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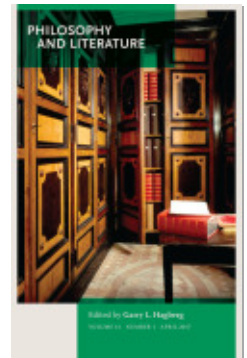
Sartre and Koestler: Bisociation, Nothingness, and the
Creative Experience in Roth's *The Anatomy Lesson*

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JAMES DUBAN

SARTRE AND KOESTLER: BISOCIATION, NOTHINGNESS,
AND THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE IN ROTH'S *THE
ANATOMY LESSON*

For my son Nathaniel

Abstract. What is the compatibility of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and Arthur Koestler's *Insight and Outlook*, and what is the significance of those correspondences for the imagination of Philip Roth, as suggested by *The Anatomy Lesson*? Possible answers, as implied by Roth's narrative, suggest the pertinence of the philosophical and psychological concerns of Sartre and Koestler. Therein resides one of Roth's significant contributions to speculative philosophy and the history of ideas. Moreover, Roth's depiction, in narrator Nathan Zuckerman, of bisociated and existential consciousness is consistent with time-proven instances of ingenuity across the arts and sciences.

RECENT STUDIES SUGGEST THAT Philip Roth's creative impulse is in some measure indebted to Arthur Koestler's *Insight and Outlook* and to Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (published as *L'être et le néant*, 1943).¹ Koestler advances a theory of "bisociative" thinking—that is, the perception of consonance amidst the clash of seemingly dissonant planes of knowledge. The theme finds expression in the very title of Koestler's book, given the compatibility, despite opposite root prepositions, of such words as "insight" and "outlook." Insofar as Roth's narrator Nathan Zuckerman mentions "Koestler" in *The Anatomy Lesson*, Zuckerman's otherwise obscure lament (because of writer's block and

neck pain) about having “too much inlook for the outlook” might reference Koestler’s treatise.²

So, it would appear, does Roth’s commentary on his own *The Plot Against America*, specifically his description of how the hapless children of that narrative, when suffering “something like the European Jewish experience,” end up joining “the trivial to the tragic.”³ That characterization may emerge from Koestler’s seminal discussion of Jonah: “The Night Journey—or the Meeting of the Tragic and Trivial Planes.”⁴ This chapter of *Insight and Outlook*, featuring innovative exegesis, explores the bisociative nature of ethical engagement. Insofar as bisociative thinking likewise characterizes Zuckerman’s thinking in *The Anatomy Lesson*, that novel’s Koestlerian resonance relates bisociatively, I suggest, to existential nothingness.

That philosophical category, by Sartre’s own admission, pertains to Heideggerian *ekstasis* (Greek, meaning “standing outside of”). As adapted by Sartre, ekstastic relations prescribe a need for consciousness “(1) to not-be what it is, (2) to be what it is not, (3) to be what it is not and to not-be what it is—within the unity of a perpetual referring” of one category to another.⁵ This formulation appears to figure in one of Roth’s interview utterances about Nathan Zuckerman in *The Anatomy Lesson*: “My hero has to be in a state of vivid transformation or radical displacement. ‘I am not what I am—I am, if anything, what I am not!’”⁶ Zuckerman—in his existential deliberations and anguish over the difference between lived experience and creative writing—unwittingly embodies the compatibility of Koestlerian bisociation and the existential dilemma of being and not being what he is and is not.

He does so, I suggest, in accord with Roth’s Koestlerian belief that the challenge, for the literary artist, is bivalent: “One of my continuing problems as a writer has been . . . to be true to these *seemingly inimical realms of experience* that I am strongly attached to by temperament and training—the aggressive, the crude, and the obscene, at one extreme, and to something a good deal more . . . refined at the other.”⁷ Thus, whatever Koestler’s likely knowledge of *Being and Nothingness*,⁸ it remained for Roth’s *The Anatomy Lesson* to dramatize the compatibility of existential nothingness (that is, *possibility*) and Koestlerian bisociation. Such is Roth’s understated (because fictionalized) but significant contribution to the fields of speculative philosophy and the history of ideas.

Pertinent to these bivalent and ultimately compatible outlooks on creativity is Sartre’s distinction between Being For-itself (*l’être pour soi*) and Being In-itself (*l’être en soi*). The For-itself connotes ever-evolving

possibilities of consciousness that exist by not being the solidity and permanence of static Being In-itself. Ever transformative, and the epistemological foundation of freedom, the For-itself arises as the upsurge of negation comprising the possibilities of consciousness. Says Sartre, “The world (*is*) mine because it is haunted by possibles, and the consciousness of each of these is a possible self-consciousness which I *am*” (*B*, p. 104). In contrast, the static In-itself exists without potential—e.g., as rock, wood, soil, or as the immutable *past*. For Sartre, consciousness transcends the past while remaining contingently related to it, as evidenced by contiguous identity and ethical accountability.

