Using Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* for Managerial Decision-Making

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Abstract: This paper will offer an alternative understanding of managerial decision-making drawing from Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* rather than simply *Being and Nothingness*. I will begin with a brief explanation of Sartre's account of freedom in *Being and Nothingness*. I will then show in section II how Andrew West uses Sartre's conception of radical freedom from *Being and Nothingness* for a managerial decision-making model. In the third section I will explore a more robust account of freedom from Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. I will attempt to show that freedom is not simply a matter of choosing (or not choosing) to perform an action, but entails external constraints—including other people. Finally, I will provide the implications of this account of freedom for managerial decision-making. I will show that it's unreasonable to place full responsibility and/or blame on managers given their constraints. This does not absolve them from responsibility, but better accounts for the way in which we ought to hold them responsible.

Introduction

The literature surrounding business ethics has been dominated by traditional ethical theories such as utilitarianism (shareholder theory) (See Friedman, 2006; Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2007), deontology (stakeholder theory) (See Freeman et al. 2004; Freeman 2006) and most recently, virtue ethics (common good) (See Mahon and McGowan, 1991; Sison 2007; O'Brien 2009). Even though existential thought (specifically, Jean-Paul Sartre) has not been at the forefront of business ethics discussions, it has not been entirely ignored (See Agarwal and Malloy, 2000; Ashman and Winstanley, 2006). There are many aspects of business ethics (e.g.,

corporate social responsibility, environmental ethics, globalization, etc.) where existentialism could be rather insightful, however, this paper will be limited to managerial decision-making. In this paper I will first show how the literature thus far has merely investigated a small portion of Sartrean philosophy—namely, his early works (e.g., *Being and Nothingness* (*BN* hereafter)) on radical freedom. Here, I will lay the groundwork of Sartre's early philosophy which includes clarifying terminology. In section two, I will show how business ethicists apply Sartre's existentialism to a decision-making model. It will be made apparent that focusing on a narrow understanding of *BN* will lead to placing limitless responsibility on managers. In the third section I will explore a more robust account of freedom from Sartre's later work, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (*CDR* hereafter). This will explore Sartre's conception of conditioned-freedom, that is, freedom in light of constraints. Finally, I will provide the implications for managerial decision-making by calling attention to Sartre's more complex notion of freedom in the *CDR*. Here, I will argue that it's unreasonable to place full responsibility on managers given their constraints. This should not be understood as absolving them of responsibility, but rather providing a more realistic account of responsibility that considers external factors, in addition to presenting a broader interpretation of Sartre. Finally, I will call on pledged groups as one way to fight the mistrust, and meet the basic needs of members, within a corporation.

I

Andrew West argues in favor of a Sartrean interpretation of freedom that primarily focuses on *BN*. West begins with a brief account of managerial decision-making. He says there are two broad categories—normative and positivist. The former prescribes how decision-making should occur in order to achieve morally satisfactory results. The latter, on the other hand, describes how decision-making occurs in practice in order to predict the most reliable moral

decision. West “proposes a decision-making model that is based on a single normative framework: the existential philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre” (2007, p. 17). He draws from primarily Sartre’s earlier works of *Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism is a Humanism*.

West, expounding on Sartre's conception of human beings, claims we are free to make any choice regardless of the situation. In explaining what it means to be free, West cites Sartre as claiming that "we are condemned to be free" (Sartre 1984, p. 186). There is no question this is Sartre's words, however, West never clarifies what this means.

In order to begin understanding this passage it is necessary to briefly examine the relevant sections of *BN*, beginning with Sartre's distinction between 'being in itself' and 'being for itself.' The former is nothing other than 'what it is' (Sartre 1984, p. 29). Thomas Anderson describes it as "being which contains no nonbeing, and its being is in itself, not part of, nor derived from, consciousness" (1993, p. 12). In other words, being is identical with the thing, and thus, has no nonbeing. Such entities include (but are not limited to) plants and inanimate objects insofar as they do not possess consciousness (non-being)—that is to say, in Sartre's terminology, they cannot negate the world. It is through negation (or nothingness), being for itself, that human beings are free. Sartre explains that "man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself...Freedom is precisely the nothingness which is *made-to-be* at the heart of man and which forces human-reality to *make itself* instead of *to be*" (Sartre's italics, 1984, p. 568). In other words, human beings are free because we are conscious beings that construct nothingness (for itself) rather than merely reduced to *being* (in itself).

Furthermore, Sartre explains that freedom cannot be analyzed in and of itself, but only in relation to 'facticity'. Simply put, facticity is what's there or given. Sartre identifies our bodies with facticity since it is just given to us. For example, a person, under her own power, cannot

jump over the Sears Tower or fly to a different location. That is, given our bodies, there are limits we cannot overcome—namely, leaping tall buildings in a single bound or flying. Sartre insists that "facticty is the only reality which freedom can discover, the only one which it can nihilate by the positing of an end...Thus, *freedom is the apprehension of my facticity*" (Sartre's italics, 1984, p. 635). In other words, in acknowledging my facticity (viz., my inability to leap tall buildings in a single bound), I am able to set new goals or projects (e.g., taking a taxi to my destination), and this becomes a manifestation of my freedom.

One may ask after examining our description of being in itself how human beings are always free, or put differently, condemned to be free. Sartre is adamant that human beings can transcend the world as it is given to us, and thus, strive to fulfill our goals and projects. By 'transcend,' I mean 'go beyond' or not be determined to follow the world as it is (or social conditions that have shaped us). One could take Sartre to be claiming that in virtue of being a human being, we can transcend any situation. Furthermore, because we can transcend every situation, we are completely responsible for all the decisions we could always do otherwise. Put differently, one may argue that Sartre claims we always have the ability to choose whether or not to perform an action, that is, even in not making a choice, we are still responsible for that lack of choice. Thus, we are condemned to be free insofar as no matter what actions we choose to perform or not perform, we were free to do so.

