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Fraternity-without-Terror: A Sartrean Account of Political Solidarity

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses Sartre's conflicting interpretations of human relationality in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and *Hope Now* in order to demonstrate two things. First, that the social dynamics leading to the formation of what Sartre calls "fused groups" and "fraternity-terror" are still at play in current manifestations of exclusionary and antagonistic conceptions of identity politics, which we contend constitute a risk for contemporary democracy. Second, that an alternative conception of "fraternity-without-terror", whose foundations can be found in Sartre's latest reflections upon the possibility of a normative ethics of reciprocity, can pave the ground to a fairer model of political solidarity.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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1. Introduction

In recent times, the notion of solidarity has attracted renewed interest among scholars working in a variety of fields—from political philosophy and theory to the social sciences including economics.¹ Although solidarity is often referred to as a general principle which can unite people and institutions transnationally or even globally,² its intellectual origins lie firmly in the European political tradition. Its emergence dates back to the French revolutionary age, when a new conception of equal and reciprocal collaboration among peers attained unheard-of importance in social and political life.³ The experience of the revolution and the subsequent development of social movements throughout the nineteenth century showed how social aid can be provided *horizontally* (among people sharing the same burdens and struggling for the same goals) rather than *vertically* (through the charity of the wealthier classes towards the poorer ones). This horizontal relationship among peers, based on shared political ideas and risks, acquired several

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¹ See Brunkhorst, *Solidarity*; Scholz, *Political Solidarity*; Kolers, *Moral Theory of Solidarity*; Banting & Kymlicka, *The Strains of Commitment*.

² See Gould, "Transnational Solidarities"; Lenard, Straehle, Ypi, "Global Solidarity"; Wilde, *Global Solidarity*.

³ See Wildt, *Solidarity: Its History and Contemporary Definition*.

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names. In the French context, the notion of *fraternité*, which was pivotal during the complex unfolding of the revolution, was gradually superseded throughout the nineteenth century by that of *solidarité*. Various interpreters have attempted to explain the transition by referring to the narrower character of fraternity, which invariably speaks to some form of blood bond, compared to the (to some extent weaker) character of solidarity. While fraternity is therefore more tightly bound to the biological realm,⁴ solidarity seems to belong to the social and political world.⁵

The transition from fraternity to solidarity was neither simple nor complete. But such attempts were made, notably by utopian-socialist thinkers (for example, Saint-Simon and Proudhon), to expand the fraternal bonds among members of a same social group as a way to counter the growing social inequalities and injustices. These authors advocated revising the normative principle of fraternity to make it a broader (or even universal) principle. Such attempts were countered by those who reaffirmed a narrower, prepolitical conception of fraternity grounded more in blood and family bonds than in any rational political stance. Even nowadays, advocates of this narrower, biological, and prepolitical idea of fraternity⁶ coexist with advocates of placing the idea at the centre of the public sphere in the form of a broad and inclusive political solidarity.⁷

An author who we believe deserves to be included in this debate but is not often mentioned is Jean-Paul Sartre. In at least two phases of his philosophical career, Sartre devised two conceptions of fraternity which we contend can be used as models to rethink contemporary manifestations of political solidarity. Although Sartre never developed a proper theory of solidarity, his double account of fraternity in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and in *Hope Now* provides unique insight into solidarity and the problems that its establishment and maintenance may entail. Our objective in this article is to demonstrate that Sartre's analysis in *Hope Now* can support arguments for a normative conception of political solidarity in today's socio-political context. We will characterize the theoretical core which underpins this conception as Fraternity-without-Terror to mark its contrast with Sartre's earlier interpretations of solidarity as Fraternity-Terror. At the same time, looking at Sartre's account of the role of Fraternity-Terror in the development of so-called fused groups, which is central in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, will allow us to shine a spotlight on the risks that the establishment of solidaristic bonds may entail whenever the grounds for these bonds are not a universal form of recognition (as suggested in *Hope Now*) but antagonistic and exclusionary ideologies. While dealing with *Hope Now*, we will discuss the reasons behind the shift in the concept of fraternity and its significance in Sartre's oeuvre. While some, notably Beauvoir, have deemed *Hope Now* controversial, we contend that by situating it within the context of Sartre's posthumously published writings from the 1940s, numerous ethical themes – such as generosity and the prospect of ethical relationships between individuals – which were always pivotal to Sartre's thinking, can be discerned.

