one come to take on the reality of another, especially when that other is the imprisoner? While separating one's thoughts from the violence being undergone, or disassociating, is a technique often employed by prisoners, captivity reflects a greater horror when it extends from purely physical to mental captivity. Judith Herman asserts that isolating their victims – whether it is from information, financial resources, or other human beings – is the common thread that can be found within the tactics employed by perpetrators who are skilled in coercion and manipulation.[5] The intersubjective deprivation can even extend to wiping away "internal images of connection to others," such as those that are tethered to symbolic objects like pictures, letters, and mementos from loved ones:[6]

> Prisoners of conscience, who have a highly developed awareness of strategies of control and resistance, generally understand that isolation is the danger to be avoided at all costs…As tenaciously as their captors seek to destroy their relationships, these prisoners tenaciously seek to maintain communication with a world outside the one in which they are confined. They deliberately practice evoking mental images of the people they love, in order to preserve their sense of connection. They also fight to preserve physical tokens of fidelity. Under conditions of prolonged isolation, prisoners need "transitional objects" to preserve their sense of connection

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[4] Ibid, 81.

[5] Ibid., 79.

[6] Ibid., 80.

to others. They understand that to lose these symbols of attachment is to lose themselves.[7]

If isolation is a common factor in the situations of those who experience traumatic bonding, than it seems evident that the maintenance of our identity and agency must be tied to our social relationships, whether imagined or present. These examples of imprisonment reveal how our identities cannot be sustained through our own interior resources alone. We need real or imagined connections to others in order to prevent the dissolution of our identities. While the question of why and how abusers and tyrants deliberately employ coercive tactics to produce willing victims is a pressing one, my interest here is in what allows for the possibility of losing the self, or being "turned around almost completely." Hearst describes how she parroted the SLA's beliefs in order to avoid bodily harm, but "in trying to convince them, I convinced myself. I felt that I had truly joined them; my past life seemed to have slipped away."[8] While Hearst had been a healthy nineteen-year-old with friends, teachers, and families who affirmed her identity, when she was held hostage, no one was there to provide affirmation of her former self. She was able to maintain her own identity through her own efforts for a while, but over time it lost its reality. In the dearth of all other human connection, when Hearst received small rewards from her captors for good behavior, she slowly became dependent upon this recognition.[9] Fueled by the positive feedback that she received as she embraced their wishes and beliefs, she took on the only identity that was recognized: "Tania." Reflecting on her time with the SLA at the beginning of her autobiography, Hearst writes, "I feel

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[7] Ibid., 80. Also, see *Man's Search for Meaning*. Viktor Frankl describes how he kept hope alive during his imprisonment in a concentration camp by picturing his loved ones.

[8] Christopher Castiglia, *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 91.

[9] Herman, 78-79.

older and wiser now, more disillusioned in my feelings about my fellow man. I am aware of the stark reality that I am vulnerable."[10]

<center>Relational Models of the Self</center>

Throughout the 20th century, relational models of selfhood have been offered by philosophers working in fields as diverse as American Pragmatism, Feminist Care Ethics, Dialogical philosophy, and Japanese Kyoto School philosophy.[11] Relational theories of selfhood specify the ways in which the self is constituted by self-other interactions; they challenge the view that the self is an enclosed, self-sustaining entity. Hearst's story illustrates the implications of a self that is thoroughly relational. Such a self is utterly vulnerable and at risk of dissolution because it depends upon forces outside itself to sustain itself. However, while the intersubjective dimension of our selfhood allows for the possibility that the self could be lost, it also leaves us open to the ways in which others can contribute towards the formation of a viable sense of self. It is not through private introspection alone that we achieve self-understanding. We learn about who we are when we are called to respond to the Other in dialogue. Catriona Mackenzie believes that others play a key role in the self's ability to integrate the various aspects of itself and envision itself as an agent, i.e. someone who is "capable of effective action."[12] If we have

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[10] Castiglia, 99.

[11] For example, see Steve Odin, *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Eva Feder Kittay and Ellen K. Feder, eds., *The Subject of Care: Feminist Perspectives on Dependency* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2002); Watsuji Tetsuro, *Rinrigaku*, trans. Robert Carter (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996); Beata Stawarska, *Between You and I: Dialogical Phenomenology* (Ohio University Press, 2009).

[12] Catriona Mackenzie, "Imagining Oneself Otherwise." In Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 140.

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supportive people in our lives who listen to our preferences, hopes, and fears, then we will not only have a better understanding of our identity, but this will also open up a space wherein we can imagine new ways of being in the world. Positive affirmation will make these new ways of being in the world seem attainable. As Mackenzie suggests,

> The affective, evaluative, and imaginative processes of reflection – by means of which we clarify what we value, distinguish our self-conceptions from our points of view, and so achieve self-knowledge cannot be purely introspective. Our emotional responses to aspects of our identities such as our temperamental characteristics – responses, for example, of shame or pride – are shaped by and responsive to the estimations and responses of others. And these responses, at least in part, form the basis for our judgments about ourselves.[13]

If we find Mackenzie's account believable, then we must conclude that self-knowledge emerges through our relationships with others. Another conclusion that we might draw from a relational model of the self is that self-understanding depends upon externalization. We will see that Beauvoir develops this claim through her concept of alienation in Chapter 3. We have to posit our identities, i.e. give an account of who we are, in order to understand who we are. Beyond self-understanding, externalizing the self through dialogue actually delivers a sense of reality to our own identity. In "Being-in-the-world and Schizophrenia: Three Phenomenological Approaches to Self-Experience in Schizophrenia,"[14] I examined how one of the symptoms that individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia described was an impoverished sense of self. While these individuals often reported feeling an all-encompassing sense of "unreality," when empathically attuned therapists listened to them, some expressed a renewed sense of the reality of their selves.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] This article will appear in *Psychology and the Other: A Dialogue at the Crossroad of an Emerging Field*. Eds. David Goodman and Mark Freeman. New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

For example, one individual describes his or her loss of self and attests to the power of the therapist-client relationship:

> I cannot feel my *being* anymore. If I cannot feel myself, I cannot have control over an action. If I cannot feel myself, I cannot feel. I cross the street, and I don't realize it, and I must cross it again… I am not aware of the presence of my own person…I cannot say 'I' in relation to myself, but only in relation to others. *But when I am here talking with you all this does not happen.*[15]

While we do not have enough background information to presume too much from this account, it is striking to witness the shift between the individual's self-disturbance described in the first part of the interview to his or her declaration at the end. What we can conclude, is that the intersubjective encounter confers a sense of reality and diminishes the self-disturbance. Somehow, in the meeting, this person received the reality of his or her selfhood back from the Other. While the examples of traumatic bonding discussed earlier show how the intersubjective constitution of one's selfhood leaves one open to fracture, this latter example illustrates how it is also the means through which one is able to put the self back together again.

In my dissertation I will begin by taking up the claim that Hegel puts forward in the master-slave section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that the self becomes aware of itself only through the presence of the Other. Hegel asserts that self-consciousness is incited when it meets another self-consciousness. Consequently, the self both discovers that it is an object for the Other and that this Other is capable of conferring recognition (*Anerkennung*).[16] Hegel states that self-consciousness' first tendency is to treat the Other as a means to an end. However, it eventually discovers that a stable sense of self

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[15] Giovanni Stanghellini, *Disembodied Spirits and Deanimated Bodies: The Psychopathology of Common Sense* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004), 123-124.

[16] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977), § 178.

necessitates viewing the Other as an autonomous equal (not an object "for-it").[17] Hegel's dense dialectic leaves the reader with a vision of selfhood wherein the self's existence is found to be deeply colored by relations to others.

While Hegel is the starting point for my project, I turn to the work of two 20th century figures, East and West, Nishida Kitarō and Simone de Beauvoir, because they further develop Hegel's notion of recognition (*Anerkennung*) through their discussion of how the face-to-face relationship that incites self-knowledge is mediated by social-historical events and discourses. Beauvoir and Nishida appropriate Hegel's notion of the relational self in different ways. Fundamentally, they make his notion of recognition more concrete, thus giving the reader of the master-slave dialectic an idea of the broader implications of Hegel's view. Assessing that Hegel's system is too "abstract,"[18] Beauvoir concretizes the master-slave dialectic by turning to first-person narrative descriptions of self-other relations in *The Second Sex,* her novels, and autobiographies.[19] While Hegel shows that the self comes to reflect on itself when it is confronted with another consciousness that sees it as an object, Beauvoir carries this a step further by detailing the way that prevalent social discourses structure the way that the self seeks recognition from the Other. Nishida makes Hegel's notion of recognition more concrete by emphasizing that the self that becomes itself through recognition is always a being that *acts* and is

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[17] Hegel, § 191.

[18] Karen Green and Nicholas Roffey, "Women, Hegel, and Recognition in *The Second Sex*," *Hypatia* 25.2 (2010), 377.

[19] See Karen Green and Nicholas Roffey and Richard Freadman, *Threads of Life: Autobiography and the Will* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 144-5.

acted upon by the historical world.[20] He highlights the agency of the historical world in the determination of the self.

Both Beauvoir and Nishida take the structure of self-other relations witnessed in Hegel's master-slave dialectic and investigate the ways that the actions of the self in response to the Other are shaped by a historical world of meaning. Beauvoir and Nishida's focus on the historical world is crucial because freedom and individuality are not bare possessions of the I and the Thou. The possibilities of self-expression are delimited by one's historical context.

Beauvoir and Nishida scholars also have something to gain from reading each other and looking to their different appropriations of Hegel. My project will respond to the criticism that is often mentioned by Nishida scholars that Nishida's discussion of the self and the historical world is too abstract.[21] I contend that Beauvoir's narratives can be utilized as fitting examples of the ontology that Nishida lays out because they model the close relationship between individual freedom and the agency of the historical world. The first person accounts of experience that Beauvoir recalls in the *Second Sex* demonstrate Nishida's claims that the Other exists in the depths of the self [22] and the world acts on the self[23] by calling to mind the structure of being-for-others and the social discourses that provide lenses through which individuals structure their lives. In *Beyond Personal*

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[20] See Nishida Kitarō, "The Historical Body," *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy*, trans. and ed. by David A. Dilworth (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).

[21] James W. Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness: An Essay on the Kyoto School* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 71; 80.

[22] Odin, 88.

[23] See Nishida, "The Historical Body," 39-40 (*NKZ* 14: 269-270). (*Nishida Kitarō Zenshū*, 19 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shōwa, 1965-), vol. 1 p. 7.) [Hereafter cited as NKZ followed by volume and page numbers.]

Identity: Dogen, Nishida, and a Phenomenology of No-Self, Gereon Kopf writes that

Nishida's "preliminary reflections on alterity are similar to those developed by Hegel,

Sartre, and Benjamin."[24] Kopf proposes that an investigation into selfhood must include

attention to how the self constructs and presents itself to the Other, alluding to the

phenomenological tradition and Ricoeur's conception of narrative identity. I believe that

due to her fundamental interest in narratives and self-other relations, a comparison of

Beauvoir's work and Nishida's advances Kopf's project. My dissertation will thus add to

the recent work on Nishida's conception of the social self by Kopf and Odin.[25]

As Beauvoir acknowledges that human existence is ambiguous (we are bodies

that undergo biological processes and the judgments of others, but we are also freedoms

that separate themselves from the passivity of the body through thought and our

projects)[26] Nishida's term *basho*, or place,[27] is useful to the reader of Beauvoir who tries

to envision a self that is always both. *Basho* effectively captures the dual aspects that

Beauvoir describes. In the middle phase of his thought, Nishida replaces language of the

"subject" with the new notion of a "field" of consciousness.[28] Consciousness is not the

property of an independent, self-sustaining individual. In order to capture these two

sentiments, and to describe action without neglecting them, Nishida describes experience

as a place or field. Any remnant of the identity of a being as closed off or self-directing is

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[24] Gereon Kopf, *Beyond Personal Identity: Dogen, Nishida, and a Phenomenology of No-Self* (Surrey, Great Britain: Curzon Press, 2001), 111.

[25] See Kopf, *Beyond Personal Identity* and Odin, *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

[26] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 7-12.

[27] Nishida Kitaro, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970), 6-7 (*NKZ* 7: 16).

[28] John Maraldo, "Nishida Kitarō," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2010 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/nishida-kitaro/>.

eradicated by the concept of *basho*. Agency doesn't issue forth from a particularized subject; rather, *basho* becomes its site, source, and ultimately, the all-encompassing reality of body-mind-world. By asserting that reality is located in the space or *basho* of action, Nishida is able to avoid reductive accounts of the world where the self is simply opposed to matter. Consciousness and material beings interpenetrate such that there is no real outside or inside to human life. Nishida thus pushes Beauvoir's notion of ambiguity to an extreme by eliminating the language of the subject.

This dissertation draws upon Hegel, Beauvoir, and Nishida's distinct notions of the relational self. While reading these authors alongside each other is mutually illuminating, it is important to highlight the limits of the comparison. In other words, while the project is oriented around common threads within their theories of the self, significant differences are also noted. For example, with regard to Hegel, I draw on the abstract structure of the struggle for recognition that comprises his view of the relational self in the master-slave section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Furthermore, I highlight how social-historical discourses and practices shape the struggle for recognition. While these concepts also occur in Beauvoir's philosophical project, she believes that Hegel neglects to account for the way that gender differences and the human tendency to flee freedom both affect the kind of recognition sought. Her discussion of the relational self emphasizes the importance of how gender is expressed in social-historical institutions, discourses, and practices. While the sections of Hegel that I use are descriptive, Beauvoir's project is both descriptive and prescriptive. Beauvoir is very clear that there *is* an authentic form of existence, which is comprised of "assuming" one's freedom and recognizing the Other's freedom. Beyond this, she also has a social political agenda. *The*

Second Sex is written with the intent of critiquing concrete gender inequalities and oppressive social historical discourses of femininity in order to bring about actual change of social discourses and social-political structures.

Like Hegel and Beauvoir, Nishida is also concerned with the way that historical place shapes identity. His account of the self bears more in common with Beauvoir than Hegel, because it is has both descriptive and prescriptive elements. Part of the prescriptive aspect involves encouraging the reader to *realize* that she or he is not a self-sustaining individual. On the surface, this injunction resembles Beauvoir's ideal notion wherein the self discovers that its "free" projects are directed toward the Other's recognition, and are thus dependent (not self-sustaining). While this discovery leads to her ideal of mutual recognition between two subjects, the other aspect of her prescriptive orientation is that she never lets go of the possibility of individual transcendence, even within an oppressive situation. Broadly, *The Second Sex* details the oppressive situation that women have inherited, but Beauvoir continually reminds the reader that this situation is not inevitable, because human beings have a hand in shaping their identity and world. Therefore, the authentic self "assumes" her freedom through creating and inventing new values and ways of being in the world, while looking for recognition of these individual projects from others.

Nishida's ideal of realizing one's dependence on others involves a profound shift with regard to self-understanding and action. While Beauvoir's ideal is "assuming" one's freedom, Nishida's ideal is diametrically opposed in that the self is called upon to shed its belief in its own power so that its actions can be guided by that which is not self, or absolute nothingness. He attempts to invoke a fundamental transformation within the

reader wherein the self discovers that it is truly itself only through its own self-negation; it has its being in that which transcends it. For Nishida, the ultimate result of realizing one's dependence on the Other is the realization that the ego is only one way of interpreting one's reality. One is tied to the existence of Others as well as everything existing in the historical, social, and natural world in such a deep way that one's own existence cannot be separated in a dualistic manner. When one realizes one's indebtedness, then the locus of action can be shifted from an individualistic way of seeing the world to one that embraces non-duality.

With regard to Nishida's discussion of the relation between the self and the historical world, his later works are meant to address the impact of the social-historical world on the self. However, in contrast to Beauvoir, he does not investigate concrete injustices. Instead, he discusses the impact of history on the *structure* of self-identity. While in *The Second Sex* Beauvoir hopes to incite a transformation within the self with regard to resisting concrete inequalities, Nishida doesn't advocate for social-political resistance. He intends to incite an ethical-religious transformation in the reader wherein she will discover that the base of her self is absolute nothingness. While both Beauvoir and Nishida hope to inspire self transformation in the reader, Beauvoir's ideal rests upon transcendence and social-political resistance to oppressive situations, whereas Nishida's ideal involves inner self-negation to allow for a new basis from which the self acts. Ultimately, both provide perspectives that shed light on the challenges that the Hearst case presents for a relational model of selfhood.

Chapter Outline

Chapter II

I begin by examining Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic because it challenges the Western narrative of the self's autonomy that emerges in modernity.[29] In the chapter on self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel reveals how self-experience is incited by other human beings. In his account of self-consciousness, Hegel emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity, which effectively eliminates the possibility of accessing the self in isolation from a relation to others.[30] The structure of the selfhood is described as a "unity of itself in its otherness." Hegel describes the encounter with the Other as one wherein the self loses itself by finding itself outside itself. Only in this meeting does the "unity of itself in its otherness" become "explicit."

My reading of Hegel is informed by Evangelica Sembou and Robert Williams' reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; the crucial idea that emerges is: to be a self means to be tied to recognition by the Other. They both argue against the dominant interpretations that tie Hegel to the cogito of Idealism and seek to expose Hegel's deep interest in intersubjectivity.[31]

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[29] See Kopf, 6: "During the periods of the Enlightenment and Modernism this notion of an individual person-over-time was adopted as the general theory of *Mensch-sein*, underlying most philosophical, psychological, and ethical systems in the West…By then, the synthesis of Aristotelian and Neoplatonist thought within the Christian theological tradition had given rise to the notion of an individual and enduring core, which clearly demarcates and identifies an individual, human person."

[30] Hegel, § 184.

[31] While some commentators believe that Hegel is wedded to a metaphysical account of Spirit, Sembou, Pinker, and Williams argue that Hegel doesn't abandon his interest in intersubjective recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See Evangelia Sembou, "Hegel's Idea of a 'Struggle for Recognition': The *Phenomenology of Spirit*," *History of Political Thought* Vol XXIV No. 2 (Summer, 2003), 263; Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7-8; Robert R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 1-3.

Chapter III

Beauvoir's interest in Hegel stems from the thesis of the master-slave dialectic, which claims that "the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as nonessential, as the object."[32] Beauvoir appropriates Hegel's notion of recognition by claiming that the human being is essentially a "project of self toward the other."[33] *The Second Sex* can be read as Beauvoir's effort to "…adapt and make concrete the confrontation of self and other to be found in Hegel."[34] She accomplishes this by examining social discourses and first person narratives that reveal the way that human beings, especially women, strive for recognition. The type of recognition that men and women often want from each other is not simply a confirmation of freedom and sovereignty, as Hegel presents in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Rather, men, and especially women, often alienate themselves into an image of themselves (persona, social role, life story, etc.) in order to flee their existential freedom.[35] I will stress that while flight from one's freedom is a motivating factor in alienation, gendered social-historical discourses and practices also heavily encourage alienation by holding up ideal feminine and masculine ways of being.

In addition, my reading of Beauvoir will highlight how our demand for recognition issues from our need for the validation of our self-concepts and projects. While we will see how Beauvoir's ethics urge one to relinquish efforts to coerce the

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[32] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 7.

[33] Simone de Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 93.

[34] Green and Roffey, "Women, Hegel, and Recognition in *The Second Sex*," 378.

[35] Nancy Bauer, "Being-with as Being-against: Heidegger Meets Hegel in *The Second Sex*," *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (2001), 144.

Other into affirming an arbitrary self-concept of one's own making, it is important to note that she doesn't suggest foregoing all attempts to seek recognition. Realizing this point ensures that we do not miss the inextricable role of the Other in Beauvoir's vision of the self: "Man can find a justification of his own existence only in the existence of other men."[36] In Beauvoir's view, we are primed to seek intersubjective recognition. This leaves us vulnerable to the possibility that we will be denied recognition and will consequently risk losing our identity and agency, like Hearst and others who have been subjected to physical or mental imprisonment. The sobering conclusion that we may draw from such instances of traumatic bonding is that the self can be lost and it cannot be saved through the effort exerted by a particularized self alone. In other words, recognition is central to the constitution and maintenance of selfhood, and a particular individual cannot give it to her or himself. We get ourselves back from the other.

Chapter IV

Nishida alludes to Hegel both directly and indirectly in many of his works. In a 1931 essay, "Hegel's Dialectic from My Point of View," Nishida declares, "There is much in my present thought that I have learned from Hegel, and I feel closer to Hegel than to anyone else."[37] Even when Nishida doesn't directly reference him, Hegel's influence on his thought seems likely in such passages as: "The I becomes an I through recognition by a Thou, just as a Thou becomes a Thou only through recognition by an I."[38] This vein of

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[36] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 72.

[37] As quoted in Peter Suares, *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel: Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe Remake the Philosophy of Spirit* (Lanham, MD.: Lexington Books, 2011), 3-4.

[38] As quoted in Odin, *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism*, 91. While Nishida does not directly allude to Hegel's master-slave dialectic here, I will make a case in Chapter 4 that statements like

thought runs throughout Nishida's entire philosophical project in his repetition of the concepts "affirmation-qua-negation" and "continuity of discontinuity," which echo the idea that individuality emerges through a field of relation.[39] Nishida also prompts the reader to *realize* the mutual dependence of self and Other, but instead of taking this idea directly from Hegel, he draws on the Buddhist teaching of self-realization through emptiness. Hegel's main influence on Nishida's work can be witnessed in the allusions to Hegel's logic as he seeks to describe a concrete logic that captures a unified reality that overcomes the division between subject and object. Here, Nishida's use of Hegel's concept of the unity between thought and being is apparent.[40] Nishida's later works on the historical world[41] rely on the same desire for unity; he hopes to capture worldly interactions without recourse to a separation between world, self, and Other. It is important to note that throughout his corpus, Nishida's use of the concept "self" at times refers to a particular human being and at other times refers to *basho*.

In this chapter, I will seek to show how the intersubjective self is an important motif within Nishida's overall philosophical project as it broadens the reader of Nishida's

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this one reveal a likely influence. Hegel does not use the term "Thou" in the master-slave dialectic, but I believe that Nishida is drawn to the term "recognition" that Hegel uses to show that the other's affirmation is a prerequisite for the existence of the self. There are other Nishida quotes that do not use the term "thou" that could also be influenced by Hegel (e.g., the frequently occuring statement: "the individual determines itself only in relation to other individuals"). At times, Nishida doesn't seem to attribute any special meaning to the term "Thou" other than another human being that the self encounters. At other times, he seems to use the term "Thou" to highlight the self and the other's ultimate non-duality.

[39] Kopf, 111-112. While Hegel and Beauvoir describe recognition as a human phenomenon, Nishida writes that any other being in the natural world ("including mountains, rivers, trees, and stones") is a Thou, when seen from the standpoint of non-duality. See Odin, 92.

[40] For example, concerning his maiden work, Nishida writes "From the beginning, the idea of the spontaneous self-development of pure experience in *An Inquiry into the Good* contained in a fundamental way also Hegel's idea of the development of the concrete concept." As quoted in Peter Suares, *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel: Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe Remake the Philosophy of Spirit* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 3; 9.

[41] For example, "Logic and Life," "The Historical Body," and "I and Thou."

understanding of key aspects of his thought, including the self and its basis in nothingness, place, and the historical world (with reference to his notions of expression and creative activity). Focusing on the dynamic between I and Thou will help correct the overemphasis, in American Nishida scholarship, on the individual "true self" and the neglect of his discussion of the social self.[42] This can be explained in part due to the lack of translations of some of his later essays including the 1932 "I and Thou." For example, in Nishitani Keiji's biography on Nishida, Steve Odin points out how Nishitani neglects to consider the importance of the I-Thou dimension of selfhood in Nishida's thought. Much attention is devoted to Nishida's concepts of the "self as pure experience" and the "self as absolute nothingness," even though Nishida's later writings articulate the self in relation in the *social-historical* world.[43] While all three ways of formulating the self demonstrate the non-duality and interpenetration of the particular and the universal, i.e. self and world, Nishida's work on the social-historical world contains a distinct way of rendering this understanding of the self through his notion of the I-Thou relation. Aside from what the relational self can tell us about other themes in Nishida's philosophical project, Nishida's view offers insight into a vision of the self that is a confluence of relations. The implications of Nishida's view is that the self is always tied to an intersubjective space. The deepest reality of the self lies both in the intimacy of deepest inward subjectivity and reality as Other. Nishida maintains that the self is expressive and free, yet he simultaneously implies that the self does not possess itself. Similar to

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[42]Steve Odin points out that Nishida scholars have tended to focus on Nishida's conception of the true self as something individual. However, in his later essays, Nishida clarifies that the self is always social. See *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism*, 85-87.

[43] Like Odin, Kopf presents an argument that upholds the importance of the social self in Nishida's thought: "[Nishida]…made the I and Thou relationship the fundament of his theory of self-awareness," 84. Odin claims that the "I-Thou" dimension of selfhood is a "central and recurrent motif" throughout Nishida's entire philosophical project. See *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism*, 81.

Beauvoir's discussion of selfhood, Nishida's model of the self is one wherein the self is not a self-directing agent as discursive entity. By upholding the centrality of intersubjective relation in the maintenance of identity, when paired with Hearst's story, Nishida's vision of the self also provides an explanation for why Hearst lost her sense of self when isolated and held captive.

Chapter V

In this chapter, I bring Beauvoir and Nishida's thought into dialogue. I demonstrate how examining Beauvoir and Nishida together yields two accounts of agency that converge on the idea that the Other is a condition of selfhood. However, their discussions of agency are weighted towards the perspective of the self in the case of Beauvoir and towards the side of the world in Nishida. Their slightly different foci present the reader with two ways of visualizing the acting self that is a product of worldly relations.

Beauvoir affirms the importance of alienation and self-understanding directly in *The Second Sex*, "A being cannot achieve self-awareness except by alienating itself; it searches for itself within the world in a foreign form that it makes its own."[44] Beauvoir's account of alienation contends that we require distance to know the self; Nishida would not disagree, but for him it is not the self alone that is alienated in the object because the agency of the world forms the self. While Beauvoir asserts that alienating oneself into one's work or social role shows us how we tend to have difficulty affirming our lack of substance, Nishida focuses on the agency of the object – these determining forces – rather than the subject. The historical world that shapes the human being is actually the

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[44] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1952), 88.

condition for individuality. Beauvoir's idea that social discourses construct our subjectivity is more in line with Nishida's projects. However, her language of "assuming one's freedom" leads the reader to think in terms of an individual ego making decisions rather than a being that is truly empty of an individual essence.[45]

While Nishida maintains that the self is born in a historical world of relations that determines it, he gives few examples of this model of selfhood in his writings. As mentioned earlier, turning to Beauvoir's descriptions of self-other relations in *The Second Sex* allows us to consider the implications of such a view. The narratives in this text demonstrate the ways that the individuality and agency of the self are a product of historical discourses and events. The self is an agent through its determinations, just like the self that acts is the self that is born out of the historical world, for Nishida. Such descriptions help us envision what Nishida means when he says that the self is something that is made.[46]

As Beauvoir acknowledges that human existence is ambiguous – we are always both subjects and objects (determining and determined) – Nishida's concept of *basho*, or place,[47] supplies a logic that captures a self that is always both. *Basho* provides us with a metaphor for how the self is a unique conduit for social-historical discourses. Given Beauvoir's commitment to situated freedom and the fundamental impulse to seek

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[45] While Nishida may critique Beauvoir's language of the subject who alienates *herself* or assumes *herself*, ultimately Beauvoir's existentialist orientation makes individual transformation of paramount importance; indeed, authentic ethics require it. Nishida is also interested in self-transformation; for him, the latter is achieved when the self *realizes* that she or he is not a self-sustaining individual. This conversion experience allows for true ethical action, which issues from the realization and embodiment of oneness.

[46] Agustin Jacinto, "The Return of the Past: Tradition and the Political Microcosm in the Later Nishida," in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, & the Question of Nationalism*, ed. by James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 140.

[47] Nishida Kitaro, Fundamental Problems of Philosophy, 6-7 (*NKZ* 7: 16).

recognition from the Other, which structures our agency in a manner that is not clear-cut and unilateral, *basho* is a useful non-dual metaphor.

Nishida and Beauvoir's accounts are similar in that they each hold up human vulnerability as the path to ethical action. Examining their ethics together provides us with two notions of self-surpassing. Both describe our avoidance – through fear – of our own finitude and encourage the reader to confront it. For Beauvoir, this means being open to the Other's capacity to recognize or refuse recognition without attempting to coerce her. For Nishida, moments of loss or trauma open the self to its total inability to control fate. In this moment of helplessness, one can make a turnaround wherein one's actions issue from absolute nothingness rather than the strivings of the ego.

While both authors provide accounts of the relational self that are influenced by Hegel, their discussions of agency are weighted toward the perspective of the particular self in the case of Beauvoir and toward the side of the world as self (or, Self, as encompassing the non-dual 'self-other') for Nishida. Ultimately, this difference can be viewed as grounding the distinct ways in which the authors conceive of ethics. Turning to the author's ethics further reinforces their models of relational selfhood. More specifically, according to Beauvoir, the self consists of both immanence and transcendence. However, at times, she privileges transcendence, i.e. our ability to surpass, through our self-created projects, the ways in which we are simply constituted by our situation. She believes that it is up to human beings to invent values; part of maturation involves realizing that values are not "ready-made." However, Beauvoir complicates this position through her assertion that one does not create projects or values for oneself

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alone. The human being creates with an eye to the Other; we hope to receive recognition for our acts. "My essential need is therefore to be faced with free men," Beauvoir writes. [48] While Beauvoir recognizes that ethics rests upon the others' recognition of one's project, and is thus a kind of "self-surpassing," ethical action still entails appealing to others, and is thus dependent upon the *individual's* desire for affirmation.

In contrast, Nishida's notion of ethical action consists of undermining one's belief in one's own capacity to act ethically. Paradoxically, according to Nishida, shedding this perception results in spontaneous compassion. It is our desire to both avoid uncertainty and control the way that others perceive us that prevents us from realizing non-duality. In Nishida's Buddhist-influenced world view, reality is completely empty of "self-nature"; realizing this leads to action that is free of the idea that the self can exist in separation from other beings. Such action is deemed ethical by Nishida because it is empty of self will. Therefore, in relation to Nishida's view in which the agency of the world is highlighted, I believe Beauvoir's model of the ethical agent privileges the subject.

While both idealize the individual who confronts her finitude and remains open to her own vulnerability, neither believe that ethical behavior can be reduced purely to the behavior and will of the individual. Since the self is always oriented toward the Other, when subjected to oppressive situations, the self cannot simply will itself to transcend such situations. Hearst's story serves as a sobering illustration of the self that is thoroughly bound to intersubjective recognition. Her case and the cases of others who

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[48] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 129.

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have experienced traumatic bonding show that the self does not possess itself. For better or worse, we get ourselves back from the Other. Hearst's case dramatically presents the implications of a relational model of self. While Chapter V will discuss Beauvoir and Nishida's views of agency, we will return to the challenge that her story presents to the relational self and the tools that Beauvoir and Nishida provide in order to surmount these challenges directly in the conclusion.

CHAPTER II

HEGEL'S NOTION OF THE RELATIONAL SELF AND THE IMPORTANCE OF

RECOGNITION IN THE MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTIC

In his discussion of the master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Hegel introduces the bold claim that the self becomes aware of itself only through the presence of the Other. He states that self-consciousness is incited when it encounters another self-consciousness. The first two implications of this mutual encounter are that consciousness discovers that it can be an object for the Other, and secondly, it sees the Other as a source of recognition (*Anerkennung*).[49] Hegel introduces an intersubjective component to the notion of selfhood: each self-consciousness plays a mediating role for the other by constituting that through which each comes to know itself. In order to possess a stable self-conception of its own autonomy, self-consciousness strives to turn its "subjective certainty" into an "objective reality." The latter is an existence that is affirmed by free others.[50] While self-consciousness at first views the Other as a means to an end, it comes to understand that a viable sense of self requires realizing that the Other is an autonomous equal (not merely an object "for-it").[51] While Hegel does not suggest that mutual recognition is a moral *ought*, we will see in later chapters that it is for Beauvoir and Nishida. According to Beauvoir and Nishida, we cannot extricate the ethical ideal of realizing I-Thou relations from the ontological premise that the self is

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[49] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977), § 178.

[50] Alexandre Kojeve, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1969), 11.

[51] Hegel, § 191.

dependent on other free Thous for its existence. All three authors offer ontological models of the self wherein the self's existence is found to be inextricably in-relation with others.[52]

My reading of the *Phenomenology* suggests that Hegel reveals an ontological model of selfhood based on relation. However, beyond this positive claim, I note that Hegel also explores the negative consequences of ignoring its reality. Thus, in Hegel, and later on in Nishida and Beauvoir, While Hegel shows how self-consciousness initially takes itself to be self-sufficient and wholly self-governing, the *Phenomenology* demonstrates how this perception is mistaken.[53] This means that beyond his critical project, he also offers up positive claims regarding the ontological position that the self is oriented primordially to seek intersubjective relations.

In order to clarify how self-other relations are an integral component of selfhood, one must examine Hegel's discussion of how self-consciousness is a product of *Geist* (*spirit* manifest as the interweaving of history, practices, and institutions). This is related to his assertion that intelligibility is not a matter of the pure subject; it is a matter of social-historical forms of knowing. It is necessary to expand the discussion of the relational self to include his notion of *Geist* because self-other relations are structured based on social-historical discourses and practices. More specifically, the way that human beings recognize or fail to recognize each other is shaped by social-historical discourses

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[52] Beyond an ethical ideal, or an ontological dimension of the self's existence, Robert Williams points out that self-recognition in the Other is a structure of Reason itself: "Self recognition in the other is the universal, relational structure that pervades all aspects of Reason in its concrete actuality." See *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 196.

[53] Stephen Houlgate, "G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831)" in *The Blackwell Guide to the Modern Philosophers : From Descartes to Nietzsche*, ed. by Steven M. Emmanuel (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 301-302.

and practices. Thus far, I have introduced the idea that 1) the self's existence, or being, is tied to the Other, 2) the self's knowledge of itself is incited by and exists interdependently with the Other, 3) self-knowledge, and intelligibility in general, are shaped by social-historical practices and discourses, and 4) the self has the tendency to realize its indebtedness to these shaping factors and seek recognition from the Other. Based on these points, I will show how Hegel's theory of the relational self and the importance of recognition occurs at the level of ontology, ethics, and epistemology.

There are scholars who would dispute the view that, for Hegel, the ontological make-up of the self is tied to the Other as well as historical forms of knowledge and practices. Yet, a purely metaphysical and/or Idealist reading of Hegel misses some of his key insights with regard to intersubjectivity. The work of such authors as Evangelica Sembou, Robert Williams, and Robert Pippin suggest that a more intersubjectively informed reading of the *Phenomenology* is in order.

Again, my reading of Hegel's project in the *Phenomenology* takes him to be advancing epistemological, ontological, and ethical claims. Unpacking these arguments will allow me to demonstrate, in later chapters, how Beauvoir and Nishida took up Hegel's notion of the relational self in their own ontological and ethical projects.

Intersubjectivity and The "Metaphysical" and "Non-Metaphysical" Debate

One of the most prominent debates in Hegel scholarship on the *Phenomenology* concerns the various interpretations of Spirit, or *Geist*. Scholars tend to align themselves in either the "metaphysical" or "non-metaphysical" group with respect to whether or not they interpret Spirit as a statement about Being itself. My project does not focus on Spirit

alone; however, depending on how one reads this crucial concept, current debates emphasize reading Hegel's notion of selfhood as either a normative concept defined in relation to history or as an ontology, i.e. a theory about being itself. . The non-metaphysical, historical reading is ultimately more compelling, as it better accounts for the intersubjective dimension of selfhood that is so indispensable for Hegel's dialectics, especially as it manifests in the *Phenomenology*.

Pippin and Terry Pinkard (I place Sembou and Williams here too) advance non-metaphysical readings of Hegel, as they see him making a transcendental argument about the conditions needed for anything to be an object of thought. Furthermore, they view Hegel as offering a genealogy of certain discourses that unfolded in the West with respect to the self and nature. For these thinkers, Hegel's project concerns historical concepts; it does not extend into the actual structure of Being itself. However, scholars such as Stephen Houlgate and Jean Hyppolite do not see a division between Hegel's description of the categories of thought, or the logic of the mind, and the logic or structure of being itself.[54]

Broadly, the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel stresses that Spirit is merely an intersubjective background[55] against which individuality forms itself. Therefore, instead of adopting the early 19th century metaphysical reading that views Spirit as a divine essence whose development is teleological,[56] Spirit is described as a concept referring to the conditions that make thought possible. While Kant gave a purely formal account of

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[54] Ibid., 119.

