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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF J.-P. SARTRE'S  
CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN THE LIGHT OF THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EN-SOI AND POUR-SOI

by

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## F O R E W O R D

In the course of a person's life his ideas in general usually undergo some degree of change. Sometimes the changes in thought are slight, while at other times they may be so great as to warrant the description "conversion". With Jean-Paul Sartre there appear to be at least two distinct phases in his thought: the early phase (until about 1950) and the later phase (until his death in 1980). Often it is argued, somewhat paradoxically, that the more a person's thought appears to change the more it remains the same. Whether this argument could be applied to the case of Sartre is problematic. There are those who stress the continuity in his thought, while others again emphasize the radical differences. Happily, I do not need to enter this debate since my concern in this dissertation is with the thought of the early Sartre. Even if the continuity in thought between his early works and his subsequent writings could be demonstrated, this would not invalidate my approach. The fact that I limit myself to a certain phase of his thought in no way commits me to any view on the relationship between this phase and any subsequent phases. With these remarks the parameters of my field of study are drawn: I confine myself to the central concept of the early Sartre, the concept of freedom.

The history of the concept of freedom is a long one. Most philosophers have had decided views on the matter and these have often been incorporated into their theories of the world. Likewise the history of the question of the relationship

between essence/.....

between essence and existence is also a long one. There is a link between the concept of freedom and the question of the relationship between essence and existence. This link is supplied by the specific interpretation of the concept of freedom as man's power to determine his own existence (self) in terms of his essential nature. On this interpretation man's essence clearly precedes his existence in so far as his existence is evaluated in terms of an a priori conception of essence. This is the view which I shall examine in my first chapter. I select Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl as exemplars of this view in what I shall call "transcendental philosophy". By this term I mean the view that world theories are constituted in the minds of specific philosophers on the grounds of their particular experience of the world. In this sense the thought of all philosophers is transcendental in so far as each philosopher conceives of his theory under the principle of identity - the way in which a philosopher conceives of the world determines the way in which he conceives of man, which, in turn, determines the way in which he expects man to act towards his fellowman. I shall not, of course, seek to prove this thesis in respect of all known philosophers (an impossible undertaking!) but merely restrict myself to four thinkers, namely, Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl, because they are important predecessors of Sartre. They are important in the sense that they represent the dominant trend in philosophy in respect of the question of the relationship between essence and existence. It is in response to this trend that Sartre, under particular historical circumstances, formulates his/.....

formulates his own conception of the relationship between essence and existence. Hence by examining the views of the major representatives of transcendental philosophy before Sartre, I hope to indicate both the similarities and the differences between Sartre's approach and the approaches of his predecessors.

It is the intention of this dissertation to determine not only the significance of the concept of freedom in the philosophy of the early Sartre, but to determine the position of the early Sartre in the history of philosophy in so far as this interpretation is conceived under the principle of identity. This additional dimension to this dissertation is not the outcome of an afterthought but is necessitated by the approach adopted. In terms of this approach it is hoped to show not only how Sartre's concept of freedom differs from those of his predecessors, but also in what respect it links up once more with those of his predecessors. In this way we are implicitly assigning to Sartre a position in the history of philosophy and it is as well to make this explicit.

I have undertaken this study of the fundamental concept of freedom in the early Sartre because, despite the voluminous literature on this topic, it seems to me that the constitutive and hence transcendental character of Sartre's concept of freedom has not been sufficiently recognized. My thesis, then, is that Sartre's concept of freedom arises from his own experience of the world which, in turn, gives rise to his image of man; that it is out of this conception of man and of

the world/...

the world that Sartre constitutes his concept of freedom as the mode of relation between man and the world. Thus in my examination of Sartre's concept of freedom I shall seek to show that this concept of freedom is conceived under particular historical circumstances and that it, therefore, points to man's existence as a finite contingent being who cannot help forming his concepts under these circumstances. As such Sartre's concept of freedom reflects the principle of identity. By showing in what way Sartre's concept of freedom is conceived under the principle of identity, I hope to indicate the constitutive and hence transcendental character of his concept of freedom.

While it is undoubtedly true that Sartre's concept of freedom has been discussed from the ethical point of view, it does not appear to have been sufficiently appreciated that it takes its rise from his philosophical model as a whole, that is, the relationship between l'être-en-soi and l'être-pour-soi. Since it is considered that the relationship between en-soi and pour-soi is itself conceived under the principle of identity, it is my intention to show how the nature of this relationship confirms the transcendental character of Sartre's concept of freedom. In order to indicate this it will be necessary to examine this relationship from the epistemological, ontological and ethical point of view.

This examination of Sartre's concept of freedom leads to problems of both a theoretical and practical character. Sartre's approach to the much-discussed questions of alienation

and authentic/...

and authentic existence is critically appraised in the light of his philosophical model from both the theoretical as well as practical point of view. From the theoretical point of view the problems are so serious as to cast doubt upon the feasibility of his entire enterprise, while from the practical point of view his approach is also questionable. The implications of his concept of freedom are explored with a view to establishing its applicability to his actual circumstances of life. Our conclusion seeks to discover the merit (if any) of Sartre's concept of freedom.

For this particular perspective I am indebted to Professor G. A. Rauche, Head of the Department of Philosophy and Political Science, University of Durban-Westville, who has indicated certain lines of this approach in a number of his published works. I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Rauche, who supervised this research, for the philosophical insights that he shared with me and the guidance which he afforded me. My debt to certain other scholars is also considerable and is acknowledged in the text. I must, however, single out two scholars whose works in some respects anticipate my position. F.H. Heinemann in Existentialism and the Modern Predicament, provides an interpretation of Sartre's early philosophy which is valid under particular historical circumstances but problematic in certain other respects which closely approximates my own conception of Sartre's philosophy as transcendental in character. Also K. Hartmann, in Sartre's Ontology, has in some respects anticipated my fundamental

thesis concerning/.....

thesis concerning the transcendental character of Sartre's concept of freedom but he, in turn, has apparently not recognized the historical dimension of Sartre's thought. Moreover, his exclusive Hegelian perspective causes him to lose sight of the cognitive significance of Sartre's philosophy. In the light of my differences with these and other scholars and my failure to discover any other scholar who has conceived the philosophy of the early Sartre in the way in which I do, a dissertation on Sartre from this point of view seems justified.

In addition to the intellectual debt, I also wish to express my very sincere appreciation to Professor Rauche for seeing to it in various ways that my position was financially secure during the period when this research was undertaken. Without such financial security this research would have taken far longer to complete. In this respect I particularly wish to thank the Human Sciences Research Council for their generous financial assistance. Thanks are also due to the University of Durban-Westville for the Graduate-Assistant bursary. A special word of thanks is also due to Miss S. Munsamy and Miss W. Williamson for typing the manuscript and draft copy.

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M. Ally

CAPE TOWN

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE IN THE TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY BEFORE SARTRE AND THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

Our examination of the relationship between essence and existence in the transcendental philosophy before Sartre will focus on the views of Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl because it is our contention that these four thinkers were most influential in establishing the philosophical climate to which Sartre responded in the formulation of his own position on the question of the relationship between essence and existence. Each of these philosophers made an attempt to derive the existence of man as conceived conceptually, from a notion of his essence and then proceeded to derive, from this notion, man's nature as well as the concept of freedom. It may not be immediately evident that the concept of freedom which a philosopher espouses must be closely related to that philosopher's view of the relationship between essence and existence, but a little reflection will lead one to the conclusion that this must indeed be so. If by freedom is meant liberty of action or, more explicitly, the power of self-determination, it follows that freedom refers to the agent or person experiencing such liberty. However, in order to be able to render an adequate account of the meaning of freedom for the agent, an overall view of the nature of the agent is required. Only by filling in the background against which freedom is exercised can the concept of freedom

emerge with/...

emerge with the necessary clarity. It would appear that this can be achieved in two ways. The philosopher may possibly further elaborate upon the nature of the agent, a process which may ultimately culminate in an account of the essential nature of the agent. On the other hand, he may emphasize those conditions of reality which are taken to constitute fundamental limitations to any human project and which, as such, constitute the a priori limits within which freedom can meaningfully be seen to function. It is our contention that these two alternatives are not only compatible with each other, but that they actually refer to each other. We believe, and intend to demonstrate in the course of this dissertation, that each philosopher's concept of the nature of reality is derived from his own experience and that it determines his concept of the nature of man; that his concept of the nature of man, in turn, determines the way in which he expects man to act toward his fellowman and thereby exemplifies his concept of human freedom. Thus, a full-blown account of the concept of freedom must needs include a theory of the nature of reality - which theory will point to the specific area in which freedom will be deployed - as well as an account of the essence of man as the agent who exercises this freedom. It is not only the philosophers whom we will be considering in this chapter who fulfil this "principle of identity" (1) as we hope to show, but Sartre himself cannot avoid instantiating this principle, not only in theory but also in practice, as we shall endeavour to demonstrate. Before we can do that, however, we must turn to those philosophers

whom we/...

whom we have singled out for detailed study.

Descartes, like Aristotle, conceived of the world as essentially a rationally organized structure with man as basically a rational animal. He, therefore, based his account of human existence on reason. This reason manifested itself to man in the form of clear and self-evident innate ideas in his mind which were therefore accessible to every man. These ideas afforded Descartes complete certainty and none more so than the certainty which was afforded his own existence when he attempted to doubt it and discovered that in such doubting his existence was implicitly affirmed. What he cannot doubt is his own consciousness, for to doubt is to be conscious, and therefore by doubting his existence, he must affirm it. This was expressed by Descartes in the form of the incorrigible proposition Cogito, ergo sum (I think, therefore I am). Descartes was so struck by this proof of the self's existence that he accorded priority to what he regarded as the immaterial thinking substances (res cogitans) over the material body (res extensa). He clearly expresses this when he wrote

this notion of a thought precedes that of all corporeal things and is most certain, since we still doubt whether there are any other things in the world, while we clearly perceive that we think. (2)

It would/...

It would be perfectly reasonable to conclude that the significance of Descartes's Cogito, ergo sum lies not so much in its merely functional usage as marking a certain stage in his reasoning, as in the fact that he identifies his own reality with his thought.

It is not necessary to show how Descartes proceeded to attempt to prove the existence of God or that of the external world. Let us merely note that Descartes's picture of the world was conceived on the model of the determinateness exhibited in the relations between particular mathematical entities. It was this search for the fundamental underlying principles of reality in terms of mathematical reasoning which led him to postulate one other principal feature concerning reality, namely, that matter is characterized by being essentially extended substances (res extensa). According to Descartes, then, there is a clear distinction between res cogitans (the internal world of minds) and res extensa (the external world of bodies). Spiritual entities such as angels, I suppose, would exemplify the former, while physical entities such as stones would exemplify the latter. It was in terms of this dualist theory of reality that Descartes conceived of the nature of man. Since man is a creature which apparently possesses both a mind and a body, Descartes postulated that res cogitans and res extensa are united in man. However, he experienced great difficulty in explaining how two quite distinct and different substances actually interacted. This difficulty arose because Descartes's initial postulates,

derived as/.....

derived as they were from a separation of essence from existence, lacked the means of being able to refer back to the reality from which they were originally derived. It is not our intention to investigate the problems which Descartes encountered in trying to explain the interaction (the body-mind problem) but rather to further elucidate the essential nature of the creature in which this interaction takes place by considering the implications of Descartes's methodological assumptions for the relationship between man and world.

We have already noted that, in terms of his method, Descartes was led to accord priority to res cogitans over res extensa. As far as man is concerned he believed that "although mind belongs to the essence of man, to be united to a human body is in the proper sense no part of the essence of mind."<sup>(3)</sup> This is not simply a restatement of the distinction between res cogitans and res extensa for it also shows that he considered that man's essence was to be found in his nature as a thinking being rather than in his possession of a physical body or even in the fact that the mind was united to the body. What Descartes's distinction between res cogitans and res extensa, when taken in conjunction with his proposition Cogito, ergo sum, clearly indicates, is that mind is essentially different from matter and that where they can be seen to interact, as in man, it is mind which is the more fundamental. It follows from this that man is essentially a consciousness which happens to be embodied, rather than essentially embodied consciousness. The essential nature of selfhood - that

attribute without/...

attribute without which a self would not be a self - is to be conscious in one or other determinate mode, in other words, the self is always conscious, just as matter is always extended. But we have also seen that Descartes based his proof of man's concrete existence on this consciousness, for this is what is implied by the proposition Cogito, ergo sum. Therefore, it follows that for Descartes man's existence is derived from his essence which is precisely the quality of thinking.

It seems that Descartes was able to achieve this derivation of man's existence from his essence at the price of assimilating his actual concrete existence to an a priori notion of essence. We shall see that this is the case in all rationalist systems. For Descartes it was the innate ideas in man's mind which enabled him to understand the real structure of the world and which secured for him the truth. Human consciousness was not only the starting-point it was also the centre of all determination as well as the point of constant reference, the axis around which the world revolved. However, it was a human consciousness constituted from a particular experience of the world and which, therefore, reflected the world in a particular manner. Descartes thereby exemplifies the principle of identity, that is, that the way in which the philosopher experiences the world, that is the way that he sees man's essence, that is the way he expects man to act toward his fellow-man. It was therefore Descartes's experience of reality as consisting of res cogitans and

res extensa which/...

res extensa which explained his picture of man as a supposedly rational being which in turn provided him with the necessary foundation to explain man's actual existence.

It is now necessary to attempt to show the relationship between Descartes's view of the essence of man and his concept of freedom. We have seen that the self's existence is disclosed by no intermediary idea that represents the self to itself: the self is known to itself exactly as it is in and for what it is at the moment of apprehending itself.

Similarly, the fact that we are free is held by Descartes to be "as self-evident and clear as anything we can ever know"<sup>(4)</sup> on the grounds that the method of doubt employed by which he arrived at the truth of the cogito presupposes "a liberty such that we were able to abstain from believing what was not perfectly certain and indubitable."<sup>(5)</sup> Our freedom is known without proofs and simply by the experience we have of it, in other words, not by inference but by direct self-inspection. Hence just as we are able to affirm our own existence in the cogito, so we can now affirm our own freedom in like manner since the cogito presupposes the volitional faculty. Descartes uses the term cogitatio to refer to the mind in its capacity as a combination of thinking, willing and feeling. Now Descartes holds that "the will is so free in its nature that it can never be constrained."<sup>(6)</sup> The question, of course, arises in what does this freedom consist? Sartre has interpreted this after his own fashion and we shall not at present consider his view of the matter, but instead attempt to offer a generally acceptable view of Descartes's concept

of freedom./...

of freedom.

It has already been noted that for Descartes that which is clearly and distinctly seen to be true can, and indeed has to be accepted as indubitable. In view of this one may wonder how Descartes can claim that the will is free if all that is meant by this is assent to the truth of the clear and distinct idea. One might be tempted to regard this freedom as somewhat specious. However, while it is true that the clear perception that a contemplated action to which emotion inclines us as good is of itself sufficient to secure our assent to it and our initiation of it, the action following the clear perception is not vouchsafed by casual inspection, but is the result of our purposive effort to discover an idea that is clear, and of our refusing to decide prematurely. In refusing to decide prematurely the self is acting feely, since it has not yet attained a clear perception of that alternative which it will eventually adopt. Such efforts and refusals in the final stages of the deliberative process themselves constitute acts of will on the part of a self that is as equally free at the time to decide precipitately as to refrain from doing so. Of course, this still does not rule out the implication that the will is "determined" by these clear and distinct ideas but, since these derive from our exercise of reason, it has justly been remarked that "such 'determination' of the will... is a determination of it by nothing other than our very own self."<sup>(7)</sup> Freedom, then, consists in obeying the dictates of a correctly employed reason. This presupposes that the rational and volitional

aspects of/...

aspects of man's mind will tend to operate harmoniously together, but upon this matter Descartes had few doubts, for he observed that "the greater clarity of my understanding was followed by a greater inclination of my will."<sup>(8)</sup> When, however, these two aspects of the mind are in opposition the possibility of error looms, since, according to Descartes, error arises out of a combination of the imperfect use of our perfect freedom, asserting and denying where we do not clearly understand, for we are not compelled or determined in our use of will - we can suspend judgement, as we have seen, as well as affirm.

Let us now take stock of our results. We have seen how Descartes's experience of the world determined his derivation of man's existence from his essence as a thinking being. We have also endeavoured to show that for Descartes freedom consists in the recognition of man's essential nature as a thinking being and the harmonious realization of that nature by means of actions guided by reason. In this way freedom becomes synonymous with self-determination while the sense of being free from external compulsion is retained. Descartes himself referred to freedom as "a real and positive power to determine oneself"<sup>(9)</sup> and clearly thought that this could be achieved the more easily if reason was employed to guide it. In this regard a passage from his correspondence can be cited in which he claims that the

greater liberty consists either in a greater

facility in/...

facility in determining oneself or of a greater use of the positive power which we have of following the worse although we see the better. If we follow the course which appears to have the most reasons in its favour we determine ourselves the more easily.<sup>(10)</sup>

Here Descartes makes reference to the notion of degrees of freedom, a notion which he had introduced in his Fourth Meditation when he spoke of indifference as "the lowest degree of freedom."<sup>(11)</sup> Descartes's position would seem to be that, while freedom is in principle unlimited, its actual realization depends upon the extent to which man as a thinking being is able to realize his essence as such. It appears, then, that Descartes's notion of degrees of freedom is not in contradiction with his previously stated belief that "the will is so free that it can never be constrained," because this latter refers to the abstract unfettered power of choosing, while the former refers to the realization of this power in actual human existence. As far as the person who is indifferent is concerned, it would probably be true to say that, since he is not moved to thought or action in one way or another, he is exercising the unlimited power of freedom which he possesses to the least extent.

In conclusion, let us not forget that Descartes has quite correctly been described as a rationalist. He gave priority to the rational feature of the mind above the purely volitional or affective features, as we have seen. The



essence of/...

essence of man was cogitatio but the essence of cogitatio was thinking. It would not, therefore, be correct to describe the unlimited freedom he accorded man as constitutive of the essence of man. Rather, we should recognize that, while freedom is a necessary pre-condition for the operation of rational thinking, its concrete realization has to be achieved in conjunction with such thinking. It is reason as the essence of man which allows freedom to be realized and thereby man's concrete existence expresses his essence as a rational creature.

Kant, too, could be called a rationalist, albeit of a more equivocal kind than Descartes, and his philosophy is more frequently referred to as transcendentalism. What is noteworthy about this philosophy from our point of view is the way in which the question of the relation between essence and existence is transmuted into a question of the way in which we posit these terms. In other words, according to Kant, the answer to the question "What does the existence of man consist in?" is that it consists in the way in which we posit this existence. This is simply a specific application of a general methodological principle whereby Kant transformed the "Why" of traditional metaphysical questions into the "How" of transcendentalism. Kant's explanation for the existence of entities or states of affairs was to enquire into the transcendental condition for the possibility of such entities or states of affairs. Kant's basic assumption was that reality as such, that is, the

thing-in-itself, /...

thing-in-itself, cannot be known although it could be thought. Accordingly he maintained that "we cognize our own subject only as a phenomenon and not as it is in itself"<sup>(12)</sup> which does not mean that our existence is merely appearance or appearance or illusion, but that "I have therefore no knowledge of myself as I am, but merely as I appear to myself".<sup>(13)</sup> He explains this in an accompanying footnote

My existence is thus already given by the act of consciousness, but the mode in which I must determine my existence, that is, the mode in which I must place the manifold belonging to my existence is not given... I am unable to determine my own existence as that of a spontaneous being, but I am only able to represent to myself the spontaneity of my thought, that is, of my determination and my existence remains ever determinable in a purely sensuous manner, that is to say, like the existence of a phenomenon. But it is because of this spontaneity that I call myself an intelligence.<sup>(14)</sup>

Man's existence, as can be seen from the above quotation, has a dual aspect. On the one hand, there is the aspect of the material phenomenon of a physical body which is perceived in the a priori form of space and the spiritual reality of a thinking subject which is perceived in the a priori form of

time. On/...

time. On the other hand, man the subject, as he is in himself, is not to be known as phenomenon but links up with a further dimension - the noumenal world, a term which now requires elucidation.

According to Kant, our knowledge of the natural world is gained by the perception of phenomena through the forms of space and time, which phenomena are coherently conceived by means of the application of certain pure concepts of the understanding (categories). However, Kant taught that we cannot know the unconditioned thing-in-itself to which he gave the name noumenon. He held that the noumenon is

merely a limitative conception, and therefore only a negative use... it is an arbitrary or fictitious notion, but is connected with the limitation of sensibility, without, however, being capable of presenting us with any positive datum beyond this sphere.<sup>(15)</sup>

These supra-sensible entities or ideas such as the ideas of God, of Freedom and of Immortality possess a practical significance in so far as they are bound up with the fulfilment of certain injunctions which are morally incumbent upon us. They not only could be thought but indeed had to be thought, although they did not provide us with knowledge. Rather, they were concepts of pure reason and not of understanding. However, it was precisely here that the true essence of man

was to be /.....

was to be found, for man was not purely a creature of the phenomenal world but also of the noumenal world as well. In fact, it is precisely the possession of the "intelligence" or reason to which Kant referred (see our quotation above) which distinguishes man's existence from all merely sensuous existence, so that for Kant it becomes definitive of man's essential (noumenal) nature. Now if the essence of the self belongs among the noumena, we have seen that it cannot be known as Kant himself recognized, but it can nevertheless be lived and it is necessary to turn to a consideration of Kant's view of ethics and morality to provide us with the answer to the question of the relation between essence and existence in man as it is related to the concept of freedom. Before doing so, it is necessary to investigate the specific relationship between essence and existence by establishing how Kant derived the existence of man from his view of the essence of man. We propose to attempt to do so by way of a consideration of the implications of Kant's well-known view concerning existence as not being a predicate. It is not necessary to recapitulate Kant's process of reasoning - we shall merely state his conclusion which was that existence is not a predicate as essence clearly is, that is, to say that something exists is not ~~to~~ to say what that something is. In thus distinguishing essence and existence logically Kant was faced with the question of what role existence fulfilled. He accepted that existences were given, but he attempted to account for their mere givenness by way of positing the subject of their essences. Not that he believed that existence was

bestowed on/...

bestowed on things by our own way of positing it, for he denied that existence is included in essence. Rather he believed that existence is not the what which I posit but the how I posit it. Since Kant posited the essence of man as to be found in the noumenal world, it follows that man's existence is posited as belonging essentially to the noumenal world. This does not mean that it is merely illusory, of course, but rather that no real knowledge of it could be posited. All we can do is either to feel it or else to affirm it, this affirmation in no way adds anything to the notion of what it affirms. But although existence may be thus distinct from essence, it is nevertheless a mode of essence in so far as it pertains to it without altering what it is. In this way Kant, like Descartes, assimilates existence to essence. In thus maintaining the distinction between essence and existence, Kant has preserved intact the fact of existence while being able to give an account of the essence of that existence. What should be quite clear by now is that he is not using the given existence as a datum from which to deduce his notion of the essence of that existence. On the contrary, the given existence is merely the referent to which his descriptions apply.

The chief characteristic of the noumenon is that it is beyond man's knowledge. Precisely because of this, man continues to strive to grasp it. Man's very failure to comprehend the noumena shows that they have to be thought and that they have practical significance for man - they appeal to man's nature as a creature of both intelligence and of volition. Because

of this/...

of this striving after the noumena, Kant postulated the will as a practical category of pure reason, in other words, in the subordination of the will to pure reason Kant discovered man's moral nature. If the determining ground of the will is reason, the will is self-determined in a way in which it is not when its motive principle is some more natural impulse, for the determining principle of one's volition then lies in one's own rational nature, rather than in some agency external to it of which the natural impulse would be but a manifestation. If man were not essentially a rational being, action from a law prescribed by reason would not be free, for it would not be self-determined. Kant is able to term such action free, however, precisely because of his conception of man's essential nature in terms of reason. Action determined by a law prescribed by reason is free because it is self-determined, that is, determined by a principle that is constitutive of one's own essential nature. Frederick Olafson has described Kant's position in the following way

Instead of a theory of the real existence or nature of human beings that would comprehend the whole range of human functions as these are revealed in experience, the moral essence of man is now concentrated in the will, and it is exclusively by reference to the 'real essence' of the will (i.e., its consistency with itself), that the rightness of actions is to be determined. (16)

The real essence of the will referred to is, of course, its

determination by/...

determination by the ideas of pure reason. In this way man becomes an autonomous being legislating for himself and being subject only to those obligations that he has created for himself in accordance with the moral law which makes it possible for him to test every act he is going to perform in the light of the question whether he would want his intended act to be declared a universal law. One cannot overemphasize the point that this law is not a restriction on freedom but rather a product of freedom, since in determining one's freedom in terms of pure practical reason, one spontaneously gives oneself a law which reflects the necessity of one's own nature and not any alien external force.

We have seen that for Descartes freedom was the "real and positive power to determine oneself". For Kant, too, we have seen that freedom is the power of self-determination in accordance with reason. A rationally determined will reveals the essence of man no less for Kant than for Descartes. However, the nature of reason in Kant is more complicated and subjected to certain restrictions which are not to be found in Descartes. Basically these restrictions stem from Kant's distinction between natural and moral law. Man is not simply an object of scientific enquiry obeying natural law, because, if all actions were necessary effects of natural causes, moral evaluation would be pointless. Kant therefore, wants to establish the autonomy of the will, that is, the capacity to obey laws of its own conception in defiance of natural causes because this, according to him is a necessary presupposition of any moral code. We have seen that this led

him to/...

him to postulate the existence of the moral law. As an object of theoretical scrutiny man can be regarded as a phenomenon while as a moral agent possessed of a will he is a noumenon. De Vleeschauwer makes the point in this way

As a phenomenon it (the subject of the will) is seen to be subject to laws from which it escapes when considered as a noumenon.

Obviously this whole reasoning is valid only in so far as the idea of freedom is presupposed.<sup>(17)</sup>

It is the idea of freedom which is the basis of man's ability to transcend his finite condition as a creature subject to natural law. However, it must be clearly understood that the idea of freedom is only effective in the practical sphere. As De Vleeschauwer makes clear "this freedom is not to be taken to be a knowledge of the essence of the subject but simply the voluntary power of determining the acts of a subject according to ideas."<sup>(18)</sup> What this means is that freedom remains bound by pure practical reason as a noumenon and as such functions solely regulatively, since it is incapable of yielding knowledge in the theoretical sphere.

In terms of this method Kant has constructed a picture of the existence of two distinct realms. The unity between these realms consists in man's rational striving. Kant conceived of man as a creature who belonged essentially to both the

phenomenal and/...

phenomenal and noumenal world. Yet, in so far as he belonged to the former, man was no different from any other mortal creature who was bound by the a priori forms of space and time, even to the extent that his consciousness was conceived as essentially temporal. However, man also belonged to the noumenal world in which he realized his essence as essentially a rational moral being who could realize his freedom only by subordinating his will to the dictates of pure practical reason. Kant's conception of man as embodying the moral law in his possession of pure practical reason illustrates the nature of the noumenal being of man as a transcendental conception of man's essence which is grounded in freedom.