Still, lacking the stability and completeness of the In-itself, consciousness is *anguished* by the freedom of its indeterminate flight toward a never-“realized” future—that is, toward “the continual possibilization of possibles” (*B*, pp. 128–29). At the core of that bisociated relation between the dross In-itself and the kinetic flight of nothingness and “Freedom” (*B*, p. 129) are Hegelian possibility and Kierkegaardian anguish over what one lacks. Also crucial, as previously noted, is Heideggerian *ekstasis*, though as modified by Sartre to connote the obligation of consciousness not to be what it *is* and to be what it *is not*.⁹ Zuckerman—in his existential deliberations and anguish over the difference between lived experience and creative writing, all part of this ekstastic mandate—unwittingly illustrates the compatibility of Koestlerian bisociation and the existential dilemma of being and not being what he is and is not.

Germane to what I take to be the Roth-Zuckerman unified perception of key emphases in Koestler and Sartre is the way, for Koestler, that artistic bisociation captures “eternity looking through time”—the phrase originating in Thomas Carlyle’s discussion of symbols in *Sartor Resartus* (as quoted by Koestler): “The infinite is made to blend itself with the finite; to stand visible, as it were, attainable there. Of this sort are all true works of art; in this we discern eternity looking *through time*” (*I*, 320; emphasis added). Koestler, in an interview, praised Hemingway’s narratives in just these terms: their “trivial dialogue” intimates “glimpses of eternity,” as experienced “through the window of time.” To “get those two [eternity and time] together,” says Koestler, is “the essence of craftsmanship.” Literary representations of eternity, unanchored to temporal experience, he continues, are otherwise “a bore.”¹⁰ Roth, in comments about Virginia Woolf, appears to approach Koestler’s thought existentially—though by associating “consciousness” with “eternity” when claiming that “fiction . . . invents consciousness,” but that consciousness will become lost in its own immensity lest it move through time and

become grounded in tangible experience. As Roth elsewhere remarks, “If you neglect consciousness, you write popular fiction; if you have only consciousness without the gravity of experience, you have the failed experiment of Virginia Woolf, where consciousness so dominates the novel that it ceases to move *through time* the way a novel needs to.”¹¹ Such is Roth’s bisociative outlook on the requisite melding of temporality and consciousness in narrative personae who *are* what they *are not* and who *are not* what they *are*—and in fictive worlds containing “the liveliest possibilities” and “possibilities and counter-possibilities.”¹²

The dramatization, in the consciousness of Zuckerman, of the consonance of dyadic thought in *Being and Nothingness* and *Insight and Outlook* may owe something to Koestler’s prefacing a key chapter of his text with a quotation, from Wolfgang Köhler’s *Dynamics in Psychology*, about unexpected relations among distant facts. The passage reads as follows: “*The most fortunate moments in the history of knowledge occur when facts which have been as yet no more than special data are suddenly referred to other apparently distant facts, and thus appear in a new light*” (I, p. 237; emphasis in original). Roth, with related bisociative emphasis, prefaces *The Anatomy Lesson* with a quotation from James H. Cyriax’s *Textbook of Orthopaedic Medicine*: “The chief obstacle to correct diagnosis in painful conditions is the fact that the symptom is often felt at a distance from its source” (A, p. 245).

In the latter text, phantom pain is part of a bisociated occurrence uniting seemingly unrelated, but ultimately congruent, phenomena. In that vein, Zuckerman’s excruciating neck pain, evading physiological diagnosis, is at once Sartrian and Koestlerian. On the one hand the pain existentially betokens the anguish of the creative writer: he must consult, yet imaginatively transform, the stuff of raw experience through an inventive process resembling the upsurge of nothingness, or future possibility, within the dross In-itself of mere Being, including past experience. Yet, in *The Anatomy Lesson*, such existential flight is also Koestlerian because Zuckerman’s pain pertains to biographical misreadings of *Carnovsky* (A, p. 260)—i.e., *Portnoy’s Complaint*—by his family, Judge Wapter, and critic Milton Appel. They fail to perceive that “life and art are distinct” and that “writing is an act of imagination” (A, p. 271)—that is, a virtual metamorphosis of fact into fiction. Stated otherwise, narrative transforms past experience into fancy, or “illusion” (I, p. 413). Therein reside representations of existential nothingness or possibility, but viewed as recognizable experience through the window of time.