The article develops as follows. In section 2, we will analyse the fundamental difference, according to Sartre, between seriality and fraternity. This will allow us to

⁴ See Musso, "La solidarité: généalogie d'un concept sociologique".

⁵ See also Chaniel, *La sociologie comme philosophie politique et réciproquement*; Gianni, "The Democratization of Solidarity through Science (in Europe and Beyond)".

⁶ See, for instance, Scruton, "Solidarity: Unity or Diversity?".

⁷ See, in particular, Habermas, "Justice and Solidarity: On the Discussion concerning Stage 6".

characterize, in section 3, the emergence of fused groups as a radical attempt by the members of a group to break free from seriality and create a genuine connection.⁸ We will also discuss the process of degeneration of this group into a statutory group and an organized group, which corresponds to a progressive institutionalization of the group starting with an oath among the members of what was initially a spontaneous group of people. In the transition from the fused group to the later forms of degeneration, a Fraternity-Terror is established, characterized by the fact that the bond between members becomes unbreakable, at the cost of the members' survival. In section 4, we will highlight the new approach to fraternity as it emerges in *Hope Now*, and we will explain how this can be used to pave the way to a normative conception of political solidarity.

2. Fraternity and Seriality

As already mentioned, Sartre presents the theme of fraternity in the first volume of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. In this book, Sartre attempts to reconcile his Marxist perspective with the idea that individual and collective *praxis* can play an essential role in history, i.e. that, beyond any temptation to interpret history in a deterministic manner, human beings are historical agents who undergo the situation at the same time as they contribute to creating it. After devoting his philosophical interest to individual action in *Being and Nothingness*, in the *Critique* Sartre outlines how collectives function and how it is possible to speak of common action based on fraternity. In reality, as we shall see, this possibility of acting together is reserved for rare moments in history, because in most cases individuals remain in a condition of seriality, namely in a relationship of separation and disinterest with respect to others. In this context, everyone within an assemblage (such as a social class or any crowd) pursues their own objectives without participating in a collective project capable of being a driving force for social change. Overcoming this initial condition, and establishing real relations of fraternity, is therefore very difficult. The condition of seriality, in this sense, occupies a widespread space like the conduct of bad faith in *Being and Nothingness*.

The example he gives to describe this kind of assemblage is a group of people in Place Saint-Germain in Paris waiting for a bus: "We are concerned here with a plurality of isolations: these people do not care about or speak to each other and, in general, they do not look at one another."⁹ Yet, despite the circumstances, these people form a unit which looks, at least at first sight, relatively solid and stable. One may therefore get the impression that this form of seriality represents a genuine instance of fraternity or solidarity. After all, all the people involved in this relationship are performing the same action in order to achieve a specific purpose (that is, catching the bus), which is typically seen as one of the main traits of a solidaristic practice. However, when people find themselves in a condition of seriality, although there are valid grounds to assume that they are standing together and effectively supporting each other—for example, because they belong to the same social class or because they are collectively producing some good—

⁸ We use the expression "fused group" to describe what Sartre calls "*groupe en fusion*". The original French expression better attests to the fact that the group is in a process of totalisation rather than a realised totality. We are thankful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this important aspect.

⁹ Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 256.

they are not establishing any genuine solidaristic relationship. In fact, for Sartre, they live in a state of complete atomization. They seem to be united, but in reality, their proximity is completely fortuitous insofar as it is not grounded in any real commitment and shared motivation.

In discussing the notion of seriality, Sartre wants to squelch any attempt to disguise detached and impersonal participation as genuine solidarity. His main critical focus here is the bourgeois economists' understanding of "solidarity of the interests":

Bourgeois economists speak quite readily of the solidarity of the interests of workers and employers. Thus, the finished product is presented as if it were the result of a concerted undertaking, that is to say, of an action and work group comprising management, technicians, office staff and workers. But the bourgeois economist does not wish to see that this solidarity is expressed in inert matter as an inversion of the real relations; this false unity, as the inert seal which supposedly signifies men, can, in fact, refer only to relations of antagonism and seriality.¹⁰

Sartre is keen to denounce these forms of spurious solidarity, which, in his view, rather than being conducive to real social change, only reinforce the status quo. Examples of this kind of seriality include the relationship between the owners of the means of production and the proletariat¹¹ as well as the dynamics that typically characterize the bond between colonized people and the settlers who refrain from overt violence.¹² No real solidarity can emerge in a situation whereby one group systematically exploits another, not least because those involved in this relationship do not share any goal or ideal. The narrative of the common interest is used to establish a bourgeois solidarity that instead of empowering people to pursue a common cause, and thereby enhancing their social environment, only requires complete adherence to the power dynamics already in place.