In order to understand the above account of freedom, consider the following example. Torrey, an employee of company A, is asked by her boss to search a co-worker's desk or run the risk of losing her job. It also happens to be the case that management has been looking to fire him for quite some time since his production is lower than his co-workers, and they believe there could be something hidden in his desk that would lead to his termination. Torrey is undoubtedly

in an extremely difficult position since she must search through a co-worker's desk unbeknownst to him or run the risk of being fired. Even if Torrey's family solely relies on her income, she could choose not to search her co-worker's desk.[1] However, that seems like a highly unlikely decision given the fact that this person will probably be fired in the near future anyway, and she will be fired too for not searching the desk—it's merely a matter of time. We can say she is *ontologically* free to say "no" to her boss since "this *nothing* is human reality itself as the radical negation by means of which the world is revealed" (Sartre's italics, 1984, p. 251).[2] Keep in mind, by 'nothingness,' Sartre is referring to freedom. In other words, recalling how nothingness and freedom coincide with one another, we can claim that human reality, according to Sartre, is freedom. Thus, Torrey is 'free' to disobey her boss insofar as she has the ability to transcend the situation being fully aware that she could lose her job, and not search through her co-worker's desk.

Finally, Kevin Jackson, following a Sartrean framework, points out that Torrey cannot opt out of a making a decision. Even if she is adamant that all her options are tragic, and thus chooses neither option, that in itself is a choice. Jackson writes that being placed in tragic dilemma does not preclude a person from choosing "how we are in those circumstances; for instance, what attitude to adopt with regard to our working at a job that we hate" (2005, p. 315). In other words, given that she is 'condemned to be free,' whether or not she chooses to search her co-worker's desk, she is fully responsible for that decision.

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[1] Even though this example may appear obviously wrong, it's not that simple. It goes without saying that one can be fired for many reasons and if she doesn't comply with this order, she will eventually be fired. Moreover, depending on the organization, it may be nearly impossible for her to contest the firing.

[2] Do not confuse the language of 'human reality' with 'human nature' since Sartre rejects the latter, meanwhile, using the former for explanatory purposes.

This example is complex and there are many socio-economic factors that are missing from the discussion. However, by focusing on Sartre's early works, Jackson is limited on the amount of resources Sartre dedicates to taking political determinations seriously. Anderson addresses this problem when he explains that for Sartre "determinations are only external, not internal, limits or restrictions on my freedom, because...my freedom...transcends every structure imposed on me" (1993, p. 23). An external restriction, recalling the above example, would be removing the desk since, then, it would no longer be possible to search the desk. There is no internal restriction, however, because that would result in limiting her choice to do otherwise. Even though Torrey must search the desk in order to support her family, she always has the option (i.e., no internal restriction) to transcend all social conditions (e.g., losing her job) in favor of performing the act she sees as correct.

The above statement—human beings are condemned to be free—may appear a bit far-fetched; it seems that we can consider various situations in which a person is far from free. For example, an enslaved person who is coerced into performing tasks bestowed upon him by his master seems to be far from free. However, one may point to *BN* to show how Sartre would handle such a charge. Sartre asserts that the "slave in chains is as free as his master" (1984, p. 703). This is a bold claim, and clearly Sartre understands that a slave is unable to perform many of the actions a master can. For example, Sartre notes that the slave will never be able to obtain a standard of living equivalent to the master. So, it cannot be the case that the slave, in virtue of being extremely limited, is as free as the master.

In order to make sense of such claims as "the slave is as free as his master," we need only recall the above account of freedom. Sartre claims in *BN* that there are no internal restrictions despite the possibility of infinite external restrictions. He asserts that "there is no privileged

situation...in which the *given* would crush beneath its weight the freedom which constitutes it as such—and that conversely there is no situation in which the for-itself would be *more free* than in others" (Sartre's italics, 1984, p. 702). There are two points to take from this claim. On the one hand, Sartre is acknowledging the pressures facticity can place on someone, perhaps, to the point where she feels unable to transcend a given situation, however, according to Sartre, the pressure is never strong enough to take away that possibility. On the other, in virtue of no for-itself being less free than any other, Sartre believes the slave can be as free as the master insofar as the slave (like the master) is able to put forth many meanings on his situation. For example, the slave has a chance to revolt or fight back; even though such actions may come with dire consequences, having at least the option to fight back allows the slave to maintain some freedom, and thus, personhood.

In sum, Sartre seems to put forth a limitless (and somewhat troubling) form of freedom in *BN*. Even though he acknowledges social conditions, he ultimately claims that we are able to transcend them. In the following section, I will show how this account of freedom has been used to advance arguments in managerial decision-making.

II

We can understand why a Sartrean conception of freedom may be appealing to some business ethicists—that is, it provides a framework to hold an individual wholly responsible for her actions. In order to do this, Sartrean business ethicists must make the connection between freedom and responsibility. The way in which they begin to do so is through explicating two key Satrean concepts—namely, 'bad faith' and 'authenticity.'

West, following Sartre, explains that bad faith (or 'self-deception') occurs when a person does "not recognize their freedom and responsibility and effectively abdicates from their

personal decision-making" (2008, p. 18). West claims that bad faith is often a result of the pressures one faces (e.g., a demanding boss or conniving co-worker). Likewise, Jackson maintains bad faith occurs when "we run away from acceptance of our freedom." Furthermore, he argues 'running away' entails affirming one part of character in order to "avoid the possibility of being different" (2005, pp. 314-5). For example, a person may claim she has the character trait of obedience, and thus, when a time arrives where she needs to not be obedient (e.g., when a boss asks her to do something immoral), she may just state "I've always been that way, so I can't change now." This, according to Jackson, is an instance of bad faith since she is deceiving herself into believing that she has no choice even though not choosing to act is still a choice. Finally, Robert Solomon makes a statement similar to West and Jackson when he says bad faith is a "refusal to take full responsibility for who one is and what one does. It is, in short, the making of *excuses*" (Solomon's italics, 2008, p. 11).[3] Recalling the example of Torrey being asked to search her co-worker's desk, Solomon would argue that if she deceived herself as to the reason she undertook the act, then she is in bad faith.