[55] Evangelia Sembou, "Hegel's Idea of a 'Struggle for Recognition': The *Phenomenology of Spirit*," *History of Political Thought* Vol XXIV No. 2 (Summer, 2003), 274.

[56] Paul Redding, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2010 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/hegel/>.

the conditions for the possibility of knowledge, Hegel's project, according to such a

reading, includes actual, lived social-historical practices as conditions for the possibility

of knowledge. For example, situations in which the subject desires worldly objects,

interacts with others, and is engaged in labor are actual conditions that prompt self-

consciousness, according to Hegel.

Those who read Hegel as advancing a "non-metaphysical" project in the

Phenomenology focus on this latter point. With respect to self-other relations, Williams

writes:

> When Hegel introduces the crucial concept of spirit (*Geist*) he shows that
> spirit originates in and results from a process of recognition that involves
> struggle, domination and reconciliation. Spirit has its existential genesis in
> interpersonal recognition. It is an I that is a We and a We that is an
> I…This implies that *Geist* is a fundamentally interpersonal and social
> conception.[57]

Contra the traditional interpretation that Spirit is a "transcendent metaphysical entity,"

Williams argues that Hegel actually aims to show how Spirit is the intersubjective matrix

of relations out of which both intelligibility and an individual's identity emerge. Absolute

Spirit, then, according to Williams, is a historical achievement of a community where

mutual recognition prevails. Pointing to the following passage in the *Phenomenology*,

Williams suggests that forgiveness allows individuals to realize their indebtedness to one

another and mutually recognize each other: "The word of reconciliation is the objectively

existing *Geist*, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself *qua* universal consciousness in

and through its opposite… [This is] a reciprocal recognition which is the absolute

Geist."[58] Again, this conception of Spirit does not suggest that Spirit develops in a

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[57] Williams, 14.

[58] As quoted by Williams, 208.

particular manner based on teleological necessity; rather, Williams holds that Spirit is an intersubjective framework that is always at work in history. This intersubjective realm becomes "actual" when a society is composed of subjects who mutually recognize each other.

Like Williams, Sembou attests to the centrality of intersubjectivity within Hegel's project. She argues that Hegel doesn't prioritize a metaphysical view of Absolute Spirit and leave behind his claims about intersubjectivity and recognition in the *Phenomenology*.[59] Sembou affirms Williams' idea that Hegel uses the term Spirit – where Spirit is an intersubjective background – instead of "subjectivity" because it resists reducing the self to an atomistic, wholly self-determining entity; for both, the self is thoroughly intersubjective. Sembou writes that understanding Hegel's project as a whole in the *Phenomenology* requires that one grasp that "absolute knowing" does not refer to a positive claim about reality in itself; Hegel uses "absolute" to refer to that which is "self-determining" instead of that which is "conditioned" or necessary. Absolute knowing refers to an individual or community's realization that the subject cannot be extricated from the object; this means that objects do not exist free from social-historical forms of knowing. Sembou offers a way of thinking about this concretely:

> Inherent in 'spirit' – or interpersonal relationships, as these are understood by humans in the course of history – is a 'struggle for recognition,' which gives shape to human life, as well as being the driving force for change. Once humans come to realize this, they have reached the standpoint of 'absolute knowing.' They now *know* that it is *they* who define the beliefs and values of the society in which they live, and that these beliefs and values in turn underlie social and political institutions, as well as governing all relationships among them. They also recognize that all philosophical and scientific theories are, to a large extent, determined by

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[59] Sembou, 263.

the kind of life they lead, by their relationship with nature (and the ways they conceive this), and by their understanding of interpersonal relations.[60]

Sembou's particular way of reading Hegel's assertion that "Substance is essentially Subject"[61] is to hone in on human beings' conceptions about the world. She emphasizes how Hegel strives to overcome dualistic ways of conceiving of reality, unlike Descartes' theory of thinking substance and extended substance,[62] by highlighting how human practices shape the object of knowledge. Ultimately, both Sembou and Williams claim that the *Phenomenology* is about the subject's assumptions about experience and how these assumptions are influenced by intersubjective relations.

Responding to the late nineteenth century metaphysical readings of Hegel that viewed Spirit as the Divine moving towards self-consciousness,[63] Pippin, Sembou, and Williams locate the *Phenomenology*'s fundamental contribution to Western philosophy in its emphasis on the importance of intersubjectivity and social-historical forms of knowing in defining the self and reason.

This social-historical, intersubjective reading of Spirit offers a more effective model of selfhood for explicating Hegel's master-slave dialectic, wherein the self is ontologically, epistemologically, and ethically tied to the Other. I will delve deeper into the self-other relation to show how it is structured by social historical forms of knowing, with the relational self as the focus of investigation.

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[60] Ibid., 279.

[61] Hegel, § 25.

[62] Ibid., 278.

[63] Redding, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/hegel/>.

Method and Epistemology in the *Phenomenology*: The Natural Attitude and the Unity of

Thinking and Being

While this chapter will focus on the model of self that is put forward in the master-slave dialectic, it is important to situate these claims within the larger project of the *Phenomenology*. Thus, this section will explore Hegel's epistemology and method in the *Phenomenology*. Furthermore, with respect to my reading of Hegel, it will give support for the position that Hegel offers an ontological theory of the relational self.

Briefly, the first three chapters of the text examine common epistemological assumptions of Modern philosophy: for example, Kant's idea of the thing-in-itself, Empiricist and Rationalist positions, and philosophical problems like the One and the Many, etc.[64] Hegel's task in these chapters is to expose the problems inherent in one-sided claims about the world.[65] For example, one such one-sided position is the fact that consciousness downplays intentionality by thinking of the object only and forgetting that the object is always "for consciousness." Hegel aims to show that the subject plays an *active* role in its relation to the world; it is not a passive *knower*. Broadly, Hegel reminds the reader that human beings tend to adopt abstract positions and view the self and objects in the world in a reified manner. Human beings' tendency to take up "one-sided" views will be important to my own project as the failure of such views leads to the promotion of a model of selfhood that is rooted in relationships with others as well as social-historical forms of knowing.

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[64] Rocio Zambrana, University of Oregon Lecture, April 15, 2013.

[65] Williams, 123.

In terms of the latter, Hegel's text can be classified as a reconstruction of how the modern subject came to, or developed, certain assumptions about its relation to the world and its autonomy.[66] The work is both reconstructive and critical, however, in that Hegel exposes various philosophical, political, and religious claims about the world to the reader while simultaneously showing how they are self-contradictory.[67] Ultimately, Hegel will also make positive ontological claims about the self that exists through its relation to beings outside itself.

I begin by examining how Hegel undermines the Western narrative of the self's autonomy that emerges in modernity.[68] While Hegel is interested in what the subject contributes to knowledge, he is critical of Kant's way of accounting for this (i.e. transcendental conditions, namely, space and time as pure forms of intuition, the categories, and the transcendental unity of apperception) because, as I mentioned earlier, these characteristics are too formal. Hegel begins with the natural attitude because he wants to restore the unity of thinking and being that is obscured when one engages in abstract thinking. While Locke and Kant presuppose that thinking and being are fundamentally opposed, Hegel reasons that this opposition stems from their assumption that knowledge is an instrument that allows the subject access to reality, which stands over and against the subject.[69] Therefore, in an effort to philosophize prior to the

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[66] Frederick Neuhouser, "Desire, Recognition, and the Relation Between Bondsman and Lord" in *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. by Kenneth R Westphal (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 38.

[67] Robert Stern, *The Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 41.
[68] See Gereon Kopf, *Beyond Personal Identity: Dogen, Nishida, and a Phenomenology of No-Self* (Surrey, Great Britain: Curzon Press, 2001), 6.

[69] Williams, 123.

postulations of critical philosophy, Hegel begins his inquiry into the relation between thinking and being by taking up the natural attitude. Kant's critical project sought to uncover the conditions under which knowledge is possible. However, Hegel's way of linking thinking and being is to show how ordinary consciousness provides its own criterion.

Working to refute Modern philosophy's skepticism that cognition is an instrument or medium[70] that is fundamentally divorced from the object of knowledge, Hegel displays the problem with conceptualizing cognition in this manner in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*: "If we remove from a reshaped thing what the instrument has done to it, then the thing – here the Absolute – becomes for us exactly what it was before this [accordingly] superfluous effort."[71] One problem that occurs when a thing-in-itself, or the Absolute, is posited is that it introduces a profound gap between mind and world that cannot be closed. Hegel goes on to demonstrate how both cognition and the object of knowledge are assumed to be true. While the object is readily given, the qualification of being the true – we see this in Hegel's description of philosophy as "the actual cognition of what truly is"[72] – the cognizing power of the subject, must also be true because consciousness provides the criterion by which the line is drawn between itself and the Absolute. In other words, if we trust the self to make any truth statements about reality, including the idea that the knowledge of reality and reality itself are opposed, then Hegel claims that we cannot simultaneously maintain that knowledge is an instrument that distorts actuality:

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[70] Hegel, § 73.
[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid., § 73.

> To be specific, it [the fear of error] takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an instrument and as a medium, and assumes that there is a difference between ourselves and this cognition. Above all, it presupposes that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other, independent and separated from it, and yet is something real; or in other words, it presupposes that cognition which, since it is excluded from the Absolute, is surely outside of the truth as well, is nevertheless true… [73]

Again, the problem with this assumption is that positing a separation between the two relies upon the fact that consciousness is already the true because *it* is drawing the line. More concretely, Hegel argues that the skeptic, by picturing cognition as a medium that might be flawed, forgets that she is the one who establishes what is true by claiming that cognition as a medium lies apart from reality. This is what Hegel means when he says that consciousness provides its own criterion; consciousness is the ultimate authority of what is true. Therefore, skepticism, or doubt about the efficacy of the cognitive faculties can never be through-going; the knower cannot get outside of herself in order to determine whether or not cognition can accurately grasp the object. [74]

Later on, Hegel writes that while knowledge is always after the pure object in-itself, "the *in-itself* that would supposedly result from it [knowing] would rather be the being of knowledge *for us*. What we asserted to be its essence would be not so much its truth but rather just our knowledge of it. The essence or criterion would lie within ourselves." [75] While consciousness would like to grasp immediate knowledge of the object, it cannot abandon its subjectivity and "test its own knowledge by that standard [the object in itself]." [76] Ultimately, it is impossible to escape the role that the subject

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[73] Ibid., § 74.
[74] Stern, 38.

[75] Hegel, § 83.

[76] Ibid., § 85.

plays in knowledge because it is the standard that determines truth. However, despite the fact that Hegel follows a Kantian line of thinking by focusing on how the subject plays a role in the constitution of the object, Hegel believes that he overcomes Kant's split between the thing-in-itself and the subject by demonstrating that positing a realm of *noumena* is a type of bad metaphysics itself. This is the case because positing the thing-in-itself goes beyond the bounds of experience. Hegel stresses that experience entails awareness of being; conceptualizing being as "out there" involves stepping out of experience.

Broadly, Hegel is a thinker who strives for unity. Instead of introducing a realm of noumena, he presents the thinking being as a being who is inextricably part of nature, or the possible objects of thought. This is how he surpasses Kant and Locke's metaphor of reason as an instrument. Gadamer insists that reason is not synonymous with thought for Hegel; rather, it is the "unity of thought and reality."[77] This means that all difference, e.g. the difference experienced in reflection or self-consciousness, issues from this unity:

> It is true that consciousness of an 'other', of an object in general, is itself necessarily *self-consciousness*, a reflectedness-into-self, consciousness of itself in its otherness. The *necessary advance* from the previous shapes of consciousness for which their truth was a Thing, an 'other' than themselves, expresses just this, that not only is consciousness of a thing possible only for a self-consciousness, but that self-consciousness alone is the truth of those shapes.[78]

Here we see that the same structure of "unity of itself in its otherness"[79] that is grasped in the most basic definition of self-consciousness – perceiving an identity between thinking

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[77] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hegel's Dialectic of Self-Consciousness" in *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary*, ed. by John O'Neill (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 151.

[78] Hegel, § 164.

[79] Ibid., § 177.

of oneself as an object and the object of oneself – is actually present in all knowledge. The object prompts self-consciousness, but, as the object is only grasped through consciousness, it cannot have a reality that is not already a part of the perceiver. In the following passage, we see the same structure of "unity of itself in its otherness" which lends support to Gadamer's reading:

> This simple infinity, or the absolute Notion, may be called the simple essence of life…This self-identical essence is therefore related only to itself; 'to itself' implies relationship to an 'other', and the relation-to-self is rather a *self-sundering*; or in other words, that very self-identicalness is an inner difference…These *sundered moments* are thus *in and for themselves* each an opposite – of an other…each is therefore in its own self the opposite of itself…[80]

Here the structure of life itself is one wherein a unity separates itself. We begin to see how Hegel's ontology defines a being's identity as that which occurs based on its relations to other beings. This is apparent in the structure of self-consciousness, which is incited by worldly interactions with objects and Others, as well as all living beings. The self exists and knows itself through that which differs from itself.

Now that we have briefly examined Hegel's ontological statement about the "unity of itself in its otherness," we will return to Hegel's discussion of the social-historical forms that mediate self-knowledge. The awareness that the self is fundamentally tied to these forms is part of the larger movement wherein the self broadens its one-sided views about itself and reality. Self-consciousness becomes aware that it is a product of *Geist* (history, practices, institutions, and being itself). In order to demonstrate how intelligibility is a matter of social-historical forms of knowing,[81] rather than a product of the self alone, Hegel gives a developmental account of the normative

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[80] Ibid., § 162.
[81] Rocio Zambrana, University of Oregon Lecture, 4/3/2013.

assumptions that are held about mind/world relations, the self, religion, politics, etc. Therefore, he begins with natural consciousness rather than philosophy:

> …an exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance will here be undertaken…it can be regarded as the path of the natural consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge; or as the way of the soul which journeys through the series of its own configurations…so that it may…achieve finally…the awareness of what it really is in itself.[82]

Returning again to the criterion for establishing the true, since it lies within consciousness itself, the proper method of philosophy is to "look on" while "consciousness examines its own self."[83] However, Hegel believes that by "looking on," the contradictions in these normative assumptions will be revealed. The path that natural consciousness takes is thus a serious matter for Hegel and a cause for despair; he warns that it will lose its self as well as its truth when it sees how its Notions fail.

Throughout the introduction, Hegel chides skeptical assumptions about epistemology. He concludes that while the philosophical assumptions of his time continually worry about how the cognitive apparatus could lead to erroneous knowledge, knowledge is by definition, once removed from the Absolute: "The first object, in being known, is altered for consciousness; it ceases to be the in-itself, and becomes something that is the in-itself only for consciousness. And this then is the True: the being-for-consciousness of this in-itself."[84] Knowledge is never identical to the object; it is always once removed. More precisely, knowledge is always mediated by consciousness. Again, this consciousness is not bare or formal, though; it contains historical shapes of knowing.

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[82] Hegel, § 76-78.

[83] Ibid., § 85.

[84] Ibid., § 86.

In the remainder of the Introduction, Hegel highlights how the *Phenomenology* contains a

record of the natural progression of human knowledge that the reader can watch unfold.

Beginning with the natural attitude, Hegel demonstrates how different shapes of

consciousness (*Gestalten des Bewusstseins*) are transformed as they encounter

experiences that contradict their one-sided convictions. Hegel uses the word *aufheben*, or

sublation, to characterize the dialectical movement of the shapes of consciousness; after

discovering contradictory views they "confront and incorporate" these views.[85] Williams

claims that Hegel doesn't try to either merely surpass or uphold the natural attitude.

Rather, he aims to expel dogmatic and partial truths from ordinary consciousness.[86] The

latter operates dogmatically: "It thinks abstractly by lifting its object out of context, and

seeking to maintain it [in] fixed isolation from, or opposition to, everything else."[87]

Again, this forgetting of context and relation will be my point of focus in my

investigation of models of selfhood. Williams writes:

> The creation of rigid oppositions, and the abstract isolation of the elements
> from relation is the cul-de-sac of ordinary consciousness and reflection. In
> its interpretation of the *Gestalten des Bewusstseins*, ordinary
> consciousness grasps only the moment of difference, or abstract identity,
> while suppressing relation and mediation. Thus, ordinary consciousness
> tends to interpret itself subjectively.[88]

Now we are in a better position to understand what Hegel means when he says that the

movement of self-consciousness is "the way of despair."[89] He uses this term to capture

how consciousness possesses abstract concepts about itself that ultimately fail.

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[85] Williams, 123.
[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., 129.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Hegel, § 78.

Consciousness doesn't recognize that its life is a "unity of itself in its otherness." The subject itself is the source of its despair because "consciousness is for itself its own concept."[90] This means that the subject possesses an abstract view of itself as separate from the world. The section on the unhappy consciousness is an example of how consciousness can become consumed with this abstract idea that it is separate from the whole of life. Here we glimpse a more complete articulation of self-consciousness' wish to see itself as autonomous. Self-consciousness desires to lift itself out of life and regard itself as "independent" from life.[91] Throughout the *Phenomenology*, Hegel will examine different structures of *Geist*, or world spirits. The unhappy consciousness is one such world spirit. It neglects the unity between the realms of spirit and body. Williams avows that Hegel sees each world spirit as suffering from the "problem of self-recognition in otherness."[92] By separating reality into a world of spirit and a world of body, the individual fails to see that it is both. Here, Hegel references the Christian privileging of the soul and debasement of the body. Despite the individual's attempts to claim independence from its bodily existence, the latter continues to reassert itself. The self continually fails to recognize that the view that it holds about itself is often partial and one-sided; what is needed is a recognition of itself in what it perceives to be other than itself. The problem of the unhappy consciousness is that it fails to accept that it is both body and spirit.

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[90] Williams, 130.
[91] Hyppolite, 72.

[92] Williams, 205.

<u>Self-Consciousness: "The Truth of Self-Certainty"</u>

Now that we have a view of the larger methodological and epistemological framework within which Hegel is working in the *Phenomenology*, we can turn to the chapter on self-consciousness. Here we will be presented with the modern view of the self which proves to be untenable. Out of this failure, Hegel introduces the idea of the self that is rooted in relations with others. The notion of recognition, then, becomes central. According to Fred Neuhouser, this chapter begins with a "bare concept of freedom," i.e. that the self's thoughts and actions issue only from itself. Hegel uses the term *Selbstandigkeit*, that which depends on itself to be itself, to express the former.[93] Neuhouser writes that the modern subject possesses a "basic drive" to affirm its autonomy. Therefore, as Hegel aims to subject these normative assumptions to inquiry in order to tease out the conditions that are necessary to support such assumptions, the chapter on self-consciousness is meant to envision the conditions that are necessary to fulfill the self's desire to be free.[94] In this section I will re-construct Hegel's argument concerning the failure of *Selbstandigkeit* while teasing out how the conditions that prompt self-knowledge provide us with an ontological model of the relational self.

At the beginning of the chapter, the initial movement to self-consciousness is prompted by the discovery that objects are not "wholly independent realit[ies]" because they appear as objects "for" consciousness and are thus shaped by it.[95]

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[93] Neuhouser, 39.

[94] Ibid., 40.

[95] Neuhouser, 37; Hegel, "This unity, however, is, as we saw, just as much its recoil from itself; and this conception breaks asunder into the opposition of self-consciousness and life: the former is the unity *for which* the absolute unity of differences exists, the latter, however, *is* only this unity itself, so that the unity is not at the same time *for itself*" § 168.

> In the previous modes of certainty what is true for consciousness is something other than itself. But the Notion of this truth vanishes in the experience of it. What the object immediately was *in-itself* – mere being in sense-certainty, the concrete thing of perception, and for the Understanding, a Force – proves to be in truth, not this at all; instead, this *in-itself* turns out to be a mode in which the object is only for an other…For the *in-itself* is consciousness; but equally it is that *for which* an other (the *in-itself*) is; and it is *for* consciousness that the in-itself of the object, and the being of the object for an other, are one and the same.

Here, the idea that objects are always "for" consciousness affirms Williams' point that Hegel is continually working towards self-recognition in the other. Recalling the epistemological issues that Hegel struggles with in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, the subject comes to realize that its knowledge of objects is not direct; instead, it is mediated by itself. For example, I may want to know an apple in itself without my concept of the apple distorting it. However, according to Hegel, it is impossible to do so because I am the one who has pointed to the apple as an object of knowledge. While I have tried to separate my knowledge of the apple from the apple itself, I end up recognizing my own activity in the object; i.e., I see that I already determined that the material object in question was an apple. Furthermore, my pointing to the object will depend upon the practices within my social-historical context. For instance, to use another example, at different times in history, different explanations were given to the existence of planets and stars. Throughout the *Phenomenology*, self-consciousness continually realizes that each viewpoint that it believes can stand alone actually relies on that which it tries to dismiss. For instance, recall the unhappy consciousness who rejects her bodily existence in favor of her soul and comes to realize that her spiritual life depends upon her body.

While the examples that I gave to explain the unity of consciousness and its object are epistemological and non-metaphysical, I believe that Hegel's ontological point is that the structure of self-consciousness is one wherein itself as object and itself as knower emerge as distinct, yet belonging to the same existence. We will see in a moment when Hegel introduces his concept of "life" that all of being is a whole that separates from itself into many beings. This whole is then driven to recognize the fact that beings share a common basis.[96] Again, Williams characterizes this structure as "self-recognition in otherness."

Returning to the idea that objects are not "wholly independent realit[ies]" due to their appearance as objects "for" consciousness, Neuhouser writes, "From this point on 'the true' will be located not in an isolated object but in a subject-relating-to-an-object that, only as a whole, is self-sufficient. "[97] The criterion for the "true" is the object that *appears* to consciousness as an in-itself. However, since one may mistakenly apply concepts to objects, consciousness continually "tests" the object to see if it corresponds to its concept.[98] This "testing" takes place in experience; for example, in order to be called a "good teacher," the person in question's actions must fit the concept of a "good teacher." This section of the *Phenomenology* will test the concept of freedom as *Selbstandigkeit*.

Hegel begins his inquiry into self-consciousness by describing the two objects that appear to consciousness in everyday experience:

> Consciousness, as self-consciousness, henceforth has a double object: one is the immediate object, that of sense-certainty and perception (not me) which however for self-consciousness has the character of a negative; and

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[96] Hegel, § 168-169.
[97] Neuhouser, 37.

[98] Williams, 128.

the second, viz. itself which is the true essence and is present in the first instance only as opposed to the first object. In this sphere, self-consciousness exhibits itself as the movement in which this antithesis is removed, and the identity of itself with itself becomes explicit for it.[99]

Here, Hegel describes the sensory object as "negative" because it is encountered as being in opposition to and external to the self. Hegel writes that the object incites consciousness to reflect on itself by opposing it. However, consciousness seeks to consider itself apart from the object and thus make its self thematic. It is through the presentation of the object that opposes it that we see the first glimpse of consciousness' perception of itself as sovereign. However, the claim is even more radical because self-consciousness is "*present in the first instance only as opposed to the first object*."[100] This means that it is a worldly object that first incites self-consciousness. According to Hegel, Kant is mistaken to assume that the transcendental unity of apperception is inherently self-conscious *a priori*. From the beginning of the chapter, the self's existence and knowledge of itself depends upon what is perceived as other to itself, i.e., worldly objects. Furthermore, we will see from the first moment of self-consciousness that the subject is engaged in a struggle for recognition.

We can further understand what Hegel means when he says that self-consciousness arises from an object that "has the character of a *negative*" by looking to his famous statement that self-consciousness is "Desire in general":

> With that first moment, self-consciousness is in the form of *consciousness*, and the whole expanse of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time only as connected with the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness with itself; and hence the sensuous world is for it an enduring existence which, however, is only *appearance*, or a difference which, *in itself*, is no difference. This antithesis of its appearance and its

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[99] Hegel, § 167.

[100] The italics are mine.

truth has, however, for its essence only the truth, viz. the unity of self-consciousness with itself; this unity must become essential to self-consciousness, i.e. self-consciousness is *Desire* in general.[101]

Here it becomes clear, once again, that self-consciousness is incited after individuals take up a relationship with a worldly object. While self-consciousness is sure of its own being, it doesn't view worldly objects as having the same claim to existence that it possesses with reference to itself. When Hegel says that the "unity of self-consciousness with itself…must become essential, i.e. self-consciousness is *Desire* in general," he is referring to the fact that our certainty about ourselves is entangled with our desire for objects. The phrase "must become" implies that self-consciousness inherently seeks confirmation of its existence from objects; it doesn't possess it inherently. Earlier in the same paragraph, Hegel writes that consciousness is comprised of two "moments." In the second moment, self-consciousness is a mere tautology. However, in the first moment, self-consciousness confronts objects outside of itself as "other."[102] Objects are part of self-consciousness' awareness of itself, but its unity is privileged as that which *is*, or has "*being.*" We see that consciousness possesses a strained relationship with itself in that part of its self-relation is connected to worldly objects, but it also sees itself as separate from them. In the next chapter, we will see how Beauvoir reframes this idea and describes human experience as both *Mitsein* and separation.

In the next paragraph Hegel introduces the close connection between self-consciousness and objects through his concept of "life":

The object of immediate desire is a *living thing*. For the in-itself, or the universal result of the relation of the Understanding to the inwardness of things, is the distinguishing of what is not to be distinguished, or the unity

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[101] Hegel § 167.
[102] Ibid.

of what is distinguished. But this unity is, as we have seen, just as much its repulsion from itself; and this Notion sunders itself into the antithesis of self-consciousness and life: the former is the unity for which the infinite unity of the differences is; the latter, however *is* only this unity in itself, so that it is not at the same time *for itself*. To the extent, then, that consciousness is independent, so too is its object, but only *implicitly*. Self-consciousness which is simply *for itself* and directly characterizes its object as a negative element, or is primarily *desire*, will therefore, on the contrary, learn through experience that the object is independent.[103]

This paragraph summarizes self-consciousness' realization that the object of desire and itself are connected in that they are both living. Hegel emphasizes that life is both a unity and a breaking apart. Self-consciousness grasps the unity of differences, or the belonging together of all that is also differentiated. Given that my focus is on the relational self, it is important to highlight that while self-consciousness learns that the object is independent, i.e. that it does not simply exist entirely for self-consciousness, the object is only "*implicitly*" independent. I believe that Hegel suggests here that while beings are individuated they emerge from a common basis: life. While the object is tied to life, self-consciousness will realize later on that life is essential to it in the same way that it is essential to the object. The main point is that one's identity is not wholly independent. However, desire also teaches the self that the object has its own reality; the object is not purely "negative."

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[103] Ibid., § 168. Gadamer reminds the reader that consciousness and the object are grounded in unity: "The dichotomization of reality into universal and particular, idea and appearance, the law and its instances, needs just as much to be eliminated as does the division of consciousness into consciousness on the one side and its object on the other. What is then thought of in the new way is termed the 'inner difference' or 'infinitude' by Hegel. Specifically, insofar as that which differentiates itself within itself is not limited from the outside by the boundary of something else from which it differentiates itself, it is infinite in itself…It is clear that what appears as this differentiation of the undifferentiated has life's structure of splitting in two and becoming identical with itself," 152.

Hyppolite, as well as Kojeve, highlight how desire is fundamental to the entire chapter on self-consciousness; the desire for the sensuous object lays the groundwork for the later structure of desiring recognition from the other.[104] Hegel writes:

> …self-consciousness is thus certain of itself only by superseding this other that presents itself to self-consciousness as an independent life; self-consciousness is Desire…it explicitly affirms that this nothingness is *for it* the truth of the other; it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as a *true* certainty. [105]

> Self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object, is unable to supersede it; it is really because of that relation that it produces the object again, and the desire as well. It is in fact something other than self-consciousness that is the essence of Desire; and through this experience self-consciousness has itself realized this truth. But at the same time it is no less absolutely for itself, and it is so only by superseding the object; and it must experience its satisfaction, for it is the truth. On account of the independence of the object, therefore, it can achieve satisfaction only when the object itself effects the negation within itself; and it must carry out this negation of itself in itself, for it is in itself the negative, and must be *for* the other what it *is…Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.*[106]

As described earlier, self-consciousness relates to itself through another; however, the form of the relation is one in which self-consciousness wants to get something from the Other. In the case of desire and the living object, when self-consciousness destroys the object, it shows that it is sovereign; the object is nothing and self-consciousness possesses true reality. Through this movement, self-consciousness displays its own agency and self-

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[104] Kojeve, 7; Hyppolite, "Self-Consciousness and Life: The Independence of Self-Consciousness."

[105] Hegel, § 174.

[106] Ibid., § 175. Hyppolite presents another way to read this passage. He writes that the first moment of the "not me" is characterized by the Kantian idea of phenomena that appear for the subject: "The truth of that world now lies in me and not in it; that truth is the self of self-consciousness," 69. This way of considering the world prompts self-consciousness and will lead it to treat the world as merely for-it. Consciousness will see that which is "not it" as being there for its consumption. More specifically, the first moment is when self-consciousness is incited by the foreignness of the world and thus experiences its difference from the world. However, the difference of the object must also be negated for consciousness to be itself, for it too is nature. "In order that through this negation of the being-other self-consciousness establish its own unity with itself," 69. Hyppolite reminds us that obtaining the object of desire is not consciousness' goal; its goal is the experience of its own unity; it thus, "desires its own desire."

sufficiency. Because it is only sure of itself when it "supersedes," or destroys, the other, it needs the Other; this is what Hegel means in the second paragraph when he says that the relationship "produces the object again and the desire as well." We see Hegel beginning to build a case for premise that the self is primarily "outside itself" when he concludes that the "essence of Desire" is something exterior for self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is driven to realize the satisfaction of its desire. The example that Hegel uses in paragraph 171 to illustrate this "superseding" of the object is "consuming." Self-consciousness experiences its own power by eating other objects of life. While desire, manifested as consumption or destruction, initially affords self-consciousness with a feeling of autonomy, the object of desire ultimately fails as a source of the subject's self-certainty. Hegel gives two reasons for the failure: 1) The independence that the sublation of the object affords the subject cannot be complete because self-consciousness depends on the object to affirm itself. 2) The feeling of autonomy is only momentary; the minute that the object is destroyed, self-consciousness loses that which it feels its own power against.[107]

In the last lines of paragraph 175 we see self-consciousness' realization that destroying the object of desire fails. Instead of negating the object from without, self-consciousness must find an object that "effects the negation within itself." We find out at the end of the paragraph that such a being is another self-consciousness.

After Hegel introduces this description of Life and the necessity of recognition from another self-consciousness, he gestures toward his later discussion of Spirit; both life and Spirit share the structure of a "unity of itself in its otherness." Hegel writes:

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[107] Neuhouser, 43-44.

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> A self-consciousness exists *for a self-consciousness*. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it…A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object.' With this, we already have before us the Notion of *Spirit*. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is – this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I.' It is in self-consciousness, in the Notion of Spirit, that consciousness first finds its turning-point…[108]

Throughout the chapter, and even the text as a whole, one-sided, partial views of the self and experience are expelled. Self-consciousness at first fails to see that its certainty is bound up with the object; it depends on the object. Just as self-consciousness is tied to the object, all living things depend on each other and thus exist as the "unity of itself in its otherness." Gadamer connects Hegel's concepts of "life," "self-consciousness," and "Spirit": "…the structural identity between the life processes of what lives and self-consciousness demonstrates that self-consciousness is not at all the individualized point of 'I=I,' but rather, as Hegel says, 'the I which is we and the we which is I', which is to say spirit."[109]

Since the living object of desire has failed, self-consciousness seeks out a new object which might affirm it. The next section of the chapter, entitled "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" begins with Hegel's bold claim:

> Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged. The Notion of this unity in its duplication embraces many and varied meanings… The detailed exposition of the concept of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with the process of recognition.[110]

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[108] Hegel, § 177.
[109] Gadamer, 153.

[110] Hegel, § 178.

Here Hegel reveals that self-consciousness is incited when it encounters another self-consciousness capable of considering it as an object of thought.[111] The first two implications of this meeting are that consciousness discovers that it can be an object for the other and secondly, it sees the other as a source of recognition.

While the Other is held up as a path to solidifying self-consciousness' certainty of itself, the Other is also described as what incites self-consciousness' loss of itself:

> Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self.[112]

The Other draws the self out of itself, for Hegel. In being seen, the self gains a new way of relating to itself. However, this also represents a loss of self-determination because the self is now dependent on the Other. Self-consciousness at first sees the Other as something existing only for-it. While attracted to the Other's power to recognize, self-consciousness does not consider its free existence in its own right. While self-consciousness is certainly relating to an Other, it "supersedes" the Other's alterity by only focusing on how the Other recognizes itself. Hegel describes this unequal relation as expected: "At first, it [recognition] will exhibit the side of the inequality of the two…one being only *recognized*, the other only *recognizing*."[113]

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[111] Hegel describes the encounter slightly differently in § 189 when he says that the simple identity that is found in immediate self-consciousness is dissolved when the Other enters the scene. The unity that he speaks of is the fact that self-consciousness thinks at first that it is wholly independent and self-enclosed.

[112] Ibid., § 179.

[113] Ibid., § 185.

Self-consciousness' inability to see the Other non-instrumentally destroys the possibility for recognition. By failing to recognize the Other as an "essential being, " "…it proceeds to supersede its *own* self, for this other is itself."[114] Hegel's point is that self-consciousness is now outside itself. It is dependent on the Other's recognition. If it sees the Other as non-essential, than it destroys the possibility that it will find itself in the Other.

Therefore, we find that each self-consciousness plays a mediating role for the other. This means that each plays a necessary role through which each becomes an object for themselves. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in order to possess a stable self-conception of its own autonomy, self-consciousness must turn its "subjective certainty" into an "objective reality." The latter is an existence that is affirmed by others.[115]

> Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another.[116]

While self-certainty is discovered in mutual recognition, we are reminded of how Hegel reveals that at first the relation is unequal; that is, only one is recognized. He traces out two ways that the self seeks to establish its supremacy over itself as a being that is dependent upon what is outside of itself for affirmation. Hoping to assert that it is above life, "each seeks the death of the other," and risks its life in the process in order to show that its freely-chosen ideals are more important to it than even life itself. However, the

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[114] Ibid., § 180.

[115] Kojeve, 11.

[116] Hegel, § 184.

life and death struggle fails in affording the subject with recognition because life is essential to both individuals. Without life, affirmation is found to be impossible. In §189, Hegel summarizes how the notion that the self is a simple unity that is independent exists until it is challenged by the arrival of the Other. He divides what has happened thus far in the chapter on self-consciousness into two "shapes of consciousness," where one is independent and "for-itself" (the lord) and the other is dependent and exists only to recognize the first (the bondsman).

> In immediate self-consciousness the simple ego is absolute object, which, however, is for us or in itself absolute mediation, and has as its essential moment substantial and solid independence. The dissolution of that simple unity is the result of the first experience; through this there is posited a pure self-consciousness, and a consciousness which is not purely for itself, but for another, i.e. as an existent consciousness, consciousness in the form and shape of thinghood.[117]

In this dense paragraph, Hegel states that our initial reflection affords us with the perception that the self is absolute, substantial, and independent. The onlooker who has been following this chapter of the *Phenomenology*, however, sees that the self is actually mediated by objects of desire and Others. The encounter with the Other causes the self's perception of itself as self-sustaining to crumble. The self deals with the loss of itself by positing itself as essential and the Other as a negative.

Hegel begins to unpack the complexity of these two self relations (the self for-itself and the self-for-the-Other) by stating that each position is "mediated" by the other. Therefore, each position doesn't occur alone; both occur simultaneously. In Kojeve's formulation, the master's self-certainty is no longer purely "subjective"; it has been

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[117] Ibid., § 189.

"objectivized and mediated by the slave's recognitions."[118] However, Hegel discloses that

the bondsman cannot offer the lord a stable reflection of itself as sovereign because the

recognition is not mutual. It is actually through the object which the bondsman masters

for the lord that the latter receives a feeling of mastery. However, it is not the object

alone that affords the lord with a feeling of independence; it is the fact that the slave is

dependent for his livelihood on the master:

> In these two moments, the master gets his recognition through an other
> consciousness, for in them the latter affirms itself as unessential, both by
> working upon the thing, and, on the other hand, by the fact of being
> dependent on a determinate existence; in neither case can this other get the
> mastery over existence, and succeed in absolutely negating it.[119]

The lord, through the fact that he is lord, always views the bondsman as "unessential."