Moving away from a situation of seriality can be arduous. The majority of relations that tie human beings together are forms of seriality. People invariably find themselves in groups that are formed randomly and in which they do not feel any sense of membership since the groups only partially reflect the people's own views and desires. The more diversified and interconnected a social fabric becomes, the easier it will be to find oneself in more or less casual relationships with an ever-increasing number of individuals. At the same time, this proliferation of serialities makes it difficult to create more meaningful and deeper ties. Is there a way to overcome this "plurality of isolations", merge these atoms of seriality, and create a stronger and more meaningful relationship of brotherhood? To find an answer and shatter the fictitious construction of conservative bourgeois solidarity, Sartre identifies a radical concept of fraternity whose most extreme historical manifestation emerged during the later phases of the French Revolution: the so-called Fraternity-Terror.

3. Fraternity-Terror

It is easy for a reader of *Critique of Dialectical Reason* to understand why, for Sartre, it is so difficult for any kind of common action based on shared goals to occur. Although

¹⁰ Ibid., 308.

¹¹ See Collamati, "Alienation between the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and the *Critique of Economic Reason*".

¹² See Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*.

Sartre's aim in this book is to present a functional model of fraternity, his analysis focuses on those historical forms of social conflict that have prevented its formation. In his understanding, such social conflict is fundamentally due to primordial violence caused by the resource scarcity that characterizes life on our planet. Since there are not enough resources to sustain everyone's life, everyone tends to regard others as counter-humans always willing to jeopardize their well-being and survival. Although overcoming this condition of conflict is arduous, Sartre theorizes that, under certain circumstances, individuals may merge into a cohesive group in order to better cope with wider conflicts with other people. From this point of view, fused groups represent the exact opposite of seriality relations. While seriality relations are conservative, fused groups are revolutionary. A single person, in fact, is not capable of any kind of social revolution, nor, from Sartre's point of view, can a collection of serialized individuals within a social class. Here Sartre also criticizes the Marxist belief in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat: there is no automatic collective projectuality by the mere fact of belonging to a collective. A fused group (or as it would be better to translate it, a group in fusion), on the other hand, implies that at its base is the common purpose where individuals become interchangeable in the sense that one is at the same time also the other, since they all pursue the same goal, which is the only way to achieve a revolutionary intent. Furthermore, while seriality is characterized by a purely fictitious union, with no real communion of intentions between their members apart from the desire to maintain the *status quo*, fused groups members are willing to renounce their individuality and merge into a potent collective entity in order to prevail against their antagonists and establish a new order.

For Sartre, the emblematic example of this type of social merger is the French Revolution. Other revolutionary phenomena such as the Russian Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union can be seen as more contemporary examples.

Among the factors that trigger such an extreme action is a sense of physical danger such as that which being starving can cause. Continuing with the first example, among the events that triggered the French Revolution are the agricultural crisis that hit Europe in the 1770s, the publication of the *Compte rendu* by French finance minister Necker in 1781, and the revocation of the Estates General by Louis XVI in 1789. All these events generated a feeling of insecurity and danger in the population, which contributed to people's transformation into a revolutionary crowd. However, material conditions alone are not sufficient to bring about such a dramatic metamorphosis; the group must first define itself on the basis of a common struggle to achieve a common goal. The Paris insurrection, which started out as a relationship of seriality in which people acted by mutual imitation, turned into something completely different when the people clashed with the king's army. At that point, says Sartre, "the city was a fused group".¹³ Paris suddenly became the stage for a collective struggle whose protagonists, not yet melded into a hierarchical formation, found themselves in a situation of profound mutuality. Any distinction between fellow citizens faded away. A fusion was really happening: suddenly everyone *was* everyone else—not in the sense that people were interchangeable (as in seriality) but in the sense that they had the same goals. Under that circumstance, they all *became* brothers. This blood bond is obviously not to be understood in a literal

¹³ Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 358.

sense. It is more like an artificial device which allows people to join forces to resolve a crisis. This first phase of group formation involves the spontaneous agreement of goals. However, as it is easy to imagine, spontaneity of purpose and its permanence in time are not reconcilable characteristics. For the purpose of the group to remain the same, it is necessary to ensure that it will not be questioned, i.e. that it will no longer act spontaneously.