All three authors explain the importance of bad faith because it helps them make what they believe is the single, most important point from Sartre—namely, that we need to hold people fully responsible for their actions insofar as they freely choose to do X rather than ~X, where ~X was a *logical* possibility. It is possible that Torrey could have done otherwise; thus, we can hold her fully responsible for searching her co-worker's desk. They all seem to interpret Sartre as saying that while we may have no control over others actions, we are in complete control of ours, and thus, responsible for only those actions we perform. For one to be in bad faith then would be to reject one's ability to make decisions. It is based on this interpretation of

[3] Even though Robert Solomon is writing on Sartrean business ethics, he is a virtue ethicist using aspects Sartre to illustrate the importance of responsibility.

bad faith that leads them to a very limited scope of responsibility, that is, merely to the individual rather than all the social factors that may have contributed to the action(s). I find this reading problematic insofar as it does not account for the complexity of actions—for example, one may perform a given act out of desperation, and if circumstances were radically different, she may not have acted as such. I will make this objection more explicit in the following sections.

The corollary of bad faith is 'authenticity.' If a person is 'authentic,' then she is clearly aware of the "inevitability of our individual freedom as well as the associated responsibility for our own choices...its consequences, and the associated 'project'...while at the same time remaining available to alternatives" (West, 2008, p. 18). Authenticity, that is, occurs when an individual is aware that she is free to choose which action to (not) perform, and yet at the same time, acknowledging that she is limited by her facticity.

It is of note that not everyone has embraced the idea of highlighting authenticity, and for good reason. Sartre only makes reference to it once in *BN* and it is not even mentioned in *CDR*. Ashman and Winstanley briefly examine why we ought to not place emphasis on authenticity. First, they argue that "there is very little agreement among existentialists as to what counts as authentic" (2006, p. 226). I am sympathetic to this concern. We can certainly debate about what this entails, and, for example, if we should emphasize transcendence or facticity. However, I am not convinced that this means we ought to abandon the term altogether. We know that authenticity, on the one hand, is not bad faith, and, on the other, requires a negotiation between transcendence and facticity—one where we do not jettison either transcendence or facticity. In other words, authenticity is a useful term for managers insofar as we are committed to Sartre's ultimate goal of freedom. I believe Sartre's account of freedom can be captured through

authenticity since it highlights both the ways we are limited by facticity and what we are able to transcend.

Anticipating this objection, Ashman and Winstanley fear that an attempt to wed authenticity to a normative ethic will lead, as it did for Agarwal and Malloy, to "*ideal* character traits or the implication that some choices are not meaningful" (Ashman and Winstanley's italic, 2008, p. 226). If one concludes that Sartre is seeking an 'ideal' trait, then Ashman and Winstanley are correct that we ought to reject their understanding of Sartre. This interpretation, though, need not lead to such conclusions. I would argue that authenticity is not a 'state' of being, but an ongoing-process since there are always new barriers, and meanwhile, new opportunities for growth within those constraints. Meaningful decisions then are possible under this understanding of authenticity. I am not claiming their understanding of Sartre is non-existential because they do not emphasize authenticity; rather, they are existential insofar as they incorporate themes such as 'concreteness,' 'particularity' and 'freedom'. In common with Ashman and WInstanley, I want to highlight concreteness, particularity and freedom; in contrast, I wan to preserve the language of authenticity.

Let's consider the following scenario in order illustrate the following aspects of Sartre—radical freedom, authenticity and bad faith. A manger notices an employee has been late for work once a week for three consecutive weeks. After the third time, the woman explained she was tardy because of unforeseen circumstances with her children, and assured her boss that it would not happen again. However, he warned her after the third time that if she were late again, she will be fired; these were orders from upper-level management. Three months later the woman was late for work. The manager's boss had asserted to him that he must fire her now (or

else...) because she had been tardy for the fourth time. He claims that her lateness hurts production. At this point, the manager is faced with a question of whether or not to fire her.

There are two predominant reasons for him to fire her. First, he has a responsibility to follow his boss' orders, and if his boss says (after persistent pressure) it's time to fire her, then he is under great pressure to do so. Second, stemming from point one, if he chooses not to fire her because he is compassionate and understands her lateness, then he not only runs the risk of losing his job, but it is likely that she will still be fired anyway. After examining her situation in its entirety, the manager concludes that she should not be fired; he believes upper-level management is being too harsh, even though the company's policy on lateness had been clearly articulated to her and she agreed to abide by it. However, he also has a family to support and fears demotion (at least) and, at worst, his job. How much freedom does he have to not fire her?

The above existential business ethicists would all argue that the boss has a real choice to fire her or not. This point may seem obvious, but I call attention to it because it's worth noting that there are no internal or external restrictions preventing him from doing so. Making an authentic choice would entail choosing not to fire her, taking ownership of that choice and accepting the consequences that follow from it (i.e., knowing he will likely be demoted or lose his job). If he claimed that he was forced to fire her, or that he had no choice but to fire her, then he would be acting in bad faith since there were no constraints preventing him from acting one way or another. However, he would not be acting in bad faith if he fired her because he did not want to lose his job, and he is honest with himself about that; this.

West employs the early Sartrean conception of radical freedom to construct a six-step business decision-making model; this model can then be used by managers to help guide them to make the most authentic decision. He says if a model is to be Sartrean it must "advocate

freedom and its associated responsibility as the overriding ethical concerns" (2008, p. 18). His model, indeed, does just that. For now, I will only include the final step of the model because it sums up all six points.[4] West says in making a decision one must "proceed with the choice that best reflects my awareness of freedom, my acceptance of personal responsibility and is most consistent with the goals and projects that I freely choose" (2008, p. 20). Thus, West would argue that an authentic decision entails realizing how free the manager is, and taking ownership of his freedom to make the decision not to fire the woman.