Hegel's philosophy continues in the tradition which we have been following in so far as he, like Descartes and Kant, conceived of the real ground of the world as a rational ground and saw the essence of man's existence as embodied in the autonomy of reason. He accepts the traditional concept of essence as being that which is peculiar not to the individual, but rather that in virtue of which one species differs from another. However, for Hegel essence and existence are united in reality in so far as reality embodies the rational essence of the world. This is the basis of his often quoted statement "What is rational is real and what is real is rational"<sup>(19)</sup> which means that true existence is essentially rational. This implies, moreover, that not any and every thing in existence is reality in the same sense and to the same extent. Hence it is necessary to distinguish between real existence, in which the internal essence manifests

itself in/...

itself in its appropriate form which Hegel takes to be basically spiritual, and accidental contingent existence. Charles Taylor remarks in this regard that

the less necessity appears in the totality of external reality, the more we must distinguish this external reality from the underlying essence, in which all things are in unity...

In other words... the non-manifestness of this necessity in external reality must go along with a distinction between this external reality and the underlying essence. Conversely the greater manifestation of the necessity will go along with a fuller identification of reality and essence. (20)

What this quotation clearly prefigures is the way in which Hegel's idea of reality is based upon an assimilation of existence to essence. This was seen to have been true of both Descartes and Kant and we shall see that it is true of Hegel and Husserl as well. It will become clearer when we investigate Hegel's view of the nature of human reality.

For Hegel, man is an emergent part of nature and in so far as nature itself is not entirely rational the rationality which it does manifest becomes gradually explicit when man appears. The rationality which man contributes to the natural process comes in the form of culture and civilization which are the products of man's existence as a spiritual being.

Through his/...

Through his mind man is able to comprehend nature as one form of the externalization of the Absolute Spirit in its development to ever greater rationality. Hegel undertakes an examination of the development of the human mind through the sub-conscious and the rational will, through human institutions and human history as the embodiment or objectification of that will, and, finally, to art, religion and philosophy in which man finally knows himself as spirit, as one with God and possessed of absolute truth. But God is essentially present only in the process of thought because only here is it true that the spirit perceived is the same as the spirit which perceives. It is thus open to man to think his own essence which is spirit (Logos). According to Hegel, the spirit "makes man man"<sup>(21)</sup> and, being the Absolute, it is therefore the true universal essence of man. Only the presupposition of the "inner universal", the spirit, enables one to recognize the external particulars of man. It is clear from this that for Hegel the concrete individual human existence is a particular instance of universal humanity the essence of which is spirit. Now by thus assimilating existence to essence and incorporating man's existence into an overall system Hegel has succeeded in overcoming the dichotomy of essence - existence at the price of the complete identification of existence with essence. In order to grasp the scale of his conception as well as to appreciate the role which freedom plays in it, it is necessary to turn from the perspective of man to that of the essence of man, that is, spirit. Of course, one must always bear in mind that for Hegel,

man is/...

man is the torchbearer of spirit since it is in man that spirit attains self-realization. In this Hegel fulfills the principle of identity in so far as he experiences the world as essentially spiritual and rational, and forms his idea of man's function in the world as the torchbearer of this spiritual essence on the basis of this experience of the world. Moreover, as we shall soon see, it is this conception of man's essential nature as a rational being which provides the basis for Hegel's concept of freedom in so far as it is only when man determines his action in accordance with the nature of reality and of his own rational essence that he realizes true freedom.

Turning first, then, to the anthropological aspect freedom for Hegel is not the liberty of indifference or licence but the rational organization of the feelings and the impulses. Hence it is incorrect to identify freedom with feelings of spontaneity or arbitrariness because that would mean that the actions are not rationally and self-consciously self-determined but determined in accordance with natural laws. Self-determination implies not only the absence of coercion by other men, but also the independence in one's choices and decisions of any factors alien to one's self. This view is similar to those of Descartes and, especially, Kant. Like Kant, Hegel holds that man has an essential nature and he conceives of that essential nature in terms of thought or reason. Furthermore he too holds that reason is capable of furnishing man with laws on which practical decisions can be based, so that when his determinant is a law

of reason,/...

of reason, he is determined by a principle constitutive of his own essential nature. In this way man is self-determined and therefore free. A person is free for Hegel, as for Kant, if and only if the determining ground of his practical decisions is nothing external to reason but rather is reason itself. Human freedom is, therefore, to be conceived not simply in terms of the self-determination of one's actions in accordance with one's will, but rather in terms of their rational self-determination, or determination in accordance with a will the principle of which is a law of thought rather than a law of mere nature. It must, however, be remembered that, for Hegel, true freedom involves not simply rational self-determination but also self-conscious self-determination, that is, consciousness of oneself as the determining source of one's decisions and choices. There is no contradiction here since the consciousness from which one's decisions and choices stem is a rational consciousness.

Man's essential rationality does not of itself guarantee that the individual by himself is capable of governing himself in accordance with the laws of his essential nature, even if he should desire to do so. So long as the aims and purposes of his actions are determined subjectively, there is always the possibility that they are being determined by the natural laws which govern the occurrence and interaction of the various elements of the individual's own particular personality. The individual can escape the condition of non-self-determined particularity only if he can find an objective basis for the determination of his actions that is not subject

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to the influence of his particular impulses and inclinations. Hegel finds such a basis in the laws and institutions of the state, which are not merely a conglomeration of practices arising by chance, and bearing no relation to rational principles, but an inherently rational system, the embodiment of rationality. Of course, actions determined in accordance with the laws of the state could not be considered free at all, if, in spite of their objectivity, they were something utterly alien to the individual's own nature. On the contrary, these laws embody objectively the very rational structure in terms of which the individual's essential rational nature is conceived.

They are not something alien to the subject.

On the contrary, his spirit bears witness to them as to its own essence, the essence of which is not distinguished from himself.<sup>(22)</sup>

This is why Hegel says "Duty is the attainment of our essence, the winning of positive freedom... (and) In duty the individual acquires his substantive freedom."<sup>(23)</sup> In determining his actions in accordance with the laws of the state, therefore, the individual not only escapes the determinism of nature but also brings his actions into conformity with the laws of his own essential nature, since he sees that in determining his actions in accordance with the laws and institutions of the state he determines them in accordance with the laws of his own essential nature. He thereby achieves rational self-determination in the only way in which it is possible for him

to do/...

to do so, that is, by blending and identifying himself with the state. In a recently published paper on Hegel, G.A. Rauche has described this identification in the following way:

In fact, the state is man's true home. For by blending himself into the state by his rational willing he overcomes the state of alienation from himself and from his fellow-man (society and the state) and becomes free from conflict. By fusing with the state (reason), man fulfills himself as a rational moral being, thus leading an authentic existence, i.e., one in terms of truth and reality: freedom<sup>(24)</sup>

It is not necessary to examine Hegel's philosophy of history in detail beyond making a few observations which, we hope, will place the foregoing presentation of the realization of freedom in perspective. According to Hegel, world history is the concrete manifestation of the spirit's gradual returning to itself. In this way the spirit comes to embody the historical logos or World Reason. Man participates in this logos which moves gradually toward greater freedom in so far as the history of the human race, according to Hegel, is a development from less to greater freedom. In his own words "World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom."<sup>(25)</sup> This progress reflects the different stages in the self-emancipation of the spirit from its self-estrangement at the beginning of history through its gradual liberation from

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its captivity in the world until it returns to itself in perfect purity. This final stage marks the end of the cycle of world history in which reason and freedom find fulfilment; in the perfectly rational and free state. Rauche has described the relationship between the state and history thus:

The state is the embodiment of world history. The individual peoples enter into world history successively, spending their spirit in the task of building a state, which, for a time, plays its part in world history as a tool of the Absolute Spirit and, as long as it lasts, is real and reasonable. As the spirit moves on, however, in the process of self-emancipation, the state, or a whole cultural era for that matter, is overcome by other states in which the Spirit manifests itself with a greater degree of freedom and which, at the same time, open a new era of culture. (26)

Hegel's philosophy continues the transcendental approach of Descartes and Kant in so far as his account of consciousness and freedom are the basis of his view of man. However, Hegel extended his view of human consciousness in a way in which neither Descartes nor Kant had done, in that his dialectical method could connect human consciousness with the self-consciousness of the Absolute Spirit. Whereas for his two famous predecessors reason was a subjective principle,

for Hegel/...

for Hegel reason was both a subjective and an objective principle and was properly understood as World Reason. By using his own reason and rationally organizing his own existence through identification with the state, man participates in the fulfilment of World Reason and, in so doing, becomes free. The self-emancipation and return of the Absolute Spirit actually means that man has achieved self-realization and self-fulfilment as an essentially moral and, indeed, cultural being.

We have been investigating Hegel's view of the essence of man and, in doing so, have had to examine the development of his concept of freedom. This led us to a brief survey of historical and political theory in order to spotlight the overall position in which man finds himself in Hegel's construction. It is hoped that we have been able to show in what respect man can be said to be the torchbearer of spirit and what the implications of the unfolding of this spirit within him are. At this stage it is necessary to return from the sublime and lofty peaks of the Absolute Spirit to the level of concrete human existence once more, in order to draw our conclusions concerning Hegel's picture in so far as it explicates the relation between essence and existence in man.

It should be clear from the foregoing presentation of Hegel's thought why we cannot obtain a picture of human existence in itself, that is, in isolation from the picture of the nature of the world in which that human existence has its reality. This is because such an existence would be nothing but an

external and/...

external and sensible existence and, as such, would lack the necessary features of essence which would make it truly human. Hence, Hegel, when speaking of human existence, already includes within this existence his notion of the essence of such existence. Now the question as to which comes first, essence or existence, is answered by Hegel in terms of the overcoming of the distinction between appearance and reality. Existence, according to Hegel, arises from the actual overcoming by a concrete essence of both appearance and reality. The actual reality of the human being itself is simply the actualized unity of its essence and existence. Essence serves as the foundation for existence. We have seen that man, for Hegel, is the torchbearer of spirit. One of the implications of this position is that man comes into existence through the unfolding of spirit and, since spirit is the essence of man, it follows that the essence of man precedes his existence. Hegel's approach is clear. He begins with an abstraction, the concept of being, and believes that it is possible to account for the concrete, particular existence through a process of dialectical speculation. Already in terms of his dialectical method, by which he attempted to overcome the opposition between concrete and abstract amongst other things, Hegel had conceived of existence as a category of essence. We have at last seen why this is the case.

The relationship between essence and existence in Husserl is basically a continuation of the tradition which we have been tracing. Like Descartes, Kant and Hegel, Husserl believes "Reason is the specific characteristic of man."<sup>(27)</sup> Husserl's

position is/...

position is similar to Kant's in so far as he believes that the objects of our knowledge are constituted in the transcendental subject. Truth for Husserl is "the correlate of the perfect rationality of the original belief, of the certainty of belief."<sup>(28)</sup> This means that truth is based on right belief or on subjectivity where subjectivity is understood as basically rational in character. Thus like Descartes, Kant and Hegel, Husserl arrives at the position that reason is the essence of man. It is probably correct to say that his philosophy (which he called phenomenology) attempts to ground the rationality of man upon a more secure and comprehensive basis than had been achieved by his rationalistic predecessors. For Husserl phenomenology is a discipline which attempts to describe what is given to us in experience without obscuring preconceptions or hypothetical speculations. This is why he adopts the watchword "Zu den Sachen Selbst" (Back to the things themselves) which enjoins the phenomenologist to pursue the sources of experience rather than adopt the prefabricated conceptions which are so often taken for truth. The cry "back to the things themselves" is the attempt to devise a philosophy which will take a new attitude toward the examination of experience. This new attitude is at once the attempt to construct a presuppositionless method and a philosophy which will begin with that root experience or givenness which neither reflection nor dialectic nor scientific disciplines of any order can meaningfully deny. It would, I think, be true to say that phenomenology as such seeks to disclose the nature of man's factual rooting in existence. A brief outline of the salient features of the

phenomenological method seems warranted.

Phenomenology investigates those features of any given object without which it could not truly be said to be the object that it is. It is these most general, necessary and invariant features of objects that Husserl referred to when he spoke of essences. Husserl believed that it was possible to discover the universal invariant features of all empirical individual experience through a special form of essential intuition which he termed Wesensschau. Husserl's phenomenology is concerned with essences in so far as it is a study of what is involved in any act of consciousness independently of the context of the particular act. It was possible to accomplish this in terms of the postulate that all consciousness is intentional, that is, all mental acts "intend" objects. This postulate was meant to express the claim that a true description of a mental act does not entail the existence or the truth of the intentional object. In this way he discovered pure consciousness (the noesis) as well as the object to which consciousness refers (the noema). Along with this Husserl adopted a method of suspension of belief, the epochè whereby he bracketed the actual existing things and debarred himself from using any judgement concerning spatio-temporal existence in order to study the general essence of consciousness and its various structures. He expressly disclaimed that phenomenology could give any factual information saying that "the positing of the essence with the intuitive apprehension that immediately accompanies it, does not imply any positing of individual existence whatsoever."<sup>(29)</sup> He actually went further

subsequently and/...

subsequently and supplemented this epochè with a further "transcendental reduction" through which a "transcendental ego" was revealed. This ego, Husserl believed, provided the foundation and the constitutive element of all experience and he believed that in uncovering this phenomenological residuum he discovered the Absolute.

Now it seems necessary here to correct what may be a misconception arising from Husserl's methodological standpoint originating in his procedure of suspending belief in the existence of phenomena. The point has been well put by Herbert Spiegelberg

... it is a misunderstanding of the phenomenological reduction to think that bracketing our beliefs in the existence of the phenomena eliminates the phenomenon of human existence. This misunderstanding is based on an unfortunate equivocation in the meaning of the word "existence". For the existence-character in the phenomena which we bracket is something quite different from Existenz or Dasein as the structure of being-in-the-world, which is found only in human beings. As far as the latter is concerned bracketing may well affect the belief in the reality of the world and even of the human being who is in such a world. But even this does not mean that being-in-the-world and its believed reality is totally ignored. It may be described qua phenomenon like any other reduced

phenomenon. (30)

Although human existence is not privileged for Husserl, as it is for Sartre and other existentialists, it is nevertheless capable of being explored by careful utilization of the phenomenological method. In point of fact, Husserl's method is better suited for the attempt to discover the essence of human existence than the majority of other methods, in so far as it makes possible the unearthing of the actual concrete data of human experience, and this explains why Heidegger and, following him, Sartre, were able to initiate their studies in ontology while claiming at the same time to be adopting Husserl's method. Whether, of course, they did so or not is not really pertinent. It should, however, be admitted that Husserl himself never studied human existence as such, using his phenomenological method, so that it is necessary to supplement whatever implications we can derive from his adoption and employment of the method by referring to certain other manuscripts in which the subject of human existence is broached.

Husserl's picture of the essence of man emerges through the various stages of his phenomenological method. Husserl, like Descartes, Kant and Hegel, tried to base our knowledge of the world, of ourselves and of our fellow-men on pure consciousness. We shall see that Husserl's phenomenology likewise conforms to the principle of identity in so far as it is Husserl's experience of the world as revealed to consciousness which is responsible for his conception of consciousness

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as basically rational in character. It is thus the rational character of consciousness which is the basis of Husserl's claim that man's essence is likewise rational and, as we shall see, that freedom consists in man's power to rationally organize his environment and himself. In Husserl's method it is consciousness which acts upon the world in such a way that it becomes a transcendental consciousness wherein the meaningful relationships between phenomena are revealed. It follows that if one wished to study human existence by means of the phenomenological method it is necessary to discover in his transcendental consciousness those features of human existence which could be justifiably regarded as its essence. Husserl conceived of this transcendental consciousness as primarily rational, and there can be no doubt that this methodological presupposition determined his view of the essence of human existence. In Husserl's phenomenological method man's existence, like that of any other phenomenon, lies in the fact of being met by consciousness so to speak. The theory of the intentionality of consciousness means that consciousness and the object of consciousness are logically related. Where this object is human existence itself, it also means that consciousness is capable of revealing the essence of that existence. For Husserl, however, it is necessary to follow methodological steps in order to arrive at this essence. Once this has been done, the immanent object of consciousness can be said to exist in an absolute sense. We shall see that for Husserl the essence of man is reason. Nor is this surprising, since Husserl had himself constructed his transcendental consciousness as essentially

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a rational consciousness. This rational consciousness is merely a reflector of man's essential nature and it is in terms of this picture of the nature of man that Husserl depicts human existence.

We have already quoted Husserl to the effect that he believed that it was reason which constituted the specific characteristic of man. He also claimed that "reason is precisely that which man qua man, in his innermost being is aiming for."<sup>(31)</sup> This suggests that reason as the essence of man is something for which man has to strive and not something simply given. Yet this striving is clearly different from the Kantian striving which we examined earlier in that it manifests itself in the creation of a rational universe within which man realizes his essential rationality. Thus Husserl writes:

To be human at all is essentially to be a human being in a socially and generatively united civilization; and if man is a rational being, it is only insofar as his whole civilization is a rational civilization, that is, one with a latent orientation toward reason...<sup>(32)</sup>

From this it would appear that on the one hand the notion of man qualifies the notion of reason while on the other hand reason gives man meaning. Reason is the very essence of humanity insofar as it ties the sense of man to the sense

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of the world. The sense in which reason can be said to be the essence of man, then, is not the sense in which this essence would be a fixed individual possibility but rather a dynamic historical principle. Not surprisingly, in view of what we have seen in his predecessors, Husserl conceived of the realization of this essence in terms of freedom. Faced with the problem of discovering the meaning of his own existence, Husserl saw man as "a free, self-determining being in his behaviour toward the human and extra human surrounding world and free in his capacity for rationally shaping himself and his surrounding world."<sup>(33)</sup> Clearly, Husserl believed that, because man was possessed of reason as his essence, it was in his power to secure rational meaning for his individual existence as well as for the common human existence through rational self-understanding.

It seems that we have not departed very radically from Descartes, who also began with consciousness as reflecting the true nature of the world and who depicted man's existence in terms of the rational structure of consciousness. Husserl's method is, of course, quite different from that of Descartes, but the conclusions which he draws are not very different. This is, of course, because he sees man's consciousness as basically rational and because he identifies this rational consciousness with man's essential nature. For Husserl, as for Descartes, Kant and Hegel, freedom and responsibility are natural corollaries of this reason, although an explicit concept of freedom is not developed as such by

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Husserl. The point to bear in mind, however, is that for Husserl, as for the other transcendental philosophers, the starting-point is consciousness in its relation to the world which is the means whereby man's essence is disclosed to him. This essence then serves as the basis for an interpretation of man's existence. In Husserl's case his theory of the intentionality of consciousness involves a correspondence between consciousness (noesis) and its object (noema), so that everything that can be known is given in consciousness. In this way consciousness as the revealer of man's essence brings man's existence to light. Hence, just as the starting-point in transcendental philosophy is consciousness, it is also true to say that the conception of essence precedes that of existence in this type of philosophy, since existence is conceived in terms of, and indeed derived from, essence.

Our examination of the way in which Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl attempted to derive a conception of man's existence from their experience of the nature of the world, has shown not only that each one of them conceived of man's essence as basically rational, but also that this rational nature was responsible for man's freedom. According to them man is free insofar as his rational essence enables him to determine his own future in accordance with his true position in the world. Because man has insight into his essential nature he is able to fulfill the role for which nature has intended him. This is the sense in which reason liberates man. It does not,

however, follow/...

however, follow that if some quality other than reason were to have been posited as the essence of man, man would not have been free in terms of this essence. What characterizes the transcendental philosophers we have been analysing is not the specific character of the essence which they posited, but the fact that they began with an a priori conception of man's essence from which they subsequently attempted to derive the existence of man. In this way a coherent account of existence as well as an intelligible concept of freedom as self-determination in harmony with the essential nature of man and of man's position in the world was indeed given. This clearly reflects that the principle of identity is fulfilled through the systematic way in which Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl each derived his view of the relationship between essence and existence from his own experience of the nature of reality and linked freedom to essence, each in his own way. The question which then arises is not whether the conceptions given are coherent or intelligible but whether they do justice to the experience of man in the changing circumstances of life. Sartre would probably not agree that they do, for he reverses the positions of his predecessors and attempts to derive man's essence from his existence. Whether he is justified in doing so remains to be seen.

Our analysis of Sartre's most influential predecessors was intended to demonstrate that each of them conceived of the world as the ground from which man's essential nature was

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constituted. Their conception of the world was, however, based upon their individual experience of reality, which itself was conceived by them in terms of the principle that essence was prior to existence. It is now necessary to consider the impact which this tradition in philosophy had on Sartre's thinking. We intend to do this by briefly tracing the background to Sartre's philosophical model from its roots in Cartesianism, through its reaction against nineteenth century trends in philosophy (Hegel and Comte) leading up to the specific formulation of the problem of being in phenomenological terms. In so doing, a certain amount of repetition will be inevitable, yet, we believe justifiable, in view of the need to show the continuity and recognize the fact that it was the influence of this tradition together with the specific circumstances of life which determined Sartre's concept of freedom.

We have seen that for Descartes reason is the real ground of the world, and, correspondingly, that man's essence is considered to lie in his existence as a thinking being. An important new feature introduced by Descartes was the orientation of the philosophic inquiry. For Descartes truth was revealed by turning inwards and inspecting the clear and distinct ideas in the mind. Of course, the fact that these clear and distinct ideas took their form in man's mind depended upon the rational structure of the universe. Nevertheless, Descartes's approach had the effect of focussing attention upon the subjective factor in reality and it is this factor which is responsible for revealing the significance

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of the general scheme of things. As we shall see when we examine Sartre's own approach to the question of reality via the relationship between essence and existence, the subjective factor is most significant, in that Sartre attributes primacy to human existence which is conceived as a consciously sustained relationship to oneself, to other human beings, and to the world at large. This subjective turn depended fundamentally upon Sartre's recognition of the possibilities implicit in Descartes's approach.

Kant and Hegel continued Descartes's new orientation.

Kant's transcendental unity of apperception, which accompanies every act of consciousness, indicates his views of the human subject. This was that man was essentially a consciousness bound within certain well-defined limits with a specific function within the overall framework of reality. Hegel wished to liberate human consciousness from the limitations which Kant had placed upon it. He found what he believed to be the means to achieve this in his dialectical method, whereby he was able to show how human consciousness was a stage in the attainment of self-consciousness by World Consciousness (the Absolute Spirit). The very comprehensiveness of Hegel's conception of reality was bound to lead to a philosophical reaction, and this indeed came about in the nineteenth century not very long after Hegel's death.

Sartre's model can only be properly understood if it is viewed as a development of this type of response, begun in the nineteenth century as a reaction to idealism, and

continued into/...

continued into the twentieth century as a rejection of certain subsequent dominant trends in present day thinking. We intend to make these general remarks somewhat clearer.

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, there arose a clash between the defenders of Hegel's idealistic conception of reality and those thinkers who were very impressed by developments in modern science and believed that a new era in the intellectual, social and cultural history of mankind was about to be inaugurated. What could not be doubted, in any event, was the scientific factor. As G.A. Rauche puts it:

As a result of the rapid development of science and industry in the 19th century and the problems and conflicts that arose in connection with it, philosophy offered alternatives for coping with these problems that either more or less conformed with the scientific and technological methods, or that opposed them. (34)

This clash was by no means the only significant feature of nineteenth century thought, but it was, historically speaking, the one with the most far-reaching repercussions.

We have called attention to the reactionary nature of the response to Hegel's systematic philosophy. This was really prompted by the actual historical circumstances of life in nineteenth century Europe (Europe at the time was still the

cultural and/...

cultural and intellectual hub of the Western world). Amongst the consequences of the Industrial Revolution, which was transforming the economic character of the European states, were the enormous social and economic changes in the fabric of the societies affected. Attention was focussed upon the material conditions of life and an idealistic metaphysics à la Hegel was increasingly criticized as unable to do justice to the changing circumstances of life. What was happening in actual fact was that theory was being separated from practice. Theoretically, even those who disagreed with Hegel lived under his shadow and remained committed to his overall dialectical enterprise. Practically, however, Hegel's philosophical approach led to man's alienation from reality and, because of this, to self-estrangement. There was a clash between spiritual and material values.

The perfect values in Hegel's philosophy, namely, truth, justice, beauty (harmony) and faith, were invalidated by historical events and led to double standards. (35)

Clearly, a new philosophic approach was called for. Actually, there was not one specific approach, but rather a host of approaches for coping with the changing historical situation. Karl Marx, for instance, addressed himself directly to the political, economic and social problems of the time by "materializing" Hegel's idealist

metaphysics. Sören/...

metaphysics. Sören Kierkegaard, on the other hand, whose emphasis upon human subjectivity was a direct anticipation of Sartre's principle that "existence precedes essence," attempted to overcome the alienation of man by the anonymous forces of culture, civilization and, more specifically, institutionalized religion by emphasizing man's necessity to make the "leap of faith" by accepting Christianity as a living creed. Friedrich Nietzsche, perhaps more drastically than either of the others, attempted to come to terms with the disintegrating cultural and moral values of his age by advocating a revaluation of all values and postulating an ideal being, the super-man, as the end to which all else ought to be subordinated. What all three thinkers have in common is a profound dissatisfaction with the prevailing values and ethos of their age and a belief that they each disposed of the means whereby alienation and self-estrangement could be overcome and a new relationship between man and the world could be established.

In contrast to those thinkers who conceived of man's situation as in need of amelioration there were those, as has already been mentioned, who felt that man was entering a new era in his history through the powers unleashed by the scientific revolution. Auguste Comte believed that the scientific method should not only be employed to master nature and subject it to man's material needs, but also to understand and regulate relations between man and his fellow-man by means of the discovery of social laws, which Comte accepted as unquestioningly as he accepted natural laws.

Moreover, he/...

Moreover, he proclaimed the science of sociology as the most complex of the sciences, since it investigated the social activities of the most complex being, namely, man. From these brief remarks one can already detect that Comte is advocating a conception somewhat different from that of Hegel, yet likewise imbued with an unbounded optimism concerning the inevitable outcome of human history. This view, like Hegel's, attracted a large number of adherents as well as many opponents. Events in the twentieth century radically altered the picture.

