



Existência e ambiguidade dialética: a presença de Hegel no pensamento de Simone de Beauvoir

Existence and dialectical ambiguity: the presence of Hegel in the thought of Simone de Beauvoir

Nathan M. A. Teixeira

[0000-0001-7292-6177](tel:0000-0001-7292-6177)

nathanmateixeira@gmail.com

UNIRIO – Universidade
Federal do Estado do Rio de
Janeiro

Resumo

Este artigo busca esclarecer em que medida a dialética hegeliana se mostra como uma base decisiva para a forma como Simone de Beauvoir compreende a existência e a caracteriza como ambígua. Como será discutido, é a partir do desenvolvimento dialético da consciência de si apresentado por Hegel, em que o momento “ser para o outro” se mostra como a mediação necessária para a constituição do ser para si, que Beauvoir irá construir a sua compreensão da presença corpórea. Neste sentido, Simone de Beauvoir irá assumir a fragmentação dialética contínua do vir a ser si mesmo como sempre tendo de retornar a si do ser para outro, ao mesmo tempo em que vai propor que essa relação seja concebida como um comprometimento do corpo na própria objetividade fora de si, de tal modo que ela apresenta uma mudança na forma hegeliana específica de pensar essa relação mas a partir da aceitação geral de suas premissas, momento em que a ideia da ambiguidade como uma relação de inerência e distanciamento será desenvolvida.

Palavras-chave: Simone de Beauvoir; Hegel; dialética; ambiguidade; existência.

Abstract

This article seeks to clarify the extent to which Hegelian dialectics is a decisive basis for the way Simone de Beauvoir understands existence and characterizes it as ambiguous. As will be discussed, it is from the dialectical development of self-consciousness presented by Hegel, in which the moment “being for the other” is shown as the necessary mediation for the constitution of being for oneself, that Beauvoir will build her understanding of bodily presence. In this sense, Simone de Beauvoir will assume the continuous dialectical fragmentation of becoming oneself as always having to return to oneself from being for the other, at the same time that she will propose that this relation be conceived as a commitment of the body to its own objectivity outside itself, in such a way that it presents a change in the specific Hegelian way of thinking about this relation but from the general acceptance of its premises, a moment in which the idea of ambiguity as a relationship of inherence and detachment will be developed.

Keywords: Simone de Beauvoir; Hegel; dialectics; ambiguity; existence.

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Kimberly Hutchings, in “Beauvoir and Hegel,” states that the latter is clearly an important author for Simone de Beauvoir, insofar as there are “[...] many references to her encounters with Hegel’s philosophy in her diaries and autobiographical writings [...]” (Hutchings, 2017, p. 187), in addition to being frequently mentioned in her major works, such as *For an Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*. However, regarding the comments made about Beauvoir’s thought, we see that there is no unanimity “[...] on the issues related to how Beauvoir interpreted Hegel [...]” (Hutchings, 2017, p. 187), so the discussion about the specificity of this interpretation and its importance for Beauvoir and for the constitution of her own thought remains significantly open. This work therefore aims to offer a small contribution to the history of this discussion, in order to confirm the preceding statements that indicate Hegelian philosophy as fundamental to Simone de Beauvoir's considerations, in addition to detailing the specificity of this interpretation which, as will be explained, has its fundamental point in the notion of ambiguity as an unfolding of a certain reading of Hegelian dialectics.

According to the statements in the *Journal de Guerre*¹, we see that Simone de Beauvoir dedicated herself directly to the study of Hegel from 1940 onwards. In a note dated July 6, after stating that she worked for two hours (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 339) reading the *Phenomenology of Spirit* at the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, she writes: “I decided to go there every day, from two to five o'clock and work on Hegel” (Beauvoir, 1990, pp. 339-340). In the following notes, Beauvoir reaffirms the consistency of this study of Hegel, which, in addition to the *Phenomenology*, also begins to include, as indicated in a passage written on July 25 of the same year, the study of the *Science of Logic*².

As a starting point for the discussion of this text, let us take a note dated January 9, 1941, in which Beauvoir writes:

“An idea that impressed me greatly in Hegel [*une idée qui m'a si fort frappée chez Hegel*]: the demand for recognition of consciousnesses by one another [...] – the only absolute being this human consciousness, a demand for freedom [...]. At the same time, the existential idea [*idée existentielle*] that human reality is nothing other than what it makes itself to be [*se fait être*], that towards which it transcends itself” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 361, emphasis added).

¹ Simone de Beauvoir's personal notes, written between 1926 and 1930, are published as *Cahiers de jeunesse*, based on the organization of the manuscripts by Sylvie le Bon de Beauvoir after her death. The *Journal de Guerre* is a separate publication, presenting the notes Beauvoir made from 1939 to 1941. As Sylvie le Bon explains in the introduction to the *Journal*: “This diary relating to the declaration and beginning of the war (seven notebooks) constitutes a fragment of the diary that Simone de Beauvoir kept since her youth, practically since her childhood, albeit intermittently. It must be considered as a moment within a significantly larger whole. But its isolated publication was conceived as a complement to her correspondence with Sartre, more than half of which belongs to the same dark period of 1939 and 1940” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 9).

² In this note, Simone de Beauvoir says: “On Wednesday, July 17th, I wrote the letters and drafted some notes [...], then I went to the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, which currently opens at ten o'clock in the morning. Hegel. I approached the *Logic*” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 350).

This passage shows us that Beauvoir starts from Hegel when thinking about the notions of existence and transcendence, and this was years before she began writing her first philosophical essay, *Pyrrhus and Cinneas*, published in 1944, which mobilizes these notions that will continue to appear in the author's other writings. More specifically, we have here one of the first notes in which Simone de Beauvoir's existential perspective appears, according to which human subjectivity exists as “[...] a being that is at a distance from itself [*à distance de soi-même*] and that has to be its being [*à être son être*]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 16), marked as “[...] a project of myself towards the other [*vers l'autre*], a transcendence [*une transcendence*]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 210), in which there is a link between the continuous movement of becoming and the need to also have one's being given as being for the other; In the terms of the previous passage from the *Journal de Guerre*, being for the other is a fundamental “absolute requirement” of transcendence.

Understanding subjectivity as a movement away from oneself, insofar as one's “self” “[...] is constitutively oriented towards something other than oneself: one is only oneself through the relationship with something other than oneself” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 219), is mobilized by Beauvoir in characterizing the process of becoming oneself as ambiguous. This is one of the fundamental points of her thought, which points to the “[...] movement of this ambiguous reality that we call existence [*cette réalité ambiguë qu'on appelle l'existence*] and which only exists by becoming [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 33) as the “[...] ontological infrastructure [...]” (Beauvoir, 2016a, p. 103) from which this subjective movement finds itself in the need to relate to what is other than itself in order to realize itself. This relationship constitutes subjectivity itself without absolutely determining it, and it is realized to the same extent that it actively relates to its being passively situated outside of itself.

More specifically, for Beauvoir, the ambiguous movement of existence characteristic of subjectivity is a “[...] synthesis of becoming [*synthèse du devenir*] [...]” (Beauvoir, 2016a, p. 63) marked by dependence on the outside of itself as its immediacy of ambiguous embodied presence. As a concrete presence, as spontaneity situated by the body that is “[...] our taking [*prise*] of the world and the outline of our projects [*esquisse de nos projets*]” (Beauvoir, 2016a, p. 75), subjectivity is materially possible as a certain embodied material becoming that connects to the world in which it is realized. Thus, the negativity that mediates the relationship with being and that is subjectivity itself becoming effective, is realized alongside a connection to the sensible thickness of the world on which it depends as the first generic layer of being. Therefore, although subjectivity always remains a negativity when it is realized and affirmed, it is an ambiguous negativity insofar as when it occurs it is because there has already been sensible thickness/situation and it itself has already been and continues to be a certain mode of being situated presence.