Finally, following an ethic that gives little to no consideration to social conditions, it should not be surprising that the early Sartrean defenders also assume a highly individualistic ethic where all "relationships" are a matter of struggle. West addresses this issue when he says "Sartre viewed relationships with others as being defined by conflict, and one of his fictional characters claimed that 'Hell is other people'" (2008, p. 23). Furthermore, Anderson explains that the early Sartre believed others were an imposition insofar as "no matter what I do for another, even if I aid him, I necessarily 'violate' his freedom...because I inevitably limit it" (1993, p. 35). In other words, Sartre desired human beings to be completely free, and if anything or anyone limited freedom, then they were considered an obstacle. Furthermore, since others (among many social conditions) limit my freedom, they are, according to the early Sartre, met with hostility. Simply put, the early Sartre seems to be committed to an individual ethic where human relationships are nearly (if not completely) impossible, and applying this to business, managers cannot make decisions based on others' desires or even receive feedback that will influence their decision because she would no longer be fully expressing her freedom.

[4] I will include all six steps to West's Sartrean business decision-making model in the fourth section. At that point, we will have the opportunity to examine it in light of Sartre's later works.

While I sympathetic to the early Sartrean proponents' solution to the above example—namely, the manager should not fire the tardy woman—I believe their means of achieving it ignore several factors. I would argue that he is not as free to make the decision to fire her as they claim. He has obligations both at work and home. Furthermore, even if he chooses not to fire her, he will likely feel very uncomfortable with his decision. In the following section I would like to explore the later Sartre's conception of freedom; in doing so, it will be apparent that Sartre places greater emphasis on social conditions insofar as they play a larger role in our decision-making process. This, in turn, will raise interesting questions about managerial decision-making in section IV.

III

This section will consist of two parts. First, I will examine Sartre's conception of freedom in the *CDR*, and juxtapose it with the account of freedom described in *BN*. Anderson claims the goals differ between *BN* and *CDR*; the former strives for freedom and the latter for integral humanity (1993, pp. 94-5). It is of note that I am not arguing we should abandon all Sartrean applications that emphasize Sartre's early works. I want to illustrate the ways in which the *CDR* offers us resources that differ from *BN* for managerial decision-making. Second, I will briefly address Sartre's notion of 'reciprocity.' This will help illustrate that Sartre's ethics are not merely individualistic, but also accounts for social aspects.

The *CDR* and its preface, *Search for a Method* (*SM* hereafter), are later works where Sartre gives more credence to conditioned freedom while remaining consistent that human beings can transcend such limitations. Following Marx, Sartre situates individuals and classes within a given historical and social context, which has been shaped by the actions of those that came before them. However, one should not reduce Sartre to Marxism since the former does not

embrace the determinism of the latter. Sartre is still engaged in a phenomenologically-existential project where we begin with an individual's freedom and subjectivity. Nonetheless, it is the concretization of the individual that contributes greatly to Sartre's *SM* and *CDR*.

Sartre succinctly writes in *SM* that human actions cut "across the social milieu while still holding on to its determinations, and which transforms the world on the basis of given conditions. For us man is characterized above all by going beyond a situation" (1963, p. 91). I believe this best represents his commitment to pure freedom from *BN* and yet showing the direction he is moving towards in the *CDR*—namely, taking the limits and conditions of freedom seriously.

Sartre explains in *SM* that the "individual is conditioned by the social environment and that he turns back upon it to condition it in turn; it is this—and nothing else—which makes his reality" (1963, p. 71). This claim is significant because Sartre is acknowledging that human beings are concretized—that is to say, we are social beings engaged in a world that, on the hand, has an influence on the actions we perform, and yet, on the other, 'ultimately' having the choice to reject living our lives according to our environment. I recognize the term 'ultimately' may be contentious insofar as it is not always clear that other options are available. The quote from *SM* immediately above indicates Sartre's belief that human beings are always confronted with obstacles (or anything that limits our freedom). Even a person who maintains he lives a non-alienating life will encounter numerous obstacles (e.g., class, others and work).

This section thus far has discussed how *SM* addresses the limitations of freedom. Freedom, according to Sartre, is not simply a matter of choice. Consider Sartre's example. He writes of a Dop shampoo worker who is completely reduced to her labor since her job has led to the "material impossibilities...of eating properly, of buying shoes...and of satisfying her modest

needs" (2004, p. 232). The worker, in some mundane sense, is 'free' enough to purchase one pair of shoes over another or satisfy one need (e.g., buying a winter coat), but restricts her from fulfilling another need (e.g., purchasing winter gloves). However, the question remains: how free is she? To this, Sartre replies that she is forced to "live a prefabricated destiny as *her reality"* (Sartre's italics, 2004, p. 233). In other words, the factory dictates the way in which she leads her life insofar as she is limited in the goods she can purchase, opportunity to find meaningful work and pressures to follow societal standards.

In the *CDR*, Sartre explains that while all human beings are free, they are never free without encountering matter. That is to say, freedom only happens in the context of that which is attempting to limit it. Sartre calls this the “practico-inert” (or “worked-matter”)—a combination of praxis and inertia, that is, in virtue of the praxis being concretized, it is created by us. Praxis, in brief, is a person's ability to make a free choice, but that choice (unlike *BN*) is always limited depending on the given situation. The inert, on the other hand, is the givenness. In the Dop shampoo example, her praxis is the decision to purchase certain goods despite being limited in what she can buy (in addition to her experience of work as destiny), and the inert includes market forces and societal pressures. The worker cannot control the fact that inertia exists, however, she can attempt to transcend it.