The experience of two World Wars shattered any illusions which people may have had in inevitable human progress. Hegelian idealism and Comtean positivism were likewise exposed as hollow pretensions devoid of substance. Their grandiose claims paled into insignificance besides the actual experience of the conquered peoples of occupied and war-torn Europe. Philosophically, this experience tended to confirm the judgements of the nineteenth century pessimists such as Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in contrast to the more sanguine expectations of Hegel, Comte and Marx. The detonation of the atomic bomb unmasked science as a force hostile to man, which was perhaps more likely to be utilized for his total destruction than for supposed beneficial purposes. Most Europeans of the time experienced the bankruptcy of the existing political order with its discredited values. The collapse of the established order meant that man was thrown entirely upon himself in a world which seemed incapable of supporting him. Man experienced his surroundings

as fundamentally/...

as fundamentally hostile, and his existence was accordingly a painful isolated one. His basic experience was one of uncertainty and anxiety. This was the actual situation politically, socially and culturally at the time when Sartre conceived of his philosophic model on the basis of the distinction between pour-soi and en-soi and decided upon the principle that "existence precedes essence." Since Sartre's experience of reality was that of a world in ruins with no certainty, it is hardly surprising that he felt a need to discover a starting-point similar to the one which Descartes discovered in his attempt to reconstruct the world on the basis of the proposition Cogito, ergo sum. However, the cogito was singularly unhelpful for Sartre's purposes since events had not justified Descartes's faith in the power of human reason. Moreover, Descartes had simply used it to reinstate the established values of his time, whereas Sartre felt the urgency of the need to re-build values in the way Nietzsche had advocated. In this situation Sartre "discovered" phenomenology.

We have already sketched Husserl's conception of phenomenology and we shall show just how Sartre links up with Husserl methodologically in our next chapter. What ought to be emphasized here is the part which Husserl played historically in continuing the tradition of critical idealism begun by Descartes and continued by Kant and Hegel. Husserl's brand of idealism was an intellectual radicalism which resembled Descartes's radicalism in making possible, as Husserl believed, an entire science of knowledge. The very radical

claims for/...

claims for phenomenology, namely, that it was a "rigorous science" entirely without presuppositions and a necessary propaedeutic for the empirical sciences, was probably responsible for the attraction which it exercised upon Sartre. Its emphasis upon suspending all pre-conceived beliefs concerning the natural world may have appealed to Sartre since his actual experience of the world was such that beliefs of that kind appeared to have been proven unjustified. It is against this background, then, that one must consider Sartre's philosophical enterprise. We shall see in the course of our next chapter how these various influences, together with his basic experience of reality, determine his view of the relationship between essence and existence and his radical concept of freedom.

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## C H A P T E R   T W O

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF SARTRE'S "EXISTENCE PRECEDES ESSENCE" FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POUR-SOI (MAN) AND EN-SOI (WORLD)

In the previous chapter we analysed the relationship between essence and existence in what we termed "the transcendental philosophy before Sartre". We endeavoured to show in that chapter that the principle of identity was fulfilled in so far as it was clear that the philosophers whom we examined derived their conception of man's essence from their conception of the world and that they accordingly conceived of freedom as the natural expression of the relationship between the essence of the world and the essence of man. It is our intention to show that this principle of identity, that is, the way in which the philosopher experiences the world, that is the way in which he sees man, that is the way in which he expects man to act, applies not only to Sartre's predecessors, but also to Sartre himself. We contend that even though Sartre reverses the position of his predecessors and claims to begin with man's concrete existence in the world, his distinction between pour-soi and en-soi is itself a construction in his own mind and, as such, it reflects his actual experience of the world at the time. In this way, we hope to demonstrate the transcendental character of his construction.

Our present chapter is devoted to an examination of Sartre's

radical reversal/...

radical reversal of the position of his predecessors in so far as the relationship between essence and existence is concerned. In order to show how this reversal comes about, it will be necessary to analyse Sartre's enterprise in L'Être et le Néant<sup>(1)</sup> as a whole. Once it becomes clear what Sartre is trying to achieve in that book, an analysis of his method can be undertaken. Only then can the full significance of Sartre's radical reversal of the tradition of transcendental philosophy - in so far as the question of the relationship between essence and existence and the concept of freedom are concerned - be understood. The implications of this reversal for the relationship between man (understood in Sartre's sense as pour-soi) and the world (understood in Sartre's sense as en-soi) will thereby be investigated with reference to Sartre's model as a whole.

At the time of writing Being and Nothingness Sartre overtly espoused phenomenology as can be seen by the subtitle of that work, "An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology". Like most of Husserl's students and followers Sartre parted company with the founder of phenomenology over certain issues while, nevertheless, believing himself to be sufficiently close to Husserl to describe his undertaking as a type of phenomenology. It is not our intention to answer the question of whether Sartre's "phenomenological ontology" is a type of phenomenology or not, although we hope to show that he does in fact link up with Husserl on a number of substantive issues. What we mainly intend to do, is to focus upon Sartre's

adoption and/...

adoption and rejection of certain aspects (or tenets) of phenomenology in order to attempt to discover what problems he is trying to come to terms with, and how he proposes to solve them.

We saw earlier that phenomenology as Husserl understood it is the study of the essence of all individual empirical experiences as these present themselves to consciousness. Experience, according to Husserl, is not just an aggregate of heterogeneous items of mental content, but a structured whole whose two poles are pure consciousness (the noesis) as a constitutive, meaning - conferring activity and the world (the noema) conceived as the transcendent correlative of these intentional acts of consciousness. Brief mention has been made of the method by which Husserl believed the essence of the "things themselves" could be discovered. It will be recalled that the phenomenological technique consists in a large part of careful observation and accurate description of phenomena subject to certain methodological conditions. Sartre possibly saw in phenomenology a means of transcending the traditional dualism between appearance and reality whereby the appearance is taken to be a misleading or incomplete representation of a concealed underlying reality. He mentions as basic to the phenomenological position the view that

the appearance does not hide the essence, it reveals it; it is the essence. The essence of an existent is no longer a property sunk in the cavity of this existent; it is the

manifest law/...

manifest law which presides over the succession of its appearances, it is the principle of the series.<sup>(2)</sup>

In other words, Sartre believes that the analysis of the being of objects as appearance is entirely justified in so far as it denies that there is any screen of sensations or mental contents behind which reality lurks. Being itself appears. On the other hand, Sartre also claims that being is completely independent of the fact of its appearing and is transcendent in the sense that it can never be exhausted by any finite set of appearances. The question then arises as to the nature (or as Sartre says, the "being") of this appearing that supervenes upon being, and of the relationship between the being of phenomena and the being of their appearing. This is the central problem to which he intends his "phenomenological ontology" to supply the answer.

It is then, as a result of what he sees as a deficiency in phenomenology that Sartre proposes his phenomenological ontology. This deficiency, according to Sartre, is the inability of phenomenology to establish the nature of the relationship between the being of things and the being of their appearing. Since Sartre's aim is to secure the ontological infrastructure of phenomenological description, he is led to a consideration of the ontological structures of consciousness which extend beyond merely phenomenological determinations. What Sartre mainly objects to is Husserl's phenomenological reduction and his theory of intentionality. For Husserl intentionality was an internal structure of mental states by virtue of which they

were directed/...

were directed toward objects, but it was by no means necessary that these objects should be independent of consciousness. Sartre wishes to establish the independence of the objects from consciousness in order to avoid the charge of idealism. Husserl for his part thought that he had placed himself beyond idealism, for he introduced his phenomenological reduction in order to avoid committing himself to such questions as the real existence of the objects of consciousness. Sartre, however, discards the phenomenological reduction precisely because he is interested in the question of the being of the existent and because his initial analysis of the question of the being of the phenomenon had led him to the conclusion that the being of the phenomenon could not be reduced to the phenomenon of being. Hence, in order to establish the transphenomenality of objects, that is, their irreducibility to appearances, he reinterprets Husserl's notion of intentionality in such a way that the intentionality of consciousness is taken as the affirmation of the existence of a transcendent being.

Consciousness is consciousness of something.

This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, that consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself.<sup>(3)</sup> (Emphasis Sartre's)

Sartre's argument for this is that since objects, whatever

their status, /...

their status, are never exhaustively given to an instantaneous intuition, a constitutive consciousness, as conceived by Husserl, could reproduce this central feature of our consciousness of objects only by intending the infinite series of appearances that compose the object and at the same time not intend all those that are not presently given. This it manifestly cannot do, and consequently Sartre concludes that the transcendence of objects is established. Sartre was apparently led to this conclusion as a result of his rejection of Husserl's transcendental ego as being the subject of consciousness as well as by his criticism of the intelligibility of the notion of hyletic data within consciousness. It follows that if there is neither transcendental ego nor hyletic stratum, the being of objects cannot be constituted by a transcendental ego in conjunction with the "contents" of consciousness. But either the being of objects is discovered to every act of consciousness, or it can never be found by an act of consciousness. Since the latter alternative runs contrary to the theory of the intentionality of consciousness, that is, that consciousness is always consciousness of something, it follows, according to Sartre, that consciousness which experiences itself as genuinely being, discovers real being. Now if this is so, then a phenomenological reduction as a suspension of all affirmation of real being becomes meaningless. In trying to isolate consciousness from that toward which it is essentially orientated, such a reduction would annihilate consciousness. Sartre, therefore, rejects Husserl's phenomenological reduction as pernicious to his own method of determining the

ontological foundation of phenomenological discovery.

Nevertheless, Sartre retains a number of other Husserlian techniques. For instance, Sartre's accurate descriptions, which occasionally prove illuminating, often achieve this effect through the practice of eidetic variation. Marjorie Grene <sup>(4)</sup> gives, as an instance of eidetic variation, Sartre's description of a man passing in a park. After describing himself observing the passing figure, Sartre wonders what it means to recognize the figure as that of a man. <sup>(5)</sup> In an attempt to provide an answer Sartre proposes to think of the figure as inanimate, as a puppet, in which case the figure becomes purely an objective aspect of the surroundings. This is correctly seen by Grene as an instance of eidetic variation in so far as Sartre's imaginative construction of the scene is an attempt to discover the essential features of the experience of what it means to perceive a man as that experience unfolds in consciousness. It may also be correct to see Sartre's technique of existential psychoanalysis as an instance of Husserl's Wesensschau in so far as the uncovering of the original project of being is achieved by an essential intuition into the nature of the original choice on the basis of an analysis of the meaning of the behaviour of the individual whose choice is being analysed. <sup>(6)</sup> We cannot at this stage pronounce judgement on this issue.

What we have been trying to do in the preceding paragraph is to show that Sartre does indeed practice a type of phenomenology

even though /...

even though he rejects Husserl's transcendentalism and phenomenological reduction. We must now try to discover wherein his own method consists. It seems to us that Sartre was attracted to phenomenology not only because it provided a conceptual apparatus whereby a concrete analysis of experience could be undertaken, but also because of certain similarities between Husserl's method and that of Descartes. We are not referring to Husserl's suspension of belief (epochè), or to Descartes's systematic doubt, but rather to the fact that for both Husserl and for Descartes philosophical knowledge begins from a pure, evident, self-guaranteeing intuition and remains on the intuitive level, or at least returns to the intuitive level periodically. Argument is subordinate to insight and must be brought back to it. As Everett Knight puts it "The final appeal is always to consciousness and not to logic, since that of which there is no consciousness does not exist".<sup>(7)</sup> But just as Sartre reinterprets Husserl's basic phenomenological premises, he likewise reinterprets Cartesian consciousness. Sartre argues that in Descartes's famous indubitable proposition Cogito, ergo sum the self that thinks is not the self which exists, because the self which thinks (the cogito) reflects upon a prior state during which thought and existence were contemporaneous. In other words, when Descartes attempted to derive his existence from his act of doubting (thinking), he was not inferring directly from his doubt the fact that he exists, rather, after reflecting upon the fact that he had doubted, he inferred that he must exist. Sartre, therefore, considers/...

therefore, considers Descartes's cogito to be reflective and postulates an immediate cogito which would serve as the object of Descartes's reflective cogito. This cogito he termed the pre-reflective cogito and it is this cogito which is Sartre's starting-point. We agree with Herbert Spiegelberg that

the ideal of Sartre's phenomenological method would seem to be the reflective elucidation of the pre-reflective consciousness according to its structures and meanings with the intent to intuit and to describe the fundamental phenomena based on a deciphering of their more immediately accessible manifestations. (8)

This may explain why Sartre seems to have access to a plane of immediate consciousness which is closed to us, although we recognize quite readily the experiences described, once they have been pointed out to us.

It should now be possible to consider the implications of Sartre's reinterpretation of the central theses of Descartes and Husserl, namely, the cogito and the theory of intentionality. Consciousness has no choice as to being or not being conscious since its own condition as consciousness is already pre-reflectively aware of the world. In this sense consciousness is constantly directed toward the world, but also aware (albeit not explicitly so) of itself. In so far as it is distinct from its own pre-reflective content, consciousness

is in/...

is in question and in doubt as to what it is. From this recognition, that the cogito is other than its content, Sartre concludes that consciousness itself is nothing but the objects which it intends pre-reflectively and that, consequently, as itself, that is, without such content, it is ultimately empty, a mere nothing.

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.<sup>(9)</sup>

It is clear that consciousness is actually for Sartre a type of being, and indeed a type of being which is very different from that which consciousness itself reveals. Sartre describes his own conception of the principle of intentionality in these words:

To say that consciousness is consciousness of something is to say that it must produce itself as a revealed-revelation of a being which is not it and which gives itself as already existing when consciousness reveals it.<sup>(10)</sup>

What emerges/...

What emerges from this re-interpretation of intentionality, in our opinion, is a return to a Cartesian dichotomy between consciousness and the world in which intentionality serves as a bridge between consciousness and world.

Sartre's enquiry now leads him to an investigation of the being of consciousness and the being of the being which consciousness reveals. Sartre uses the term "transphenomenal" to refer to the fact that both the perceived and the perceiving have a characteristic kind of being over and above their essence which cannot be fully described in terms of perceiving. What is involved is that, on the one hand, consciousness in its being is independent of appearing to itself and especially to reflection (that is, it is pre-reflective) and, on the other hand, what we are conscious of is autonomous in its being and not merely constituted by consciousness. We never reach out beyond consciousness but the phenomena that appear within this range are transphenomenal in so far as they are more than mere phenomena in that they have a being of their own.

As we have seen, this means that the being of the intentional object must extend beyond its mere appearance as a phenomenon to consciousness in order to warrant ontological status. Thus prompted to an apparent ontological dualism, Sartre makes a distinction between l'être - pour-soi and l'être - en-soi. Sartre uses the term "pour-soi" to refer to the being of the cogito, that is, the ontological dimension of the reflective cogito is called "pour-soi".

In contrast, /...

In contrast, the transphenomenal being of the phenomenon is called by Sartre "en-soi".

The transphenomenal being of what exists for consciousness is itself in itself.<sup>(12)</sup>

(Emphasis Sartre's)

What the significance of these terms are and why they were chosen will now be explained.

We have seen that Sartre has been interpreting Husserl's theory of intentionality in such a way that when consciousness is taken as being consciousness of something, this necessarily involves the affirmation of the existence of being other than consciousness. This Sartre describes as

consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself.<sup>(13)</sup>

Sartre calls his attempt to establish this independent existence of being as revealed by consciousness the "Ontological Proof" in imitation of Saint Anselm. He believes that he has thereby established the independent existence of the en-soi, that is, the transphenomenal being of the phenomenon. This en-soi must not only be understood in the sense of "materiality" but in the sense of everything of which there is consciousness. For instance, a dream, a painful sensation, memory, as well

as the/...

as the objects which occupy the external world would all be en-soi. One could describe the en-soi as "the roughness of Being, the brute confrontation of being, the 'stuff' of the world."<sup>(14)</sup> Although Sartre appears to have adopted the term "en-soi" from Hegel's "An-sich-sein", there is some difference between Hegel's notion of An-sich-sein as a movement of Being from indeterminate to determinate Being. What Sartre retains from Hegel's notion of An-sich-sein is Being characterized by identity and contingency. Sartre's en-soi is a cognate of Aristotle's prime matter and of Descartes's res extensa. It is pure indeterminate, undifferentiated being. Sartre himself gives three preliminary formulations of the en-soi.

Being is. Being is in itself. Being is  
what it is.<sup>(15)</sup>

This formulation of the en-soi has been subjected to severe criticism, some of which I believe to be misplaced. Jean Wahl, for instance, speaks of it as "the myth of the In-itself, that is, of a being which is completely and densely what it is, a myth which has been discarded by philosophers from the time when Plato destroyed the theory of Parmenides."<sup>(16)</sup> However, this view is mistaken, for unlike Parmenides, whose description of the nature of being was unable to account for change since being was conceived of as an autonomous principle of reality, Sartre holds that change depends upon the observer (pour-soi). The world cannot be described as it is in itself because it is human beings who do the describing.

The danger of talking of the en-soi lies in the possibility that it might be thought that a neutral description of the world could be given. It is because Sartre tries to avoid this danger that some of his statements concerning the en-soi appear Parmenidean. As we shall see later, a similar difficulty arises in his attempt to characterize the pour-soi.

Sartre, as we saw, gave the name "pour-soi" to the transphenomenal being of consciousness. Consciousness is "a type of being of its own. Its transphenomenality consists in its 'being' a self-givenness instead of being 'for' a knower."<sup>(17)</sup> It seems that Sartre borrowed the term "pour-soi" from Hegel who used the related term "Für-sich-sein." We may note here that, although the terms "en-soi" and "pour-soi" are derived from Hegel, they are used to create a different schema from that of Hegel, one in which, as we shall see, a harmonious synthesis à la Hegel will not be possible. Hartmann has compared Sartre and Hegel on this point:

Hegel's tripartite division of being into pure being, determinate being, and being-for-itself is replaced by a duality of being and being-with-negation, or being-in-itself and being-for-itself in Sartre's acceptation of these terms.<sup>(18)</sup>

In this way the major Hegelian concepts take on a new movement and lead to a different, and much less satisfactory, finalè.

Already in/...

Already in one of his earliest published works Sartre had described consciousness as determining its "existence at each instance, without our being able to conceive anything before it."<sup>(19)</sup> This is primarily and originally how consciousness is - it simply surges up as consciousness of itself, that is, it is its own beginning. This is what Sartre also expresses in Being and Nothingness when he writes:

Since consciousness is not possible before being, but since its being is the source and condition of all possibility, its existence implies its essence.<sup>(20)</sup>

which means "the existence of consciousness comes from consciousness itself".<sup>(21)</sup> Yet consciousness, as we have seen, is equally nothing but a "revealed - revelation of a being which is not it and which gives itself as already existing when consciousness reveals it." Clearly, what Sartre wants to say is that, while consciousness reveals the prior existence of a being which is not itself (that is, the en-soi), it does not derive its existence from the en-soi. The pour-soi is incapable of being acted upon from without (for reasons which will later be revealed), and it consists in, and is exhausted by, its own intentional meaning-conferring acts. Sartre, therefore, postulates the being of consciousness as radically other than the en-soi, with the result that this being (the pour-soi) is described in terms which are basically

negative, in/...

negative, in so far as what is affirmed of the pour-soi is derived from what is negated of the en-soi. Thus, whereas the en-soi is what it is (that is, the logical principle of identity applies to it), the pour-soi is "a being which is not what it is and which is what it is not".<sup>(22)</sup> It reveals itself in contradistinction to the en-soi as not being the en-soi, although it is only through itself that the en-soi is revealed. In other words, the pour-soi is the creator of distinctions and categories, in virtue of which we have to reckon not only with what a thing is, but also with what a thing is not. But in itself the pour-soi can never be identical with itself, since, when it attempts to take its own being as object (as in reflection), it discovers that the self that is reflected is other than the self which reflects - the logical principle of identity cannot apply to it. Hence the mode of being of consciousness is to exist for itself and not as itself, in other words, it is self-awareness, and everything which is other than it, exists for it.

As pour-soi, consciousness is constantly under the twin obligation to reveal the en-soi and to affirm itself as other than the en-soi by disengaging from the en-soi. This disengagement or negation of the en-soi is possible because of the fact that the pour-soi is not a being in itself in its own right. As Sartre says "It is a lack of being. The for-itself is a lack of being-itself."<sup>(23)</sup> Hence Sartre describes the pour-soi as a nothingness.

The being/...

The being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist at a distance from itself as a presence to itself, and this empty distance which being carries in its being is Nothingness. (24)

Sartre's meaning is not immediately apparent and we, therefore, hazard the following interpretation. It seems to us that what Sartre means is that, although the pour-soi cannot coincide fully with itself, since it is at a distance from itself, it, nevertheless, adds something to the being which it reveals. This "something" is non-substantial, but it is nevertheless responsible for the different characteristics by which substance is individuated. Looked at from another perspective, it may be that, since consciousness is always consciousness of some object (en-soi): it is also conscious of itself as consciousness of the object in question. But consciousness is never consciousness of itself apart from the en-soi, although of course, it can make its consciousness of the en-soi the object of a reflective consciousness. In attempting to seize itself, it inevitably falls back on the object of which it is consciousness and thereby reveals itself as a nothing. It seems, then, that the pour-soi is everything which is not physically present, but the presence of which is essential to the perception and understanding of that which is physically present.

Sartre's belief that the pour-soi as reflection knows itself as other than its intentional object has led him to conclude

that the/...

that the pour-soi is negative in respect to what it is about or of. He means by negativity, then, that which is other than en-soi. As we interpret him, he seems to be saying that the otherness of consciousness is in itself empty; this is what he seems to mean by nothingness. We should say that, for Sartre, nothingness is the native state of being for consciousness itself and arises as the separation or distance between consciousness and its object within the unity of the being of consciousness. It would thus appear that to be nothing is at least to be that something which is nothing and this becomes intelligible if it<sup>is</sup> remembered that to say "something is nothing" means that something has negative characteristics and appears as a phenomenon in negative terms only. Perhaps Sartre might have been less misleading if he had discussed the nothingness of consciousness in terms of absence, emptiness or otherness, since for him nothing still means to be that something which exists as nothing. Yet Sartre seems to us to be justified in adopting this terminology, for he is trying to speak of ambiguity and nothingness in a language made to express being and identity.

It should not be thought that the negativity of consciousness is an arbitrary invention of Sartre. It follows very precisely from his conception of the en-soi as a being which is what it is in total indeterminate fullness and the pour-soi as a being which causes meaning to appear. It is the "nihilating" power of the pour-soi which enables it to make distinctions, to effect determinations, to discover or to

invent relations/...

invent relations in the field of being. Before the advent of consciousness we can say that "Being is" and that is all. After the advent of consciousness we can say that "Being is this" or "Being is that". We can summarise Sartre's position in this way: since everything that exists is en-soi, there is no room in the universe for the existence of anything else. Yet the very fact that it is possible to speak of the en-soi, indicates that there has to be something else; for the existence of a given object as such is only conceivable in the case where what is not that object also exists. Hence, since the en-soi exists, it follows that the pour-soi as the emergence of nothingness also exists. Indeed, Sartre goes on to show that the pour-soi is the foundation of its own nothingness. This argument of Sartre is worth examining because it will enable us to see in what sense the pour-soi is a nothingness.

We have seen how Sartre established the transphenomenality of the being of the phenomenon and the transphenomenality of the being of consciousness. We shall now see that Sartre wants to establish the transphenomenality of non-being as well.

(25) This seemingly Quixotic quest is really an attempt to establish the prior existence of non-being as a condition for the possibility of making negative judgements. Sartre appeals to common experience: If I am looking for a friend in a café, the café appears as a backdrop to the image which I have of him, just as it would have done had my friend been physically present. (26) The massive and compact existence of the en-soi can only be made perceptible if it

is isolated/...

is isolated by a halo of nothingness. Fixing one's eyes and attention upon a specific object causes everything else in the field of vision to recede, to become a kind of background upon which the object of interest appears in relief. The entire world with the exception of the object perceived has been "nihilated," as Sartre puts it, that is, surrounded by nothingness. But this nothingness does not exist in its own right. It is not independent in the sense in which the en-soi is independent. According to Sartre, "if nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being - like a worm."<sup>(27)</sup> In summary, then, we may say that negation and non-being under their different forms (interrogation, negative judgement and distinction) suppose a form of nothingness in the heart of consciousness itself. It is in the absolute and pure subjectivity of human consciousness that we discover the origin of the non-being which we ascribe to things. The act by which the pour-soi (or human consciousness) continually generates non-being in the world is called "nihilation" or "negation". All judgement is in one way or another a negation or nihilation. In this way, human consciousness is its own non-being, its own nihilation. The transphenomenal being of non-being is thus identical with the transphenomenal being of consciousness, that is, the pour-soi.

We have seen that the pour-soi is the origin of nothingness; we may say that it is the nihilation of being. Sartre claims

that it/...

that it is man (or as he prefers to call it, "human reality") who is the being by which nothingness comes to being.

Human reality is being in so far as within its being and for its being it is the unique foundation of nothingness at the heart of being. (28)

Consciousness is the process whereby nothingness has been introduced into the world and it is through this nothingness, as we have seen, that the world comes to have distinct form.

The transphenomenal being of consciousness was given the name pour-soi, and it has turned out that this being is radically other than the transphenomenal being of the phenomenon, which was given the name en-soi, so much so, in fact, that the only appropriate term to describe the characteristic quality of this being is to call it nothingness. Clearly consciousness, nothingness and pour-soi are synonymous terms.

The first significant consequence of Sartre's identification of the being of consciousness with nothingness is that for consciousness its existence precedes its essence. Consciousness in itself is a nothingness since it knows itself as precisely not that of which it is conscious. Sartre has contrasted the being of consciousness and the being of the phenomenon in these terms:

Consciousness is a being whose existence posits

its essence/...

its essence and inversely it is consciousness  
of a being, whose essence implies its  
existence. (29)

There can be no essence of consciousness because  
consciousness has no content, yet the law of consciousness  
is to appear and to be different from that which appears.  
In this sense consciousness does not have an a priori  
essence - its existence precedes its essence. One cannot  
conceive of an abstract essence of consciousness apart from  
its existence, or as Sartre says

... consciousness is not produced as a  
particular instance of an abstract  
possibility but that in rising to the  
centre of being, it creates and supports  
its essence - that is, the synthetic  
order of its possibilities. (30)

This is what we have referred to as Sartre's radical reversal  
of the position of his predecessors. In so far as human reality  
is consciousness, its existence precedes its essence, conscious-  
ness determines its own existence, it is responsible for its  
own manner of being. This is what Sartre wishes to convey by  
saying "The existence of consciousness comes from consciousness  
itself." (31) The expression "existence precedes essence"  
succinctly encapsulates Sartre's theory because it draws  
together the different strands of thought upon which the  
theory is based. Since conscious being, or the pour-soi, is

always intentional/....

always intentional and directed toward the en-soi, it is itself a nothingness and, therefore, cannot be defined by an essence. In other words, its essence is henceforth what its intentionality intends, that is, consciousness is no longer essence but project of essence. Essence is always in front of us, that is, transcendent, and never that on which our existence is based. The relationship between essence and existence is reversed: existence is no longer derived from essence, rather it appears henceforth as the transcendental condition of the possibility of essence.