Since the material object could not provide lasting recognition on account of the fact that

it was a thing, the bondsman, when deprived of his freedom becomes thing-like and thus,

similarly, cannot be a source of lasting recognition. Therefore, the bondsman's power to

recognize the lord as autonomous dwindles because the former is not consistently

recognized as an "essential" for-itself.

The lord, thinking that he is *Selbstandigkeit*, in actuality comes to realize that his

"truth" is that of the bondsman:

> In all this, the unessential consciousness is, for the master, the object
> which embodies the truth of his certainty of himself. But it is evident that
> this object does not correspond to its notion; for, just where the master has
> effectively achieved lordship, he really finds that something has come
> about quite different from an independent consciousness. It is not an
> independent, but rather a dependent consciousness that he has achieved.
> He is thus not assured of self-existence as his truth; he finds that his truth

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[118] Kojeve, 16.

[119] Hegel, § 191.

is rather the unessential consciousness, and the fortuitous unessential action of that consciousness.[120]

Instead of resting in his role as master, the master finds that he is completely dependent upon the slave for his identity as master. Returning to the instances of traumatic bonding discussed in the introduction, from the side of the imprisoner, we see that he or she is dependent upon the prisoner for his or her identity. In instances of intimate partner violence, abusers present themselves as all-powerful beings while in reality their power issues from the victims who are taught to submit to being those who merely recognize.

At this point in the *Phenomenology*, the reader realizes that self-consciousness can only maintain itself, for itself, through mutual recognition, which is mentioned earlier.[121] Hyppolite writes:

> Self-consciousness, then, comes to exist only by means of an 'operation' that poses it in being as it is for itself…this mutual recognition, in which individuals recognize each other as reciprocally recognizing each other, creates the element of spiritual life – the medium in which the subject is an object to itself, finding itself completely in the other yet doing so without abrogating the otherness that is essential to self-consciousness.[122]

The encounter with the other mirrors the way that Hegel first discusses self-consciousness as necessarily posing itself as an object for itself. We see Hegel's tendency to move toward unity in this stage as well. The peculiarity of self-consciousness is that it both rejects its belonging to the world by reflecting on itself as for-itself while simultaneously seeing that it is a being of the world.[123] In mutual recognition, self-consciousness sees that its own relation to self occurs through another being in the world.

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[120] Ibid., § 192.

[121] Ibid., § 184 and 188.

[122] Hyppolite, 76.

[123] Ibid.

This is an ontological point that affirms that the self's being is tied to the Other. Hyppolite details how self-consciousness experiences itself as autonomous, but only as a "negative." Self-consciousness:

> …negates itself and maintains itself in that negation. Concretely, this is the very existence of man, 'who never is what he is,' who always exceeds himself and is always beyond himself, who has a future, and who rejects all permanence except the permanence of his desire aware of itself as desire.[124]

Here it is easy to see how Heidegger, Sartre, and Beauvoir took up Hyppolite's gloss on Hegel, i.e. the idea of human existence as free transcendence and directedness toward the future. Interestingly, at least for Beauvoir, recognition by an Other is the foundation for the maintenance of freedom.[125]

At this point in the chapter, Hegel turns to analyzing the bondsman. We learn that while the master appeared to be independent, but came to be exposed as dependent, the bondsman appears to be dependent but is in actuality independent – through dependence. Hegel examines how the experience of facing the possibility of his own death has allowed the bondsman to realize "absolute negativity, *pure being-for-self*." Furthermore, in his relation of dependence before the lord, the bondsman forsakes everything but his service. In his work, he experiences his independence by transcending his own life, if necessary, and dedicating himself to labor. The bondsman finds in the product of his labor a mirror for the power of his subjectivity. Hegel describes the process of alienation:

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Beauvoir describes the human being as fundamentally "…a project of self toward the other, a transcendence." See Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 93. Sartre describes the self as a nothing that is always creating meaning. See *Being and Nothingness*. For Heidegger, the human being is that which always has a range of possibilities through which to interpret itself; it projects itself into the future. See *Being and Time*.

"Through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is."[126] In labor, the for-itself of self-consciousness is recognized. Moreover, self-consciousness sees its affinity with objects of the world.

When the bondsman succeeds in transcending his desires and creates a product, his self takes on an aspect of "permanence" in the object: "It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness, *qua* worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its *own* independence."[127] Hegel ends the chapter on self-consciousness by asserting that through work, the bondsman comes to acquire a mind of his own. However, self-consciousness continues to struggle with being tied to the world through a need for recognition.[128]

In conclusion, the master-slave section of the *Phenomenology* provides the reader with a series of critiques as well as positive ontological, epistemological, and ethical claims. First, Hegel begins by showing how the modern view of the subject that is *Selbstandigkeit* fails. However, despite this failed model of the self, we see that self-consciousness nevertheless attempts to fulfill this notion of itself. Despite its dependence, it desires affirmation, or recognition, of its autonomy. Self-consciousness begins in the moment when desire for a worldly object arises. Next, we see that when this fails, self-consciousness discovers in its encounter with another self-consciousness that the Other is a source of more lasting recognition. Lastly, we see from this dialectic that the structure of self-consciousness is identical with that of life, i.e., "unity of itself in its otherness." The section on lordship and bondage makes the epistemological point that self-knowledge is achieved through self-other relations and labor. Moreover, it introduces the

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[126] Hegel, § 195. Hyppolite writes "Being in itself, the being of life, is no longer separate from the being for itself of consciousness; through labor, self-consciousness rises to its self intuition in being," 85.

[127] Ibid.
[128] Hegel, § 196.

possibility of mutual recognition. Lastly, the section shows that the ontological structure of self-consciousness is one of unity through difference, i.e. selfhood is inextricable from the Other's power to provide recognition.

Spirit and Intersubjectivity in the *Phenomenology*

In order to situate the claims that Hegel makes about the relational self in the master-slave dialectic, I will briefly examine some of the ways that forms of knowing are mediated by social-historical discourses and practices for Hegel. This will pave the way for making an argument that intersubjectivity is inextricable from Hegel's project. The model of selfhood that emerges in the *Phenomenology* is one that is grounded upon relations with Others and social historical forms of knowing. I aim to highlight the logical structure of the self, which can be summarized by an ontology wherein the self is the "unity of itself in its otherness." This ontology is rendered explicit by 1) showing how the self depends upon the Other and 2) how its access to itself is shaped through social-historical discourses that are themselves inseparable from the logical structure of being. As the last section addressed the former, now I will investigate the latter.

Moving from the last section of the chapter on Self-consciousness, wherein the unhappy consciousness is in despair about its "two world metaphysics," (i.e. this world and the beyond, soul and body, etc.) the chapter on reason ends with the realization that knowledge of nature involves *Geist*, or the activity of reason. This means that the former involves social-historical forms of knowledge. Therefore, nature cannot be grasped wholly objectively; the premise of Idealism is also rejected here; reality cannot be known through the I, where the I is all reality. Thus, broadly, the inquiry throughout the text

moves from an investigation of the object of the senses, to the investigation of the I, to the investigation of history. In this section, scientific theories of Hegel's time are examined in order to reveal their one-sidedness.[129] As the self is mediated by these social-historical forms of knowledge, it will be instructive to examine a few examples; to this end, I will discuss the paradigm of psychological laws of behavior, the figure of Antigone, and the French Revolution's ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. My discussion of these historical perspectives will end in an investigation of the ethical ideal of actualized Spirit that Hegel introduces.

Towards the end of the section on "Observing Reason," Hegel shows how the problem with scientific paradigms, in particular the psychological paradigm that seeks to explain the human being based on psychological laws of behavior, is that they are reductive, i.e. they cannot give a true picture of individuality. For example, Hegel writes "What is asserted to be a fixed Law that is in itself constant can only be a moment of the unity which is reflected into itself, can only appear as a vanishing magnitude."[130] Laws only capture a moment of observing a particular; they cannot encapsulate the self or knowledge of the self. He goes on to describe psychology as a discipline in which Spirit relates itself "to the various modes of its actuality as an *otherness already given.*"[131] Spirit neglects its individuality when it adopts this stance towards its being because human action is not pre-determined. [132] However, it also neglects the dimension of itself that is universal when it acts in a way that it considers purely individual because there is a

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[129] Hegel, § 296.
[130] Ibid., § 300.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid., § 302.

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"universal (*Geistige*) character to all action;" [133] the individual's "essential nature is the universal of Spirit." [134] The psychological paradigm thus, is an example of a form of knowing that is historical and also one-sided by ignoring the context of relations that form individual existence.

Hegel immediately gives an example of what he means. Psychological laws that seek to explain the subject must reference the given situation of the subject, which include its "habits, customs, religion, and so on." [135] Hegel reasons that we can conclude that individuality includes *Geist*, or the intersubjective background, [136] that it inherits along with the way that it relates to this background in action when it transgresses the norms of its culture. [137] The famous example that Hegel uses to illustrate this concept is Sophocles' *Antigone*. Here, Antigone, in being claimed simultaneously by Greek divine and human laws, is an exemplar of individuation through her choice to forego her role as a citizen in order to bury her brother. The point, though, is that the self does not give birth to its character alone; it relies on an intersubjective background of meaning, i.e., in Antigone's case, divine and human laws. However, at the same time, the self cannot be reduced to blindly following psychological laws or social roles. The figure of Antigone is significant because she shows how individuality emerges out of an intersubjective framework. However, the fact that burying her brother caused her to violate her social role, as citizen, does not mean that she is an individual independent of the determining

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[133] Rocio Zambrana, lecture, 5/1/2013.

[134] Hegel, § 304.
[135] Ibid., § 305.

[136] Sembou, 274.

[137] Hegel, § 307.

force of context; nor does it mean that her actions do not involve a new norm. Concerning the latter, Rocio Zambrana suggests that transgression can be "norm-setting," depending upon how it is interpreted in the future.[138] Therefore, the individual can contribute to advancing new social-historical norms, which mediate self-understanding.

Zambrana points out that while the earlier chapters on self-consciousness articulate the shapes of the self, the chapters on Spirit concentrate on the shapes of the self in relation to shapes of the world.[139] As Hegel writes

> Spirit is thus self-supporting, absolute, real being. All previous shapes of consciousness are abstract forms of it…Spirit is the ethical life of a nation in so far as it is the immediate truth – the individual that is a world…These shapes, however, are distinguished from the previous ones by the fact that they are real Spirits, actualities in the strict meaning of the word, and instead of being shapes merely of consciousness, are shapes of a world.[140]

Hegel is moving toward the complete interpenetration of reason and worldly existence with his notion of Spirit: "Reason is Spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself."[141] Hegel's discussion of Spirit as lived, ethical experience reveals again that consciousness' abstract views about the world fail due to its inability to see that "the individual is a world." In interpreting this passage, Williams argues that Hegel critiques the idealist position which intuits the world from only the perspective of the "I"; reason is discovered as that which is socially mediated. For Hegel, the "embodiment of reason and rationality

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[138] Zambrana, University of Oregon Lecture, 5/20/2013
[139] Ibid.

[140] Hegel, § 440-441.

[141] Hegel, § 438.

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is not the cogito, but a social spirit (*Geist*) that finds expression in the life of a people."[142]

Here the term "expression" is important because, just as the first part of the chapter on

self-consciousness showed how self-consciousness emerges in action (through desire,

interactions with the Other, and work), here again, we see that rationality is not the *a*

priori product of a rational subject; rationality emerges in social-historical practices.

Given my intent to clarify the ways in which Hegel's claims about the relational

self in the *Phenomenology* are epistemological, ontological, and ethical, I will take a

moment to explore how Hegel's discussion of *Spirit* involves positive ethical claims.

Hegel's discussion is ethically significant: in two main ways. He suggests that 1) purely

abstract ideals, like those asserted in the time of the French Revolution – liberty, equality,

and fraternity – end in violence because they don't take into account concrete forms of

Spirit and 2) such abstract ideals result in what we might call unactualized Spirit, i.e.,

abstract beliefs that are not enacted in the real world. Recalling the earlier passage where

Hegel writes that the shapes of Spirit are "actual" shapes of the world, the reader learns

that Spirit can be either actualized or unactualized. Unactualized Spirit occurs when

freedom is not guaranteed by concrete practices in an actual society. Regarding the first

point above, Hegel writes of the Enlightenment's belief in the ideal of absolute freedom:

> …by virtue of its own abstraction, it divides itself into extremes equally
> abstract, into a simple, inflexible cold universality, and into the discrete,
> absolute hard rigidity and self-willed atomism of actual self-
> consciousness. Now that it has completed the destruction of the actual
> organization of the world, and exists now just for itself, this is its sole
> object, an object that no longer has any content, possession, existence, or
> outer extension, but is merely this knowledge of itself as an absolutely
> pure and free individual self…The relation, then, of these two, since each
> exists indivisibly and absolutely for itself, and thus cannot dispose of a
> middle term which would link them together, is one of wholly unmediated
> pure negation, a negation, moreover, of the individual as a being existing

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[142] Williams, 194.

in the universal. The sole work and deed of universal freedom is therefore death.[143]

Here we see that absolute freedom takes the form of an abstract rule that does not have anything built into it to remain sensitive to context (actual social practices). Furthermore, the self is reduced to the will alone (without reference to its community). The pure commitment to the rule above all else means that there is no necessary connection between the law, which states that a citizen is free, and the actions of the citizen. We can thus infer that absolute freedom is unactualized in concrete societies. The negation of the self "existing in the universal" means that the cultural and religious practices and institutions of a particular society are made irrelevant and relegated below the supreme good of absolute freedom. Furthermore, such a position is violent because if the commitment to freedom is valued above all else, then it can be enforced by killing.

While the *Phenomenology* can be read as a genealogy of modern, Western subjectivity, Hegel does not write purely descriptively. In the section on *Antigone*, for example, he seems to privilege the fact that she individuates herself by reacting against the social norms of her time period.[144] Furthermore, the notion of "actualized" and "unactualized" Spirit, and the condemnation of unactualized Spirit in the French Revolution, seem to suggest that Hegel values the former over the latter. Ultimately, Hegel attempts to show in the chapters on Spirit that our understanding of ourselves is always mediated by a historical place, and he seems to place some value in the reader's *realization* that the self is mediated. This claim is supported by the *Phenomenology*'s overall theme of gradually overcoming one-sided views of the world when such views

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[143] Hegel, § 590.
[144] The counter argument here, of course, would be that she demonstrates how important and unavoidable free choice will be to later European societies and institutions.

are found contradictory. One-sided views of the self, like the modern assumption that the self is radically independent, self-governing, and autonomous, are shown to fail. For instance, the master-slave dialectic models the failure of this notion by exposing how self-consciousness is incited by interactions with worldly objects and Others. Moreover, the master-slave dialectic offers the reader the positive claim that realizing that the self is mediated by the Other will open up the possibility of mutual recognition, thus avoiding the dangers of mis-recognition (e.g., mastery and servitude).

Action, therefore, becomes decisive for understanding Hegel's claim that individuality is based on relations that exist outside of itself.[145] Individuality cannot be reduced to a system of psychological laws, nor can it be explained in terms of action that does not grow out of a particular context. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Williams, Sembou, and Pippin stress the importance of intersubjectivity in Hegel's project in the *Phenomenology*. Action becomes an important part of their discussion of intersubjectivity because it is through concrete actions that the self seeks recognition. Sembou points out how action cannot be explained without reference to its norm-setting characteristics. When I decide to pursue one action over another, I am in that moment claiming that one possibility is higher than another and should be for others as well. More completely, I want others to *recognize* and *accept* that my action is right.[146] Sembou writes

> 'Spirit' is exactly the intersubjective or social framework that is presupposed by and underlies the 'experience of consciousness' as well as the way(s) people come to under-stand the relations among themselves in a particular political community at a given time in history. Most crucially,

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[145] Zambrana, University of Oregon Lecture, 5/1/2013.

[146] Sembou, 269.

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inherent in human relationships is a 'struggle for recognition', as each individual attempts to impose her own needs or understanding of reality on the others and demands that they accord her recognition.[147]

Therefore, the self cannot be understood without reference to the actions that it takes before a world of others and norms. The intersubjective background is an inextricable part of action and self-understanding.

Robert Pippin advances a similar position when he claims that Hegel is critical of a concept of agency that focuses solely on the actor's intention without considering how others respond to the action after it is initiated. Pippin points to §401 in the *Phenomenology,* where Hegel writes "an individual cannot know what he is until he has made himself a reality through action."[148] In Pippin's words, "…one counts as a practically responsible subject by being taken to be one."[149] Here, the structure of "finding the self in what is other" resurfaces. The self recognizes and finds itself in the externality of its own action.[150] Again, this means that our identity depends upon how Others recognize or mis-recognize our actions. However, Hegel's concept of intersubjective recognition is broadened by another insight of the *Phenomenology*: *Spirit* is also a necessary condition of the self. This means that the subject and the recognizing or non-recognizing Other are both rooted in certain practices and assertions about truth

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[147] Ibid., 280-81.

[148] Robert Pippin, "Hegel's Social Theory of Agency: The 'Inner-Outer' Problem" in *Hegel on Action*, ed. by Arto Laitinen and Constantine Sandis (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 65-66.

[149] As quoted by J. McDowell in "Towards a Reading of Hegel on Action in the 'Reason' Chapter of the Phenomenology" in *Hegel on Action*, ed. by Arto Laitinen and Constantine Sandis (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 79.

[150] In the next chapter we will see how Beauvoir is greatly influenced by this premise. She will claim that the self is a "project of self toward the other" and that it can only claim to be itself in a creative act.

that shape them.[151] Recognition is tied to these social-historical forms of knowing. The former discourses that emerge in the psychological paradigm, Greek ethical life, and the French Revolution, are illustrative examples of such practices and truth claims.

<center>Conclusion</center>

In this chapter, I have suggested that Hegel provides an ontological model of selfhood based on relation in his famous master-slave dialectic. Furthermore, I have drawn on other parts of the *Phenomenology* in order to emphasize that the structure of self-other relations is shaped by social historical discourses and practices. I have also demonstrated Hegel's interest in the relational self with regard to epistemology and ethics. Self-knowledge is found to be dependent upon intersubjective relations. Furthermore, Hegel suggests that the self possesses the capacity to seek mutual recognition from the Other.

Williams, Sembou, and Pippin's analyses of intersubjectivity, recognition, and social-historical discourses and practices within the *Phenomenology* demonstrate the extent to which the modern idea of the self as *Selbstandigkeit* fails. They argue that the self understands itself and acts through these modes. Therefore, the self cannot be wholly self-governing and autonomous, because it is deeply shaped by recognition and social-historical forms of knowing. Hegel's claim about the self's dependence upon an intersubjective field of meaning is an expression of the larger ontological claim that the self, and all "living" beings, are indebted to forces beyond themselves.

Epistemology and ontology are inextricable in the *Phenomenology* because the self understands itself through understanding its own ontology. More specifically, the

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[151] Sembou, 280-81.

structure of recognizing oneself in the Other is part of the structure of the self, but it is also a part of the structure of "life" itself. Here we may recall Hegel's assertion about life, "Thus the simple substance of Life is the splitting-up of itself into shapes and at the same time the dissolution of the splitting-up is just as much a splitting-up and a forming of members. With this, the two sides of the whole movement which before were distinguished, viz. the passive separateness of the shapes in the general medium of independence, and the process of Life, collapse into one another."[152] Here we see that life possesses the structure of "splitting" itself up and then dissolving these differences. As we saw earlier, self-consciousness is the movement from world to self and the resulting separation into for-itself and in-itself. Ultimately, the idea that the self comes to realize its indebtedness to forces beyond itself is an ontological statement about the self.

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[152] Hegel, § 171.

CHAPTER III

THE VULNERABILITY OF SELFHOOD AND THE DEMAND FOR

RECOGNITION: BEAUVOIR'S APPROPRIATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF

HEGEL'S MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTIC

Hegel's master-slave dialectic shows up repeatedly in Beauvoir's corpus. Given her dedication to describing individual identity as that which emerges from an intersubjective world, it is not surprising that Hegel's foundational premise, that self-consciousness is incited by the Other, exerts an undeniable influence on her work. Beauvoir provides the reader with a vision of the self as ecstatic, or outside itself; it is most basically a "project toward the Other."[153] Like Hegel, she does not think that the self is independent and self-sustaining; the self experiences itself through its relation to the Other. She characterizes the independent dependence of human reality as that which is "both *Mitsein* and separation." This means that the self cannot be extracted from its relations to Others; it is dependent on others to access itself and understand itself. However, the self is also separation in that it is a singular bodily existence that is endowed with choice and responsibility. While she appropriates the idea of the self as a splitting up of consciousness and object from Hegel,[154] she offers her own original contribution by describing the psychological tendencies that this produces in human beings, in particular the way that both *Mitsein* and separation are experienced in anguish. Furthermore, she complicates Hegel's structure of self-other interactions by revealing the role that social-historical discourses play in the struggle for recognition.

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[153] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 93.

[154] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 167; 171.

My own reading of Beauvoir's view of the self will focus on how she provides the reader with a notion of the self that is fundamentally tied to the intersubjective space that it emerged from; the overarching implication of this view is that the self is vulnerable; it cannot sustain itself through its own inner resources. Therefore, the self is continually engaged in authentic and inauthentic attempts to justify its existence through appeals to the Other.

In this chapter I will describe what Beauvoir offers a model of selfhood that takes seriously the idea that the self is thoroughly intersubjective. First, I will examine the ways in which the self is mediated by its relations to that which is outside of itself, including Others and social-historical discourses. This will include a discussion of Beauvoir's concept of the human tendency toward "alienation" in the form of a self-concept, created object, or life story. As the self exists in a space outside of itself, Beauvoir describes our relation to self as a continual, sometimes agonizing struggle between reifying our self-conceptions and assuming our transcendence. Again, I believe that one of Beauvoir's insights is that self-relation is not something that is given and stable; it is vulnerable due to its dependence on others. Therefore, more specifically, the struggle that every individual undergoes is characterized by the temptation to coerce the Other into affirming a static self-concept of one's own choosing and the opposing possibility of living without static justification from the Other. Beauvoir's version of authenticity stands out from other Existentialists like Heidegger and Sartre because it rests on more than adopting the proper relation toward one's freedom; on her view, authentic existence requires the existence of free Others.[155] The implication of this view is that authenticity is not entirely

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[155] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 128-129.

under one's own control; the self is vulnerable to ethical and personal failures as its authentic existence remains tied to the Other.

Secondly, I will trace how Beauvoir's view of the self appropriates and transforms aspects of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. I will argue that Beauvoir goes beyond Hegel's discussion of the relational self in the master-slave dialectic in three ways: 1) She provides psychological descriptions of tendencies that human beings employ in order to escape the way that their self-relations exist outside of themselves, 2) While Hegel's account of self-consciousness describes a subject who seeks recognition of its freedom, Beauvoir shows how the weight of social-historical discourses actually drive the subject to desire to be recognized for these narratives rather than its freedom, and 3) Beauvoir's discussion of recognition differs from Hegel's by arguing that recognition is about validating the worth of one's existence – by communicating to the Other through one's act – instead of seeking certainty about one's autonomy. One of the methodological ways that Beauvoir's discussion of the relational self extends beyond Hegel's is that she provides the reader with narrative descriptions which model and illustrate the ways in which the self is a space of relation rather than an entity or pure self-relation. Thus, this section will rely on Beauvoir's use off narratives in order to make the above points.

Lastly, I will argue that while Beauvoir cautions the reader against the tendency towards alienation and flight from freedom, she doesn't mean to say that one should resist the desire to seek justification of one's existence through recognition from others. As she often criticizes alienation and allowing one's relations to others to be motivated by anguish before one's freedom, Beauvoir's texts seem to suggest that all attempts to justify one's existence must be renounced because they deny one's transcendence; since

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each moment presents a new opportunity for unique action, the self cannot receive

justification for its entire being. However, what is not readily apparent in Beauvoir's own

corpus is that she doesn't advocate that we resist all attempts to be justified by the Other.

If the ontological structure of the self is such that we relate to ourselves only through the

Other, than our "salvation"[156] does not lie in simply avoiding fleeing our freedom toward

being. Our salvation lies in the Other. For Beauvoir, authentic existence differs from

Heideggarian resoluteness or Sartrean courage to choose in good faith; for her,

authenticity lies in taking up projects that are always toward the Other. This means that

one is always in need of the Other's recognition; the Other gives me back to myself in a

way that I cannot produce alone. Therefore, on my reading of Beauvoir, the good life is

fraught with risk and does not lie entirely under one's own control.

As a novelist and existentialist, Beauvoir's way of engaging philosophy relies

heavily on describing concrete historical situations, character types, and relationships

rather than describing atemporal, abstract structures of reality or subjectivity. Therefore, I

will seek to show how looking to *The Second Sex* fleshes out Hegel's claim that one's

relationship to oneself occurs through the Other's power to confer recognition.[157]

Beauvoir accomplishes this by examining social discourses and first person narrative

descriptions of experience that reveal the way that human beings, especially women,

strive for recognition. While my dissertation is not specifically concerned with sexual

difference and female oppression, I will show how *The Second Sex* is a concrete

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[156] I am using the term "salvation" here, because it follows from Beauvoir's claim in "Pyrrhus and Cineas": "I intend to save my being in the world, such as it is realized in my actions," 129.

[157] While the claim that one's self-relation depends upon intersubjective recognition could be considered to be an atemporal statement, Beauvoir appeals to concrete descriptions of experience that appear to prove the accuracy of the claim.

illustration of certain aspects of Hegel's structure of self-other interactions in the master-slave dialectic and the claims that Beauvoir herself makes in "Pyrrhus and Cineas" and *The Ethics of Ambiguity* with regard to the relational self.

Beyond her appropriation of Hegelian recognition, Beauvoir seems to be influenced by the figure of the bondsman in the master-slave dialectic, who glimpses his autonomy in the object of his production.[158] Recalling Beauvoir's description of the human being as "a project toward the Other," the idea that the self's identity is bound up with action and creation may reveal the influence of Hegel's discussion of how the bondsman relates to himself through his labor. Beauvoir describes this way of discovering autonomy in one's creation through the term "alienation" in *The Second Sex*. While this term does not show up frequently in the text, I believe that Beauvoir's philosophy as a whole is implicitly colored by the idea. Indeed, alienation in the form of a created object or personal life story seems to be a primary way that the self accesses and recognizes itself. Beauvoir affirms the importance of alienation and self-understanding directly in *The Second Sex*, "A being cannot achieve self-awareness except by alienating itself; it searches for itself within the world in a foreign form that it makes its own."[159]

Given that Beauvoir, herself, privileges human freedom and the possibility of two subjects mutually recognizing each other's freedom, it may seem odd that this chapter is devoting space to her theory of alienation. Indeed, given her commitment to social activism and existentialist ethics, it is not surprising that she seems to suggest that transcendence is more truly "human" than one's facticity. According to Beauvoir, to be at home in the world and to allow for humanist ethics, one must realize that transcendence

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[158] Hegel, § 195.

[159] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H. M. Parshley, 88.

is a defining dimension of one's being.[160] Despite this leaning, Beauvoir states that human existence is always lived out through the tension of ambiguity; we are always both subjects and objects (determining and determined). Despite Beauvoir's emphasis on freedom and the dangers of alienation, the latter remains a way of accessing the self as well as illustrating the human reaction to one's freedom. Devoting space to Beauvoir's theory of alienation allows us to see how self-understanding is a struggle between the desire to alienate oneself into an object to appear necessary and the desire to live without static justification.

Beauvoir's View of the Self: Intersubjectivity, Recognition, and Alienation

In this section, I will describe Beauvoir's overall picture of the self in order to show how the self exists outside itself. This section will explain how the self is mediated by its environment, especially other human beings and social-historical discourses. It will also explore the psychological tendencies that result from the self's ontological make-up. This will lead us to investigate alienation, recognition, and authentically assuming one's existence as always outside of oneself. This section will also lay the groundwork for my claim that Beauvoir's model of the self is not something that can relate to itself without the mediation of the Other. While one may mistakenly read Beauvoir as condemning all attempts to justify one's existence, I believe that given the prevalence of her discussion of alienation, coupled with her discussion of recognition and creation, she believes that the self is built to seek justification of itself; therefore, one ought not believe that all justification is inauthentic.

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[160] See Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 111.

Firstly, proposing that Beauvoir possesses a "model of the self" is somewhat problematic because, in her view, the self is not an unchanging object that could be isolated from its world and studied as a pure in-itself. Since the self is not thing-like it can be more aptly described as an ongoing struggle between the opposing realms of objectivity (being) and subjectivity (freedom). Indeed, much of her writing is dedicated to discarding the idea that the self is a self-sustaining, unchanging, and independent essence. Instead, she highlights how the self is identical with itself only in action: The self is "not first a thing but a spontaneity that desires, that loves, that wants, that acts…I am a project of self toward the other, a transcendence."[161] While this passage is from the beginning of her first philosophical essay, "Pyrrhus and Cineas" (1943), we will see how the idea that the self is defined through projects, instead of through reflection on a concept of the self as an interior substance, is a persistent theme throughout Beauvoir's entire philosophical project. Beauvoir cites Hegel early on in the essay to support her discussion of the self as that which acts:

> Hegel has shown convincingly that reality should never be conceived as an interiority hidden in the depths of appearance. Interiority is not different from exteriority; appearance is itself reality. Man is not an immobile presence.[162]

In this reference, we also see Beauvoir's rejection of Kant's distinction between the thing-in-itself and appearances. While Kant holds that the transcendental unity of apperception is an a priori given, Hegel and Beauvoir hold that there is no fully formed faculty of "mineness" which then enters into experience. Recalling Hegel's statement that

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[161] Ibid., 93.

[162] Ibid., 97.

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"self-consciousness is *Desire* in general" [163] and Beauvoir's notion that the self is first "a spontaneity that desires," [164] we see that both suggest that the self is formed when the world impinges upon it and it is incited to action by the welling up of desire. In an article on Hegel's dissemblance of an inner versus an outer realm, or conscious intention and the resulting bodily movement, Robert Pippin points to two passages that support this dissembling: "Ethical self consciousness now learns *from its deed* the developed nature of what it actually did" (469) and "an individual cannot know what he is until he has made himself a reality through action" (401). These passages from *The Phenomenology* are quite close to Beauvoir's claims about action and may have directly influenced her when she writes in "Pyrrhus and Cineas,"

> Only that in which I recognize my being is mine, and I can only recognize it where it is engaged. In order for an object to belong to me, it must have been founded by me. It is totally mine only if I founded it in its totality. The only reality that belongs entirely to me is, therefore, my act. [165]

One can draw out two characteristics of Beauvoir's vision of selfhood here, which interestingly follow from the former Hegel passages: 1) the self is not accessed in an inner realm of introspection and 2) the self only appears in action. The implications of these concepts are that one's relationship to oneself will always entail the context out of which the action unfolds.

In "Pyrrhus and Cineas," Beauvoir describes a scene where a man lays on a hillside and contemplates his identity. She writes that his existence cannot be reduced to his mere presence on the hillside. Rather, his being includes the surrounding hills, the

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[163] Hegel § 167.

[164] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 93.

[165] Ibid.

temperature, and the city, wherein he exists "as someone absent." She writes, "He cannot suddenly spring forth into the world in the pure ipseity of his being without the world suddenly springing forth in front of him."[166] Through a phenomenological description, Beauvoir displays how the self never appears as an unmediated thing-like existent.

In the immediately preceding passage, we may also glimpse Heidegger's influence on Beauvoir's model of the self. Indeed, on the same page she quotes him: "Man is always infinitely more than he would be if he were reduced to what he is in the instant." She writes, "Man is always somewhere else; there exists no privileged spot in the world about which he can safely say this is me…He is himself only through his relationships with something other than himself."[167] If the human being is not an "immobile presence," than he must be changing and non-substantial. It therefore makes sense to claim, as we saw earlier that the self is comprised of "projects," or ways of comporting itself *toward other human beings*.

This assertion helps us understand Beauvoir's insistence that the self is transcendence.[168] The self is not something finished and accessible through introspection. It is not a collection of experiences either. The nature of the human being is, rather, a continuous reaching toward the future that is evident in the projects that one takes up: "His condition is to surpass everything given."[169] Beauvoir also uses the terms "lack" and

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[166] Ibid., 98.

[167] Ibid., 97.

[168] This term is already used in Beauvoir's earliest philosophical essay, "Pyrrhus and Cineas" and it appears in many of her later philosophical essays and texts.

[169] Ibid., 98. Interestingly, the idea of transcendence prompts her to reject Heidegger's claim that authenticity is resolute being-toward-death. She counters that as Heidegger affirmed elsewhere, one's being is better grasped through "engagement in the objective world" (114) rather than an inner grasping of one's own finitude. Nancy Bauer suggests that Beauvoir's emphasis on the self as "relation to" is influenced by

"nothingness" to describe this aspect of human reality. While the human being is transcendence, she is also an object that exists at the disposal of other transcendences who may deny or affirm her projects. This means that the self as transcendence is tied inextricably to the self that desires recognition.[170] Recalling the earlier quotation, the self is a "project toward the Other." The self is propelled to act and this action is always in relation to another.

In the *Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir uses the term *ambiguity* to capture the fact that human existence is comprised of being an object, or facticity, before others (i.e. constituted in ways that are out of our control) and a subject, or transcendence, (i.e. possessing the capacity to constitute ourselves). More specifically, regarding the "objective" dimension of our existence, we are historically situated bodies that are subject to biological processes, social discourses, and the judgments of others. On the other hand, regarding the subjective dimension, we are also freedoms that separate themselves from the passivity of the situated body through thought and projects.[171]

In agreement with Hegel, Beauvoir asserts that the self is not a static essence that exists in an inner realm apart from action; however, Beauvoir emphasizes in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* that freedom is also not bare or radically contingent. Transcendence does not imply a way of being synonymous with the random bouncing around of the clinamen,

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Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein* and *sorgen*." See Nancy Bauer, "Being-with as Being-against: Heidegger Meets Hegel in *The Second Sex*," 130-131. Furthermore, the tendency towards bad faith relates to Heidegger's concept of losing oneself in *das Man*, 138-139.

[170] However, at least in "Pyrrhus and Cineas" and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir implicitly affirms the transcendence part of one's nature as more truly "human" than one's facticity. This seems to be in part motivated by her criticism of Hegel that he neglects the "living subjectivity" of the individual in his grand system. To be at home in the world and to allow for humanist ethics, one must realize that transcendence is a defining dimension of one's being. See Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 111.

[171] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 7-12.

or the Epicurean atom.[172] When Beauvoir speaks of immanence, she is referring to both our material existence and the fact that our actions grow out the particular historical situation that we inherit. The reader may interpret the latter as having a constraining effect on our freedom, but part of Beauvoir's original notion of the self is that freedom arises out of a concrete situation. The deeper idea here is that identity does not issue from an inner individual will; rather, it forms itself out of a complex network of social and historical relations, practices, and discourses. Therefore, even when Beauvoir speaks of transcendence as the birthplace of our action and projects, these cannot be described as entirely our own. While Beauvoir's Existentialist leaning leads her to subtly privilege transcendence, the implication of her notion of ambiguity is that the self does not possess itself or decide in a vacuum of interiority; the self is thoroughly a social-historical existence.

When Beauvoir speaks of the situation of the self, one of her points of focus is the context of Others before and out of which the self acts. Indeed, the theme of self-other relations features prominently in the majority of Beauvoir's philosophical and literary works. It is worth noting that Hegel's "each consciousness seeks the death of the other" is the quotation that opens her philosophical novel *She Came to Stay*, written one year before her first philosophical essay "Pyrrhus and Cineas." Ten years later, in the introduction to *The Second Sex* she writes: "The category of *Other* is as original as consciousness itself...[it] can be found in the most primitive societies…alterity is the fundamental category of human thought. No group ever defines itself as One without

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[172] Ibid., 25.

immediately setting up the Other opposite itself."[173] Both passages occur at the beginning of important texts and thus reflect Beauvoir's preoccupation with the intersubjective dimension of consciousness. With regard to Beauvoir's model of selfhood, this means that the Other draws me out; my self-relation is incited by and constituted in relation to the presence of the Other. Thus, there is no fully formed self that then appeals to the Other; instead, the self constitutes itself through its relation to the Other. Such a model of selfhood makes the issue of recognition central. Indeed, influenced by Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Beauvoir asserts that the basic structure of self-other relations can be characterized by the struggle for recognition. . The examples of traumatic bonding discussed in the introduction are real-life illustrations of how important recognition is to the maintenance of identity. In Hearst's case, the fact that she took on a new identity shows us that recognition is an ongoing need. She wasn't simply able to rely upon the recognition that she received in the past. With reference to the prisoners who were trained in the resistance of mental coercion and manipulation, we recall that they preserved their identities by visualizing their connection to Others before their imprisonment. However, this doesn't mean that recognition was not an ongoing need for them. Rather, they practiced imaginatively reactivating the recognition that they received from relationships in the past.

