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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF JEAN PAUL SARTRE'S EXISTENTIAL
HUMANISM WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS UPON HIS CONCEPT
OF FREEDOM AND ITS MORAL IMPLICATIONS

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the
Department of Philosophy in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts at Assumption
University of Windsor

by

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1957

Windsor, Ontario, Canada 1963

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ABSTRACT

The term 'existentialism' is extremely vague as is the term 'humanism'. However, existentialism may be generally characterized as a protest against moral or physical determinism in regard to man. And 'humanism', in its most general application may mean any system centered on the concepts of dignity and freedom of man. Thus Jean Paul Sartre makes his existentialism a humanism through the fundament of human freedom. He does this by drawing from and synthesizing notions of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger. The result is a unique concept of freedom.

Sartre begins, in the manner of Husserl, with a phenomenological description of reality. This kind of analysis reveals only a consciousness, "the being subject", existing solely as the consciousness of something, "the being object". It is a consciousness situated in the midst of objects which constitute the world. Between subject and object stands a continuous rapport of opposition, of impossible synthesis. For, to see itself as an object is for consciousness to negate its own existence. Self-determination is the way consciousness maintains itself but only at the price of perpetual annihilation. It can never reflect or return upon its subjectivity without by that fact ceasing to exist as consciousness. Therefore consciousness must remain in a continual tension of detachment from any concrete determination. This

attitude of consciousness is the basis of human freedom. For Sartre human freedom comes to be a capacity of the being-for-itself to make itself be in a positive way by pursuing what it wishes to be without binding itself to any of its own determinations. Consciousness, in fact, transcends by its freedom every determination imposed on it: natural, biological, or physical.

In its free realization of itself consciousness is given primacy over the world of objects, which includes all others outside the individual. What value they have is freely assigned to them by consciousness. Since consciousness is not limited by a particular form of being, the subject strives continually to go beyond what it is at any moment. This is expressed as a fundamental drive which implies an infinite possibility of being for the subject, and hence signifies a will to be God himself. But since there is no God, "man is a useless passion". This can only be a humanism on its own terms but its own terms are those of psychological description. But it fails as a psychology for the extremes of feeling and experience are taken as the normal condition of man. What was meant to be a practical philosophy comes to be anti-philosophical. Man is simply an irrational hole in being.

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PREFACE

Jean Paul Sartre calls his philosophy of existentialism a humanism. He defends this position chiefly in a lecture published under the title Existentialisme est un Humanisme. But the word "humanism", like the word "culture", has a diversity of meanings, most of them very broad. To encompass all of these meanings within the ambit of the present work is unnecessary. It is sufficient to contrast Sartre's use of the word humanism with the traditional christian meaning of the word.

Essential to Sartre's 'existential humanism' is a unique concept of freedom. It will be the work of this paper to ascertain Sartre's notion of freedom and to note some of its consequences in the realm of situation ethics. To this point no attempt has been made to show the fundamental accord of existential ethics and situation ethics in its extreme form and this accord can only be hinted at in this limited work. However, it can be stated here that certain motives and factors which Sartre pursues to the point of absurdity have been heartily endorsed by the situationists. If one were to take away the phenomenological frame and the atheistic presuppositions proper to the existentialism of Sartre, one could say that the two ethics agree in their general expression, that is, with regard to the moral values of conscience (consciousness) and its autonomy respecting external norms.

I will proceed by pointing out the development of those movements and attitudes upon which Sartre draws, and, more particularly, by briefly explaining the chief sources of Sartre's philosophical position. In the course of the work it will also be shown how Sartre answers, philosophically, his own humanist questions. The legitimacy of Sartre's claim to humanism will be questioned. Doctrinal inconsistencies and historical distortions will be pointed out and, finally, the consequences for morality of Sartre's notion of freedom will be explored.

Of the foreign works consulted certain standard translations were used for clarification. These include the Barne's translation of L'être et la Néant (Being and Nothingness) which will be referred to in the text as B.N. I also used Bernard Frechtman's translation of Sartre's lecture Existentialisme est un Humanisme hereafter cited as Exist. Further translations used are the Swenson-Lowries translation of Kierkegaard's Final Unfinished Postscript, Alexander Dru's edition of Kierkegaard's Journals and the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of Heidegger's Zein und Zeit (Being and Time).

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation and gratitude to Professor Flood of the Philosophy Department of the University of Windsor without whose patience and kind attention this work could never have been completed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND ELEMENTS IN SARTRE'S EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM

The term "existentialism" has been applied to many different reactions to both rationalism and idealism in literature and traditional philosophy. However, the contemporary existentialists are not in agreement on essentials. Some even prefer not to be called "existentialist", and even if those generally held as belonging to the existentialist "school" or "movement" were in agreement and their thoughts were reducible to a few basic tenets, it is of the very nature of existentialism to deny the priority of any essential note over existence, even in a mere consideration of the doctrine. To add to the confusion the word existentialism is the name of a "system" of thought. The meeting point of all sincere existentialists, possibly excluding Thomists who call themselves existentialists, seems to be in their avowal of individualism.¹ Because existentialism has so many definitions it can no longer be defined.² It is better described as a tendency

1 "The refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic and remote from life - that is the heart of existentialism." Wilhelm Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: 1956), p.12.

2 As Sartre himself says: "The word existentialism . . . has been so stretched and has taken on so broad a meaning, that it no longer means anything at all." Jean Paul Sartre, Existentialism, Trans. B. Frechtman (New York: 1947), p.14.

or attitude with a few doctrines common to all its exponents.

Taken as an ethico-social phenomenon, existentialism may be generally characterized as a protest against views of the world and policies of action in which individual human beings are regarded as helpless playthings of historical forces or as wholly determined by the regular operation of natural processes. This aspect is negative, as are the protestations of existentialists against reason. This is manifested in a kind of crypto-voluntarism. All of this throws some light on Sartre's existentialism. The negative elements are present in Sartre as they were from the beginning in Kierkegaard. In fact, the Kierkegaardian lexicon is basic in the vocabulary of Jean Paul Sartre.

It was from Kierkegaard's use of it that the word "existence" gained the significance that it now bears as a technical term in existentialist philosophy. In non-technical language anything concretely actual may be said to exist, but in existentialism it is primarily human beings who are said to have existence. When Sartre uses the word existence it is in this sense that he uses it.

The central tenet of Sartre's existential humanism is Kierkegaard's concept of freedom which he arrived at by an analysis of becoming. Says Kierkegaard:

If a plan is coming into being, is changed in itself, it is not this plan that comes into being; but if it comes into being unchanged, what is the nature of the change by which it comes into being? This change is clearly not a change in essence, but in being. But this non-being which the subject of becoming leaves behind must itself have some sort

of being.³

The solution to this, according to Sartre, is the concept of possibility which refers to a being which is nevertheless a non-being.⁴ Becoming is the transition from possibility to actuality. In this becoming there resides a freedom, for that which becomes must be possible before it becomes actual and the possible can never be the necessary. The necessary is a determination of essence - that which is necessary is so by its essence. But the difference between the possible and the actual is not of essence but of being; or, not a difference of essence but of existence. Necessity is therefore not a synthesis of the possible and the actual but something that is essentially different from both, and, since that which becomes changes from the possible to the actual, that which becomes cannot be necessary.

Freedom, then, is established at the very core of the existent situation. It is a continual becoming of possibility for man, since for man everything becomes. Within the limited amount of time allotted to each individual he must go about his task of choosing continually his course of action, continually effecting his own becoming as it were, but doing so in anguish and dread because, fully realizing that since "freedom" is at the core of choice (the core of existence itself),

³ Soren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, Trans. D.F. Swenson (Princeton: 1940), p.60.

⁴ Jean Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: 1956), p.17. Hereafter Being and Nothingness will be referred to in the text by the abbreviation BN.

the individual can never know what the outcome of his choice will be, can never know what will become of him. Kierkegaard points out⁵ that Hegel's attempt to demonstrate that the world is a rational system, that "the real is the rational and the rational is the real," is not only presumptuous but ridiculous, for it rests upon the assumption that a particular part of an as yet uncompleted scheme which is not in process of being created by itself could know what its completed form must be. It follows, then, according to this theory, that no one can know his place, no one can have his duty proved to him, but that each must take his courage in both hands and choose as best he can. Kierkegaard conceives himself as having to choose before God with no possibility of knowing whether the outcome will be his salvation or his damnation.⁶ But Sartre's philosophy of engagement presupposes and transcends Kierkegaard's choice because he is conscious of his commitment even as he writes.⁷

Kierkegaard wrote that "Sickness is the natural state of the Christian,"⁸ and Sartre, throughout his works, implicitly changes this to read: "Nausea is the natural state of the conscious existent." For Kierkegaard God is discovered neither

5 Soren Kierkegaard, Final Unfinished Postscript, Trans. Swenson-Lowrie (Oxford: 1948), p.261. Hereafter referred to as FUP.

6 Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, Trans. D. Swenson (Princeton: 1946), p.3.

7 Sartre, Existentialism, Trans. B. Frechtman (New York: 1947), p.66. Hereafter referred to as Exist.

8 Kierkegaard, Stages on Life's Way, Trans. W. Lowrie (Princeton: 1940), p.430.

by abstract reasoning or demonstration or in nature; religion is a matter of choice and since men must choose in partial ignorance they are, therefore, in a condition of anxiety and must, if they become Christians, pass through despair.⁹ For Sartre, however, one must accept this despair; one cannot pass through it. That is why "the existentialist thinks it very distressing that God does not exist." (Exist. p.26).

In a word, Kierkegaard's insight into "existence" was essentially a religious protestation. He saw man as confronting God. Sartre, however, emerges as a humanist who has re-located Kierkegaard's religious protest on a moral and purely temporal plane. Sartre leaves man, bewildered, in a strange world. Through Husserl's phenomenology, Sartre engages in metaphysical problems according to their ethical connotations. He is principally a moralist analysing metaphysical problems with moral or ethical overtones. He seems to be concerned with the humanist questions: What is man? What is his nature? How can he know what he should do? Is he free to do whatever should be done?

Before letting Sartre answer these questions, however, it must be shown that the elements of his existentialist hu-

9 Subjectivity can be truly subjective only in the confrontation of the individual with God, since only the absolute is completely indescribable beyond the inroads of abstraction and objectivity. Only before God is a man really himself, because it is only before God that he is finally and irretrievably alone. But before God the finite individual is as nothing; and it is the bitter realization of that nothingness that marks the religious stage of existence.

manism are not simply "taken" from Kierkegaard but that they are Kierkegaard's notions which have been reworked by Martin Heidegger in the light of Husserl's phenomenology. In fact, Sartre's main work is subtitled a "Phenomenological Ontology".