The second consequence of Sartre's identification of the being of consciousness with nothingness is intimately related to the preceding explication of existence preceding essence. Indeed, it may be regarded as the necessary implication of that position. Combining the consequences of the original derivation with its implication to the effect that existence precedes essence, we may say that, if consciousness is its own nothingness, it must be free since, lacking a centre of determination, nothing can act upon it. The non-being of consciousness is the source of its freedom, in so far as it breaks the chain of causality. As a nothingness, consciousness cannot be conditioned or constrained by any essence. Nothing can determine consciousness because there is nothing in consciousness which can be determined. Nothing can enter consciousness to limit its freedom. The world exists for consciousness, while consciousness is always for itself. Everything other than consciousness

has relevance/...

has relevance to consciousness only in so far as it appears to consciousness, and, therefore, remains other than consciousness. Consciousness thus has an autonomous existence which guarantees that it will never become the effect of causes which are other than itself. It is capable of withdrawing from its involvement, indeed, in a sense it always does so, in so far as it constitutes itself pre-reflectively as not being that of which it is at that moment conscious. This "nihilating withdrawal" or distancing is what Sartre means by the freedom of consciousness.

Freedom is the human being putting his past  
out of play by secreting his own nothingness. (32)

The relation between man's past and his present is such, according to Sartre, that what he was is not the foundation of what he is, any more than what he is is the foundation of what he will be. The past cannot determine the future because it is merely a datum for consciousness and not the origin of consciousness. Man can create an essence for himself only by engaging or committing himself in some way. But this essence does not determine him because he can (and indeed must) separate himself from his past by virtue of the nothingness within consciousness, that is, the freedom of consciousness to "secrete" its own nothingness. The nothingness of man is his freedom and man can make himself as a free being by choosing the manner in which he will "inhabit"

the nothingness./...

the nothingness. Man thus possesses freedom in his being (as a pour-soi), for the flight of the pour-soi towards its future is its measure of freedom to become what it will be. We shall see in our next chapter that not only can man become what he will be, but that he has (is compelled) to do so.

It might appear that Sartre is guilty of a blatant contradiction in claiming that existence precedes essence, for is he not attributing an essence to man by describing him as free? He might indeed seem to be, but let us note that, according to Sartre, freedom is "not a property which belongs among others to the essence of the human being."<sup>(33)</sup> Sartre warns that "The very use of the term 'freedom' is dangerous if it is to imply that the word refers to a concept as words ordinarily do"<sup>(34)</sup> Freedom, for Sartre, is no static essence, and can be defined in terms of no objective qualities which the self can be said to have. There is no essence or nature of freedom because the existence of consciousness constitutes the essence of freedom. According to Sartre

... my freedom is perpetually in question in my being, it is not a quality added on or a property of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being;<sup>(35)</sup> (Emphasis Sartre)

This is Sartre's fundamental doctrine, namely, that man is ontologically free. Thus Sartre holds that it is not

contradictory to/...

contradictory to claim that in man "existence precedes essence" since what he means is that freedom is the being which defines, that is, continually makes itself, without being capable of itself being defined. But this paradoxical position is not quite consistent. It seems to us that since the nothingness of man is his freedom, this freedom can be defined negatively, for instance, one may describe freedom as the being which is other than the en-soi and this is a legitimate definition of freedom. It seems to us that Sartre cannot avoid committing himself to a definition of freedom, albeit in negative terms. Nevertheless, we do not think that Sartre contradicts himself in holding that existence precedes essence, because it seems to us that he is using the term freedom as a synonym for existence. This is why he claims that "Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible, the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom."<sup>(36)</sup> Sartre's point is that man is inherently free and that whatever characteristics may eventually be ascribable to him are a consequence of his exercise of this freedom. Freedom, Sartre believes, could not itself be an essence because it is nothing in itself, it is rather the foundation upon which essence arises, the transcendental condition of the possibility of essence. It seems clear that if we remember what we said earlier about the reversal that freedom and existence are synonymous - existence is freedom. Sartre himself explicitly asserts that "Freedom is existence, and in it existence precedes essence."<sup>(37)</sup>

The proposition "existence is freedom" is not an analytical

one, since/...

one, since Sartre does not derive the meaning of the term "freedom" from an analysis of the term "existence". Nor is the proposition synthetic for, although freedom creates predicates, it is not itself a predicate. We think that the proposition ought to be taken descriptively as describing the manner in which existence presents itself to a consciousness which has its being wholly within existence.

What implications can be drawn from Sartre's claim that in man "existence precedes essence?" Well, firstly, let us note that it is not contradictory to speak of man as if we were talking about an entity whose essence was implicitly understood in the use of the term "man" and then to assert that the essence of man is something yet to be realized. Existence is not a sort of secondary quality added to others to produce man. Man is his existence. This means that there is no universal essence "man" to which "existence" is added as it was once believed that secondary qualities were added to the primary ones to produce objects. Sartre uses the term "existence" as the title for the concrete consciousness of man in its free creativity. Whatever subsequent meaning the term "man" acquires will depend wholly upon the projection of man in the world.

Before that projection of the self nothing exists;  
not even the haven of intelligence: man will  
attain existence when he is what he purposes to  
be. (38)

Sartre's meaning seems to be reasonably clear: No one can have a past until he exists and no one can exist without projecting himself forward into the future. This is what it means to live and to be a man. No man is born with the kind of essence appropriate for designating what a man is. Each man is, therefore, responsible for creating himself and, through this self-creation, for creating humanity, that is, each man begins ab ovo. Hence Sartre wishes to convey by the expression "existence precedes essence" that men do not have determinate natures fixed in advance of their choices. He wishes to deny that they are created by God, since for him the creation of men by God would imply that men possess fixed, already determinate, natures and, therefore, that men would not be free. It follows for Sartre that if God does not exist, man could not be determined by a previously given essence, by any concept of human nature conceived in God's mind, and, therefore, that man is free. (39)

Let us immediately recall here that neither Descartes, Kant, Hegel nor Husserl thought that man's possession of an essential nature limited his freedom. On the contrary, they were firmly convinced that freedom was only capable of being realized if man acted in accordance with his essential (rational) nature. Does Sartre then believe that his predecessors held a self - contradictory position in believing that man is free and that he possesses an essence which precedes his existence? The short answer to this question is that Sartre would probably say that his pre-

decessors' concept/...

decessors' concept of freedom was based on a conception of essence as potentiality in contrast to existence as actuality whereas his own conception of freedom is a denial that freedom is a power and identifies freedom with the actual being of man. If this were indeed his position we could not agree with him, for it seems to us that for him freedom is also a power in the sense that it makes possible the meaningful constitution of the world as well as man's self-creation. Sartre's conception is not one of mere self-given actuality as he would like to make it appear, but a carefully conceived means of situating man vis-à-vis the world. This is clearly illustrated in Sartre's arguments for the freedom of consciousness. The distinguishing feature of human consciousness, according to Sartre, is to constitute itself by contrast with, or as other than, its physical environment, its body, its past, and indeed, everything whatsoever. By its self-detaching activity it projects the en-soi against a background of non-being and thereby apprehends actuality in the context of possibility. In other words, it discovers the alternative possibilities of development to which the actual is susceptible. It also apprehends itself as a bridge between the actual and the possible as having to determine which of these possibilities is to be realized. In view of this picture of the freedom of consciousness as the means of realizing possibilities in the world, it seems undeniable that freedom as such is indeed a power. We saw earlier that freedom could be defined, at least in negative terms. It seems that Sartre's attempt to identify freedom with the

being of/...

being of man in such a way that he avoids the pitfalls of his predecessors is not successful.

We should say that where Sartre really parts company with his predecessors is over the question of the possession of an a priori essence. Sartre regards the possession of an a priori essence as a limitation upon freedom rather than as the means for the realization of this freedom. His reasons for doing so are to be found in his notion of consciousness and his view of reality. Consciousness, for Sartre, is essentially free and uncaused; as we have seen "its existence comes from itself." This means among other things that consciousness is spontaneous self-creation and that through this self-creation the essence of the self is constituted. Essence is not a priori but a posteriori. This is what Sartre wishes to convey by referring to Hegel's statement "Wesen ist was gewesen ist" (Essence is what has been).<sup>(40)</sup> Sartre would, therefore, regard self-determination in accordance with an a priori essence as a hollow sort of determination, since the possibility of determining one's own freedom in the positive sense would be ruled out. This appears to be the basis of his charge against Descartes, namely, that the latter limited freedom within the framework of established morality and adopted a "pious" view of freedom. He claims that although Descartes started from the premises that the world is contingent and meaningless and man thereby free, he reduced freedom to a purely negative power. Cartesian freedom, according to Sartre, is purely negative in the sense that the possibility of an active choice is denied; there

remains only/...

remains only the possibility of refusing the choices which God has already made and going no further. Only God can create - man can but strive toward the contemplation and knowledge of the divine order. But, if there is no God, Sartre believes, there would be no a priori essence, and man would be free to create his own essence. The reason why existence precedes essence seems for Sartre to be that God does not exist and therefore reality is thought to be contingent. Man is, therefore, held to be free from pre-ordained values and pre-conceived definitions.<sup>(41)</sup> Sartre's radical concept of freedom as self-creation out of nothing demands a concept of essence which is not a priori but a posteriori; and this view of essence only make sense if consciousness is a nothingness, since otherwise man could not create his own essence, but would create himself in accordance with the law of a pre-determined essence. Man exists only in the measure in which he creates himself. During his entire existence man is making himself, creating an essence which becomes complete only at the moment of his death. As long as man lives he can never coincide with the idea he has of himself, since this idea is in the past and, as for the future, it demands continual improvisation, since new possibilities always arise; but whether these are to be realized or not depends upon man. Man is thus self-transcendence, that is, he lives by his projects, his sketches of possible courses of actions in the future. What corresponds to essence or nature can only be a certain uniformity of structure that is afterwards discovered within

the various/...

the various instances of human freedom. Such is Sartre's picture of man.

This picture of man should be seen in the light of Sartre's actual experience of the world. Sartre's experience of the world is a negative one. We saw in our previous chapter that the basic experience of European man at this time was one of uncertainty and anxiety occasioned by the collapse of the established order. Sartre's experience of a fundamentally hostile environment determines his view of the relationship between man and world. While Sartre would perhaps himself say that he was reacting against the idealistic metaphysics of his teachers, we think that more than this is involved. We believe that he transcended the merely formal philosophical issues and was actually responding to the crises (political, social, moral and metaphysical) of his age. F.H. Heinemann seems to us to be fundamentally correct in his recognition that

Sartre expresses a genuine experience of a concrete ultimate situation. It is political, as the experience of a political group, moral as implying a moral choice, and metaphysical, as the experience of the individual who, in the face of an ultimate situation in his utter loneliness, remains indissolubly connected with, and responsible to, all members of the group, and, in the last resort, to all men. (42)

We would/...

We would add that the experience is also epistemological in that it represents an attempt to grasp the nature of the world in terms of certain "existentialia". These latter refer to those basic features of being-in-the-world as Sartre conceives of this relation, which reveal the actual nature of being-in-the-world. Just as Kant had a list of categories which enabled one to comprehend the nature of the relationship between the mind and the objects which the mind understood, so Sartre has a number of "existentialia" which enables one to comprehend the nature of the relationship between individual existence and those features of the world which help to individuate this existence as a being-in-the-world. These are anguish or anxiety (angoisse), which makes man directly aware of his freedom; shame, which reveals the presence of the Other and being-seen-by-him; nausea, which reveals the elusiveness and evasiveness of the natural world; existence as actualitas, that is, man's projecting himself into the world from the nothing; being-by-itself, which reveals that man has no essence and has to exist as a pour-soi; freedom-to-the-nothing, which reveals that man is compelled to be free. These odd categories constitute a summary of the main features of Sartre's philosophy. We cannot, however, deal with them in this way and have merely enumerated them here in order to illustrate the point that Sartre's experience of the world has an epistemological aspect in addition to those noted by Heinemann. Of course, as Mary Warnock rightly points out, "Sartre is never at any time concerned/...

time concerned with pure epistemology. There are too many ways of knowing the world for epistemology ever, for him, to be a pure subject."<sup>(43)</sup> Nevertheless, a distinct epistemological strain is distinguishable, as we hope to show in our next chapter.

It is noteworthy that reason does not feature among the "existentialia". This is because the experience of being-in-the-world is not conceived of as basically rational. On the contrary, the experience of being-in-the-world is fundamentally absurd because existence is not necessary but contingent and contingency finds no external justification. Both the pour-soi and the en-soi are absurd. The pour-soi is absurd because its sheer contingent existence as the nihilation of a particular en-soi and its failure to attain the state of en-soi-pour-soi, that is, become its own foundation, leave it unjustified and unjustifiable. The en-soi is absurd because, as Sartre says, it is "uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being,"<sup>(44)</sup> This, being-in-the-world is basically absurd because each of the terms of the relation, the pour-soi and en-soi, are absurd.

It seems to us, however, that Sartre is not justified in his claim that absurdity is fundamental to human existence. His argument from contingency fails because, as James Collins notes, contingency by itself excludes only a certain type of derivation and meaningfulness.

It is/...

It is incompatible with a necessary deduction or emanation from an absolute kind and with an a priori determination of meaning on the basis of ideal, dialectical necessities alone.<sup>(45)</sup>

Thus the non-deducible character of the existent does not entail its unintelligibility, lack of rational justification or absurdity. We agree with Heinemann that "It is not the universe that is absurd, but man who projects his absurdity into the world. Nothing is absurd except feelings, thoughts, interpretations, actions or productions of man."<sup>(46)</sup> Sartre, in our opinion, has falsely universalized a specific experience which may have possessed validity in so far as it symbolized the spirit of the age, but which the changing circumstances of life, together with its own inherent contradictions, have long since invalidated. We do not deny that Sartre was right to attempt to express the experience of the breakdown of the established order in philosophical terms. In fact, in so doing he instantiates the principle of identity in a negative sense. As we have repeatedly pointed out, the pour-soi, by its very nature, attempts to reach the en-soi and fuse with the en-soi. Its failure to achieve this stems from Sartre's inability to transcend his conception of the experience of alienation and absurdity. In fact, it is Sartre's basic experience of reality as alienation that determines his view of the relation between the pour-soi and the en-soi. This basic experience of reality is a negative one in so far as nothingness and negation are found at the very

heart of/...

heart of being and the fact that things could be other than what they are, in other words, that they are contingent, reveals the empty freedom of the being who is its own nothingness. But it nevertheless seems to us undeniable that Sartre's conception of the nature of man, and the way in which he expects man to act, fulfill the principle of identity, albeit in a negative way. This follows from Sartre's conception of man as a nothingness unable to fuse with the world (which is pure positivity) lest he lose his identity as man.

Sartre's reversal of the tradition of transcendental philosophy means that, for the first time, man is placed firmly in the centre of a conception of reality. The starting-point for Sartre is the individual as such in his unique subjectivity which is considered prior to any theory of human nature. Against Descartes's starting-point of Cogito, ergo sum, Sartre proclaims the truth of man's subjectivity, Existo, ergo sum (I exist, therefore I am). By taking subjectivity as the starting-point, it becomes possible to present an account of the essential being of man as it manifests itself in his actual and concrete existence. It is in this sense that "existentialism is a humanism", since it is through his free creation of himself that man constitutes man. Maurice Natanson describes Sartre's enterprise as a "Copernican revolution in ontology,"<sup>(47)</sup> in that it places the pour-soi at the core of existence. This is indeed the reversal in what has come to be known as existentialism. Whereas hitherto

philosophers had/...

philosophers had attempted to derive man's subjectivity by a consideration of his place within the larger framework of things, Sartre begins with a consideration of man as a being-in-the-world, that is, as a being compelled to exist by relating itself to the world. But it is not the world which provides the framework for the interpretation of the position of man, rather, it is man who, through his being as a pour-soi, structures and restructures the en-soi (the world). As we have seen, however, whether a philosopher begins from the world, or from man, it is still his fundamental experience of reality that determines his view of the nature of the world, of man, and of the relationship between them. Whether this shift of Sartre, therefore, deserves the honorific title "Copernican revolution" is doubtful. We shall return to this issue somewhat later.

We have just remarked that the pour-soi structures the en-soi. This might mislead the incautious into believing that Sartre is an idealist intent on reducing knowledge to the structure of our understanding. Nothing could be further from the truth. Sartre is neither idealist nor realist - he begins neither from an immanent mind nor from a transcendent world. Sartre tries to go beyond both idealism and realism by situating consciousness in the world, yet denying any causal relation between consciousness and the world. The world has not given rise to consciousness nor has consciousness given rise to the world, for the world is not the meaningful content of consciousness.

Consciousness finds/...

Consciousness finds the world as already existing but the world is wholly undifferentiated plenitude, what Sartre terms en-soi. Only through consciousness (pour-soi) does structure and differentiation come about. What then has priority, the en-soi or the pour-soi? Sartre would probably regard this question as reflecting a misunderstanding, for he would no doubt say that terms like "before" or "after" only make sense when the pour-soi is already given in relation to the en-soi. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that it is the en-soi which is taken as the paradigm of being. Sartre speaks of "a kind of ontological priority of the in-itself over the for-itself"<sup>(48)</sup>, and it must be remembered that consciousness could not exist without something to be conscious of, whereas the en-soi could certainly exist without consciousness. However, to answer the question of priority in this way might be misleading, for it would presuppose an abstract comprehension of the en-soi apart from the pour-soi. Such a comprehension would reveal only that something exists as itself, but not what that something is. The priority of the en-soi is an empty abstraction whereas the contingent presence of the pour-soi to the en-soi reveals the en-soi as a concrete world with a particular structure. If anything then, Sartre is more realist than idealist. He is, however, a very peculiar type of realist, in that he believes that the world as we know it depends for its order and significance wholly upon the presence of human consciousness.

It may/...

It may be thought that Sartre has overstated man's freedom, since surely the sheer givenness of the en-soi must limit the possibilities of the pour-soi in its projection into the future. Sartre is aware of this fact, but he believes that the en-soi exists for the pour-soi, in other words, the given constitutes a limit only in so far as the conscious being freely decides upon a course of action from which the particular significance of the given will be determined.

The given, in fact, could never be a cause  
for an action if it were not appreciated. (49)

Man is, of course, born into a world which he did not choose, a world of facticity, as Sartre calls it, but it is precisely this world of facticity that provides the opportunity for man to realize his freedom.

Thus although brute things... can from the start limit our freedom of action, it is our freedom itself which must first constitute the framework, the technique and the ends in relation to which they will manifest themselves as limits. (50)

In saying this, Sartre is only drawing the necessary implications of his principle that "existence precedes essence," since it is only if man is essentially nothing, and if his essence is "suspended in his freedom," that

man as/...

man as a pour-soi can determine the nature of the limitation which the en-soi imposes upon him. Sartre has given the name "situation" to this "common product of the contingency of the in-itself and of freedom".<sup>(51)</sup> Because the pour-soi always refers to the en-soi, man is always free and hence always in a situation. Sartre claims that "there is freedom only in a situation and there is a situation only through freedom."<sup>(52)</sup> But, as we have seen, although the existence of situations may reveal obstacles to freedom and these obstacles undoubtedly make it impossible for man to do everything that he wants to do, they do not limit his freedom. Freedom is unlimited because man can negate his past and his present situation and project future possibilities, and there is no possibility of any factor outside of consciousness entering consciousness to determine his future projects. Not only are physical obstacles no barrier to freedom, but the emotions, too, are no barrier to freedom. They, too, exist for consciousness and never in consciousness. They are chosen as a result of a conscious negation and intentional projection of a goal. Hence it is because everything exists for consciousness that man's freedom is unlimited.

Our exposition of Sartre's notion of situation sheds light upon our earlier question as to why Sartre believes that the existence of an a priori essence would constitute a limit to freedom and not be a means of realizing this freedom. It may have been felt that Sartre's rejection of the

a priori respect/...



a priori aspect of reality was somewhat unjustified. One may be more willing to concede Sartre's point now that he explains

What men have in common is not a nature but a metaphysical condition and by this we mean all the constraints which limit them a priori, the necessity of being born and dying, of being finite, and existing in the world among other men. And this condition is the fundamental human situation or, if one prefers, the ensemble of abstract characters common to all situations. The other elements of what is described as human nature are but dependent structures whose essential character is to be situated, and they differ from each other as their situations differ.<sup>(53)</sup>

Sartre is saying that man is resolved into his situation, relations and projects, not into an essence or nature. But we do not believe that Sartre has satisfactorily proven his thesis. On the contrary, we agree with Wilfrid Desan<sup>(54)</sup> who claims that Sartre is implicitly describing the essence of man in his description of the fundamental human situation as "the ensemble of abstract characters common to all situations." We shall return to this criticism in our conclusion of this chapter, but a detailed criticism of Sartre's concept of freedom will have to be postponed to our fourth

chapter, since/...

chapter, since there are still many ramifications to consider.

The nature of the relationship between the pour-soi and the en-soi is something which we have as yet only mentioned in passing, so that it will now be necessary to examine it in detail in the light of our preceding elucidation. For Sartre, then, the creative agent is the pour-soi. Its creative act is that of constituting the en-soi as the human situation. Man as a pour-soi is perpetually referred to the en-soi not only because, in his being as a pour-soi, he is a nothingness and hence needs to create an essence, but also because as a pour-soi he is conscious and being conscious of something which is not itself that act of consciousness, in other words, that is en-soi. The relationship between pour-soi and en-soi may, therefore, be described as dialectical. It is dialectical because the pour-soi is the complete antithesis of the en-soi, as we have seen, and because it, nevertheless, cannot exist except by continually referring to the en-soi. The structure of the en-soi, on the other hand, can only be revealed by the pour-soi, since, without the existence of the pour-soi, nothing at all can be said of the en-soi, not even that it is. Hence, neither pour-soi nor en-soi has any significance when considered in its own right. But if we now adopt the Hegelian model and regard the en-soi as the thesis, the pour-soi as the antithesis, what would be the synthesis? Sartre's answer is that the desired

synthesis has/...

synthesis has been God in the sense of the Ens causa sui and he believes that this is a contradictory notion in so far as the en-soi-pour-soi could not retain the characteristics of the pour-soi at the same time as those of the en-soi. Nevertheless, Sartre posits this contradictory being as the ultimate aim of the pour-soi, for the pour-soi is continually projecting itself toward the en-soi and, teleologically speaking, wants to become the en-soi, yet not wholly in the manner in which the en-soi is (as if that were possible!) but as an en-soi aware of itself. Clearly, however, on Sartre's premises such a syncretism of consciousness and thing, activity and immobility is self-contradictory, and the dialectical relationship between pour-soi and en-soi remains fixated at an intermediate stage. But although no harmonious synthesis between pour-soi and en-soi is envisaged by Sartre, the dialectical relationship between the two regions of being will prove most significant as an explanation of the nature of the relationship between man and world, as well as between man and his fellow-man.

Although the pour-soi is continually referred to the en-soi and the two regions of being are thereby in a dialectical relation, this relation is not reciprocal as we have seen. The pour-soi needs the en-soi in order to exist, but the en-soi does not need the pour-soi. What the pour-soi receives from the en-soi is the fact of sheer givenness, a material upon which it can fashion a more or less complex structure through its "nihilation" of the en-soi. Whereas the en-soi

is a/...

is a being which is what is is, the pour-soi is a being which is not what it is, and is what it is not. So, although the pour-soi is pure existence without essence, it is a paradoxical being in so far as, even its existence, is equivocal, for despite deriving its existence entirely from itself, it does not reveal itself through its existence, but only by means of that which is other than itself, namely, the en-soi. The fact that the pour-soi cannot grasp itself except as that paradoxical being "which is not what it is and is what it is not" points to the impossibility of the pour-soi uniting with the en-soi. Man as a pour-soi is continually striving to attain the stability of en-soi-type existence, but he is unable to exist like a material thing, since his consciousness perpetually reveals to him new possibilities, and his freedom is thereby given as inescapable, man and world, pour-soi and en-soi, are polar opposites and therefore perpetually divorced from each other while, nevertheless, being referred to each other. The relationship between the pour-soi and the en-soi is basically a negative one in so far as the pour-soi must constantly establish itself as not being the en-soi, that is, consciousness must continually deny that it is identical with the external world. This is the way in which Sartre conceives of the fundamental nature of the relation between man and world. The world is not seen as the meaningful essential ground, but rather as the material for alienation and self-estrangement.

We have seen that the relationship between pour-soi and

en-soi is/...

en-soi is dialectical in nature. But the en-soi does not require the pour-soi in order to exist. We must therefore conclude that it is the pour-soi which generates the relation between en-soi and pour-soi. In fact, the pour-soi itself is dialectical in nature, it is a dialectical unity, a type of being of its own which, nevertheless, requires a different type of being to support it. This is what Sartre means when he writes "the For-itself and the In-Itself are reunited by a synthetic connection which is nothing other than the For-itself itself."<sup>(55)</sup> But this "synthetic connection" is merely an "internal relation,"<sup>(56)</sup> whereby the pour-soi constantly refers to the en-soi without being capable of attaining to a genuine synthesis, because a genuine logical synthesis is precluded by the negating action of human consciousness which perpetually creates anew the distinctions such a synthesis is intended to overcome. Man must always remain a pour-soi in antithetical relation to the en-soi. It is because of this necessary but futile pursuit of a unified concept of being, the en-soi-pour-soi, that Sartre conceives of the human predicament as a "useless passion".<sup>(57)</sup> It is useless in the sense that man's activity finds no ultimate support outside itself, since man's existence is not for anything except himself. This picture of man condemned to endless striving and unable to find any final resting-point inside or outside himself has certain similarities with Kant and certain metaphysical implications. Kant, as we saw earlier, postulated the thing-in-itself (the Absolute) as beyond human understanding, but

as the/...

as the object of man's constant striving. It did, however, possess positive connotations in so far as it enabled man to regulate his conduct practically in terms of "ideas of pure reason" as they were known. Sartre postulates the en-soi-pour-soi, the Absolute, "the Ens causa sui which religions call God"<sup>(58)</sup> as likewise beyond human realization and as the object of man's constant striving as a pour-soi. However, although Sartre refers to it as a value, it is an impossible unity constituted by the antithetical relationship between pour-soi and en-soi, and does not possess practical significance. One may say that since "existence precedes essence" the pour-soi can receive significance from its relation with the en-soi, while the significance of the en-soi remains problematic and awaits determination from the pour-soi. Hence the en-soi-pour-soi, the thing-in-itself (God), can neither be the ground of knowledge nor be known.

Continuing the parallel with Kant, we find ourselves in agreement with Natanson who has argued that the picture of the pour-soi introducing significance to the en-soi parallels Kant's Copernican revolution in some ways.

