

Phl 421: Sartre, Fall 2017, Handout 7: Knowledge and The Problem of Others

1. S gives a good summary of what was going on in chapter one on pp.238-239
2. Note how he uses *responsibility* on p.239: "it produces itself originally on the foundation of a relation to the in-itself," i.e., since the for-itself cannot totally merge with the it-self and since it cannot coincide with itself, it founds itself as not-being founded, and this S calls "responsibility." Whenever we run away from our responsibility, we try to become a thing again, i.e., we try to found ourselves in an *external* being; but, given the basic negative quality of self-consciousness, we will always fail (unless we die)
3. Intuition
 - a. S uses this term in a philosophical way; it means: non-abstract, non-universal, non-"empty"
 - b. S claims, following Husserl, that all abstract forms of "knowledge" (arguments, deductions, proofs, etc.) ultimately are based on intuitive knowledge
 - c. Intuition is immediate (247); however, as S points out, the immediacy cannot mean that knower and known "merge"
4. Intentionality
 - a. This section is very helpful for understanding the core of BN; a lot of what he says here should be somehow familiar by now
 - i. To speak about knowledge presupposes that we have knowledge *of* something; however, the condition of this relation is consciousness itself as consciousness *of* something
 - ii. The object (of x) presupposes a negation; I can only be related to a phenomenon if I am *not* it; I am not the chair, I am not the number, etc.; so, as S points out, it is misleading to say that the thing is not being consciousness (242)
5. Knowledge
 - a. "Knowledge appears as a mode of being" (242). What S wants to say is that knowledge cannot be a separate "something" *in* consciousness; instead, it must be a/the mode of consciousness itself
 - b. S excluded empirical knowledge from his considerations (i.e., stuff I know via learning and experience); he is concerned with knowledge as it belongs to the being of the for-itself; knowledge as an "ontological relation" (244)
 - c. In order to know a particular object, I have the relationship to *this* object *already* established (or: knowledge about presupposes knowledge of)
 - d. Again: an internal negation is presupposed for having a "knowledge" relation to an object (245)
 - e. The real object of knowledge is not simply an object; instead, it is *the known*; however, there is *nothing* that separates the knower from the known (247)
 - f. The known must be known *in presence* (i.e., it cannot be mediated by a third, it cannot be reflective, i.e., the act itself must be *intuitive*)
 - g. Since the for-itself is itself nothing, knowledge is simply the pure presence of an object, i.e., it is identical with "phenomenon," it is one realization of the for-itself; i.e., knowledge cannot be a representation (image, p.314)

6. Others

- a. S now expands his analysis of the for-itself towards the existence of others; he rejects former attempts to grasp the existence of others; however, he agrees with phenomenologists such as Husserl and Heidegger that intersubjectivity is totally misunderstood if reduced to the question of “other minds” or the problem of solipsism
- b. Carefully think about the example of shame with which S opens part 3 of BN: shame is described as a mode of *having to be*, not of abstract knowledge; shame is not “in” you; you are ashamed of yourself; in addition, it is immediately a relation to the other; the other seems to be somehow “inscribed” into the for-itself and my relation to myself (302); it is not discursive or based on some kind of thought deduction
- c. The way in which we are *for-others* must have something to do with our embodiment; this embodiment, as S will later demonstrate, does not equal mind-thing + body-thing
 - i. Realists: they do understand that the body is central; however, they conceive the body as an it-self, as a thing in the world that does not differ from other things such as chairs and tables; realists do not deny the existence of the other; however, they then reduce everything to the problem of knowledge (305)
 1. Indication
 2. Empathy
 - ii. Idealists: they have the problem of how to connect the *universal* knowledge of the other (noumenal) to the concrete experience; The other shows up as an organized totality (307); the *ideal* unification (308) cannot be applied to experience, we do not understand in the Kantian horizon how we can live in “different” temporal experiences; the idealists either end up in solipsism or in some kind of mysticism
 1. Causality
 2. As if (regulative idea)
 - iii. The main problem of both realism and idealism is that they establish the difference between others as *external* negations (differences between things) (312); the negation is turned into something given (for S it has to be “established”); every external negation requires a “witness” who posits and “observes” the difference (so, it ends up in infinite circles again) (313): S had said more about external negations in the section on knowledge
- d. “I am the one who constitutes the Other in the field of his experience” (314); think about this carefully; S tries to think the relation to the Other as a kind of double negation; I can experience myself as a thing and it-self since the other negates my self-presence and my for-itself, Flynn calls this the “looking/looked-at model of interpersonal relations” (205)
- e. Ultimately, the other produces a pre-reflective self-consciousness of that which I transcend (it-self, thing); S terms this “being-for-others” (analysis in “The Look”)