The most problematic aspect of this phenomenon for Sartre is that, as soon as the emergency that triggered the merging comes to an end, the group is in danger of deviating from its original path to the point that it may dissolve completely. When this happens, Sartre notes, fused groups begin to morph into something different - for Sartre this is the transition from the group in fusion to the statutory group. In order to avoid any deviation, the initial spontaneity of the fusion is replaced by the pledge, such as the Tennis Court Oath of 20 June 1789. Such an oath is a guarantee for the group bought at the price of individual freedom. Each group member decides to limit their freedom in order to defend the security of the group. This oath goes so far as to imply the possible death of any member of the group who would renounce their membership or question the purpose for which the group was created. The apex of this phase is the moment of Terror: fraternity itself, as a bond between group members, becomes Fraternity-Terror because the relationship is based on the threat of death in the event of a disbandment.

Santoni highlights how this circumstance is an essential aspect of Terror: "On this dialectical analysis, far from separating or sundering, Terror unites. [...] Through the 'creative act of the pledge' and the statute of Terror, we have become brothers".¹⁴ Under these circumstances, the members of a fused group accept Fraternity-Terror as the ultimate way to maintain their cohesion and prevent dissolution at all costs. The problem is that the violence that Fraternity-Terror generates is not only directed outwards but spills over onto the group's members. Robespierre went to the guillotine only eighteen months after Louis XVI's execution, and a similar fate befell many former Bolshevik leaders during Stalin's Great Purge (known in Russia as the Great Terror) in 1936–38. In the *Critique*, Sartre describes the transformation of the ongoing attempt at totalization of the fused group to the progressive petrification of the statutory group based on the oath until the Terror and the presumed violent totalization of the institutionalized group. At this point, freedoms are forcibly anchored to a purpose, which may no longer be truly shared: it may be even a purpose *against* those freedoms.

During a situation of Terror, the effort to eliminate any opposition to the revolutionary group becomes so strong that it indiscriminately targets supposed external and internal enemies. Thinking critically, raising reasonable doubts, and proposing alternatives to the majority line are viewed with suspicion and can easily generate violence towards those who engage in them. This creates a paradoxical situation. Even though one of the main reasons for joining a fused group is to oppose restrictions on personal freedom and human dignity, such as those implemented by the clergy and the nobility in the *anci n* regime, its members now face an even more inhuman and restrictive situation, which they themselves helped to create, in which freedom is denied in the name of freedom itself. Fraternity-Terror is fundamentally the right of all to exercise violence on

¹⁴ Santoni, *Sartre on Violence: Curiously Ambivalent*, 44.

the other; “it is, so to speak, freedom returning to man as a superhuman, petrified power”.¹⁵ Starting from a common goal—achieving greater freedom and social justice—the revolutionary crowd reaches the counterfinality of petrifying freedom and increasingly excluding participation in the group.

At the end of this petrifying process, Sartre points out, a new type of seriality ends up being established. In the institutionalized group each member is called upon to perform a specific function. This kind of group essentially relies on hierarchy and bureaucracy. In this modified scenario, brothers become strangers, as each member is assessed solely on the basis of their function and performance. At the top of this organization stands a new kind of head who has lost all traits of the revolutionary leader to become a manager figure and whose main task consists in institutionalizing violence and regulating the means of communication. Powerlessness and isolation are the new traits that characterize the social sphere. Paradoxically, it resembles the early stages of seriality, in which social relations are regulated by fictitious forms of solidarity while, beneath the surface, violence and social atomism are prevalent. No real social cohesion exists—only a plurality of isolations, again.

When Sartre speaks of Fraternity-Terror, he has in mind the final stages of the French Revolution especially. However, we believe that the idea’s application can be extended further. In particular, the relapse of the revolutionary group into forms of bureaucratic seriality closely resembles the accounts of various authors who, to describe the political and intellectual situations under actually existing socialism, have variously spoken of “supercivilisation”¹⁶ and “post-totalitarianism”.¹⁷ Similarly, the aspects of falsehood and hypocrisy that characterize social relations in this difficult historical phase have been described as “life in the lie” and “virtue of lies” in the analyses of major central and eastern European dissidents such as Solženitsyn and Kołakowski.