Husserl affirmed that a really significant philosophical renaissance could not consist in merely reviving a system of Cartesian meditations, let alone in adopting them as a whole: nevertheless, in the spirit of Descartes, its real direction must be upon the deep significance of a radical return to the pure Ego cogito and in reviving the eternal values which spring from it. As Husserl says: "The world originates within us, as Descartes led men to recognize."¹⁰ He held that philosophers should turn their attention away from the world and toward the inner experiences which are, he says, basic for our apprehension of the natural world and our thought about it. For Husserl, truth, the object of thought, is really or merely an inner experience.

Heidegger follows this course to the extent of claiming to describe fundamental experiences which are behind our everyday and scientific knowledge, but his account of what he finds when he exercises this method is very different from Husserl's conclusions. Husserl was in quest of a "pure logic" of meanings; phenomenology would accordingly deal with "pure meanings in their logical interrelations, that is, with pure

¹⁰ Edmund Husserl, "Phenomenology", Encyclopedia Britannica, (11th ed.) XVII, 701.

ideal content only."¹¹ As a philosophy, its task would be to study the necessities and laws and identities resident in the pure experiences of the Ego. For a phenomenologist true to Husserl's view the essentials of everyday experiences as well as of scientific investigations are intuited contents, that is, data of pure consciousness.¹² The guiding axiom for Husserl was that things are as they appear, as they seem to be.¹³

Heidegger, on whom Sartre relies most, using Husserl's method, inverts it so that the emphasis is not on the "thing itself" but on existence. Heidegger's human existence is defined as being-in-the-world or Dasein, "being-there," a being which, without being anything in particular, yet is there, directly, necessarily bound to the world of objects. Being-in-itself is intuited directly, but is without potentiality or purpose, and consequently refers to nothing beyond itself.¹⁴ This is the fundamental insight of Sartre, namely that the world in which man finds himself is contingent, gratuitous, and meaningless. Order is projected into the world by man, and is not guaranteed by a God (BN, p.424).

¹¹ W. R. B. Gibson, The Problem of the Real and Ideal in the Phenomenology of Husserl (New York: 1931), p.314.

¹² Parl Welch, The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl (New York: 1941), p.298.

¹³ See Husserl, Phenomenology, p.702.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, Trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (London: 1962), pp.222-223. Hereafter referred to as BT.

For the purposes of this analysis the most important aspect of Heidegger's philosophy is its underlying fundamental feeling of Dasein as being-thrown into the world without having chosen or willed it. When it begins to take notice, human existence is already there, already 'embarked', and so it feels itself precarious, penniless, abandoned. Besides, the adventure will end up in the abyss of death. Meanwhile man, if he takes his existence seriously, recognizes the nothingness, the absolute non-sense of things. This is dread.¹⁵ The meaning of the world, for Heidegger, comes entirely from oneself, from one's project, that is to say, from the original and free manner in which one sets out, in which one realizes himself in the world. One exists in an authentic fashion when, in expectation of ultimate death one conceives 'projects' which will be at once his meaning and the meaning of objects, and all for nothing (BT, p.301).

Thus man is described as cast into an unsympathetic world in which he tries to achieve purposes all of which will inevitably come to nothing in death. He may try to evade the thought of his own coming dissolution by living his life in terms of impersonal and conventional generalities, but he can

¹⁵ Martin Kerr, in his glossary for Roger Troisfontaines, Existentialism and Christian Thought, trans. M. J. Kerr (London: 1949) p.vi says that the word "angoisse", appearing frequently in the philosophy of Heidegger, is taken over from Kierkegaard's "Angst" (anguished dread), the deep-down restlessness, questioning element in man's selfconsciousness which is aware of freedom, contingency and the awful terror of annihilation.

only be true to himself by living constantly with the thought of his eventual death.¹⁶

Heidegger's account of man as inevitably given over to care and subject to a fate to which he can close his eyes but which he cannot evade is rooted in Kierkegaard and incorporated in the works of Sartre. Sartre, however, who believes that Husserl's phenomenology is the method for all philosophical discoveries, does not remain in the sterile world of Husserl and Heidegger. Theirs is the world of mere phenomenal description which Sartre sees as a result of starting with a reflexive cogito. For all of the phenomenologists, the cogito is nothing but consciousness, a consciousness in which, through reflection, one notices several phenomena and the description of these phenomena constitutes the phenomenological method. In using the phenomenological method, Sartre avoids Husserl's idealistic procedure. He goes beyond Husserl and begins his ontology with his so-called pre-reflexive cogito. What is at stake is the straight and simple affirmation of external reality (Exist. p.43).

It is from the position of the Cartesian cogito that Sartre will invaluablely show the inconsistency of a belief in natures and in God. But it is the Cartesian God that Sartre is refuting, not truly the Christian God. But just how can Cartesian mathematicism be reconciled with individualistic liberty in Sartre's existentialism? It seems that mathemati-

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, Existence and Being, Trans. W. Brock (Chicago: 1949), pp. 224, 383-384.

cism implies a universe of inalterable essences hardly consistent with the free and autonomous existential man. But Sartre solves this problem by pointing out that the entire mathematical edifice raised by Descartes is subject to the purely arbitrary whims of a free God: Who is, for Sartre, merely a projection of human freedom of choice.

. . . c'est la liberté qui est le fondement du vrai, et la nécessité rigoureuse qui paraît dans l'ordre des vérités est elle même soutenue par la contingence absolue d'un libre arbitre créateur.¹⁷

For Descartes, ideas do not testify to the truth of God, rather the truth of God guarantees the validity of ideas. This, for Sartre, is the position of any Christian; he sees the problem of God only as a Cartesian construct. Sartre construed Descartes' description of the freedom of God as a dislocated intuition of human liberty. The Cartesian doctrine of divine liberty was, according to Sartre, a mere hypostas-tization of human liberty of choice.¹⁸

Sartre believes his own position to be the logical out-growth of Descartes' system, (Exist., p.45). Just as divine liberty is a hypostastization of human freedom of choice, so

17 J. P. Sartre, Descartes, (Paris: 1946), p.48 ". . . it is freedom which is the basis of truth, and the strict necessity which appears in the order of truth is itself maintained by the absolute contingency of the free will of the creator."

18 Sartre, Descartes, pp. 50-51. ". . . Descartes finit par rejoindre et par expliciter, dans sa description de liberté divine, son intuition première de sa propre liberté, dont il a dit qu'elle 'se connaît sans preuve et par seule expérience que nous en avons'."

God is a principle necessary for the Cartesian system and can be dispensed with if the system is dissolved. God vanishes if there is no system that needs him as a principle. Thus the positing of God is purely gratuitous and superfluous. This becomes clear if man is free and without a nature. To say that man has a nature is to say there is a God. To say that man is free and without a nature is to say there is no God. Sartre feels that the same reasoning is basic in both Descartes' and his own argument. The identification of Descartes' position with Christianity is cavalier. To understand this one need only consult Sartre's introduction to selections he has made from Descartes' works.¹⁹

Sartre, leaving out the verification of God, assumes the extreme anti-rational position that the source and elements of knowledge are sensations as they exist in our consciousness. There is no difference between the internal and the external, as there is no natural phenomenon which could not be examined psychologically; it all has its "existence" in states of mind. There is only intuitive knowledge for Sartre and, ". . . intuition is the presence of the thing in person to consciousness," (B.N., p.172). This intuition for Sartre is the free creativity of the artist, though Frenchmen today still interpret intuition as Descartes did in terms of freedom of thought.²⁰ Nevertheless, Descartes

¹⁹ Sartre, Descartes. These selections emphasize the autonomy and freedom of man. See especially pp. 55-56 and 83-84.

²⁰ Sartre, Descartes, p.10.

remains the original exponent of libertistic humanism.

Il faudra deux siècles de crise-crise de la Foi, crise de la Science - pour que l'homme récupère cette liberté creatrice que Descartes a mise en Dieu et pour qu'on soupçonne enfin cette vérité, base essentielle de l'humanisme.²¹

Having located himself in a Cartesian world and drawn from Kierkegaard, Husserl and Heidegger, Sartre has a propensity for psychologizing social relationships from a Nietzschean point of view. As will be seen in the next chapter when examining Sartre's analysis of man's relationship with the "other", Sartre substitutes appropriation for love, utensility for co-operation, and retaliation in place of sympathy for the 'other'. It is sufficient here in the introduction to indicate Nietzsche as another possible unacknowledged source of Sartre's existential humanism. Gabriel Marcel has also seen the striking similarities in Sartre's work and says explicitly: ". . . at the root it is Nietzsche far more than Kierkegaard who is the source of Sartre's existentialism - in spite of the fact that he never mentions Nietzsche's name."²² The "Will to Power" sets up every individual against every other individual and this is Sartre's world of "No Exit."²³

²¹ Sartre, Descartes, p.51.

²² Gabriel Marcel, The Philosophy of Existence, Trans. Manya Harari (London: 1948), p.17.

²³ See Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, Trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: 1955).

By means of his plays and stories, Sartre is the maker of a new way of life which he has not yet identified. In them his characters never know why they should do what they do. They seem to be acting morally without reason. Sartre considers this problem anthropologically. There can be no ready-made code of morals for Sartre, because he regards the death of God as a cultural fact. Once Nietzsche had proclaimed that "God is dead," Sartre saw man as confronted with the profound responsibility of deciding for himself, choosing for himself, acting for himself, and being himself. That is, man has to choose authentic existence rather than becoming non-authentic and escaping reality. The crisis comes about with the loss of faith in reason, science and logic as well as revelation.²⁴

Thus without commands, man has neither a past nor a future; nothing behind him or before him; he is not provided with anything that can legitimize his behaviour: "man is

²⁴ Modern loss of faith is not religious in origin; it cannot be traced to the Reformation and counter-reformation, and its scope is by no means restricted to the religious sphere. Moreover, even if we admit that the modern age began with a sudden and inexplicable eclipse of transcendence, of a belief in a hereafter, it would by no means follow that this loss threw man back upon the world. The historical evidence, on the contrary, shows that modern men were not thrown back upon this world but upon themselves. One of the most persistent trends in modern philosophy since Descartes and perhaps its most original contribution to philosophy has been an exclusive concern with the self, as distinguished from the soul or person or man in general, an attempt to reduce all experiences, with the world as well as with human beings, to experiences between man and himself.

condemned to be free."²⁵

What is meant by the statement that, "man is condemned to be free?" In Sartre's view for man to be free really means to be free of God. This freedom from God imposes upon man's shoulders the unbearable liberty of pitiless atheism. There are those who comfortably hold a doctrine of atheism by preserving laws of nature which they can fall back on for standards and norms. But Sartre, along with Nietzsche, feels that this comfortable position is impossible. For Sartre it is impossible to hold for natures if there is no God. He perceives an annihilation of nature as a necessary consequence of atheism.