As Koestler remarks—though without linking bisociative cognition to *Being and Nothingness*—“what is represented in Art is not real things and events, but the artist’s experience or imagination of the nature, sequence, causes, shapes, and colours of those things and events” (*I*, p. 295). Rather different—for Koestler, Roth, and Zuckerman—is base “associative” (*I*, pp. viii, 37) cognition, which pertains to “the dim routine of existence” (*I*, p. 239) and that risks leading facile readers of literature to evade, through mere biographical interpretation, the nothingness, or possibilities, of an author’s or narrator’s imaginative flight. Just as, for Koestler, the “higher mental functions can only be described in bisociative, not associative, terms” (*I*, p. 377; also see p. 320), so, for Zuckerman, associative biographical readings habitually overlook the artistic impulse that Koestler attributes to the writer’s gift for entertaining “two fields bisociated in creating illusion” (*I*, 295; also see p. 413). Roth, in turn, approaches this dyadic outlook, though existentially, when characterizing Zuckerman with reference to the “ekstatic” dimensions implied by “I am not what I am—I am, if anything, what I am not!” Koestler himself may have eventually apprehended the pertinence of Sartre for aesthetic bisociation when, in an elaborative exploration of bisociative creativity, Koestler references the artist’s “displacements of emphasis onto some blacked-out range of the existential spectrum.”¹³

As dramatized by Zuckerman’s bivalent consciousness, the bisociative point of *Insight and Outlook*, when perceived in harmony with the Sartrian distinction between being and nothingness, constitutes a rejoinder to Milton Appel’s biographical assault on *Carnovsky*. That is so because the act of writing, influenced by what Koestler calls “creative stress” (*I*, p. 248)—or “the tension between two planes of existence” (*I*, p. 378)—“can only be relieved by departure from the original field of . . . habit and by shifting the locus of operations to a different field; that is, by a bisociative act” (*I*, p. 248; also see pp. 253, 264). That stress—requisite for the creative outcome of bisociative thinking (*I*, p. 377)—is implied by the tension caused by Zuckerman’s “inlook and outlook.” The pain that accompanies the challenge of reconciling distant fields or matrices in the creation of fictive characters is, for Zuckerman, in some measure analogous to existential anguish, or the indefinite flight of the Sartrian For-itself toward possibility (*B*, pp. 129, 464). As applied to literature, the outcomes are literary personae reflecting the often-unsettling nothingness of imaginative excursion inspired by the author’s use of now-transcended and radically transformed familial experience, along the spectrum of fictive possibility.

Congruity of insight by Sartre and Koestler may also figure in Roth's utterance that "Sheer Playfulness and Deadly Seriousness are my closest friends"¹⁴—existential because of the fictive upsurge of possibility implied in narrative bisociation. Consider, along these lines, Zuckerman's flight of sexual fantasy in *The Ghost Writer*, where he bisociates, via imaginative possibility, the identities of Amy Bellette and Anne Frank. Zuckerman further fantasizes, to calm his parents' fear that he is a Jewish anti-Semite, that he has wed and impregnated Anne Frank, who, in his imagination, has survived the concentration camps. Such are the unfettered existential possibilities of narrative bisociation. Similarly bisociated and existential is Zuckerman's encounter with one of his mistresses, Jaga, in *The Anatomy Lesson*: administering sex atop his ailing and prostrate body, while narrating an exceedingly tragic account of her life, Jaga at one point interjects—in midsentence, no less—"you want to come now?" (A, p. 326). The trivial and the tragic here collide within the realm of existential possibility—that is, within an outlandish fictive scenario.

Such, moreover, is the bisociative mood and impact of Zuckerman's masquerade as pornographer Milton Appel, an imaginative foray that Roth himself, commenting on Zuckerman's creativity, calls "the best thing" Zuckerman "does."¹⁵ The masquerade is both Sartrian and Koestlerian, since, when posing as Appel, Zuckerman laments that people, bored in pursuit of the "trivial," enter another realm via sex: "when people fuck they close their eyes and fantasize about something else, something that's absent, something that's elusive" (A, p. 360). The absent *something* is kindred to the upsurge of imaginative possibility—that is, the For-itself of existential nothingness.