Since the pour-soi is in perpetual flux the significations which it creates change it:  
In short, the constancy or regularity of the phenomenal world of Kant has been denied, and in its place is put a dialectical reality. The essence of Sartre's Copernican revolution, therefore, is that the manifestation of the

pour-soi is dialectical reality.<sup>(59)</sup>

This accords with our earlier remarks that the pour-soi itself is a dialectical unity. We would, however, like to express certain reservations about the term "Copernican revolution". Sartre has indeed, as we have tried to show, shifted the emphasis from the world to man's existence, and, in so doing, he has transformed our notion of ontology, but he has not thereby avoided constituting either man or the world and his ontology remains transcendental in so far as the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi is a rational construction and hence a specific theory of the world (reality).

While we agree that Sartre has reversed the position of his predecessors, we do not believe that his conception of man as a pour-soi compelled to exist in relation to the world as en-soi is not itself derived from his experience of reality (actuality). On the contrary, we believe that it was Sartre's specific experience of reality which determined his view of the nature of man and of the world, as well as of the relationship between them. Whereas Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl conceived of man as essentially a being capable of being fulfilled and considered the world as capable of meeting man's fundamental aspirations, Sartre conceives of man as lacking an essence and believes that the world is not capable of meeting man's fundamental aspiration, which is the desire to be God. The

real ground/...

real ground and sufficient reason of the world is thus negative and not positive - it is nothingness. In this way, Sartre fulfills the principle of identity negatively instead of positively. Because of his negative experience of the world, Sartre is unable to bring man into a harmonious relationship with the world and this is reflected in his construction of the incompatible relationship between the pour-soi and the en-soi. Sartre's conception of man as a pour-soi, compelled to make itself because of its ontological poverty, stems directly from his experience of the world as the fundamentally alien milieu in which man has to exist. Not only does the world not meet man's deepest need, that is, the need to be his own foundation (en-soi-pour-soi), but it actively resists man's attempt to obtain a purchase upon it. Sartre describes this elusive quality of the world as "visqueux" (translated as "slimy" by Barnes but perhaps better rendered as "viscous").<sup>(60)</sup> He says that "everything takes place for us as if the viscous were the meaning of the entire world or the unique mode of being-in-itself".<sup>(61)</sup> One must, therefore, agree that "the viscous is an important category for us to employ in our descriptions of the world just because it does, in itself, stand for our relation with things-in-themselves."<sup>(62)</sup>

But if Sartre is unable to make man compatible with the world, it is not only because the en-soi resists comprehension, it is also because the pour-soi is nothingness. As nothingness, the pour-soi attempts to fuse with the en-soi in the ideal of en-soi-pour-soi, but only succeeds in re-

affirming its/...

affirming its essential being as a nothingness since the synthesis of being with nothingness must needs be lack of being. Thus, because Sartre begins with a negative conception of reality, it is hardly surprising that he sees man as essentially a nothingness and condemns man to everlasting negativity and, in this sense, to freedom. The moral act is, accordingly, man's decision to live up to his essential nature as a being which lacks a nature and is thus compelled to freely create his own nature. In this sense, man's essence is freedom qua nothingness and this nothingness is, as we have seen, derived from Sartre's experience of reality, that is, the antithetical relationship between en-soi and pour-soi. Hence it follows that Sartre's model, too, demonstrates the validity of the principle of identity. Sartre, too, starts from a particular experience of reality, attempts to conceptualise man in the light of this experience, and conceives of man's relationship to the world (including his fellow-man) in accordance with man's essential nature. Sartre's principle "existence precedes essence" may have reversed the starting-point but actually

All that has happened is that the matter of reflection has been shifted from the world to man's own existence and, in this way, a new theory or type of man is conceived... as freedom to nothing, and, as such, creating his own values and his own being in a foreign and hostile world.<sup>(63)</sup>

Our examination/...

Our examination of the implications of Sartre's principle "existence precedes essence" for the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi has shown that, while Sartre certainly has reversed the tradition of transcendental philosophy by adopting subjectivity as the starting-point, he has not been able to present a unified concept of being, and his position leads to serious difficulties. Sartre's concept of freedom has been shown to have its basis in the paradoxical nature of the pour-soi and in the antithetical relationship which exists between the pour-soi (mind) and the en-soi (matter). By his formula "existence precedes essence" Sartre signals his intention to establish a new conception of the nature of man. It is clear from our examination that Sartre has based his conception of man on a new relationship between consciousness and the world. Through his consciousness, man realizes that he is different from the world since consciousness is wholly intention of the world. Its very nothingness means that it is united to the world, not as an object, but as a project. In other words, man cannot be defined by characteristics or a nature that would be inherent in him, but solely by his worldly ventures, that is to say, his acts.

Man is nothing else but what he purposes,  
he exists only in so far as he realizes  
himself, he is therefore nothing else but  
the sum of his actions, nothing else but  
what his life is. (64)

And this/...

And this is so, since for Sartre man is by nature free and, what amounts to the same thing as we have seen, "existence precedes essence". Sartre does not think that freedom is a new essence or a new qualification of consciousness. He believes that it is wholly project toward the world, since it is consciousness which is free, and consciousness, as such, is projection toward possibilities. It is because consciousness is a nothingness that consciousness distinguishes itself from past and present and is able to posit future ends as not yet actualized. If there is an essence of man at all, it is this nothingness, but since nothingness is not a property except in a negative sense, and consciousness is constantly beyond itself and obliged to transcend itself, its existence precedes its essence.

It is our contention that Sartre does not avoid constructing an essence for man because his distinction between pour-soi and en-soi is itself based upon a particular view of the nature of man, which is in turn derived from his experience of the world, as we have seen. We saw earlier that Sartre's resolution of man into situation, relations and projects merely re-described, in different language, the common features which were traditionally referred to as essence. In our opinion, Sartre is covertly re-introducing a view of human nature in his thesis that man has to create himself by his free action. While we believe that Sartre is right to oppose the view of essence as a fixed a priori feature

of man/...

of man and the view of freedom as proceeding strictly in accordance with the dictates of that essence, we believe that essence and freedom are not incompatible. In other words, it does not follow that, in order for man to possess true freedom, his existence has to precede his essence.

D. Roberts has rightly pointed out that

We do not need to accept a definition of essence which excludes freedom or a definition of existence which means that it always 'precedes' essence. Instead, we should define freedom as integral to 'human nature'. (65)

Even though Sartre's principle "existence precedes essence" makes sense in terms of his ontology it does not do justice to the changing experience of man in the actual circumstances of life. Where Sartre has succeeded in convincing, he has done so only through appealing to those common features of the human condition which he separates in his distinction between pour-soi and en-soi. While we agree with Sartre that what defines the human condition is the experience of freedom, the necessity to choose and create values and the attendant responsibility, we feel that Sartre exaggerates by placing nothingness instead of a nature at the heart of man. Of course, Sartre needs this nothingness to make sense of his concept of freedom, as we have seen. Nevertheless, the question remains whether Sartre is justified in adopting

this "anti-concept", /...

this "anti-concept", as it has been called, as his starting-point.

It seems to us that Sartre is not able to avoid constituting this model of the relationship of man to the world. It has been conclusively shown how his experience of the world determined the nature of his conception of the essence of man as well as how this essence determined his relationship with the world. Notwithstanding his intentions, as we shall see, Sartre has turned the experience of human subjectivity into a theory and thereby sacrificed some of the most vital features of his philosophy. Despite his reversal of the starting-point in philosophy, we believe that his conception of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi fails to do justice to the actual existence of man in the changing and contingent circumstances of life. Whether this is because Sartre is attempting to construct something which cannot be constructed or whether his construction is based on too narrow a foundation remains to be seen. What can be said at this stage with some degree of certainty is that the concept of freedom which Sartre has given derives from his distinction between the pour-soi and the en-soi. If this distinction proves inadequate, his concept of freedom will be open to justifiable criticism. Exactly what our future criticism will be and how it will refer to the pour-soi-en-soi distinction depends upon our further elucidation of other aspects of Sartre's concept of freedom.

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C H A P T E R   T H R E E

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOUR-SOI AND EN-SOI IN THE  
LIGHT OF SARTRE'S STATEMENT: MAN IS COMPELLED TO  
FREEDOM

It is, perhaps, most helpful, if one wishes to preclude misunderstanding at the outset, to distinguish freedom as it is ordinarily used in everyday language and as it has hitherto been used in our dissertation, when we spoke of the "power of self-determination", from the concept of freedom in Sartre. Ordinarily, one is considered free if no obstacles or restraints exist which would hinder or prevent the performance of a particular action. This factor is presupposed in the usual concept of freedom in which freedom is conceived of as the power of self-determination. In the latter concept it is the self, that is, the very being (existence) of the performing agent, which serves as the ground of those actions which are termed free in contradistinction to the power of natural (or causal) necessity, which serves as the ground of those actions or events which are, in consequence, considered determined. Our remarks concerning the Sartrean concept of freedom must, at this stage, be regarded as somewhat tentative, since we have not, as yet, elucidated its salient aspects. Let us recall, in the light of what we have discovered in our previous chapter, that Sartrean freedom is not simply a positive power to determine oneself in accordance with

certain existing/...

certain existing standards or laws. As we saw, freedom was considered to be synonymous with the very being of man, which was conceived of as a lack of being or "nothingness". We now hope to show why it is that Sartre has equated freedom with nothingness and why, in consequence, man is compelled to freedom.

The starting-point for the presentation of Sartre's concept of freedom, as indeed for his philosophical enterprise as a whole, is the theory of intentionality. We saw earlier that all consciousness must be consciousness of some thing. This means that consciousness reveals the existence of something which exists independently of consciousness itself. This being was called by Sartre "en-soi", and he considered that its existence had been apodeictically proven by the theory of intentionality. He went on to postulate that consciousness itself was of two kinds; reflective and pre-reflective, and he gave the name pour-soi to the being of reflective consciousness, wishing to indicate thereby that this was a being for which other beings existed, but which did not exist in its own right apart from the existence of other beings which were, in consequence, all en-soi with respect to it. It follows that if, as we have seen, the pour-soi is necessarily referred to the en-soi, the theory of the intentionality of consciousness is confirmed; or conversely, if the theory of the intentionality of consciousness holds, then it must be true that the pour-soi must necessarily be referred to the en-soi. Now it also follows that if

consciousness cannot/...

consciousness cannot escape the obligation to reveal the phenomena of the world (en-soi), then consciousness itself must be parasitic, as it were, upon these phenomena. Because consciousness has no being of its own, or rather, because its being is nothingness, it cannot be known as it is in itself but only in its relation to the type of objects which it reveals. Thus one can come to know what type of consciousness exists by coming to know the objects which consciousness reveals. It is clear that consciousness is fundamentally some or other attitude toward certain phenomena to which it addresses itself. Moreover, it seems that it is not possible for consciousness to avoid taking some or other attitude towards the phenomena precisely because it has no being of its own and is consequently forced to come to terms with that which has a being of its own, in fact, that which is pure being (en-soi). From this nexus of consciousness in its inseparable relation to being-in-itself (en-soi), Sartre develops his concept of freedom. This we shall try to show.

By the very fact that consciousness is intentional and has to exist in relation to an object, it follows that consciousness is not able to choose whether and how to exist. Consciousness has no choice as to being or not being conscious, since its own condition as consciousness is already pre-reflectively aware of the world. The fact of having to exist Sartre terms facticity. As for the manner of existence of consciousness "it must necessarily be what it is not and

not be/...

not be what it is".<sup>(1)</sup> This paradoxical statement concerning consciousness is meant to emphasize the fact that, for Sartre, consciousness is ambiguous in its very being. The ambiguity in the nature of consciousness is caused by the actual lack of substance (what Sartre calls nothingness) at the heart of its being. Sartre is, in one sense, radically anti-Cartesian. He is as opposed to the idea of a soul substance as Gilbert Ryle. There is no "Ghost in the Machine" for Sartre. Mind is the sum of the properties which is evidenced in behaviour. It is no more possible to posit the existence of a being which exists within consciousness (normally called the ego) for Sartre than it is for Ryle. Because Sartre sees the ego as the object of consciousness rather than the subject of consciousness, he is able to describe consciousness as essentially a nothingness. But this nothingness is the necessary condition for freedom, as we have seen. Hence it is legitimate to draw the conclusion, as Sartre does, that

The being which is what it is cannot be free.  
Freedom is precisely the nothingness which is  
made-to-be at the heart of man and which  
forces human reality to make itself instead  
of to be.<sup>(2)</sup>

Man, according to Sartre, is compelled to be free because he is compelled to be a pour-soi in antithetical relation

to the/...

to the en-soi and he is compelled to be a pour-soi in antithetical relation to the en-soi because he is fundamentally a being-in-the-world, that is, a being whose reality and meaning are revealed only through its relation to its world. It follows that the nature of man's being-in-the-world is to be conscious of himself in the world. Moreover, it is because man's consciousness is nothing, that he is compelled to be free; since, however, he chooses to realize his freedom in the world, he cannot establish any permanent structure or essential personality by which his future actions can be directed, because his consciousness is constantly beginning anew from its basic nothingness. Sartre's philosophy can thus be called an actualitas in so far as man is always engaging himself; he must do so in a new manner as the situation changes. But howsoever man engages himself and attempts to use his freedom to become something, he can never erase nor cancel the ultimate ground of freedom to which he is condemned. Man is compelled to be free because he is compelled to live his life consciously, that is, reflectively.

The paradoxical idea of a freedom which is constrained to be free will appear less puzzling if we consider that for Sartre freedom manifests itself within a specific situation and particular concrete circumstances. Sartre has argued that in order to be something one must play at being it; yet in order to play at being something one must be that thing.

This inapprehensible/...

This inapprehensible fact of my condition, this impalpable difference which distinguishes this drama of realization from drama pure and simple is what causes the for-itself, while choosing the meaning of its situation and while constituting itself as the foundation of itself in situation, not to choose its position.<sup>(3)</sup> (Emphasis Sartre's)

This clearly means that the for-itself finds itself in a position which it has not chosen, in other words, that the for-itself is compelled to be situated in one way or another. Sartre gives the name "facticity" to this necessity:

Without facticity consciousness could choose its attachments to the world in the same way as the souls in Plato's Republic choose their condition. I could determine myself to "be born a worker" or to "be born a bourgeois."<sup>(4)</sup>

Similarly man cannot choose to be free; rather he is compelled to be free:

We said freedom is not free not to be free and that it is not free not to exist. This

is because/...

is because the fact of not being able not to be free is the facticity of freedom, and the fact of not being able not to exist is its contingency.<sup>(5)</sup> (Emphasis Sartre's)

The conclusion to the above seems to be that "the For-itself is free, and its Freedom is to itself its own limit. To be free is to be condemned to be free."<sup>(6)</sup> "This is because freedom is a choice of its being but not the foundation of its being... human reality can choose itself as it intends but it is not able not to choose itself."<sup>(7)</sup> "In fact 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, as Heidegger says, 'abandoned'."<sup>(8)</sup> Thus choice is both the expression and the agent of freedom. To choose demonstrates my freedom and activates it at the same time. Man has not chosen to be free, yet his freedom obliges him to choose how to use it. Freedom involves the necessity of choice, which is the activity by which man exercises and demonstrates his autonomy.

This statement of Sartre, that man is condemned to be free or that he is compelled to freedom, provides the key to the understanding of his concept of freedom. We shall try to elucidate the concept of freedom by considering the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi from the epistemological, ontological and, finally, ethical point of view. By treating his philosophical system in this methodological fashion,

we hope to reveal that Sartre's concept of freedom takes its rise from his philosophical model as a whole, that is, from the dialectical relationship between the en-soi and the pour-soi, or the ontological difference between them. Throughout our investigation we shall be guided by our intention to show how the concept of freedom emerges from the nature of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi.

A: FROM THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

We have already had occasion to refer to Sartre's conception of human existence as fundamentally a being-in-the-world. We have also seen that the world could not be described as it was in itself, not because it was not a being in its own right, for, as we have seen, this is just what it was - l'être-en-soi. It could not be described in itself because, as en-soi, it lacked defining characteristics, since it was the pour-soi which was responsible for introducing the distinctions and categories by which the world is known. But even the world as one pole of the syncretism being-in-the-world could not be known essentially.

We know that there is not a for-itself on the one hand and a world on the other as two closed entities for which we must subsequently seek some explanation as to how they communicate.<sup>(9)</sup>

Sartre's interpretation of the intentionality of consciousness

obviates the/...

obviates the need to establish the independent existence of the world and guarantees the existence of being-in-the-world as the mode of existence of human consciousness or, properly speaking, the pour-soi. Just as it is not possible to describe the world as it is in itself, it is not possible to describe the being which is in the world, in other words, the pour-soi; at least it is not possible to describe it positively. All that can be done is to describe what the pour-soi is not and, in so doing, to suggest what it may be. Sartre's description of the various immediate structures of the pour-soi aims at establishing the ontological structures of consciousness as these appear in immediate self-awareness, and not from the point of view of a being capable of distancing itself from its own being.

Now if, as it seems, neither the pour-soi (man) nor the en-soi (world) can be described as each is in itself, all knowledge would appear to be relative. However, knowledge which is relative would hardly appear to deserve to be called knowledge. Fortunately for Sartre, he is not susceptible to this objection. On the contrary, he tries to safeguard knowledge (within his own terms, of course) by attempting to establish the primacy of being over knowledge (the so-called transphenomenality of the being of the phenomenon) and hopes, thereafter, to guarantee the existence of knowledge by showing, through an analysis of the relationship between being and consciousness, what the nature of being is. His starting-point, like that of some other philosophers (most

notably Husserl), /...

notably Husserl), is intuition. However, it is not intuition understood in the sense of "the presence of the thing 'in person' to consciousness";<sup>(10)</sup> it is intuition understood as "the presence of consciousness to the thing."<sup>(11)</sup> This reversal is necessary because, as we have seen, Sartre believes that "knowledge cannot by itself give an account of being, that is, the being of the phenomenon can not be reduced to the phenomenon of being."<sup>(12)</sup> Moreover, the transphenomenal being of the phenomenon (the en-soi) is clearly conceived as the primary entity as it does not require consciousness in order to exist, whereas consciousness is a lesser being which requires the existence of the en-soi in order to exist, whose very existence, as we saw from the ontological proof, posits the existence of the autonomous en-soi. But now if intuition is defined in the Sartrean sense, does it necessarily follow that the nature of the thing is revealed to consciousness? Sartre's argument for the translucent nature of consciousness is meant to establish the position that consciousness does indeed reach the thing-in-itself. It is necessary to examine this argument if one wishes to evaluate the validity of his position.

Firstly, Sartre tries to prove that "all knowing consciousness can be knowledge only of its object."<sup>(13)</sup> His argument here appears to be valid, although it also shades off into triviality, since he does not appear to attempt to establish the validity of the object of knowledge, but only of the

necessity, for/...

necessity, for a consciousness which knows anything, to be conscious of itself knowing it. This, as we have seen, is the basis for his claim that it is necessary to posit a pre-reflective cogito as the object of the Cartesian cogito, and of his distinction between pre-reflective and reflective consciousness. The pre-reflective consciousness is what Sartre calls "an immediate non-cognitive relation of the self to itself."<sup>(14)</sup> Through his construction of this consciousness, Sartre believes that he has avoided the necessity of an infinite regress which he considers the fate of many theories of knowledge which are unable to establish the absolute autonomy of the object of knowledge and the subject which attains to this knowledge. The problem arises for all epistemologies which begin with the assumption that knowledge implies consciousness of itself. If this consciousness is taken as itself a kind of knowing consciousness, it follows that one will be led to posit the existence of an infinite series of knowings, of knowledge that one knows that one knows and so on. Sartre tries to avoid this position by taking the word "of", in "consciousness of", as denoting an immediate relationship, not a relation between a piece of knowledge (or a process of knowing) and that of which knowledge is knowledge of. It seems to us, though, that he has separated the object of knowledge from the knowing subject and is faced with the problem of showing that the latter does indeed establish contact with the former.

Secondly, Sartre tries to prove that the being of the

phenomenon exists/...

phenomenon exists as a being-in-itself (l'être-en-soi) so that he can later claim that when consciousness reveals the phenomenon, it uncovers the thing as it is in itself. We agree here with Jean Wahl that Sartre seems to be motivated by "a kind of epistemological concern to posit some reality that would be independent of knowledge. If knowledge is to be possible, there must be something which is independent of knowledge and which is the in-itself."<sup>(15)</sup> In this way the object of knowledge can be shown to exist independently of the fact of being known and yet to exist as the object of that which the knowing subject (pour-soi) necessarily attains if it is to exist as a knowing subject. But, of course, it is not sufficient to posit the existence of a knowing subject. It is also necessary to prove that it actually establishes contact with the object of knowledge. This does not, of course, mean that the object of knowledge is relative to the knowing subject; only that a plausible explanation needs to be given of how each pole of the knowing-known dyad functions.

Sartre's distinction between pour-soi and en-soi, that is, between a translucent consciousness and the thing-in-itself, determines his view of knowledge. In contrast to Kant Sartre presents his own view, which is that knowledge is necessarily intuition, the presence of consciousness to the object which it is not. This is the original condition of all experience. The pour-soi is characterized only as not being this en-soi. It reveals the world in not being the world and/...

world and makes it possible to know that there is a world, but adds nothing to it. The relation between knower and known, between pour-soi and en-soi, according to Sartre, "can be expressed neither in terms of continuity nor in terms of discontinuity, for it is pure denied identity."<sup>(16)</sup> Ideally speaking, to attain knowledge is to know the thing as it is in itself. But this would only be possible if consciousness could identify itself with the thing. However, since consciousness would thereby disappear as such, the possibility of knowledge would be lost, since the knower would be submerged within the known. But, as we have seen, for Sartre consciousness cannot achieve identification with the thing-in-itself. It might, therefore, appear that for Sartre no knowledge of any description is possible. This is, however, not the case since, as we have also seen, consciousness is nothing if not a revealed-revelation of the being-in-itself. Indeed, it is the existence of consciousness which brings the world into existence, since, as we have pointed out previously, it is consciousness which introduces those distinctions which mark off the world as a distinct and differentiated entity from the merely undifferentiated given which is the en-soi. It therefore follows that, in structuring the en-soi, consciousness attains knowledge of the world, but in striving to identify with this knowledge, consciousness only succeeds in re-establishing the distinction between itself and the world. Paradoxically the very failure of consciousness to achieve identification with the world

makes knowledge/...

makes knowledge possible because it guarantees the continued presence of the knower (consciousness) on the one hand, and the known (the world) on the other. Since consciousness is always consciousness of something, there is no question of consciousness not reaching the world. Knowledge is thus a type of relation between consciousness and the thing, between pour-soi and en-soi. The nature of the relationship remains to be elucidated.

It follows that if the pour-soi's presence to the en-soi is the necessary condition of knowledge, the pour-soi as the dynamic principle, the dialectical unity as we called it, must be constitutive of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi, and hence of knowledge. Knowledge, Sartre claims, is "the very being of the for-itself in so far as this is presence to - ; that is, in so far as the for-itself has to be its being by making itself not to be a certain being to which it is present."<sup>(17)</sup> In knowledge, consciousness, which is absolute nothingness, makes itself present to a particular object which it is not, thereby becoming a particular qualified nothingness. The presence of consciousness to the object causes the object to become present to consciousness and to stand out against the nothingness of consciousness. Knowing and being known constitute one of the fundamental relations between the en-soi and the pour-soi, and this bond is only possible because of the nothingness at the centre of the pour-soi. Knowledge entails that the object known is held at a distance from the person knowing it. This distance at which the object is held is the gap

of nothingness/...

of nothingness at the heart of the pour-soi. Thus human knowledge is the presence of consciousness or non-being to that which it is not, that is, the world.

It seems that Sartre's dualistic conception of man (pour-soi) and world (en-soi) and his theory of nothingness provide a convenient framework for making knowledge possible. One must, however, remember that for Sartre

Not all consciousness is knowledge (there are states of affective consciousness, for example), but all knowing consciousness can be knowledge only of its object.<sup>(18)</sup>

One can hardly quarrel with the latter part of this formulation, for it seems incontestable that a knowing consciousness can be knowledge of its object since, otherwise it would be a consciousness ignorant of itself, which Sartre rightly ridicules as absurd. However, it does not seem clear why affective consciousness ought not to be considered epistemological, especially in view of Sartre's statements to the effect that, in certain affective experiences, knowledge of various significant aspects of the world is revealed. For example, Sartre believes that in nausea one apprehends one's body as it is in its sheer given contingent existence.<sup>(19)</sup> We think that Sartre is perhaps right in refusing to consider affective consciousness epistemological, but we do not think that he is able to justify this position in terms of his

overall approach./...

overall approach. But if Sartre appears guilty of inconsistency or carelessness, to say the least, he is at the same time establishing the possibility of an entirely positive and productive epistemology. Let us consider further the epistemological implications of his position.

It is clear that Sartre's epistemological position rests upon Husserl's postulate of a self-sufficient phenomenology which enables him to gain entrance to a self-contained region wherein rigorous generalized findings can be made without reference to any actual causal order. In terms of Husserl's postulate, it is meaning itself which is uncovered through the phenomenological method, and this method of discovery provides Sartre, as we saw in our previous chapter, with a means of justifying and establishing his own ontological postulates. A question which may well have bothered the reader is how Sartre is able to arrive at his peculiar demarcation of the regions of being into l'être-pour-soi and l'être-en-soi. When we consider Sartre's reasons for this demarcation of the regions of being we discover a patent failure. It is not a question of whether Sartre's ontological proof is valid or not<sup>(20)</sup> but of how Sartre is able to make the claims which he does in fact make concerning the nature of the pour-soi and the en-soi. It is not that we should wish to condemn Sartre's distinction itself as unfounded, for we have seen how the need to establish the transphenomenality of the being of the phenomenon, the transphenomenality of the being of consciousness and the

transphenomenality of/...

transphenomenality of the being of nothingness were all required in order to justify the establishment of a sound phenomenological ontology. It is not however clear to us how Sartre can make the claims which he does in fact make concerning the nature of, for instance, the en-soi. What reasons we can discover depend upon a peculiar interpretation of the phenomenological method. It would appear that, with Sartre, phenomenological description of certain unique emotional attitudes takes the place of direct eidetic intuition of the transphenomenal being of the object.

Of course it must always be borne in mind that Sartre's ontological proof for the existence of the en-soi rests on negation. The pour-soi as the being whose sole raison d'être is to reveal the en-soi does so by negating itself and thereby affirming the en-soi. Upon the affirmation of the en-soi by the negating pour-soi depends the freedom of the pour-soi. This freedom of the pour-soi is inescapable because the pour-soi is not able<sup>not</sup> to affirm the en-soi, since its very existence is proof of the existence of the en-soi, while at the same time being an affirmation of itself as other than the en-soi. This twin function of the pour-soi, to reveal the en-soi through recognizing its own being as being other than the en-soi, is implicit in Sartre's ontological proof. Sartre's ontological proof does not merely attempt to show a priori that unless being possessed a self-subsistent independent existence there could be neither consciousness

nor being./...

nor being. It also attempts to show from an analysis of the nature of conscious being, that is, the pour-soi, that the en-soi not only exists, but does so in an epistemological sense by virtue of the fact of the existence of the pour-soi. It is because the pour-soi is compelled to be free that it is obliged to separate itself from that of which it is conscious. In so doing the pour-soi not merely affirms the en-soi, but structures it as well, thereby showing that from the epistemological point of view the ontological postulates of pour-soi and en-soi give rise to knowledge.