Even in more recent times, we believe, it is possible to draw parallels between, on the one hand, fused groups and their degeneration into forms of Fraternity-Terror and, on the other hand, cases of social solidarity based on hard and exclusionary conceptions of identity politics. We are referring in particular to conservative and reactionary forms of solidarity that are used in a rhetorical form to defend particular types of identity (for example, national, linguistic, religious) during emergencies such as the supposed assault of external forces, as has been the case, for example, in several European countries during the ongoing migration crises or the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is a particularly interesting example in that it has generated opposing effects. On the one hand, it has prompted mutual solidarity both at the interpersonal and institutional levels as shown, for instance, in the establishment of transnational recovery plans such as Next-GenerationEU. On the other hand, the pandemic has triggered forms of neonationalism whose adherents’ understanding of solidarity relies on shared historical symbols and memories that seem to have been eclipsed by the rise of a globalized society.¹⁸ Artificial processes of social fusion and othering are underway in these situations in order to accentuate the demarcation between “us” and “them” and reinforce the unity of the

¹⁵ Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 442. See also Eshleman, “Is Violence Necessarily in Bad Faith?”; Santoni, “Liberatory Violence, Bad Faith, and Moral Justification: A Reply”.

¹⁶ See Patočka, “Nadcivilizace a její vnitřní konflikt”.

¹⁷ See Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*.

¹⁸ See Wang, “From Crisis to Nationalism?”.

group. Mechanisms of artificial consanguinity, such as those discussed by Sartre in the formation of fused groups, are widely used in these contexts—as shown by the narratives concerning alleged ethnic and national roots, aimed at fostering a firmer sense of unity which has no historical basis.

Our contention is that the same mechanism that Sartre denounced in his analysis of Fraternity-Terror underpins these contemporary forms of exclusionary, identity-based solidarity. Numerous similarities exist between these two phenomena: (1) they both originate from a radical danger (real or fictitious); (2) they are based on the identification of a common purpose, which corresponds to a reaction to this threat; (3) they are based on the mutual recognition of a group of individuals who share something analogous to a blood bond; (4) they are necessarily limited in time and space; (5) they fall back into seriality and cannot be universalized because there are concrete limits to their inclusiveness; (6) even if violence is not necessarily employed as in the case of the French Revolution, freedom is limited in the name of collective security. The neonationalist narrative is a particularly effective political message since a culprit is identified towards whom the negative passions of the masses can be directed in the belief that this other group might grab resources or acquire privileges.

One might wonder whether this kind of exclusionary group relation deserves the name of solidarity. Whether one inclines towards a purely descriptive conception of this notion, so as to include forms of immoral solidarity, or a more normative version of it, so as to include moral obligations to enable the creation of solidarity, the term *solidarity* is widely used not only by democratic and progressive political forces but also by xenophobic and racist ones which limit the possibility of forming meaningful solidaristic bonds with those beyond their narrow circles. Our thesis is mildly normative in that, while it does not deny that bad forms of solidarity can exist, it indicates the necessity of theorizing good forms of solidarity that can be conducive to more democratic inclusivity and social justice. Indeed, we think that establishing a democratic and just form of solidarity would help dismantle narratives that use this term for unethical purposes whose pursuit exacerbates social inequality and conflict. Forms of inclusive solidarity require the support of universal values that can help group members to overcome the temptation to relapse into othering and marginalization in the face of danger and fear. We believe that Sartre's second account of fraternity—in his late work—allows us to support this argument and to prepare the way to a new conception of political solidarity.

4. Fraternity-without-Terror

Although in his major works the other is always seen in a negative light (as a source of alienation in *Being and Nothingness*, and even as a counterhuman in the *Critique*), throughout his life Sartre also tried to give a normative indication of how human relations should be in order for us to be *truly* human.¹⁹ This intent to conceive an existentialist ethics is evident from the very first work entitled *Transcendence of the Ego*. The most relevant thoughts, as already mentioned, are contained in *Notebooks for an Ethics*,

¹⁹ See, for example, Anderson, *Sartre's Two Ethics*; Detmer, *Freedom as a Value*; Linsenbard, *An Investigation of Jean-Paul Sartre's Posthumously Published Notebooks for an Ethics*; Howells, *The Necessity of Freedom*; Webber, *Rethinking Existentialism*.