Sartre does not deny that there are physical things ruled by constant laws; his point is that, because man is free, natural laws do not apply to men. For if there were a God, nature would be his work and then one would have to follow nature in order to follow God. But man is free, therefore what is true for nature is not true for men.²⁶ Sartre finds no difference between a merely natural world and a Christian

²⁵ Jean Paul Sartre, The Reprieve, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: 1947), p.285.

²⁶ This type of reasoning is the result of a necessitarian view of nature. It parallels the Graeco-Arabic necessitarianism in which there had to be a stable relation between things. This was necessary for there to be a science. Therefore, there had to be stable natures. As a result, their worlds were described as being eternal and necessary. Historically, Duns Scotus opposed these views. St. Thomas made an adjustment where he showed that there could not be a free nature as is found in man. On the other hand, Ockham felt that there could not be any natures for that would restrict the freedom of God. And, so also, Sartre does not see the compatibility of liberty and nature.

world. Neither one, says Sartre, can be true.

This is the heart of Sartre's existential humanism: men are free, and human life starts on the far side of despair.²⁷ Once men have realized they are alone, then life begins - in despair. Man must accept that he is doomed to have no other life than his own. He has to make his own way. If life begins in despair, then the problem is to know how to live with it.

According to Sartre, this despair is really a consequence upon the seeming probabilities of our actions. We can only hope in our freedom. Man is limited to some form of action which makes that action feasible, and he overcomes the despair by hoping in his freedom. Sartre seems to be returning to classical stoicism.

Sartre has confronted himself with the philosophical problem of necessity and contingency. In his essay "Existentialism is a Humanism", God is not even an adversary. Yet, one must remember, Sartre's position is not a naturalism either, for its center is not nature. He refuses to deal with man as a thing determined from without. Sartre is not a philosopher of man's nature. He is not a theist or a naturalist, but a "humanist." That is, in a general sense, Sartre is below God and above nature, his concentration is upon man. However, in the history of European thought, the term humanism has had much more specific meaning than merely a concen-

²⁷ Jean Paul Sartre, "The Flies", No Exit and Three Other Plays, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: 1955) p.123.

trating on man. When one uses the term humanism its meaning is usually derived from this historical tradition and implies certain attitudes and values as applied to human nature. Now it may be discovered that the connection of Sartre's use of the word with the traditional meaning of humanism is very tenuous. However, that is a judgment which cannot be made here but which will be seen through the development of this paper. One should begin, at least, with generally accepted views of just what humanism means.

In its narrowest sense humanism, as a term, is used to describe that kind of study of the Greek and Latin Classics which is accompanied by the conviction that these classics contain the highest expressions of human values. This has been extended to include subjects which were considered to be most directly relevant to the right conduct of life. These subjects were regularly distinguished from natural sciences and from metaphysical and theological speculation. In its most general application, humanism may mean any system centered on the concepts of dignity and freedom of man.²⁸

The great age of Greece issued in an anthropocentric concentration subsequently adopted by Rome and the thread of this classical tradition continued to exert an influence during the middle ages. However, the great age of humanism is generally accepted to be associated with the Renaissance beginning with Petrarch and Boccaccio in the fourteenth century.

²⁸ Louis J. Mercier, The Challenge of Humanism (New York: 1936), p.3.

These men developed a new attitude toward the classical past and gave an immense prestige to a literary sensibility formed on the conscious cultivation of this past. According to Babbitt, this was due to:

. . . the type of scholar who was not only proficient in Greek and Latin, but who at the same time inclined to prefer the humanity of the great classical writers to what seemed to him the excess of divinity in the Medievals.²⁹

It was against a distorted view of man's natural condition that the Humanists of the Renaissance, rediscovering the pagan authors, asserted the intrinsic value of man's life before death and the greatness of his potentialities.

The interest in this philological movement was in attaining the kind of knowledge which would make men grow in virtue, and so there had to be included a better understanding of the Christian traditions as well as the Classics. The lessons of history were also needed as a basis for politics and ethics. Although these were the preoccupations of humanistic thought, the earlier humanists scorned the philosophy of the schools and considered the subjects of scholastic science as a perversion of the true ends of philosophy. From the time of Petrarch onwards, the humanists argued for a philosophy which would teach men wisdom rather than an arid art of disputation, and when they finally did turn to philosophy, it was to the Platonic³⁰ rather than to the Aristotelian tradition.

²⁹ Irving Babbitt, "Humanism: An Essay at Definition," Humanism and America, ed. N. Forester (New York: 1930), p.26.

³⁰ The Platonic tradition of philosophical thought

"In the Renaissance itself what the humanists came to emphasize was the principle of mediation between extremes, of pro-

Continuation of Footnote 30

started with a reversal and this determined to a large extent the thought patterns into which Western philosophy almost automatically fell wherever it was not animated by a great and original philosophical impetus. Academic philosophy, as a matter of fact, has ever since been dominated by the never-ending reversals of idealism and materialism, of transcendentalism and immanentism, of realism and nominalism, of hedonism and asceticism, and so on. What matters here is the reversability of all these systems, that they can be turned upside down or "downside up" at any given moment in history without requiring for such reversal either historical events or changes in the structural elements involved. The concepts themselves remain the same no matter where they are placed in the various systematic orders. Once Plato had succeeded in making these structural elements and concepts reversible, reversals within the course of intellectual history no longer needed more than purely intellectual experience, an experience within the framework of conceptual thinking itself. These reversals already began with the philosophical schools in late Antiquity and have remained part of the Western tradition. It is still the same tradition, the same intellectual game with paired antitheses that rules, to an extent, the famous modern reversals of spiritual hierarchies, such as Marx's turning Hegelian dialectic upside down or Nietzsche's revaluation of the sensual and natural as against the supersensual and supernatural.

The reversal we deal with here although it has frequently been interpreted in terms of the traditional reversals and hence as integral to the Western history of ideas, is of an altogether different nature. The conviction that objective truth is not given to man but that he can know only what he makes himself is not the result of skepticism but of demonstrable discovery, and therefore does not lead to resignation but either to redoubled activity or to despair.

The world loss of modern philosophy, whose introspection discovered consciousness as the inner sense with which one senses his senses and found it to be the only guaranty of reality, is different not only in degree from the age-old suspicion of the philosophers toward the world and toward the others with whom they shared the world; the philosopher no longer turns from the world of deceptive perishability to another world of eternal truth, but turns away from both and withdraws into himself. What he discovers in the region of the inner self is, again, not an image whose permanence can be beheld and contemplated, but, on the contrary, the constant movement of sensual perceptions and the no less constantly moving activity of the mind. Since the 17th century,

portion and measure."³¹ The whole question raised by humanism was: what is the character of man as such, what is the nature of man? Through the recognition of intellect and will, as distinct from matter, three basic positions on this question of the nature of man are distinguishable in humanist tradition. The first is the stoic position that man may easily learn and follow the laws of nature which concern the achievement of a well-ordered human life. In other words, "Know thyself," for knowledge is virtue. Opposed to this is the view that man has difficulty discovering these laws and even when he knows them he does not necessarily follow them. The third position is the Rousseauian view that the analytical intellect is a hindrance to man who is instinctually good. All three views are concerned with human nature and although Sartre denies the existence of human nature, it will be seen that he is closest to the stoic point of view though strangely enough accepting the second position as the condition of man. Historical roots for these positions are vague.

It is the second position, that of the depraved state of human nature which is the most significant in the later

Conclusion of Footnote 30
 philosophy has produced the best and least disputed results when it has investigated, through a supreme effort of self-inspection, the processes of the senses and of the mind. In this aspect, most of modern philosophy is indeed theory of cognition and psychology, and in the few instances where the potentialities of the Cartesian method of introspection were fully realized by men like Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, - one is tempted to say that philosophers have experimented with their own selves no less radically and perhaps even more fearlessly than the scientists experimented with nature.

³¹ Mercier, p.3.

development of Christian Humanism. For the Christians the fall of Adam had disorganized the original natural tendency of man's intellect, will and sensual appetites to virtue. To achieve order, the Christians believed that they needed the help of the grace of God. In other words, man needed God to lead even a well-ordered human life in this world, let alone the next. It is the inversion and degeneration of this notion into bourgeois humanism and naturalism that Sartre accepts as the present condition of man. It is this "accepted" condition which Sartre hopes to resolve through a phenomenology dealing with humanist questions.

Sartre uses the word existentialism, then, to emphasize the claims that each individual person is unique and inexplicable in terms of any metaphysical or scientific system; that he is a being who chooses as well as a being who thinks or contemplates; that he is free, and because he is free he suffers; and that since his future depends in part upon his free choices, it is not altogether predictable. There are also "overtones" in this special usage of the word which suggest that existence is something genuine or authentic by contrast with insincerity, and that a man who merely contemplates the world is failing to make the acts of choice which his situation demands. As M. Natanson says:

Existentialism emerges as a deeply felt concern with and for the concrete reality of the individual; it is his existence that is vital, and it is he who must define himself. It is no longer possible to lose oneself in the system or hope to reveal existence by analytic procedures used in the investigation of "life" or the "cosmos". The individual as such, in

his unique subjectivity, in his personal existence, is at stake; and existentialism holds that the essence of a person may not be revealed by reference to an a priori theory of man or any religious interpretation that speaks of man prior to and apart from his actual existence.³²

It is this notion of human nature as being defined by freedom which has become the cornerstone of a new ethical structure whose proponents have as yet presented only an outline of how it might be constituted. The specifically atheistic branch of this ethics is implicit throughout Sartre's works.

The chief characteristics of Sartre's ethical position can be summed up briefly in the following points: the individual, in an isolation imposed upon him by his freedom and in response to the requirements of his unique situation, must make his moral choices and bear responsibility for them. There are no acts which are good or bad in themselves, no goals that are automatically worthy. There are no structures of physical nature, reason, or history above which man cannot rise freely by his self-transcending consciousness of himself. To this point Sartre does not differ from modern "situationist" thinkers, such as Reinhold Niebuhr for example.

What is new in Sartre's ethics is his version of the existentialist virtue of authenticity, which replaces the Christian love commandment. Authenticity requires of man not a code of conduct but a way of life. An ethics based on an essentialist view of man tends to take the form of universally valid content-filled norms, or specific rules of conduct,

³² Maurice Natanson, A Critic of Jean Paul Sartre's Ontology (Lincoln: 1951) p.2

which Sartre cannot and does not admit. Instead he emphasizes the obligation to live in a certain way. The term existence as used by Sartre therefore sometimes takes on a second meaning, that of true or authentic existence as opposed to the absurd existence revealed by the experience of nausea. Existence here is equivalent to the pursuit of transcendent goals, an important part of the authentic life, (Exist., pp. 59-60).

For Sartre then, authentic existence is directly related to the being of man. It is a way of life which is in accordance with a realistic grasp of the ambiguous nature of human reality. Authenticity is a kind of honesty or a kind of courage. The authentic individual faces something which the unauthentic individual is afraid to face.³³ That which he faces is the fact that he is nothing apart from his actions, the necessity to pursue transcendent goals, the realization that these goals are of his own choice and that he is responsible for what he has done in their pursuit.