We agree with Sartre that philosophers and psychologists have often been guilty of ignoring the fact that perception is not a purely intellectual process, but that a large affective component also exists. In perception man not only direct his attention outwardly towards the world, but is also affected by what he observes. Through this affective experience sensations and moods are aroused in him which, Sartre believes, can present him with conclusive evidence for certain beliefs. For instance, he claims that experiences such as being looked at by another and an accompanying experience of shame clearly establishes the existence of the "Other"; or rather, it proves that the "Other" is at least as certain as myself. Whatever may be the affective appeal of this type of "proof" or justification, it seems to us that no matter how genuine and compelling a mood of this sort may be, it cannot be transformed into a philosophical first principle without passing certain tests. No reason is advanced by Sartre for making an unconditional

ontological generalization/...

ontological generalization out of this experience. He admits that the mood could not by itself establish his principle, but the relevant issue is whether it has any formally epistemological or ontological significance whatever. It seems to us that Sartre's phenomenological approach tends to make perception the model form of consciousness. Sartre then unjustifiably raises certain aspects of perceptual consciousness to a privileged position and interprets reality from this unwarranted perspective. This approach to perceptual consciousness is paralleled in Sartre by a corresponding elevation of the pour-soi to the level of categorical determinant of meaning. It seems to us (and in this respect we follow K. Hartmann) a quite arbitrary creation of Sartre that the pour-soi by itself should establish experience "by means of a subjective operation or negation rather than by means of presupposed categorical elements."<sup>(21)</sup> The danger in Sartre's construction lies in its failure to justify any material content, since it has to regard such content as a matter of empirical experience. Sartre decidedly gives the impression of merely being an ingenious realist who appears to have constructed a striking picture of the relationship between consciousness and its object, but who has actually merely reinstated the being of the object as it appears to empirical observation.

To be fair to Sartre we must acknowledge that he has made a valuable contribution to the problem of the role of perception in obtaining knowledge. He may not have resolved

the classical/...

the classical body-mind problem, but he has given the old problem a new dimension by pointing out that conscious mind and non-conscious body are each in its own way a unique source of knowledge, not only of the world but of the being which is in the world, namely, man. Man is an embodied conscious being, a pour-soi which is also linked to the world by his body, which in turn has a threefold aspect - it is that through which the pour-soi exists, it is that which is "utilized and known by the Other,"<sup>(22)</sup> and it is that which serves as the object of the Other's consciousness and which causes the pour-soi to be aware of itself as such an object of consciousness. These various aspects of the body reflect the perspectival character of human knowledge. For, as we have seen, Sartre denies that essential knowledge is possible. "All knowledge implies a viewpoint and commits itself from this viewpoint in time and in space."<sup>(23)</sup> Knowledge for the pour-soi is only possible because to be a pour-soi necessarily implies being conscious of the en-soi. But this consciousness is mediated by the body. It is in the act of perception that the pour-soi becomes aware not only of the world outside of itself but also of the body which it exists. Because this body is situated in space and in time it serves as a point of view as well as point of departure for the attainment of knowledge. In this way both perception and, consequently, knowledge are rendered perspectival.

It seems that, because the pour-soi is not an independent being, but merely a relation, a nexus attaching consciousness

to matter,/...

to matter, what the pour-soi discovers in its relation to the en-soi is the nature of its own being. This is, however, only partly true. The pour-soi grasps the en-soi immediately or pre-reflectively, but it also grasps itself reflectively. Knowledge of self is thus normally reflective while the direct apprehension of the world (en-soi) is pre-reflective. However, knowledge of self can also be directly pre-reflective in the case of certain experiences by which the self may become revealed to itself. For example, I obtain knowledge of myself as an object when the "Other" looks at me without having to reflect upon the nature of the encounter. On the other hand, the world can also become an object of reflective consciousness if the immediate pre-reflective consciousness of the world is taken as the object of a subsequent reflective consciousness. Knowledge in this more qualified sense implies a kind of consciousness about that which appears, which presupposes reflection. But although reflective consciousness is not immediate consciousness, it is still derived from the original experience of intuitive apprehension of the object of pre-reflective consciousness. Sartre, therefore, does not contradict his initial claim that all knowledge is intuitive. To know something is to have a pre-reflective knowledge of a relationship which, if subsequently made the object of reflective consciousness, <sup>becomes</sup> knowledge in a more fundamental sense. Pre-reflective knowledge can go no further than the dynamic relationship of existence, but reflective consciousness enables one to reflectively grasp this relationship and the project that/...

project that it is. Thus reflective consciousness is also a relation and a project. It is inseparably linked to pre-reflective consciousness, not as a separate and parasitic consciousness but as an integral structure of consciousness. There are thus not two types of knowledge, but merely different modes of grasping the object of knowledge.

Our presentation of Sartre's conception of knowledge now requires to be complemented by a consideration of the implications for his epistemology of his statement that man is compelled to freedom. What is evidently apparent from Sartre's view that man is not free to exercise his freedom but is obliged to do so, is that knowledge of self, knowledge of one's fellow-man and knowledge of the world in general is not something which can only be acquired through the exercise of special techniques or the execution of an elaborate methodology, but is quite simply something which man, in the nature of things, cannot avoid acquiring. Through his very being-in-the-world man attains knowledge, albeit in a somewhat limited sense. In the same sense in which man grasps something pre-reflectively, he knows that which he has grasped, although he may not be aware that he knows it. This knowledge which man attains is simply the necessary outcome of the fact that man as a conscious being, that is, as a pour-soi, has to be confronted with an en-soi, whether he wishes to be so confronted or not. In a more restricted sense, man may attain knowledge proper through the exercise of his reflective consciousness. The necessary and

sufficient condition/...

sufficient condition for the attainment of such knowledge is that man be conscious of himself possessing that knowledge, in other words, that he be reflectively aware of such knowledge, ("...the necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge of its object, is that it be consciousness of itself as being that knowledge"<sup>(24)</sup>). But even in this case man cannot avoid knowing something reflectively since, if he were to try to avoid reflecting upon that thing, he would merely be acknowledging implicitly that he understood only too well that which he sought to avoid reflecting upon. In so doing he would be affirming that which he desired to negate. This paradoxical feature of knowledge is possible because, while Sartre has posited the existence of two kinds of consciousness, reflective and pre-reflective, he has also insisted upon the complete translucency of consciousness. In his description of the phenomenon of bad faith Sartre compounds the above paradoxical considerations in order to show that consciousness is as he has described it, in other words, that it is free. Here we need not follow him. All we need to bear in mind is that, even reflectively, knowledge is not a question of choice but of necessity. One may choose not to know, but in so doing one is only acknowledging that one does, in fact, know. Knowledge, therefore, seems to be all pervasive.

Despite these consequences Sartre has not reduced the concept of knowledge to vacuity, as may possibly have been thought.

Although there/...

Although there is no place for an unknowable thing-in-itself in his system, Sartre does not allow that knowledge in either of the above senses is complete. In fact, as we have seen, knowledge is always relative to the knower, and the knower, being a finite, situated, embodied being, can never attain essential knowledge (in Kant' or Husserl's sense of the word), but only obtains perspectives of perception, knowledge of the phenomenon, or rather, of the transphenomenality of the being of the phenomenon, that is, what we have been calling l'être-en-soi. But even this particular knowledge of en-soi is a precarious affair. It depends upon the knower (the pour-soi) ceaselessly maintaining and recreating himself as a pour-soi in the face of an impenetrable en-soi which it not only has to categorize and structure, but which it has to hold at a distance in order to prevent it engulfing the pour-soi. The closer the pour-soi approaches to knowledge of the en-soi the greater is the risk that the en-soi will appear to effect the merger with the pour-soi, which the pour-soi has so consistently been seeking, only for the merger to prove illusory and for the pour-soi to be reduced to an en-soi, a mere object instead of a subject. Thus knowledge, even in Sartre's sense of a word, is a somewhat hazardous occurrence; fraught with the kind of difficulties which man in his capacity as a pour-soi encounters in all aspects of his relationship with the world as en-soi.

We have pointed out that it is not possible for consciousness to reach a state of identification with the world,

although it/...

although it serves as a means of revealing the world - the pour-soi structures the en-soi, but is not able to achieve assimilation with the en-soi. An obvious question arises: Why should the pour-soi "seek" this type of assimilation? Would it not be sufficient to recognize the en-soi and recognize itself as other than the en-soi? Sartre's reason for so describing the pour-soi that it constantly seeks to lose itself in the en-soi is that the pour-soi recognizes itself as lacking a reason for being; it recognizes itself as de trop. When it perceives the en-soi (which is likewise de trop) it perceives its alter-ego, as it were. Everything which the pour-soi lacks is to be found in the en-soi. The pour-soi, therefore tries to "fulfil" itself by not merely revealing the en-soi, but by becoming like the en-soi.

Consciousness is in fact a project of founding itself; that is, of attaining to the dignity of the in-itself-for-itself or in-itself-as-self-cause. (25)

(Emphasis Sartre's)

We shall see that this project is doomed to failure because it is a contradictory enterprise. Nevertheless, its very failure makes knowledge of the en-soi possible, as we have seen. There is, however, another reason why the pour-soi is unable to achieve identification with the en-soi; one which further reveals the nature of the en-soi.

The en-soi, as has been repeatedly emphasized, is unstructured matter, it simply exists. The pour-soi as a revelation of

the en-soi/...

the en-soi encounters the en-soi as it is in itself. It then structures the en-soi and thereby makes a world possible. Now it is able to do so because it is other than the en-soi, and as long as it remains translucent consciousness, and hence pour-soi, it fulfills one of the conditions for making knowledge possible. However, it is constantly in danger of being engulfed by the en-soi, of becoming identified with the en-soi and losing its character as a pour-soi. The unstable equilibrium which exists between pour-soi and en-soi is expressed in terms of the category of the viscous. We have previously had occasion to mention this particular feature of the en-soi.<sup>(26)</sup> The viscous character of the en-soi reflects the peculiar manner of the existence of the en-soi. Just as a viscous substance resists all attempts to immobilize it and bring it under control, so the en-soi defies the attempt of the pour-soi to grasp it and render it completely accessible. At the same time the en-soi threatens to overwhelm the pour-soi in the same way in which a viscous substance is capable of engulfing a solid substance. Now, while the pour-soi is not in any sense a substance, its very lack of substance makes it vulnerable to the en-soi which is entirely undifferentiated substance. Sartre's metaphor of the viscous as representing the nature of the en-soi leads to the implication that the futile but necessary project of the pour-soi to grasp the en-soi is in danger of being reversed with the consequence that the en-soi threatens to overwhelm the pour-soi.

...there is a possibility that the In-  
itself might absorb the For-itself;

that is/...

that is, that a being might be constituted in a manner just the reverse of the "In-itself-For-itself", and that in this new being the In-itself would draw the For-itself into its contingency, into its undifferentiated exteriority, into its foundationless existence. (27)

Thus Sartre considers that the viscous represents the ever-present possibility of the loss of conscious existence through the reification of the object of consciousness, the en-soi. The converse of the perpetual striving of the pour-soi to reach en-soi and establish the existence of the ideal en-soi-pour-soi is the constant danger of the intended merger leading not to the creation of a conscious en-soi, but of an unconscious en-soi in which the pour-soi has lost its function and identity. This possibility is likewise ideal and never capable of realization. Sartre refers to it as "Anti-value" (28) because it is the obverse of the supreme value which we pursue, the en-soi-pour-soi. The significance of the viscous, then, is that it represents the impossibility of the union of the pour-soi and the en-soi while at the same time representing the possibility of a merger in which all trace of the pour-soi is expunged in the ideal but non-existent being en-soi-pour-soi which Sartre refers to as "God." In the face of this quality of the en-soi the reaction of the pour-soi is to experience its own existence as nauseous. Since for the pour-soi to be

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is to be in the world, but that is, to be faced with the en-soi which it is compelled to "exist", the pour-soi experiences its freedom as a compulsion, as a negative power which prevents it identifying with the en-soi which it is compelled to structure.

We saw earlier how the basic experience of the absurdity of existence and the alienation from the world determined Sartre's concept of man's relation to the world. It seems clear that man's estrangement from the world, his inability to really understand or to come to terms with reality, is responsible for the compulsive nature of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi. In fact, Sartre's view of knowledge, as will no doubt be apparent from the foregoing, depends upon the nature of his concept of reality and hence of freedom, for it cannot be doubted that, in the light of our examination of Sartre's epistemology, Sartre's view of the concept of freedom itself is dependent upon the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi. The antithetical nature of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi is suggested by the fact that man both seeks to become like the en-soi, albeit a conscious en-soi (a contradictory state of affairs according to Sartre), and is fearful of becoming mere en-soi. Looking at this from the epistemological point of view, man is both confronted with an en-soi, which he is compelled to structure, and is faced by an en-soi which resists ultimate comprehension. Likewise, it is man's existence as a pour-soi which obliges him to constantly create himself instead of reposing in a substantial being, and it is this compulsion to self-creation

that Sartre/...

that Sartre has termed freedom. Man is compelled to be free by the mere fact that consciousness as pure act can never stop acting. Epistemologically speaking the nothingness of the pour-soi, its lack of determinate structure, raises the problem of the principle of individuation. In other words, Sartre faces the problem of explaining the nature of our knowledge of the existence of individual entities. His answer, that it is the pour-soi which is the locus of all operations by which the world is revealed, is not satisfactory. If the pour-soi is supposed to organize the world and bestow meaning upon it rather in the manner of Kant's categories, it still remains a problem to explain how this can be done without presupposing categorial elements within the world itself. We shall return to this problem in our next chapter.

Our examination of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi in the light of Sartre's statement that man is compelled to freedom has shown that the distinction between the pour-soi and the en-soi forms the basis of Sartre's epistemological position that knowledge is a form of relationship between pour-soi and en-soi. We have seen what form this epistemological relationship takes. Further considerations have led to the conclusion that by far the greater burden of the epistemological relation devolves upon the pour-soi. On the other hand, the en-soi serves both as the object of knowledge and as a limiting factor in the attainment of absolute knowledge. Sartre's conception of the phenomenon as the relative-absolute points out the

similarities as/...

similarities as well as the differences between his own conception and that of Kant. Knowledge is a built-in aspect of Sartre's concept of the phenomenon which holds, in effect, that there can be nothing that appears without there being something that it appears to, and there can be nothing that is appeared to, without there being something that appears to it. Since comprehension of the phenomenon or "affirmative negation" of the en-soi is the necessary condition for the possibility of knowledge, it follows that not only is the presence of the en-soi to the pour-soi a necessary condition of knowledge, but also that the presence of the pour-soi to the en-soi is a necessary condition of knowledge. Thus by establishing the necessity for the existence of both knower and known and by affirming the primacy of being over knowing, Sartre has succeeded in founding a positive epistemology within the confines of his distinction between pour-soi and en-soi.

B. FROM THE ONTOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

Our discussion of the epistemological implications of Sartre's ontological dichotomy has shed light on his concept of freedom. We have seen that in so far as the pour-soi is free it is also conscious; therefore it is a necessary condition for knowledge. But knowledge itself is only one aspect of the relationship between en-soi and pour-soi. Epistemology points beyond itself to the ontological basis upon which it always rests. As an epistemological description of the relationship between en-soi and pour-soi Sartre's concept of freedom possesses only limited value. Yet without

this value/...

this value the ontological relationship between en-soi and pour-soi would lack direction, en-soi and pour-soi would have appeared as postulates devoid of epistemological value. Because of the epistemological character of their relation to each other much more can be expected of the ontological relationship between en-soi and pour-soi. We shall be entitled to expect that the concept of freedom formulated by Sartre will be capable of revealing an ontological relationship commensurate with the epistemological implications which have been revealed. In this we shall not be disappointed.

Sartre's statement that man is compelled to freedom is closely linked to his formulation that in man existence precedes essence. The exact nature of the relationship between these two key propositions may not be immediately apparent. We shall endeavour to discover what the relationship is. It has frequently been pointed out that Sartre believes that man chooses his own character through his response to the situation in which he finds himself. This is what was termed "self-creation". Moreover, this type of self-creation, as will no doubt be generally acknowledged, is only possible if man does not possess a given a priori essential nature, in Sartre's words, if "existence precedes essence". But now if existence precedes essence, man constantly begins his actions anew since there can be no definitive given standards by which to regulate his life. All has to be assumed and either constantly affirmed anew

or rejected, /...

or rejected, as the case may be. It also follows that man's lack of essence, or "nothingness", obliges him to create himself. He cannot choose not to do so, since even a choice of this nature is still a choice of the relevant kind for which he is responsible. Thus not only do men choose themselves in their actions, they are compelled to do so. Hence, Sartre's statement, man is compelled to freedom, is seen to be a logical development of his basic formula that "existence precedes essence". We do not hereby wish to imply that any strictly logical relationship exists between the two statements; merely that the one further extends and elaborates ideas contained in the other.

Man's compulsion to freedom, then, arises from his existence as a being whose meaning depends entirely upon his own present and future conduct and the attitude which he adopts toward the various situations in which he finds himself. Freedom cannot emerge except against a background of unchosen elements. But, as we have seen, these elements do not restrict our freedom; we are totally free in the manner in which we experience these elements. Thus, while it is certainly true that we cannot choose entirely what we are or who our parents were, or how strong we are, it is equally true that our freedom to choose ourselves is limitless. This is so since Sartre has defined freedom in terms of facticity - what I can choose is my reaction to the fact that I am compelled to freedom, in other words, towards my facticity. Sartre, accordingly, is able to maintain

paradoxically that/...

paradoxically that "freedom can be truly free only by constituting facticity as its own restriction." (29)

But freedom is not thereby able to avoid the obligation to be free, since whatever one does creates meaning. The freedom to give meaning to the world is also thereby an obligation to do so. Man is compelled to freedom because he is unable to exist except as a being whose existence precedes his essence. Hence to be free is to be compelled to be free.

It seems that when Sartre claims that man is compelled to freedom he comes very close to giving what is traditionally referred to as a description of man's nature, of man's essence "prior to his existence," and also of categorical a priori values and norms. Sartre would not only appear to be ascribing to men an altogether original specific a priori inescapable freedom, but to be postulating norms in terms of which this freedom must be defended and given expression in humanity. It, therefore, seems that Sartre is contradicting in practice what he posits in theory. We feel that while Sartre may not, without some degree of justification, feel irritated by this type of criticism, there are serious difficulties, not to say antinomies, in his position. Where the criticism appears to us to point to an undeniable truth is in the inability of a philosopher to devise any type of doctrine, be it ontological, metaphysical or epistemological, without presupposing certain criteria in accordance with which the various constitutive elements

of the/...

of the doctrine are able to function harmoniously. The very success of his ontology necessitates the adherence to certain implicit a priori criteria. In so far as Sartre then makes his ontological pronouncements concerning how, for instance, freedom is to be realized in man, he cannot avoid constituting an a priori essence. On the other hand, Sartre might claim that he had so circumscribed his descriptions of man that what he was attributing to that creature was not a nature but a "metaphysical condition."<sup>(30)</sup> He might argue that the true humanity of men lies in their freedom. He might also feel that his notion of facticity was being misconstrued if it were thought that the attribution of freedom to man constituted a nature. The question <sup>then arises</sup> as to whether Sartre's notion of facticity is able to so alter our normal understanding of given characteristics, attributes, etc., as to justify his position that man's compulsion to freedom, or in other words, the facticity of his freedom, does not constitute a character or essence.

By subsuming descriptions of the various given aspects of the human being under the general term "facticity", Sartre has attempted to devise a means of safeguarding human freedom through the creation of a new concept of freedom circumscribed by the notion of facticity. What requires examination is whether the notion of facticity can justifiably account for our experience of what it is we think we share with our fellow-man and which we tend to think

constitutes an/...

constitutes an essential part of our humanity while at the same time not thereby merely re-describing the notion of an a priori essence which Sartre has consistently opposed. Let us take the statement "All men are mortal". The word "mortal" is a predicate which describes a quality which is shared among all members of the class men. As such it could be said that men are essentially mortal beings; that being mortal constitutes their a priori essence. But this type of a priori essence is a fixed, static type of quality entirely without possibility. Naturally, no one knows when this fact of being mortal will actually realize itself in his own being, or in other words, when he will die. Hence, being mortal in itself tells one very little about what it is to be a man except that at some time living human existence will cease. The same could apply mutatis mutandis to other descriptions of given shareable characteristics. If this is indeed what Sartre wishes to convey by his concept of facticity we can conclude that he has not reinstated the concept of an a priori essence to any significant extent. He is not covertly re-introducing the notion of a priori essence because man is not determined by his facticity and cannot derive his existence from it. Although he has to forge an essence out of his facticity, it is his freedom which serves as the ground of his essence. Sartre's argument is basically that while a causal relationship may well appear to exist between the past events and circumstances of a person's life and his future behaviour, this behaviour is only possible because the individual has

experienced the/...

experienced the relationship as causal as such. "In order to be a cause, the cause must be experienced as such."<sup>(31)</sup> In Sartre's view one confers upon the cause its efficacy by deciding what will serve as a cause for what. But if freedom is introduced in this way into the cause-effect relationship, would it not appear that this type of freedom amounts merely to the recognition of necessity? Can this freedom alter that which is causally necessitated? Sartre believes that it can do just this, since it is only by virtue of this freedom that any relationship is established between past, present and future. He claims that

Under no circumstances can the past in any way by itself produce an act; that is, the positing of an end which turns back upon itself so as to illuminate it.<sup>(32)</sup>

Of course, his argument depends upon his view that all actions are on principle intentional, and a convinced determinist would deny that in that sense men acted at all. Nevertheless, it seems to be undeniable that, in view of his theory of the nature of the action of consciousness upon matter, Sartre may have at least a prima facie plausible case. According to Sartre, things have causes and effects, but however closely these causes and effects attend upon that which consciousness has set itself at a distance from, they cannot reach consciousness itself. In consciousness, then, man sets himself outside the network of causal dependencies in the world, by the same token as he sets himself outside/...

himself outside the things of the world. He is able to do so because, Sartre argues, neither the nihilating judgement of the present as lacking something, nor the projection of the not yet existent situation, is part of the chain of the causal series; since the recognition of lacks and the projection of an ideal are negative effects in no way deducible from positive causes and, therefore, free. Nihilating or free acts proceed from consciousness because consciousness is ontologically nothing but a nihilation of being. It is precisely as this ontological nihilation that consciousness is free. Fundamental freedom and consciousness are thus ultimately indistinguishable, for they are equally a being free of being. Consciousness breaks the causal chain in a special sense and it achieves this only because it is itself not something substantial, not something which can be held fast as a link in a chain. According to Sartre, man secretes or separates out a nothingness, or more correctly, something nihilated, which isolates him from all else. As we have seen, freedom is the "name of this possibility which human reality has to secrete a nothingness which isolates it."<sup>(33)</sup> When Sartre speaks of man as by nature free, he is referring to his ontological view of man as such as free from the causal determinations of the world of being. Necessary causal relations hold only among beings. Man, insofar as he is non-being (and this fundamentally refers to man as consciousness) is not therefore totally/...

therefore totally bound and determined by being, no matter what the situation in which he finds himself. Thus because of the nihilating character of human consciousness, man is free, and because man is free, he can constitute causes as such.

Sartre's argument for freedom thus rests upon the theory that human being is basically conscious being, and, as such, a non-being and therefore a continuous escape from being.

Freedom is precisely the being which makes itself a lack of being<sup>(34)</sup>... freedom is really synonymous with lack. Freedom is the concrete mode of being of the lack of being.<sup>(35)</sup>

Because human reality can stay out of the causal chain of being and can escape from being, it is inescapably free. As W. Desan says

Human reality is free because it is 'not what is is,' because it is not massive Being-in-itself, because it is "For-itself."<sup>(36)</sup>

Man's freedom consists in "the permanent possibility of dissociating himself from the causal series which constitutes being and which can produce only being".

Moreover, Sartre's argument that man is not free not to be

free because/...

free because he would then remove the basis for his continued freedom and make it a contingent fact that he is free, rather than a necessary condition of being free in the first place, depends upon the notion of a contingent freedom reducing to absurdity. It would do so if Sartre were correct that being free were to be understood as a choice of itself as freedom. But freedom need not be understood as choice of itself but simply as maintaining its existence in certain circumstances and causing it to lapse in other circumstances. However, even the fact of abdicating one's freedom would be a failure if consciousness were as Sartre claims it is, that is, translucent. We can, therefore, conclude that Sartre has a plausible prima facie case for his claim that man is not free not to be free. "Man can not be sometimes slave and sometimes free, he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all."<sup>(38)</sup>

Considered from the ontological point of view, the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi is one in which each division of Being constitutes an indispensable ontological entity. It is no more possible for the en-soi to detach itself ontologically from the pour-soi than for the pour-soi to detach itself ontologically from the en-soi. We have already seen that there could be no pour-soi without an en-soi and that there could be no en-soi without a pour-soi. It must, however, be clearly understood that although there could be no en-soi without a pour-soi this is not to be understood in the sense in which the en-soi would require the pour-soi

to exist/...

to exist, for we have already seen that this is not so. The en-soi is a fully autonomous being, in fact, according to Sartre, there is a "kind of ontological priority of the in-itself over the for-itself."<sup>(39)</sup> It was this kind of priority of the in-itself that prompted Sartre, a propos epistemological considerations, to seek to establish the primacy of being vis-à-vis knowledge. This is the basis of his claim that "the ontological problem of knowledge is resolved by the affirmation of the ontological primacy of the in-itself over the for-itself."<sup>(40)</sup> The sense in which there could be no en-soi without a pour-soi is one in which the en-soi already acquires determinate structure in the form of a world with its various recognizable features. In other words, the en-soi is relative to the pour-soi not as being but as object of knowledge.

From the ontological point of view, the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi is one in which the pour-soi in its being as a being which is not what it is and is what it is not is constantly in question as to the nature of its being. Because of its paradoxical status as a being whose being is in question in so far as its being implies the existence of a being which is other than itself, the pour-soi is ontologically compelled to exist beyond itself and to reveal the existence of the being which is other than itself, that is, the en-soi. The freedom to which the pour-soi is condemned is the freedom to recreate itself as a being which is constantly in the process of fashioning an essence which is then itself surpassed by the very freedom to invent

one's own essence. The pour-soi is, therefore, compelled to make use of its freedom. Sartre himself equates the freedom of the pour-soi with its function as a nihilation of the en-soi. An extended quotation may illuminate our discussion.