Recall section I's distinction between being-for itself and being-in itself in *BN*; Sartre provides a similar interaction in the *CDR* between praxis and inertia. Specifically, the practico-inert is praxis working on, in and though the inert. Robert Birt describes the practico-inert as "our freedom exteriorized...It generates a forceful experience of alienation, in which the action of a person returns to him in the form of Other" (1986, p. 296). Consider a volleyball game. A player expresses her freedom by serving the ball over the net. Her praxis is inverted (i.e., given

back to her in another form) by the way in which the opposing team handles the serve. The server now scrambles to play defense in order to prepare herself for the ball to be returned. In Sartre's terminology, the server's praxis becomes inert in the form of the volleyball being returned by the opposing team, in addition to all the rules of the game the players are following. On one level, her praxis (serving the volleyball) creates inertia (receiving the volleyball). On another, it is a bit more complicated—that is, it is also inertia that makes the praxis possible and intelligible. The ball has physical properties (e.g., mass, elasticity and shape) that make it possible for her to control (within limit) the velocity of the ball as she serves it. And insofar as the other players work with the same set of properties, and within the known rules of the game, even the return of the serve is not experienced as simple inertia, but has her own praxis still within it (although, it is altered). This example shows how praxis and being-for itself and inertia and being-in itself are closely related.

One may question, given the factory worker example, whether the latter Sartre believes that one's choices in the world have diminished. William McBride correctly answers "no". He says Sartre "has not repudiated either his earlier view that to be human is to be free...or his commitment to human liberation as a supreme and open-ended goal" (p. 149). Whether we analyze the shampoo worker from the perspective of *BN* or the *CDR*, we can understand the ways in which she strives for liberation, however, the latter helps us better account for how such choices are minimal to living a satisfactory life. It is not as if she has fewer choices, but her choices are (strongly) influenced by external circumstances such that the options she chooses from may be unsatisfactory or not conducive to living-well. In other words, the Dop Shampoo example is meant to illustrate that the process of capitalist exploitation conditions the woman's praxis such that, no matter what she chooses, the outcome will always lead to her increased

vulnerability and dependence upon the very process that continuously inverts her praxis. This is the way in which it turns her freedom against herself.

Now that we've examined Sartre's conception of individual freedom in the *CDR*, I would also like to call our attention to 'reciprocity' in the same work. Like freedom, reciprocity will reveal problems of focusing merely on Sartre's early works. As will be made apparent, the latter Sartre argues true freedom only occurs within groups.

Before I begin my discussion of reciprocity, I would like to clarify the process upon which Sartre believes pledged groups are formed—from a series to a group, and group to a pledged group. First, a 'series' occurs when a collective forms around of a common object. There is no common unity between the members of a series, and thus, they are loosely connected and short-lived. Consider Sartre's example. A bus arrives at the same time nearly every day. Insofar as everyone is waiting for the common object (viz., the bus) to arrive, they are all, in some sense, bonded. However, they a have not formed a common bond. Second, if the members of a series become united around a common struggle, they form a group. A 'group,' according to Sartre, forms "to the extent that they have a *common interest*...though separated as organic individuals, they share a structure of their practico-inert being, and it unites them from outside" (Sartre's italics, 2004, pp. 258-9). Recalling Sartre's example, the people waiting at the bus stop would form a group because they need to unite around a common cause (e.g., consistent lateness of the busses). It is most effective to fight for the cause together because they share the same practico-inert mediation—namely, the city or county. Members of the group still see others in the group qua others, but they recognize that they need one another in order to accomplish their goals most effectively. Thus, it is more effective for them to all march into city hall together to show how disgruntled they are from the busses arriving late rather than merely one person who

appears to be venting. Finally, a 'pledged group' arises out of a group; this happens when "freedom becomes common *praxis* and grounds the permanence of the group by producing its own inertia through itself and in mediated reciprocity" (Sartre's italics, 2004, p. 419). Like a group, a pledged group remains united around a common cause, but the latter makes an oath with one another. They take a vow that all actions work towards the common objective of the pledged group; thus, they all decisions will hopefully be conducive for the pledged group's permanence. Furthermore, Sartre claims that a pledged group is not simply an arbitrary group that appears to have a closer relationship than a group, but a new ontological status has been created. Individuals remain ontologically distinct, but they "consent to the group relationship and agree to maintain their common praxis" (1993, p. 98).

Violence, according to Sartre, holds the group together. David Detmer explains that "under conditions of scarcity the group is (often) formed only as a result of an external threat of violence" (p. 203). By 'scarcity,' he is referring to lack of material resources to meet one's basic needs. Sartre says violence does not have to be "massacres, imprisonment or any visible use of force...It merely means that the relations of production are established and pursued in a climate of fear and mutual mistrust" (1993, p. 149). Violence plays a two-fold role for the pledged group. On the one hand, it serves as a deterrent to prevent group members from undermining the group, and, on the other, it continuously instills fear that if the group dissolves, then they will succumb to what they are fighting against. This, in turn, will ultimately hinder their pursuit of freedom. Whether or not violence is necessary for a pledged group is a great debate. However, it is beyond the scope of the paper to argue the necessity (or lack thereof) of violence within a

pledged group, but from this brief discussion we can see the importance of a pledged group.[5] That is, it provides a space to address an attitude of mistrust in a place where scarcity of jobs (and thus, unemployment) is working against the worker. A pledged group would have less fear of others attempting to take advantage of them because they would now be committed to fighting the same causes. We can also see how in virtue being a member of a pledged group, my freedom is conditioned by others, and vice-verse, insofar as achieving projects and goals cannot be simply an individual endeavor. Of course, a pledged will not eliminate fear and mistrust, not to mention scarcity, but it will begin to provide the conditions for them to realize their mutually-desired goals. Thus, I believe following Sartre that if we are committed to the freedom of all, then we ought to form pledged groups.