It is significant that the movement of transcendence is characterized by Beauvoir, as Sonia Kruks correctly indicates, as a “[...] taking as one's own the ‘already given’ aspects of one's own existence” (Kruks, 2012,

p. 33, emphasis mine), because it is precisely from the emphasis given to the ambiguity of bodily presence, which despite being affirmed “as pure interiority [...] is also experienced as something crushed by the obscure weight of other things [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 11), that Beauvoir will therefore think that, because her body is engaged in the situation, human transcendence has a generic and ambiguous sensitive thickness in which its existence occurs in a connection or commitment at a distance, which simultaneously already opens itself to the future, that is, there is a kind of “giving ground” of the body³ that is already an experience of itself in this world and that remains in the continuous resumption of becoming. Referring again to Sonia Kruks's reading:

The lived body is the interface between the self and the world, and therefore also between the self and others. It is our situation in time and space [...]. [The body] particularizes us and guarantees our inherence in a certain generality of human existence. It follows, then, that, insofar as they are coextensive with human existence, the corporeal and the factual do not in themselves represent a diminution of freedom [...] (Kruks, 2012, p. 36).

From these considerations, it becomes clear that the question of existential ambiguity, central to Simone de Beauvoir's thought, presents itself as a discussion fundamentally about dialectics. In other words, the important Hegelian moment for Beauvoir shows itself as the indication that, insofar as “Consciousness is spirit as something concrete and, in fact, knowledge trapped in exteriority [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 29)⁴, the movements of consciousness as an “[...] essence that implements itself through its development, [...] contains a becoming Other that must be taken up, and is a mediation [...]” (Hegel, 2014 p. 33, author's emphasis) of consciousness in relation to itself, in such a way that its effectiveness as becoming of itself “is pure and *simple negativity*, and precisely for this reason it is the fragmentation of the simple or the opposing duplication [...]; reflection in itself in its being-Other [...]” (Hegel, 2014, p. 32, author's emphasis).

In short, we see that the idea of distance from oneself as an existential marker, previously indicated by Beauvoir, presents itself from the general dialectical framework according to which the process of becoming oneself as synthesis carries within itself its past development as a starting point; *it only exists insofar as it has already become*, and this indicates the passage through the other of oneself – through the loss of oneself in being-for-the-other – as a necessary mediation from which being-for-itself becomes as such. We could say, therefore, that Hegel's consideration that consciousness, as “[...] the immediate being-there of the spirit [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 43) is a self-production in the “objective element, in which it has its being-there and

³ It is important to point out that in her first philosophical essay, Pyrrhus and Cinneas, Beauvoir refers to the situation as the practical engagement of the body in the world, as a “ground” in which one is “[...] enclosed until death [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 213), in such a way that one could say that in the situation “[...] one's own flesh is engaged [*est engagée sa propre chair*]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 305).

⁴ A detailed analysis of the cited Hegelian works or of the relationship between the Phenomenology and the Logic, will not be undertaken here. The use of passages from Hegel's work in both is solely intended to clarify how being-for-other is a determining dialectical moment for the synthesis of self-consciousness as-in-itself and-for-itself, as well as the unfolding of this moment in the opening of the concrete being-there of this self-consciousness.

thus is, for itself, a reflected object in itself in its being-there” (Hegel, 2014, p. 37) emerges in Beauvoir as the general structure of existence of the movement of corporeal presence. That is to say, the assertion that the ambiguity of the human condition presents itself as “[...] the positive existence of a lack [*l’existence positive d’un manque*] [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 73) stems from the general framework of Hegelian dialectics that the individual possesses “[...] within himself a perpetual play of the negative [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 44), since it is precisely the presence of such negativity that qualifies becoming as a continuous passage towards itself in which having already been is a moment of determination that remains as that from which it comes, it is not annihilated because it remains in the following as a self that negates in itself the accumulation at a distance from its base of being⁵.

Insofar as Beauvoir draws attention to an ambiguous determination in the very being other of oneself, as indicative of inherence in the determination of the body-situation link from being-in-the-world as having a “[...] sensible thickness [*épaisseur sensible*] [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 129); as well as indicating that such a negative becoming that loses itself, presents itself as a corporeal presence that affirms the “[...] concrete and singular thickness [*épaisseur concrète*] of this world [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 132), a significant differentiation in relation to the Hegelian conception in its “pure” form is already indicated.

Specifically, it involves taking as a central point the fact that the moment of “being for the other” as a necessary dialectical mediation of being oneself consists in the relation to objectivity in which that which comes to be *is and has the condition of being* effectively an existing entity, perpetually constituting it from the experience of becoming “[...] for itself, insofar as it subsumes the being other, its relation and its communion with the other [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 164). This Hegelian point acquires centrality in the way Beauvoir thinks about existence and, simultaneously, presents Beauvoir's own perspective in the face of the indication of the lack, in Hegel, of an ambiguity in this determination of having to come to oneself from the other of oneself.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel states that: “There is in consciousness a One for an Other, that is, consciousness has within itself the determinacy of the moment of knowing. At the same time, for consciousness, this Other is not only for itself, but is also outside of this relation, that is, it is in itself: the moment of truth” (Hegel, 2014, p. 76). This is the presentation of the dialectical movement that characterizes the experience that consciousness exercises in itself in its process of becoming conscious of itself, a movement that presents “[...] the series of figures that consciousness traverses [...]” (Hegel, 2014, p. 73) as phenomenal moments knowable in their necessity. This necessity presents the double movement, in which consciousness becomes qualitatively other, overcoming its initial negative moment, and

⁵ “[...] a superseded is[...] a mediated, it is that which is not, but as a result that came from a being; it therefore still has in itself the determinacy from which it originates” (Hegel, 2016, p. 111, emphasis added).

simultaneously prepares itself as authentic self-knowledge subsequently exposed to itself. Hegel states that such phenomenally experienceable figures for consciousness as essential constitutive moments and, therefore, also as objectifications that are exposed, are “[...] so to speak, the detailed history of the formation for the science of consciousness itself [...]” (Hegel, 2014, p. 73), and that “[...] their exposition coincides exactly with this point of the authentic science of spirit” (Hegel, 2014, p. 79)⁶. Thus, the development of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* follows the development of how the complete series of figures of consciousness is conducted in its necessity that “presents itself to consciousness without it knowing how it happens to it. For us, it is as if this were happening behind its back. [...] a moment of being-in-itself [...]” (Hegel, 2014, p. 79, emphasis added).

Here we observe what we might call radically implicated ontological and epistemological questions, in the sense that Hegel presents both the very mode of being of self-consciousness in its effective relation to objectivity and how such relation qualifies it, as well as conceptualizing the knowledge of this objectivity posited by itself in its process of being itself. More precisely, and drawing attention to something central to Beauvoir's reading, there is a kind of lag in the consciousness's relation to itself – something happens to it “behind its back” – which causes it to experience itself and to actually be there without having this development conceptually objectively for itself. In other words, the consciousness that is for itself as effective and actual self-consciousness has in itself, as its moment in itself, the *already having come to be* as a determined negation of its passage through the other of itself that obliges it to be a perpetual return to itself.

It is in this sense, therefore, that to say that consciousness has within itself a moment in itself, a moment in which it is at a distance from itself because it makes itself other than itself by having its being in its own relation to what is external to it as an internal negation of itself, is also to say that being for the other is its moment of determination. Something is for consciousness at the moment when it is itself as not itself, when it is in itself relation to the other of itself, in such a way that the phenomenal process of consciousness as a singularity, “[...] is its own passage, from its concept to an *external* reality, [...] which is both consciousness and, for that very reason – as singularity and exclusive One – is the allusion to an other” (Hegel, 2014, p. 175, emphasis added).