For the for-itself to be is to nihilate the in-itself which it is. Under these conditions freedom can be nothing other than this nihilation. It is through this that the for-itself is always something other than what can be said of it. For in the final analysis the For-itself is the one which escapes this very denomination, the one which is already beyond the name which is given to it, beyond the property which is recognized in it. To say that the for-itself has to be what it is, to say that in it existence precedes and conditions essence or inversely, according to Hegel, that for it "Wesen ist was gewesen ist" - all this is to say one and the same thing: to be aware that man is free... I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free. To the extent that the

for-itself wishes/...

for-itself wishes to hide its own nothingness from itself, and to incorporate the in-itself as its true mode of being, it is also trying to hide its freedom from itself.<sup>(41)</sup>

(Emphasis Sartre's)

Clearly, then, to be free is to be compelled to be free, since even the vain attempt to conceal one's freedom from oneself as in bad faith merely testifies to the existence of the freedom to which we are condemned.

The obverse side to the nothingness of the pour-soi is the viscous character of the en-soi. The viscosity of the en-soi (world) prevents the pour-soi from achieving the desired identification with the en-soi because it represents the individual particularity of the en-soi, which resists categorization and which, therefore, prevents the pour-soi from obtaining a foothold in the en-soi. As a result man as a pour-soi is condemned to perpetual freedom. At the same time the viscosity of the world also enables him to fulfill himself as himself, that is, as a pour-soi. Yet this self-fulfilment serves only to reveal his ontological impoverishment since his entire raison d'être is to seek en-soi-type existence. But this is an impossible quest since, for Sartre, man does not exist "for" anything; rather everything exists "for" him. Hence he can never derive his being (essence) from self-conceived absolutes such as science, metaphysics (ideology) or religion. These absolutes presuppose a union of essence and existence, but as such they

remain quite/...

remain quite other than human existence (pour-soi). In fact, according to Sartre, it is human existence which is responsible for constructing the absolutes as a response to its own finitude. Human existence for Sartre is a passion to achieve the absolute, to derive its existence from an a priori essence. But this is precisely what it is unable to do, since its existence precedes its essence. In response to this inescapable condition of being compelled to be free man constructs the concept of God. The futile attempt to achieve identification with the en-soi, by which means man seeks to derive his existence from his essence, finds its apotheosis in this concept of God. But Sartre's concept of God is that it is an attempt to reconcile pour-soi and en-soi - subject and object - and as such again reflects man's freedom as a pour-soi. Hence on Sartre's premises the attempt to derive one's existence from one's essence is doomed to failure since it merely confirms that we are unable to escape from our freedom, our condition of being a pour-soi whose existence precedes its essence.

The fact is, of course, that man is compelled to freedom because he is compelled to remain a pour-soi in constant pursuit of its own foundation. Not for him the comforting substantiality of the en-soi. Man is compelled to be free because, instead of being simply there as the things of the world, he has to create himself or lose all sense of selfhood. The quest of the pour-soi to complete itself by incorporating certain desired features of en-soi type existence such as,

for instance/...

for instance, identity with itself, is one of the permanent features of the antithetical relationship between pour-soi and en-soi. This relationship between pour-soi and en-soi is one in which the division in Being seeks to recover itself, so that, through the re-establishment of ontological unity, being will once again become the source of everything. However, this is an impossibility since Sartre has so defined the pour-soi as to make union with the en-soi inconceivable. As Sartre points out:

The For-itself is not nothingness in general but a particular privation; it constitutes itself as the privation of this being. Therefore we can have no business asking about the way in which the for-itself can be united with the in-itself since the for-itself is in no way an autonomous substance. (42)

The failure to constitute a unified concept of Being means that, from the metaphysical point of view, Sartre considers the constitution of Being or the Absolute from the world as a futile passion, as we have seen. Nevertheless, it is from a pre-ontological comprehension of the nature of this passion that Sartre is able to construct his own ontology. It, therefore, follows that, while Sartre may have appeared

to consider/...

to consider the Absolute to be transcendent, it had actually been transformed into a transcendental concept, that is, an idea in our mind. Sartre's willingness to concede that the Absolute is an impossible contradictory notion contrasts strangely with his confident ontological pronouncements. Yet, this would not be so surprising if one recognized that Sartre's ontology rests upon the transcendental character of his distinction between pour-soi and en-soi. It is because these aspects of Being have been converted into transcendental concepts, that is, because we have constructed them in our minds, that Sartre is able to sustain the impression of a transcendent Absolute which is somehow still accessible from the ontological point of view.

In actual fact, it seems justifiable to consider Sartre's absolute to be, not the impossible en-soi-pour-soi, but the nothingness at the heart of being. When Sartre constantly insists upon man's need to create himself out of nothing, when he claims that existence precedes essence, he is emphasizing the nothingness to which man is condemned. We agree that "Man's state of perpetual re-definition and flux is what Sartre means by 'nothingness', and to this nothingness man is condemned."<sup>(43)</sup> Since, according to Sartre's theory, man is this nothingness and constantly returns to this nothingness, it seems undeniable that man is condemned to be free because he is condemned to be perpetual inescapable nothingness of being. If the human being is a consciousness in constant transition, then the essence of that transition, the very reason for that transition, is the nothingness of the self. We think, then, that G.A. Rauche is correct in

his assessment that "Sartre's absolute... is the nothing. It is from the nothing that man creates himself in absolute freedom and into the nothing is he plunged again in whatever he undertakes for, to Sartre man is essentially nothing."<sup>(44)</sup> If Sartre's position is understood in this way the transcendental character of his construction will gradually become apparent.

It is clear that it is man's existence as a conscious being, the origin and support of the nothing, which accounts for the fact that, as Sartre sees it, man is compelled to freedom. Man's nature as a conscious being then is the basis for Sartre's claim that man is accordingly free by "ontological necessity", in other words, that he is not merely free in his being, but that his very being is freedom. Nor does it necessarily follow that this is an extravagant indefensible claim. Sartre is not claiming that freedom is absolute, but only that no a priori limits can ever be assigned to freedom.

Sartre's concept of freedom rests upon his equation of choice and consciousness.

One must be conscious in order to choose  
and one must choose in order to be conscious.  
Choice and consciousness are one and the  
same thing.<sup>(45)</sup>

The equation is possible for Sartre, whereas, for instance,

for commonsense/...

for commonsense it might appear somewhat problematic, because for Sartre the choice is made on a pre-reflective level of consciousness. The argument for existence of a pre-reflective consciousness of the world with the argument that everything exists as objects for consciousness rather than as constituents of consciousness enables Sartre to justify his correlation of choice and consciousness. Since, as we have already seen, man cannot fail to be conscious because his very condition as man is already pre-reflectively a revelation and consciousness of the world, it follows that man cannot but choose. It is on this basis that Sartre is able to argue that man is not able<sup>not</sup> to choose, for not to choose consciously (reflectively) is nevertheless to have already chosen pre-reflectively. In view of this, emotive words like "condemned" or "compelled" are indeed most accurately descriptive of Sartre's position.

Sartre clearly believes that in bringing to light what he takes to be the inescapable fact of man's freedom, he is presenting a new conception of man's relation to the world, or to being. In fact, one could well say that freedom is precisely the relation of man to the world. This Sartre expresses hence

To exist as the fact of freedom or to have to be a being in the midst of the world are one and the same thing, as this means that freedom is originally a relation to the given.<sup>(46)</sup> (Emphasis Sartre's)

The fact is that, for Sartre, freedom is constitutive of the very relation of man to the world, of the pour-soi to the en-soi. Just as the pour-soi cannot exist save as a relation with the en-soi, so freedom is definitive of this relationship between pour-soi and en-soi. This is why Sartre has so defined freedom that it only manifests itself in relation to and notwithstanding a particular situation. In his own words, the "paradox of freedom" lies in the fact that

...there is freedom only in a situation, and  
there is a situation only through freedom.  
Human reality everywhere encounters resistance  
and obstacles which it has not created, but  
these resistances and obstacles have meaning  
only in and through the free choice which  
human reality is. (Emphasis Sartre's)

In view of this Sartre's contention that freedom is not simply a power, but is rather the actual being of man, carries some weight. From the ontological point of view freedom is a being, or rather, lack of being or non-being. The relationship between freedom as a lack of being and the necessity to exist in this form, that is, to be compelled to freedom, can be seen in the following quotation:

Making itself a lack of being, human reality  
is on principle both the aspiration to be

(what it/...

(what it is not) and the incapacity of such being, since it is precisely as not being that it is. To anticipate a later formulation, 'we are condemned to be free.' We choose ourselves, we make ourselves be, as the unrealized and, by the very logic of our being unrealizable completion of ourselves. (48)

(Emphasis Grene's)

The notion of freedom is thus derived ontologically from the notion of non-being. Just as non-being exists only on the basis of being, freedom can be posited only in relation to a situation. The reality of our situation does not depend on our choice, but its meaning depends on our freedom and on the freedom of other men. In logical terms, the notion of meaning postulates the notion of freedom. This means that the future of the individual is open, and it is only in relation to the open future that the reality of man becomes a situation and hence meaningful. The homogeneity and interrelationship of the key concepts of Sartre's construction can thus clearly be seen.

Although there are certain similarities between Sartre's concept of freedom and the concept of freedom in ordinary usage<sup>(49)</sup> there are also radical differences which cannot be overlooked. We suggest that the fact that for Sartre man is compelled to freedom is not compatible with the notion of freedom as used in ordinary language. If this difference

is not/...

is not recognized, confusion and misunderstanding will be the result. Consider, for instance, the implications of Sartre's position that freedom is both absolute yet inescapable. The critics who pounce upon the apparent inconsistency of an absolute freedom and the facts that freedom cannot be successfully renounced nor the situation totally transformed impose upon Sartre the definition of freedom as free will or the ability to achieve a chosen goal. However, these do not constitute limitations, first of all because man is firmly implanted in his world and cannot be abstractly described as though he existed in a vacuum. Secondly, man's freedom arises only through his interaction with this world in terms of his projects. Thus Sartre's concept of freedom is not a perverse or self-contradictory notion, nor does it necessarily turn freedom into unfreedom. We consider the criticism of Herbert Marcuse to be especially misdirected. Basically, Marcuse considers Sartrean freedom to be pre-condition for true freedom and not freedom itself

Moreover, isolated from the specific historical context in which alone the 'transcendence' of the subject may become a pre-condition of freedom and hypostatized into the ontological form of the subject as such, this transcendental liberty becomes the very token of enslavement. (50)

On Marcuse's premises this might appear a valid criticism, but there is insufficient reason why one ought to adopt

Marcuse's premises rather than Sartre's. It seems to us that Marcuse has adopted a particular ethical or moral position from which he is able to pose as a presiding judge upon other philosophical systems. While we do not necessarily wish to reject the implicit moral criteria which Marcuse adopts, we feel that it is not necessary to adopt them in evaluating a position which claims to be basically ontological. We, therefore, fully endorse the view of Jean Wahl who makes the following reply to Marcuse:

I think that here one has to make a distinction between a kind of transcendental freedom which is the condition of the very being of man, according to Sartre, and an ethical freedom.<sup>(51)</sup>

Our remarks will be misunderstood if they are taken as an endorsement of Sartre's concept of freedom. All that we intend to say is that Sartre's concept of freedom ought to be understood and criticized on its own terms and not in terms of pre-conceived notions and criteria which are implicit but never explicitly revealed. It should not be thought that ontology provides Sartre with an escape hatch for making sweeping, implausible and unverifiable pronouncements. Nothing could be further from the truth. While it is true that, as an ontologist, Sartre is interested in analysing the primal given from which all analyses

ultimately derive,/...

ultimately derive, his own ontology can be verified through phenomenological analysis and appeal to experience. No philosopher could reasonably expect his readers to accept in blind faith the validity of his supposed insights into the nature of being. One need not only be satisfied with an internal investigation concerning the rigorousness and consistency of the argument. While it is true that as an ontologist Sartre is interested in analysing the primal given from which all analyses ultimately derive, his own ontology can be verified through phenomenological inspection and analysis. Likewise Sartre's transcendental arguments can be verified in the light of insights gained into the nature of experience from alternative sources. Sartre is, therefore, far from presenting an unverifiable argument.

Our examination of Sartre's concept of freedom from the ontological point of view has revealed both the similarities and the differences between Sartre's concept of freedom and the concept of freedom which is common in ordinary usage. Whereas the latter concept is based on a notion of absence of constraints, the former is based on an identification of freedom with consciousness. As a result of this identification Sartrean freedom is ontological, it is the very relation between the two types of being, the en-soi and the pour-soi. Thus freedom is constitutive of the very relation of man to the world. This relation is basically an antithetical one with no possibility of future synthesis being foreseen, since the concept of the Absolute (en-soi-pour-soi) is deemed to be

self-contradictory/...

self-contradictory. Moreover, this concept of the Absolute (God) again points to the freedom to which man is condemned, since it is by the exercise of his freedom that the concept of the Absolute is formed. From this we have drawn the significant conclusion that while Sartre may have appeared to consider the Absolute to be transcendent it has actually been transformed into a transcendental concept. This is the central concern of our dissertation, and we shall return to this question in the next chapter.

C. FROM THE ETHICAL POINT OF VIEW

The ethical implications of Sartre's concept of freedom follow directly upon the ontological position which we have outlined. Although it is true, as Sartre says, that "Ontology itself can not formulate ethical precepts,"<sup>(52)</sup> it remains equally true that all ethics implies a metaphysics and hence an ontology. As will soon become clear, the ethical dimension of Sartre's thought is in line with the fundamental ontological position hitherto presented.

From the ethical point of view Sartre's statement that man is compelled to freedom has significant consequences for the construction of a meaningful ethics. His denial of an a priori essential nature has the consequence that the values by which men actually live depend not upon divine fiat or metaphysical necessity, but on the free decisions of men themselves. It follows that if there is no a priori essence of man, all human values are created in the acts of choice.

If all values are the work of freedom and freedom is the emergence of that which cannot be accounted for in terms of what preceded it, there can, in the nature of the case, be no deduction of values from some given essence. Their justification lies in their origin, that is, in freedom. As de Beauvoir has written "Freedom is the source from which all significations and all values spring. It is the original condition of all justification of existence."<sup>(53)</sup> But if he freely determines values in this way and without any objective support, then man is wholly responsible for whatever values he decides upon. These consequences necessarily follow from Sartre's principle that "existence precedes essence," since if, in evaluating, man is not determined by any previously given essence or norm, by anything outside of himself, he is solely responsible for whatever judgement or evaluation he makes with no right of appeal to any tribunal. If a man is what he is through his choice and choice is a manifestation of freedom, the responsibility arising from freedom becomes obvious. It follows that to accept this responsibility is to choose freedom and to bear in mind that we are also choosing for other people, semi-consciously providing a model and proclaiming our own categorical imperative. As Sartre makes clear

Every one of our acts has, as its stake,  
the meaning of the world and man's place  
in the universe. Through each of them,

whether we/...

whether we wish it or not, we set up a scale of values which is universal. (54)

Ontologically speaking, the pour-soi is responsible for its being, since it chooses the meaning of its situation and itself as ground for itself in that situation. To the extent that the choices which the pour-soi makes affect others, the pour-soi chooses for them as well in its decisions and actions. Thus in so far as man is a pour-soi, he is responsible for the image of himself that he forms as well as being responsible for others as well. At the same time the pour-soi is not responsible for its position in the world, nor for the fact of its existence, both of which comes to it from outside of itself. Thus the dialectical nature of the relationship between the pour-soi and the en-soi reveals the pour-soi as a wholly contingent being, which founds wholly contingent values, but which necessarily cannot avoid doing so. The pour-soi constitutes the en-soi as the ground of value by creating its determinateness. The en-soi made determinate by the pour-soi is a proper ground for value since it admits of radical diversity and change. The pour-soi chooses a particular possibility as its end from the absolute undifferentiated ultimate possibility which is an aspect of its own being. In so doing, the chosen end becomes a thing of intrinsic value. Sartre claims "to choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen, for we are unable to choose the worse." (55)

These views/...

These views of Sartre may appear at first sight gratuitous and facile, but they should not be summarily dismissed without proper consideration. What Sartre wants to establish is the fact that every individual consciousness should, in principle, be considered as an end, not as a means to an end. The realization that each individual consciousness is an absolute, necessarily involves a sense of reciprocity. Each man needs the liberty of the others and, in a sense, he always desires it, even if he be a tyrant. In cases such as the latter, he simply fails to assume in good faith the consequences of such a desire. But in setting up each individual consciousness as an absolute, Sartre has sown the seeds for discord, strife and anarchy for, if each consciousness is compelled to freely create its own standards and values, there would seem to be no possible limit to the proliferation of values. However, Sartre's conception of reality does contain a certain built-in limiting factor which, while not perhaps permitting the overcoming of conflict, nevertheless, serves as a bridge between man and his fellow-man. What we have in mind is Sartre's notion of situation which we introduced in our previous chapter.

For Sartre, the situation acts as a frame within which and in relation to which man exercises his freedom. It follows that the situation can be changed or improved by the individual. The situation acts as a limiting factor, in so far as it must, per se, narrow down the number of avenues open for action. While, therefore, the situation

cannot determine/...

cannot determine an individual's behaviour, it does in a way enclose it, in the sense that any personal or social action must be undertaken in the context of that situation and be relevant to that situation, if it is to be effective. Thus although man is free, he must, nevertheless, take into account the situation in which his freedom is to be exercised. To choose a course of action which ignores the situation would be to act in "bad faith" (by which terms Sartre means the tendency to pretend to oneself that one is determined when one is actually free) and, while it might appear that Sartre has no answer to the person who wishes to seek this type of pretence he is quite justified in maintaining that "the attitude of strict consistency alone is that of good faith."<sup>(56)</sup> This is the basis of what is popularly referred to as Sartre's concept of "commitment" (engagement). Basically, Sartre's position is that when a man confers meaning and value upon a possibility by deciding to realize it, he is at the same time creating through his choice "an image of man such as he believes he ought to be."<sup>(57)</sup> This accounts for the great responsibility which each individual bears which, in turn explains the widespread tendency to lapse into bad faith. We have seen that all values derive from the fundamental freedom of man. For Sartre there are no unalterable structures of essences or values given prior to man's own existence. There are no changeless norms to which he can look for guidance in his conduct. However, it by no means follows that all a priori values ought to be rejected per se.

Other people/...

Other people have established meanings and values which are intended to help regulate the conduct of individuals in the community. However if the individual is to live up to his existence as a pour-soi, he must accept that values carry no inherent justification simply because they are part of the norms of his society. On the contrary, it depends entirely upon him whether these values are to be made his own values, or whether they are to be rejected. By adopting established values after recognizing that their justification depends wholly upon himself, man re-creates the values of his predecessors in good faith.

These views of Sartre have considerable consequences for man's relations with his fellow-man. This is not the place to examine Sartre's theory of what he calls the Other.<sup>(58)</sup> We shall have occasion to discuss this aspect in our examination of Sartre's attempt to answer the charge of solipism. Let us merely observe here that, for the individual pour-soi, the world consists not only in en-soi but also other pour-sois. Hence it follows that, specifically, the situation in which the pour-soi exercises its freedom includes other pour-sois as well. Thus, since the situation is given meaning through the choices of the pour-soi, these choices involve a grave responsibility, for they affect completely and profoundly the status of others. The relationship between one pour-soi and another is, however, construed by Sartre on the model of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi. On the other hand the pour-soi needs the Other in

so far/...

so far as it is only under the impact of the presence of the Other that the pour-soi knows itself as existing as a pour-soi. Yet as Sartre has skillfully shown, the "look" of the Other can transform the pour-soi into an en-soi. The fact of being seen changes the pour-soi into an en-soi in so far as the "look" of the Other is a judgement of the erstwhile pour-soi, not as it is in a process of becoming - for future possibilities cannot be known by the Other - but only in so far as the pour-soi is at the very moment of judgement. Thus the Other perpetuates the particular contingent moment of the evolution of the pour-soi and transforms the pour-soi into an en-soi. This comes about because, according to Sartre, it is through his look that the Other reveals himself as a pour-soi, a subject able to transcend itself and all given data toward its own ends. But if this is so, it follows, Sartre argues, that by his look the Other can change me from a free project into a determined thing, from a pour-soi into an en-soi. The relationship is thus antithetical in nature in so far as a harmonious relationship between pour-sois is not possible; yet each pour-soi must needs seek out relations with his fellow pour-sois. It is here that Sartre has been severely criticized on the grounds that his description of relations between men are one-sided and unrepresentative of reality as it is usually experienced. While fully endorsing such criticism, I think that one ought not to be surprised that Sartre should paint such a negative

picture of/...

picture of human relations. It is because the pour-soi is a nothingness that Sartre can make his claim that man is compelled to freedom because he is compelled to exist constantly beyond his essence, and, in this sense, to be a nothingness. Now, because Sartre denies that there exists a common universal essence, he must deny that there exist universally acceptable moral values. Such universally acceptable moral values would necessarily point to a common human nature by which they could be realized. But Sartre denies that values precede freedom. On the contrary, it is through freedom that values arise, and hence valuation is not applicable to freedom itself. It might, therefore, be justified to describe Sartre's position (with some of its implications) in the following way

Since there is no authority besides that of the individual, since there is no reference to the world and to the other man but only to himself (for the individual is his own norm and his own standard), man is free only in the fact of self-creation. He is thus forced to hold his own against the other man, and, in this sense, must engage himself if he desires to be something and not to be reduced to an object of the other man, thus ceasing to exist as a free subject.<sup>(59)</sup>

This, then, /...

This, then, is the predicament of man - "one must either transcend the Other or allow oneself to be transcended by him. The essence of the relations between consciousness is not the Mitsein; it is conflict."<sup>(60)</sup>

Sartre's ethical doctrine must be gleaned from an examination of certain of his works (most prominently Being and Nothingness and Existentialism is a Humanism), since the specific work on ethics which Sartre promised has never materialized. His doctrine can be seen to be based upon man's decision to live up resolutely to his existence as a pour-soi who is compelled to be free and hence to create his own values. He who recognizes his freedom as the source of all values and accepts the responsibility and anxiety arising from this knowledge, exists authentically. He who denies freedom and flees from it into bad faith under the pretext of a determinism which, he would have one believe, compels him, for instance, to be the type of person he generally is taken to be in the same way in which a stone may be heavy, exists inauthentically. Since Sartre has so defined the "situation" that it does not constitute a limit to the exercise of one's freedom, we think that he is quite justified in stating

If it is agreed that man may be defined as a being having freedom within the limits of a situation: then it is easy to see that the exercise of his freedom may be considered as authentic or inauthentic according to the choices made in the situation.<sup>(61)</sup>

But if/...

But if the proper utilization of one's freedom is deemed sufficient to constitute a basis for morality, one must not, therefore, mistake this freedom for a substantive value. Rather it is one's attitude toward this given ontological freedom which defines the one ethical value which Sartre has unequivocally espoused, namely authenticity. As Majorie Grene makes clear

for Sartre it is a peculiar attitude toward freedom in its relation to value that defines authentic existence... authenticity is a kind of honesty or a kind of courage; the authentic individual faces something which the unauthentic individual is afraid to face. (62)

What this is, basically, is the total absence of an a priori essence and the corresponding necessity to create one's own character out of this nothingness. The injunction to live authentically is simply the requirement that one acts in good faith, where good faith is recognition of one's freedom as the basis of one's life, actions and values. Sartre somewhat dramatically concludes

Authenticity, it is obvious, consists of having a lucid and truthful awareness of the situation, in bearing the responsibilities and risks which the situation demands, in taking it upon oneself with

pride or humility, sometimes with horror and hatred.<sup>(63)</sup>

The fundamental criticism which has been levelled at Sartre is his failure to explain how authentic existence is to be secured in view of the all-pervasiveness of bad faith. His cryptic hints at a "radical conversion"<sup>(64)</sup> are singularly unhelpful in this respect. It may well be that, given the nature of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi and the fact that for Sartre the pour-autrui (being-for-others) does not constitute a separate ontological structure, together with the fact that the pour-autrui cannot be derived from the pour-soi,<sup>(65)</sup> a Sartrean ethics based upon the standpoint of Being and Nothingness would be impossible to construct. It would seem that a possible ethics would require at least a modification of the pour-soi-en-soi dichotomy for, given the nature of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi, a harmonious relationship between man and world, probably an indispensable factor in the construction of a meaningful ethical system, does not seem conceivable. Moreover, when it comes down to trying to uncover the grounds for accepting Sartre's "existential virtue" of authenticity, we find an obvious failure. The critics who have accused Sartre of virtually constructing an ethical system parasitic upon existing systems appear to be correct. Yet, after closer consideration, it might be argued that this was not so serious in view of the grave difficulty in constructing, or even attempting to

construct, an/...

construct, an ethical system which bore no relation to already existing codes. Nor is this very surprising for these moral codes are, after all, related to the facts which constitute us as human beings. Sartre might very well reply to his critics that the attempt to develop a radical criticism of existing moral systems makes it extremely difficult to institute a new morality of his own, for to do so might be to deny the very facts on which his whole work is based. He might argue, for instance, that if there were any reasons which always justified an action, it would be possible to be both immoral and moral. Nevertheless, while this line of argument has a certain plausibility, it cannot entirely justify Sartre's ethical position.

Sartre's basic failure seems to us to lie in his inability to offer sufficient reasons for his contention that freedom as he sees it is the source of all values, and also for the acceptance of authenticity as the primary, if not sole, virtue. His main reason for the first contention is that "once a man has seen that values depend upon himself in that state of foresakeness he can will only one thing, and that is freedom as the foundation of all values."<sup>(66)</sup> But, of course, Sartre has not shown that a man ought to see that values depend entirely upon himself. This would only be so if in man "existence precedes essence", and Sartre has adopted this as his terminus a quo rather than his terminus ad quem. As for the second contention, that is, that authenticity should be adopted as the principal virtue,

this is/...

this is merely a question of definition. Since Sartre has defined consciousness as freedom and freedom is the source of all values, it necessarily follows that a lucid recognition of one's freedom is the condition for any subsequent correct employment of one's freedom. Again Sartre's probable answer to the charge that freedom and authenticity are insufficient in themselves to constitute a morality might well be that morality is the very stuff out of which human life is made. This amounts to stating that to exist is to be obliged or compelled to be free. What awaits clarification is the way in which we choose to be free, and, in the final analysis, there are but two ways - to use our freedom to further freedom or to use our freedom to hinder freedom. A course of action is approved by Sartre if it makes for the realization of freedom, and disapproved if it destroys it. But if Sartre is to do this, he has to be able to adopt a value independent of freedom by which he is able to judge the exercise of freedom in one case as right and in another as wrong. Here, then, is where Sartre has recourse to the idea of authenticity. But in doing so, Sartre has merely re-instated a kind of honesty as the criterion for making moral judgements. It is doubtful whether this is a sufficient criterion for the kind of undertaking which Sartre apparently envisages. Authenticity cannot provide the grounds for condemning one who, in full recognition of his freedom, commits himself to evil. It does not follow that, because I recognize that man is a free being, I cannot oppose the freedom of others. Consider, moreover, that if my relations

with others/...

with others are rooted in conflict, and that the very existence of others limits my freedom, it would hardly seem to make much sense to preserve this freedom and thereby to perpetuate the conflict. Conversely, if Sartre's undertaking is not the construction of a system of ethics, it is still doubtful whether the adoption of the criterion of authenticity is itself sufficient for the possibility of choosing between existing ethical systems.