Sartre does not envisage authenticity as simply the acceptance of a certain attitude toward human reality and the world. This is necessary and he says that man must assure his freedom. But true existence, for Sartre, is something beyond the assumption of an attitude; it is the making of free decisions.

. . . if man has once become aware that in his forlornness he imposes values, he can no longer want

³³ Marjorie Grene, "Authenticity: An Existentialist Virtue," Ethics, LXII, No. 4 (July, 1952), p.267.

but one thing, and that is freedom, as the basis of all values. . . . the ultimate meaning of the acts of honest men is the quest for freedom as such, (Exist., pp. 53-54).

This 'free', self-conscious commitment to a preoccupation with one's integrity will be more clearly understood after a closer examination of the condition of man and the concept of freedom in Sartre's view.

CHAPTER II

THE CONDITION OF MAN AND THE IDEA OF FREEDOM IN JEAN PAUL SARTRE'S EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM

In order to view the condition of man from Sartre's point of view it is necessary to place oneself within the context of an existential epistemology. For the existentialist real knowledge must always refer to the knower as an existing individual.³⁴ Now one consequence of this demand is that there is a basic opposition between abstract thought and the real being, for reality cannot then be conceived or grasped in a concept.³⁵ In other words, the concept of existence is an ideality and the difficulty is, whether existence can be reduced to a concept. For it is precisely because I exist and the things among which I exist also exist that I am separated from them. So existence separates, and since it is the function of thought to unify, thought finds resistance to

34 As Kierkegaard so well states it: "That essential knowledge is essentially related to existence does not mean the above-mentioned identity which abstract thought postulates between thought and being; nor does it signify, objectively, that knowledge corresponds to something existent as its object, but it means that knowledge has a relationship to the knower, who is essentially an existing individual, and for this reason all essential knowledge is essentially related to existence." Soren Kierkegaard, The Final Unfinished Post-script, Trans. Swenson-Lowrie, (Oxford: 1948), p.177. Hereafter referred to as F.U.P.

35 "To do so is to reduce it to possibility, but in that case it is impossible to conceive it, because to conceive it is to reduce it to possibility and consequently, not to hold fast to it as reality." Soren Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, Trans. Alex Dru (London: 1957), #1054.

its activity in the very fact of existing. For that reason an existential system is a radical impossibility (F.U.P., p.107).

In terms of the individual who must lead his life in very precise and unique circumstances, this means that reason is really cut off from existence and life:

It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards. And if one thinks over that proposition it becomes more and more evident that life can never really be understood in time simply because at no particular moment can I find the necessary resting place from which to understand it - backwards. (J., #465).

In actual living, Kierkegaard goes on, the individual is required to make decisions, choose and act. His reason, however, tells him he can do one thing just as well as another and that is tantamount to telling him that he cannot act at all. Reflexion is simply an equilibrium of possibilities and one cannot act on such a basis. He is then caught in the incongruity between action and reflection; he must do that which is literally absurd to his reason. In the concrete, then, reason always comes to grief in absurdity. Recourse must be had, then, to something other than rational knowledge and to means other than reason for attaining it.

Sartre's analysis and the view of man that results from it are really inspired by Heidegger's search for an answer to the question: what is Being? At the beginning of his main work Sein und Zeit, Heidegger stresses the need for a return to ontology. Being, he states (B.T., p.25) occupies a

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central role in all of our thoughts and activities; it is the most universal of concepts; it is incapable of being defined, it includes man in its universality; we live within it and yet its meaning is always shrouded in darkness. Investigating the meaning of Being is, then, the basic question in philosophy (B.T., p.23; p.48). But Being has certain demands to make of that investigation. The investigation cannot be pushed arbitrarily, the question can only be asked and answered by one who is a Being. So of all the things to which we apply the term "Being", only one can properly handle the investigation, that is, a Being that looks at or examines itself. Man is just such a Being. Heidegger calls him Dasein. A correct and clear formulation of the meaning of Being demands, then, a preliminary explanation of the Being of man (B.T., p.29): the nature of Sein must be determined by analysing Dasein. What Being is will be determined by what the Dasein is, and for Heidegger the "essence" of Dasein rests in its existence. "Existence" being used not in the traditional sense of existentia, he says (B.T., p.65), nor as a property of an actual Being but as the Sein des Daseins, that is, human existence. So the answer to our ontological question must come from a Being that reveals itself to itself and man is such a self-revealing Being. In this sense, man is ontological to the core.

If, however, this is true then Being is to be found in the phenomenon. Heidegger (B.T., p.50) points out that the Greek word φαίνεσθαι to which our word goes back, means "to

be revealed" or "to show itself". So a phenomenon is that which reveals or shows itself. Man, then, is a phenomenon and the nature of being will be revealed in penetrating the meaning of phenomenon and discovering just what it implies. In a word, for Heidegger, phenomenology as a study of phenomenon and ontology (the study of being) are not two distinct disciplines belonging to philosophy. Rather the two titles stand for philosophy according to its method in one case, according to its object in the other. Philosophy is a universal, phenomenological ontology taking its point of departure in an interpretation of man's Being, an analysis of whose existence provides the clues needed in all philosophical questions.

It is likewise with an analysis of phenomena that Sartre begins his L'Être et le Néant and with an analysis of human existence that he goes on to determine the meaning of being. Realizing that Being is phenomenon is, he tells us, (B.N., p.XLV) the great advance made by modern thought, inasmuch as it allows us to reduce the existent to the series of appearances that reveals it. Thus, he says (B.N., p.XLVI), we attain the notion of phenomenon as it can be encountered in the phenomenology of Husserl or Heidegger, for example. (The existent, then, is what reveals itself. Notice that it does not reveal anything within itself, it simply reveals itself.) There is not something real inside it which the appearance manifests; its appearing is precisely what is revealed. The dualism of being and appearing can no longer have a rightful claim on philosophy, for here we are confronted with a

phenomenon that is an absolute. Phenomenon is the real (B.N., p.XLVI). In short, phenomenology is a direct looking upon or inspection of the givens of sensory experience. Such inspection confronts one, first of all, with "appearances". In the sense that one is presented with them, these appearances are. They would not be appearances unless they appeared. But if these appearances are, then, according to Sartre, we have located Being; for appearance is being. "It is. That is the only manner of defining its manner of being." "Being is simply the condition of all revelation." (B.N., p.XLIX).

Now just what does phenomenon reveal? Well, if there is to be appearance there must be that which appears and that to which it appears: an act of being perceived and one of perceiving; the perceived and the perceiver; the object and the subject. In referring the components of these pairs one to the other, does the perceiving constitute the perceived so that the object's esse would be percipi? No, says Sartre (B.N., p.I). Every idealism, he points out, seeks to reduce being to the knowledge that is had of it, but to be well-founded it should first establish the being of knowledge on which being depends. Failure to do that means the esse est percipi rests on nothing at all. Consequently, Sartre feels that in any solid doctrine, the being of knowledge must rest on something beyond knowledge, something that escapes the percipi (B.N., p.LI). Otherwise knowledge itself falls into nothingness. So to his mind the relation between perceiver and perceived must be an entitative or transphenomenal

reference of object to subject, subject to object (B.N., p.LI).

On the side of the subject, such transphenomenal dimension is constituted by consciousness in self, for as Husserl has seen so well,³⁶ all consciousness is consciousness of and is intrinsically intentional (B.N., p.LI). It is, therefore, referred to object entitatively. Pleasure, for example, is an event before it is a representation of a pleasant object (B.N., p.LV). In a word, the phenomenon implies an intentional subject, the so-called "consciousness-self", which is the subject of the most concrete experiences but which is more truly identical with those experiences than related to them. It has nothing substantial about it; it is a pure appearance in the sense that the subject is a pure self-awareness identical with an awareness of (B.N., p.LV). As for the object, its percipi does not depend on reflexive consciousness so as to be constituted what it is by being known. It depends, rather, on the pre-reflexive consciousness in that it is demanded transphenomenally as the object of intentional consciousness. In the manner of Husserl, the being of the cogito pre-reflexively requires the intentionality of the ego and the being of the object: not, as Sartre very carefully points out, (B.N., p.LIX) as the noema is the simple correlative of the noesis, for then the object would be constituted by being known, but as something transcendently demanded by the very

³⁶ E. Husserl, Meditationes Cartesianae (Vrin, Paris: 1947), p.28.

being of consciousness. Its independence of the subject is, indeed, indicated by the constant stress Sartre places on its being active, never passive, (B.N., p.LVIII). In short, being or phenomenon demands a subject and object intrinsically related one to the other: a being or phenomenon which is phenomenon because it is aware of itself in all appearing, that is, it is a self-awareness or "being-for-itself"; and a being or phenomenon appearing to consciousness as a transphenomenal object of that consciousness but not reflexively aware of itself, that is, a "being-in-itself". There are, then, two orders in phenomenon, the pour-soi and the en-soi, (B.N., p.LXV). The pour-soi is consciousness in its most simple sense. For Sartre, speculation begins in subjectivity; more specifically, it begins with the Cartesian cogito, which is taken to be the root of all judgments and all cognition. It is "an absolute truth founded upon the immediate grasp which consciousness has of itself, and as such is the basis for all other certain truths."³⁷ Sartre recognizes, however, a pre-reflective as well as a reflective cogito, and through an examination of the pre-reflective cogito he tries to give a general understanding of the en-soi, the other pole of being.

The pre-reflective cogito is the basis for the reality of consciousness; for there can be no consciousness where there is no reference to an object. This is ". . . the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of

³⁷ J. Collins. "The Existentialism of J. P. Sartre", Thought, Vol. XXIII (March, 1948), 69.

something", (B.N., p.LIV). Consciousness cannot exist apart from its active unfolding in the acts of consciousness.

Consciousness has nothing substantial, it is pure appearance in the sense that it exists only to the degree to which it appears. But it is precisely because consciousness is pure appearance, because it is total emptiness (since the entire world is outside it) - it is because of this identity of appearance and existence within it that it can be considered as the absolute, (B.N., p.LVI).

Consciousness is thus the cause of its own manner of being and is the identity of appearance and existence. Sartre's recourse to the pre-reflective cogito enables him to escape from the infinite regress of "knowing known"; for the coincidence of existence and appearance indicates that the pre-reflective cogito is an absolute in the order of existence and a condition of all knowledge.

However, consciousness is more than self-reflection; all consciousness is consciousness of something. Consciousness intends some object in the world. What is intended, says Sartre, is some "trans-phenomenal" being beyond consciousness. The realm of trans-phenomenal being is the realm of the en-soi. For Sartre, the en-soi is the rough "is-ness" of being, the brute confrontation of being; the "stuff" of the world. Thus the being of consciousness faces the being of the phenomenon: the pour-soi faces the en-soi, and although both may be identified by a subjective analysis, they remain in alien and severed realms. If the pour-soi can be identified or defined as consciousness, then the en-soi may be defined as the trans-phenomenal being of the object.