The central question, therefore, is that the becoming of self-consciousness, as a negative movement determined as “[...]equality and simplicity, related to themselves” (Hegel, 2014, p. 35), needs to have within

⁶ In his *Science of Logic*, Vol. I, for example, Hegel states that he sought to present in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* “[...] consciousness [...] as something concrete and, in fact, knowledge trapped in externality [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 29). Therefore, the describable phenomenal experiences of self-consciousness always have the dimension of self-formative experience and are, therefore, objective moments external to the self that are already constitutive of it as concrete determinations of its history.

itself, as an essential moment of determination, a “for an Other” as a necessary constitutive relation of its becoming. According to Hegel, the immediacy of self-consciousness “includes within itself not only the universal or the immediacy of knowledge itself, but also that immediacy which is being, or the immediacy for knowledge” (Hegel, 2014, p. 32), and, therefore, “consciousness *distinguishes* something from itself and at the same time *relates* to it” (Hegel, 2014, p. 75, emphasis added) based on the abstract determinations of knowledge – the relating of something to itself – and of truth – the something posited as being distinct from itself. The concretely existing effectiveness emerges for consciousness from the relational form “distinguishes itself from itself and relates itself” which is its own basic mode of being in this relationship that it posits for itself. In this sense, its qualification as being is itself immediately becoming again there as having a dimension in itself because it has already passed through the negation of itself “being for another,” this is its immediacy “which is the being” itself as in itself; as it is an internal moment to consciousness as a unity that relates to itself, this is only in itself because it was qualified in the relational form of “knowing” – negates itself and relates to itself – immediately in the return to itself as a being that is for itself, so that it can posit as a “true” object in itself this objective becoming that is itself as it has already become. Finally, the immediacy of the concrete and effective emergence of consciousness as a totality in itself and for itself is twofold, in the sense that its being is as having already become a determined negation of being for another, and because it is immediately a concrete being for the other and there, so that it can only be a becoming in itself and for itself insofar as it is an essence that is there, because it has being there as its moment of determination.

Consciousness comes to be itself, therefore, as a return to itself that has already distanced itself from being for the other and has already returned to itself in itself and, being a concrete and objective essence, it immediately has “again” being for the other in this unity of being the entity that is and is there. Expanding from Hegel, we have:

[...] The subsistence or substance of a being-there is equality with itself [...]. When I say: *quality*, I mean simple determinacy; by means of quality, a being-there is different from another, that is, it is a being-there; it is for itself or subsists by means of this simplicity with itself. But for this reason it is essentially *thought*. [...] since the subsistence of being-there is equality-with-itself or pure abstraction, it is abstraction of itself by itself, or it is its inequality with itself and its dissolution - its own interiority and its resumption in itself - its becoming (Hegel, 2014, p. 55, emphasis added)

And in *Science of Logic*, Vol. I, “The Doctrine of Being”, we have that:

Being for another is, in the unity of something with itself, identical to its in itself; being for the other is, thus, in something. The determination thus reflected within itself is, therefore, again a simple determination which is, therefore, again a quality – determination (Hegel, 2016, p. 127, emphasis added).

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel is presenting the “[...] *pure essentialities* [...]” as moments of the progressive movements that consciousness is “[...] as [...] knowledge trapped in exteriority” (Hegel, 2016, p. 24,

emphasis added). That is, the phenomenologically given experience of self-consciousness and comprehensible as its history has such phenomenal moments determined by such essentialities “as they are in and for themselves” (Hegel, 2014, p. 24), and, taken for themselves as an object, constitute the content that the *Science of Logic* presents⁷. Therefore, the indication in *Phenomenology* that self-consciousness has within itself the moment of “being-for-another” is complemented by the *Logic's* consideration that “[...] being-there a determined being, a *concrete* [...]” (Hegel, 2014, p. 114, author's emphasis), self-consciousness as in itself and for itself is there insofar as it has already been qualified in itself in the process of passing through being-for-another that reflects in itself from the determined negation that is itself posing itself as a return to itself in its being-for-another⁸.

This constitutive dialectic of immediate being-there in the now *because it has already been mediated* is a fundamental mark of the moment of being-for-another as a necessary determination of being-for-itself. The dialectic that self-consciousness experiences in becoming itself and marks it as a unity in becoming of concrete and effectively existing return to itself, insofar as it can only be from the determined negation that it itself realizes in itself coming from being-for-another, has here its basis of constitutive negativity, its qualitative determination. In turn, it is in this *need to always be there and again* that it acquires the objectivity of having a place in the world as a historical process already given in its own formation⁹. We could say, following Lukács in his work on Hegel, that we have here something fundamental to Hegelian dialectics insofar as:

The trajectory that each individual has to travel from common consciousness to philosophical consciousness is, at the same time, the path of the development of humanity, it is the abbreviated synthesis of all the experiences of humankind, represented as such and, from this point of view, the historical process itself (Lukács, 2018a, p. 608).

It is this entire process, as the immediate totality of becoming oneself as such, that is there, and which Hegel indicated as being the continuous passage from being to the other as concrete qualification, that Beauvoir implies when she affirms, drawing attention to the dimension of existing presence, that “[...] subjectivity is not inertia, withdrawal upon oneself, separation [...] I am not a thing but a project of myself towards the

⁷ In short, after developing pure knowledge as the endpoint of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel intends to analyze the conceptual development of the necessary forms of thought in their connections, as the basis for the ontological development of the human spirit.

⁸ Clarifying the ontological question implied in Hegel's *Logic*, we have, for example, Lukács's statement: “[...] Hegelian logic [...] does not pretend to be a logic in the scholastic sense of the word, a formal logic, but an indissoluble spiritual unity of logic and ontology: on the one hand, true ontological connections receive in Hegel their adequate expression in thought only in the form of logical categories; on the other hand, logical categories are conceived as simple determinations of thought, but must be understood as dynamic components of the essential movement of reality, as degrees or stages on the path of the spirit to realize itself” (Lukács, 2018b, p. 198).

⁹ “Consciousness will determine its relation to the other-being or to its object in different ways, according to the stage in which it finds itself, of the world-spirit that-becomes-conscious-of-itself. The way in which the world-spirit in each case immediately finds and determines itself and its object – or how it is for itself – depends on what has already come to be, or what already is-in-itself” (Hegel, 2014, p. 174, emphasis added).

other, a transcendence” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 210). That is to say, the fundamental perspective of Hegelian dialectics previously presented sustains the understanding that the process of subjectivation in becoming as reflexivity is always immediately in the return to itself of being towards the other; it transcends being towards the other, goes beyond commitment to it as having already been becoming from it, just as it goes beyond itself towards the “for the other” from the negation in becoming of that which is as having already been at a distance from itself.

This is why, for example, in *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir states that she assumes an understanding of being based on the “[...] dynamic Hegelian sense: *to be is to have become, to have been made* as one manifests oneself [*être c’est être devenu, c’est avoir été fait tel qu’on se manifeste*]” (Beauvoir, 2016a, p. 27, emphasis mine). The point is that all that understanding, seen above corporeal presence, fundamentally admits the element of distancing oneself as loss and relation to oneself in having to be also for the other of oneself as a mode of being that structures the existence of this process present in the world, immediately constitutive in oneself and as the other of oneself of one's being there of concrete presence. Returning to the previously cited passage from the *Journal de guerre*, we see that the Hegelian existential idea that Beauvoir indicates is precisely the ontological necessity of being for the other – which causes being to be doubly, as we have seen, at a distance from itself – as the lived existential immediacy that is present while already having become, and which therefore comes to be itself as phenomenal objectivity with other objectivities and at the same time has this relation in itself as posited for itself in its process of becoming itself. Here, therefore, it is specified how Beauvoir assumes in the presence the Hegelian idea that becoming “[...] implies a negation of the determined diversity of being by a reflection that internalizes it in a unity as the external totality of realities” (Direk, 2017, p. 202).

However, as already indicated, it is also precisely here that Beauvoir disagrees with Hegel while still assuming the general premises listed above. This disagreement, in its immediate simplicity, appears as Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that there should be an ambiguity in this openness of presence there that is absent in Hegel. Furthermore, this issue arises in relation to the fact that this immediacy of presence there is sustained, in Beauvoir's case, by corporeality. To elucidate this difference, let us consider some passages from the philosopher in which she criticizes the specific form of Hegelian dialectics, assuming that it is crucial for Beauvoir to emphasize that being-for-the-other is, unlike Hegel, the ambiguous condition of presence that comes to be itself as embodied becoming.

In “For an Ethics of Ambiguity,” after marking the self-constitutive distance of becoming as what she is calling ambiguity, Beauvoir says:

“Its being is lack of being, but there is a way of being of this lack of being that is precisely existence. In Hegelian terms, we could say that there is here a negation of the negation through which the

positive is re-established. [...] However, [...] in Hegel the superseded terms are preserved only as abstract moments, whereas we consider that existence still remains negativity in the affirmation of itself [...]" (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 18, emphasis mine).