which will only be published after his death. On the other hand, even in the more popular writings *Existentialism is a Humanism* and *What is Literature?* the intention to propose existentialism first and foremost as a practical philosophy, a theory of action, a conduct of life, is very clear. *Being and Nothingness* itself closes with a series of questions about a possible existentialist moral perspective, and existential psychoanalysis, understood as a way of understanding one's own and others' fundamental project, can be seen as the beginning of a moral philosophy based first and foremost on authentic recognition. However, this normative dimension struggles to be embodied due to the widespread and pervasive dynamics of oppression in history: this is why, for Sartre, true humanity has not yet been achieved. It is as if everything that has happened so far in history has been about subhumanity, which has always violated the Kantian imperative that the other should be treated not only as a means but also as an end in itself:

We are not complete human beings. We are beings who are struggling to establish human relations and arrive at a definition of what is human. At this moment we are in the thick of battle, and no doubt it will go on for many years. But one must define the battle: we are seeking to live together like human beings, and to be human beings. [...] In other words, our goal is to arrive at a genuinely constituent body in which each person would be a human being and collectivities would be equally human.²⁰

The experience of the fused groups does not go beyond the level of subhumanity, as the other becomes a means by which to realize the common purpose, which, at a certain point, as already shown, becomes the self-referential goal of the survival of the group itself, regardless of the wills of those involved. However, Sartre does not want to surrender to this dynamic with a negative outcome, precisely because he believes that a conversion of human relations is still possible (although in the *Critique* he no longer uses this term because he tries to adapt his language to the Marxist one).

Hope Now, his last work, which stems from a series of interviews that Sartre conducted with his assistant, Benny Lévy, and came out only a few weeks before his death, is of particular interest, as Sartre originally conceived of it as a preparatory work for a book that he did not have time to write—*Pouvoir et liberté*—in which he would reconsider the contents of both *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Aronson emphasizes this aspect: “Sartre’s goal in *Hope Now* is to indicate the philosophical foundation of a revived Left-wing politics. And this foundation will be an ethics, a project whose completion has eluded him for over thirty years. [...] Sartre now points to fraternity, dependence, solidarity, sociality, and working toward society as the basis for a new ethics of reciprocity and the ‘guiding principle for the left’ to be constructed from it”.²¹ As reported in the introduction, some have questioned the authorship of this interview, starting with Beauvoir who did not appreciate the relationship that had been established with Lévy. However, as is also reported in his official biography, written by Annie Cohen-Solal, it was Sartre himself who phoned the editor of the *Nouvel Observateur* to have this interview published; as the editor himself recalls, Sartre was perfectly lucid and quoted whole passages of the text from memory. Moreover, if one reads *Hope Now* in the light of the ethical writings published posthumously, one can rediscover many themes that were already present at the end of the 1940s: a possible ethical relationship

²⁰ Sartre, *Hope Now*, 67.

²¹ Aronson, *Sartre’s Last Words* (Introduction to *Hope Now*), 24-25.

between men, genuine solidarity, morality as the ultimate end of history. It is also what Linsenbard emphasizes in a study devoted to Sartre's moral philosophy: "the third ethics he worked on at the end of his life should not be regarded as a wholesale rejection of the ethics he developed in the *Cahiers pour une morale* but rather as an "enrichment" of it".²²

From the very first pages of *Hope Now*, Sartre clarifies that "the ethical modality"²³ is the real alternative not only to the desire to be-in-itself-for-itself and the conduct of bad faith but also to the failures of Fraternity-Terror and the unsuccessful attempts to respond to violence with violence. According to Aronson, in this last interview, "Marxism is replaced by ethics".²⁴ This ethical modality refers to a society which implies "a different kind of relationship among men".²⁵ It is necessary for Sartre to "search for the true social ends of ethics",²⁶ which cannot be the provisional and exclusionary ends that characterize fused groups. In fact, when he declares that "one must imagine a body of people who struggle as one",²⁷ Lévy reminds him that he had already written a book of some eight hundred pages to illustrate his theory of fused groups but that this type of union turned into Fraternity-Terror, which marked its failure.