Consciousness implies in its very being a non-conscious, trans-phenomenal being. "Consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in question insofar as this being implies a being other than itself," (B.N., p.LXII). The pour-soi (consciousness) is nothingness.

What, then, does the pour-soi as consciousness reveal to us of the nature of being? Well, it is the self-revealing, and since our basic ontological situation demanded that being question itself, let us see what the pour-soi tells us of being in the experience of questioning. Any question, as distinct from an affirmation, demands that a yes or no answer be possible. In asking a question one must accept the possibility of the non-existence of the being he questions. In addition, he reveals himself to be in a state of indetermin- ation in even asking the question. A question, then, is a bridge between two non-beings: the non-being of knowing on the side of the questioner, the non-being of the transcendancy on the side of the one questioned. So in merely asking: what is being? a new dimension of being has been revealed -- non-being, (B.N., p.5).

On the side of the pour-soi such "non-being" is not only revealed as a condition of my confronting myself so as to be able to question myself, but also of questioning other men or things. To question them the pour-soi must in some way remove itself from being. On the side of the en-soi as object of the conscious attention involved in questioning, it must appear capable of giving a negative reply. For if a question is

aroused in a questioner by anything that just is, then it is occasioned by something completely and universally determined and the question would cease to be even conceivable. Therefore, the en-soi must appear capable of not-being. It must appear haunted by "non-being." According to Sartre (B.N., p.8-12), it is by the attention of the pour-soi, in this case illustrated by questioning but just as well by expectation or any other conscious attitude, that "non-being" comes into being. But for our present purposes, the important thing to note is that a fundamental note of being, its "non-being", has been revealed by analysing human existence. That "non-being" is just as transphenomenal and objective as is being; subject and object are just as transcendentally nothing. We have, then, in the case of Sartre, a definite conception of being taking shape even though it is properly man that is under examination. In a word, man's existence proves a key to the nature of being itself.

In developing his notion of the pour-soi Sartre was recasting in his own way the Dasein of Heidegger which is found identified with human existence. Man is a "being-for-himself," a phenomenon and a "consciousness-self." At the extreme of that consciousness, through the attention man pays to the object of his consciousness, negativity or "non-being" enters being. It is through man as pour-soi that non-being comes to be. His being is, properly speaking, to negate being; negate it as by a positive, concrete act of negating. In short, man is really the link in being. The apparent hiatus in being

caused by the distinction between pour-soi and en-soi is bridged by a synthetic bond which is nothing else but the pour-soi itself, (B.N., p.617). The pour-soi is, indeed, but a pure negating of the en-soi. It is like an entitative gap in being. It is a creative gap, for by its negating attention the pour-soi makes a nothing of the individual en-soi and out of this overthrowing of the en-soi a world is made, (B.N., p.LXV). In a word, man's attention singles out of a vast background certain en-soi that now become objects of his consciousness and constitute 'his' world. Man creates a world by his attention. It is, then, out of his negativity that a world appears, a negativity that Sartre attempts to express, (B.N., p.LXV) by saying of the pour-soi: it is not what it is, and it is what it is not.

The "facticity" of the pour-soi is its pastness, (B.N., p.118). The facticity of the pour-soi is threatened and encroached upon by the en-soi; the "in-itself" attempts to swallow up the "for-itself." The "was" characterizes the type of being of the pour-soi; it characterizes the relation of the pour-soi to its being. The past is the en-soi which I am, considered as passed beyond. The past is "in itself" and "I am for-myself," therefore the "Cartesian cogito ought to be formulated rather, "I think; therefore I was," (B.N., p.119). In other words, I am the man who "was" the man. But in the same sense in which I am the man who was, I certainly am not the man who was, for I am the man I am.

The pour-soi, when it becomes pastness, is seized by the

en-soi and rendered "facticity", but since the present is pour-soi, a paradox is involved. Although, for Sartre, the present must be defined in terms of being, whenever the attempt is made to specify the present there is left only an infinitesimal instant, a nothingness. This, Sartre points out, is the fundamental contradiction of existence: there is always the indissoluble pair, being and nothingness.

The pour-soi, as present, cannot be seized as such because the present is a perpetual flight in the face of being. The present cannot truly be seized in any of its instants, for these instants themselves are in flight,

Yet the pour-soi exists only because it has a future. The pour-soi of the present reveals the pour-soi yet to be. The "project" is held before the pour-soi as its image-to-be. The future world, says Sartre, "has meaning as a future only insofar as I am present to it as "another" who I will be, in another position, physical, emotional, social, etc., (B.N., p.127). Sartre concludes that "I must become what I was, but in a world that has become from the standpoint of what it is. This means that I give to the world its own possibilities in terms of the state which I apprehend on it," (B.N., p.127).

The totality of the self then, arises from the unity of past, present and future with the liaisons of "was-ness" and "flight" which bind them together dialectically.

The self holds within it the problem of its freedom, for the flight of the pour-soi toward its future is its measure of freedom to become what it will be. This freedom, for

Sartre, is unique. The pour-soi does not accept or reject its freedom in a purely conceptual way.

The future constitutes the meaning of my present pour-soi, as the project of its possibility, but that in no way pre-determines my pour-soi which is to come, since the pour-soi is always abandoned to the nihilating obligation of being the foundation of its nothingness, (B.N., p.128).

Sartre concludes then, that the pour-soi cannot avoid its "problematicity" since the pour-soi itself is problematic in the sense of continually being faced by an uncertain future. This is what Sartre means when he asserts that man is a being whose meaning is always problematical. And so, the pour-soi can never be anything but problematically its future, for it is separated from that future by a nothingness which it itself is. The pour-soi is free and its freedom is to itself its own limit.

The nothingness of the pour-soi, is for Sartre, the possibility of freedom. Freedom is the "possibility for the human reality to secrete a nothingness which isolates" and "freedom is the human being putting its past out of play by secreting his own nothingness," (B.N., p.28).

It is in virtue of that negativity (particularly its creative, projecting tendencies) that man is not said to be, but to be towards being, (B.N., p.LXV). And because he is such a negative, projecting being, he is free. It is by his negativity that he escapes causal laws, (B.N., p.23), it is by projecting that nothingness into other beings in expecting them to be other than they are that they too are seen to

escape those same causal laws in some measure. Every human attention, be it question, expectation, imagination or emotion is really a judgment that "non-being" is possible in things, that they can be other than they are, that they escape rigid determinism. So negativity is the root and foundation of human liberty, (B.N., p.24). In short, negativity, being towards and standing outside being all add up to one thing: liberty.

It is this identification of man with freedom that Sartre has in mind in speaking (Ex., p.18) of man in pure subjectivity and as a being that just appears in the world: to be free man must just appear, exist and then freely define himself in existing. In this sense his existence is a primary fact, his essence must come from what he wills to make himself. The constant exercise of that freedom, that is to say his constant existing, is attested by the feelings of anguish, forlornness and despair that in some degree or other accompany every choice he makes.

Nothingness reveals freedom and also reveals our anguish.

. . . it is in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is in anguish that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself, (B.N., p.29).

Anguish should be distinguished from fear. Fear is of things of the world, whereas anguish is anguish before oneself; it is the fear of having fear or the consciousness of freedom. In other words it is fear of the non-specific or a fear of possibles. But inasmuch as he is a pour-soi, he is properly

man in choosing rather than allowing his decisions to be made for him impersonally: he is condemned to be free, but to be free he must choose. Thus, liberty becomes the only value that really guarantees humanity to man, it is the link that binds together all 'human' phenomena, (Ex., p.56). In this sense freedom is the essence of man.

These notions of Sartre being established, it is now possible to delineate his concept of freedom which is a necessary establishment for positing Sartre's ontology as a condition for humanism.

According to Sartre, every action is, in principle, intentional. True action implies a consciousness of acting on the part of the actor. Since action is necessarily intentional, no political or economic fact can cause action in the individual. "The indispensable and fundamental condition of all action is the freedom of the acting being," (B.N., p.436).

Freedom is evidenced in the pour-soi insofar as the pour-soi exists as "lack". The lack of the pour-soi is its nothingness. Because the pour-soi "exists" itself through flight, it is nothing, for its existence is always non-static. The pour-soi is not that which it is and is that which it is not.

Choice, freedom and action are inextricably bound together in the existence of the pour-soi. There can be no freedom if there is no choice; there can be no choice if there is no freedom; there can be no action where there is no freedom. And yet, as Sartre says:

To choose ourselves is to nihilate ourselves; that is

to cause a future to come to make known to us what we are by conferring a meaning on our past. Thus there is not a succession of instants separated by nothingnesses - as with Descartes - such that my choice at the instant I can not act on my choice of the instant I. To choose is to effect the upsurge along with my engagement of a certain finite extension of concrete and continuous duration, which is precisely that which separates me from the realization of my original possibles. Thus freedom, choice, nihilation, temporalization are all one and the same, (B.N., p.465).

Sartre does not accept the common notion of freedom which is a description of those conditions external to man which allow him to choose among alternatives but rather freedom for Sartre is a state of being of the pour-soi to which it is condemned. "We are a freedom which chooses, but we do not choose to be free. We are condemned to freedom, as we said earlier, thrown into freedom or . . . abandoned." (B.N., p.485). Since the pour-soi is in question in its being, freedom is its condition. "Freedom . . . is not a quality added on or a property of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being," (B.N., p.439).

To comprehend Sartre's freedom, one must keep in mind that for Sartre human reality is its own nothingness. The pour-soi, in order to be, must choose itself. There is no a priori essence or God-given human nature that the pour-soi can depend on or cling to. The pour-soi, "without any help whatsoever . . . is entirely abandoned to the intolerable necessity of making itself be - down to the slightest detail. Thus freedom is not a being; it is the freedom of man - i.e. his nothingness of being," (B.N., p.441).

Taken ontologically essence is a necessary determination, and in this present case would mean that man must be man. But existentially man can be "not-man" by being inauthentic, that is to say he can simply go along with the crowd, so to speak, in his ordinary daily existence. In fleeing personal responsibility he is not properly man. Existentially, then, man does not have to be man, 'human' does not exercise a necessary determination. But what is existentially necessary is that for man to be man he must choose. In that sense freedom makes man to be man, it is the definition of man, (Ex., p.54) - but surely it is a moral definition.

The constant insistence that phenomenological analysis is descriptive, is noteworthy. Husserl³⁸ has called it "a new, descriptive, philosophical method" and has suggested its use in completely revising the sciences. It is a search for essences but it is primarily psychological in object and in method, hence the strong atmosphere of psychology in Heidegger and Sartre. Now recognizing that most of our contemporaries are trained to handle psychological data rather than the subtleties of theology and metaphysics, one might well consider using such phenomenological analysis in searching for and the defence of a doctrine of essences. But a reworking of such basic notions as experience, consciousness, intentionality, meaning and evidence would certainly be a prerequisite.