Also in the same work, we have the consideration that the Hegelian system, "[...] identifying the real and the rational, empties the human world of its sensible thickness [*vide le monde humain de son épaisseur sensible*]" (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 129). Thus, although Beauvoir is operating with the same basic understanding of Hegel's dialectical negativity, to the point that her statements can be understood in the very general form of Hegelian terms, her notion of existence involves an ambiguity concerning its negativity that is made positive as a process. Furthermore, this ambiguity would directly concern the immediacy of concrete presence, insofar as its absence in Hegel would result in a "loss of thickness" of being-there in the world, as if this being-there were posited *only* by a conceptual unity of presence.

Simone de Beauvoir is not trying to draw attention to an ambiguity that is already clearly found in Hegel, and which is the very tension of the dialectical relationship, when he states, for example, that being-for-another is immediately doubly linked to being-for-oneself. That is to say, if the unity of being-for-itself that is conscious of itself has a dimension that is in itself, insofar as it has already "[...] moved away from being-for-the-other and returned to itself [...]" (Hegel, 2016, p. 125), being determined as being "[...] the *non-being* of being-for-the-other [...]" (Hegel, 2016, p. 124, emphasis added), while at the same time pointing/relating to being-for-the-other which is its negated moment in itself from which it must be reflected within itself, and, this unity being negative, pointing/relating to the immediate being-for-the-other which is its relation of being-there as "[...] negation of the simple relation of being-for-itself [...]" (Hegel, 2016, p. 124), there is consequently always present a double mediation of the moment of being-for-the-other. From Simone de Beauvoir's perspective, there should be an ambiguity ontologically prior to this one, in the sense of being more decisive with regard to the synthesis of being-there, but internal to this general Hegelian dialectic, an ambiguity specifically in being-for-the-other as a condition for the emergence of subjectivity, beyond its ambiguity as an internal moment of becoming oneself.

Hegel's becoming-oneself always stems from being-for-the-other, but this constitutive moment is always already internal to the presumed unity of the self: the other being is in *it*, but it *is not also* in being-for-the-other as a concrete and qualifyingly determining condition of itself as other of the self for which it is as presence there. Following Beauvoir, the immediacy of presence is said to be ambiguous because it is being in being-for-the-other at the same time as it is this as a determined negation in itself and for itself. There is the ambiguity of being immediately related to – being in being-for-the-other as a condition posited independently of returning to oneself – and immediately being the negation of this relation in itself and relation to oneself from this duality of being in and for the other. She maintains the immediate Hegelian unity of presence there – there is an externality there in itself that is other, it is for the self in it just as it

already is in itself, and it is that in itself for itself – but she posits that this “being for the self” of the other externality is not immediately the simple totality itself positing itself at that moment as a mere internal return to its unity, there is also the posited immediacy of objectivity *itself that posits the self for it insofar as it is in it*, has a place there in which it is inherent. In such a way that there is ambiguity if we isolate the universal form of the relation itself, which presents itself as a general suffering of objectivity as an ambiguous mediation, because it posits the self for objectivity and is the starting point of the return to itself already partially determined in the positioning given in this mediation. Therefore, the idea of distance from oneself as a condition also of the lived ambiguity of presence, insofar as the becoming subjectivity is a double synthesis of itself doubly at a distance from itself.

In short, Beauvoir's disagreement with Hegel specifically concerns the reduction of the immediacy of being-there to the unified simplicity of self-consciousness. In this way, the dialectical play of the negative only occurs within the simple unity of being-itself, precisely in its moment of concreteness in the world, because the general form of this totality of emergence is that of consciousness itself as itself, only in a negative moment posited by itself in itself. This, according to Beauvoir, as we have seen, ends up removing the very thickness of this concreteness of becoming-oneself, since being-there-in-the-world is considered only as the self-positing of self-consciousness as an abstract unity.

The existential reading of the Hegelian premise that the self needs to “be outside itself” as an essential qualification for being an existing and concrete presence, consists here in assuming that such a condition of loss is in fact dialectical, because “having to be its being” implies that subjectivity is distant from the being that it already is as having to be, and, because it is distant in itself as a processual totality, the positing of the subsequent being also counts as a “still lacking” to be posited from the distance that already is. However, it must also be said that it is ambiguous, because it is not “distinguishes and relates,” which presumes an already full – positive – unity, even if for a brief moment, as the whole that posits the relation by distinguishing itself from and relating to it while negated. The condition of being for the other as the basic relation of becoming oneself is autonomous in itself as a concrete inherence in the thickness of the objectivity of that which becomes; Isolating it as an object, we would say that it is the form of “having an inherence,” “being in being for the other,” something like “being placed in relation to and distancing oneself in the relation of being placed.” To call it ambiguous is to say that there is no unification of it in a self without that self not being placed in it as determined in a distanced relation that sustains the return from which it comes, in such a way that this exists by becoming positive as lack, in which this is indicative of “assuming a distance” in a previous “being related.”

If we return to the Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit, we have the following statements by Hegel:

The movement of being consists, on the one hand, in becoming an Other and thus its own immanent content; on the other hand, being recovers in itself this development or this being-there of itself, that is, it makes of itself a moment and simplifies itself towards determinacy. Negativity in this movement is the differentiating and the putting of being-there; And it is in this return, the becoming of determined simplicity (Hegel, 2014, p. 54, emphasis added).

A little further on, we read:

[...] what is precisely contained in that simplicity of thinking is that determinacy has within itself its other-being and that it is self-movement; for such simplicity is thought that moves and differentiates itself; [...] the pure concept. [...] The concrete figure, moving itself, makes of itself a simple determinacy; with this it rises to logical form and is, in its essentiality. Its concrete being-there is only this movement, and it is logical being-there, immediately (Hegel, 2014, pp. 56-57, emphasis added).

According to Beauvoir, the problem here lies in using the conceptual form of self-consciousness, in which a whole of simple positive thought, a “pure concept,” already has being-for-the-other as a moment of differentiation posited by the self in its speculative return to “equality-with-itself” that moved as thinking, as that which sustains the “concrete figure” of itself posited in being-there. In other words, the immediacy of being-there of self-consciousness emerges as an internal negative unity, but positive in “alluding to the other” as a binding immediacy of being that gives the “there” of phenomenal presence; self-consciousness as a simple category is immediately in being, equal to being in itself as already self-consciousness in itself. Being-as-effective-there is being-as-pure-thinking, only as thinking and pure thinking in itself, so that the involvement of consciousness with the other of itself in order to be itself, besides starting from the self as a simple unity, does so through conceptual synthesis in which the “loss of self” survives only as a moment of synthesis in simple unity of itself. In other words, ultimately, being-for-the-other – being related to and negating – is consciousness positing the differentiation of itself because it has always already been itself as a unity.

For Beauvoir, there is a lack of an ambiguous immediacy in *being in a relationship* to another, because there one is in oneself and for oneself for objectivity in it, in being-for-the-other as one who is there and, consequently, being, as oneself, an ambiguous totality in relation to the exteriority there and in relation to oneself as becoming from there. The point, therefore, is that in Hegel self-consciousness does not have a dimension of loss of self that is the positing of the ambiguous immediacy of corporeal presence as being there. As we have seen, the way Beauvoir thinks about corporeality accounts for this issue, since presence “[...]is nowhere else but in the act that makes present, it is only realized in the *creation of concrete connections* [*dans la création de liens concrets*]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 255, my emphasis), so that as embodied becoming, such movement has “[...] a certain carnal thickness [*épaisseur charnelle*] [...]” (Beauvoir, 2007b, p. 80) that makes it always be immediately there “[...] in a perpetual tension to keep being at a distance [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 31) in the very being-related that one already is. Subjectivity

is, therefore, materially possible as a certain embodied material becoming that connects to the world in which it is realized.