The theme of recognition arises in her early work when she writes "I am not first a thing but a spontaneity that desires, that loves, that wants, that acts…I am a project of self toward the other, a transcendence."[174] The self that is referenced in the last two quotations is described as that which "posits itself" and aims to influence the Other. The

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[173] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 6.

[174] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 93.

self that Beauvoir describes, from the outset, actively seeks recognition of its specific goals from the Other.

Fundamentally, "man is relation to," or that being who always desires recognition:

> A man would be nothing if nothing happened to him, and it is always through others that something happens to him, starting with his birth….I am the instrument of his destiny. This is why our actions toward the other seem to us so heavy and at the same time weightless...through him our words and gestures received a meaning. He freely decided their meaning…each of my actions by falling into the world creates a new situation for [the Other].[175]

Here Beauvoir reveals how the intersubjective dimension of existence is inseparable from personal identity. Beauvoir focuses in on the vital role that the self plays in the life of Others as well as the way that the Other's freedom separates him or her from the self's actions. When Beauvoir says that the self is "the instrument" of the Other's "destiny," she implies that the self becomes itself always through appealing to Others for recognition. The self's actions actually acquire meaning when they are affirmed and taken up by another. Herein lies the vulnerability of the self that is a "project toward the Other."

Beauvoir's philosophical project is also a psychology in that, apart from offering the reader an ontological model of selfhood based on action and relation, she also presents human tendencies that emerge as reactions to its own structure of consciousness, nature, and other human beings. For example, In the *Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir further develops how human beings flee from their transcendence. Recalling the split human realities of transcendence and immanence, Beauvoir writes that human beings relate to their ambiguity through anguish. One's transcendence presents itself as intolerable and frightening; therefore, the human being desires that its entire being match

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[175] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 125.

the solidity of the body. While one's existence is always overflowing itself, or transcending, toward possibilities (since there is no objective standard that one acts by), one wants to be something substantial. In the next section I will examine the human tendency to flee transcendence with particular focus on how this impacts self-other interactions. I will highlight what I think can be overlooked in reading Beauvoir: namely, while the desire for recognition arises in part as a reaction to the anguish that freedom provokes, relating to one's transcendence authentically is not just a matter of abandoning the need to be recognized. Authentically relating to one's ambiguity consists of struggling to withhold reifying one's self-concept and allowing the Other the freedom to judge one as he or she sees fit. However, realizing that one's self-relation occurs through the Other's recognition reminds one that one cannot simply view others' recognition as irrelevant or unnecessary.

Alienation

Beauvoir's notion of alienation appears throughout her philosophical works. Alienation occurs when human beings identify with a singular action or self-concept in such a way that they refuse to acknowledge that the transcendence aspect of their being overflows any all-encompassing idea that they can hold about their identity. The self-concept could be a social role or profession or even a possession (e.g. one's property or an object of one's creation). Beauvoir suggests that human beings want to settle once and for all who they are for several reasons: 1) From birth, human beings are attracted to belonging to the *Mitsein*. 2) They are driven to relate to themselves; such a relation seems at first glance to require that one encapsulate oneself into an object that one can in turn

relate to. 3) As human beings are set up to look for recognition from others, they recoil from the fact that the Other is utterly free to refuse to recognize them; this prompts them to try to control the Other by providing him or her with an unchanging version of themselves. In *The Second Sex* Beauvoir writes, "Primitive people alienate themselves in their *mana*, their totem; civilized people in their individual souls, their egos, their names, their possessions, and their work: here is the first temptation of inauthenticity."[176] Such a behavior is inauthentic because it solely affirms one dimension of human reality, namely, one's facticity. As we saw earlier, as transcendence produces anguish because one's self-understanding and the recognition that one receives from others is never settled, human beings tend to deny their transcendence and adopt views of themselves that are static. They then attempt to convince others to recognize them for these static identities.

As alienation often carries a negative connotation in Beauvoir's work, it is easy to mistakenly assume that she merely counsels readers to avoid it. However, in *The Second Sex* she also asserts "A being cannot achieve self-awareness except by alienating itself; it searches for itself within the world in a foreign form that it makes its own."[177] Rather than being a cowardly, short-sighted stance toward oneself that emotionally stronger individuals can avoid, we see that the human subject can only grasp itself by making itself into an object.[178] Beauvoir refers to alienation as a human "tendency" and an "existential fact."[179]

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[176] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 57.

[177] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H. M. Parshley, 88.

[178] This claim should give us pause. If we can only achieve self-awareness by externalizing ourselves, then perhaps Beauvoir is less interested in promoting an ideal of "self-awareness" and more interested in "validating" the self by relating to Others through action.

[179] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 57.

Therefore, while it is bad faith for one to solely affirm one's facticity or being-in-itself, it is significant for an understanding of human selfhood that one of the primary ways that one grasps oneself is through alienation into an object that is then recognized by others. While Beauvoir often writes about alienation in terms of labor and artistic production, she argues that the drive to escape oneself into an object of one's choosing – or the Other's choosing – begins in early childhood.

> In an immediate way the newborn lives the primeval drama of every existent – that is, the drama of one's relation to the Other. Man experiences his abandonment in his anguish. Fleeing his freedom and subjectivity, he would like to lose himself within the Whole…He never manages to abolish his separated self: at the least he wishes to achieve the solidity of the in-itself, to be petrified in a thing; it is uniquely when he is fixed by the gaze of other that he appears to himself as a being. It is in this vein that the child's behavior has to be interpreted: in a bodily form he discovers finitude, solitude, and abandonment in an alien world; he tries to compensate for this catastrophe by alienating his existence in an image whose reality and value will be established by others. It would seem that from the time he recognizes his reflection in a mirror – at a time that coincides with weaning – he begins to affirm his identity: his self merges with this reflection in such a way that it is formed only by alienating itself…the child at about six months of age begins to understand his parents' miming and to grasp himself under their gaze as an object. He is already an autonomous subject transcending himself toward the world: but it is only in an alienated form that he will encounter himself.[180]

As we can see from this passage, alienation is closely tied to anxiety before one's freedom, wherein freedom is that which separates and differentiates oneself from Others. Contra Heidegger, the anxiety felt in life is not provoked by finitude according to Beauvoir; instead, it is undergone as a result of the nothingness that "…allows one to constantly transcend all transcendence."[181] Here, she is closer to Sartre than Heidegger in her insistence that anxiety (for her, the wish to flee from one's freedom through

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[180] Ibid., 284.

[181] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 115.

alienating oneself in an image that others might affirm), is motivated by the insecurity that one feels as a self that must seek validation from free others. The fundamental struggle of human existence is negotiating one's relation to Others, but more specifically, it is negotiating one's separateness with one's primordial belonging-with Others. Selfhood arises through this very struggle. Here, we are reminded of Beauvoir's notion that fundamentally, "man is relation to." It is significant that Beauvoir writes that the child's sense of himself is mediated by the Other; it is only when the Other objectifies him that he "appears to himself as a being." The centrality of alienation and the mediation of the Other in the formation of selfhood is evident when Beauvoir writes that separation is experienced as catastrophic. The child's recourse to this catastrophe is to seek an identity that is affirmed by others.[182]

The tendency to alienate oneself continues throughout adulthood, according to Beauvoir. If alienating oneself into an object whose worth may be established by the Other is how the human being tends to respond to transcendence, it follows that part of the impetus for engaging in projects – which are always projects toward the Other – is to attempt to make one's existence "necessary" rather than "contingent." With regard to production, if one alienates oneself into one's writing, art, invention, etc., then one may delude oneself that one is really the book, painting, or invention rather than nothingness. However, it is important to remember that alienating oneself into the created object is more than a delusion. It is also a way of accessing oneself.

In "Pyrrhus and Cineas," Beauvoir describes how an author may write a book out of the desire to be affirmed. While the author hopes to attain recognition of her very

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[182] Beauvoir goes on to detail how boys experience their transcendence through alienating themselves in their penises; girls, however, are not encouraged to experience their transcendence.

being through the creative act, she cannot will this recognition. Selfhood shows itself to be vulnerable because the readers themselves are untouched by the author's desire to be validated:

> But they [the readers] never demand *me*, and yet I wish to be necessitated by them in the very singularity of my being. The book that I write does not fill a void shaped in advance exactly like it…Only the other can create a need for what we give him; every appeal and every demand comes from his freedom. In order for the object that I founded to appear as a good, the other must make it into his own good, and then I would be justified for having created it. The other's freedom alone is capable of necessitating my being. My essential need is therefore to be faced with free men.[183]

After exposing the self's powerlessness to coerce the Other into affirming his creativity and the object of creation, Beauvoir concludes by stating that the self who desires recognition needs free Others. Indirectly, pointing to Hegel's master-slave dialectic, this conclusion is arrived at after several examples of the way that appealing to slave consciousness fails.[184] While we saw earlier that alienating oneself into one's *mana*, soul, or work is inauthentic, this passage is important because it shows that 1) we actually need to be justified and necessitated by others and 2) we can earn this justification through glimpsing ourselves, or alienating ourselves, in our projects. However, regarding the latter point, Beauvoir's caveat is that we can never attain justification "once-and-for-all." This is the why our selfhood is always outside itself and characterized by vulnerability. Again, if we consider the occurrence of traumatic bonding in concentration camps, prisons, religious cults, brothels, and relationships of intimate partner violence, we see the dangerous implications of the self that is utterly outside itself.

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[183] Ibid., 128-129.

[184] Ibid., 132-134.

Beauvoir expands on her idea that the self recognizes itself and is recognized by Others only in its actions:

> If I seek myself in the eyes of others before I have fashioned myself, I am nothing. I take on a shape and an existence only if I first throw myself into the world by loving, by doing. And my being enters into communication with others only through those objects in which it is engaged. I must resign myself to never being entirely saved. There are endeavors that extend over an entire life; others are limited to an instant, but none expresses the totality of my being since this totality *is not*.[185]

At first this assertion appears to be quite extreme. Don't we recognize ourselves immediately in reflection on our identities or feel a minimal sense of self that infuses all experience as mine? However, Beauvoir's claim seems to be that we require distance in order to see ourselves. Again, like Hegel's bondsman, she asserts that the self glimpses its own power and unstable sovereignty in its action and creation. However, Beauvoir also mentions "seeking" oneself in "the eyes of others" and "enter[ing] into communication with others" in this passage. These sections remind the reader that we live in a world with Others and that we do not relate to ourselves purely through our act. Rather, this passage suggests that we grasp ourselves through the Other's recognition of our act. Why then does Beauvoir jump from communicating with others and engaging oneself in projects to a statement about "never being entirely saved"? In the paragraphs leading up to this passage, Beauvoir makes two other statements about the Other's power to save or justify the self's transcendence: "We need others in order for our existence to become founded and necessary" and "I intend to save my being in the world, such as it is realized in my actions…Only through these objects that I make exist in the world can I communicate with others. If I make nothing exist, there is neither communication nor

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[185] Ibid., 130.

justification."[186] For Beauvoir, there are two ways of relating to one's transcendence. The most common is to flee it through alienation. The second is to assume it. The latter is characterized by affirming that one's existence is "nothingness" and the only relation to self is through action. Self-identity, then, must be located in one's ever-changing and transcending projects. The other side of assuming one's existence involves admitting to oneself that others are free to judge one how they see fit. While assuming one's existence may appear as something that one simply has to will oneself to do in order to live authentically, I think that it is easy to miss that one still needs the Other's recognition in order to be "saved." The former quotations reveal that human nothingness needs to be recognized, or made necessary, not just by the self but by the Other.

The language of "founding" reveals the implication of Beauvoir's view of selfhood. If the self is always a project toward the Other, it must seek itself in the Other. According to her, when the human being "assumes" her existence, she simultaneously "renounces all possession, because possession is a way of searching for being."[187] While we will see that Beauvoir often aligns attempts to "justify" or "found" one's existence as inauthentic when they stem from cementing one's concept of oneself or coercing the Other to affirm a fixed self-concept, renouncing possession doesn't mean renouncing the need to be justified in one's nothingness through the Other's recognition. For Beauvoir, selfhood is something that is in need of saving; furthermore, one cannot justify oneself from within. Therefore, if others continually refuse to justify one's existence, than one cannot simply validate oneself. In the next section, we will explore the extent to which one's situation constrains the self. More specifically, the implication is that in an

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[186] Ibid., 129.

[187] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 160.

oppressive environment, the ability to know oneself and be justified are lost. In Beauvoir's view, there are no hidden, interior resources that one can draw on to be a self on one's own.

While the individual acts in part in order to justify her existence through the affirmation of her projects by others, if she desires to authentically relate to her freedom, the affirmation that she desires must entail the furtherance of her project through the inspiration for new projects. She locates recognition as that which "carries off [one's project] toward a new future by new projects."[188] Here, Beauvoir seems to insist that authentic action means that the appeal toward the Other in action and creation is always directed toward the Other's freedom which represents an unknowable future. She reveals the close tie between the self as acting being and the self as an appeal to the Other:

> Thus it is not *for* others that each person transcends himself; one writes books and invents machines that were demanded nowhere. It is not *for* one-self [soi] either, because "self" [soi] exists only through the very project that throws it into the world. The fact of transcendence precedes all ends and all justification, but as soon as we are thrown into the world, we immediately wish to escape from the contingence and the gratuitousness of pure presence. We need others in order for our existence to become founded and necessary. It is not a matter of making recognized in us the pure abstract form of the self [moi] as Hegel believes. I intend to save my being in the world, such as it is realized in my actions, my works, my life. Only through these objects that I make exist in the world can I communicate with others. If I make nothing exist, there is neither communication nor justification.[189]

While I will take up Hegel's influence on Beauvoir in the next section, this passage reveals that our drive to seek recognition seems to be an unconscious need which stems from our very ontology. However, Beauvoir clearly states that transcendence cannot be justified just like she said in the former passage that one cannot be "entirely

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[188] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 135.

[189] Ibid., 129.

saved" because one's being is "*not*." But, she immediately follows this statement with a description of the human being's desire to be justified, first by writing that we "wish" to escape from our freedom and then by claiming that we "need" Others to justify our existence. These conflicting statements reveal the extent to which selfhood is an ongoing struggle that needs "saving" for Beauvoir. While Beauvoir's discussion of anguish and inauthenticty may lead us to read her as condemning all attempts that relate to the Other through a need to justify oneself, we see that we absolutely need the Other in order to be a self.

Lastly, in *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir devotes a lot of space to describing feminine alienation, which manifests itself in a particular way, given woman's historical situation:

> Narcissism is a well-defined process of alienation: the self is posited as an absolute end, and the subject escapes itself in it… There are many other – authentic or inauthentic – attitudes found in woman…What is true is that circumstances invite woman more than man to turn toward self and to dedicate her love to herself…Her education has encouraged her to alienate herself wholly in her body.[190]

Here Beauvoir moves from stating that alienation is an existential fact and describing its structure to showing how social-historical discourses and practices impact the way in which it manifests itself. The narcissistic woman's self-relation is thus strongly impacted by these discourses; she will then seek recognition of the self that is shaped by them from Others.

Ultimately, the self's flight from freedom is a significant part of self-other relations because if Beauvoir is correct in stating that human beings often alienate themselves into their "souls, egos, etc."[191] as a result of this fear, than self-other

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[190] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 667-668.

[191] Ibid., 57.

interactions are structured more by seeking recognition of these objects rather than recognition of one's freedom or transcendence.

Recognition, the Master-Slave Dialectic, and Narrative Descriptions in *The Second Sex*

In this section I will examine the implications of Beauvoir's theory of selfhood in *The Second Sex*. My point of focus will be the way that she appropriates and transforms Hegel's fundamental idea that the self depends on and comes to reflect on itself through the Other because it is this insight that lies behind her theory of selfhood. I will begin this section by outlining some of the key ideas that emerge in *The Second Sex*. Secondly, I will examine Beauvoir's interest in Hegel and then move on to analyzing her use of the master-slave dialectic in *The Second Sex*. Lastly, I will show how Beauvoir makes Hegel's notion of selfhood more concrete through her use of narratives. I will argue that Beauvoir goes beyond Hegel's discussion of the relational self in the master-slave dialectic in three ways: 1) Firstly, she provides psychological descriptions of tendencies that human beings employ in order to escape the way that their self-relations exist outside of themselves. 2) Secondly, while Hegel's account of self-consciousness describes a subject who seeks recognition of its freedom, Beauvoir shows how the weight of social-historical discourses actually drive the subject to desire to be recognized for these narratives rather than its freedom. 3) Lastly, Beauvoir's discussion of recognition focuses on communicating to the Other through one's act in a way that seeks validation of one's existence; this motivation for recognition differs from Hegel's account which states that the subject seeks recognition so that it can attain "certainty" of itself and its freedom.

An Introduction to The Second Sex

As we have seen, recognition is a central concept in Beauvoir's work. Following in line with her earlier works, Beauvoir stresses repeatedly in *The Second Sex* that human existence is mediated.[192] Following Hegel, spirit reaches self-consciousness through the mediation of others. While at first the self is hostile to the fact that the other has the power to confer meaning on its facticity, it realizes that if the other is destroyed, it loses the possibility to get itself back from the other. Beauvoir echoes this notion in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*: "by taking the world away from me, others also give it to me."[193] The self is not sovereign; it must appeal to others for recognition.

Given Beauvoir's view that the Other's recognition is integral to the self's existence and self-conception, *The Second Sex* can be read as concretizing this claim. She does this by showing how the patterns of self-other interactions, especially those between men and women, are grounded in historical situations. One's situation, for Beauvoir, is comprised of one's social roles within public and private realms, material opportunities, political rights, and cultural discourses. Broadly, *The Second Sex* demonstrates the ways in which human existence, in particular female existence, is mediated by these variables.[194] While Beauvoir's guiding question throughout the text is "what about woman's historical situation led her to occupy the role of Other to man?," the text itself provides a model of the ways that social discourses and concrete historical positions heavily determine the situation out of which identity arises.

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[192] *The Second Sex*, 88.

[193] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 71.

[194] *The Second Sex*, 88.

More specifically, Beauvoir's analysis of the psychological ties between men and women in *The Second Sex* can be used to illustrate the ways in which self-other relations determine the self. These are given in vivid detail in Beauvoir's descriptions, gathered from interviews with women and examples from literature. For example, summarizing her findings with regard to man's relation to woman, Beauvoir writes:

> A husband looks for himself in his wife…he seeks in her the myth of his virility, his sovereignty, his unmediated reality…But he himself is a slave to his double: what effort to build up an image in which he is always in danger! After all it is founded on the capricious freedom of Woman. Man is consumed by the concern to appear male, important, superior. He play acts so that others will play act with him.[195]

In passages describing woman, Beauvoir says, "She does not separate man's desire from love of her own self."[196] Or, similarly:

> [Woman] wants to feel like a woman for her own personal satisfaction. She only succeeds in accepting herself from the perspective of both the present and the past by combining the life she has made for herself with the destiny prepared for her by her mother, her childhood games, and her adolescent fantasies.[197]

While these rich passages illustrate how men and women possess the deep-seated desire to be recognized by each other, they also illustrate how the way that each wants to be recognized depends upon the social discourses of his or her situation. Both quotations describe individuals who act in bad faith by seeking confirmation of a fixed image of themselves from the Other. But the deeper point is that the weight of one's situation compels one to relate to oneself by seeking recognition of these discourses from the Other. This comes out strongly in the first line of the latter quote: "[Woman] wants to

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[195] Ibid., 756.

[196] Ibid., 350.

[197] Ibid., 725.

feel like a woman for her own personal satisfaction." While we may think of discourses as thought patterns that we can enter into at will, Beauvoir suggests that the discourses are internalized to such a degree that woman's desires propel her to live them out; they "satisfy" her in her core.

Beauvoir privileges transcendence because she thinks that the possibility of ethics rests on one's capacity to choose the right course of action in every new situation. She also locates authenticity in assuming one's freedom; an authentic self-relation occurs only when one glimpses oneself in one's "free" act. However, the implication of such a view when put into relation with the two preceding passages is that projects are not entirely of the individual's own making; the projects themselves are influenced by these same discourses. Moreover, we saw above that one's projects are only made meaningful when they are affirmed by others. Therefore, regardless of whether we speak of an authentic form of existence or one that seeks to affirm a fixed image of oneself, identity emerges in relation to the discourses and practices of one's situation and is radically dependent upon the whims of the Other; the self is thus utterly vulnerable. We see this clearly in the second passage when fulfillment is described as hinging upon woman's free projects as well as the degree to which she lives out her role as "woman." If we think of the way that the self "gets itself back from the Other," in the scenario that Beauvoir presents, than woman doesn't just seek recognition of "the life she has prepared for herself"; she seeks recognition on the basis of discourses of femininity.

Hegel's Influence on Beauvoir

The subject of Hegel's influence on Beauvoir is not new in Beauvoir scholarship. Within this area of research, there is disagreement among scholars with regard to Beauvoir's use of Hegel's master-slave dialectic in *The Second Sex*. For example, Eva Lundgren-Gothlin takes the position that *The Second Sex* suggests that women do not participate in the master-slave dialectic because they do not engage in a life and death struggle with men, i.e. they do not forcefully demand recognition as subjects. The result of this is that women become absolute Others by never demanding recognition, or seeking reciprocity, from men.[198] While Karen Green and Nicholas Roffey agree with Lundgren-Gothlin that women do not enter into a life and death struggle with men, they argue that Beauvoir does place women in the role of the dependent consciousness in Hegel's dialectic. This means that man occupies the role of the Master and woman only recognizes, or "lives" for man.[199] Nancy Bauer, on the other hand, highlights how women *desire* to be recognized as objects because this allows them to "…ward off a fear that is the other side of…[their] existential freedom: namely, the fear that…[their] relationship to the world is insecure."[200] Therefore, contra Green and Roffey, Bauer claims that women do not merely recognize and live for men; their recognition of men is actually self-serving in that it allows them to avoid "assuming" their transcendence.

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[198] See Eva Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence: Simone de Beauvoir's ''The Second Sex.''* Trans. L. Schenk. (Hanover, N.H: University Press of New England, 1996).

[199] Karen Green and Nicholas Roffey, "Women, Hegel, and Recognition in *The Second Sex*," Green and Roffey point to § 189 in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*: "…one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another."

[200] Bauer, "Being-with as Being-against: Heidegger Meets Hegel in *The Second Sex*," *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (2001), 144.

On Bauer's view, Beauvoir's interest in the master-slave dialectic lies in the fact that for her, self-consciousness, whether male or female, is fundamentally oriented towards seeking recognition from the Other by controlling the Other's perception of itself. In short, Bauer argues that women *do* seek recognition from men, but they seek recognition of themselves as desirable objects.[201] Similarly, men also seek recognition of static self-concepts from women; however, the difference is that they seek recognition of themselves as static subjects while women seek recognition of themselves as static objects. Here, a "subject" refers to the transcending aspect of one's being or the fact that one is capable of exercising autonomy. An "object" refers to one's immanence, or the idea that one is constituted in a certain way that is enduring. Beauvoir shows how men don't actually seek affirmation of their freedom, or subjectivity; they, too, often fall into the trap of seeking recognition of a fixed concept of themselves (e.g. purely independent or *Selbstandigkeit*). Beauvoir's interest in the human drive to seek recognition of an unchanging self-concept is evident from an idea that frequently recurs in her work: human beings relate to their freedom through anguish and flight.[202] Bauer identifies the important role that anguish plays in Beauvoir's account of recognition; anguish motivates one to alienate oneself into a static self-concept. In my own project, I think that this is one of the ways that Beauvoir moves beyond simply re-hashing Hegel's master-slave dialectic in *The Second Sex*. By describing psychological tendencies, like anguish, that emerge as a response to one's constitution as a self that has its being in that which is

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[201] See Bauer, "*The Second Sex* and the Master-Slave Dialectic."

[202] See Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 284; "Pyrrhus and Cineas" in *Philosophical Writings*, 114, 117; *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 34.

outside itself, Beauvoir presents an original discussion and illustration of the implications of Hegel's relational self.

I find Bauer's analysis the most convincing, but I suggest that all three views don't fully grasp Beauvoir's appropriation and transformation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. While the first two positions emphasize that women don't seek recognition from men, I side with Bauer that women do look for affirmation, but they often seek affirmation of themselves as objects rather than subjects. In my view, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* traces the failure of modernity's notion of selfhood as *Selbstandingkeit*. If this reading of the text is correct, we see that Hegel affirms that one's self-conception is historically-situated and variable. I read Beauvoir as taking up the master-slave dialectic first from her own historically-situated place and then throughout history in order to examine the discourses that one is subjected to as a woman. In one sense, she is in agreement with Hegel about the force that the discourses about selfhood wield when it comes to one's self-relation and self-other interactions. However, her transformation of the dialectic based on a different social-historical situation is important because it reveals the extent to which discourses on masculinity and femininity structure the self's desires for recognition. Hegel is silent on this point in the master-slave dialectic. As Bauer points out, human beings are tempted to seek recognition from each other for themselves as objects because it allows them to flee their transcendence. I want to advance this claim by showing that beyond one's psychological reaction to one's freedom, the weight of one's social-historical situation also compels one to seek recognition of such discourses. In order to accomplish this end, I will examine narratives that reveal the way that subjects seek recognition of social-historical discourses in the

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Other. These two motivations for seeking recognition of oneself as an object need not be ranked in importance or completely separated. I would rather like to focus on the role that social-historical discourses play because I find that a more thorough discussion is needed in order to tease out Beauvoir's position from Hegel's with regard to the relational self.

For example, Beauvoir's original notion of the psychological tendency of the self to seek control of the Other's perception of his/her identity is shown clearly when Beauvoir makes the case in *The Second Sex* that woman "wants to feel like a woman for her own personal satisfaction."[203] Beauvoir takes the structure of seeking recognition from Hegel's dialectic, but transforms it by pointing to the way that women's social-historical situation encourages her to seek recognition of herself as a pleasing object instead of as an autonomous, independent freedom. While Bauer points out that women and men seek recognition of themselves as objects based on discourses and on their experience of anguish, I believe that a more thorough investigation is needed to account for the idea that the discourses don't just come from without; the discourses satisfy us internally.

Furthermore, Bauer captures Beauvoir's injunction to the reader to live authentically by avoiding the tempting belief that one could take oneself out of relationship *and* by avoiding the temptation to coerce the Other to see oneself as one wishes to be seen. However, what is not readily apparent in Beauvoir's own corpus and what also stands out as an unexplored dimension of Bauer's discussion of Beauvoir's notion of authenticity is that Beauvoir doesn't advocate that we resist the desire to be justified by the Other. While she criticizes the individual's narcissistic attempt to justify oneself in a way of one's choosing and then thrust this upon the Other, she states clearly

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[203] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 725.

that others compel the individual to act. Furthermore, one's action becomes meaningful when it is understood by others: "through him our words and gestures received a meaning."[204] From infancy on Beauvoir details how we relate to ourselves through the eyes of others. While it is easy to read Beauvoir's discussion of authenticity as an attitude where one invites the Other to judge one as he or she sees fit, I don't think that this invitation means that the self ought to give up all its desire for justification. Fleeing from one's transcendence is inauthentic when it leads to denying one's power to make decisions and when it means that one tries to coerce the Other into affirming a static self-concept. However, anguish before one's transcendence can be positive when it leads the self to engage in projects even if the impetus is only to justify oneself in the eyes of another. On Beauvoir's view, I experience my abandonment in anguish; my separation from the *Mitsein* is a catastrophe. But, it is through this separation that I can relate to the Other. It is through my very need for recognition that motivates me to act.

Now that I have described some of the ways that scholars understand Beauvoir's use of the master-slave dialectic as well as introduced my own way of reading Beauvoir and Hegel together, I will turn to a more thorough discussion of what I take to be Beauvoir's appropriation and transformation of Hegel's view of the relational self.

Most basically, the master-slave dialectic grounds Beauvoir's project in *The Second Sex* as she seeks to picture the ways that the self's authentic and inauthentic desires for recognition are structured by social and historical practices and discourses. Beauvoir recasts the master-slave dialectic in her own words in the introduction: "…following Hegel, a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in

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[204] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 125.

consciousness itself; the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object."[205] In her own original theory of selfhood, we can observe how Hegel's idea that "the subject posits itself only in opposition" is active; for instance, Beauvoir appropriates Hegel's notion of recognition by claiming that the human being is essentially a "project of self toward the other."[206] The self develops its self-concept and actions always already in relation to Others; more specifically, the self seeks recognition of its identity and projects. Furthermore, Beauvoir's notion that the self understands itself through action rather than through solitary introspection is also found in Hegel's discussion of how desire motivates our practical engagement in the world in the chapter on self-consciousness.

Due to the references to Hegel which appear throughout her student diaries, her first philosophical essay, and in her two major philosophical works, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*, it seems likely that Beauvoir's attention to intersubjectivity and selfhood in her work can be explained to some degree by her interest in Hegel. Indeed, in all three of these texts Beauvoir includes sections on "Others" or "Social Life." Furthermore, she retells parts of the recognition section of the master-slave dialectic in each of these works.[207]

With respect to *The Second Sex* in particular, aside from her allusions to the master-slave dialectic, Beauvoir also references Hegel's ideas on sexuality, ethics,

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[205] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 7.

[206] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 93.

[207] For example, see "Pyrrhus and Cineas" in *Philosophical Writings*, 132-135; *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 70-71; *The Second Sex*, 159-160.

parenthood, and marriage throughout *The Second Sex*.[208] However, these are brief

references when compared to her main use of Hegel, which is an investigation of the idea

that surfaces in the master-slave dialectic; namely, "alterity is the fundamental category

of human thought."[209] My particular focus within this claim is the model of selfhood that

emerges. As I have presented, much of Beauvoir's philosophical project is aimed at

fleshing out how one's relation to oneself is based upon one's relation to Others. I think

that Green and Roffey are correct when they suggest that part of Beauvoir's project is to

"…adapt and make concrete the confrontation of self and other to be found in Hegel."[210]

I believe that she achieves this end through her narrative descriptions of self-other

interactions in *The Second Sex*, which reveal the way that social-historical discourses

structure these interactions. As stated earlier, I believe that Beauvoir's transformation of

Hegel's master-slave dialectic lies more in the fact that her discussion of the weight of

the "situated" aspect of one's identity compels one to seek recognition of oneself as an

object rather than a subject. What I mean by "situation" here is the place of individuality,

which is comprised of social-historical discourses and Others which one comports

oneself toward. Beauvoir exposes that the way that the self wants to be recognized is

often not unique; it is structured by historical notions. Hegel's account of recognition

involves a subject asserting a demand to be recognized for its freedom. However,

Beauvoir proposes that the struggle for recognition is more about demanding that one is

seen as an image of one's choosing. The weight of discourses is not the only explanation

that she gives for this phenomenon. She also argues, as Nancy Bauer points out, that the

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[208] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 37, 260, 449, 540.
[209] Ibid., 6.

[210] Green and Roffey, "Women, Hegel, and Recognition in *The Second Sex*," 378.

anguish before one's freedom and the freedom of the Other drives one to seek out a settled version of oneself, i.e. a depiction of oneself as an object rather than a transcendence. Beauvoir points out how the relation to the Other's freedom is peculiar because the self needs the Other to be made "necessary." However, the appeal to the Other is less a matter of inviting the Other to exercise his or her freedom and more a matter of trying to coerce the Other into affirming the self-concept of the self's choosing.

Therefore, while others are the means through which my projects are made meaningful, Beauvoir focuses in *The Second Sex* on the ways in which women's oppression is tied to the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, which affirms that when two consciousnesses encounter each other, each possesses a tendency to dominate the other. If one consciousness holds some "advantage" over the other then domination of the other is possible and the former seeks to preserve its position above the other through oppression.[211] In the "History" section of the *Second Sex*, Beauvoir writes that "there is no ideological revolution more important in the primitive period than the one replacing matrilineal descent with agnation" because it elevates man's status to absolute master while relegating woman to the role of eternal servant.[212] At this moment when man is identified as the sovereign possessor and dispenser of life to each generation, "when he asserts himself as subject and freedom," woman's existence becomes "Other" and "mediatory"; this means that woman admits to recognizing man as the free subject and surrendering her human desire to be recognized as a free subject herself.[213]

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[211] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 71.

[212] Ibid., 87.

[213] Ibid., 88.

Woman, seen as matter and passivity, becomes a convenient placeholder for all of the traits that man does not want to claim; she is the object against which man experiences the power of his will and the certainty of his freedom. While man projects his fear of materiality onto woman, he also "hopes to realize himself by finding himself through her".[214] Both man and woman look to each other for deep-seated affirmation of their self-worth. However, again, while Hegel's dialectic is written for the subject who desires affirmation for its independence and belief in its own sovereignty, Beauvoir believes that men and women more often seek recognition of discourses on masculinity and femininity. In Bauer's view, Beauvoir's use of the master-slave dialectic emphasizes that women and men fit the dialectic more or less well during different times in history. For example, women and men "asymmetrically" recognized each other before the time of slavery when they worked to produce food together. However, after men possessed slaves, women came to be the absolute Other and ceased to demand recognition of themselves as subjects from men.[215]

In the introduction to *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir asserts that the "category of the "Other" is a fundamental aspect of consciousness. She cites its existence in primitive societies and ancient mythologies and points specifically to opposites like Good and Bad, "Sun-Moon, God and Lucifer."[216] Beauvoir quickly follows this discussion with an appeal to Hegel:

> These phenomena could not be understood if human reality were solely a *Mitsein* based on solidarity and friendship. On the contrary, they become

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[214] Ibid., 161.

[215] Bauer, "*The Second Sex* and the Master-Slave Dialectic," 196-197.

[216] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 7.

clear if, following Hegel, a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness itself; the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as the inessential, as the object.[217]

Beauvoir, thus, takes the struggle between the two consciousnesses in the master-slave dialectic to be an essential component of the self and self-knowledge. Beauvoir brings this structure of "posit[ing] itself only in opposition" and brings it to life by looking at the history of unjust societies and female oppression. In the opening of the section entitled "Myths," Beauvoir explores psychological intentions and consequences with regard to men's assumption of the role of the One, or the master:

> Once the subject attempts to assert himself, the Other, who limits and denies him, is nonetheless necessary for him: he attains himself only through the reality that he is not. That is why man's life is never plenitude and rest, it is lack and movement, it is combat. Facing himself, man encounters Nature; he has a hold on it, he tries to appropriate it for himself. But it cannot satisfy him.[218]

Here, not only do we glimpse man's dependence upon the Other and his constant struggle to experience himself through mastery, but we also see Beauvoir repeating Hegel's account of self-consciousness' encounter with "Life" at the beginning of "The Truth of Self-Certainty" section.[219] Like Hegel, she goes on to show how consumption of nature fails because it destroys the object that provides a mirror for its autonomy.[220] In

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[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., 159.

[219] Hegel § 171; 175.

[220] In these sections, Hegel demonstrates how desire, manifested as consumption or destruction, initially affords self-consciousness with a feeling of autonomy. However, the object of desire ultimately fails as a source of the subject's self-certainty. Hegel gives two reasons for the failure: 1) The independence that the sublation of the object affords the subject cannot be complete, because self-consciousness depends on the object to affirm itself. 2) The feeling of autonomy is only momentary; the minute that the object is destroyed, self-consciousness loses that which it feels its own power against.

Beauvoir's words, after consumption, man "remains alone."[221] While man experiences

his sovereignty through dominating an object of nature, the object cannot "give himself

back to himself" because it does not possess free consciousness. Following the movement

of the dialectic in her own text, Beauvoir moves on to describing man's encounter with

woman. Woman, a being endowed with consciousness, is a better candidate for

recognizing man's freedom.

Beauvoir cites the master-slave dialectic directly on the second page of the

"Myths" section when describing the male benefit of aligning woman with nature and

passivity:

> He [man] has contradictory aspirations to both life and rest, existence and
> being; he knows very well that "a restless spirit" is the ransom for his
> development, that his distance from the object is the ransom for his being
> present to himself; but he dreams of restfulness in restlessness and of an
> opaque plenitude that his consciousness would nevertheless still inhabit.
> This embodied dream is, precisely, woman; she is the perfect intermediary
> between nature that is foreign to man and the peer who is too identical to
> him. She pits neither the hostile silence of nature nor the hard demand of a
> reciprocal recognition against him; by a unique privilege she is a
> consciousness, and yet it seems possible to possess her in the flesh.
> Thanks to her, there is a way to escape the inexorable dialectic of the
> master and the slave that springs from the reciprocity of freedoms.[222]

In the first part of this passage, Beauvoir repeats the notion put forward in Hegel that

self-knowledge requires that the self splits into object and consciousness.[223] In the *Ethics*

of Ambiguity, she recasts this splitting up of the self into consciousness and object in

terms of two opposing realities: immanence and transcendence: "Man knows and thinks

this tragic ambivalence which the animal and the plant merely undergo. A new paradox is

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[221] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 159.