In this text, Sartre decides to rethink the nature of human relationships. He does so by retrieving some ethical possibilities that he had envisaged in *Notebooks*, in which he analysed help and generosity in order to identify constraints on freedom that would justify moral and political commitments.²⁸ Now Sartre brings the existence of the other back to the centre of ethical discourse: the relationship with the other is no longer merely confrontational but something that positively constrains someone's choices: "I hadn't determined what I am trying to determine today: the dependence of each individual on all other individuals".²⁹ This kind of dependence diverges from both the alienating gaze of *Being and Nothingness* and from the endless conflict of the *Critique*. According to Sartre, a human bond exists that is deeper than every actual or fictitious blood relationship. This type of relationship resembles the recognition of the other as freedom in difficulty that Sartre mentioned in *Notebooks* whereby the other, far from being a petrifying gaze that turns one into an object, is seen in all their vulnerability. This new relational mode opens the possibility of imagining what we call Fraternity-without-Terror.

On what ground does Fraternity-without-Terror differ from Fraternity-Terror? The main difference between these two relationships concerns their aim. The members of fused groups typically only share goals that are limited in space and time and can therefore only be experienced by a limited number of people. The urgency of their goals' fulfilment is what forces group members to create bloodlike relationships. In contrast, the "true social end of ethics", which underpins Fraternity-without-Terror, is not merely contingent but rather corresponds to a "transhistorical end",³⁰ which is just another way to say that it is a universal or, at least, universalisable end. This end consists in

²² Linsenbard, *An Investigation of Jean-Paul Sartre's Posthumously Published Notebooks for an Ethics*, 2.

²³ Sartre, *Hope Now*, 59.

²⁴ Aronson, *Sartre's Last Words*, 34.

²⁵ Sartre, *Hope Now*, 60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁸ See Heter, *Sartre's Ethics of Engagement*.

²⁹ Sartre, *Hope Now*, 72.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

the establishment of humane relations based on non-oppression and mutual recognition. Within the framework of Fraternity-without-Terror, others are seen as brothers and sisters—not because of any artificial consanguinity but simply because they are all human beings. Although this fraternal relationship is a prepolitical bond—just like the one that unites the members of a fused group because it also relies on feelings rather than articulated discourses—it can still be considered as conducive to the formation of inclusive solidarity practices. This is not to say that this form of solidarity can be easily realized in practice; after all, not all human beings are willing to recognize one another as brothers and sisters. As Sartre fully acknowledges, this makes Fraternity-without-Terror a much weaker tool than Fraternity-Terror. One can, however, aspire to establish a broad and inclusive solidarity at least with all those who are capable of such recognition, regardless of all their differences and potential conflicts. It is the possibility of establishing practices of authentic and inclusive solidarity with all those who can—and wish to—exercise mutual respect and who, above all, do not understand the other as someone to be vanquished at any cost. This type of recognition should precede the emergence of any other relationship. It is an ethical recognition: “If I were to consider society as I viewed it in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I would observe that fraternity has little place in it. [...] In a certain way, we form a single family”.³¹ For Sartre, this signifies that we are all children of the same mother, which means we all share a common background as vulnerable inhabitants of a world characterized by a growing scarcity of resources. The fact that we all share this situation puts all other situations in the background.

To sum up, Fraternity-without-Terror consists in the recognition that (1) we all have common origins (as we belong to the same species), (2) we potentially face the same obstacles (scarcity of resources and its repercussions in the form of conflict and exploitation), and (3) we also share a transhistorical end, which is to realize humane relationships that do not result in oppressive behaviours.

In this sense, for Sartre, it is essential to move away from an ethics of scarcity, which is characterized by a series of counterviolent relations driven by the fact that there are not enough resources for everyone, and instead establish an ethics in scarcity, which consists of the possibility of envisioning humane relations on the basis of the recognition of a mutual obstacle—scarcity—that we all share. This new perspective is no longer competitive but instead relies on a fairer redistribution of resources, more equity, and more respect for human rights.

Sartre goes so far as to say that the violence on which Fraternity-Terror was based is the opposite of a genuine experience of fraternity. While exclusionary and identity-based solidarity responds to the demands of an ethics of scarcity in that it aims at ensuring one group’s survival at the expense of others, inclusive political solidarity manifests itself in the attempt to find a humane and ethical way of acting within the context of scarcity while attributing to every life an equal share of recognition and respect. Real revolution requires an ethical approach—an approach that allows human beings to realize that, rather than blood bonds, they need universal, transhistorical values to unite and flourish. Sartre is perfectly aware that this idea of fraternity can serve only as a regulative ideal and that history is dominated by the dialectical circle of seriality and the relentless