Therefore, she states that “[...] our body is a mechanical force capable of provoking determined effects in the material world, while at the same time being the expression of our existence [...]” (Beauvoir, 2007a, p. 57). Insofar as there is a fundamental ambiguity in the emergence of becoming as being in being for the other, being placed within it in a general conditioning relationship in which it distances itself, the continuously renewed realization of a sensible link that unites and separates subjectivity and world is admitted, in which corporeality is delivered to objective and concrete effectiveness as a “thing among things,” while at the same time establishing the effective being of lived presence that expresses itself as itself at a distance from the inherent, ambiguous, fundamental link of distancing.

As we can see, Beauvoir is not eliminating from the process of becoming oneself the moment of positive totalization, which phenomenally occurs as a presence that makes the lived experience of oneself a unity that must be. The point is that she sustains this synthesis in corporeality as an ambiguous whole, because the body is and is not delivered to the other of itself in which it makes itself present, so that here being for the other is inherence at a distance as being the concrete relation that the body is as posited at the same time as it posits for itself in itself this past totality of inherence and retreat as its internal moment of being

for the other. Similarly, it is not a matter of affirming that the process of becoming oneself as thought in Hegel is pure in the sense of not being “with things,” since it qualifies itself as continuously related to them. The differentiation proposed by Beauvoir consists in pointing out that the assumption that it is thought articulating itself to itself and within itself that determines its own actuality and effectiveness as an objective being that has already become, and at the same time determines the general conditions of objectivity in which it is there as an existent that has this objectivity for itself, implies that its “loss of self in relation to things” does not in fact amount to a “loss” in concreteness, insofar as this link with the other of itself is only a constitutive qualification when it occurs in the very general form of the simple conceptual unity that places this negative moment of self immediately and in concreteness as an internal moment of return to itself; which would end up erasing the importance of the *concreteness of being for the other* in the same movement that indicates it as essential.

Let us insist on this point, given its centrality to the understanding of ambiguity. The simple Hegelian unity is the positive that “[...] *is in itself* the difference of itself, as well as the negative” (Hegel, 2014, p. 120), that is, the simple infinitude of thinking “[...] or the absolute concept [...]”. Therefore, this self-equal essence refers only to itself. *To itself*; this is the Other to which the relation is directed, and *relating to itself* is, rather, *splitting itself*, or, precisely, that equality-with-itself is the interior difference” (Hegel, 2014, p. 127,

emphasis added). The splitting of the self as self-related negativity is immediately an already determining internal moment of emergence of the “[...] being-there *that relates to itself* [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 129, emphasis added), but this emergence of the relationship to itself as effective and objective immediately assumes, in its very emergence, the form of the totality of being-itself as an absolute concept that refers only to itself. Even though this unity is immediately fragmented again, its simple positivation has already determined the immediacy of its very emergence there, therefore, when Beauvoir indicates the need for an ambiguity precisely in this immediacy of emergence, she is affirming the need for the relational form of this emergence to remain as a determination of “being in a there” that is not merely the negative moment of the self-movement of placing oneself in the other of oneself as a simple unity that fragments; there must be a fragmentation that does not start from the self because it is its other relational condition from which it comes as a relation to itself *already fragmented in the concreteness of that there*.

We can therefore recount this entire problem from the identification of the simple unity with the form that Hegel calls the exclusive One, as previously indicated. The immediate unity of being of that which becomes a determined and concrete being, from which “[...] various determinations therefore immediately emerge [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 115), is being-there. Being-there as having a dimension in itself that is within it, it is given that it has negated its being for the other and made itself equal to itself mediated by this negation, in such a way that “[...] the in-itself is the *overcoming itself from within itself*” (Hegel, 2016, p. 127, emphasis added), constituting its determination as being-there that relates to itself as negativity. This concreteness of immediate emergence therefore has two sides: being-for-another as a determined negation in the very thing that emerges there, as well as being-for-another external to concreteness itself, “[...] a being-there external to the thing that is also its being-there, but does not belong to its being-in-itself” (Hegel, 2016, p. 128, emphasis added). This concerns the finitude of being-for-itself as something doubly limited there, in the development of its quality of being-in-itself as it has already become through “[...] involvement and contradiction [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 131), and the immediate limitation of the other externality before which it finds itself as a renewed process of return to itself.

Expanding on the question of finitude, Hegel states:

Being-there is determined: something has a quality and in it is not only determined, but limited; its quality is its limit, and, being affected by it, this something initially remains affirmative, quiet being-there. But this negation, developed in such a way that the very opposition of its being-there and of negation as its immanent limit is the being-within-itself of the something, and this, only becoming-in-itself, constitutes its finitude (Hegel, 2016, p. 134).

And further:

This dual identity of both, being-there and the limit, contains the fact that something has its being only at the limit and the fact that, insofar as the limit and the immediate being-there are both, at the same time, the negative of each other, the something, which is only at its limit, equally separates

itself and points, beyond itself, to its non-being and enunciates this as its being, and thus, passes into it (Hegel, 2016, p. 132).

Being-for-itself has to be its being, it points to it as a continuous movement of setting itself as a return to itself, precisely because of the finitude of being-there as a development of being-for-the-other, which obliges it as a something, as also a thing among things, to sustain in the negative unity with itself the limitation internalized as its immanent quality, insofar as it is a moment of becoming in itself, as well as the ever-renewed external limitation of concreteness. What is shown in this continuous relationship with the limitation imposed by finitude is precisely “[...] the restlessness of something at its limit, [...] of being the contradiction, which propels it beyond itself [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 133). However, such restlessness occurs to the extent that this something there is a being-for-itself, a becoming-itself that has a negation in its self as the “from whence they must,” so that there is properly an affirmative infinitude of itself as a continuous reestablishment of the unity of itself in the involvement with the finitude of its contradiction, which is also always reestablished.

The inherent quality of this infinitude of being-for-itself, insofar as it “[...] *is* and *is there*, present, current [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 154, emphasis added) as speculative thinking, is ideality, as the infinite unity of being-for-itself within which is present “[...] the moment of being-there [...] as *being-for-one*” (Hegel, 2016, p. 165, emphasis added) which ultimately expresses “[...] how the finite is in its unity with the infinite, that is, as ideal” (Hegel, 2016, p. 165). The infinitude of being-for-itself as ideality, which is concretely realized in the negation of being-there, becomes present immediately “[...] with a determination, a content that is different, but not such that it is *self-subsistent*, but as a *moment*” (Hegel, 2016, p. 155, emphasis added). That is to say, the simple unity presumed as the basis of becoming, insofar as “[...] in its other, it relates only to itself” (Hegel, 2016, p. 165), and which is the immediate unity of the effective presence of being-for-itself in which “[...] the form of the immediacy of being enters into being-for-itself as being-for-itself [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 170, emphasis added), makes this immediate emergence already only being-for-one, that is, itself as a posited unity of being-for-itself whose moment of being-for-another as there is already posited as an internal moment to “[...] the absolute unification of the relation with the other and the relation with oneself [...]” (Hegel, 2016, p. 171).

Simone de Beauvoir, while acknowledging that the unity of the immediacy of becoming is not as simple as self-subsistence in itself, points to the Hegelian problem in asserting that the immediacy of being-there as concrete and continuously repositioned in finitude is given as the presence of a conceptual unity that is one in itself, to the point that the qualitative determination of being posited in being-for-the-other – the externality that Hegel points to as the recurring “fall” of being-for-itself – is sustained as immediately *only* an internal moment of the self-subsistent unity of pure thinking. Again, therefore, according to Beauvoir, there would be a lack of ambiguity in this being that is present and actual precisely in the immediacy of the

finitude of the for-itself that is *posited in being-there at the same time* as it has within *itself* the ambiguous negation of that moment which is not only an internal moment, but also of inherence in being-for-the-other.

Based on these clarifications, it is appropriate to return to Beauvoir's definition of existence in a previously cited passage, in which it is stated that existence is an ambiguously negative positivation of oneself. In volume II of the *Science of Logic*, “The Doctrine of Essence,” speaking about the emergence of being-in-itself and-for-itself as existent, Hegel says:

The truth of being-there is, therefore, of being-condition; its immediacy is solely through the reflection of the ground relation, which posits itself as superseded. Thus, becoming, just like immediacy, is only an appearance of the unconditioned, insofar as the latter presupposes itself, and has its form in this, and the immediacy of being is, therefore, essentially, only a moment of the form (Hegel, 2017, p. 129, emphasis added).