Even though I have provided a linear model beginning with a series and ending with a pledged group, Sartre argues that such a conception of group-formation is mistaken. More often than not, a series will dissolve into mere individuals rather than a group. Since there is nothing holding the group together besides an external object, the group can dissolve for reasons as simple as changing the bus route. Thus, Sartre argues that the relationship between these collectives should be understood as a process—that is, a group may become a series and a series may, under the right conditions, re-emerge as a group. Furthermore, a pledged group may become a group or series (depending on the situation) or dissolve into individuals. Sartre, however, claims that it should be more difficult for a pledged group to become a group or series for two reasons: first, members of the pledged group make a reciprocal commitment to one another, and second, a pledged group member is willing to give everything one has for others in trusting they would do the same for oneself (2004, p. 427).

[5] For further discussion on Sartre and violence see Detmer (2008, pp. 198-211), Monahan (2008) and Santoni (2003).

One point worth briefly developing from a pledged group is Sartre's notion of 'reciprocity' (or mutual recognition) since this illustrates why I believe Sartre's ethic is not solely individualistic. Sartre maintains that a 'self' is socially constructed, and recognition is the basis upon which a self is formed since it is the foundation for all relationships. Simply put, recognition is the process by which an individual A recognizes (or affirms) B as such (e.g., their gender, class, etc.). I do not say 'process' because the act of recognition happens continuously (although that is certainly the case), but rather because the recognizer and recognizee are always changing as persons (e.g., their relationship or goals).[6] Sartre provides two roles for recognition within a pledged group: first, one recognizing one's own freedom through the freedom of other pledged group members and second, it affirms the membership of the group (2004, p. 435).

Sartre explains that mutual recognition is a process by which "my *praxis* appears to me not only as myself...but also as myself approaching me through my neighbour and myself" (2004, p. 392). Notice the emphasis on praxis (or freedom). In other words, reciprocity entails recognizing my free actions through another, and also another recognizing her free actions through me. Recognition is not simply acknowledging an individual's presence, but acknowledging them as a *free* subject—which entails respecting their projects, goals and ambitions within the context of the group. Sartre writes that a group, on the one hand, is the most effective means of controlling material resources in a milieu of scarcity, and, on the other, "the absolute end as pure freedom liberating men from alterity" and by 'alterity,' Sartre simply means 'otherness' (Sartre's italics, 2004, p. 673). It is through mutual recognition, then, where one has the possibility to be liberated.

[6] For further discussion on recognition as a process see Monahan, 2006 and Heter, 2006.

One may ask how reciprocity is possible in *BN* since Sartre claims that others are always objectifying me—that is, I'm viewed as an object who limits another's freedom rather than a free subject. It may be a bit of a stretch to say that reciprocity is impossible, but nonetheless, those who only focus on *BN* may understand relationships differently from those who study both the early and later works of Sartre. West claims that Sartre views relationships as purely conflicting, and thus individualistic. However, West grants briefly that a pledged group "reflects [Sartre's] movement away from a purely individualistic view of humanity and ethics. This therefore could be seen as a valid criticism, but one which may at least be partly remedied" (2008, pp. 23-4). West is correct that a pledged group provides a space for relationships to be other than conflicting. However, he (1) fails to develop the notion of a pledged group and (2) never provides a remedy by ignoring a pledged group. I believe that part of West's problem is that by focusing merely on *BN*, he is unable to see the importance others play in achieving freedom. This does not mean we ought to completely abandon West's insights. In the following section, I will provide an account of freedom from the *CDR* that offers managers a new way of thinking about freedom and responsibility that is not solely individualistic.

IV

The previous section provided a theoretical framework of the latter Sartre in order to problematize the managerial decision-making method founded on *BN*. In this section I will first explain the limitations of West's managerial decision-making model. Then, I will show how focusing on the *CDR* provides a superior managerial decision-maker insofar as it (1) describes actual managerial-decision making more accurately and (2) provides guidance for managers that is more conducive to reciprocity than *BN*.

West provides the following six-step managerial decision-making model: (1) acknowledge and identify my freedom to act, (2) accept responsibility for my action, (3) consider prior choices, projects and goals, (4) consider pressures and expectations of others, (5) consider practical constraints of the situation and (6) choose the action that best reflects my awareness of freedom, my acceptance of personal responsibility and is most consistent with the goals I've chosen freely (2008, pp. 21-2). I will now examine (1), (2), (4) and (5) since they best highlight the importance of paying attention to the *CDR*.

Beginning with West's first step—identify my freedom to act—we see the emphasis from *BN*. West believes a manager is free to act in any way she desires. However, managers may not have as much freedom to act as West argues. It's worth mentioning that Sartre never rejects the importance of freedom in *CDR*, but rather understands its limitations. What does this mean for managerial decision-making? Managers need to acknowledge which options are truly options. Just because one can perform an action does not make it a viable choice. If a manager is asked to fire someone or else she will lose her job—at what point is she responsible for the decision to fire or lose her job? The questions of responsibility can only be answered in terms of freedom.

In virtue of West's commitment to Sartre's radical freedom, he places full responsibility on managers because they freely chose to perform a particular action. I would agree that the manager above did freely choose to either fire the person or lose her job, but the latter claim (i.e., lose her job) deserves further attention. Assuming the manager enjoys her job, works extremely hard and is well-respected by her co-workers, is it possible to say that she chose to be fired? This would be rather odd. Regardless of the decision, her praxis will be given back to her in an altered form. If she chooses to fire her co-worker, she will likely lose respect from other co-workers and feel terrible for her decision. Thus, in making a decision, is it as simple as firing

someone or losing your job? And, if these are the only options, then how accountable can we hold this manager? West seems to believe that such a manager would be fully responsible since "he is faced with free choice and must face up to this. Consequently, he should not allow another person to make the decision for him" (2008, p. 21). There seems to be two problems with this claim. First, if by 'fully responsible' we mean that no one bears the burden for the decision but the manager, as West maintains, then this cannot be the case. There are many factors that led to the firing of the employee. For example, since the manager has basic needs to be met, then keeping her job to meet those needs certainly influenced the firing. This does not even begin to address the complex relationships at the workplace that too may contribute to the firing. Second, no one argues that someone is making the decision for the manager, however, a manager may be given a tragic dilemma that is outside her control. Thus, until this point, West has neither given external constraints full consideration nor has he gotten past the fact that responsibility need not be an either/or—either fully responsible or not.