Indeed, Roth has remarked—again intimating the bisociated nature of existential flight in *The Anatomy Lesson*—that the most interesting thing about Zuckerman is his bivalency. On the one hand Zuckerman, frustrated and physically incapacitated by writer's block, wishes to abandon creative writing and enter medical school; on the other, he luxuriates in the creation and enactment of a pornographic Milton Appel. For Roth, the book's success resides in the union of the two identities: "the inspiration came when the two things joined."¹⁶ While mainly Koestlerian in resonance, the statement is also Sartrian, as Roth has evoked the ekstatic dimensions to describe Zuckerman as a character who—especially when masquerading as Milton Appel—*is* what he *is not* and *is not* what he *is*.

Granted, Zuckerman's existential flight unsettles Milton Appel, Judge Wapter, and other latter-day Jeremiahs since—again with reference to Koestler—"each operative field" of a bisociated dyad "tends to facilitate its

'permitted' type of association and to inhibit all others." Particularly apt for Zuckerman's conflict with the powers that be is Koestler's remark that "operative fields may also refer to certain established *codes or patterns of behavior*" (*I*, p. 41; emphases in original). Thus, prohibition of artistic antinomianism arises from literary criticism that, resisting bisociation, would circumscribe or nullify Zuckerman's existential flight and the possibilities of "far out" narrative consciousness—such as that featured, beyond the concerns of *Carnovsky*, in the outlooks of Alexander Portnoy, Rita Cohen (*American Pastoral*), Mickey Sabbath (*Sabbath's Theater*), or Marcus Messner (*Indignation*). In each case of provocative outlook and utterance we see the relevance of Roth's quasi-existential remark (as noted above) that "fiction is not called fiction because it invents events, but because it invents consciousness."¹⁷ While Zuckerman may toy with the idea that "to make so much of consciousness may have been my first mistake" (*A*, p. 394), Roth recognizes that the fictive invention of consciousness corresponds, in some measure, to paradigms of creative thinking in *Being and Nothingness* and *Insight and Outlook*. Although Roth disarmingly claims, "My gift is to pretend,"¹⁸ his acts of fabrication—whether at the border of the trivial and the tragic or at the periphery of the serious and the playful—are partly inspired by existential possibility, at one with the "inlook and outlook" of bisociated cognition.

One might yet ask whether Roth's likely merging of Sartrean and Koestlerian outlooks finds precedent in creative thought across several disciplines. Stated otherwise, is Roth's invention of Zuckerman's bisociated consciousness psychologically consistent with time-proven measures and standards of ingenuity? Roth might well respond in the affirmative, for any number of reasons—though confirmation exists among notable scientists, writers, and artisans whose interviews reside in a book titled *The Creative Experience*, the editors of which claim to have studied "the phenomenology of the creative experience itself" (*CE*, p. 379). Roth figures in the volume because contributor Neil Simon, when asked about his mother, references *Portnoy's Complaint*, calling it "a brilliant, brilliant book" with which he fully identifies: "I've just been reading about myself" (*CE*, p. 367). More obsessively, in *Zuckerman Unbound*, Alvin Pepler takes such reader identification to extremes by accusing Zuckerman of having stolen from *him* the life of Gilbert Carnovsky: "those hang ups you wrote about happen to be mine, and . . . you knew it— . . . you stole it!"¹⁹

Of course, we do not know if Simon's remarks figure in Roth's creation of Pepler, or if reports of Simon's praise for *Portnoy's Complaint* led

Roth to seek out and eventually read *The Creative Experience*, ultimately appropriating, in comments about Virginia Woolf, Koestler's interview remarks about Hemingway, consciousness, and time. Nonetheless, as we shall now observe, recurrent attention in *The Creative Experience* to possibility and bivalent thinking lends credibility to Roth's dramatization in *The Anatomy Lesson* of bisociation and existential possibility as features of exceedingly creative persons who, with minor exception, are likely unfamiliar with Koestler's or Sartre's writings. They nonetheless exhibit bivalent apprehension and possibility when discussing their research or creativity. Taken collectively, their utterances anticipate and validate the psychological and philosophical accuracy of Zuckerman's "inlook and outlook," as implied existentially by the fictive possibilities surrounding his not being what he is and his being what he is not. Such categories, we shall observe, also open up a new way of understanding the cognitive and philosophical significance of bisociated narration in *The Anatomy Lesson*.

Among the individuals in *The Creative Experience* harboring something like the bisociative mindset of Zuckerman's existential outlook are: Aaron Copland (composer), George Nelson (architect and industrial designer), Ulrich Franzen (architect), Paul Saltman (molecular chemist), Morris Kline (mathematician), David Krech (neuropsychologist), Wilder Penfield (neurosurgeon), Bonnie Cashin (fashion designer), Robert Engman (sculptor), Froelich G. Rainey (archaeologist), Sidney Lumet (movie director), Merce Cunningham (choreographer and dancer), and Oppi Untracht (sculptor and enamelist). Perhaps Copland best anticipates the existential and phenomenological dimension of Zuckerman's consciousness by claiming that creativity, while difficult to define, is "really not very different from having ideas. I mean, what starts you thinking?" (*CE*, p. 273).