Further, the investigations that have been examined here

³⁸ Husserl, "Phenomenology", Encyc. Brit., Vol. 17, p.6998 (New York: 15th ed., 1932).

are basically moral, and in this ontological considerations are secondary to moral ones. For Sartre being is meaningful in terms of man and man is defined by what he chooses; he exists in action; freedom is the supreme value and freedom is found in the transcendence of negativity that explains our knowing or being conscious. In short, moral questions command the phenomenological analysis which then becomes a search for negativity. To find it one is forced to examine phenomena, for a being that is other than phenomena will have a structure; it will just be and thereby resist freedom. It is not surprising then, that Sartre himself should conclude: "thus, existential psycho-analysis is a moral description because it gives us the ethical meaning of different human projects," (B.N., p.626). In short, the being in question is moral being. In that perspective the notion of man being uncaused, making his own nature, creating his own world, being his past and the mystery of his being are all meaningful. Consequently, analysing such conclusions as are presented by Sartre should be the work of the moralist primarily.

If that is so it is obvious that the constant insistence on concreteness as opposed to abstraction becomes understandable. What is actually here is an appeal that moral being be treated as a distinctive kind of being, that is a free movement towards an end rather than a being centered in its own metaphysical act. To complicate matters further, however, the greatest stress is laid on considering such being at its most circumscribed and individual level: the point where

choice initiates the act towards its end, a point that must be experienced and is strictly incapable of formulation. One should insist, however, that even here there is a radical intelligibility to be recognized. Unfortunately, for Sartre, the Kantian antithesis of speculative and practical reason has cast its shadow over his analysis as it has been followed, so that his resulting treatment of moral being is a non-intellectual one. Thus, the moral order becomes an order of magic for Sartre. One must strive to reintegrate intellectual principles into the moral order without destroying the formal character of moral being: the moral must be shown to be "intelligible" and at the same time "free." To do this it is necessary to remove the illusion that intellectual principles, since they guide speculative reason, bring physical necessity in their wake and are antithetical to freedom.

And finally, to do so it would appear necessary to insist on the fundamental difference between physical and spiritual nature. The former is closed by matter and determined in operation; the latter open and free in operation, containing rather than being contained.

But since the analysis of Sartre's investigation of being shows his consideration to be basically moral, there is one more concept in his phenomenology which must be looked at before attempting to assess his existential humanism. It is the relation of the "self" to the "other".

For Sartre the "other" is immediately known or "encountered". It has the nature of a contingent but irreducible

fact, and therefore Sartre says that the existence of the "other" cannot be derived ontologically. And yet, for Sartre, there is in every day reality an original relation to the "other" which can be constantly sought and which is disclosed outside of all reference to God.

The basis for this original relation to the other is the very "appearance" of the other. As Sartre says, "the very appearance of the other in my universe of an element of disintegration of this universe is what I call the appearance of a man in my universe," (B.N., p.225). The other shocks this world of self in an original, unique and irreducible manner. "I cannot be the object of an object," says Sartre, and yet, ". . . at each instant the other looks at me," (B.N., p.257).

The basis of the solution to the problem of the other will be the "look". But what does it mean, for Sartre, to be seen? "The other's look hides his eyes; he seems to go in front of them," (B.N., p.258). What Sartre is referring to, here, is the conscious look of another - which has already been shown to be a nothingness which nihilates.

What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is not that there is someone there; it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt, that I occupy a place and that I can not in any case escape from the space in which I am . . . in short, that I am "seen", (B.N., p.259).

As long as one is a pure consciousness of things to be done or to be used, he is safe. "I do what I have to do. No transcending view comes to confer upon my acts the character of a given on which a judgment can be brought to bear," (B.N.,

p.259).

Shame reveals to the self the look of the other. "I see myself because somebody sees me," (B.N., p.260). Shame, for Sartre, means that "I am the object the other is looking at," (B.N., p.261). To apprehend himself as seen is, for Sartre, the alienation of the world which he organized. The other is the hidden death of his possibilities in the world. The other looks at him and in the look, shocks or haemorrhages his inner unity, his inner world, his subjectivity. The recovery of this inner world of the self is possible by a retaliation against the other, i.e., by making the other the object of my look and destroying his inner unity. By the look of the other Sartre has been made an object for the other's subjectivity and the other knows him only as object, never as subject. In the same manner, Sartre knows the other as object, never as subject.

This very notion extended to include a social consciousness leads men through bad faith, to postulate the existence of God by the experience of being an "us-object".

This experience occurs when a group identifies itself as such in relation to another group or person who looks at them as objects. A number of persons see themselves as forming a definite group or community when they find themselves so classed in the view of a third party. If the third party is a foreigner, the reaction is a consciousness of nationality. For example, the presence of the bourgeois is required for the class solidarity of the proletariat.³⁹

³⁹ Norman Greene. The Existentialist Ethic (Ann Arbor: 1960), p.70.

This effort at recovering the human totality can not take place without positing the existence of a "third", who is on principle distinct from humanity and in whose eyes humanity is wholly object . . . this concept is the same as that of the being-who-looks-at and who can never be looked-at; that is, it is one with the idea of God, (B.N., p.423).

Bearing these notions of the totality of the self, the nihilation of God, the shock of the "other", the anguish of choice and the condemnation to freedom, it is time now to determine the implications for modern morality of Jean Paul Sartre's concept of freedom as made explicit in his existential humanism.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS AND CRITICISM REGARDING JEAN PAUL SARTRE'S EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM

Given the essential ambiguity of the "human condition", of a freedom -- situated, two alternatives remain open to consciousness: to lose self in the objective or to establish self in pure freedom by renunciation of fixed determinations, of every form of concrete existence. According to Sartre the only authentic attitude, the only morality which can save the true nature of consciousness is neither of the alternatives mentioned, but the engagement of self with objects without at the same time becoming the slave of the en-soi, an engagement in freedom that is always active and repudiative, constantly engaged with the world yet never estranged from self, ever disposed to new realizations but never moulded to some static, definite manner of being.

The freedom of ambiguity represents a conquest which each one must reach by himself through personal and painful effort. From the initial, spontaneous encounter with the world by which one is enticed and disarmed by it one must pass through the phase of the reflection which is complicity to that of the reflection which is purification. In this final stage is placed the moral problem of fidelity to the authentic demands of the human condition. Man must continually make choices, create for himself his particular essence,

form his personality. It is not something already constituted by a natural determinism but something demanding discovery or invention by each person: in this consists man's particular moral duty.

The idea of a totally personal solution of moral problems, a solution "created" from situation to situation, is a focal point common to some extent to all existentialist theoreticians. In it there is nothing absolute or universal which would be valid for all individuals, since the real is always the concrete and particular. Man can never appeal to universal norms to escape the obligation of judging for himself what conduct he ought to assume in this instance of existence.

Sartre is adverse to all that is fixed, definite or impersonal. These are in fact characteristics of the "absurd" to which the dynamism of the "being-for-itself" is opposed. Sartre invokes an "existential psychoanalysis" which controls behavior and the projected ends of the individual and places him on guard against the enslavement of freedom in a mode of being which is not authentic, that is, not ambiguous.

Every objective value which man seeks to realize is lost in the effort if he makes it his goal. Even the attempt to become God "that is, to be of oneself the conscious foundation of one's own en-soi" is a self-contradictory project inasmuch as it would necessarily bring one to a fixation of consciousness in a determinate state and therefore to the extinction of freedom.

For Sartre, consequently, the good or evil of acts does

not derive from an external norm. The will itself bestows good or bad upon them by willing them freely. Man can will everything and never reject anything, because by the very fact that he wills anything at all that thing becomes fully licit. Sartre's ideal of an authentic realization of the "conscious being" is that of a freedom which is totally intoxicated with itself, which refuses none of its possibilities of being, which is permitted everything, which rejects every restriction that pretends to bind it, and at the same time a freedom which attaches itself to nothing, which binds itself to none of those things which it chooses to be or which it does.

The affirmation of a total and gratuitous human freedom as opposed to a superior and all comprehensive moral order, both divine and natural, releases man from any directive bond whatever and crowns him with an autonomy as absolute as it is vacuous. No value can now impose itself upon him as obligatory. The individual becomes the creator of his values, his own internal law. It is clear that this is an ethic of the arbitrary and hence no ethic. Human life according to Sartre, with all the moral values by which humanity lives and is nourished, is simply impossible. Without God man cannot comprehend even himself.

The extraordinary appeal of Sartre is witness to his ability to grasp and interpret the spiritual situation of the post-war generation. To young people who place no hope in anything, he has cast a new anchor of salvation, however

strange it may seem, their very desperation. He says: live as you like, without willing anything. This is freedom. Desperation is itself a way of life, indeed, the one most consonant with the insignificance of life.⁴⁰

A lucid despair, an implacable pessimism about man's condition and the presumed values and ideals he has always sought, and an acute sense of the vanity of things is what pervades every page of Sartre. Cast willy nilly into an absurd world, one must engage in life without hoping for anything from it while enjoying with full freedom the rare moments of pleasure that it offers. In to-day's world where many do not believe in anything or hope for anything, why meddle with unverifiable prescriptions or metaphysical creeds which can only induce self-torture and unrest? It is to the present existential reality that one must attach himself, not to find support in it, since it is inconsistent, but to take only that little good which it has to offer.

The impossibility of an existential ethics has its metaphysical basis in the exaltation of "being" as antecedent and opposed to thought. To ontological phenomenism logically

40 A compendious view of Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy can be had by reading the lecture he gave in Paris in 1945. This work later published, is grounded on the "metaphysic" developed by his larger work, L'être et le néant. Even Sartre's more popular stories and his plays are less literary than they are doctrinaire. For just as Being and Nothingness provides an ontological roost from which he may jump into the void of his own creating, so also the characters in his writings, who seem to be absolutely irrational at times, are really graphic demonstrations of Sartre's brand of existentialism put into action. His characters are "humanistic" in the highest Sartrean sense of the word, and the short works in which they appear are catechetical expositions of an atheistic theology which is specifically a humanism.

corresponds an ethical atomism, both presented in the light of a false horizontal transcendentalism.

The question may now be asked whether Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism would have to conform to traditional notions (as pointed out in the introduction to this paper) of humanism in order to call itself a humanism. It would seem not, for the problem here is to see whether Sartre's existentialism is a humanism on its own terms or whether it is guilty of its own "bad faith."

"Bad faith" means, for Sartre, dishonesty. However, dishonesty without any moral criteria, simply means a certain inconsistency in the face of "reality". Here then, are a few of Sartre's inconsistencies.