Given the various constraints a manager must encounter, West admits, in his fourth step of a managerial decision-making model, that such constraints cannot go unnoticed. He says a manager must admit to the pressures and expectations of others. Following the latter Sartre, I could not agree more. For example, he says we must consider constraints such as professional codes and local codes of conduct and customs. Consider an American based multinational corporation that has a company in India. In India, it is custom for companies to hire children of their employees once they have completed a particular level of schooling. Thomas Donaldson explains that this custom "reflects Indian culture's belief that the West has gone too far in allowing economic opportunities to break up families" (1996, p. 56). There may be questions as

to whether this practice should be upheld, but that is not within the scope of this discussion. I raise this example in order to illustrate the difficulties external constraints place on managers.

Even though West grants the existence of external constraints, he seems to ignore its influence when he qualifies (or more strongly, 'nullifies') his fourth step by explaining,

> "in making an 'authentic' decision...his choice of action is shaped by his own choices of his personal projects and goals, and is not unduly influenced by these external pressures...no matter how forceful these pressures may be, Sam must be aware that he can reject them" (2008, p. 21).

I question how serious West takes this fourth step considering the qualification. I would expect him to make such claims when explaining steps one or two, but doing so here shows his commitment to a thin conception of freedom—freedom with constraints. As West claims, there is no force that a manager cannot reject. In one sense, this may be true insofar as she could always do otherwise. However, in another sense, this may be incomprehensible since her options may entail such harsh consequences (e.g., loss of self-worth) that they are not truly viable options.

Furthermore, I contend given West's commitment to a thin conception of freedom, he is unable to articulate the complexities involved in making an authentic choice. Keep in mind, West claims that the fifth step of an authentic decision entails giving consideration to the 'practical constraints' of a situation. Here, he says "we operate as the facticity of the situation [which] includes the limiting factors placed on us by our physical characteristics, time, and place" (p. 20). In other words, we are 'free to do as we wish' except by a few limitations—namely, our bodies and spatio-temporal location. I do not deny any of these features as viable forms of facticity, but this seems to oversimplify the interplay between facticity and freedom, and thus, ultimately bad faith and authenticity.

I noted in the first section that Sartre says in *BN* that 'freedom is the apprehension of facticity'. There are two implications to seeing this in light of the socially-situated self in the *CDR*. First, we are better able to identify the ways in which one is harmed. For example, by claiming an individual is not merely freedom, but a socially-situated agent that pursues freedom, we can claim that not fulfilling basic needs (e.g., hunger) that constitutes an agent, is harmful. Second, we will be able to better address those harms. Pledged groups, perhaps, will offer the resources to fight for a livable wage since attempting to do so individually is an insurmountable task. That is, we must recognize that others (and their freedom) are essential to attaining our own projects or goals (and ultimately, freedom). Detmer sums up the importance of including invaluable insights from the *CDR* without jettisoning *BN* when he says "the early Sartre focuses on the need to make good choices within our situation, the later Sartre, without taking that back, stresses the need to bring about better situations—situations that will present us with much better options" (p. 214). I am in agreement with Detmer that there seems to be an ontological priority shift from the individual (in *BN*) to the group (in the *CDR*).

I believe we are now in a better position to make authentic choices because we have considered the complexity of facticity that is not simply the body. Detmer draws on a distinction from Sartre's *Notebooks for an Ethics* between 'accessory reflection' and 'purifying reflection' to make this point. The former, on the one hand, takes our "fundamental ends" as given, and will overlook the means to which we must achieve them (e.g., relationships), the latter, on the other hand, focuses on fundamental ends, but does so in a way that calls "them into question, revealing them not to be necessary or inevitable, but rather as optional" (p. 139). Detmer states that this is an exercise in authenticity. While both West and I would agree with this account of authenticity, I believe it is through properly identifying the multi-layered facticity (e.g., our needs, relations

and social-circumstances writ large) that allows us to correctly call our ends into question or see them as optional.

We can now begin to see the upshot of the *CDR*. West is correct that the manager remains free, but only as long as the manager approaches the problem strictly from the individual level; here, he will be powerless to change the conditions under which he makes his choices. I believe this is why the Sartre of the *CDR* can be a bit more illuminatory insofar as he turns to group praxis and a more political conception of freedom. The ontological freedom to which we are all condemned is still a real and present force in the later Sartre. The main difference is that group praxis opens up the possibility of turning my freedom toward the project of changing the material and social conditions within which I make my choices. Having said that, it is still the case that if the manager fires the employee, but wishes he did not have to, and claims he was 'forced' to do so, he is in bad faith.

My critique is not meant to create an illusion that all managerial decisions are tragic dilemmas. Contrary to West, though, I believe all decisions will also include constraints, that is, factors that dictate a situation, but not necessarily prevent it from occurring. Some constraints have more influences on decisions than others, but nonetheless, they are always present. If West is interested in addressing the most realistic ways in which managers make decisions, then he must take external forces more seriously. Furthermore, the role constraints have on personal responsibility is not an all-or-nothing affair.

I believe part of the difficulty with placing responsibility on a manager, given their freedom, stems from a commitment to dualities. That is, many people want to argue that we are *either* free *or* not free or we are fully responsible for our actions *or* we are not. However, Sartre would reject such dichotomies—this is most apparent in the *CDR*. For example, as I mentioned

last section, human beings are socially constructed, and thus, always in process. Furthermore, reciprocity (which Sartre maintains is necessary to be free) is a process. Because we are always changing—that is, never fixed—we cannot be merely X or Y at a specific time. A feature of being in process is granting that we do not have fixed identities or relationships. Michael Monahan captures this when he writes that "recognition...must be understood as an always *incomplete process*, and not as something one accomplishes...It is not a static state, but a *manifestation* of a continuous process" (Monahan's italics, 2006, p. 406).[7] Dichotomies, on the other hand, require static states—either a person is X or ~X—which Sartre rejects. Thus, to hold one fully responsible because one is fully free is not only very difficult to comprehend, but it is not Sartrean.