³¹ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

emergence and collapse of fused groups. Nevertheless, his intention to construct an existentialist ethics leads him to continually return throughout his philosophical career to the attempt at imagining a mode of exercising freedom that does not imply the prevarication of the other, approaching a Kantian ethics but excluding the deontological lexicon.³² The idea of inclusive and universalisable practices of solidarity implies that there is a normative criterion that identifies as solidarity only those cases in which the other is not excluded and reduced to a mere object, and not even an enemy to be destroyed. Seriality and Fraternity-Terror are not forms of solidarity, even if they present themselves as such, but are mass phenomena that use the term *solidarity* solely to justify their bonding and the consequent pursuit of their goals at all costs. The more inclusive solidarity is, the closer it comes to the regulative ideal of solidarity. However weak and utopian it may be, the regulative ideal is what can really point to possible progress in history, which is otherwise condemned to repeat its conflict dynamics.

5. Conclusion

Despite their profound differences, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and *Hope Now* share a similar objective: clarifying the different (and sometimes problematic and contradictory) modalities of human relations. Each account of fraternity that Sartre presents in his texts can pave the way to a different understanding of solidarity.

First, *seriality*, which characterizes the typical human relationship in bourgeois society, signals a bond of fake solidarity whereby society's members are not really united around a shared goal. There is no recognition of real fraternity between oppressed and oppressors. Similar phenomena have been observed in recent accounts of solidarity. For instance, in her analysis of political solidarity, Sally Scholz coins the term "parasitical solidarity" to indicate something similar to what Sartre means by seriality: it consists in a hypocritical declaration of solidarity that is not followed by any concrete help and cooperation because there is no recognition of any moral values or duties.³³

Second, by *fused group* (or *group in fusion*) Sartre means the extreme and violent attempt to break out from seriality and establish a deeper and stronger bond. Under these circumstances, the group members decide to become blood brothers by establishing a relationship of artificial consanguinity in order to circumvent the absence of natural brotherhood and make their bond stronger. To avoid dissolution, group members then swear a blood oath and merge into a unique body with the detrimental outcomes that characterize Fraternity-Terror. Contemporary re-enactments of exclusionary, identity-based solidarity echo the violent outcome and inherent fragility of Fraternity-Terror. Certainly, their constant emergence testifies to the enduring attractiveness of this political technique: attempts to expand the horizons of solidarity relations have always been countered by efforts to re-establish narrower horizons that are centred on fused groups.

Third, Fraternity-without-Terror, as Sartre envisages it in *Hope Now*, can be interpreted as a fundamental basis for establishing a functional form of political solidarity which would prevent the relapsing of its members into fused groups. Being human

³² See Russo, "The normative bond between Kantian autonomy and Sartrean authenticity"; Russo, "From Jean-Paul Sartre to Critical Existentialism".

³³ Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 46-48.

becomes the quintessential characteristic around which such a bond can be built—a humanity understood not as an inherent quality or as a merit but rather as a recognition of an innate condition of vulnerability which unites all humans. This conception echoes several attempts to theorize human or global versions of solidarity beyond any identity-based paradigm. The real challenge here, as Rorty points out in a way that reminds us Sartre is to enlarge natural conceptions of “we-solidarity” in such a way that the whole of humanity can be traced within this “we”.³⁴ In other words, how can we construe such a bond without stumbling upon divisions and antagonisms that rather than uniting humans exacerbate the contrast between “us” and the “other”? The key element is clearly the typology of recognition: am I a brother to a group of people who resemble me for common purposes or identity traits, or am I a brother to everyone as a vulnerable human being struggling in the face of scarcity to establish human relationships?

How Sartre’s ideas might be put into action and solidify into a positive theory of solidarity is beyond the scope of this article. However, we believe we have at least shown that Sartre’s late account of human fraternity can help us tackle this problem and prepare the ground for a broad conception of political solidarity. Similarly, we have demonstrated how his account of the fused group and Fraternity-Terror dynamics provides a useful tool which allows us to identify the risks linked to the strong attractiveness of this type of bond.

The kind of solidarity that becomes more widespread in the coming years, within the borders of the European Union but also beyond, will be a clear sign of the kind of human and social relations that will be established in the more distant future. Despite history’s denials, Sartre to the very end believed in a kind of progress in the evolution of humanity, always remembering that it is not due to some deterministic development of history but is always in the hands of human beings.

Disclosure Statement

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³⁴ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 195.

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