We earlier encountered that phenomenon via the ekstatic dyad of being and nothingness, which, in the juxtaposition of two seemingly unrelated but ultimately linked concepts, anticipates features of Koestler's bisociated vision of apparently alien, but reconcilable, planes of inquiry. In *The Creative Experience* something kindred to what Koestler calls bisociative thinking exists in Nelson's description of how, when creating the bubble lamp, he fused knowledge of exorbitantly expensive, hand-sewn Swedish silken lamps and—far afield from that craft—the use of plastics by a New Jersey company commissioned to mothball battleships for the U.S. Navy. "What's mothballing a battleship got to do with lamps?" (*CE*, p. 262)—well, just as much, we might say, as relaxing in a bath had to

do with Archimedes's preoccupation (as envisioned by Koestler) with the mathematical means of measuring the volume of asymmetrical objects (*I*, 251–55).

Moreover, what Nelson calls “the irritation factor”—his annoyance with the lavish expense of the Swedish hanging lamps, which led to thoughts of noncommissioned ships—corresponds to what Koestler defines as “creative stress” (*I*, p. 248) or “tension between two planes of existence” (*I*, p. 378). In *The Creative Experience*, several contributors attribute such creative stress to the “Aha! Experience” of “insight,” attributing such tension, as Krech does, to “the pressure of necessity” (*CE*, p. 65); or what Nelson labels “irritation” (*CE*, p. 254); or what Klein calls an incessant keeping of the “problem . . . in mind” (*CE*, p. 93); or what Saltman terms “brooding” or “worry” (*CE*, p. 118); or what Lumet, even closer in rhetoric to Koestler, calls the creative “tension” and “pressure” (*CE*, p. 194) that often lead to his capturing just the right cinematic take at an optimal, though sometimes arbitrary, moment.

In *The Creative Experience*, kindred moments of bisociation exist for Bonnie Cashin, whose line of clothing features “the cross-fertilization of ancient ideas with modern concepts” that stimulates “whole new directions in my thought” (*CE*, p. 247). She also boasts that inspiration for her “high fashion things” sometimes springs from mundane sources, such as the functionality of a “mechanic’s overalls” (*CE*, p. 249). And, relative to related interminglings of distant fields or matrices, Engman notes how, as he drives to work, “changes in the landscape” prove helpful to his solving “certain problems” (*CE*, p. 347) in sculpture. Bisociative, as well, for Cunningham, are the seemingly irreconcilable, but finally compatible, activities of contemporary dance and the National Football League: that odd collision of stimuli occurs on plane trips when he watches “Joe Namath on the professional football reruns” while plugging “the sound into the music channel” (*CE*, p. 184). In a related act of bisociation, Saltman, during a scientific experiment, will, “all of a sudden,” find himself “running around doing all kinds of different experiments distantly related to the problem” (*CE*, p. 121). Such excursions occasionally provide answers that Saltman has otherwise been seeking on only a single plane of inquiry.

Krech, in turn, is even more aggressively bisociative in trying “to reverse the field” (i.e., the cause-and-effect premises) of investigation. Thus, rather than inquire “‘How do chemical differences in the brain affect learning,’ we asked the reverse problem, ‘How does learning affect brain chemistry’” (*CE*, pp. 62–63). Similarly, when searching for

a “possible answer” for how the body absorbs iron, Saltman, at a dead end, changes the plane of inquiry: “I said we ought to look at the data not as if it were an inorganic chemical problem but as if it were a protein chemical problem. And we just developed a whole new approach” that led to their breaking “a whole new field of chemistry wide open” (*CE*, p. 118). Here, in particular, reside real-world analogues for the bisociated, possibility-infused insight and outlook of Nathan Zuckerman, not only in *The Anatomy Lesson* but even more emphatically in the premise-shifting possible worlds of *The Counterlife*, which Roth has recently characterized as “What if the opposite happened?”²⁰

And not far afield from the unlikely shifts of reality in *The Counterlife* is—within *The Creative Experience*—the consummate paradigm of possibility that Nelson offers. Recalling his early fascination with Sherlock Holmes, Nelson respects the assertion that “if you’re dealing with a problem and none of the possible solutions work, then the only solution that works has to be the impossible solution.” Thus when searching at different levels for answers to particularly vexing problems, Nelson has occasionally “arrived at a solution because I realized that all the ‘possibles’ had to be disregarded and that the only one that could be made workable was the impossible” (*CE*, p. 257). Such is the bisociated mind perpetually in flight toward possibility—as Sartre might characterize the phenomenon—on the far-fetched plane of the impossible. This provides further experiential precedent for the juxtaposition of Koestlerian and Sartrian cognition in the consciousness of Nathan Zuckerman and, arguably, in the complex structure and inverted narrative of Roth’s *The Counterlife*.