[222] Ibid., 160.

[223] Hegel, § 167; 171.

thereby introduced into his destiny. 'Rational animal,' 'thinking reed,' he escapes from his natural condition without, however, freeing himself from it."[224] While in this passage and in the first part of the one above, Beauvoir references consciousness and nature, the domains of rest and life could also be mapped onto the self as both "*Mitsein* and separation." Then, she moves on to reference the part of the master-slave dialectic where recognition from another self-consciousness is deemed necessary in order to satisfy the self's notion of itself that it is an autonomous being. Here, Beauvoir aligns men with Hegel's master who emerges from the life and death struggle and demands unceasing, nonreciprocal recognition. She describes woman as man's ideal slave-like consciousness because she consents to her role as slave; furthermore, she is a consciousness that can be possessed through sexual intercourse. Woman is the closest that man can come to controlling the consciousness of the Other and securing long-standing recognition.

Importantly, Beauvoir's analysis of the master differs from Hegel's because the latter describes the master as desiring to be constantly affirmed for his sovereignty and power. The description Beauvoir gives above emphasizes that man, from the start, desires "restfulness." I believe that Beauvoir's analysis here falls in line with the claims that she makes in "Pyrrhus and Cineas" about the self's need for validation. Man desires to possess and control the being who has the ability to give him unceasing validation. Beauvoir suggests here that what motivates recognition is not the desire to be affirmed as a freedom, bound by nothing; instead, the human tendency to flee one's separation, or freedom, towards a state without conflict is the true impetus. Here, Beauvoir provides a rich account of a common psychological reaction to the way in which the self exists ontologically outside of itself. Furthermore, discourses of masculinity certainly play a

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[224] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 7.

role in man's initial drive to secure validation from woman. When man hopes to secure

recognition of himself through possessing woman in the sexual act, he isn't seeking

recognition of himself as a gender-neutral, abstract freedom; he seeks recognition of

himself as a masculine subject.

Pointing ahead to Hegel's notion of mutual recognition, and re-casting it in her

own terms, Beauvoir writes:

> The other is present only if the other is himself present to himself: that is, true alterity is a consciousness separated from my own and identical to it. It is the existence of other men that wrests each man from his immanence and enables him to accomplish the truth of his being, to accomplish himself as transcendence, as flight toward the object, as a project. But this foreign freedom, which confirms my freedom, also enters into conflict with it: this is the tragedy of the unhappy consciousness; each consciousness seeks to posit itself alone as sovereign subject. Each one tries to accomplish itself by reducing the other to slavery…The conflict can be overcome by the free recognition of each individual in the other, each one positing both itself and the other as object and as subject in a reciprocal movement…this is where he is in his truth: but this truth is a struggle endlessly begun, endlessly abolished….unable to accomplish himself in solitude, man is ceaselessly in jeopardy in his relations with his peers: his life is a difficult enterprise whose success is never assured.[225]

While Beauvoir asserted above that the Other is necessary for the self to know itself, she

now adds, following Hegel, that only an Other who is free to affirm or reject the self can

confer recognition. This passage also reveals how in Beauvoir's retelling of the master-

slave dialectic, she adds her own original ideas. For instance, she stresses that the human

condition is one in which the struggle between the master and the slave is continually

playing out. This is a matter of emphasis rather than an outright difference with Hegel.

The implication of Hegel's description of mutual recognition in §184 is that one's self-

relation – the fact that one sees oneself as an "immediate," independent being – depends

upon the mediation of another free consciousness and is thus always susceptible to

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[225] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 159-160.

failure. Rather than proposing a new idea, Beauvoir emphasizes the vulnerable nature of the relationship that Hegel introduces. Beauvoir's description of assuming one's freedom involves admitting that the struggle for recognition is ongoing because the self itself is a "negativity" and a "lack":

> In Hegelian terms it might be said that we have here a negation of the negation by which the positive is re-established. Man makes himself a lack, but he can deny the lack as lack and affirm himself as a positive existence…However, rather than being a Hegelian act of surpassing, it is a matter of a conversion. For in Hegel the surpassed terms are preserved only as abstract moments, whereas we consider that existence still remains a negativity in the positive affirmation of itself.[226]

Here, Beauvoir asserts against Hegel that the process for seeking justification and self-consciousness is continual. In Hegel, Beauvoir sees a finality in the synthesis. However, her own view is that the self is always ambiguous; the distance between self-consciousness and the body – the lack – is an ontological reality that must be affirmed along with the contingency of all moral choices.[227]

Beauvoir recasts Hegel's idea that each consciousness is both a subject and an object for the other in terms of her understanding of the opposing realms of transcendence and immanence, or existence and being. Beyond Hegel's claim, that the Other is necessary for self-knowledge, Beauvoir writes that the Other is also the means through which the self becomes truly human. The self is fundamentally "a flight toward the object," or a project. Therefore, realizing that her being is not fixed or given is the task of the human being, according to Beauvoir. Given that the self, according to Beauvoir, is "unable to accomplish himself in solitude," it seems that the Other provides the self with the impetus to act, and consequently to realize his or her transcendence

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[226] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 13.

[227] Ibid., 13-14.

through action. While what appears to be at stake in Hegel's discussion of recognition is the self's desire to see itself as "self-certain" and "essential," for Beauvoir, recognition allows individuals to become truly human by inciting them to engage in projects: "It is the existence of other men that wrests each man from his immanence and enables him to accomplish the truth of his being, to accomplish himself as transcendence, as flight toward the object, as a project." While Hegel would agree that the Other incites self-consciousness, Beauvoir goes beyond these statements by asserting that the Other incites the self to engage in freely-chosen projects, which is ultimately how one "accomplishes" oneself as a human being.

However, as we saw above, the human tendency to force recognition from an Other that is subjugated by the self is also frequently at work. Furthermore, as Bauer rightly points out, Beauvoir adds to Hegel's discussion of the self's encounter with the Other that mutual recognition entails more than solely recognizing the Other's subjectivity or freedom; it must include acknowledging that the Other and itself are always *both* subject *and* object, or immanence *and* transcendence.[228] This is significant because it expands on Hegel's discussion of the first encounter with another self-consciousness when self-consciousness realizes that the Other is both an object before it, but also identical to it, with regard to its ability to confer recognition.[229] Beauvoir emphasizes that mutual recognition isn't just about recognizing the Other's freedom; it also concerns the self-realization that one is continually an object of consciousness for the Other and thus vulnerable to the Other's judgment. While Hegel states that self-

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[228] Bauer, "*The Second Sex* and the Master-Slave Dialectic," 186.

[229] Hegel, §184.

consciousness is made into an object by the Other, Beauvoir deepens this claim. According to her, when the human being "assumes" her existence, she simultaneously "renounces all possession, because possession is a way of searching for being."[230] While it seems clear that Beauvoir means that the authentic individual withholds from viewing herself as the embodiment of a static self-concept, it appears that this statement also pertains to the quelling of the drive to control or halt the Other's continual capacity to see her as an object. The unstable human situation prompts Beauvoir to write that human beings are always "in jeopardy" with Others because the Other's consciousness recurrently turns one into an object. Moreover, it is the Other that incites my action and holds the key to recognizing my act.

Beauvoir's Use of Narratives in Second Sex

Now that we have examined Beauvoir's original notion of selfhood, her fundamental interest in intersubjectivity, and her use of the master-slave dialectic in *The Second Sex*, we are in a position to show how her use of narrative descriptions in *The Second Sex* make the model of the self that is put forward in Hegel's master-slave dialectic more concrete. First we will explore the role that narrative plays in her own work in general. As the narratives presented are taken from literature as well as self-reports, Beauvoir's own discussion of the way in which narratives aid existential philosophy in "Literature and Metaphysics" (1946) is helpful when analyzing the function of narrative in *The Second Sex*. Summarizing Beauvoir, Margaret Simons writes:

> Beauvoir describes the goal of philosophy as a "disclosure" of metaphysical reality, which she describes in Heideggerian terms as grasping one's 'being-in-the-world,' that is, one's experience of embodied freedom and abandonment, of the opacity of things and the resistance of

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[230] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 160.

foreign consciousness. Beauvoir argues that since the metaphysical meaning of human events and objects in the real world cannot be grasped by the pure understanding, but can only be disclosed within an overall relation of action and emotion, philosophers must reject system building and turn to the novel.[231]

Simons rightly points out that for Beauvoir, narratives present a wider scope of human experience than philosophical essays by describing action as it unfolds as well as the subjective meaning that unfurls out of situations and events. Applying this reasoning to my own project means that a philosophical theory of selfhood succeeds in achieving the goal of philosophy – i.e., the disclosure of lived experience – when it is demonstrated in narrative format. However, Beauvoir by no means suggests that we should discard philosophical theory; indeed, her own work describes human experience in terms of theoretical constructs (e.g. transcendence and immanence). Rather, she advocates the combination of theory and literature:

> It is not by chance if existentialist thought today attempts to express itself sometimes by theoretical treatises and sometimes by fiction; it is because it is an effort to reconcile the objective and the subjective, the absolute and the relative, the timeless and the historical. [232]

Following along with Hegel's phenomenological premise that all perception includes *consciousness of* the object, Beauvoir asserts that narratives display this insight concretely. The subjective element of human experience is captured in narrative form because here we see action as it unfolds and affects a particular human being in a particular situation. While Beauvoir describes Hegel's notion of recognition as "too abstract" in "Pyrrhus and Cineas," she praises Hegel's own use of literature in the *Phenomenology* three years later in "Literature and Metaphysics."

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[231] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 265.
[232] Ibid., 274.

> …when spirit has not accomplished itself but is only in the process of accomplishing itself, Hegel must confer on it a certain carnal thickness in order to recount adequately its adventures. In the Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel resorts to literary myths such as Don Juan and Faust, because the drama of the unhappy consciousness finds its truth only in a concrete and historical world.[233]

Beauvoir references an instance in which Hegel's unhappy consciousness comes to realize that it is more than immaterial existence: "there has entered into it the Spirit of the earth." The unhappy consciousness comes to understand that its body allows it to actually exist.[234] Hegel's allusion to Faust when describing the unhappy consciousness' realization is significant for Beauvoir's claims about literature's ability to capture lived experience because it shows that Hegel turns to narrative to effectively demonstrate particular, bodily existence. The passages above suggest that, for Beauvoir, philosophical claims (like her model of the self in relation) are both closest to reality and easily grasped when they appear in the life-like setting of a narrative that includes descriptions of a settings, relations amongst characters, action, and interior monologues.

Now that we have surveyed Beauvoir's use of narratives in general, I will turn to narratives drawn from a variety of chapters in *The Second Sex* in order to illustrate the former claim. First I will show how Beauvoir takes the structure of finding oneself in the Other from Hegel and goes on to explore psychological reactions to this structure. Starting with "Childhood," we see a vivid illustration of the "fundamental hostility"[235] towards the Other that exists in consciousness itself in a passage about a daughter's rebellion from the novel *Sido* by Colette Audry. While Hegel provides an outline of the

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[233] Ibid.

[234] Hegel, § 360. Hegel alludes to Faust in this section. See Howard P. Kainz, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: Not Missing the Trees for the Forest* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2008), Chapter Six. Kainz emphasizes that the *Phenomenology* is written in a narrative form and suggests that it employs numerous literary devices.

[235] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 7.

outcomes of a meeting between two consciousnesses, Beauvoir provides an illustration of the *experience* of a Hegelian struggle for sovereignty, i.e., what it feels like from the inside:

> I wouldn't have known how to answer the truth, however innocent it was, because I never felt innocent in front of Mama. She was the essential adult, and I resented her for it as long as I was not yet cured. There was deep inside me a kind of tumultuous and fierce sore that I was sure of always finding raw…I didn't think she was too strict; nor that she hadn't the right. I thought no, no, no with all my strength. I didn't even blame her for her authority or for her orders or arbitrary defenses but for *wanting to subjugate me*. She said it sometimes: when she didn't say it, her eyes and voice did. Or else she told ladies that children are much more docile after a punishment. These words stuck in my throat, unforgettable…This anger was my guilt in front of her and also my shame in front of me…living the silent madness that made me only repeat, 'Subjugate, docile, punishment, humiliation,' I wouldn't be subjugated.[236]

Here, we see the strong desire that exists in both the mother and the child to be recognized as an autonomous being; this is evident in the Mother's desire to experience herself as Master and the daughter's resistance to being reduced to slave consciousness. What stands out most strongly is the idea that the self is deeply affected by – and here resentful of – the Other's power to judge. The inner and outer struggle against being reduced to an object (against one's will) before a powerful Other is displayed in rich detail here. Aside from illustrating how the self feels guilt and resentment when faced with an Other who struggles to achieve mastery over it, Beauvoir's philosophical point seems to be that as a self, we are constituted to be susceptible to the Other's judgment in such a way that it deeply affects our own self-relation (e.g., "I never felt innocent in front of Mama). While Hegel claims that the Other mediates our self-certainty and feeling of autonomy, Beauvoir's account of how the Other impacts our self-relation is weighted more towards desiring recognition of one's worth and value.

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[236] Ibid., 308-309.

Beauvoir's interest in the recognition of self-worth is also evident when Beauvoir quotes Sophia Tolstoy's diary: "The feeling of being indispensable to them [my children] is my greatest happiness…My only resources, my only weapons to establish equality between us [my husband and I], are the children, energy, joy, health…"[237] Sophia Tolstoy, here, describes how her relation to her children gives her a sense of worth; she is necessary and "indispensable" because her children esteem her as such. Here we see how her self-relation is mediated through her children's recognition. Furthermore, the children become a way of increasing her worth next to her husband. Being their mother makes her more powerful in the eyes of her husband and color his perception of her. Ultimately, this passage and the ones that follow reveal that the self depends upon another consciousness in order to relate to itself; the self looks to the Other for confirmation of its worth.

Moving away from Beauvoir's discussion of mother-child relations, I will now turn to analyzing a major theme in *The Second Sex*, namely the male gaze. To this end, I will examine women's descriptions of the male gaze drawn from first person experience and literature. While Hegel's master-slave dialectic centers on self-consciousness' desire to be seen as all-powerful, free, and dependent upon only itself, Beauvoir focuses on how women come to internalize a different drive, namely, the desire to be *seen* as a desirable sexual object by masculine eyes.

The Male Gaze

Because girls are taught to desire recognition *as women*, the experience of the gaze of the Other takes on a more determinate role in the lives of women than in the lives

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[237] Ibid., 565.

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of men. In the chapter on childhood, Beauvoir writes that boys and girls both seek

recognition of themselves as objects from their parents.[238] In this chapter, she details the

way that the drive for recognition develops. For both boys and girls, the gaze and

recognition of the Other confers a sense of reality and worth on the subject.[239] When a

child first recognizes himself in the mirror and realizes that he is a separate, autonomous

being Beauvoir writes that he flees this reality "and tries to compensate for this

catastrophe by alienating his existence into an image whose reality and value will be

established by others."[240] Beauvoir goes on to write:

> …the passivity that essentially characterizes the 'feminine' woman is a
> trait that develops in her from her earliest years…[for the boy,] it is by
> doing that he makes himself be, in one single movement. On the contrary,
> for the woman there is, from the start, a conflict between her autonomous
> existence and her 'being-other'; she is taught that to please, she must try to
> please, must make herself object.[241]

While both sexes strive for intersubjective recognition, the boy gains his through

performing transcendent activities through which he experiences *himself* as a being that

overcomes obstacles in the world. Beauvoir writes that boys receive recognition and

experience their own autonomy for climbing trees, playing sports, roughhousing with

friends, etc. because such activities fall in line with discourses of masculinity.

Conversely, the girl is encouraged to live out discourses of femininity; she is taught to be

a "living doll." She must wait for others to notice and praise her appearance. The girl

experiences her own human agency but she is aware of being recognized not for this

agency but for herself *as object*. The consciousness of being a passive body before others

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[238] Ibid., 284.

[239] Ibid., 284.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid., 295.

effects a sharp split between her freedom and her image before others. The girl's actions can no longer be performed fluidly because her image performs them. That is, if she hopes to be recognized, her actions become burdened with the way that they could be received by others. She must "try to please." While it is unclear what percentage of the time young girls comport themselves this way, Beauvoir believes that 1) young girls are aware that they must try to offer up a pleasing image of themselves to Others and 2) This tendency increases in adolescence and can lead to pathological disassociation.

Beauvoir describes a young woman's description of the "shock" of feeling herself seen by another *as a woman* for the first time. Beauvoir summarizes this experience: "The little girl feels that her body is escaping her, that it is no longer the clear expression of her individuality; it becomes foreign to her; and at the same moment, she is grasped by others as a thing: on the street, eyes follow her…"[242] This "doubling" produces anguish but the girl will soon discover the power in being the seductive object. The excitement and approval that the girl sees in men's eyes invite her to believe the myth that woman is an "enchantress." Beauvoir writes that the connection between the man's arousal and her own seduction is particularly strong for the girl.[243]

The woman's consciousness of a split between herself as subject and herself as object is often maintained throughout her entire life. Due to the enormous pressures exerted on her to be recognized by men, the heterosexual woman dedicates an immense amount of time worrying about and shaping the object/image that escapes herself as subject. In a sense, the young woman internalizes the male gaze so that she is always

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[242] Ibid., 321.

[243] Ibid., 349.

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acting before him; all of her movements become burdened by play-acting rather than unselfconscious dedication to a "freely-chosen" project.

Beauvoir writes "… in the solitude of her room, in salons where she tries to attract the gaze of others, she does not separate man's desires from the love of her own self."[244] Here we see clearly that if Beauvoir is correct in her analysis of a young woman's experience then her self-worth is contingent upon male *sexual* recognition. However, she seeks/receives recognition from a man for being an object, not a subject. Again, Beauvoir expands Hegel's discussion of the self that seeks recognition in the master-slave dialectic by showing how women are more conscious of themselves as objects before men, given the fact that the avenues of recognition are restricted due to their historical situation.

Citing Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette's *Vagabond* and the poet Cecile Sauvage's reflections on her early married life, Beauvoir describes woman's project, to become a desirable object, in more detail in the passages below:

> I must confess that, in allowing this man to return tomorrow, I was giving way to my desire to keep, not an admirer, not a friend, but an eager spectator of my life and my person. "One has to get terribly old," said Margot to me one day, "before one can give up the vanity of living in the presence of someone else.[245]

> When you are not there, it seems not even worthwhile to greet the day; everything that happens to me seems lifeless, I am no more than a little empty dress thrown on a chair.[246]

Here Beauvoir describes women's need for "a spectator"; her identity and her actions only attain importance when they are observed by male eyes. While Beauvoir's focus is woman's relation to the male gaze, it is worth noting that she also cites passages that

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[244] Ibid., 350.

[245] Ibid., 687.

[246] Ibid., 701.

confirm that man's self-relation is also colored by the gaze of the Other. She points to

Montherlant's autobiographical novel, *Le Songe*:

> Alban repelling Dominique because he sees a fool in the mirror illustrates
> this enslavement: it is in the eyes of others that one is a fool. The arrogant
> Alban subjects his heart to this collective consciousness that he
> despises.[247] (*Le Songe*)

The pull that the Other has over the self and the extent to which this power is internalized

is exemplified in this passage. However, while Alban sees himself through the eyes of

Others in this passage, there is no mention of him surrendering his subjectivity by

devoting himself to a project of seeking recognition of himself as an object.

For Hegel, one can't achieve self-certainty, nor can one feel that one is an

"essential," i.e. free, without the recognition of the Other's consciousness. As we have

seen above, for Beauvoir, discourses prompt us – especially woman, given that the

discourses prize her passivity and appearance rather than her acts – to seek recognition of

static self-concepts rather than our transcendence. This doesn't mean that the individuals

that Beauvoir describe don't seek recognition of their own autonomy in a disguised way

through trying to force the Other to affirm them for a self-concept of their own choosing.

In my view, the deeper point that Beauvoir makes is that social-historical discourses and

individual freedom can't be neatly unraveled. While Hegel makes this point in his own

way by showing that the subject seeks recognition of the modern notion of individuality

(*Selbstandigkeit*), Beauvoir claims that fulfillment lies in uniting the life that one has

chosen with the discourses that one has internalized since childhood. While Hegel

doesn't address the role of gendered discourses, Beauvoir shows how recognition differs

according to which gendered discourses one has been subjected to. In Beauvoir's view,

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[247] Ibid., 226.

the self unequivocally needs others to accomplish itself; others incite us to realize and fulfill our humanity through our own projects. However, Beauvoir also gives us the resources to think about how our "own projects" are not entirely our own. The weight of our historical, gendered situation cannot be denied.

Conclusion

I have sought to show how Beauvoir's original theory of the self in relation can be clearly grasped when her own project is teased out from Hegel's in the master-slave dialectic. Following Green and Roffey, I agree that Hegel's dialectic depicts two masculine subjects who seek recognition of themselves as *Selbstandigkeit*.[248] Beauvoir takes Hegel's structure of the struggle for recognition and applies it to male-female relations; she shows how women often seek recognition of themselves as objects due to the influence of discourses of femininity. However, Beauvoir thinks that men, too, desire to be recognized for fixed self-concepts due to the role that masculine discourses play in their life. According to Green and Roffey, Beauvoir locates woman as the dependent consciousness, or bondsman, who only affirms and man as the independent consciousness who experiences his own autonomy through the dependent consciousness' recognition. However, if we look to the recurring notion of alienation in Beauvoir's corpus, we will see that both men and women exercise their freedom by seeking to flee it and alienating themselves into fixed self-concepts. As Bauer points out, woman by no means lives only to affirm man; she doesn't fit the structure of Hegel's dependent consciousness because woman doesn't purely recognize. She, too, demands to be recognized. However, her demand is to be recognized as an object of desire. While Bauer

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[248] Green and Roffey, 390.

locates anguish before one's freedom as the key motivation for seeking recognition of oneself as an object, I think Beauvoir's transformation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic lies more in the fact that the weight of the "situated" aspect of one's identity is the motivating factor in the search for recognition.

Furthermore, while Hegel's master-slave dialectic moves toward the goal of becoming certain of one's autonomy, Beauvoir suggests that recognition pertains more to our inescapable need to be validated in our interactions with others. Recalling the passages about infancy, human beings are set up to desire the *Mitsein*. The goal for Beauvoir is to relate authentically to the *Mitsein* by maintaining that one is also "separation." As quoted above:

> We need others in order for our existence to become founded and necessary. It is not a matter of making recognized in us the pure abstract form of the self [moi] as Hegel believes. I intend to save my being in the world, such as it is realized in my actions, my works, my life. Only through these objects that I make exist in the world can I communicate with others. If I make nothing exist, there is neither communication nor justification.[249]

Recognition is not about gaining an inner feeling of certainty from another that one does in fact possess freedom. For Beauvoir, one's self-relation remains in an intersubjective space of action and communication. However, the fact that the self is vulnerable through existing utterly outside itself, as a being in the world, leaves open the possibility that one can enter into relationships with Others that justify one's existence.

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[249] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 129.

CHAPTER IV

THE OTHER WITHIN:

THE RELATIONAL SELF IN NISHIDA'S CORPUS

The dialectical process may be conceived from the self determination of this world of reality which is both one qua many and many qua one. It may therefore be seen from the world of the I and the Thou. The self is the affirmation of the self negation of this world of reality.[250]

I think that the notion of the individual's being an individual only in relation to other individuals has been neglected. As I have often said, the unity of the person is not a mere continuity but a continuity of discontinuity.[251]

At first glance, the relational self does not appear to be a recurrent subject within

Nishida's corpus. From his first work, *An Inquiry into the Good*, to his last essay, "The

Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview," Nishida is concerned with presenting a

non-dualistic logic that captures experience. Wary of dualisms like subject and object and

idealism and materialism, Nishida describes experience as that which unfolds through

action, expression, and perception in the place between consciousness and matter.[252]

However, for Nishida, true reality must be understood from both the side of the subject

and from the side of the objective world. He highlights the agency and force of the world

which determines the subject. "The real…does not entirely transcend the person, for it

always retains the meaning of determining us. True reality is that which fully determines

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[250] Nishida Kitaro, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, 139 (*NKZ* 7:264-265).

[251] Ibid., 141 (*NKZ* 7: 268).

[252] Nishida calls originary experience "pure" because drawing the line between subject and object occurs *after* the original unity of "just perceiving." For example, before reflection, there is just a rose. Only after the initial perception do I add onto experience the concepts, "rose" and "self" as well as the abstraction "I perceive the rose." See Nishida, "Pure Experience" in *An Inquiry into the Good,* trans. by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 3-10 (*NKZ* 1: 9-18).

us – indeed, which determines us from our very depths."[253] Ultimately, there is no inside or outside to experience for Nishida; the world and the self are mutually self-determining. Nishida describes reality through his logic of absolutely contradictory self-identity (Jpn. *zettai mujunteki jiko dôitsu*絶対矛盾的自己同一), which holds that all beings are empty of intrinsic essence and formed through their relations to other beings. Thus, speaking of the "world" and the "self" as distinct entities is misleading; rather, there is only a single, interdependent reality.

Given Nishida's interest in logic and ontology, coupled with the fact that he includes few examples from everyday human experience in his voluminous writings, we may be surprised that intersubjectivity is a point of focus for Nishida. However, following Steve Odin,[254] I argue that the relational self is an important and recurrent theme in Nishida's project. Indeed, the "I-Thou" dimension of selfhood is examined in numerous works throughout the different phases of his thought, including *Inquiry into the Good* (1911), *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy* (1933-4), "The Standpoint of Active Intuition" (1935) "Human Being" (1938), "I and Thou," (1932) "Love of Self-Love of Other and the Dialectic" (1932), and "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview" (1945).

In this chapter I will seek to show how the intersubjective self is an important motif within Nishida's overall philosophical project, as it broadens the reader of Nishida's understanding of key aspects of his thought, including the self and its basis in nothingness, place, and the historical world (with reference to his notions of expression

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[253] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 2 (*NKZ* 7:7).

[254] See Odin, *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism.*

and creative activity). Aside from what the relational self can tell us about other themes in Nishida's philosophical project, Nishida's view offers insight into a vision of the self that is a confluence of relations. The implications of Nishida's view is that the self is always tied to an intersubjective space. The deepest reality of the self is Other. Nishida maintains that the self is expressive and free, yet he simultaneously implies that the self does not possess itself. First, I will provide a brief background of key concepts within Nishida's thought, namely, his view of the self, place, and expressive activity within the historical world. Secondly, I will examine Nishida's discussion of the self in relation by investigating three aspects of this discussion: 1) living-qua-dying, 2) recognition, and 3) expression. In this section I will tease out Hegel's influence on Nishida's view of recognition. I will also point to Watsuji Tetsuro's view of the human person as "betweenness" in order to clarify Nishida's view of the intersubjective space of selfhood. Lastly, I will discuss the implications of Nishida's view of the self in relation with reference to vulnerability, possession, and agency.

Additionally, as mentioned in the introduction, concentrating on the "Thou structure" will help rectify the overemphasis, in American Nishida scholarship, on the self as pure experience and absolute nothingness and the avoidance of his discussion of the social self.[255] Nishida's descriptions of the self as absolute nothingness are persistent throughout his philosophical project. However, his way of capturing the self that is an expression of absolute nothingness, or emptiness, is distinct in the texts and essays listed above. In these works, he concretizes what it means to say that the self is a conduit for the

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[255] Steve Odin points out that Nishida scholars have tended to focus on Nishida's conception of the true self as something individual. However, in his later essays Nishida clarifies that the self is always social. See *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism*, 85-87.

world's expression by calling attention to the way that social-historical self-other relations are constitutive of individuality.

While Nishida doesn't often cite Hegel directly when he discusses recognition and I-Thou relations, Hegel's influence on his thought seems evident in statements like: "The I becomes an I through recognition by a Thou, just as a Thou becomes a Thou only through recognition by an I."[256] This vein of thought runs throughout Nishida's entire philosophical project in his repetition of "affirmation-qua-negation" and "continuity of discontinuity," which echo the idea that individuality emerges through a field of relation.[257] Nishida also prompts the reader to realize the mutual dependence of self and Other, but instead of taking this idea directly from Hegel, he draws on the Buddhist teaching of self-realization through emptiness. Hegel was clearly on Nishida's mind as he considered the question of intersubjectivity due to the fact that he published "Hegel's Dialectic from my Point of View" one year prior to his essay "I and Thou."

According to Peter Suares, Hegel's main influence on Nishida's work can be glimpsed in the allusions to Hegel's concrete logic in his own efforts to outline logic that captures a unified reality that overcomes the division between subject and object. Here, Hegel's influence on Nishida's thought with reference to the unity between thought and being is evident. For example, concerning his maiden work, Nishida writes "From the beginning, the idea of the spontaneous self-development of pure experience in *An Inquiry into the Good* contained in a fundamental way also Hegel's idea of the development of

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[256] As quoted in Odin, *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism,* 91.

[257] Kopf, 111-112. While Hegel and Beauvoir describe recognition as a human phenomenon, Nishida writes that any other being in the natural world ("including mountains, rivers, trees, and stones") is a Thou. See Odin, 92.

the concrete concept."[258] Nishida's later works on the historical world[259] stem from the

same desire for unity; he intends to portray worldly interactions without recourse to a

separation between world, self, and the Other. For example, he attempts to show how

"expression" (*hyōgen*) transcends the dichotomies that the abstract concepts of matter or

mind posit:

> The world of expression is the world of the I and Thou…it is neither the
> world of objectivity, the world of objects, nor the world of subjectivity,
> consciousness. Again, the world of expression is neither the world of the I
> nor the world of the Thou, but the world of the I and Thou.[260]

While the subject of Nishida's engagement with Hegel is vast, given my focus on the

relational self, I will only examine how the notion of recognition that emerges in the

master-slave section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* influenced Nishida's discussion of

the relational selfhood.

I will now turn to examining three key aspects of Nishida's thought which will

help us to understand his overall vision of the self: the nothingness at the base of the self,

place, and the historical world.

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[258] Peter Suares, *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel: Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe Remake the Philosophy of Spirit*, 3, 9.

[259] For example, "Logic and Life," "The Historical Body," and "I and Thou."

[260] As quoted in Kopf, 119.

Nishida's Model of the Self

Transcendence and Absolutely Self-Contradictory Identity

In "Human Being" (1938), Nishida writes of the self, "it is not within the self itself that it possesses self identity."[261] Nishida's logic is tied to the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness and interdependent co-origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). These doctrines signify that the self does not produce its own identity because it is empty of intrinsic essence. While we may posit the existence of a self through the workings of the conceptual mind, the self itself is ontologically fictitious. However, although the self does not exist as an unchanging core entity, human beings do possess distinct identities. The self – and in the Buddhist worldview, all things – gains its identity through its relations to other things. Using the example of a tree, the doctrine of interdependent co-origination claims that the tree does not have an individual essence; its identity is formed through the sun, water, and soil that make it what it is. Nishida describes his own way of conceiving of identity through the term "predicate logic." While "object logic" views a being as a reified entity or substance, "predicate logic" assumes that identity is not something "interior," self-generating, or self-sustaining. [262]

Nishida's way of envisioning the self may relate to our common sense understanding of our own identities. For instance, when we reflect on our identities, we do not discover a reified essence. Instead, we find a world that we are engaged in, i.e. we understand ourselves through an environment, a family, a workplace, etc. The self that

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[261] Nishida, "Human Being" in *Ontology of Production: 3 Essays*, trans. William Haver (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 169 (*NKZ* 9: 45).

[262] David Dilworth, Introduction to *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, by Nishida Kitarō (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 3.

one is and the self that one knows emerges from what is not self. Nishida writes, "If an object is considered as merely that which opposes the self spatially, the self is no more than a thing, and a relationship of this sort is a relationship of things."[263] For Nishida, identity is permeable; it issues from the thorough interaction of beings. Nishida thus characterizes human actions as having the character of a contradictory identity.[264] We see here that all of reality follows the pattern of absolutely contradictory self-identity (Jpn. *zettai mujunteki jiko dôitsu*絶対矛盾的自己同一); all beings are groundless and gain their identity through self-negation. Here, "self-negation" means that the self is a worldly being both in its consciousness and in its actions; it isn't self-contained. Our consciousness is always of something just as our actions involve acting on the historical, material world. Both entail moving outside of oneself and having our being in that which transcends us.

While all selfhood originates from what is "other," in his last essay, Nishida focuses on the absolute other at the base of the self:

> We are contradictory existence. We reflect the world within ourselves and yet have our selfhood in the absolute other."[265]
>
> At the bottom of the self there is something that utterly transcends us and this something is neither foreign nor external to us.[266]

If something is empty of intrinsic essence, then at its base it is empty. Nishida uses the term "absolute nothingness" to refer to the true reality of the self. While we often act

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[263] Nishida, "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview," *The Eastern Buddhist*, trans. by Yusa Michiko, 20.1 (1987), 8.

[264] Ibid., 58.

[265] Ibid., 6.

[266] Ibid., 85.

from a place that believes in its individuality and volition, Nishida asserts that this is not the only way of conceiving of ourselves. Religious-ethical reality originates from a space where absolute nothingness is affirmed and becomes the basis of one's actions. It cannot rest upon believing in the power of one's individual will. Here it is important to note that Nishida's project goes further than offering a model of selfhood. Rather, he encourages the reader to *realize* that she or he is not a self-sustaining individual. He attempts to invoke a fundamental transformation where the self discovers that it is truly itself only through its own self-negation; it has its being in that which transcends it. Thus, it is important to note that Nishida's use of the term self often reflects *both* the self as absolute nothingness and the self as a particular existence.

Basho and the Historical World

Nishida expands his philosophical vision of the absolute interpenetration of self and world through his notion of place (*basho* 場所) in the mid-1920s. The metaphor of *basho* provides a "logical foundation" for his earlier work by replacing language of the "subject" with the new notion of a "field" of consciousness.[267] In this account, consciousness is not the property of an independent, self-sustaining individual. In order to capture this sentiment, and to articulate action without neglecting it, Nishida describes experience as a place or field.

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[267] John Maraldo, "Nishida Kitarō," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2010 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/nishida-kitaro/>.

John Maraldo suggests that, within Nishida's project, *basho* "functions as the field that is the opening [or non-dualism] of world and self."[268] In Nishida's words, "The individual determines itself only in relation to other individuals. The idea of a unique self-determining individual has no meaning. In order for the individual to determine itself there must first be what I have called the determination of a place "basho", i.e. a unity of absolute contradictories."[269] Any remnant of the identity of a being as closed off or self-directing is eradicated by the concept of *basho*. Nishida's insight is that such a way of conceiving of reality shifts the focus away from a notion of agency that is tied to an individual subject.

> [The] self-determination of absolute space…does not signify a place in which things exist. It must rather signify a place in which things are mutually determining, which is, as it were, a physical space of personal action. The mutual determination of things also implies that the place is self-determining.[270]

Nishida's notion of "expression" (*hyōgen*), as that which takes place between two human beings and cannot be reduced to the will of merely one, helps to illustrate what he means by *basho's* "self-determination." Agency doesn't issue from a subject; rather, *basho* becomes its site. The reader's understanding of agency is thus radically transformed; the subject does not merely stand against and act upon nature. Nishida's ontology consists of the mutual determination of self and world.

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[268] Ibid.

[269] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 6-7 (*NKZ* 7: 16).

[270] Ibid., 48 (*NKZ* 7: 94-95).

Expressive Activity and the Historical World

Nishida's later works are guided by the desire to further develop his theories of *basho* and absolutely self-contradictory identity by affirming the agency of the historical world, i.e. how social structures and past events act on the self. In particular, Nishida draws attention to human beings as acting beings. Human beings are engaged in production (e.g. making food, books, art, buildings, and children). What is produced then becomes a "public" or "historical thing," and is thus capable of acting on its producer and the wider community.[271] Modes of production throughout time construct our identities. Our bodies are produced by our parents, and the institutions and man-made buildings and objects that surround us make up our world. Thus, if we want to speak of the identity of a person, we must locate it between the ideal and the material realms. We act on the world by transforming our ideas into actions and physical objects that become public. The world of things, made by other subjects, acts on us as well. Therefore, we are "made" by our own "making" and the "making" of others. John Maraldo writes: "Similarly, we conceptualize the historical world sometimes as produced out of nature by human work and activity, sometimes as producing the individuals who interact in it, but we [according to Nishida] should think of it primarily as the mediating place of interactive creation."[272] Here we see directly how Nishida's discussion of the historical world represents his desire to concretize his earlier theory of place by including action and production.