In the first part of his essay, "Existentialism is a humanism", Sartre implies that he is struggling against the powers-that-be; that he is resisting authority and trying to rise above his station. He is a romantic who leaves to man the possibility of choice. And yet Sartre maintains that "we do not believe in progress. Progress is betterment, but man is always the same. The situation confronting him varies. But the choice always remains a choice in a situation," (Exist., p.52). So, man rises above his station, but he cannot progress.

For Sartre, "there does exist a universal human condition," (Exist., p.45). The limits are neither subjective nor objective; rather they have two sides. They are objective because found everywhere, and subjective because they are

non-existent unless lived by man; as he says, "There is a universality of man but it is not given, it is perpetually being made," (Exist., p.47). Then, man is a mystery who can never be what he is until he is dead.

Again Sartre says that there is no reality except in action, for man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfils himself. Man is nothing else than a series of undertakings; he is the sum, the organization, the ensemble of the relationships which make up these undertakings. In other words, ". . . the coward makes himself cowardly, and the hero makes himself heroic," (Exist., p.41). It is because of this flux that a man can never be a being-in-itself in the present. It is only the past that can be grasped or statified. That is why a man both is and is not what he is and he cannot totally be what he is until he is dead.

Since the project in the future will involve new conditions, man can never really know what he will be and yet Sartre states that "there is no doctrine more optimistic, since man's destiny is within himself," (Exist., p.42).

Sartre starts with the so-called simple, subjective truth that "outside the Cartesian cogito, all views are only probable," (Exist., p.44) and he elaborates a theory of probability based on it. For Sartre, "this theory is the only one which gives man dignity, the only one which does not reduce him to an object," (Exist., p.43). But man reduces himself to an object in continually striving to be the project that he has created for himself.

Man must accept the situation in which he finds himself, and yet he is responsible for this situation. "Existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him," (Exist., p.19).

For Sartre, man is a choosing, a self-creating subjectivity and therefore every choice is not only the best choice for him but also contains the image of what he wills to be. At first sight this does not seem to be consistent with his notion that man chooses in anxiety because he is not only choosing what he will be but also legislating what all mankind ought to be, (Exist., p.20). But where is the anguish in making a choice which is necessarily good or the best? Could it be that anguish in this existential system stems from the fact that there are no standards for comparative degrees of choice since the choice is simply subjective? It would seem then that such words as "the good" or "the best" are meaningless and that anguish is a result of this meaninglessness. But Sartre points out that his anguish is a correlative of the question which each man must ask himself before making a choice. "Am I really the kind of man who has the right to act in such a way that humanity might guide itself by my actions?" (Exist., p.24). The anguish here is a result of the fact that there is no answer to the question. This question does not, and is not, supposed to indicate a sympathy for one's fellow man. It simply must be asked because the new world which "I" am about to create by "my" choice

will involve the other in a new situation and, of course, one does not know what this situation will be. There is certainly no concern here, for the "other" "I" can never get to know as subject, who shatters "my" inner unity, who objectivizes "me", who is an intruder into "my" world, and whom "I" must look at, objectivize, in order to regain equilibrium.

There is a paradox involved here for Sartre says that he perceives all others as the "condition of his own existence," (Exist., p.24). In order to get any truth about oneself, one must have contact with another person. But the contact shatters one's inner unity; one is no longer oneself. "Every man who sets up a determinism is a dishonest man," (Exist., p.53). And yet, just previous to this statement, Sartre had said: "This inability to not make a choice is absolute," (Exist., p.47). If a man in making a choice does so in anguish because he does not know how it will turn out or what he will be and yet his future depends upon this choice, is this not an irrational and non-deliberate determinism? But for Sartre man is freedom.

Every action of man is subject to a moral interpretation. "Nothing is excusable, man is responsible for his passion," (Exist., p.27). But there are no objective moral principles. "Moral choice is to be compared to the making of a work of art. In choosing his ethics, man makes himself," (Exist., p.49).

The fundamental relation of man with others is conflict. "Hell is other people." "The other haemorrhages my inner

unity." The other is an element of disintegration in my universe. And yet Sartre says:

. . . the subjectivity that we have thus arrived at, and which we have claimed to be truth, is not a strictly individual subjectivity, for we have demonstrated that one discovers in the cogito not only himself, but others as well, (Exist., p.44).

In fact a man cannot know himself except as objectivized by the other. In spite of the conflict, man must commit himself to others.

In spite of the apparent contradictions and ambiguities of an essentially negativistic, pessimistic philosophy of irrationalism, Sartre has built a rational system centered upon man and his condition. He has tried to answer the questions: What is man? Where is he going? and How shall he go about getting there? As such, Sartre's work is a brand of humanism. Traditional Christian humanism, which regards man as provided by God with certain graces, talents and gifts which must be used to obtain eternal happiness, for Sartre, is an arbitrary determinism and therefore nonsense. Nor does Sartre completely agree with an atheistic humanism which regards man as being subjectively responsible for developing individual "grace" and talent for the purpose of creating a certain personal happiness as well as uplifting mankind while reaching for immortality. As Sartre says; "This . . . theory takes man as an end and as a higher value. ". . . that I, as man, shall personally consider myself responsible for, and honored by, acts of a few particular men. This kind of

Humanism we can do without." The meaning of humanism, for Sartre, is this:

Man is constantly outside of himself; in projecting himself, in losing himself outside of himself, he makes for man's existing; and on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent goals that he is able to exist; man being this state of passing beyond, is at the heart, at the center of this passing beyond. There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This connection between transcendency, as a constitutive element of man - not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of passing beyond - and subjectivity, in the sense that man is not closed in on himself but is always present in a human universe, is what we call humanism.

Humanism, because we remind man that there is no law-maker other than himself, and that in his forlornness he will decide by himself; because we point out that man will fulfil himself as man not in turning towards himself but in seeking outside of himself a goal which is just this liberation, just this particular fulfilment, (Exist., p.60).

Given his principles, then, Sartre has constructed a system which illuminates choice and probability, which stresses the essential freedom of man and a certain function of the other in conditioning choice and freedom. He has developed a theory which centers upon and makes possible the existence of man, given the situation of man and man's condition as Sartre understands them. Thus the work is not without value. On the contrary the very impetus for this existentialism seems to be founded upon the essentially religious experience of a man having come from nothing and going towards nothing -- and as such it has humanistic implications.

But what of the inconsistencies, the apparent "bad faith?" Well, if man comes from nothing and for no reason, then he has an irrational beginning. He lives a life about

which he has only an historical knowledge and moves towards his own total annihilation. The only salvation for Sartre, then, is the rational recognition of irrationalism. As Norman Greene puts it, this is ". . . a sort of reverse stoicism, the living by man of the life determined for him by his project."⁴¹

In other words, man lives in a condition of indefinite compounding. The important thing is not to lose, yet one never wins. The essence of liberty lies in the uncertainty and risk involved in the necessity of action. This new stoicism like the old commands man to look within, to recognize the universal in himself, but unlike the old stoicism it cannot believe that "no natural desire is in vain."⁴² This stoicism of Sartre's is designed not only to confront external desolation but also the powerful contradictory impulses from within as well. In anguish man will see himself, his contradictory condition, and his freedom to act "as if" he were God.

Thus Sartre's doctrine may properly be called an atheistic theology for, though it is diametrically opposed to a God-centered world, nevertheless, it rests its case upon God or at least upon the "non-existence" of God. The very impetus and drive for all of men's actions, according to Sartre, is

⁴¹ Norman Greene, Existential Ethics. (Ann Arbor: 1960), p. 206.

⁴² Simone de Beauvoir, Pyrrhus and Cyneas, Trans. Catherine Freemanle, Partisan Review, Summer, 1946.

found in the longing to be and the attempt to become God. In fact, Sartre implies that the philosophy of existence is impossible without first annihilating God. He says that:

Atheistic existentialism, which I represent, is more coherent. It states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man, or, as Heidegger says, human reality. What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence, (Exist., p.18).

As was shown previously, Descartes, in his search for "clear and distinct" ideas, ignored the immediate fact of existence. The dualism of res extensa and res cogitans is founded essentially on a separation of man's essence from his existence, and Descartes never succeeded in synthesizing or welding them together again. The reaction of the existentialists was to expose man as a feeling creature, a finite creature caught in the paradox of his search for the infinite. A creature that must believe his heart because his reason is inadequate.

Since the very basis of our action is founded upon an assumed impossibility, i.e. the existence of God and the tending of man toward God, Sartre's chief effort is to get man to face squarely the implications for personal action in a universe without purpose. Starting with an assumed first

principle, that of the non-existence of God, and denying the existence of a fixed human nature, man is allowed no external support and is therefore fully responsible for his own character, judgments and choices.

Kierkegaard, for example, understood man as a creature who cannot prove the existence of God but who leaps to Him in an act of ultimate faith. Sartre, however, leaps away from God. The fact of God for Sartre is an illusion caused by certain basic aspects of the total human condition. In fact, belief in God, for Sartre, is detrimental to human welfare and is caused by a form of "bad faith" or refusal to face the fact of human freedom. ". . . the first act of bad faith is to flee what it cannot flee, to flee what it is," (Exist., p.15). Bad faith is a response to a situation in which man faces the difficulty of conquering himself as a self in a world created by others, but which he, by virtue of the necessity of his dependence accepts as his own. He must assert the world as it appears to him. The recognition of freedom is inseparable from anguish and the recognition of solitude is accompanied by nausea. Desire breeds frustration and satisfaction is impossible. It is the "human condition" with its inner conflict and struggle which leads to "bad faith", (B.N. p.49).

Sartre admits that in claiming to be an atheist he is going beyond the certainty of experience to the realm of the hypothetical and probable. The existence or non-existence of God is a metaphysical question for him, and he regards

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metaphysics as an imaginative enterprise incapable of yielding certainty. Sartre's ontology differs from a metaphysics in that it is a description of facts, and thus, he believes, it is subject to the criteria of truth or falsity. He seems to have a basic reluctance to assume more than is justified by the "clear" testimony of experience.

Sartre is preoccupied essentially with men-in-situations, with man and the human condition of man, but he seems to be looking at man from the point of view of a psychologist or sociologist, even though his work is couched in quasi-philosophic language. First, let it be kept in mind that one studying Sartre is dealing with a phenomenology and as such the work is limited to subjective description. For this reason it cannot be a philosophy either of being or of nothingness, for the intuition of either of these notions must necessarily be outside of any particular phenomenon. By the same token it cannot be a humanism in the traditional sense, because traditional humanism draws upon principles, norms and criteria obtaining in a penetrating analysis of the human person. In spite of the fact that Sartre makes the "human condition" the central theme of his "description", this could never take the place of a philosophical analysis any more than the confessional could take the place of psycho-analysis or sociology could take the place of moral theology.