Later, Hegel states that “[...] existence is the immediacy that arose from the overcoming of the mediation that relates through the ground and the condition, an immediacy that, in arising, precisely overcomes this very arising” (Hegel, 2017, p. 135). Existence is the immediate totality of the being that is there as in itself and for itself insofar as it appears already essentially determined in the sphere of being; therefore, the conditioning mediation of being there, immediately overcome as its arising, has already been a moment posited as a presupposition of unconditioned conceptual unity. Thus, its immediacy—being present there, which only is because it is there, its being there as posited—immediately assumes the very presupposed total form that is now positing itself as a presupposed moment of itself. The immediacy of existing there, of becoming as a totality of essentially reflected appearance, is given in the form of simple unity insofar as it arose through reflection of mediation with itself in its other being determined as itself posited by itself in its negative moment, a negative unity that is *immediately only* equal to itself in its other being of itself.

When Beauvoir says that *existence is positive to itself as lack*, this being the totality of immediate emergence there of a certain presence to itself, the qualitative determination of the negativity “being in being for the other” remains – existence is ambiguous – precisely because it is this, as Hegel himself already indicates, that gives the concrete emergence of the process of becoming oneself, thus assuming, now against Hegel, that this emergence cannot be immediately *posited* and *sustained* by a simple unity of self-consciousness. If becoming exists there as “[...] presence of flesh and blood [*présence de chair et d’os*] [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 19) that emerges in the movement in which “by its tearing away from the world [*arrachement au monde*] [...] it gives itself as present in the world and gives the world as present to itself” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 17), this immediacy in the general form of “having a condition of inherence from which it tears itself away, or being placed in a relationship at a distance in which it takes itself as distance,” is immediately – ambiguously – positively affirmed as “outside of itself” insofar as the conditioning negativity “being for another” is only an internal element to the self insofar as it is always also immediately becoming from it; But it does not become as that which has already posited this emergence in its form of being a unity of itself

that relates from the internal negation of that relationship; it is becoming as having to come from being placed there outside of itself as a condition of being a concrete and determined “self” there. Beauvoir is not, therefore, claiming a primary condition of being as pure negativity from which the dialectical movement of becoming oneself as presence would begin. It is, in fact, the affirmation that the dialectical totality of subjectivity in becoming is ambiguous already in its immediate emergence there, because the negative moment “being for the other” is immediately coming from a condition of loss of self in which it is as posited and as positing itself from that. This unfolds a second ambiguity, because the properly reflective being as a unity of thought is at a distance from itself as posited there in being for the other and at a distance from its moment of already having been ambiguously a self from being for the other as its moment in itself.

It is also important to highlight that Beauvoir is not affirming ambiguity in opposition to a character of completeness or closure supposedly present in Hegelian dialectics. In *For an Ethics of Ambiguity*, when speaking of dialectical totality, she states that “[...] the dialectical chaining of moments is only possible if there is in each moment an indeterminacy of the singular elements taken one by one” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 182). Here, however, she is making a statement about Hegel's general dialectical understanding, which is linked to the previous statement that “[...] since the spirit is restlessness [...]”, “[...] Hegel himself does not dare to delude himself with the idea of an immobile future [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 146). In other words, Beauvoir correctly perceives that the Hegelian process of totalization, in the being-there dimension of the experience of self-consciousness and in the objective dimension as the historical development of the spirit, is marked by moments of contingency which, while negative, keep this totality open in the sense that the fragmentation continually reinstated within this totality is what makes it a recurrent and “restless” process of totalization. Again, therefore, the ambiguity indicates an opposition specifically to the emergence of concrete being-there which, we could say, is already announced as open by Hegel himself as qualifying becoming, but only as an internal moment of self-consciousness as a simple unity.

At this point, returning to Simone de Beauvoir's personal notes allows us to further develop this discussion. In a letter to Sartre dated January 29, 1940¹⁰, Beauvoir says: “I was also struck when reflecting on how correct this Hegelian idea of the totality enveloping our individual becoming is [*cette idée hegelienne d'envelopper la totalité dans notre devenir individuel est juste*] [...]” (Beauvoir, 2018, p. 181, emphasis mine), and states that this made her recall a conversation she had with Sartre himself about “[...] what meaning the point of view of universal life would have [...]” (Beauvoir, 2018, p. 182) for individual becoming. She then indicates that, although she previously agreed with Sartre and thought that “[...] this point of view would lead everything back to a kind of absurd indifference [...]”, her perspective had changed

¹⁰ The letters between Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre were published separately in two volumes, as a specific internal moment within the personal notes that Beauvoir had been making since her youth.

when she assumed, through “[...] the influence of Hegel [...]”, that this place of the individual “[...] is real [*est réel*] [...]” (Beauvoir, 2018, p. 182, emphasis added)¹¹. We see a change concerning the assumption that, since having a point of view on universality is through involvement, it is a place of inherence, the universal would not be an absolute negation of the singularity of this “involvement”, therefore, a void of indifference would not be created that would presume that the properly qualitative and concrete determination has been negated in a kind of absolute suspension of relations.

Despite the importance of this passage for establishing significant differences between the thought of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir¹², what it presents as significant for the argumentative development of this work consists precisely in the fact that we have here indicated, albeit only as an initial outline, the acceptance and critique of Hegel that was discussed earlier in its most developed form. That is, the dialectical concreteness of corporeal presence, insofar as it is posited from a condition of involvement as the “there” of its existence, can still be said to be ambiguous if it is thought of as a point of anchoring and retreat of annihilation in that same relationship.

We can also see that Beauvoir's critique of Hegelian thought, that despite the indication of the concreteness of presence as a qualitative and renewed passage through the other of the self in becoming, this dimension in Hegel loses precisely such concreteness because what sustains the basis of this perspective is the development of spiritual unity in which subject and object are identical, so that the presence of being there is “[...] only an abstract moment in the History of the absolute Spirit” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 129), points to an issue also indicated by other authors. Adorno, for example, in *Three Studies on Hegel* states:

¹¹ The complete quoted passage is: “I was also struck when reflecting on how correct this Hegelian idea of the totality being involved in our individual becoming is – for when we are concerned with creating a work, it is certain that we observe it in itself as a moment of total becoming in which all the past is realized and which is in effective connection with all the future. I recall a conversation at the ‘Louis XIV’ to find out whether or not we think of ourselves from the limits of a human life and our questioning of what meaning the point of view of universal life would have, a point of view that would exclude the limitation of death and the being-towards-death dimension of life. It seemed to us then that this point of view would lead everything back to a kind of absurd indifference. But I no longer think so; in short, this point of view is real, and the influence of Hegel in conjunction with some events made me adopt, from within, for the first time in my life, this attitude [...]” (Beauvoir, 2018, pp. 181-182, emphasis added).

¹² The difference between Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre will not be discussed here; however, it is necessary to state, albeit briefly, that Hegelian philosophy in general, and dialectics in particular, is a central point of this discussion. That is to say, the relationship between the moments of being and nothingness in Sartre, as we see from **The Transcendence of the Ego** but which is more developed in **Being and Nothingness**, is a non-dialectical relationship. Precisely for this reason, Sartre asserts that there is a radical opposition between being-in-itself external to consciousness-for-itself, in which there is “[...] no single part of being that is distance from itself [...]” (Sartre, 2016, p. 130), and the self-negativity of consciousness as presence to itself that actively brings nothingness into its being, which distances it from the opacity of fully external being-in-itself. Thus, “[...] if the opposition is radical and if the in-itself is being, then the for-itself, being fundamentally other than the in-itself, can only be nothing” (Bornheim, 2016, p. 38). This unfolds into the consideration that “my being-for-the-other is a fall through the void towards objectivity [...] this fall is alienation” (Sartre, 2016, p. 378). Not having a dimension in itself as a determining relation of being in itself as a return of being to the other, Sartrean consciousness sustains itself as a void full of being that determines itself as such, as an absolute nothingness of being in relation to fullness in itself, its merely external and secondary passage through being-towards-the-other. This is clearly opposed to the perspective of ambiguity in Simone de Beauvoir that is being discussed here.