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[271] Nishida, "The Historical Body," 40 (*NKZ* 14: 270): "So to make simultaneously entails being made, both in the productive interaction with the thing made and subsequent to that interaction … we are – so to speak – made by making."

[272] John Maraldo, "Nishida Kitarō," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2010 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/nishida-kitaro/>.

Nishida often uses the example of an artist and her work to illustrate the connection between "made" and "making."[273] An artist is born into a particular time frame which determines the techniques she is taught. This long history of style acts on her. Yet she can also transform the traditional forms through the creation of a new work. This work in turn shapes her identity; in other words, the work is integrated into her identity. Nishida emphasizes that the human being is *homo faber*; production is an integral part of human existence.[274] However, creativity doesn't emerge from the will of the self alone. Rather, the world expresses itself through the self: "The individual self is a singularity…it is a point of production."[275]

Nishida uses "expression" (*hyōgen*) to refer to the non-dual relation between I and Thou in particular as well as the historical world in general. Driven towards presenting a unified view of reality that avoids dichotomies like subject and object, idealism and materialism, Nishida uses the word expression to refer to the self's creative activity that occurs in a *basho* of relation. Expression doesn't merely refer to the existence of interrelated activity, however; Gereon Kopf highlights how expression entails the "unself-conscious encounter" between the self and the Other.[276] Therefore, expressive activity is intersubjective. Recalling the earlier quotation, "The world of expression is neither the world of objectivity, the world of objects, nor the world of subjectivity, consciousness. Again, the world of expression is neither the world of the I nor the world

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[273] Ibid.

[274] Nishida Kitarō, "Logic and Life," in *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays*, trans by John Wesley et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 158 (*NKZ* 8: 366).

[275] Nishida, "The Standpoint of Active Intuition," in *Ontology of Production,* 69 (*NKZ* 8: 114-115).

[276] Kopf, 119.

of the Thou, but the world of the I and Thou."[277] Therefore, the "thoroughly self-expressive" self necessarily entails an intersubjective field of meaning and influence. As we saw in the last chapter, Beauvoir echoed these sentiments as well as provided an analysis of the intersubjective life world.

Now that I have provided background for key aspects within Nishida's thought I will turn to Nishida's discussion of the I-Thou dimension of selfhood. My discussion will approach this topic through three aspects of this concept: 1) living-qua-dying, 2) recognition, and 3) expression. In the first section, I will focus on one text, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, as it lays the groundwork for understanding Nishida's ontology together with his view of the relational self.

The Relational Self: Living-qua-dying, Recognition, and Expressive Activity

Living-qua-dying in Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*: The Anxiety of Nothingness, Risk, and Vulnerability*

Before I begin my investigation into the concept "living-qua-dying" in *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, I will provide a very brief orientation to the text. Nishida begins Chapter One of the second half of *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy* by considering what reality is. He affirms that it must include the subject; the actual world is phenomenological in that one cannot step outside of it. It entails both consciousness and matter. Nishida's route to understanding reality is through the formulation of a concrete logic. He writes "True *Dialektik* must be a path by which reality explains itself. This can be truly called the science of truth." While he argues that

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[277] As quoted by Kopf, 119.

only Hegel was aware of this orientation towards logic, ultimately he sees Hegel as falling short in this attempt. Kant and modern phenomenology also fail to provide a picture of actuality because they consider reality always from the standpoint of the subject. However, for Nishida, true reality must be understood from both the side of the subject *and* from the side of the world. He highlights the agency and force of the world which determines the subject. "The real…does not entirely transcend the person, for it always retains the meaning of determining us."[278]

Nishida emphasizes how the body is the site of the coming together of the ideal and material realms because we move between the two in action. Action occurs as physical and temporal movement. In order to account for an identity that moves, and hence, changes, Nishida proposes that we consider individual beings to be "continuities of discontinuity." This means that they hold negation within themselves. One way of describing the negation within an identity is to say that it reflects a "world of coming into being and passing away."[279]

> The universal which determines the individual determines itself by taking absolute negation as mediation. That which exists in it 'lives by dying', i.e. it is the continuity of discontinuity. As the determination of such a universal, it is both determined by the universal, but it is at the same time, the true individual, i.e. an acting thing, which determines the universal through its own self-determination.[280]

"Determined by the individual," here, means determined by nothingness. Nothingness allows for personal action. Later on Nishida brings together nothingness, the continuity of discontinuity, and interactions between individuals: "The determination of the continuity

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[278] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 2.

[279] Ibid., 6.

[280] Ibid., 7.

of discontinuity which is mediated by absolute negation is to be conceived from the mutual determination of individuals, i.e. from the idea of action. The logic of true being, i.e. of concrete reality, has this form. In these terms, I think I can clarify the logical structure of what I call an acting being."[281] While the mediation of nothingness is the necessary condition for action, "determination" issues from "the mutual determination of individuals." The implication of this view is that the self isn't individuated based on an individual core, or anything that belongs to it alone. Rather, the self is mediated by nothingness and other human beings. Nishida goes on to include other living and non-living entities (plants, animals, and objects and ideas from the historical-cultural world) as possible "Thou's."[282] Hegel's Antigone could be used as an example of Nishida's notion of mutual determination. Antigone is determined by the social-historical discourses of divine and human law; yet, she is not fully determined by them. She also acts upon them. In Nishida's view, Antigone's identity arises out of emptiness because it is a confluence of interacting forces (discourses, practices, and other human beings).

Nishida uses the oppositional structure between life and death to characterize the opposition between self and other. Frequently, when he writes about the I-Thou relation, he describes it by alluding to the phrase "living by dying." For instance, he writes "In absolute negation qua affirmation, individuals are determined and mutually active. The I and the Thou mutually oppose and determine one another in the absolute aspect of being-qua-non-being, or death-qua-life."[283]

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[281] Ibid., 8.

[282] Ibid., 29 (*NKZ* 7: 59).

[283] Ibid., 27(*NKZ* 7: 55).

Recalling Nishida's description of the self as a continuity of individual "points" that are independent, he also uses the term "living by dying" to capture this aspect of the self. If there is no substance or *hypokeimenon* that is unchanging, than each moment of self-experience is a determination of absolute nothingness. More specifically, the self in each moment is a new determination; this means that the self lives through dying. In practical terms, all human beings move towards death; however, Nishida uses the term death to indicate how human reality is constituted by impermanence and non-persistence. However, despite the fading away of each self in each moment, there is continuity within one's self-experience. Significantly, the ability to regard each dying self as a "Thou" allows one to experience unity or continuity.

> The personal unity of the individual self is established as the 'I' of the present regards the 'I' of yesterday as a 'Thou' and also the 'I' of the tomorrow as a 'Thou' – indeed, by the 'I' of the past instant and future instant thus mutually regarding each other.[284]

Nishida's vision of the self is that which contains something Other at its base. The fact that each moment contains negation means that the self is disjointed. Unity is restored to self-experience when a relation between the disjointed moments is achieved; this relation is spoken of in personal terms. Within the self itself, the structure of self and Other is at work. But what does this mean in concrete terms? Nishida writes "The free individual negates both the determinations of the past and the demands of the future at each and every moment. For we not only determine the future, but change the meaning of the past."[285] At this point, we can consider how it is common to say "I was a different person five years ago" or "I will surely be a different person two years from now." In this sense,

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[284] Ibid., 10 *NKZ* 7: 24).

[285] Ibid.

we regard the person that we were in the past or the person we anticipate that we will become as separate, independent existences. Nishida's point is that even within the self itself there is tremendous alterity.

Nishida devotes space to the psychological responses that human beings exhibit as a result of "living by dying" in "The Dialectical World" section of *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*.

> As the individual determination of the dialectically self-determining world, the self faces absolute negation, absolute nothingness. Therefore, this world is a world of infinite anxiety. Our every step is a danger, with the infinite depths at its foundation. Moreover, these depths are not physical matter, but an infinite darkness, an infinite negation. We are self-determining in individual forms as the individual determinations of such a world. For the self exists in it. It is the life urge. In order to live, man must struggle. Moreover, the foundation itself of that life urge is a darkness. We do not know for what we are struggling. Life itself is a fate.[286]

Here Nishida describes how the absolute nothingness that is part of every being's identity provokes anxiety in the human being. If every moment is radically new and "other," than we are always confronting the fact that the future is unknowable. Moreover, even more significant is the idea that the depths of the self are hidden, i.e., in the depths of the self there is an unbridgeable alterity that cannot be known. However, the self's unknowable foundation incites us to act and "struggle." The self undergoes anxiety before its very ontology, i.e. due to the fact that it is "determined by non-being." In two essays written after *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, "Logic and Life" (1936/7) and "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview" (1944), Nishida describes how our consciousness of death sets us apart from other creatures:

> While we look at ourselves through and through as objects, we are at the same time always transcending the world of objects. Therein lies the

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[286] Ibid., 158.

existence of us humans. Only humans are aware of death, only humans commit suicide.[287]

> To know our eternal death is the fundamental reason of our existence. For only one who knows his own eternal death truly knows that he is an individual…What does not die is not singular existence…only by facing the eternal negation, do we truly realize the singularity of our existence. It is not through self-reflection but by facing our eternal death that we become truly self-conscious…What lives dies. This is indeed a contradiction, but such is the mode of our existence.[288]

In the first passage, we see that Nishida's view of human reality bears a likeness to existential-phenomenological perspectives like those of Heidegger, Beauvoir, and Sartre, where one exists outside oneself by transcending toward the future in action. While we may habitually consider ourselves as "objects" in that the mind and body possess boundaries, Nishida suggests that we are constituted by our ability to transcend these boundaries. In this instance, our ability to see ahead to our own death and to grasp ourselves as living through negation, or "living by dying" defines our humanity. In the second passage, we see that beyond being that which differentiates us from other creatures, our awareness of our death is that through which we become individuated. Against Descartes, and in line with Hegel's discussion of the bondsman, Nishida writes that becoming aware of our own mortality is that which incites self-consciousness. We see how Nishida's ontology always includes oppositions and unity. Death is that which opposes, but it is also the means through which I realize my singularity. Here we could interpret singularity as my awareness of myself as a unity.

Nishida's description "living-by-dying" is one lens through which we can understand the more all-encompassing claim that being includes a dimension of otherness

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[287] Nishida, "Logic and Life," 109 (*NKZ* 8:283).

[288] Nishida, "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview," 18 (*NKZ* 11:395-396).

within itself. The alterity of death that we house within us helps us to understand the alterity of the concrete Other. Now I will move to his explicit discussion of I-Thou relations by focusing on his notion of recognition.

The Relational Self: Recognition and the Influence of the Master-Slave Dialectic in Nishida's Philosophical Project

Nishida dedicates two essays to the subject of the intersubjectivity of the self: "Love of Self-Love of Other and the Dialectic" and "I and Thou," both of which were written in 1932. However, in addition to these pieces, Nishida describes the role that the Other plays in the constitution of the self in numerous other essays and books. Just as the identity of the self issues from a determination of absolute nothingness, Nishida's intent in discussions of self-other relations is to show how the self does not produce itself; it is, most basically, something that forms itself through relation. Nishida directly asserts that intersubjectivity is an important aspect of the self: "I think that the notion of the individual's being an individual only in relation to other individuals has been neglected. As I have often said, the unity of the person is not a mere continuity but a continuity of discontinuity."[289] Consistent with the first example on absolutely contradictory self-identity that Nishida uses in *An Inquiry into the Good*, we see that identity results from holding oppositions within itself; Using the color red as an example, in order for red to have an identity, there must be other colors that oppose red.[290] Red's identity is created through its difference from other colors. Therefore, its very identity is tied to the existence of the opposing colors. In other words, the other colors are somehow contained

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[289] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 141.

[290] Nishida, *An Inquiry into the Good,* 56-57. (*NKZ* 1: 67-69).

within the definition of the color red. Here the example of something determining itself only in relation to something else is extended to the realm of selfhood. Not only does the self emerge out of relations with concrete others and thus reflect a continuity amidst discontinuities; it also contains discontinuity within itself as the self is born and dies in each passing moment.

Nishida writes near the beginning of *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, in a paragraph following one where he references Hegel:

> The individual determines itself only in relation to other individuals. The idea of a unique self-determining individual has no meaning. In order for the individual to determine itself there must first be what I have called the determination of a place "basho", i.e. a unity of absolute contradictories. But the principle of particularization means the continuity of discontinuity.[291]

And, a few pages later, he writes:

> The self becomes a personality only by recognizing the personality of others, such as in Kant's statement that ethical action must regard the other as an end in himself.[292]

Firstly, we see Nishida repeating his idea that individuality forms itself, but not through its individual will or individual notions. The individual contains "non-individual elements," i.e., others, cultural objects and discourses, its physical environment, etc. that are formative. Rather than lapse into "object logic," Nishida refers to the self and consciousness as a field or place of interacting forces. Here, he adds the idea that the individual is an individual only through its relation to others. Given the fact that this first passage occurs directly after Nishida discusses Hegel, it seems likely that Nishida is influenced here – in part – by Hegelian recognition in the master-slave dialectic.

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[291] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 6-7 (*NKZ* 7: 16).

[292] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 9 (*NKZ* 7: 20).

Consistent with the numerous mentions of the German philosopher in his works, letters, and diaries, Nishida explicitly states in a 1931 essay, "Hegel's Dialectic from My Point of View," "There is much in my present thought that I have learned from Hegel, and I feel closer to Hegel than to anyone else."[293]

Just as Hegel claims that self-consciousness and one's self-relation depend upon encountering an Other who is my double and who sees me, Nishida debunks the idea that the self is self-originating and that which understands itself solely based on its inner resources. In the following passage and other places, Nishida actually uses the word "recognize" or "acknowledge" when describing the effect individuals have on each other's self-relations. Even in the second passage when Nishida references Kant, we see that the self forms itself through facing and responding to another. Nishida implies that an "individual" is merely a continuity or point that selectively draws together oppositional forces outside of itself. "The self must in essence be personal. Such terms as consciousness, thinking, willing, or acting cannot adequately describe the self…The self becomes a self by recognizing a Thou as a Thou."[294]

As stated earlier, the self does not merely regard other human beings as others. It also relates to itself as a "Thou."

> The personal unity of the self can only be established by the self of yesterday regarding the self of today as a Thou, and vice versa…There is no solitary individual personality. There is no I without a Thou, no individual person without society. There must be a Thou which makes the I an I…the self of yesterday and the self of today must be in dialogue.[295]

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[293] Suares, 3-4.

[294] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 43 (*NKZ* 7: 85-86).

[295] Ibid (*NKZ* 7: 86).

Nishida's overall intention when writing of I-Thou relations is to demonstrate how the alterity of the other symbolizes the alterity of the self when it seeks to relate to itself. Just as an individual depends upon having a society from which to differentiate itself, at each moment the self itself enters into relation to the self of the past and the self of the future. If the relationship between opposing forces is the true picture of reality, than it follows that identity is established based on individuals recognizing each other. The unity of the self would crumble if one were unable to understand or relate to the person one was in the past or the future. While we sometimes express a lack of understanding when it comes to why we made certain decisions in the past, only in pathology is the break between our former selves and our current self complete. Here we may recall Hearst's statements about her former self "slipping away." During her imprisonment, Hearst's experience became less and less unified; she underwent a profound break between the self that she was in the past and the self, "Tania," that she came to inhabit.

Nishida's concept of the "social" is also important when understanding what Nishida means when he says that even one's inner world contains intersubjective elements:

> Even in saying that we stand independent in the form of internal perception, the idea of a mere individual man has no meaning. For the I is the I by standing over against the Thou, and the individual is the individual relative to other individuals. The self is social. The self may only be conceived as the self determination of the medium between individuals.[296]

Nishida implies that our individuality is always experienced amidst the background of a realm of others. The very uniqueness of the self depends upon the medium of the social. Steve Odin points out how Nishida is influenced by James' notion of the social as a

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[296] Ibid., 207 (*NKZ* 7:382).

background against which the self forms itself.[297] The implication of this view is that the interior world is not a private space where one could stoically retreat from the world of others. Hearst can be used as an example again here. If identity is tied to a medium of others, than it is unsurprising that her identity was radically transformed when held captive by the SLA.

One could interpret what Nishida is saying here in terms of the structure of the self, wherein the self is a thoroughly relational being. However, one might also interpret it in terms of the experience of introspection. For instance, our interior world is often filled with imaginary situations and dialogues between ourselves and others. We may spend a large portion of our time recalling past interactions with Others and imagining them differently or envisioning future encounters. Here it is helpful to recall the earlier quotation, "The free individual negates both the determinations of the past and the demands of the future at each and every moment. For we not only determine the future, but change the meaning of the past."[298] For Nishida, the self is constantly dying and being reborn in each moment; it changes its relationship to its history and future continually. However, the preceding quotation doesn't just pertain to the discontinuous nature of the self and its experience of its temporality. For example, "chang[ing] the meaning of the past" implies that I imaginatively reflect on the meaning of past events; these past events very likely involve others. Even when one interprets a past feeling or situation that didn't out-rightly involve others, the weight of social discourses that determine values as well as relationships that took on the role of examples of possible ways of being structure the way that we engage with our past. In sum, Nishida points out

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[297] Odin, 85.

[298] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 10 (*NKZ* 7: 24).

the inextricable role that the "social" plays in our inner life; one's interior space is not free of the reach of the "social."

While the notion of the social as a background or "fringe" of relationships is justified in passages like the ones above, Nishida also intends to reveal the agency of the social realm:

> Usually the social is taken to mean the abstract relationship between men, but here it refers to that which determines the personal action of the I and the Thou as the self-identity of absolute contradictories. It is the determination of subject qua predicate. That which exists in it must be both subjectively and objectively at the same time. Thus, I and Thou mediate one another. The Thou which stands in opposition to the I must be both internal and external. It is neither merely physical nor merely spiritual, but both. The world which is social in such a sense determines itself dialectically as the unity of absolute contradictories. It is metaphysical and historical. This means that the world of truly concrete reality is social in essence and determines itself historically. Even the natural world can be conceived in the ultimate point of the subjective aspect of such determination.[299]

While we may think of the self as the center of an individual will, Nishida is interested in the idea that what is "outside" of us also determines our individuality. For example, later on in the text he writes, "Such terms as consciousness, thinking, willing, or acting cannot adequately describe the self. The self becomes a self by recognizing a Thou as a Thou."[300] However, the self does possess a subjective reality, i.e. it does experience its consciousness, thought, intentions, and acts. Nishida's point is that one's self-experience and one's agency continually reflect both subjective *and* objective influences.

While we have devoted time to unpacking how *basho* is social, it is still unclear what Nishida means when he says that there is no I without a Thou. What exactly does he

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[299] Ibid., 36 (*NKZ* 7: 71-72).

[300] Ibid., 43 (*NKZ* 7: 85-86).

mean by this? I think that this is best interpreted by remembering his recurrent interest in

unity because unity allows for relationship. In "I and Thou" he writes,

> A self must include the absolute other in itself. It is not that a self becomes
> other and the other becomes the self through a medium. But the self
> becomes the other through the bottom of itself. Because there is the other
> at the bottom of the self's existence and there is the self at the bottom of
> the other's existence. I and Thou are absolute others. There is no general
> thing which includes I and Thou. But I am I by acknowledging Thou, and
> Thou are Thou by acknowledging me. There is a Thou at my bottom and
> my I at Thy bottom. I unite with you through my bottom, and the Thou
> unites with me through Thy bottom. Because they are absolute others, they
> unite with each other inside of themselves.[301]

The absolute other within the self is what Nishida means in his last essay when he writes

"At the bottom of the self there is something that utterly transcends us and this something

is neither foreign nor external to us."[302] Succinctly, the absolute other is absolute

nothingness. As we contain that which is absolutely other at our core, we become

ourselves by recognizing this part of ourselves. In this sense, the Other's alterity incites

one to see oneself clearly. While initially this may sound as if the self instrumentalizes

the Other, I think there is more going on here. While the Other's alterity prompts us to

grasp our own alterity, it also reveals that our selfhood cannot be neatly enclosed within

our own consciousness and experience. Most basically, the self becomes itself through

recognizing the Other. This is another way of reformulating Hegel's premise in the

master-slave dialectic that self-consciousness depends upon the encounter with the Other.

For Nishida, the deepest part of oneself is not a core, but something like an opening

which allows us to unite with the Other. Relation is possible based on the fact that our

identities issue from nothing (i.e., that which is the base of the self). Later on in

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[301] As quoted by Odin, 88.

[302] Nishida, "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview," 85 (*NKZ* 11:418-419).

Fundamental Problems of Philosophy Nishida explains the radicality of his notion of intersubjectivity:

> But the I and thou do not come into being merely through mutual opposition and mutual understanding. I do not mean to imply this when I say that the I becomes the I by recognizing the Thou and (vice versa). *I rather mean that the Thou is the prerequisite for the existence of the I, and the I is the prerequisite for the existence of the Thou.* .. that the I and the Thou become themselves by recognizing each other means that the I and the thou become what we are by mutual self-negation.[303]

Like Hegel, Nishida claims that the Other is a necessary condition for selfhood. The recognition that constitutes the self can be understood as self-negation. Given Nishida's ontology of absolute nothingness, it makes sense that he would be drawn to Hegel's premise that the Other is a prerequisite of the self and interpret it through the lens of self-negation. Recognition, for Nishida is a movement toward another in that it requires one to deny one's purely individual needs and desires and affirm that another being has the same needs and desires, i.e. that the other is a free being. Therefore, I believe that Nishida interprets Hegel's idea of two subjects mutually recognizing each other's freedom in terms of his structure of "affirmation-qua-negation." Affirmation, or recognition, co-exists with negation of oneself, which in this context entails negating one's own freedom. Negating oneself means that one allows for another dimension of being, i.e., absolute nothingness to emerge. This is what Nishida means when he says that we "become what we are by mutual self-negation." The concrete Other and the absolute nothingness at the base of the self both represent self-negation; when they are acknowledged, reality is seen clearly and affirmed.

We have seen Nishida define the thou in two main ways thus far. First, the "Thou" is defined as any human Other that the self is faced with. Secondly, Nishida

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[303] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems,* 143 (*NKZ* 7: 271-271). The italics are mine.

details how the self contains an internal Thou or a series of Thou's. The internal absolute

Thou is the absolute nothingness at the base of our consciousness and self-experience.

The series of Thou's are the individual selves that arise and fall away in each moment

that "recognize" each Other and thus form a continuity of discontinuities. Nishida goes

on to expand the meaning of "Thou" even further:

> In the concrete world there must be the relation of I and Thou between thing and thing. That which stands over against the I must always be a Thou. But the I-Thou relationship is not a mere opposition between individuals. When there is a mutual experiencing separated by absolute negation in which the self exists in the state of absolute negation qua affirmation, everything which stands opposed to the self – even the mountains, rivers, trees, and stones – is a Thou. In such a sense, the concrete world becomes a metaphysical society.[304]

Here it is important to note that Nishida doesn't simply state that plants and material

entities are Thou's in the same way that human beings are. He begins by including the

qualification "When there is a mutual experiencing separated by absolute negation," these

beings are "Thou's." The state that the self must appear in, in order to effect this, is one

in which it perceives and relates to the world from a place of its own nothingness. Here

we could think of Nishida's allusion to the medieval Zen Buddhist Dogen Kigen in his

last essay, "To pursue Buddha's path is to pursue oneself. To pursue oneself is to forget

oneself."[305] The significance behind this statement is that reality is experienced more

completely when the ego has been shed. Part of seeing the world from the place of

nothingness, the standpoint without a standpoint, is that it allows one to admit to oneself

that one is fundamentally related to other beings; one is a place of interacting beings.

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[304] Ibid., 29 (*NKZ* 7: 59).

[305] Nishida, "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview," 89 (*NKZ* 11:424).

Watsuji on Recognition: The Self as Betweenness

At this point, Nishida's view of the fundamental intersubjectivity of the self can be clarified if we look to Watsuji Tetsuro's notion of the self as "betweenness." While Nishida and Watsuji present very similar ontological visions of the self, Watsuji uses a wealth of everyday experiences to illustrate his points; such examples are notoriously absent from Nishida's works. While not a part of the Kyoto School, Watsuji Tetsuro's (1889–1960) philosophical project was similar to Nishida's in that he was also a comparative thinker who examined the themes of absolute nothingness and dialectical logic.[306] Like Nishida, Watsuji seeks to overcome all one-sided worldviews by taking up a phenomenological orientation of the mutual interpenetration of self and world. However, Watsuji radicalizes this notion by moving the focus even farther away from consciousness as something individual:

> …we take our departure not from the intentional consciousness of 'I' but from 'betweenness.' The essential feature of *betweenness* lies in this, that the intentionality of *I* is from the outset prescribed by its counterpart, which is also conversely prescribed by the former.[307]

Watsuji's study of the self begins with careful attention to etymology. For him, words like *anthropos, homo sapiens, man, and Mensch* indicate that the self is individual and self-sustaining. Furthermore, the Christian idea of a human being as made up of body and soul, the notion that the human being is a rational animal (*homo sapien*), and the idea that human beings are primarily productive (*homo faber*) all give credence to this picture of

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[306] Robert Carter, "Watsuji Tetsurô" "Watsuji Tetsurô", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/watsuji-tetsuro/>.

[307] Watsuji, Tetsuro, *Rinrigaku*, trans Robert Carter (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 51. (*Rinrigaku*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shōwa 17-24, 1942-49), vol. 1, p. 73) [Hereafter cited as *Rinrigaku* followed by volume and page numbers.]

the self as individual. In contrast, the Japanese word for human being is *ningen*.[308] The character *nin* indicates 2 men supporting one another; *gen* means "between."[309] While the original Chinese meaning of the character for *ningen* was "public," in Japanese the word came to be used to signify human being as well. Watsuji contends that the fact that the word "public" so easily came to mean "human being" mirrors the "dialectical unity" of the two opposing parts of the human: the individual and the community.[310] *Ningen*, or "betweenness," thus implies that the self appears in a space "between" others.

Watsuji's emphasis on the *Thou* when speaking of the identity of the self demonstrates an affinity with Nishida's recurring phrase, "The self becomes a self by recognizing a Thou as a Thou."[311] Here we see how Watsuji's analysis of the self is similar to Nishida's concept of a field of beings who respond to each other. The self doesn't exist *in* a field; it *occurs* in the space of relation.

Watsuji offers a distinct model for how consciousness is directed toward *Thou*. When reflecting on the notion of "person," Watsuji writes that oftentimes "persons" are defined as such on the basis of the separateness of the individual body or the mind (ego consciousness). While such a statement appears reasonable in the realm of speculation, it neglects our everyday experience. For Watsuji, daily existence is permeated by I-Thou interactions. He writes:

> Consciousness of 'I' cannot be isolated from its 'objects of consciousness.'… we must describe the intentionality of consciousness as 'I am conscious of *something*.' However, in our daily lives we look at,

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[308] Ibid., 13-14 (*Rinrigaku* 1: 8-9).

[309] James Shields, "The Art of *Aidagara*: Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Quest for an Ontology of Social Existence in Watsuji Tetsuro's *Rinrigaku*," *Asian Philosophy*, 19.3 (2009):265-283.

[310] Watsuji, 14-15 (*Rinrigaku* 1: 10-13).

[311] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 43 (*NKZ* 7: 86).

doubt, or love, a *Thou.* That is to say, 'I become conscious of *Thou.*' My seeing Thou is already determined by your seeing me, and the activity of my loving Thou is already determined by your loving me. Hence, my becoming conscious of Thou is inextricably interconnected with your becoming conscious of me… Activity inherent in the consciousness of 'I' is never determined by this 'I' alone but is also determined by others.[312]

Human beings are fundamentally attuned to the presence of others. Watsuji uses this basic fact to challenge the idea that there is a separate self that then feels, judges, and responds to the external world. He contends that the self becomes itself through its "becoming conscious" of worldly events and others. As with Nishida, here again the divisions "internal" and "external" are challenged. Awareness and self-reflection issue from what is not self. This means that selfhood unfolds "between" what is individual and what is worldly.

Returning to Watsuji's emphasis on the Other, while interaction with a material object provides a space for the self, the arrival of another human being even more radically affects one's self-awareness (for a Western counterpart, consider Jean-Paul Sartre's famous "keyhole" or "park bench" examples of the experience of being an object of another's consciousness). While it is evident that one's self is colored by relations with loved ones, Watsuji points out that even the mundane event of riding a bus reveals how one's subjective experience is shaped by the presence of others. Watsuji illustrates how consciousness is always *already* structured by the Other's consciousness. When he writes, "My seeing Thou is already determined by your seeing me," we get a clear vision of what Nishida certainly means when he says that reality is a place of ongoing mutual determination.

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[312] Watsuji, 69 (*Rinrigaku* 1: 106-107).

Expression

Now I will deepen my investigation of the intersubjective realm of selfhood by unpacking what Nishida means when he describes I-Thou relations as fundamentally "expressive." Delving into what this signifies in the context of I-Thou relations will shed light on Nishida's use of the term throughout his other works. In *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, Nishida writes:

> …individuals who thus face one another separated by absolute negation are an immediate mutual determination of negation qua affirmation, i.e. they are mutual negation through action. Individuals oppose each other expressively, and determine one another through action.[313]

Nishida describes action as that which is always self-negating and transcending. Action is directed toward the Other; it is expressive, i.e., it appeals to the Other in its drive to communicate. In "I and Thou" Nishida writes that expression is neither the result of our subjective intention nor something that can be grasped only as an objective act that neglects the subject's intention: "The world of expression is the world of the I and Thou…it is neither the world of objectivity, the world of objects, nor the world of subjectivity, consciousness. Again, the world of expression is neither the world of the I nor the world of the Thou, but the world of the I and Thou.[314] Expression symbolizes the mutual determination of self and Other because it takes place in between the two. With this last passage, we see what Nishida means when he writes that action is mutually self-negating and affirming. Expression and action require that we move outside ourselves toward the Other; it also means that we must affirm the Other's individuality. We can see what Nishida means by recalling a common experience in which one wants to relate a

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[313] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 29 (*NKZ* 7: 59).

[314] As quoted by Kopf, 119.

story to a friend. The act of telling the story cannot be reduced to my own intention alone.

I am telling the story to an audience who possesses the power of judgment. In order to tell

the story I take for granted that the Other has autonomy. In a sense, the Other represents

the power of negation. Ultimately, we see that all things are expressive because all beings

are – ontologically speaking – naturally self-negating.

> True life, as the unity of absolute contradictories implies an I-Thou
> relationship for that which stands in opposition to the I must possess
> expression. In fact, the mountains and the rivers must also be
> expressive.[315]

Just like the self, mountains and rivers are also baseless; their identities are based in

absolute nothingness. This means that their identities are "expressions" of relation.

Nishida states repeatedly that individuals are mediated; they are constituted through their

relations to others.[316]

While expression is a term that Nishida uses to convey his ontological theory of

absolute self-contradictory identity, by referencing action and the historical place of

selfhood, his discussion of intersubjectivity enhances our understanding of the way that

he uses the term throughout his corpus. Recalling that expression is the "world of the I

and the Thou," rather than that which is merely subjective or objective, it is helpful to

turn to his description of a "true personal relation":

> The usual concept of personal relations is an abstraction. The abstract
> relation between mere rational persons is not a true personal relation.
> However, true personal relation does not consist in the abstract relation
> between rational persons. The I-Thou relationship is a mutual seeing
> separated by absolute negation. For the I and Thou are always separated
> by the physical world…Therefore the actual world, in which individuals
> are mutually determining, is neither simply spiritual nor simply physical.

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[315] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 35 (*NKZ* 7: 71).

[316] Ibid., 186 (*NKZ* 7:346).

> Rather it is metaphysical and social in the sense of including the I and the Thou. Usually the social is taken to mean the abstract relationship between men, but here it refers to that which determines the personal action of the I and the Thou as the self-identity of absolute contradictories…the world of truly concrete reality is social in essence and determines itself historically.[317]

What does Nishida mean here when he says that the "I-Thou relationship is a mutual seeing separated by absolute negation"? An intersubjective encounter, for Nishida, cannot be described by "object logic" or any way of interpreting the two human beings as completely separate and self-enclosed entities. However, each stands opposed to the Other because it inhabits a body that does have boundaries. In this sense, we can think of Hegel's description of how what opposes the self in the "Truth of Self-Certainty" chapter is experienced by the self as fundamentally "not me." True reality includes "mutual seeing" and mutual determination; this is what Nishida means when he says that individuals are self-expressive points of the world. Reality is a unity of oppositions or a continuity of discontinuity.

The Relational Self and Key Aspects of Nishida's Philosophical Project: The Self and Absolute Nothingness, *Basho*, and the Historical World

In the foregoing, I have outlined key aspects of Nishida's thought, including his view of the self, place, and expressive activity within the historical world. Then, I moved on to unpacking the intersubjective dimension of selfhood that is interspersed throughout his works. Now I will examine the two together and explicitly show what the latter can do to broaden the reader's understanding of the former.

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[317] Ibid., 35-36 (*NKZ* 7: 71-72).

Firstly, Nishida's discussion of the I-Thou relation deepens our understanding of his view of the self. Nishida repeatedly claims that the self is absolutely contradictory identity. He writes that we have our selfhood in the absolute Other, and that our deepest reality is something transcendent. While absolute nothingness is of central importance to Nishida's philosophical project, pointing to the way that it is realized through intersubjectivity not only clarifies the confrontation with the Other, as a being that is fundamentally "other" to us, it also prompts us to realize ourselves in the Other. On one hand, this way of understanding the self and other human and non-human others is best explained through the result of Buddhist self-emptying practices like meditation and chanting, which Nishida references in his works from time to time.[318] Through focused attention, rigid boundaries between the self and other beings relax and one begins to perceive the world outside of the lens of the ego. In more concrete terms, when one stills one's thoughts and practices viewing them with non-attachment, then one begins to realize oneness between one's own reality and that of other beings. We can see this clearly when we recall this passage, quoted earlier:

> A self must include the absolute other in itself. It is not that a self becomes other and other becomes the self through a medium. But the self becomes the other through the bottom of itself. Because there is the other at the bottom of the self's existence and there is the self at the bottom of the other's existence. I and Thou are absolute others. There is no general thing which includes I and Thou. But I am I by acknowledging Thou, and Thou are Thou by acknowledging me. There is a Thou at my bottom and my I at Thy bottom. I unite with you through my bottom, and the Thou unites with me through Thy bottom. Because they are absolute others, they unite with each other inside of themselves.[319]

[318] See Nishida, "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview" and Dennis Hirota, "Nishida's 'Gutoku Shinran,'" *The Eastern Buddhist* 28, no. 2 (Fall 1995).

[319] As quoted by Odin, 88.

In the Buddhist worldview, self-realization depends on recognizing that ultimately, self and other are non-dual. While Buddhism is often viewed as individualistic through its insistence that there is no self, i.e. beings are empty of intrinsic essence, in actuality self-realization depends upon grasping the fact that one is intimately connected to other beings. Nishida's allusion to the necessity of acknowledging a "Thou," clarifies that his notion of the self is thoroughly relational. The Other plays a key role in self-realization because self-realization hinges on the recognition of one's relatedness.

Nishida's account of intersubjectivity clarifies his view of the self in another way as well. As discussed above, the self contains alterity within itself not only due to the lack of rigid boundaries between self and Other but through the fact that it is always other to itself. Albert Camus writes "forever I shall be a stranger to myself"[320]; indeed, at times, we experience surprise in reaction to our own actions. Nishida's discussion of the self as a continuity of discontinuity, i.e. a series of selves that arise and fall away clarifies this experience of distance. Here, we see another meaning of his repeated phrase "we have our selfhood in the absolute other." Recalling Nishida's caution that intersubjectivity is neglected when philosophers consider the self and that the self is a "continuity of discontinuity," we see that he seeks to expose how the intersubjective realm clearly illustrates his notions of absolutely self-contradictory identity and creative activity. The fact that our experience is structured by the social reveals that the self contains oppositions within itself; it is an acting being that is both "making and made." Other individuals shape the context out of which the self acts. The self is "made" as a result of the oppositions of others, yet it also "makes," i.e. by being an individual "self-expressing

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[320] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus And Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955), 19.

point of the world." Ultimately, Nishida's discussion of the relational self aims to reveal how the alterity of the Other symbolizes the alterity of the self itself.