Within their collected interviews, contributors to *The Creative Experience* sometimes veer even more aggressively toward existential “flight” (that is, toward incessantly transcendent possibility), as suggested by Lumet’s attraction to working on multiple films: “When I’m editing one picture, I can think about the next picture” (*CE*, p. 192); or by Aaron Copland’s remark that, when composing music, “you are already ahead of yourself” (*CE*, p. 273); or by Neil Simon’s remark, not far removed from how Nathan Zuckerman enacts the identity of pornographer Milton Appel: “Usually, I am working on one thing and thinking about the next thing, which is also part of that life process of keeping it going, always afraid it’s all going to burn out” (*CE*, p. 371). Engman, noting that a sculpture is “never a finished work,” likewise explains the creative process in terms approaching existential flight: the work of art “answers a question which has been asked, and asks a new question. It answers the question of

refinement or self-refinement and asks the question of possible future refinements" (*CE*, p. 345). Bonnie Cashin similarly refuses to believe in creative "completion," since she always hungers "for further reaches and new insights" (*CE*, p. 244). Such flights of fancy further validate and "ground" the link between bisociation and the possibilities of the existential self, as argued by Koestler and Sartre, and as dramatized in Roth's creation of Nathan Zuckerman's ekstatic inlook and anguished outlook.

While all these statements anticipate—albeit in everyday rhetoric—Zuckerman's existential and bisociated cognition, one statement in *The Creative Experience* has the added benefit of helping us better approach the connection between pain and writing in *The Anatomy Lesson*—and as those phenomena pertain to the suggestion, advanced by several Roth scholars, that Nathan Zuckerman is at once the narrator and past sufferer of that novel. Yes, Zuckerman's physiologically untraceable neck pain and ensuing depression are related to Sartrian "pain consciousness"—even as that relates to Zuckerman's quandary whether to become a physician or continue as a creative writer.²¹ Still, scholarship shows that Zuckerman eventually persists in the act of creative writing, as shown by clues that he, ostensibly, *is* the author-narrator of *The Anatomy Lesson*.²²

Relevant, then, to the transcendence of pain and depression implied by Zuckerman's purported authorship of *The Anatomy Lesson* is the perspective on pain and creativity offered in *The Creative Experience* by Aaron Copland: "Too much depression will not result in a work of art because a work of art is an affirmative gesture. To compose, you have to feel that you are accomplishing something. If you feel you are accomplishing something, you won't feel so depressed. You may feel depressed, but it can't be so depressing that you can't move. No, I would say that people create in moments when they are elated about expressing their depression!" (*CE*, p. 274). Drawing upon this suggestion—that to express depression artistically is to be able to "compose" and move beyond depression and physical debilitation—we may now advance this of Zuckerman: narrator of his existential pain and physical incapacitation in *The Anatomy Lesson*, he has implicitly transcended his pain and depression via the existential flight implied by transformative narrative.

If, therefore, Koestler is accurate about the benefit of "earthing" or "grounding" the "personal predicament in the universal" (*I*, p. 331; see also p. 321), and if Roth exhibits related wisdom in "ground[ing] the mythological in the recognizable,"²³ then Zuckerman's existential bisociation finds corroboration, collectively, in the thinking of Copland, Simon,

Cashin, and Saltman, among others. Moreover, if, as Roth believes, the imaginative possibilities of Bellow and Malamud are richer for being “grounded in the colorful specificity of the locale,”²⁴ then the bisociated existentialism of Zuckerman, in *The Anatomy Lesson*, is all the more enchanting for its radical correspondence to case studies collected in *The Creative Experience*. Those provide, beyond a firm footing for several of Zuckerman’s imaginative excursions, enhanced appreciation for the narrative commingling, in *The Anatomy Lesson*, of bisociative cognition and existential flight.