Although dialectics demonstrates the impossibility of reducing the world to a fixed subjective pole and methodically pursues the reciprocal negation and production of objective and subjective moments, Hegel's philosophy, as a philosophy of the Spirit, remained in idealism. Only the *doctrine of identity between subject and object inherent in idealism* – which, according to its simple form, anticipates privileging the subject – grants it that force of totality that allows the work of the negative, the fluidification of particular concepts, the reflection of the immediate and then again the overcoming [*Aufhebung*] of reflection. (Adorno, 2013, p. 82, emphasis mine).

We also have Lukács, who in his work on Hegel previously cited says:

[...] *if the objectivity of objects is the product of a temporary rupture of the identical subject-object, it is inevitable that the criterion of the supreme truth of the global process resided in the demonstration of the identity between subject and object, in the self-achievement of the identical subject-object. If the trajectory of this spirit, however, starts from an original identity, which needs to be presupposed in this construction, and the process itself consists in the creation of objectivity through “alienation,” it is absolutely necessary that Hegel represent the attainment of identity between subject and object in the form of [...] overcoming objectivity as such* (Lukács, 2018a, p. 686, emphasis mine).

Without going into considerations about the particular perspectives of the philosophers cited, what matters for our discussion is the fact that both are pointing to the same problem in Hegel, which can only be indicated simultaneously with an agreement with dialectics and the perception, therefore, of a problem inherent in his idealist premise. Both Adorno and Lukács, with different purposes related to their respective theoretical developments, are affirming that, while Hegel indicates the need for a dialectical relationship between subject and object, which causes the totality of self-consciousness that is there to have in objectivity the necessary and recurrently reinstated alienation of itself, since the relationship between the poles is not fixed and the rupture of the totalization of becoming oneself always returns, as there is the idealist premise of the priority of the self as a unified reflection in itself in the putting oneself there immediately in objectivity, there is a moment, albeit temporary, of full unification of subject and object precisely as the foundation of emergence in objectivity. As we have seen, this is the same problem pointed out by Simone de Beauvoir in her own terms, in which she draws attention to the ambiguity of bodily presence as an inherent distance.

Therefore, according to Beauvoir, “[...] it is not necessary to think about a situation in order to *exist* [*pour l'exister*]” (Beauvoir, 2016b, p. 14, emphasis added), insofar as existing in the situation is having an ambiguous condition of bodily presence. Thus, what would be configured as the lived experience of individual becoming is having a “*common ground from which all singular existence is drawn*” [*fond commun sur lequel s'enlève*] (Beauvoir, 2016b, p. 9, emphasis mine), in which the lived experience would not be a complete immediacy in itself of pure presence of being, which would not be dialectical, insofar as the “common ground” of objectivity would not be its moment in itself as an involvement necessary to the other of itself. The lived experience is also not a negative totality that briefly became positive in relation to the situated loss of self, to the point that the situation ceases to be the concrete ground of the qualifying

inherence of this lived experience, in which there would be no ambiguity of involvement as an internal moment and condition from which one “tears oneself away”.

In turn, it is also from this situation that we can return to the question of the recognition of consciousnesses which, in the passage from the *Journal de Guerre* with which the discussion of this text began, Beauvoir said was the Hegelian “idea” that caught her attention and which she accepted along with the affirmation of distance from herself. In a note following that passage, Beauvoir clarifies that the requirement of recognition of consciousnesses by one another means, fundamentally, that “if the value of these consciousnesses disappears, the value of mine also ceases to exist” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 365), and that this is “[...] intimately linked to the social [...]” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 365). Given that being-for-the-other is the ambiguous mediation necessary for becoming oneself, it is this mediation that develops as the historical social totality from which each concrete presence has the possibility of returning to itself, qualified by the being given to it as the exteriority of generality in which it possesses a “place” of being recognized, which is already indicated by Hegel himself, when he states that “Self-consciousness is in itself and for itself when and because it is in itself and for itself for an Other: that is to say, it only exists as something recognized” (Hegel, 2014, p. 142). However, Beauvoir further states that “[...] this relationship to the other in its existential complexity [*complexité existentielle*] [...]” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 364), which is posed by the “*individual situation* [...] and its relationship with the social (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 363, emphasis added)”, implies that “a social thought must deliberately take men as its object. (Consciousness being this object, but as rendered passive [*mais comme passivée*])” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 364, emphasis added).

In these initial notes, although there is no development of the understanding of the ambiguous corporeal presence, in which the ontological need of the self to have its being given to another arises from the loss of self-inherence and distancing that places it in objectivity as an objective being there, Beauvoir is already assuming the general Hegelian premise of being-for-the-other and its implication for recognition, but with some specific indications of her own: 1- self-consciousness, used here by the author still in a Hegelian way to speak of the general form of becoming, is existentially situated also as a passive object in being-for-the-other, it has a recognized being because it exists as posited as an object for the objectivity in which it is situated despite its movement of positing itself for itself; 2- even though she is not merely a being given to being, she is also “[...] that towards which she transcends herself [...]” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 362), this movement of consciousness always continues to start from this condition of *also* already being passively surrendered to her situation as a recognized being¹³. Therefore, it is once again perceived how Beauvoir

¹³ Given the limitations of this text and its main focus, the discussion of Hegelian recognition in Simone de Beauvoir will not be developed. However, it is important to mention how this is addressed by Mariana Teixeira in her article “Ambiguity and laceration: Simone de Beauvoir, reader of Hegel and Kojève”. The author presents the question of recognition from the way it appears in *The Second Sex*, particularly when Beauvoir refers to the conflict between two self-consciousnesses that tend to place the other in the position of the Other as negative for oneself. After stating that Kojève's reading of Hegel, initially unconcerned

assumes, from the beginning, a Hegelian dialectical basis while internally conceiving within this basis another way of thinking about the relationship between being oneself and being for the other, characterized by passive and ambiguous surrender to the situation.

The question of ambiguity in Beauvoir unfolds even further if we consider the fact that, in parallel to her reading of Hegel, the philosopher also turned to Marx. As Sonia Kruks points out, “it is no exaggeration to say that from 1940 onwards Marxism remained a core of integral and vital constitution of Beauvoir’s political-intellectual orientations” (Kruks, 2017, p. 237), specifically in the way that “material life in its Marxist sense is [...] strongly constitutive of situations [...]” (Kruks, 2017, p. 237), so that Marx would offer “[...] fundamental understandings about the material aspects of human existence” (Kruks, 2017, p. 239). The decisive text for this point of discussion is the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*¹⁴, more specifically, the part in which Marx establishes a critique of Hegel.

In the chapter entitled “Critique of Hegelian Dialectics and Philosophy in General,” after stating that the “[...] greatness of Hegelian ‘*Phenomenology*’ [...]” consists in the affirmation of “[...] negativity as a driving and generating principle [...]” (Marx, 2015, p. 123), Marx critically analyzes the way in which objectivity is posited in the process of objectification of self-consciousness in this dialectical perspective. Thus, Marx affirms that the specific problem consists in the fact that “[...] the *object of consciousness* is nothing other than *self-consciousness*, or that the object is only objectified self-consciousness [...]. (The settling of man = self-consciousness)” (Marx, 2015, p. 124, emphasis added). Ultimately, “[...] *thingness* is by no means, therefore, *autonomous, essential*, in relation to self-consciousness, but rather a mere creature, something *posited [Gesetztes]* by it, and the thing that is posited, instead of confirming itself, is merely a confirmation

with its properly Hegelian meaning, privileges an idea of transcendence as absolute liberation from immanence (Teixeira, 2022, p. 34), from the dimension of being-in-itself to another, Mariana shows the significant difference in Simone de Beauvoir’s understanding. According to the author, Beauvoir differs from Kojève precisely because of her premise of existential ambiguity, in which the relationship between transcendence – becoming for oneself – and immanence – being in oneself immediately linked to being for the other – is a continuous mediation because “[...] transcendence can only be achieved through, and not against, immanence” (Teixeira, 2022, p. 36, emphasis added), and this is due to the fact that it is as a body that the dimension of being situated in the world is given; humanity being, therefore, “[...] a historical becoming marked by this fundamental ambiguity” (Teixeira, 2022, p. 37). At this point, therefore, Beauvoir would be closer to Hegel than Kojève. Thus, it is important to highlight that the reading supported here in this text finds an affinity of theoretical framing with such commentary; While this article focuses on explaining the specific way in which Hegelian self-consciousness’s dialectic forms the basis for both approaching and distancing itself from Simone de Beauvoir’s existential ambiguity, Mariana Teixeira presents a similar general approach between ambiguity and dialectics, driven, in turn, by the centrality given to the question of recognition and how important this is to the specific issues of *The Second Sex*.