Nishida's account of the relational self also enhances our understanding of his notion of *basho*, or place. Through lines like "the individual only determines itself in relation to other individuals" and "the self becomes a personality only by recognizing the personality of others" we see that when Nishida describes *basho*, which is the site of mutual determination, he means to include human beings. Additionally, such references give us a better idea of what Nishida means when he says that *basho* does not mean "a place in which things exist." Rather, it means "a physical space of personal action" and "mutual determination." Therefore, putting all of these statements together, mutual determination implies intersubjective recognition and the actions of human beings. Nishida goes on to state that place is "self-determining."

> The dialectical process may be conceived from the self determination of this world of reality which is both one qua many and many qua one. It may therefore be seen from the world of the I and the Thou. The self is the affirmation of the self negation of this world of reality.[321]

When Nishida speaks of the "self-determination" of place, he means to highlight how action is typically attributed to an agent with conscious intent. However, his ontology of absolutely contradictory self-identity contests any purely interior or external, ideal or material notion of thought or action. The self cannot be reduced to consciousness, the will, or actions. In his view, the self cannot be a locus of autonomy; place is the site of autonomy. Moreover, Nishida's discussion of I-Thou relations reveal that *basho* is an *intersubjective* space that is "self-determining." We can make sense of this statement if we think of how the self contains "non-individual elements." If the self is truly empty of

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[321] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 139 (*NKZ* 7:264-265).

intrinsic essence, than its agency issues from the confluence of a variety of forces within the field that it inhabits. Furthermore, it also continually shapes other beings. With reference to the last line of the passage above, the self is fundamentally that which affirms self-negation. This is shown most clearly in the I-Thou relation when one acknowledges non-dualism between self and other. The world is self-negating through the fact that it expresses itself through the singularity of the self. Furthermore, the self must always affirm the ways that it is determined by the world. Its existence encloses much more than its own intention; even its intention is produced through mutual determination.

Nishida's use of the term "social" helps the reader see that *basho* is not a field of separate "thing-like" existences that interact. Recalling the earlier passage, "I and Thou mediate one another. The Thou which stands in opposition to the I must be both internal and external," the extent to which our own identities are bound up by the mediation of others provides a way of envisioning *basho* as a site of interweaving relations rather than a place that "things" inhabit. Here we can see why Nishida was most likely attracted to Hegel's notion of recognition; we may recall paragraph 179, "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in the other sees its own self."[322] The encounter between two human beings is one where two freedoms mutually determine, or recognize each other. The same thorough interdependence that symbolizes an intersubjective meeting helps us envision what Nishida meant by a place of absolute self-contradictory identity.

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[322] Hegel, § 179.

Lastly, Nishida's account of I-Thou relations sheds light on what he means by creation, expression, and the historical world.

> Our self as a creative element in the creative world, while confronting that which thoroughly expresses itself as object, also always confronts a creative element in the depths of its own life, the thou. An individual thing confronts an individual thing. Needless to say, we can further think of this in various terms, such as of the relationship in facing the creator. In any case, a creative element in the creative world is made from a combination of other creative elements and must also be what makes other creative elements. This is why I say that in the depths of the historical world, there is the opposition between the I and the thou, and that otherwise there would be no such thing as a historical world. Here lies the ground of the historical reality of society. The I does not confront the thou in the region of things. That the I confronts the thing and that the I confronts the thou, are confrontations in two opposing regions. Even in biological life, while we confront the nutritional environment in the region of things, we confront the parent or the child in the region of life. But the world of living things is not creative; it is not the world that lives on its own. That which confronts [us] as object is merely nutritional and not the expression of life. In the world of historical reality, while we confront expressions in the region of things, persons encounter persons as creative elements. We accordingly intermingle through the medium of expression. Although biological life determines itself merely morphologically, historical life goes on forming itself expressively.[323]

Here, Nishida clearly states that his concept of the historical world can be understood if we think of the absolutely self-contradictory identity of I and Thou. The human being is "the expression of life" and "a creative element." Nishida's allusion to the parent and the child are helpful to the reader because most of his discussions of creation and expression contain very few examples; furthermore, when he does give an example, it is almost always of artistic creation. Human beings are not things for Nishida; they are characterized by the fact that they determine each other and create each other. Nishida repeats here the phrase "The self is not a thing." Alluding to the I-Thou relation and expression is helpful in understanding this point. A thing is self-contained, while human

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[323] Nishida, "Logic and Life," 145 (*NKZ* 8:343).

beings go beyond themselves through expression. As in the example above, when one tells a story to a friend, the experience is one of Watsuji's sense of "betweenness." Just as the artist may have had an intention when he began creating, while the friend telling the story also has an intention, both the work of art and the story are directed outside of themselves. Expression, for Nishida, includes the qualification "to another." If we take his discussion of expression within intersubjective encounters and apply it to statements where he writes that *basho* is expressive and the individual is fundamentally self-expressive, than we see that beings are always directed outside of themselves to other beings. This concept also clarifies my assertion above that self-realization for Nishida includes the realization of one's own otherness through one's fundamental belonging to a world of others.

In conclusion, I have sought to demonstrate that the intersubjective self is a crucial concept within Nishida's overall philosophical project as it broadens the reader of Nishida's understanding of key aspects of his thought, including the self and its basis in nothingness, place, and the historical world. By examining the following aspects of his theory of the relational self, i.e. living-qua-dying, recognition, and expression, I brought out key characteristics of his view. For example, the self is fundamentally discontinuous based on its interior and exterior relations to Others as well as its relation to the various selves that arise and fall away in its own interior temporal experience. Secondly, the self relates to the fact that it is other to itself with anxiety. Thirdly, despite the discontinuity, the self still experiences itself as a temporal whole. Furthermore, human beings experience a type of belonging based on the fact that they gain their identity through a

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shared intersubjective field; human beings share a commonality through the fact that they are all "expressions of life."

The implication of Nishida's notion of selfhood is that individual agency and possession are displaced. Nishida's "self" does not create itself, it does not fully direct its own movements, and even its interior life is not its own, at least not in the merely particularistic sense of self. The self does possess free will, but this freedom originates from a social-historical world that determines it, one that is ultimately an expression of the universal, or of the all-embracing *basho*, that is, an absolute nothingness that encompasses and works through/as the historical world including the particular self, but that is ultimately beyond discursive conception. As Nishida prefers to speak of *basho* as self-determining instead of the self as determining itself, the autonomy of the self is put into question. According to the picture that Nishida puts forth, selfhood is marked by vulnerability. If it is fundamentally tied to an intersubjective space and social-historical discourses and modes of production, then it is indeed other to itself. Its very being is "toward another"; it does not fully possess or direct itself. Ultimately, we have seen that the self doesn't exist *in* a field; it *occurs* in the space of relation. In Nishida's words, we could say that the field of historical relations, itself, is expressive.

CHAPTER V

BEAUVOIR AND NISHIDA: THE EXPRESSIVE SELF, AGENCY, AND THE

HISTORICAL WORLD

We saw in the previous two chapters that Nishida and Beauvoir maintain that the

self is thoroughly mediated; i.e., there is no self experience outside of the world of

relation. For both, the self emerges through its directedness toward the Other: Beauvoir

describes the self as a "project toward the Other," while Nishida emphasizes that the self

"determines itself only in relation to other individuals."[324] Beyond their discussions of the

intersubjective aspect of the relational self, Beauvoir and Nishida point to the way that

the self is continually relating to its social-historical situation or environment.[325] While

the self's individuality is tied to the Other, the form of the relation between the self and

the Other is shaped by social-historical practices and discourses. Both authors stress the

way that the self's identity issues from a space outside itself; however, both declare that

the self still possesses freedom and agency. As the authors discount the notion that

intention is completely self-originating, what are we to make of the fact that they

maintain that the self possesses freedom and agency? This chapter examines their claims

that the self is fundamentally mediated by social-historical self-other relations with

particular reference to how this impacts human agency.

I place Nishida and Beauvoir into conversation, not because they are the only

philosophers who endorse models of the relational self, but because they present nuanced

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[324] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 6-7 (*NKZ* 7: 16).

[325] Here, it is important to recall that Nishida's use of the term "self" at times refers to the individual alone
and at other times includes the self as absolute nothingness.

accounts that succeed in concretizing it. Specifically, Nishida does this by introducing an ontology of the self as expressive action that is always both subjectively and objectively determined. Beauvoir, on the other hand, achieves this end by bringing to light the historically-bound narratives (including an attention to power relations) that shape the psychological patterns of interaction between self and Other. While Nishida's discussion of expression continually references the agency of *historical* space, he uses few examples to illustrate the determinacy of the historical field of relations. On the other hand, Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is full of such descriptions. When read alongside Nishida's discussion of the relational self and the historical world, *The Second Sex* offers the reader of Nishida an illustration of the historical world that includes dimensions of constituted and constituting forces.

Nishida's metaphor of the self as a place of interaction, or *basho*, in turn, is useful to the reader of Beauvoir who attempts to picture a self that is ambiguous. As we saw in Chapter 3, Beauvoir describes selfhood as a tension between undergoing forces that we are subject to (e.g., the way that our bodies are determined, the fact that we are subject to social-historical discourses, and the way that we are subject to the Other's power to give or withhold recognition) and being subjects, or centers of decision, judgment, and creation ourselves (e.g., we possess the power to engage in projects of our own choosing and we cannot escape from our responsibility to choose when faced with moral dilemmas). As our existence is comprised of both immanence and transcendence, Nishida's discussion of the agency of place, which is the site of mutual determination of world and self, provides a clear non-dual illustration of Beauvoir's notion of situated freedom that allows for individuality and determination. At times, Beauvoir privileges the

subject in a way that neglects the agency of one's situation. Nishida's account provides the reader of Beauvoir with a way of envisioning ambiguous existence.

Examining the authors together provides two accounts of agency that converge with respect to the idea that the Other is a condition of selfhood. However, their discussions of agency are weighted toward the perspective of the self in the case of Beauvoir and toward the side of the world for Nishida. Their slightly different foci present the reader with two ways of visualizing the acting self that is a product of worldly relations. Both authors describe the ways in which the historical world and Others give shape to our identities. However, the readers of both Beauvoir and Nishida are left with the question stated earlier: If the self is reliant on that which is outside itself to be itself then what becomes of the agency that seems necessary in order to make ethical decisions?

While it is fruitful to compare Nishida and Beauvoir's models of selfhood, it is also important to note the limits of the comparison. For instance, aside from offering phenomenological reflections and ontological and ethical theories of human experience, Beauvoir possesses a social political agenda. A large part of her project in *The Second Sex* is to critique concrete gender inequalities and oppressive social historical discourses of femininity. She aims to incite reflection which will lead to the actual change of social-political structures. Her work is thus descriptive and prescriptive. Nishida, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with offering a non-dualistic logic of experience. Amidst criticism from his colleagues' (Tanabe Hajime and students Tosaka Jun and Miki Kiyoshi), his later works are meant to address the impact of the social historical world on the self. However, his interest in the latter never addresses concrete injustices. Rather, he

discusses the impact of history on the *structure* of self-identity. Nevertheless, Nishida's work is not solely descriptive. He intends to incite an ethical-religious transformation in the reader wherein she will discover that the base of her self is absolute nothingness.

While this dissertation examines the models of selfhood that Beauvoir and Nishida put forward, and thus avoids making Beauvoir's social critique central, it is important to note the different methods that each employ. Despite Nishida's lack of discussion of situations of oppression, the descriptive model of the self that he proposes is useful to the reader of Beauvoir for the reasons outlined above and further discussed later on in the chapter.

I will begin by describing how Nishida locates agency in a space of relation rather than a solitary subject. Then I will show how turning to Beauvoir's descriptions of self-other interactions within *The Second Sex* allows us to both visualize Nishida's model of the relational self as well as consider the implications of his view. Next, I will show how Nishida's view of agency is tied to his ethics of place. Then, I will move to Beauvoir's ethics, which oscillate between privileging the subject and privileging a notion of situated freedom. We will see that ethics and ontology are intertwined in both Nishida and Beauvoir's philosophical projects due to the fact that the vulnerability of the relational self leads to ideal forms of action that embrace this vulnerability rather than flee it.

The Agency of Place

As we saw in the last chapter, Nishida attempts to philosophize from a non-dualistic standpoint. Instead of employing object logic, which reifies living beings, he

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aims to capture experience by beginning with action, which includes an environment wherein the action takes place.

> We consider our selves or our consciousness to be separated from the world…we consider self and thing to be counterposed. The philosophy of modern subjectivism takes the self, or something called consciousness, as its point of departure and tries to view the world from the self, tries to think from interiority to the transcendental; but never is the self itself, as such, problematized in any profound way. But it is what is called the self or consciousness that is thought as the singular determination of the world that itself determines itself.[326]

While "viewing the world from the self" means that the philosopher operates from the assumption that there is a hard division between interior and exterior reality, Nishida wants to draw into focus the fact that the world is always acting on the self. Instead of thinking that the self acts on the world from a stoic, private sphere of volition, Nishida calls into question this unilateral notion of agency: "To act is of necessity always at the same time to be acted upon."[327] Our very intentions depend upon and are tied to a world of experience that we didn't produce. The world is the locus of agency, or determination, for Nishida; the self is only an expression of the world. However, Nishida is careful to say that this does not mean that we do not possess free will. Like Beauvoir, he implies that there is a difference between unconditioned freedom and freedom which emerges out of situation:

> While individual and universal are mutually determining, the individual can neither determine the universal nor vice versa. Moreover, such a world of reality should be regarded as the self determination of place....This is because it is always the intersection of subjectivity and objectivity. The self determination of the active self is the affirmation of the self negation of such a world. If we define the self determination of the world as an organic development and define the activity of the self from such a determination, the freedom of the individual is lost. But the dialectical

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[326] Nishida Kitaro, *Ontology of Production*, 72 (NKZ 118)

[327] Ibid., 76 (NKZ 124).

world advances by taking self-negation as medium. It is the self determination of the world which is both one qua many and many qua one. We touch the absolute at each and every step.[328]

Here Nishida notes that by highlighting the agency of the world, he does not mean to imply that the world shapes the self in a unilateral manner. However, if it is incorrect to claim that the world determines the self, and the self determines the world, than how can they be "mutually determining"? The answer lies in Nishida's statement that agency issues from *basho*, or place. We can grasp Nishida's point in this passage if we recall his notion of absolute nothingness. As absolute nothingness signifies that all beings are empty of intrinsic essence, there is no easily identifiable locus that houses a being's intention. It is important to take note of the fact that absolute nothingness is not an entity, for Nishida. It is a concept that stands for the fact that identity does not contain purely individual elements; rather, individuality issues from relations between many things. Therefore, the root of identity is baseless; Nishida's way of describing baselessness is to use the term "absolute nothingness." For example, if we want to speak of the identity of a riverbank, there is nothing about the riverbank that is wholly individual. It's identity is composed entirely of "non-individual elements": the river, soil, rocks, plants, minerals, air, etc. While even if we agree that beings don't have essences, we may still believe that we can point to the bodies of beings as the locus of agency. However, as we saw above, the concept of absolute nothingness discounts the idea that anything is purely individual. Even bodies depend upon natural elements, sustenance, the existence of other bodies, etc. Therefore, one can't easily point to a body and describe it as an individual agent without allowing other forces and entities that it relies upon to also be called agents. Thus, we can conclude that "mutual determination" cannot signify two purely self-determining entities

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[328] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 134 (*NKZ* 7: 256).

influencing each other. By stating that the "medium" of the dialectical world is self-negation, Nishida is again referencing the underlying reality of absolute nothingness. However, self-negation is also an ethical ideal for Nishida. By refuting the perspective of object logic and singular determination, one allows one's action to issue from a place beyond egocentrism. We will see in the section on Nishida's ethics that the ideal form of action requires self-negation. Self-negation involves surrendering to the fact that one cannot will oneself to act ethically.

Nishida's works repeatedly undermine the idea of a solitary, self-originating and self-sustaining individual. Creation originates from a field. He expresses this notion through the phrase "the self determination of the dialectical universal."[329] As we saw in the last chapter, Nishida embraces the Buddhist view that all beings are empty of intrinsic essence; identity emerges through a confluence of relations, including Others, social-historical discourses, the material world, etc. Here, "dialectical universal" expresses this view that beings don't gain their identities through distinct essences. However, agency must be located in this place, which is itself groundless, because viewing the world as a collection of distinct "objects" is mistaken. Additionally, in his last essay, he writes "That the universal has its existence without any ground of its own in its self-determination means that it has its existence in its particularization and ultimately in its individuation."[330] Here, Nishida means that the agency of the place itself owes its existence to that through which it expresses itself, i.e., beings: "The mutual relationship between absolutely opposing things is *expressive*. Absolute Being does not transcend the

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[329] Ibid., 69 (*NKZ* 7: 135).

[330] Nishida, "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview," 14 (*NKZ* 11:390).

relative, but it has its existence and sees itself through its absolute self-negation."[331]

Nishida's descriptions of the dynamic between self and world mirrors that of the creation of the world through interpenetration in Huayen Buddhism.[332] The basic idea is that the individual is a point of the world rather than being a distinct entity. The world expresses itself through the individual point of the self while the self expresses itself in the space of the world.

As we saw in the last chapter, Nishida's later works are guided by the desire to further develop his theories of *basho* and absolutely contradictory self-identity by affirming the agency of the historical world, i.e. how social structures and past events act on the self. In this phase of his thought, Nishida focuses on action and production. Created objects become "public" and go on to act on their producers and the wider community.[333] The self acts on the world by transforming ideas into actions and physical objects that become public. The world of created objects, made by others, acts on the self as well. Nishida concludes that the self is "made" by its own "making" and the "making" of others. The individual is a "self-expressing point of the world."

For my purposes, I am interested in Nishida's discussion of how this place of expression is described as intersubjective. Therefore, we will return to Nishida's notion of *basho* as "the social."

> The self-identity of absolute contradictories can be conceived from the experience of the personal self which exists in an I-Thou relation. Therefore, social and historical determination may be said to lie at the

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[331] Ibid., 101 (*NKZ* 11:439).

[332] For a discussion of Huayen Buddhism, see Thomas Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable : An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983).

[333] Nishida Kitarō, "The Historical Body," 40: "So to make simultaneously entails being made, both in the productive interaction with the thing made and subsequent to that interaction … we are – so to speak – made by making."

very ground of reality. For the idea of the personal world as merely subjective or as form doesn't escape being the idea of an immanent unity which fails to see that the person can be considered only as the affirmation of absolute negation. The true person must see the absolute other within himself and his self within the absolute other.[334]

Here Nishida connects self-negation to the I-Thou relation. The Other as a negating presence is integral to the self's very identity. The self lacks an essence or an interior space of agency; it is not an "immanent unity." Nishida refers to the self as "the affirmation of absolute negation" because it forms itself out of emptiness, or negation. The ideal self, for Nishida, confronts its own baselessness; part of this confrontation involves realizing its lack of intrinsic essence and subsequent connection to others.

If absolutely self-contradictory identity can be likened to the way that identity is formed out of a confluence of relations then it makes sense to liken it to intersubjective relations in which human beings mutually determine each other. We can understand this point concretely if we agree that we learn about who we are when we are called on to express our likes and dislikes, ambitions and fears, etc. to another. I believe that Nishida's point when he says that "social and historical determination" is the foundation of reality is that self-other relations are historical. As Nishida is always concerned with unity, each individual moment must be tied together by continuity. I believe that "historical" in this context means that our relations possess a temporal unity. However, it also refers to the already formed world, which is the site of interacting forces. While Nishida's own examples of interacting forces within a social-historical place are scant in number, Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* provides a wealth of such examples in the form of phenomenological descriptions and excerpts from literature.

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[334] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, 46 (*NKZ* 7: 92).

Nishida describes "social determination" again by pointing to the formative power of myth:

> What I call social determination is not, as is usually thought, something like the constitutive principle of society abstracted from its historical basis. It is the activity of self-determination of the world of the affirmation of absolute negation. Even what we call myth is not merely subjective but the constitutive principle of such a world…Thus it is in the direction of the absolute negation of such a world that the world of material substance can be conceived; its affirmation qua negation can be thought to be reflecting consciousness; contrariwise, in the direction of its absolute affirmation, the personal world can be conceived. Even what is called the world of "personality" is established according to social determinations. When the world is seen merely as perceptual or epistemological object, then the world of material substance is conceived to be the most universal, the primary world, and something like the biological world or society is conceived to be merely a particular, secondary world.[335]

Intersubjective influence is grounded in a historical world. By stating that myth is not "merely subjective," we see that Nishida aims to highlight the creative power that ideas, or cultural discourses, wield in the formation of a society. He also aims to refute the idea that material reality is more basic of fundamental than ideal reality. Nishida wants the reader to take seriously the notion that the world is determined by historically-grounded myths. By following this with a statement that "personality" is formed through social determinations, Nishida once again points to an intersubjective realm that gives rise to identity. The term social is an effective example of what Nishida means by dialectic because it is a realm of mutually interacting forces. Furthermore, we see that the historical world exerts a formative influence through myths. This point gives support to the idea that when Nishida writes of the influence of the historical world on the subject, he includes "myths." I believe that myths could be considered to include social historical discourses. If this is the case, then Nishida's writings on the historical world's "making"

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[335] Nishida, *Ontology of Production*, 122-123 (*NKZ* 8: 187-188).

of the self resonate with Beauvoir's. Such a commonality lends weight to my comparison

of the two authors and to my discussion of how Beauvoir's narratives can act as fitting

illustrations of Nishida's claims about the self and the historical world.

What Beauvoir Offers Nishida's Notion of the Agency of Place

While Nishida maintains that the self is born in a historical world of relations that

determines it, he gives few real world examples of this model of selfhood in his writings.

Turning to Beauvoir's descriptions of self-other relations in *The Second Sex* allows us to

both picture real world examples of how the social-historical place determines the self as

well as consider the implications of Nishida's model of selfhood. The narratives in

Beauvoir's text demonstrate the ways that the individuality and agency of the self are

products of historical discourses and events. The self is an agent through its

determinations, just like the self that acts is the self that is born out of the historical

world, for Nishida. Such descriptions help us envision what Nishida means when he says

that the self is something that is made.[336]

First we will look to a passage that clarifies what Nishida means by the "historical

world"; then, we will examine passages from *The Second Sex*.

> Historical reality is not something that we can just conceive by means of
> the logic of objectification. The active self is unable to enter the world of
> objects postulated by the logic of objectification. Our self exists in the
> historical world as a contradictory existence. Having said this, however, I
> do not intend to ignore the logic of objectification. The world of historical
> reality is not the appearance of what already exists. Instead it must be
> creative. That which *is* must be such that its essence is generation itself,
> and its generation is essence itself.[337]

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[336] Jacinto, "The Return of the Past: Tradition and the Political Microcosm in the Later Nishida," 140.

[337] Nishida, "Logic and Life," 104 (*NKZ* 8:275-6).

The individuality and agency of the self is both affirmed and negated by the agency of social-historical discourses, institutions, and created and natural objects. The self is both created, that is born, and also creative in that it produces new human beings, objects, ideas, etc. The self is thus a contradictory identity in that its identity emerges as a result of being differentiated and differentiating itself from a sphere of others. Given the abstractness of this passage and the many others that reference the historical world, is there a way that Beauvoir can shed light on the self that is a "contradictory existence" in the "historical world" that is fundamentally creative?

Given Beauvoir's view that the Other's recognition is integral to the self's existence and self-conception, *The Second Sex* can be read as concretizing this claim. She does this by showing how the patterns of self-other interactions, especially those between men and women, are grounded in historical situations. One's situation, for Beauvoir, is comprised of one's social roles within public and private realms, material opportunities, political rights, and cultural discourses. Broadly, *The Second Sex* demonstrates the ways in which human existence, in particular female existence, is mediated by these variables.[338] While Beauvoir's guiding concern throughout the text is how woman's historical situation led her to occupy the role of Other to man, the text also provides a model of the ways that social discourses and concrete historical positions deeply determine the situation out of which identity emerges.

More specifically, Beauvoir's analysis of the psychological ties between men and women in this work can be used to illustrate the ways in which self-other relations determine the self. Beauvoir describes the way that a woman's self-relation is structured by her relation to men and historical discourses of femininity:

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[338] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 88.

She cannot have arrogant pride in her body as long as male approval has not confirmed her young vanity. And this is just what frightens her; the lover is even more terrifying than a gaze: he is a judge; he is going to reveal her to herself in her truth…now the [man's] eyes are really there; impossible to cheat; impossible to fight: a mysterious freedom decides, and this decision is final.[339]

She does not separate man's desire from love of her own self.[340]

[Woman] wants to feel like a woman for her own personal satisfaction. She only succeeds in accepting herself from the perspective of both the present and the past by combining the life she has made for herself with the destiny prepared for her by her mother, her childhood games, and her adolescent fantasies.[341]

While these passages illustrate how men and women possess the deep-seated desire to be recognized by each other, they also illustrate that the way that each wants to be recognized depends upon the social discourses of his or her situation. At first glance, these quotations describe individuals who act in bad faith by searching for affirmation of a fixed image of themselves from the Other. But the deeper point is that the weight of one's situation compels one to relate to oneself by seeking recognition of these discourses from the Other. The first two passages reference the social discourse that woman's worth is determined by a man's judgment of whether or not she is found attractive and sexually appealing. This myth is woven into the basic structure of self-other relations in which the self seeks recognition from the Other. The woman seeks confirmation of the social discourse; she wants to be recognized for filling out this discourse. As we saw in Chapter 3, the third passage references competing drives within women. We see this clearly in this passage when fulfillment is described as hinging upon woman's free projects as well

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[339] Ibid., 392.

[340] Ibid., 350.

[341] Ibid., 725.

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as the degree to which she lives out her role as "woman." If we think of the way that the

self "gets itself back from the Other," in the scenario that Beauvoir presents, than woman

doesn't just seek recognition of "the life she has prepared for herself"; she seeks

recognition on the basis of discourses of femininity. The implication of such a view when

put into relation with the two preceding passages is her projects are not entirely of her

own making; the projects themselves are influenced by these same discourses. Moreover,

we saw above that one's projects are only made meaningful when they are affirmed by

others. Therefore, regardless of whether we speak of an authentic form of existence or

one that seeks to affirm a fixed image of oneself, identity emerges in relation to the

discourses and practices of one's situation and is radically dependent upon the whims of

the Other.

These passages are fitting illustrations of Nishida's concepts of self-contradictory

identity, I-Thou relations, and the historical world. Here the self is self-contradictory

identity by existing as a unique reflection of interacting forces within a social-historical

situation. Nishida writes

> Our self-consciousness does not take place in a merely closed up,
> windowless self. It consists in the fact that the self, by transcending itself,
> faces and expresses the world. When we are self-conscious, we are already
> self-transcending. But such an evident truth has no place in a philosophy
> that substantializes the self and the act through some dogmatism based on
> object logic."[342]

Nishida's point is that we don't understand ourselves from within ourselves. Self-

consciousness means consciousness of that which is "outside" the boundaries of a

narrowly conceived object-like self. Our self-understanding occurs through the world

expressing itself within us. The Beauvoir passages above fit this way of describing the

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[342] Nishida, "The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious Worldview," 52-53 (*NKZ* 11:377-378).

self. The cultural myths of femininity express themselves through the self. When Nishida discusses the historical world's "self-determination" and expression through the self, we can look to such passages from Beauvoir that demonstrate the force of self-other relations within the historical world in the constitution of the self. These passages also fit what I think Nishida means when he writes that the self is both "made" and "making." The self is "made" through the traditions,[343] or social discourses, within its historical world and also that which "makes" or creates itself out of these discourses. While Nishida's discussion of making typically refers to the creation of physical objects, I think that the fact that he alludes to tradition means that we can extend his discussion of "making" to personal identity. When Nishida says that the self is "made," he means that agency comes from outside of oneself from an intersubjective, historical space. Here, we see from these Beauvoir passages how the self's freedom emerges out of a situation. Nishida wants to eradicate dualisms like matter and consciousness, world and self, etc. Beauvoir's discussion of the interweaving of woman's freedom, what she *wants*, and the force of worldly determinations (social-historical discourses) follows in line with Nishida's abstract statements against dualistic notions of self-determination and a determining world.

The problem with Nishida's logical structures of self-other and self-world mutual determination is that the reader has difficulty visualizing how such structures play out in real life experience. Beauvoir allows us to really see how agency can't be conceived of dualistically because social-historical discourses, in her case those concerning gender, are not completely distinct from our transcendence, or ability to choose and desire freely.

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[343] "As individual items in the world, the self of each of us… is not born into the world accidentally but traditionally, that is to say socially, in an historically specific way." See Nishida, *NKZ* 10: 293-4. As cited in Jacinto, 140.

This is clearly evident in the line "[Woman] wants to feel like a woman for her own personal satisfaction."[344] I believe that this is a real-life illustration of Nishida's notion that the individual is a "self-expressing point of the world." Furthermore, Nishida's emphasis on the creativity of the historical world (the idea that historical reality is not simply that which is "already made") can be understood by looking to Beauvoir's description that one's experience is the combination of transcendence (freedom) and immanence (a social-historical situation which includes discourses and practices).

While Nishida speaks of the artist whose creation emerges out of the interplay of an artistic tradition that preceded him and his own particular expression of his situation, Beauvoir reminds the reader of the darker side of the interplay of one's historical situation and self-expression. She uses examples of slaves and women who live in societies where they are not allowed to enter into free, reciprocal relationships with others. She reveals how the discourses and practices that mediate their own self-understanding restrict their avenues for expression, thus denying the possibility that the Other will listen. Nishida writes that what is "made" undoubtedly affects the maker, but we see that there is more at stake in the vision of self-other interactions that Beauvoir gives. While Beauvoir's narrative descriptions can be utilized as illustrations of Nishida's own model of the self, Beauvoir's own project has a distinct social political agenda, as mentioned earlier. While her own aim is to incite reflection on sexual oppression, the passages discussed earlier nevertheless demonstrate the interweaving of individuality and the social-historical world. Moreover, pairing her works with Nishida's is beneficial to the reader of Nishida because they show how the world's expression through the self could refer to the expression of oppressive discourses. The few examples that Nishida

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[344] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 725.

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gives do not touch on the negative implications of his ontological vision. As Nishida himself was accused of supporting Japanese militarism and fascism during the Pacific War when his highly abstract wartime writings made startlingly concrete references to the Japanese state, I believe that an examination of how his logical structures of self-other and self-world interactions might reflect actual social issues is sorely needed.[345] As Beauvoir's writings seldom stray from real life instances of oppression, they push the reader of Nishida to examine the implications of the relational self.

Nishida's Ethics of Place

Now that we have examined Nishida's theory of the agency of place and seen how *The Second Sex* can aid in concretizing Nishida's claims, we will turn to the implications of his view. Thus, the question posed earlier remains: If the self is reliant on that which is outside itself to be itself then what becomes of the individual agency that seems necessary in order to make ethical decisions? Answering this question requires an investigation of Nishida's own view of the ethics of place. As mentioned before, we will see that Nishida's discussion of the ethical agent is weighted towards the side of the world, which contrasts with Beauvoir's, which emphasizes the self. I will turn now to Nishida's discussion of the ethical agent; I will focus on his last essay here, as it deals directly with ethics.

Understanding Nishida's view of morality requires understanding the influence of Mahayana Buddhism, especially the Zen and Shin traditions, on his thought. In the Mahayana Buddhist teaching, the two core virtues are wisdom (Skt. *prajna*) and

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[345] For a thorough discussion of the accusations made against Nishida, see *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, & the Question of Nationalism*, ed. by James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995).

compassion (*karuna*). In brief, wisdom rests upon a non-conceptual, bodily realization of interdependent co-arising, i.e., the ultimate non-duality of beings due to their lack of intrinsic essences. Another way to formulate this insight is to refer to the doctrine of *anatman*, or no-self. If all beings depend on other beings for their existence and identity, than "self," when it refers to an unchanging, reified core, is solely a conventional way of understanding the self. Ultimate reality is characterized by impermanence and non-duality between self and world. Realizing non-duality leads to spontaneous compassion for others. Before the realization, one's interactions with others are colored by attachment to the self and one's own interests. The compassion is "spontaneous" because it does not originate from the individual's will. When belief in one's capacity as a center of self-directed moral agency is shed, than the space of nothingness becomes the birthplace of spontaneous compassion.

In Buddhist ethics there is a curious entangling of ontology and ethics. Thus, while all beings are fully relational, the ideal person is she who affirms what *is*. However, if this is the case, we might wonder why all individuals are not automatically ethical. The answer lies in the fact that while the deeper reality of the self is emptiness, egocentric desires often prevent the self from realizing emptiness.

One can glimpse these notions in Nishida's last essay, which is concerned with the awakening of religious consciousness:

> Religious questions are not concerned with what we ought to be as that which acts, or how we should act. Rather, they deal with the nature and the mode of existence of the self…One often tries to give a foundation to our religious need based on the imperfection of the erring, deluded self…so long as there is an implicit faith in one's own moral capacity, it is not the religious mind.[346]

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[346] Nishida, "The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview," (*NKZ* 11: 406-407).

Developing religious consciousness is the path to moral action for Nishida. Religious

consciousness only comes about when individual agency is displaced. As we saw in the

last chapter, our finitude with respect to our own mortality and our ability to know the

future or what the end of life entails provokes intense anxiety. Loss and trauma bring us

face to face with how little control we have over our own bodies. However, when we

realize our lack of control, this opens up the possibility for ethical action that originates

from a space of no-self. Nishida writes, "One embraces faith only having completely

exhausted one's resources."[347] Here we see that realizing the self's vulnerability is

actually the route to moral action.

We see the direct coupling of wisdom and compassion in Nishida's reflections on

the Medieval Shin Buddhist master, Shinran:

> Wisdom in religion lies in knowing wisdom itself. Virtue in religion lies in
> enacting virtue itself. Every person, no matter who he is, must return to the
> original body of his own naked self; he must once let go from the cliff's
> ledge and come back to life after perishing, or he cannot know them. In
> other words, only the person who has been able to experience deeply what
> it is to be "foolish/stubble-haired" can know wisdom and virtue…[348]

True agency for Nishida is free of conscious intent. Nishida embraces Shinran's view of

the ultimate foolishness of human beings. According to Shinran, try as we might, we are

unable to will ourselves to consistently perform moral actions. Understanding the end of

Nishida's thought, if we can make such a statement by considering his final summative

essay, allows us to understand his protests against object logic. In the "Historical Body"

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[347] Ibid., 92.

[348] Nishida, "Gutoku Shinran," 243. After his Buddhist name was stripped away as a result of religious persecution, Shinran gave himself a new name, "Gutoku," which means "foolish/stubble-haired." *Bonbu*, or foolish being, is one of the key insights of Shin Buddhism: religious awakening lies in the realization of our inescapable human foolishness, or unending blind desires. For a discussion of Shinran's influence on Nishida see Elizabeth McManaman Grosz, "Reading Nishida through Shinran: Absolute Nothingness, Other Power, and Religious Consciousness," *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy*. Ed. Gereon Kopf, forthcoming.

Nishida calls philosophers to return to everyday experience, which is characterized by "acting and making."[349] However, Nishida's turn to the historical world is motivated by criticism that his philosophy is excessively focused on the internal world of the self without outlining the influence of the social-historical world on the self. In an effort to demonstrate that his philosophy is concerned with ethical action, Nishida cites the Chinese Zen Master Lin-chi Lu's saying, "he is master of himself wherever he goes" in order to describe the religiously self-aware person. Once the grasping ego is shed, "infinite compassion wells forth. Love is something objective."[350] Nishida's point is that religious self-realization is more than "individual peace of mind."

Beauvoir's Notion of Agency

Now that we have investigated Nishida's notion of the agency and ethics of *basho*, we will turn to Beauvoir's theory of human agency and her "ethics of ambiguity." While both authors describe agency as issuing from a place of constituted and constituting forces, we will see how her account differs from Nishida's, as she emphasizes the agency of the individual more than one's historical situation. Beauvoir's language of "assuming one's freedom" leads the reader to think in terms of an individual ego making decisions rather than a being that is truly empty of an individual essence.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Beauvoir uses the term *ambiguity* to capture the fact that human existence is comprised of being an object, or facticity, before others (i.e. constituted in ways that are out of our control) and a subject, or transcendence, (i.e.