The final metaphysical breakdown is forced upon Sartre by his own phenomenological criteria when he attempts to discuss existence prescindend from essence. This destroys the very

existence, the starting point of Sartre's system because of an all exclusive concentration upon existence. One is speaking of nothing if he attempts to speak of an essence which does not exist in some way, and so, also, Sartre is speaking of nothing when he attempts to talk about individual existents which are not some-things, which have no form or nature; which, in other words, are unspeakable. By throwing out natures, Sartre also destroys existence and from then on his existents have, strangely, many essential characteristics. (For example, existence is essentially free.)

Rather than a metaphysic or even a philosophy of nature, what Sartre has here is a description of the interplay of environmental factors conditioning the man (psychology) or his collectivity (sociology), which description is itself involved in this "human condition".

Further, Sartre not only destroys existence but he also destroys discourse. Plato saw the need of constructing something other than being (non-being), in order to talk about being. The attempt of Sartre to create a rational system of description of totally involved personal irrationalism, using terms which invalidate themselves, communicating the incommunicable and speaking about an unspeakable subject is ambiguous.

The obvious moral breakdown of Sartre's existential humanism is a result of the ambiguity of measuring without a measure. The culmination of a vain and pretentious humanism which attempts to seal man off from God and make the creature

instead of the creator the measure of all things, is precisely this kind of ultra-personal individualism.

There can be little doubt that much of the success of Sartre and his philosophic and theological offspring is due to the new way of propagating ideas through literature especially the novel and the drama. The exponents of existentialism, particularly in France, immediately saw the advantages of literature over any formal scientific exposition for presenting the individual in his concrete existence. Sartre's drama, Les Diables et Le Bon Dieu, for example, has had far greater influence than his treatise Being and Nothingness. Sartre passes from philosophy to the novel, to tragedy and to comedy without shifting his ground, because for him the theatre is nothing more than phenomenology played out on a stage.

In his dramas Sartre portrays the indetermination of human freedom, the contingency and absurdity of an existence in which human acts are disconnected, of no logical or moral significance, or in Sartrian terminology, wholly gratuitous.

It is evident that psychoanalysis, both as a method of psycho-therapy and as a branch of empirical psychology, has had tremendous influence everywhere and holds the interest of countless individuals. One consequence of this new science of man has been the desire to institute new norms which are independent of natural and Christian morality. Unconscious dynamisms and determinations lie beneath the apparent calm of consciousness and are guided by their own laws according to psychology. These laws and their dynamisms are imperious in

their demands upon man's conscious behaviour. Conscience is not, as it may appear, a clear and placid realm where judgments of moral value regarding individual acts are reached. It is rather a bundle of psychic energy rooted in instinctive and unconscious soil.

It is further affirmed that the evolution of conscience in its intellectual and affective formation is an extremely complicated phenomenon whose harmonious development and perfect maturation is found only in rare instances. In its efforts to adapt itself to the real, the ego is barraged and battered by unbridled impulses of pleasure on one hand and by the inhibitions of external morality on the other. If this conflict of the ego with the id and superego is not happily resolved, we then have one or the other complex or arrestation of the psychic dynamism. This degenerates progressively into nervous disorders, into intellectual, affective, and sensual regressions which fetter for one's entire life the perfection and freedom of moral acts.

Nearly all persons, according to the psychoanalysts are afflicted with some such psychological devolution. If the psychic equilibrium is not evident, it is because the defects have been compensated by other capacities and resources of the individual. Hence some inclinations, even though the most noble and moral, can be found to be related to disturbances and regressions in the depth of the psyche. The particular tone of one's affections, of one's manner of seeing and judging, is always linked to this mysterious part of oneself.

One must be careful not to confuse virtue with what might be merely a defective development in a part of the personality.

If this is carried to its logical limit, the unconscious dynamisms could not only inhibit the free exercise of the will, they could actually exclude it altogether. These forces bring such extrinsic pressure to bear on the subject, that although the will remains free to offer its theoretical consent to the moral judgment of conscience, it is nevertheless physically impossible to actualize that judgment.

Man to-day has a horror of the fixed, the determinate, the eternal. Three persons seated upon divans in a parlour look out of painted windows with no other amusement than their mutual self-torture carried on in a delirium which always returns to where it began. This, according to Sartre, is man's hell, and it is shared by all those who cannot discover the true sense, at once human and divine, of man's fleeting and painful existence on earth.

Criticism of Sartre

But even as a psychology, Sartre's existentialism disintegrates thought more than promoting or enriching it, and those who have written defensive critiques of Sartre's work, such as Maurice Nathanson, have been very subtle in negating the most positive assertions of Sartre whose logic ends up by destroying itself.

A philosopher who considers rationality the supreme illusion of human consciousness is a priori not even worthy of

criticism. Therefore it is a moot question whether Sartre is right or wrong, whether he is a charlatan of genius or a poor fellow caught in the trap of his own dialectics.

The fact that Sartrean existentialism expresses itself in a whole series of morbid literary works seems to corroborate the opinions of critics such as Roger Troisfontaines,⁴³ that this is not simply a reaction against the rationalistic and idealistic trends which too long dominated philosophical thought in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, cutting that thought off and making it sterile. Rather, they recognize that this noisy explosion of existentialism had emotional roots and arose out of the frightful cataclysm of war.

It is well that Sartre has raised the question of the meaning of human existence for all reflection should take into account the destiny of man himself. Philosophy is not only a scheme of ideas; it is the establishment of a position with regard to the absolute and each one of us, at every moment, irrevocably stakes infinite values. But one should not allow the abuse of deadening abstractions to throw one into the sticky subjectivity of the hard existent, as the exaggerated systematization of Hegel drove Kierkegaard to clench his fists in a fit of fideistic despair. Philosophy, which is an understanding of reality, is not based upon the particular, sunk into itself, nor upon bloodless generalities.

⁴³ Roger Troisfontaines "Existentialism and Christianity", Trans. M. J. Kerr (London: Adam & Charles Black Co., 1949).

When, with regard to action's internal springs, one tries to describe the interlocking links of action, one should never do it as if analysis were sufficient of itself, or as if description could be gratuitous. There are over-all structures, supra-individual standards, organic wholes, and intelligible syntheses. In short, there are regulative and judicative truths without which Sartre could not realize that physical being constantly becomes stickier, like a homogeneous mass, nor that consciousness expands like a fullness overflowing, nor, above all, that the two oppose each other, either painfully to prolong their separation, or to project themselves, discovering in the unexpectedness of this leap forward the very essence of freedom from any value. If Sartre's phenomenology has continued to develop contradictory dialectics, it is because he has revived the divorce between the individual and the universal. He starts by making the individual sacrosanct and to this one point, chosen arbitrarily, he then tries to bring all the facets and values of existence into this perspective, cost what it may. This is the worst of all abstractions: to seek to reduce to an identical norm -- arbitrarily conceived -- the diverse reactions and needs of human beings which can be integrated only in a hierarchy of principles and values. If Sartrian humanism is only true for Sartre, then it may be said that it is no longer true, even for him; truth and universality are one.

Once the initial perspective of humanism is distorted, the vision of the whole remains disturbed. What are these

notions of "factitiousness", "utility", "existential choice", and even, of equivocal "transcendence"? The simple statement of a "pure" fact is unintelligible; the most elementary fact is always in some degree elaborated so that the penetration of the object by the subject began long before Sartre declared that it was impossible. Similarly, what clear-cut idea is one to understand when Sartre, in the mode of pragmatism, speaks of the artificiality of the world? This notion turns back upon its creator to prove to him that, if the world is relative to his ability to construct it, far from being enslaved by "mundaneness", he can dominate "mundaneness" by the absoluteness of the spirit. As for the idea of "pure choice", identified with the blind existential urge, it means only an obscure tendency, radically biological, with utilitarian or hedonistic fruits. If no coherent science can be worked out concerning existence, and freedom is conceived without an inwardness that is both demanding and sanctioning, not only does all metaphysics or morality become impossible, but all reason becomes impossible too. Finally, what can be said of the caricature of transcendence that is offered by Sartre to designate in turn the exterior position of the existent with regard to himself, his privacy over nothingness, his very precarious control of the world and his "project" within an illusory freedom. Nowhere is the authentic transcendence of the immanent and demanding Absolute discussed, and, fundamentally, it is logical that this system which has brought the mind down to the level of the irrational should

bring transcendence down to the level of the unreal.

From Sartre's existential humanism the idea to be retained is that a practical and militant philosophy is necessary, since in the question, "What is man?", Sartre is included and compromised to the point where he can no longer answer objectively without taking a stand for or against his own existence. It has been the goal of philosophical effort to show that the idea of an act and the act itself are not the same thing and that a proper place in philosophy must be given to that which until now seemed impossible to identify in the extreme diversity of the elusive contingency which attends concrete existences. But what can be retained of the negative Sartrean humanism? Its psychoanalytical explorations have revealed as yet unplumbed depths of egoism and perversity in man, rather than treasures of generosity. Can Sartre be said to have enriched one's knowledge of humanity by his contribution of cynical "totalism"? Definitely not, for the truth is always of the spirit. It disintegrates in descriptive complacency and the workings of an unhealthy imagination disturbed by animal cravings. It seems that Sartre does not really wish to solve the problems of existence but rather to curb one's right to raise the real problems. This may be why he destroys, a priori, any relationship between the subject and the object, between the subject and himself, between the subject and other subject. But then, whom will he convince that man lives only for this disgusting "mess" and that he dies merely to prove the absurdity of life? Why must the

irrational be the favourite food of man's reason, rather than that which transcends it and fulfils it? Could it be because reason can juggle with the unreasonable, while it must show itself humble before standards that go beyond it? It is time now for the mind, after this sortie into the Darkness, to re-affirm its rights to universality and inwardness, instead of allowing itself to be deceived by an overly visceral imagination.

Sartre has tried to construct a radical philosophy of freedom. Yet by it one is not led down the road to the deification of man. On the contrary, the freedom of which Sartre speaks is not a positive and creative freedom. It is a destructive, annihilative freedom. Sartre looks upon man as the being that is the source of nothingness. Had not human reality sprung up, like an erosive canker, in the very heart of being, being would always be unchanged; nothingness would not exist. If nothingness has come to exist it is due to this most singular act, human reality, which is consequently the sole basis of nothingness in the heart of being. And why is man the source of nothingness? Because he is free, unique among all beings in the world. Freedom is the condition of the work of annihilation carried out by man in the heart of being. Thus freedom is not merely a sentence passed on man, in the sense that he himself has not chosen it; it is also the fundamental condition of the nothingness which is man and which he has carved out of being, like a hole that may never be filled in. Sartre's man is the sheer antithesis of

God, who creates the world out of nothingness; he creates nothingness out of the world.

No more radical and paradoxical inversion of humanism could be imagined. In traditional humanism man builds and enriches the world through his works. In Sartre's conception, man delves within the world like a worm, grinding it into fragments, corroding it and impoverishing it. Man is a useless passion, (B.N., p.615).

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