

Phl 421: Sartre, ProfLotz, Handout 5: Immediate Structures of the For-Itself

1. Where are we?
 - a. According to S I cannot coincide with myself = I am what I am not (I am the “not”)
 - i. I distinguish myself from *everything*; for S, there is nothing “in” consciousness, insofar as everything is a phenomenon
 - ii. The negation is *total*; the for-itself is a being (i.e., is part of the universe), but *as* being it *is not itself*
 - iii. The easiest way to understand this = the for-itself is nothing “fixed” (waiter); it is not a thing (fear), and it is not itself (negation, transcendence)
 - iv. Introduction of temporality = arguments against psychic determinism
 1. I am not my past
 2. I am not my future
 3. There is a difference between anguish (related to my freedom) and fear (related to me as facticity)
 4. Transcendence = I surpass all phenomena towards what I am not (my past and my future)
 - v. Freedom
 1. Must be total = human reality, i.e., is not a feature of single acts
 2. Willing acts and actions are possible actualizations of consciousness
 3. Here, again: I negate what is willed and what is to be reached in action
 4. Here: value (see below)
2. Presence to self
 - a. Starting point: cogito; however, it is wrong to determine it as substance (119)
 - b. Coincide = “being is what it is” (120)
 - c. Intentionality does not allow us to say that there simply *are* things around us or in consciousness; the pre-reflective “witness” (of) consciousness cannot mean that there is an absolute identity
 - d. Pre-reflective consciousness cannot be a second – reflective – act; only reflection implies dissociation (122)
 - e. Self-consciousness cannot be a *different* consciousness (infinite circle); reflection *alters* consciousness (and the reflection must itself be self-conscious)
 - f. The self cannot *be* self, it cannot coincide with itself
 - g. The self must be an *ideal* distance (self-relation); it negates its own coincidence and identity
 - h. The for-itself = presence to itself; distance without two in-itselfs; cannot be a relation between being and being
 - i. Consciousness exists as a “nihilation of identity” (125)
 - j. (Self)Consciousness = “absolute event” (126) → it is unfounded (127)
3. Facticity
 - a. Self-Consciousness cannot be its own foundation
 - i. There is no possibility “outside” of SelfConsciousness (129); possibility belongs to the for-itself
 - ii. Only *because* the for-itself is contingent can it desire to have a foundation (129)

- iii. The question of foundations is on the level of *value*
- iv. The nihilation of itself cannot be called a foundation since this act is *precisely* the act of denying all foundations; paradoxically: the cogito founds itself by *not* founding itself; I am *not* derived from or determined by something outside of myself *is* the foundation
- v. SelfConsciousness remains an absolute event (130); remember: I had already pointed to this thought in our first class sessions
- vi. The cogito is always *situational* (131); i.e., whatever I am by not being it (waiter) is given through my existential situation, i.e., *every* act is always characterized by transcending “something” (the now, the present, the given, etc.); so, it presupposes *a totality* negated in each moment; for example, I am my past by not being it; I am my future by not being it

4. Value

- a. S discusses “value” for similar reasons to why he discussed past and future in the chapter on anguish
- b. The cogito can be described by a *lack*; lack introduces a specific relation between the non-coincidence of the self and its “attempt” to be itself;
- c. The best expression of this lacking nature of the self is *desire* (S goes here back to Plato and Hegel) (136)
 - i. Desire is not to be confused with conatus (which S interprets as material)
 - ii. Thirst does not exist on the level of physiology (it would then simply be a reconfiguration of the reality as itself)
 - iii. Thirst is not a *state*; rather, I *want to* drink
 - iv. In order to speak of “lack” something must *matter* for the self; it must be *for someone*; it must be consciousness of (138)
 - v. “The missing in=itself is pure absence” (138)
 - vi. The lack is the origin of transcendence; the cogito surpasses its facticity because it surpasses the given, the now, the limit, etc., *towards* what it lacks (139)
 - vii. Satisfaction = possible coincidence (i.e., for Sartre total satisfaction is *impossible*)
 - viii. The for-itself is “unhappy consciousness” (140), here: Hegel, since it *wants to* be itself, but it can only be itself as for-itself, i.e., by not being itself; uuuh... super sad, isn’t it?
 - ix. The unreachable totality, or, better, the impossibility of coinciding with itself, makes the totality a lack and gives it an implicit “norm” (aha! = value)
 - x. Example: suffering (142)
 - xi. Value is another expression for the lack of foundation; value cannot exist, it is beyond being; it *is* only insofar as it is desired
 - xii.

5. Possibility