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[349] Nishida, "The Historical Body," 41 (*NKZ* 14:271).

[350] Nishida, "Towards a Philosophy of Religion with the Concept of Pre-established Harmony as Guide," 45. (*NKZ* 14: 144-145)

possessing the capacity to constitute ourselves). Our immanence reflects how we are historically situated bodies that are subject to biological processes, social discourses, and the judgments of others. On the other hand, regarding the subjective dimension, we are also freedoms that separate themselves from the passivity of the situated body through thought and projects.[351]

While the reader may interpret facticity as having a constraining effect on our freedom, her notion of the self is that freedom arises out of a concrete situation. The deeper idea here is that identity does not issue from an inner individual will; rather, it forms itself out of a complex network of social and historical relations, practices, and discourses. Therefore, even when Beauvoir speaks of transcendence as the birthplace of our action and projects, it seems that transcendence cannot be completely extricated from immanence.

While I do not contest the fact that freedom is situated for Beauvoir, I believe Beauvoir's Existentialist leaning leads her to subtly privilege transcendence, or our ability to exercise our individual freedom. We can see from the passages below that the self becomes truly human by assuming its freedom.

> Only that in which I recognize my being is mine, and I can only recognize it where it is engaged. In order for an object to belong to me, it must have been founded by me. It is totally mine only if I founded it in its totality. The only reality that belongs entirely to me is, therefore, my act.[352]

> Indeed, cut off from his transcendence, reduced to the facticity of his presence, an individual is nothing; it is by his project that he fulfills himself, by the end at which he aims that he justifies himself; thus, this justification is always to come.[353]

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[351] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 7-12.

[352] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 93.

[353] Ibid., 115.

It is through inventive, future-directed projects that the individual fulfills herself.

Furthermore, it is through action that one is an individual and receives validation for

one's individuality. It is even clearer in this next passage that while human existence is

comprised of both transcendence and immanence, transcendence is prized:

> One cannot save a man by showing him that that dimension of his being
> by which he is a stranger to himself and an object for others is conserved.
> Undoubtedly man is present to the entire universe as a given. At each
> instant, I have the entire past of humanity behind me, before me its entire
> future; I am situated in one spot on the earth, in the solar system, among
> the nebulae. Each of the objects that I handle refers me to all the objects
> that constitute the world, and my existence refers me to that of all men, but
> this is not sufficient for the universe to be mine. What is mine is what I
> have founded; it is the accomplishment of my own project.[354]

In the first part of this quotation, Beauvoir refers to the historically situated part of our

existence. The passage is oriented around the possibility of "salvation"; the situated

dimension of our existence is determined to be incapable of saving us. Putting our

individual mark on the world, i.e., employing our transcendence, is the route to salvation.

It is in passages like these, taken from her earliest essay, "Pyrrhus and Cineas," as well as

the later *Ethics of Ambiguity*, that we see a disentangling of transcendence and

immanence. While it is one thing to say, as Beauvoir does at the beginning of *The Ethics*

of Ambiguity that man is comprised of two distinct dimensions (transcendence and

immanence), it is quite another to describe how one bleeds into the other. While *The*

Second Sex provides countless narrative descriptions where myths of femininity color the

way that women understand their individual identities as well as inform their projects, the

vision of transcendence that we get from the passages above is that it is the individual's

way of breaking free of immanence. This leads me to assert that Beauvoir's discussion of

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[354] Ibid.

agency subtly privileges the subject. From her descriptions, it seems possible to separate oneself from the weight of situation and create a project that is entirely one's own.

Beauvoir's Ethics of Ambiguity

Beauvoir's view of ethics rests upon the individual who decides without appeal to systems of ethics when faced with ethical dilemmas. For example, she writes, "Ethics is a triumph of freedom over facticity, and the sub-man feels only the facticity of his existence."[355] She warns that confining oneself to "ready-made values" shuts off the possibility that we can introduce new values. Furthermore, refusing to exercise one's freedom leaves one open to being coerced by others. Much of Beauvoir's ethical project is concerned with meaning and justifying one's existence. She is worried that without justification and the creation of values, nihilism will set in. It is our capacity to be future-directed that saves us, for Beauvoir. The human being is not constituted to live in the present without continually orienting herself toward the future. Part of this projecting toward the future is also an appeal to the Other for justification. Beauvoir describes the "sub-man" as he who is trapped in facticity; this means that he never establishes a "bond with the universe." He doesn't seek to move beyond facticity by engaging in projects that would tie him to the world and give him reasons to act.

> No project has meaning in the world disclosed by such an existence. Man is defined as a wild flight. The world about him is bare and incoherent. Nothing ever happens; nothing merits desire or effort. The sub-man makes his way across a world deprived of meaning toward a death which merely confirms his long negation of himself. The only thing revealed in this experience is the absurd facticity of an existence which remains forever unjustified if it has not known how to justify itself.[356]

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[355] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 44.

[356] Ibid., 45.

However, as ethical dilemmas often involve social relationships, beyond her interest in

individual projects, Beauvoir is also committed to an ethics which authentically relates to

the freedom of the Other. By examining the "adventurer" character type, we see that

assuming one's freedom and mutual recognition do not necessarily go hand in hand.

> The adventurer devises a sort of moral behavior because he assumes his subjectivity positively. But if he dishonestly refuses to recognize that this subjectivity necessarily transcends itself toward others [he depends on others] he will enclose himself in a false independence which will indeed be servitude. To the free man he will be only a chance ally in whom one can have no confidence; he will easily become an enemy. His fault is believing that one can do something for oneself without others and even against him.[357]

Here Beauvoir reveals that one cannot actually assume one's transcendence alone.

Assuming one's transcendence means that one takes up the fact that one is a "lack" and

applies the future-directed aspect of existence to the creation of projects. However,

authentic moral behavior doesn't mean that one simply commits oneself to a project; it

signifies that one's project is taken up "towards others." Assuming one's freedom

includes the desire that one's projects be recognized. As we saw in Chapter 3, the

overarching theme within Beauvoir is discussion of self-other relations is justification.

The self is in need of justification of its existence from the Other. Instead of championing

individual values, Beauvoir describes existentialist ethics as a "surpassing of

subjectivity":

> Thus, it can be seen to what an extent those people are mistaken – or are lying – who try to make of existentialism a solipsism, like Nietzsche, who would exalt the bare will to power. According to this interpretation, as widespread as it is erroneous, the individual, knowing himself and choosing himself as the creator of his own values, would seek to impose them on others. The result would be a conflict of opposed wills enclosed in their solitude. But we have seen that on the contrary, to the extent that

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[357] Ibid., 63.

passion, pride lead to this tyranny and its conflicts, existentialist ethics condemns them, if it is true that every project emanates from subjectivity, it is also true that this subjective movement establishes by itself a surpassing of subjectivity. Man can find a justification of his own existence only in the existence of other men.[358]

Here, too, Beauvoir links morality with the human quest for meaning. We see that individually created values are not the end of morality. One's values are directed at an intersubjective space and must be recognized by others.

We saw in Chapter 3 that one's self understanding, given the fact that selfhood is based on a "project toward the other," is a battle between the temptation to coerce the Other into affirming a static self-concept of one's own choosing and the opposing possibility of living without static justification from the Other. Moral behavior is based upon assuming one's transcendence, but the accompanying attitude must include surrendering to the fact that the Other is free to judge one's project as he wishes; he is free to give or deny recognition. Our own freedom and the freedom of others is experienced with anxiety, but it is through relating to the Other without denying her otherness or coercing her that one is moral. Assuming one's freedom involves a conversion, which entails a re-orientation with respect to one's relation to the other:

> A conversion can start within passion itself. The cause of the passionate man's torment is his distance from the object; but he must accept it instead of trying to eliminate it. It is the condition within which the object is disclosed. The individual will then find his joy in the very wrench which separates him from the being of which he makes himself a lack. It is only as something strange, forbidden, as something free that the other is revealed as an other. And to love him genuinely is to love him in his otherness and in that freedom by which he escapes. Passion is converted to genuine freedom only if one destines his existence to other existences through the being – whether thing or man – at which he aims, without hoping to entrap it in the destiny of the in-itself. We see that no existence

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[358] Ibid., 71-72.

can be validly fulfilled if it is limited to itself. It appeals to the existence of others.[359]

While our examination of cases of traumatic bonding in the introduction focused on the victim's loss of selfhood, it may be fruitful to consider the oppression itself. The root of coercive tactics that aim to isolate and dismantle an individual's agency is a genuine denial of the individual's freedom. As Hegel's dialectic demonstrates, human beings possess the capacity to enslave the Other's consciousness. Beauvoir's injunction to relate to the Other by respecting "that freedom by which he escapes" is more compelling when we are faced with the consequences of entrapping another's freedom modeled by the examples in the introduction.

Now that we have examined Beauvoir's discussion of agency and ethics, we are in a position to turn how Nishida's *basho* may be useful to the reader of Beauvoir.

What Basho Offers Beauvoir's Ambiguity

While Beauvoir emphasizes that the self at times alienates itself into a fixed image of itself, e.g. a social role, and at other times authentically assumes its situation, Nishida focuses on the agency of the historical world rather than the subject's drive to "posit itself" or become a project toward the Other. The historical world that shapes the human being is actually the condition for individuality; this allows Nishida to say that the world expresses itself through the self. Beauvoir's idea that social discourses play a large part in constructing our subjectivity is more in line with Nishida's interest in the determining forces within the historical world. However, Beauvoir's language of "assuming one's freedom" leads the reader to think in terms of an individual ego making

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[359] Ibid., 66.

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decisions rather than a being that is truly empty of an individual essence. Given her

commitment to social activism and existentialist ethics, it is not surprising that Beauvoir

seems to suggest that transcendence is more truly "human" than one's facticity.

According to Beauvoir, to be at home in the world and to allow for humanist ethics, one

must realize that transcendence is a defining dimension of one's being.[360] Despite this

leaning, Beauvoir states that human existence is ambiguous: we are always both subjects

and objects (determining and determined). Here, Nishida's concept of basho, or a field of

relations, offers to the reader of Beauvoir a singular, non-dual metaphor of human

existence that includes within it the agency of the historical world as well as the

individual's distinct actions that flow out of her situation.

Recalling the earlier tension in Beauvoir's work, i.e. statements within *The Ethics

of Ambiguity* that depict transcendence and immanence as separable versus passages from

The Second Sex, which demonstrate the intertwining of the two, *basho* offers the reader

of Beauvoir a way of thinking about these aspects of experience as completely mutually

determining without losing individual freedom. As we saw in Chapter 3, the struggle for

recognition is a defining part of selfhood; the self is set up to seek affirmation from the

Other. Beauvoir emphasizes that immanence, or one's situatedness, structures and

motivates the recognition that the self seeks. Behind this historically-influenced manner

of searching for recognition is the self's deep-seated desire to have its existence justified

by another. The justification sought is often in the form of discourses.

Basho provides a metaphor for how the self is a unique conduit for social-

historical discourses. However, instead of only reflecting the one-way determination of

world to self, Nishida describes historical place as fundamentally creative; this means

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[360] See Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 111.

that the self transforms those same discourses. It is not as if there is a fully formed self that acts on the world though. Both self and world, consciousness and materiality, intersect with each other fluidly. As a place of mutually interacting and determining forces, *basho* shifts the weight away from the subject. This image is helpful when thinking about Beauvoir's notion of the relational self, which is a worldly entity that is always directed outside itself. Furthermore, while *basho* shifts the weight away from the subject, this does not mean that individuality and the impulse to make ethical decisions is lost. Rather, this term describes how our individuality is shot through with worldly, non-individual elements. Instead of existing as atomistic entities with rigid borders, we are individual "self-expressing points of the world." Nishida's point is that individuality cannot be separated out from materiality and history. Given Beauvoir's commitment to situated freedom and the fundamental impulse to seek recognition from the Other, which structures our agency in a manner that is not clear-cut and unilateral, *basho* is a useful non-dual metaphor.

Conclusion: Two Accounts of Agency and Ethics: Self-Negation and Self-Surpassing

Examining Nishida and Beauvoir together is mutually illuminating. They provide us with two notions of agency, which end in different conceptions of the route to ethical action. Nishida's vision of ethical action holds up self-negation as an ideal. Relying on our own intentions actually thwarts our ability to act ethically. "Trying to be good" is bound up with our desire to appear good, which is ultimately more about how we seek to appear good before others than the action itself.[361] The ground of reality for Nishida is

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[361] See Grosz, "Reading Nishida through Shinran: Absolute Nothingness, Other Power, and Religious Consciousness."

our absolute finitude, which issues from the fact that reality is absolute nothingness. While we act and think in ways that cover over this emptiness and finitude, confronting it allows us to face our own deepest reality.

In an essay on Shinran, Nishida references the central Shin Buddhist practice of chanting the name of the Buddha:

> Chanting the name of Amida Buddha may be the seed of our rebirth into the Pure Land or our descent into hell. We have no way of knowing which way it will turn up…In this kind of realization we touch life eternal. [362]

While this religious practice is meant to assure the practitioner's rebirth in a heavenly realm, the "Pure Land," Shinran conveys his radical uncertainty about the efficacy of any religious practice. The deeper significance of this statement is that one never knows the end of one's actions. Coming to grips with our radical uncertainty allows us to see our own nature – and its connection to the nature of all reality – clearly. Emptiness is at the heart of the self and our actions. Here we see how Nishida's account of the agency of place is also active in his ethical theory. Curiously, our own vulnerability is the route to ethical action. Nishida's concern with ethics hinges on absolute nothingness. While he references the importance of coming to see that the Other exists in the bottom of the self, absolute nothingness is always central.

Beauvoir presents an idea similar to Nishida's discussion of self-negation when she references the "surpassing of subjectivity." However, for Beauvoir, subjectivity is surpassed somewhat naturally because human beings are from the beginning, fundamentally oriented toward the Other. This directedness toward the Other issues from the human need for justification from the Other. Orienting action "toward an Other,"

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[362] As quoted in Michiko Yusa, *Zen and Philosophy: An Intellectual Biography of the Life of Nishida Kitarō* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 95.

however, is quite different than Nishida's allusions to self-emptying practices aimed at self-negation; Beauvoir doesn't encourage transcendence of the ego or individual will. Beauvoir's emphasis on the importance of mutual recognition of freedom, the ideal of free men, and more specifically, her ideal of opening oneself to the Other's judgment without seeking static justification from him are posited as morally exemplary behaviors and attitudes without much discussion of how to concretely achieve these ideals other than to will oneself to develop them.

Nishida and Beauvoir's accounts are similar in that they each hold up human vulnerability as the path to ethical action. Both describe our avoidance – through fear – of our own finitude and encourage the reader to confront this finitude. For Beauvoir, this means being open to the Other's capacity to justify one or refuse justification without attempting to coerce her. For Nishida, moments of loss or trauma open the self to its total inability to control fate. In this moment of helplessness, one can make a turnaround wherein one's actions issue from absolute nothingness rather than the strivings of the ego. Beauvoir's injunctions do not reference transcendence of the ego nor do they offer the reader specific practices that develop one's ability to recognize the Other freely. Her vision of morality seems to rest upon whether or not one can will oneself to treat the Other as a free being. In his last essay and in "Gutoku Shinran," Nishida states that one cannot rely upon one's individual will to act ethically. This falls in line with his discussion of the agency of place. While not often discussed explicitly, Zen and Shin Buddhist practices like meditation and chanting are held up as paths to self-negation and self-emptying. While Beauvoir emphasizes the ways in which our freedom is situated,

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she seems to still rely upon the efficacy of the individual will to introduce values into the world and to treat the Other as a free agent.

In conclusion, examining Beauvoir and Nishida together yields two accounts of agency that converge on the idea that the Other is a condition of selfhood. Their discussions of agency are weighted towards the perspective of the self in the case of Beauvoir and towards the side of the world in Nishida. Their slightly different foci present the reader with two ways of visualizing the acting self that is a product of worldly relations. As Beauvoir acknowledges that human existence is ambiguous, Nishida's term *basho* is useful to the reader of Beauvoir who tries to envision a self that is always both determining and determined. Again, I believe *basho* is an effective metaphor because it is non-dualistic and resists the idea that there can be a wholly individual, self-sustaining self. Beauvoir's descriptions of self-other relations in *The Second Sex*, in turn, allow the reader of Nishida to picture concrete ways that the historical world acts on the self.

Examining their ethics together provides us with two notions of self-surpassing. For both authors, when the Other is encountered, she or he, "negates" the self's total freedom. The self is always oriented toward the Other through its self-determination or through its seeking of recognition. However, the surpassing of one's individuality for Beauvoir relates to how self-other relations are transformed through the mutual recognition of freedom while Nishida's self-surpassing entails seeking a new locus of ethical action, i.e. absolute nothingness.

While their versions of ethical action are distinct, both offer us ways of thinking about how the end of the self's action is blocked from view. Coming to terms with our uncertainty is the way to morality for both. For Nishida the realization stems from loss or

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trauma. For Beauvoir, we never know whether or not others will recognize our projects. The fact that our identities are through and through relational leaves us utterly vulnerable. Nishida and Beauvoir present the uncertainty and vulnerability that issues from their concepts of the relational self in slightly different ways that expand the reader's understanding of relational models of selfhood.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In the introduction, we saw how cases of traumatic bonding illustrated the human being's fundamental need to form intersubjective bonds. We saw that in extreme circumstances of captivity, when separated from friends, family, and colleagues, individuals succumbed to forming relationships with their oppressors. Or, in the case of certain prisoners, if they managed to distance themselves from their captors, it was due to visualizing their connections to loved ones. Isolated from her peers and the significant people in her life, Hearst reported that her old self gradually "slipped away" in captivity. [363] Concurrently, the agency tied to her old self faltered. These examples reveal that we are inherently social creatures. Knowledge of the world isn't housed in the lone individual; it is shared. Our sense of reality issues from relationships with Others who look out onto the same world and give us feedback.

While our intersubjective bonds sustain our identities and our sense of reality, they also leave us vulnerable to fracture and disintegration. After she was persistently mis-recognized, Hearst took on a new identity, "Tania," and came to sympathize and collaborate with a rebel group's illegal tactics. Cases of traumatic bonding are compelling because it is difficult to answer the question, what could the victim have done differently to prevent the loss of his or her self? Philosophies that address self-betterment seem to make the individual self central. While cliché, often repeated American cultural tropes like "you can only change yourself" and "Be yourself; it doesn't matter what others think of you" hold a place in the cultural imaginary. Hegel, Beauvoir, and Nishida critique ontological and ethical standpoints that make the individual central. As we saw, these

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[363] Castiglia, 91.

authors revealed the extent to which self-understanding and ethical actions depend upon intersubjective recognition.

While Hearst's story is a dramatic example of the extent to which our agency is shaped by others, especially with regard to oppression, it presents a challenge to our ability to forsee how someone could act as an agent within such a context. In the last chapter, we saw how both Beauvoir and Nishida grapple with the relation between agency and intersubjectivity. Indeed, within these authors we find an articulation of the self's dependence on the Other, but also a way to take up this dependence in a way that leads to self transformation. While Hegel only hints at the possibility of equal self-other relations in the master-slave section of the *Phenomenology*, Beauvoir and Nishida provide normative accounts of self transformation. Their discussions of agency can be understood more fully if we apply them imaginatively to how Patty Hearst may have experienced her sense of self after her release from captivity. I will lead the reader through a thought experiment after reviewing the main contributions of the authors in terms of their views of the relational self.

Hegel shows us that despite 21st century American cultural tropes that idealize providing one's own validation, our access to ourselves occurs *only* through the Other's perception of us: "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged." [364] When the self becomes aware of this, it experiences a feeling of loss. The self is no longer perceived as the "essential." Hegel asserts that in the encounter with the Other, the self has "come *out of itself*." This means that the self not only loses itself, but also sees itself in the Other. We saw that the self is fully relational for Hegel. It is a being that exists "for" another. It is

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[364] Hegel, § 178.

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only through being for another that self-consciousness understands "the unity of itself in its otherness." The self is fundamentally split between its individual desires and its existence for others: "A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object.'"

Hegel tells us that the self does not possess itself because it relates to itself through the existence of that which is outside itself. This reality at first provokes antagonism; self-consciousness tends to cope with the continual loss of itself by trying to control and coerce the Other. We saw the extent to which Hegel's account of the antagonistic attitude of consciousness toward the Other influenced Beauvoir's thought. Both Hegel and Beauvoir recount how the self seeks to control the Other in order to reinforce a self-concept of its own choosing. As Hegel writes with reference to the commitments of his own time, *Selbstandigkeit* emerges as the ideal – albeit flawed – model of the self in the *Phenomenology*. Beauvoir, on the other hand, both challenges this ideal as being too abstract and also suggests that women are encouraged by social-historical discourses to seek recognition of themselves as pleasing, passive sexual objects rather than autonomous and independent subjects.

The master-slave dialectic illustrates how attempting to dominate the Other in order to receive recognition fails. In the *Phenomenology*, the reader is able to infer that the recognition is powerful precisely because it is freely given. Hegel thus introduces the notion of mutual recognition, in which the self and the Other view each other as equals, both endowed with free choice. Beauvoir takes Hegel's claim wherein the self is both object and I and recasts it by proposing a model of the self that is both immanent and transcendent. Just like the vision that we get in the first part of the chapter on self-

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consciousness of the self that exists in conflict with the object of desire and then the Other, Beauvoir suggests that the self undergoes a constant struggle to receive justification from the Other. The self is torn between two possible ways of seeking recognition: 1) the temptation to reify its self-concept and persuade the Other to affirm this self-concept, and 2) the resignation to the Other's freedom wherein the self resolves to live without coercing the Other to provide static justification.

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir details the ways in which female subjectivity is heavily mediated by social-historical discourses and practices. While authentic existence opens itself to the Other's judgment, this work highlights how women are encouraged to seek recognition of particular traits and attitudes described as "feminine." In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir outlines the dangers of non-mutual recognition. Ethics is found to rest upon more than the individual's freely-chosen projects; ethics depends upon the existence of other free human beings. Beauvoir argues, "We need others in order for our existence to become founded and necessary." While we require intersubjective validation, we cannot ensure that others will recognize our projects. Thus, the picture of human experience that Beauvoir paints is one marked by risk and uncertainty. The self exists at the mercy of those who might affirm it.

While Beauvoir describes selfhood as a "project toward the Other," Nishida advances a similar notion in his often repeated phrase, "The individual determines itself only in relation to other individuals." For Nishida, the self is fundamentally empty of intrinsic essence. However, instead of canceling out the possibility of an individual identity, this merely means that identity emerges through the interaction of many beings. Like Hegel, Nishida suggests that the self is not wholly self-determining. The self houses

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both otherness and unity. Nishida's concepts of the "continuity of discontinuity" and "living-qua-dying" demonstrate how the particular self issues from absolute nothingness. While the self arises and passes away in every new moment, we still experience unity. These concepts allow us to grasp the broader claim that all being includes a dimension of otherness within itself. The alterity of absolute nothingness within the particular self helps us to understand the alterity of the concrete Other.

If we take seriously the idea that the individual cannot be self-producing, self-determining, nor self-sustaining, we have to account for the ways that others and social-historical discourses shape identity. Nishida's notion of *basho* allows us to substitute a picture of the self as self-contained and atomistic with the metaphor of a field of interacting forces. *Basho* reveals how the self can be an individual that doesn't determine itself within itself; instead, selfhood originates from what is "other," i.e. absolute nothingness.

While I have summarized key aspects of Hegel, Beauvoir, and Nishida's models of the relational self, the reader may be left wondering how this knowledge is useful in real life experience. What is gained in concrete terms from this knowledge? And, how does it help us live better lives?

While most of my dissertation concerns how selfhood is constituted through intersubjective recognition, we also saw how the authors made claims, in places, about how our intersubjective constitution impacts how we relate to others. If the self needs the Other in order to get itself back, then what are the implications for the ways in which the self treats the Other? One implication of this structure of the self is the adoption of an instrumentalizing attitude toward others. For example, above, I recalled Hegel's

description of the self's initial antagonism towards the Other and Beauvoir's account of the "fundamental hostility" between self and Other. The self's desire for the Other's recognition often ends up obscuring the fact that the Other always escapes the self's ability to foresee or control his or her responses. Instrumentalizing attitudes, when taken to the extreme, are the cause of much evil in the world. When the Other's freedom is forcefully ignored or denied then he or she is reduced to a mere thing that the self can do with as he or she wishes. The implications of such attitudes can include discrimination, subordination within an intimate relationship or within a society, genocide, enslavement, torture, and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Both Beauvoir and Hegel highlight how our humanity is tied to the exercise of our freedom when we dedicate ourselves to certain projects or ideals – even at the risk of death. When our ability to choose to follow our own ends is denied by another who desires to serve his or her own ends, we lose an integral aspect of our humanity.

I think Beauvoir brings out the "fundamental hostility of consciousness" because it is a common response to the self's lack of footing in a world wherein it can only get to itself through another. While the self is completely indebted to the Other, this reality is frightening because the Other is free to refuse recognition. It is only through force or coercion that the self can *ensure* that the Other will affirm him or her in the manner of his or her choosing, as we saw in the Hearst story. The reality is that we are always vulnerable to the Other's freedom. Our task is to resist the tendency to objectify the Other.

Hearst's case makes Beauvoir's ideal of mutual recognition all the more compelling. Beauvoir describes ethical comportment as choosing to remain open to the

Other's judgments about oneself without trying to control the way that one gets oneself back from the Other.[365] While Hearst was denied a voice due to persistent mis-recognition, when the self enters into relationships of mutual recognition, it gains the ability to give an account of itself and envision new possible ways of being in the world through the Other's affirmation. As we saw in the introduction, Mackenzie believes that we come to know what we want and believe in our own agency when we are listened to by others who treat us as equals. The prisoners who were able to resist their captors' efforts at brainwashing, were able to do so through picturing past relationships that had afforded them with the ability to have faith in their own agency.

Hegel, Beauvoir, and Nishida give us an original way of thinking about ethical action that originates from a space that is non-dualistic. As mentioned above, when we think of self-actualization and self-betterment, it is common to idealize acting from a place that emphasizes one's own locus of control. One may even be able to glimpse the influence of Stoicism in this tendency, i.e. the belief that one cannot control a chaotic and impermanent world so one must retreat into an inner space that one can control. However, as both phenomenology and Buddhist philosophy have demonstrated, the world cannot be conceived of dualistically. Both Beauvoir and Nishida make this realization an integral component to their ethics. Beauvoir writes, "If it is true that every project emanates from subjectivity, it is also true that this subjective movement establishes by itself a surpassing of subjectivity. Man can find a justification of his own

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[365] This type of surrender resonates with Nishida's discussions of Shinran. Ethical action depends upon surrendering oneself to the fact that one's understanding of life and religious practice is profoundly limited. Remaining open to what one cannot control or know is an integral aspect of ethical and religious consciousness.

existence only in the existence of other men."[366] If every project always already entails directedness toward another, then it seems that our actions are never wholly individual.

Within a non-dualistic world, if our subjectivity is shot through with others and our historical place, how are we to act ethically as individuals? Hegel, Beauvoir, and Nishida provide different answers to this question, which revolve around their distinct views of history. While I focused on a small portion of the *Phenomenology* only, Hegel's view throughout the text is that throughout human history, we come to understand the one-sidedness of our convictions. The limits of our views are revealed in time. With regard to self-other interactions, while he doesn't provide normative claims in the master-slave dialectic, self-consciousness comes to understand that the self is not *Selbstandigkeit* and that non-reciprocal self-other relations fail to provide it with stable recognition.

Beauvoir's approach to history, on the other hand, encourages continual transcendence in the form of the contestation of social inequality and the creation of new possibilities of self-understanding and action. In *The Second Sex*, she examines the situation of women throughout many different historical moments. While social-historical practices and discourses shape women's self-understanding, she emphasizes that there is room for resistance. Beginning with her first work, "Pyrrhus and Cineas," she describes human existence as comprised of both immanence and transcendence. She advocates for political changes to correct inequalities between the sexes as well as individual and societal changes in the discourses and one's relation to these discourses that surround femininity. Due to her view of human experience, transcendence can never be fully eradicated, but it is not granted full expression in oppressive historical situations. Arguably, one could reduce her ethical ideal to "assuming" one's transcendence *and* the

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[366] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 72

"essential need" to be "faced with free men."[367] Within the context of *The Second Sex*, this entails changing one's relation to oppressive discourses and inventing new possibilities of existence.

In contrast to Hegel and Beauvoir, Nishida doesn't advocate a view of history that involves progress with regard to knowledge or social-political change. Instead, he is concerned with what underlies history, i.e. absolute nothingness. While ethical action stems from resisting historical discourses for Beauvoir, for Nishida, ethical action requires a turnaround wherein the self realizes that it cannot will itself to act ethically. Traumatic events involving death or loss lead the individual to realize she is at the mercy of forces outside her control. The resulting loss of her faith in her own efforts to control life can lead to the experience of the force of great compassion, i.e., absolute nothingness. True freedom, then, issues from her realization that she cannot control life; it stems from the negation of her will. Nishida's perspective is at odds with Beauvoir's social-political agenda within *The Second Sex* because for him, self-transformation is tied to that which is more fundamental than human history and beyond the scope of the individual ego.

What do Beauvoir and Nishida have to say about human agency in response to the story of Patty Hearst? I contend that the authors' different approaches to history will help us make sense of their views of agency, especially when we apply their views imaginatively to how Patty Hearst would have ideally experienced her sense of self after her release from captivity.

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[367] Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, 129.

As we saw in Chapters III and V, Beauvoir holds that our projects are not only directed toward others, they only become worthwhile when they are validated externally. In a sense, human experience is defined as a continual openness to the Other's power to judge or affirm who one takes oneself to be. Hearst's experience was one in which she was objectified by the Other. Her alterity and freedom was not seen or allowed full expression. I believe that Beauvoir would hope that Hearst would come to identify and deeply reflect on oppressive social discourses. I think Beauvoir would also say that Hearst's experience gave her special insight into how dependent we are upon others to allow us to speak in our own voices, or employ our transcendence. This would surely instill in Hearst a deep respect for the Other's freedom. Beauvoir would surely hope that her experience would make her more likely to maintain relationships of mutual recognition in the future because she directly experienced the trauma that results when relationships are not based on mutual recognition. Since being isolated from such relationships opens one up to the loss of one's self, Beauvoir would hope that Hearst would realize that her "essential need is to be faced with free men." Lastly, I think Beauvoir would claim that the oppression that Hearst endured would lead her to respond actively and creatively, perhaps in the form of some type of social activism. Ultimately, Beauvoir would hope that Hearst would emerge from her captivity with a renewed respect for the Other's freedom and a passion to move beyond her oppressive situation by creating new projects.

If Nishida were to assess how Hearst would ideally respond to her release, he would say that the experience would have completely transformed her sense of self in a way that would lead to her adopting an ethical-religious standpoint. As stated earlier, in

his view, situations of extreme trauma or loss open the self to what is our human condition all along, i.e. being subject to forces beyond our control. Here it is helpful to recall that Nishida proposes that the self is a field of relation. As human beings, we experience the loss of people who we love and we are subject to violence, natural disasters, disease, and death. Furthermore, as Nishida is concerned with questions of existential and religious meaning, he writes that we cannot be sure that what we think will bring us salvation – for example a certain religious practice – actually will. In Nishida's view, the trauma that Hearst underwent would have opened her eyes to our actual human condition: vulnerability. However, as soon as she understood the powerlessness of her own individual will, she would simultaneously undergo a feeling of great compassion. In this moment of helplessness, one can make a turnaround wherein one's actions issue from absolute nothingness rather than the strivings of the ego. Nishida's notion of the way that loss or trauma can lead to self transformation can be grasped if we think of the way that people who have experienced hardship or tragedy at one point may undergo a profound shift in the way that they relate to this past. This new understanding injects light and energy into their lives. However, the transformation was not willed; rather, it came from without when they "hit rock bottom" or gave up all hope.

In this imaginative exercise, we see that both Beauvoir and Nishida suggest that a relational model of the self implies that the human condition is comprised by vulnerability. However, both believe that we are not totally subject to the relations out of which we emerge. Beauvoir argues that humans always possess the capacity to resist historical situations and invent new ways of being by employing their transcendence. However, as her philosophical concept of ambiguity suggests, her vision of the human

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condition is not fully settled; the self is always both *Mitsein* and separation. For her, we cannot give up our need for recognition, but, significantly, given her project of social-political resistance, neither can we fully lose our freedom. While the Hearst story didn't present successful resistance to oppression, Beauvoir would surely believe that in the aftermath of such a situation Hearst would rediscover and employ her transcendence.

As we saw above, Nishida's notion of individuality is closely tied to the realization of one's vulnerability. In his view, when we see our own vulnerability, we are embraced by the all-embracing reality of emptiness. Emptiness, or absolute nothingness, is actually our true individuality and the basis from which we act. While the fact that all beings share a common basis (emptiness or absolute nothingness) may seem to preclude individual freedom, the Buddhist two-fold truth of form and emptiness states that all beings are individuals, even though they simultaneously share a unity. All beings appear in distinct forms, but this form emerges out of emptiness. We can think about the form as the individual being's unique expression of emptiness. For example, no two roses are completely alike, but their individuality is dependent upon many of the same forces (e.g., water, soil, air, etc.). In Nishida's view roses don't have individual essences; they emerge out of emptiness, but this doesn't mean that they aren't individuals. So, even though the self is a "self-expressing point of the world," the expression is unique. If we relate this to the Hearst story, then Nishida would say that Hearst's self was an expression of a field of relation, but the particular expression was unique. I believe that this perspective allows for the possibility that Hearst's individuality wasn't fully eclipsed by the oppressive situation.

Broadly, Beauvoir and Nishida's accounts of self transformation operate on different levels. Beauvoir idealizes social-political changes; for example, she hopes to transform society so that it includes citizens who are capable of mutual recognition. Nishida, on the other hand, doesn't outline or advocate for social-political changes. Instead, he upholds the importance of an inward turn which enables the self to make peace with the vulnerability of being human and find new strength.

Let us return now to further exploring the implications for ethical action given this dependency. Beyond the threat of bodily harm, isolation is one of the greatest risk to the self's ability to act ethically. If we return to Hearst's story, I think our subjectivist tendency is to ask ourselves how she could have avoided the loss of her identity. If ethical action depends upon the recognition of others, in an oppressive situation, the implication is that the self often fails to resist the Other's coercion. The failure does, however, elicit a profound awareness of our place in the world as vulnerable creatures. Despite the risk of failure, however, there are cases of extraordinary individuals, like those prisoners mentioned in the introduction, who successfully resist their captors' attempt at total domination and coercion within situations of isolation. However, these prisoners were able to preserve their agency, and thus the possibility for ethical action, through imagining their connection to loved ones. If the maintenance of one's identity and the possibility of ethical action are both dependent on intersubjective recognition, then is resistance within oppression possible, even when it is not recognized? I believe that this question is best answered through empirical studies. However, I think that it is likely that most of the time these individuals are receiving real or imagined recognition, because Beauvoir's point that self-awareness requires externalization is compelling.

As I made strong claims throughout the dissertation about the centrality of the Other in the constitution of the self, the reader may still wonder, is the self constituted exclusively through its relations to others? Our in-depth investigation of Nishida and Beauvoir's work revealed that identity arises from a place or situation that includes social-historical discourses, practices, and imaginaries, as well as our gender, race, ethnicity, family history, and the natural environment in which we live. While these factors play a role in the formation of our identities, the authors highlight how our lives are fundamentally oriented "toward" others. In Chapter 4, we saw how Watsuji described human consciousness as always already relational. The world is never perceived by the self alone, because the self is attuned to the presence of others as it looks out onto the world. The self is not formed exclusively through its relations to others, but, as others frame the experience of the self, they cannot be ever easily separated out from the self's identity.

In conclusion, while our personal identity is something individual, the discussions of the relational self that we examined demonstrate the extent to which it is dependent upon the feedback that we get from our relationships with others. We grasp who we are through the version of ourselves that we present to others in the form of life stories, actions, or even our virtual social media profiles. While the Other is absolutely fundamental to our own process of self-discovery and understanding, his or her freedom causes him or her to be an unpredictable source of recognition. A self that must rely upon unstable Others can never be fully settled. Therefore, our self-understanding must be in process and variable. In their own ways, all three authors encourage us to remain open to the Other's power to confer recognition, even though we are incapable of ensuring that

we will receive the recognition that we desire. As we are all incapable of sustaining our identities without feedback from others, we must hope that our shared vulnerability will incite us to affirm, rather than flee from, the alterity through which the Other escapes.

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