One may ask, after rejecting the freedom and responsibility dichotomies, whether to concede that we no longer are able to hold managers responsible? To this, I answer with an emphatic, "No"! A 'yes' to this question would entail managers having no choice in the decisions they make, but this is clearly false given the Sartrean framework. They are in fact still responsible for their actions, even according to the latter Sartre, because the "specific nature that unites us...is freedom" (2004, p. 437). He is merely alluding to his belief that all human beings are free—despite all the qualifications associated with what it means to be free given one's situation. Thus, we hold managers responsible insofar as they share in the freedom to choose that action. Let's recall the example from section II. The manager in this example is certainly responsible for firing the tardy woman, but that doesn't necessarily mean we ought to blame him for his decision or even hold him fully responsible for his decision. In further examining why he had to fire her, it is a combination of his boss' unforgiving personality and the woman arriving

[7] It's worth noting that Monahan is writing specifically on Hegelian recognition, but it applies in the same way as Sartre's reciprocity. See Heter, 2008, ch. 4 and 8.

late for work. We may hold the manager partly responsible, but that does not mean we should blame him, given the conditions in which he was making the choice.

One may criticize my analysis as incomplete since I do not provide a framework guiding managers to choose the best action. Doing so runs the risk of lapsing Sartrean ethics into a utilitarian or deontological generalization. However, as Ashman and Winstanley argue correctly, an existential, and ultimately, Sartrean, ethic must emphasize "the concrete and particular over the abstract and general" (2006, p. 218). Sartre consistently rejects the idea that ethics should be algorithmic—that is, if X arises, then do Y. West does not explicitly provide an algorithmic ethic, his decision-making model is constructed in such a way that an individual will feel she needs to perform the action that makes her feel most free. In other words, if the action makes a person feel most free and is in line with her projects, then she should perform that action. Such an argument may appear too rigid for Sartre. Freedom no doubt is the ultimate foundation of all value for Sartre, and thus, his ethics of freedom insists that we commit ourselves to the freedom of all. Furthermore, even though it is not algorithmic, it can rule out some actions and commit us to others—namely, those that promote the freedom of ourselves and others. However, to provide a simple action-guidance chart to follow, it would undermine the ability for an agent to fully realize her freedom since the actions would be already be dictated for her.

I believe there are three normative implications of note that the CDR offers managerial decision-making. West, following Sartre, is right that we are responsible for our actions, but this does not mean we are free from all constraints. First, if the goal is to be free, and freedom for oneself entails the freedom of others, then one is more likely to work in conjunction with others to achieve this goal. That is to say, a manager takes others in the company not as obstacles, but as opportunities for personal growth and communal reciprocity. Joseph Catalano sums this up

well when he says "*Sartre is always considering the group insofar as its original purpose is to give greater freedom to each individual*" (his italics, 1986, p. 185). This could have positive implications insofar as mangers would often consult others for their opinion, which helps avoid being myopic, and may also lead to further trust between manager and her employees.

Second, because others are no longer considered obstacles, managers would no longer need to bear the full burden of responsibility for every decision they made. West, following Sartre is correct that everyone must accept responsibility for their actions. However, if a manager places all burdens of responsibility purely on herself, then it will be difficult for her to make decisions. In Sartre's terminology, one could make a case that she is acting in bad faith since she is not acknowledging her facticity—e.g., having to follow orders from above and being respected by those who work under her. The manager can still take responsibility for the choice she makes (thus, remaining true to Sartre), however, responsibility for that decision would be shared amongst the group.

Finally, the analysis in *CDR* implies certain Marxist economic commitments. Managers, for example, must strive to provide conditions for their workers to reduce alienation in the workplace. Alienation for Sartre is intimately connected to scarcity since the latter, as noted above, tends to put people in conflict; thus, causing further alienation. One way Sartre believed one responds to this is through a pledged group. Here, the group can unite under a common goal—even though it may be held together through violence—to fight the individualism so prominent in capitalism. Even in a classless society, we may never be able to fully abolish alienation, according to Sartre. Thus, it appears that managers should do all they can to fight alienation in the workplace.

I find these three normative implications of the *CDR*—managers sharing responsibility, managers seeing others as a means to freedom and Marxist economic commitments—to be background conditions that we are not forced to perform actions, and thus, lack freedom. This, above all else, would be anti-Sartrean. However, I believe they are insightful enough to provide some guidance for managerial decision-making. If a manager follows either West's decision-making model or the guidance I provided from the *CDR*, she will be committed to freedom. I have shown the latter provides alternatives not found in West.

V

In conclusion, I have shown how Sartre's latter works present a different model for managerial decision-making than his early works. Those who focus merely on *BN* maintain human beings are radically free (i.e., we can overcome any external circumstances when deciding which action to perform), and thus, assume full responsibility for their actions. However, as I have shown, this argument does not consider the force of constraints. Furthermore, the *CDR* also dispels the notion that Sartre puts forth merely a radically individualistic ethic—that is, where all relationships are conflicting. He argues that in a pledged group, where reciprocity has the ability to flourish, relationships can develop and one is most free. Proponents of the early Sartre are correct to highlight the importance of freedom—and I find it more attractive than the purely algorithmic ethics from utilitarianism and deontology—however, by incorporating the *CDR*, I have shown the importance of not freedom per se, but conditioned freedom. It is through pledged groups, for example, that members can fight to meet basic needs, and battle the mistrust that often infiltrates groups.

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