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1. On Roth and Sartre, see James Duban, “Sartrean Nothingness: Roth’s *The Ghost Writer*, *The Anatomy Lesson*, *Zuckerman Unbound*, *The Prague Orgy*, and *Exit Ghost*,” *Philip Roth Studies* 10, no. 1 (2014): 11–33. Also see, for Roth’s debt to Sartre’s *Anti-Semite and Jew* (*Réflexions sur la question juive*, 1946), Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, “Philip Roth and American Jewish Identity: The Question of Authenticity,” *American Literary History* 13, no. 1 (2001): 90–103; Amos Morris-Reich, “The ‘Negative Jew’ and Individuality,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97, no. 1 (2007): 117–19; James Duban, “From Negative Identity to Existential Nothingness: Philip Roth and the Younger Jewish Intellectuals,” *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 13, no. 1 (2015): 43–55. Morris-Reich (104–6) relates the seminal philosophy of *Anti-Semite and Jew* to concepts in *Being and Nothingness*. Here and below, I limit my discussion of Sartrean “existentialism” to Sartre’s pre-Marxist, nontendentious philosophy.

On Roth’s apparent knowledge of Koestler, see James Duban, “Arthur Koestler and Meyer Levin: The Trivial, the Tragic, and Rationalization Post Factum in Roth’s ‘Eli, the Fanatic,’” *Philip Roth Studies* 7, no. 2 (2011): 171–86; James Duban, “‘That Butcher, Imagination’: Arthur Koestler and the Bisociated Narration of Philip Roth’s *Indignation*,” *Philip Roth Studies* 8, no. 2 (2012): 145–60; James Duban, “To Dazzle as Macbeth: Bisociated Drama in Philip Roth’s *The Humbling*,” *Comparative Drama* 46, no. 1 (2012): 1–16. For comprehensive overviews of Koestler’s life and ideas, see Michael Scammell, *Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic* (New York: Random House, 2009); Murray A. Sperber, “The Uses of Apocalypse: A Study of Arthur Koestler’s Life and Writing” (dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1974). Koestler socialized with Sartre but harbored ambivalent feelings about the philosopher’s anti-Gaullist outlook, as well as about Sartre’s evolution toward Marxism when Koestler had already repudiated Communist Party ideology, as dramatized in Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon* (1940). On Sartre and Koestler, see Mamaine Koestler, *Living with Koestler: Mamaine Koestler’s Letters, 1945–51*, ed. Celia Goodman (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), pp. 40, 43–44; Iain Hamilton, *Koestler: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 125, 157–58, 160, 218; Sidney A. Pearson Jr., *Arthur Koestler* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), p. 100.

2. Philip Roth, *The Anatomy Lesson*, in Philip Roth, *Zuckerman Bound: A Trilogy and Epilogue* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1985), p. 258 (on “inlook for the outlook”); hereafter abbreviated *A*. Koestler is named in *A*, p. 288. Also see Zuckerman’s “inwardness” and “outlook” (*A*, p. 259).

The suggestion that the phrase “insight and outlook” features opposite directions merging in congruent apprehension finds support in a passage from one of Koestler’s several autobiographies. He contrasts the “ego spiral,” which is “curled inward,” and the trajectory of an arrow “on its quest for the infinitely remote.” For Koestler, the arrow and the spiral find reconciliation in “two opposite trance-like states of heightened consciousness.” Arthur Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue: An Autobiography* (London: Collins, 1952), pp. 75–76.

3. Philip Roth, “The Story Behind ‘The Plot Against America,’” *New York Times Book Review* (September 19, 2004): 11. See also David Kepesh’s remark about what TV does best: “the triumph of trivialization over tragedy.” Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), p. 145.

4. Arthur Koestler, *Insight and Outlook: An Inquiry into the Common Foundations of Science, Art and Social Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 371–80; hereafter abbreviated *I*.

5. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 137; hereafter abbreviated *B*.

6. Philip Roth, “The Art of Fiction LXXXIV,” 1984 interview with Hermione Lee, in *Conversations with Philip Roth*, ed. George Searles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), p. 182; hereafter abbreviated *CR*.

7. Philip Roth, “On the Great American Novel,” in *Reading Myself and Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), p. 82 (emphasis added); hereafter abbreviated *R*. Such, in a far lighter context, is the state of mind Roth references when recounting radio broadcaster Red Barber’s description of Brooklyn Dodger “wild man” pitcher Rex Barney, eating a hotdog when the game appeared to be rained out. For Roth, that gratuitous culinary detail joined “the spectacular to the mundane, . . . furnishing an adolescent boy with a glimpse of an unexpectedly ordinary, even humdrum, side to male heroism.” Philip Roth, “My Baseball Years” (*R*, p. 183).