¹⁴ As Mark Poster (1975, p. 42) points out, the reading of Marx in France fundamentally begins with the publication of the translation of fragments of the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 in the first volume of *Revue marxiste*, coordinated by Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman, who were also responsible for the translations. For further considerations on Simone de Beauvoir’s political and intellectual context in relation to Marx’s thought and, particularly, in relation to the “official reading” of Marx upheld by the French Communist Party, see Sonia Kruks, 2017, pp. 236-238.

of the act of positing [...]” (Marx, 2015, p. 126, emphasis added) of consciousness in its process of becoming itself.

We can see, therefore, that the central problem presented by Marx consists in the fact that there would be no effectiveness truly independent of the self-positing of consciousness; there is a presupposed simple unity that fragments and reunites, and there is no having been fragmented by the conditions practically imposed, since there is no experience of determining of becoming that is not to reunite everything in conceptual unity precisely in its concrete effectiveness as objective being. Given Hegel's idealist presupposition, to be effective is only to be as speculative thinking, in such a way that effectiveness itself as a determining concreteness over self-consciousness ceases to exist, not because it would fully lose its independence as something in itself in relation to consciousness, or because it would cease to be a necessary moment of the dialectical fragmentation of the negative movement of becoming itself, the problem consists in the fact that there is no determination posited as concrete effectiveness that posits and qualifies as being there the self-consciousness independently of its movement of self-positing, but realizing itself alongside such self-positing.

These considerations are drawing attention to precisely the same problem that was discussed earlier based on Simone de Beauvoir's reading of Hegel. However, Marx is even more specific in developing his critique, a specificity that also proves significant for the issue of ambiguity in Beauvoir. According to Marx:

“When the actual, corporeal man, with his feet firmly on the ground, [...] establishes his essential objective and effective forces [...], this [act of] establishing is not the subject; it is the subjectivity of essential objective forces, whose action, therefore, must also be objective. [...] He creates, establishes only objects, because he is established by means of these objects [...]” (Marx, 2015, p. 126, emphasis added).

Further on, we also have:

“Man is immediately a natural being. As a natural being, and as a living natural being, he is, on the one hand, endowed with natural forces, with vital forces, he is an active natural being; [...]. It is identical: to be (sein) objective, natural, sentient and at the same time to have outside oneself an object, nature, meaning, or to be an object itself, nature, meaning for a third party (Marx, 2015, p. 127, emphasis added).

From Marx's perspective, the already mediated immediacy of being-there as objective being is posited by the sensible and therefore corporeal dimension of the individual, at which point he is posited as an object for something other than himself. It is no coincidence, therefore, that he calls this self-positing a “settling” in objectivity, which is *simultaneously* a “being settled” by it, insofar as being objective for oneself is dialectically identical to having been posited in objectivity itself as an effectiveness independent of this self, and which qualifies it in this dialectical independence from it. Therefore, the previous critical observation that “settling” or “positing oneself” is thought of in a Hegelian sense as completely equal to the self-positing of self-consciousness independent of itself, so that, ultimately, there would not properly be a

settling/being posited of consciousness independent of itself, insofar as it would not be objectively posited for another effectiveness other than itself. For Hegelian self-consciousness, “knowledge is its *only* objective behavior” (Marx, 2015, p. 129, emphasis mine), in such a way that its being for objectivity is reduced to this subsumed in the form of knowledge that “distinguishes itself from and relates” to self-consciousness; therefore, the dimension of being as an *object for* objectivity disappears, being-there as the quality of being as “[...] object of another being [...]” (Marx, 2015, p. 127).

Agreeing with Lukács in stating that, for Marx, “Hegel’s idealist illusion arises [...] precisely because the ontological process of being and genesis is too closely approximated to the process of understanding [...]”, so that “[...] the latter comes to be understood as a substitute and even as an ontologically superior form of the former” (Lukács, 2018b, p. 88), we can highlight the importance of these passages from the *Manuscripts*. The ontological process that determines the being of Hegelian self-consciousness is, as we have seen, equated, albeit “[...] only for a moment [...]” (Marx, 2015, p. 126), to the speculative totalization process of conceptual understanding, so that, by drawing attention to the concreteness of the individual’s corporeal and sensitive development “[...] with feet firmly on the ground [...]” (*Ibidem*, p. 126), Marx affirms that dialectical negativity in objectivity is a kind of settling/being placed and being settled/being placed by it.

The importance of this for the discussion of this work on Beauvoir is, therefore, twofold. Firstly, we have that her concern with the concreteness of situated corporeal presence assumes a critical position in relation to Hegel precisely in the indication of effective being-there as a condition of involvement and inherence with the thickness of her existence, and this is structured on the basis of the Marxist critique present in the *Manuscripts*. Furthermore, and to be more specific, the general idea of ambiguity as indicative of this bodily presentified dialectical involvement, the ontological determination of having to come from being to the other objective also posited within it as an object, shows itself as an existential development of Marx’s assertion that effective being-there is a simultaneous “positing” and “being posited” in the very link with objectivity, in which the moment of being an object posited for objectivity as objective being within it is not merely internal to the synthesis of oneself as becoming-there, but is simultaneously and immediately the very objective starting point of this becoming that is corporeal and sensible¹⁵.

In short, it seems possible to suggest that Simone de Beauvoir’s position in relation to Hegel, as previously presented in this work, which implies a general acceptance of Hegelian dialectics along with its critique, specifically in the distancing from the ambiguous self in the process of becoming oneself as a corporeal

¹⁵ It is therefore understandable why Beauvoir’s critique of Hegel, as seen, aligns with the readings of Lukács and Adorno. Like both philosophers, Beauvoir starts from the premise that Marx’s reading of Hegelian dialectics, precisely as a materialist one, presents a problem in Hegel that cannot be ignored: the unification between subject and object based on the subject itself as a self-subsistent ideal unity, dissolving its dialectically announced concreteness within itself as a presupposed simple unity.

presence, occurs to the extent that she equally assumes the general basis of the Marxist critique discussed above. Thus, the ambiguous positivation of existence as lack, and all the discussion that this implies in relation to the lived experience of presence, would be a kind of development of an existentialist philosophy based on Hegelian dialectics and mediated by Marx's position, which draws attention to the problem of presuming that being effective is simply being conscious of oneself, which, in Beauvoir, appears as an indication that becoming oneself has in the thickness of “[...] ambiguity of its condition [...]” (Beauvoir, 2013, p. 12) corporeal the mediating loss of self in being for the other to the same extent that it has this distance in itself; after all, “[...] the body is from the beginning the diffusion of a subjectivity [*le corps est d’abord le rayonnement d’une subjectivité*] [...] that effects the understanding of the world” (Beauvoir, 2016b, p. 13).

In this sense, the assertion that Hegel's dialectic is an unavoidable moment in the process of understanding how Simone de Beauvoir thinks about existential ambiguity is justified. Ultimately, one can say that Beauvoir distances herself from Hegel's philosophy from its inherent connection as a starting point, and it is within this distance that Marx's critique emerges, from which the philosopher develops her own considerations that, dialectically, continually return to and point towards her ambiguous Hegelian “ground.”

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Nathan Menezes Amarante Teixeira

Holds a PhD in Philosophy from UFRJ (2020), conducting research in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy, focusing on Ethics, Political Philosophy, and Ontology, primarily based on the works of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Lukács, and Simone de Beauvoir. He is currently a substitute professor in the Philosophy Department at UNIRIO.

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