8. We do not know if Koestler read *Being and Nothingness*, though he likely would have. Mamine Koestler reveals that on January 16, 1948, “Sartre told me to read *L’Être et le néant* and I told him I shouldn’t understand it if I did” (*Living with Koestler*, p. 73). Although Koestler makes no mention of Sartre in either *Insight and Outlook* or *The Act of Creation* (1964), one suspects, given his conflicted friendship with the philosopher, that Koestler would have appreciated Sartre’s preoccupation with nothingness-as-possibility. I suggest as much, moreover, because in *The Age of Longing* (1951) Koestler satirizes Sartre via the Marxist apologetics of Professor Pontieux—identified as Sartre by Pearson (*Arthur Koestler*, p. 100)—who, in one incoherent speech, harps on the willing renunciation of freedom based on history’s realization of its aims “by the negation of its own negations” (Arthur Koestler, *The Age of Longing* [New York: Macmillan, 1951], p. 82). Such is the sorrowful manipulation of rhetoric and reason that Sartre would eventually codify in his 1960 *Critique of Dialectical Reason* to nullify the foundations of possibility and freedom in *Being and Nothingness*. For the effort to have a Marxist “negation of the negation” trump individual possibility and freedom, see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*,

vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Rée, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: Verso, 1976), p. 80. See, as well, Koestler's tasking of Sartre and President Franklin D. Roosevelt for their toleration, and even admiration, of Stalinism. Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, vol. 2 of *Arrow in the Blue: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 390.

9. On Kierkegaard, anguish, and lack, see *B*, p. 29; on Hegel, see *B*, pp. 16–17, 86n10, 298. Sartre was ambivalent about Heidegger, especially because of what Sartre deemed the Heideggerian misnomer that death encompasses possibility: *B*, pp. 73, 85, 533–37, 539–45. For Sartre's more positive response to Heidegger's ekstatic relations, see *B*, pp. 73, 136, 172, 177, 203, 241, 273, 298, 301.

10. Arthur Koestler, interview with Stanley Rosner and Lawrence E. Abt, in *The Creative Experience*, ed. Stanley Rosner and Lawrence E. Abt (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1970), pp. 143–44; hereafter abbreviated *CE*. Koestler here builds on the need for bisociative grounding that he had earlier pioneered: "The absolute only becomes emotionally effective when dovetailed into the trivial" (*I*, p. 321).

11. For reasons pertaining to apparently elliptical and restored transcription of the same interview, I here quote "fiction . . . invents" from Philip Roth, "The Challenge of Fiction," interview with David Remnick, *Sunday Telegraph* (London), March 16, 2003; and "If you neglect" from Claudia Roth Pierpont, *Roth Unbound: A Writer and His Books* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), p. 211.

12. On "liveliest," see Roth, "The Art of Fiction LXXXIV," *CR*, p. 183; on "counter-possibilities," see Philip Roth, "Life, Counterlife," 1987 interview with Katharine Weber, in *CR*, p. 216.

13. Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 334. As these categories pertain both to *Carnovsky* and *Portnoy's Complaint*, the suggestion emerges that Roth's otherwise evasive afterword to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *Portnoy's Complaint* references *Being and Nothingness* to take issue with restrictive biographical readings that greeted the first appearance of Roth's novel. See James Duban, "'Juice or Gravy?':—Philosophies of Composition by Roth, Poe, and Sartre," *Philip Roth Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 71–82.

14. Philip Roth, "After Eight Books," 1974 interview with Joyce Carol Oates, in *R*, p. 111.

15. Philip Roth, "Doctor or Pornographer? Clive Sinclair Talks to Philip Roth about His New Book," in *CR*, p. 190.

16. Roth, "Doctor or Pornographer?" *CR*, p. 190.

17. Roth, "The Challenge of Fiction." I am here indebted to the Remnick transcription.

18. Philip Roth, "The Varnished Truths of Philip Roth," 1987 interview with Paul Gray, in *CR*, p. 207.

19. Philip Roth, *Zuckerman Unbound*, in Roth, *Zuckerman Bound*, p. 202.

20. Pierpont, *Roth Unbound*, p. 145.

21. Duban, "Existential Nothingness," pp. 23–25.

22. Benjamin H. Ogden, "Formal Antagonisms: How Philip Roth Writes Nathan Zuckerman," *Studies in American Fiction* 39, no. 1 (2012): 88–93; Thomas H. Frank, "The Interpretation of Limits: Doctors and Novelists in the Fiction of Philip Roth," *Journal of Popular Culture* 28, no. 4 (1995): 77–78.
23. Philip Roth, "In Response to Those Who Have Asked Me: 'How Did You Come to Write That Book, Anyway?'" in *R*, p. 40.
24. Philip Roth, "The Ghosts of Roth," 1981 interview with Alain Finkielkraut, in *CR*, p. 128.