Generally speaking, Sartre's claim that man is compelled to freedom rests upon a confusion between the conditions which are necessary for a man to exist at all, and the conditions which are necessary for a man to be a particular type of being. It seems to us that Sartre is guilty of confusing the conditions which are logically necessary with conditions which are causally effective and introduces the notion of normative or moral necessity without adequate justification. Basically, he tends to speak as if the existence of an entity or state of affairs, X, follows from the definition of X without showing how X is necessitated. By speaking as if necessary conditions are sufficient, Sartre creates the impression, for example, that, since freedom is a necessary condition for choice, it is a sufficient condition as well. Sartre pushes the meaning of the word "choice" to its limit. His claim that every action is on principle intentional together with his insistence that existence precedes essence has thus had the effect that man, accordingly chooses himself by means of his actions. Every action is not only a manifestation of choice, but a

re-affirmation of/...

re-affirmation of it as well. Hence because choice is inescapable, man is compelled to freedom. Yet this argument only retains a semblance of plausibility if it is indeed true that reality is as Sartre has described it and if, in man, existence precedes essence. But it by no means follows that the ability to choose is a sufficient condition for the actualization of choice. The sense in which choice is spoken of as the completion of an event must be separated from the sense in which choice is a factor which contributes to that completion. This would only be true if one were able to equate choice with consciousness and consciousness with freedom. On Sartre's premises this equation would in fact be legitimate, but it does not appear that Sartre has shown that there is a necessary connection between the terms. We shall return to this question in our next chapter in the course of the examination of the transcendental concept of nothingness.

From the ethical point of view man's compulsion to freedom points to a dual sense of freedom. Freedom as an ontological fact of the existence of man is the necessary condition for the construction of any morality or ethical system whatsoever. At the same time man's condition as a free being constrains him to further liberate himself in the sense that he is obliged to live up to his existence as a freedom that chooses. Hence Sartre asserts paradoxically that "If man is not originally free, but determined once and for all, one cannot even conceive what his liberation could be".<sup>(67)</sup> Clearly, man's "liberation" is a future state

to be/....

to be achieved as a result of the proper use of fundamental-ontological freedom. For Sartre, then, man has to be posited as a free being at the start, otherwise we can stop talking about ethics or morality. But be that as it may, we have seen that, while freedom may be necessary for ethics and morality, Sartre has not shown that it is sufficient.

It is hard to see that Sartre's ethical doctrine amounts to more than an arbitrary decision on the part of man to maintain his freedom in one way or another. "For since he represents his own law and creates his own norms, he is neither good nor bad, but simply nothing and, therefore free from any norms but his own."<sup>(68)</sup> The complete absence of objective moral standards whereby to regulate one's conduct places the entire ethical project in jeopardy. As another critic has aptly remarked "The danger is that all we are given is a do-it-yourself kit, not a morality."<sup>(69)</sup> And this follows from Sartre's insistence that man is compelled to be nothing, to continually create himself from nothing and, in this sense, to be compelled to freedom. But if moral decision is reduced to the level of mere arbitrary decision, notwithstanding the great responsibility attendant upon man, the choice could hardly guarantee the creation of moral standards in any but an arbitrary sense of the word. It, therefore, seems indisputable that

Sartre's total/...

Sartre's total rejection of any norm and his insistence that man is the creator of his own norm might easily bring about chaos and anarchy. Such an attitude might easily lead to murder and ruthless oppression by those who happen to have the whiphand.<sup>(70)</sup>

It, therefore, seems to us absolutely necessary to call in question Sartre's constitution of freedom as the sole standard. In our critical observations we shall consider the ethical question in a more critical way.

Our examination of the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi in the light of Sartre's statement: "man is compelled to freedom" has shown that the pour-soi is a being which is compelled (or condemned) to be free because it is unable to achieve union with the en-soi. On the contrary, it is constantly repulsed by the en-soi, as it were, since it is unable to make any impression on the en-soi. Nevertheless, the pour-soi cannot ignore the en-soi since its very existence depends upon that of the en-soi. Despite the necessity to exist as a perpetual but fruitless pursuit of the en-soi, the pour-soi is nevertheless responsible for uncovering knowledge of the world as such. Furthermore, it is responsible for establishing all moral values and standards and indeed the very possibility of an ethical system depends

upon the/...

upon the pour-soi in so far as the pour-soi is free. The very lack of determinant power on the part of the en-soi requires the pour-soi to be free; for it is totally responsible for all distinctions and categories, epistemological, metaphysical or ethical.

From the epistemological point of view the resistance and opacity of the en-soi is the basic material out of which the world (or structured en-soi) comes to yield its secrets in the act of intuition (in Sartre's sense of the word). Paradoxically, the various ramifications of the pour-soi-en-soi distinction are made to serve as the ground of knowledge. For instance, as we have seen, knowledge of self is vouchsafed by the recognition of oneself as a possible en-soi in the face of the "look" of the Other, which itself reveals him as a pour-soi and not a mere en-soi. In other words, man only comes to know himself in terms of his experience of the Other because man's dual nature as both a pour-soi and an en-soi cannot be grasped except in the basic experience of being seen.

From the ontological point of view man's existence as a pour-soi is a contingent fact, but one which must necessarily take certain shape. The desire of the pour-soi to fuse with the en-soi has certain similarities with the mystic's desire to unite with the One. But whereas in mysticism this type of fusion points to a fruitful search for truth, Sartre can only hold out the union of pour-soi and en-soi

as a/...

as a "useless passion".<sup>(71)</sup> The true ground of the world in Sartre's philosophy is the failure of consciousness to unite with Being, with pour-soi to identify with en-soi. This alienation of man from the world then becomes the primal experience, or fact, from which Sartre further evolves his ontological position. Man's attempt to close the gap between the pour-soi and the en-soi has the reverse effect of widening the gulf which separates man from the world, for the closer he approximates the en-soi, the more clearly he realizes that final union is impossible. It follows that man would do better to accept his condition as a pour-soi condemned to continual failure to reach the state of absolute existence (en-soi-pour-soi) and therefore compelled to freedom.

Considered from the ontological point of view, man's compulsion to freedom can be seen to arise out of the antithetical relationship between pour-soi and en-soi, since it is impossible for the pour-soi to become an en-soi and thereby renounce its freedom. Freedom is thus seen to be the outcome of the failure of being to found itself. The fact that the pour-soi is confronted with the en-soi makes freedom possible in so far as freedom is simply a measure of the capacity of the pour-soi to structure, or give meaning to the en-soi.

From the ethical point of view Sartre's statement that man is compelled to freedom has the consequence that man is unable to take refuge in given or prevailing norms or

standards, but/...

standards, but has constantly to refer to his own free judgement. Thereby man comes to recognize that all values depend entirely on his own freedom, and that he, as the source of values, is responsible for any ethical standard by which he makes his judgement. Since man cannot escape the necessity to create values, his freedom to do so becomes itself a value in the sense that he cannot avoid the necessity to choose. Hence Sartre claims that man does not choose to be free but is a freedom which chooses. Whether Sartre's concept of freedom represents a valid attempt to describe man's actual condition in the changing circumstances of life or whether, on the contrary it "represents the greatest unfreedom in terms of which any of man's action is justified"<sup>(72)</sup> is a question we intend to settle in our next chapter.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS ON SARTRE'S CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

Our examination of the relationship between en-soi and pour-soi as expressed in Sartre's early philosophy has been considerably extended both in depth and scope by a consideration of the epistemological, ontological and ethical implications of Sartre's concept of freedom. The concept of freedom which has emerged from our analysis of his model has been shown to be dependent upon the antithetical relationship between the en-soi and the pour-soi. We have seen that Sartre has so described the relationship between the two mutually exclusive regions of being that his concept of freedom serves as a defining link between them. It is because the pour-soi is paradoxically free in establishing its own existence, yet compelled to do so by structuring the en-soi, that freedom emerges as the abiding link connecting man and the world in Sartre's conception of reality. This freedom of the pour-soi, as we saw, is a compulsion to freedom, because the pour-soi is a nothingness which is aware of its own lack of being, and also aware that it is necessarily confronted by a being which is other than itself, that is, l'en-soi. It thus follows, as pointed out earlier, that freedom is constitutive of the actual relationship between en-soi and pour-soi. In this chapter we intend to show that, through his ontology, Sartre has constructed reality in terms of his own concept of freedom, that is,

in terms/...

in terms of his own conception of the relationship between en-soi and pour-soi, thereby by-passing reality in practice. It is further our intention to show that, in attempting to articulate a valid experience of the world under particular historical circumstances, Sartre has laid himself open to the charge that the theoretical postulates whereby he attempts to convey this experience constitute a self-constructed account of reality. The paradoxical result is that, whereas Sartre has attempted to achieve a breakthrough to reality by giving expression to a particular experience of the world, he has in effect become enmeshed in a self-constituted theoretical model of reality which fails to reflect its problematic nature. We believe that what, in fact, emerges from his enterprise is the consequence that Sartre's model is a self-constituted one which gives only a particular perspective of reality, a perspective conceived on the premises of the paradoxical relationship between pour-soi and en-soi.

A: FROM THE THEORETICAL POINT OF VIEW

(1) THE TRANSCENDENTAL CHARACTER OF SARTRE'S CONCEPT  
OF NOTHINGNESS - THEREFORE FREEDOM

Our contention that Sartre's conception of the relationship between en-soi and pour-soi is a rational construction and thus a theory among theories can be demonstrated by the recognition that embedded in it is a string of dichotomies

such as/....

such as being-nothingness, world - consciousness, object - subject, essence - existence, and necessity-contingency. These dichotomies are classic theoretical categories by which various aspects of reality have traditionally been comprehended. By subsuming one half of the dichotomies under the concept of en-soi and the other half under that of pour-soi, Sartre has tried to give the impression that the dichotomies as such are resolved. But by resting his entire world view upon the radical distinction between en-soi and pour-soi, Sartre has re-established a dualism which is as extreme as any of those which he has rejected. Moreover, his claim to have given a radically new interpretation to man's existence by switching his starting-point from essence to existence, from the world to consciousness, from object to subject, has had the paradoxical result that his real ground and sufficient reason of the world can be identified with nothingness. It is from this nothingness or negating quality of the world that Sartre is able to constitute the real ground of the world. In this way nothingness itself is revealed as a transcendental concept with which man is absorbed and with which he fuses. In fact, it is the antithetical relationship between pour-soi and en-soi which points to nothingness as a transcendental concept. Sartre, as we hope to show, clearly constructs his concept of nothingness in his own mind with the aid of the phenomenological method whereby he established the dichotomy en-soi and pour-soi in the first place.

We saw/...

We saw how his re-interpretation of the relationship between essence and existence led Sartre to a concept of freedom which permitted the acknowledgement of the entire presence of the world (the en-soi) to consciousness (the pour-soi) and yet enabled him to maintain that it was not only the right, but also the duty, of the pour-soi to distance and "nihilate" itself in respect of the world. This freedom of the pour-soi is possible because the pour-soi is its own nothingness.

...human reality is free to the exact extent that it has to be its own nothingness.<sup>(1)</sup>

As a nihilation of the en-soi, the pour-soi is never able to achieve union with the en-soi and thus it remains radically free from the en-soi. It is not, of course, able to exist independently of the en-soi, but it does constantly nihilate the en-soi, and thereby not only does it give a determinate structure to the en-soi, but it also fulfills its own essential function which is to be a nothingness of being.

For the for-itself, to be is to nihilate the in-itself which it is.<sup>(2)</sup>

This lack of being of the pour-soi is the condition of the determination of the meaning of the en-soi. But this is

precisely where/...

precisely where the transcendental character of the pour-soi, in so far as it is a revelation of the en-soi, is most apparent. As Sartre has categorically stated:

We know that there is not a for-itself on the one hand and a world on the other as two closed entities for which we must subsequently seek some explanation as to how they communicate. The for-itself is a relation to the world. The for-itself, by denying that it is being, makes there be a world. (3)

Then the paradoxical reality of the pour-soi lies in its revelation of being through being a nothingness of being. But if this is so, then Hartmann is fundamentally correct when he says that

Sartre's for-itself comes under the transcendental type of subject notion which is designed to establish experience by means of a subjective operation, or negation, rather than by means of pre-supposed categorial elements. (4)

We, too, hold that his conception of the pour-soi implies the presence in Sartre's thinking of unacknowledged constitutive processes. This is something we intend to demonstrate.

Sartre has/...

Sartre has argued, as we saw, that negation is a function of nothingness, and that nothingness as nihilation of the en-soi is the means whereby the world is revealed. What needs to be shown is that nothingness is transcendental, that it is a comprehended and self-constituted concept. That it is, is evident from Sartre's basic premise, namely, that "existence precedes essence." As a being which is still to become what it decides to be, man's essence is suspended in his freedom, as Sartre has said. How then is Sartre able to justify his description of existence in general, unless from a self-constituted viewpoint? It stands to reason that his basic premise is such a self-constituted viewpoint. The methodological constitution of the relationship between essence and existence reveals the self-constitution of nothingness as the guiding concept whereby consciousness is related to the world in the new way, which Sartre has conceived. It is in this way that the concept of nothingness is revealed as transcendental - it is through the self-constructed concept of nothingness that the world is constituted by Sartre, and it is through the constitution of the world by nothingness that Sartre reveals the character of both consciousness and the world. It follows that both nothingness and the world are actually transcendental in character, since their relation to each other is constituted in Sartre's mind. The capacity of mind to comprehend mind in its relation to the world is presupposed by Sartre's phenomenological method. Furthermore, just because it is a method, it is self-constituted.

It might/...

It might have been possible for Sartre to describe the world phenomenologically without "placing" nothingness within consciousness. Heidegger, for instance, "placed" nothingness in the world. But, as has been pointed out, "In opposition to Heidegger he [Sartre] transfers nothingness from the realm of the object to that of the subject, and [grafts] it on a philosophy of consciousness."<sup>(5)</sup>

It is hence justifiable to infer that in his attempt to justify the phenomenological concept of nothingness, Sartre "betrays the presence of an ulterior guiding thread pre-empting the desired result, the negativity of consciousness."<sup>(6)</sup>

In so doing, Sartre transcends the reality he is attempting to describe with the result that phenomenological description no longer reflects the actual experience of being-in-the-world. It is hardly to be expected that Sartre will be able to do justice to man's ever-changing experience of the world if phenomenological description is already pre-empted in the way suggested.

We have seen that the nihilation of the en-soi is the fundamental function of the pour-soi. It is in this nihilation that the pour-soi reveals its freedom.

Freedom is the escape from an engagement in being; it is the nihilation of a being which it is. (Emphasis Sartre's)<sup>(7)</sup>

As one critic has explained "Nihilation as a cleavage between my immediate psychic past and my present is the act

by which/...

by which I make myself as free."<sup>(8)</sup> This cleavage points to the future as the temporal realm in which freedom has to be exercised. It follows that, since the future is not yet in existence, it can be said to represent the non-existent. One could then say that the word "future" translates into temporal terms the notion of non-being. This leads to the implication that we are not free to cease to be free, since even if we were to believe that everything was determined, this would merely affirm our freedom, for it would reveal our free decision. This decision is always taken in the context of a specific situation which, as we saw, serves not as a limit to freedom, but rather as the condition of the realization of freedom. What does limit freedom is the existence of other people.

...my freedom... finds its limits also in  
the existence of the Other's freedom.<sup>(9)</sup>

The existence of other people limits freedom in so far as other people, too, have a future. It is not only the meaning of one's own present existence which depends on them, but also the meaning of one's future, of what one will be or do. It is precisely because other people too are transcendently free that they threaten one's very being as a free agent. What consequences Sartre will draw from this position will be elucidated in due course.

We have seen that freedom is the power of consciousness to "secrete" nothingness. It is this nothingness which

separates the/...

separates the pour-soi from its past and its future and, as such, enables the pour-soi to be free. Sartre specifically equates this nothingness with freedom.

Freedom in fact, as we have shown...

is strictly identical with nihilation.

The only being which can be called

free is the being which nihilates its

being... Freedom is precisely the being

which makes itself a lack of being.<sup>(10)</sup>

It follows that freedom is the condition that results from the nihilating power of consciousness. It is thus through nothingness in this sense that consciousness possesses the power to introduce meaning into the otherwise meaningless en-soi. Nothingness, and therefore freedom, becomes the transcendental condition for the possibility of meaning. Were it not for freedom, the en-soi would never emerge as a distinct "world" which, in turn, provides the locus for the meeting of the pour-soi and the en-soi. Freedom as the ground of the appearance of the phenomenal world is absolute in the sense that nothing can affect it or be the condition of that which is itself the condition of the appearance of the world. Through freedom the world of beings is revealed - it is through intuition that both en-soi and pour-soi are conceived, so that the world is transcendental in character. As Hartmann has argued, Sartre's model is "transcendental in character inasmuch as the subject in its structural differentiation is held responsible for the

disclosure of/...

disclosure of the world."<sup>(11)</sup> But, in addition to, and associated with, its revelatory function, freedom is able to transcend or to surpass not only pour-soi but also en-soi by projecting the pour-soi towards its possibilities. In this way man determines his own course of action by reference to an imagined future. Freedom is defined in terms of man's potentiality to accept or reject alternative course of action, to transcend conceptually any particular situation. As May Warnock puts it "Freedom and consciousness are the very same thing. Only the free consciousness can imagine a world different from that in which it finds itself and therefore it alone can form plans to change that world."<sup>(12)</sup> One may add that such a consciousness could only be as radically free as Sartre describes it if it lacked all traces of substance, if it were sheer nothingness.

It seems undeniable that, by his concept of freedom, Sartre intended to give man back his inalienable right to self-determination in the face of the apparently over-powering forces of science and technology and sundry monolithic ideologies. What is more controversial is the question whether Sartre's concept of freedom reflects the true condition of man as a multi-dimensional being, or whether it merely focuses upon one aspect of human reality and thereby misrepresents the nature of human existence.

It must always be borne in mind that Sartre has attempted to describe what it is that exists in the world in so far as this could be uncovered by the phenomenological method.

If he/...

If he has thereby revealed human existence as a type of non-being, he has done so only in so far as this non-being is intended to serve as the ground of the meaning of being. Similarly, there is nothing greatly paradoxical in the compulsion to freedom, since not being free to be free is one possible interpretation of being free (another would be being free to be free). The former interpretation appears to be a contradiction only in the light of a conception in which freedom is regarded as being a liberating activity. But Sartrean freedom is an ontological relation of one being to another and, as such, is a pre-condition for liberation, not liberation itself. It might also be possible to adopt the concept of a freedom which is free to be free as an ontological postulate, but then such freedom would constantly face the possibility of its own extinction. Sartre's concept of freedom seems to be founded on more secure ground than that of the alternative and apparently unparadoxical concept of freedom.

Nevertheless, Sartre's concept of freedom is not sufficiently well-founded to withstand certain lines of criticism. Granted the ontological distinction between pour-soi and en-soi, the foundation of freedom can itself be undermined by this distinction. What we suggest is that if freedom is that which cannot be explained in terms of the en-soi alone, that is, in terms of what "precedes" or confronts it, there is insufficient grounds for accepting freedom at all. As Roberts has pointed out "Sartre's ontology undermines its own claim to be true by making all meaning into

something which/....

something which the subject projects."<sup>(13)</sup> The fact that man is compelled to be free does not save Sartre from the charge that his concept of freedom is itself a function of one man's vision of the relationship between consciousness and the world. Freedom cannot be renounced because consciousness cannot exist except as consciousness of being free, but consciousness of being free is itself dependent upon the constituted notion of consciousness as consciousness of being-in-the-world. In other words, the phenomenological theory of the intentionality of consciousness is itself a self-constituted theory of the nature of consciousness and any other concept which depends directly upon such a self-constituted theory is itself self-constituted, "something which the subject projects", as Roberts says.

It could also be objected that Sartre's phenomenological descriptions do not provide evidence for his ontological distinctions. Ordinary human experience (to which we ultimately have to appeal) suggests that Sartre's rigid distinction between pour-soi and en-soi tends to falsify experience if this distinction is supposed to reflect phenomenologically how freedom manifests itself. Certain types of extraordinary situations might lend support to Sartre's distinction; for example, life in occupied France during the Second World War may have been such that the separation of consciousness from the world in the way in which Sartre has phenomenologically described it, may have appeared experientially well-founded. Plainly, however, Sartre is not justified in universalizing such a situation, since nothing

in our/...

in our normal experience of the world would justify the contention that consciousness is as painfully and restlessly separated from the world as Sartre's distinction between pour-soi and en-soi would appear to indicate.

However, the historical situation is never totally irrelevant to phenomenological ontology, since it can instantiate the application of such an ontology to man's existence (that is, his being-in-the-world). Consequently, Sartre's concept of freedom must also be evaluated from the practical point of view (as we shall do in due course).

Theoretically speaking, however, Sartre's concept of freedom can be shown to be transcendental in character in so far as the paradoxical relationship between en-soi and pour-soi upon which it is based is itself constituted or conceived in man's mind. That the world need not be described as en-soi, nor man as pour-soi, can be seen from the inability of Sartre's fundamental categories to account for such fundamental experiences as mutual gratitude, love, hope, joy, confidence and many other "positive" attitudes and emotions. It is these "positive" existential phenomena that Otto Friederich Bollnow posits against the "negative" moods of the existentialists.<sup>(14)</sup> A concept of freedom which fails to include in man's relationship to the world any of these "positive" features must be called into question as being unjustifiably one-sided. This one-sidedness is yet another indicator of the transcendental character of Sartre's concept of freedom.

What incontrovertibly/...

What incontrovertibly proves the transcendental character of Sartre's concept of freedom is our experience of the world as en-soi and of ourselves as a pour-soi which is condemned to freedom in the face of the antithetical en-soi. The question which naturally arises is "On what grounds does Sartre posit man as pour-soi and the world as en-soi?" If the grounds are alleged to be implicit in Sartre's phenomenological undertaking, we could still question whether our experience of the world justifies this phenomenological ontology. If, despite our not experiencing ourselves as pour-soi and the world as en-soi, we are told that such is indeed the relation of our being to that of the world, we may well wonder whether we are not being asked to accept something on insufficient evidence. Our suspicion that Sartre has himself constructed the relationship between man and the world in his own mind on the basis of his particular phenomenological method will gain in support if we discover wide discrepancies between Sartre's ontological postulates and those of others practising the phenomenological method. <sup>(15)</sup> That this is indeed the case is shown by the vast amount of criticism Sartre's ontology has provoked, not only from those outside the mainstream of phenomenology, but from amongst those practising a variation of phenomenology themselves. For instance, Merleau-Ponty has also described man's relation to the world in terms of "for-itself" and "in-itself", but his ontological categories and his concept of freedom differ from those of Sartre. <sup>(16)</sup> Even more radically different from Sartre is the ontology of/...

ontology of Gabriel Marcel, who developed a view in which being with others (intersubjectivity) is the fundamental ground of the world through which our knowledge of the world is constituted.<sup>(17)</sup> In view of such differences in ontological conceptions among these philosophers, we are obliged to raise the fundamental question of whether the relationship between man and world and man <sup>and</sup> his fellow-man is a negative one as Sartre undoubtedly sees it, or whether the world may not also be a ground from which a positive response can be evoked. Undoubtedly Sartre's own experience of the world determined his view of the relationship between man and world. It cannot, therefore, be doubted that his concept of freedom is itself transcendental.

Because Sartre's concept of freedom is transcendental, it follows that his reduction of the relationship between man and the world to the model of pour-soi and en-soi is unsatisfactory from both the theoretical and practical point of view. From the theoretical point of view, Sartre's self-constituted model becomes a double-edged sword by which its creator can himself be slain. A constituted pour-soi is not exactly pour-soi (for-itself) any more than a constituted en-soi is exactly en-soi (in-itself). In other words, the constituted regions of being cease to be ontological in the way in which they had been originally postulated as being. Furthermore, the antithetical relationship which is alleged by Sartre to exist between en-soi and pour-soi becomes a comprehended antithesis and thus de facto a synthesis. Here

then our/...

then our earlier claim<sup>(18)</sup> that Sartre's absolute was not the unrealizable en-soi-pour-soi but rather nothingness is endorsed; for it is from the nothingness of the human consciousness that the world was constituted. Thus, as we hope to have shown, "the constitutive nature of Sartre's concepts of freedom and nothingness can hardly be overlooked."<sup>(19)</sup>

(II) ONTOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ARISING FROM SARTRE'S  
EQUATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS = NOTHINGNESS = FREEDOM

Our examination of Sartre's concept of transcendental freedom from the theoretical point of view has shown that the concept of freedom is derived from the relationship between man and world, which is in turn a particular theoretical philosophical model founded upon Sartre's particular experience of the world. On this model freedom is derived from nothingness while nothingness emerges in the world by virtue of the negative structure of consciousness - man is free because he is nothing, he is nothing because he is conscious. The equation of freedom with nothingness and of nothingness with consciousness gives rise to certain ontological problems. It is necessary to examine these problems.

Firstly, it may be urged against Sartre that his derivation is circular, that if one defines one set of terms in terms of another it should not be possible, on pain of circularity,

to reverse/...

to reverse the process and derive the second set of terms in terms of the first. As we have seen, both concepts are transcendental in nature and, in so far as each derives from a constitutive act of the mind, Sartre seems justified in equating them. Phenomenologically, such an equation may be justified since it would appear that only through the phenomenological method is it possible to describe the fundamental nothingness at the heart of being. Furthermore, Sartre needs the equation in order to justify his description of man as a pour-soi which is utterly other than the world (en-soi). It should by now be clear that we cannot accept this dichotomy of Sartre, not only because it has proved to be inadequate in explaining certain fundamental aspects of human relationships, but also because of the transcendental nature of its conception. Our suspicion that Sartre's distinction between pour-soi and en-soi unnecessarily restricts his ability to account for certain features of human existence is corroborated by the fact that at least two of the elements of Sartre's model, namely freedom and nothingness, are constituted not by logical relationships but by reference to a third member of the equation, namely, consciousness. Free acts proceed from consciousness because consciousness is ontologically nothing: a nihilation of being. Freedom is thus indistinguishable from consciousness since, because each is a nihilation of being, each is a continuous negation of being. According to Sartre, the distinguishing feature of human consciousness is, as we have seen, the ability to constitute itself by contrast with, or

as other/...

as other than, its physical environment and, indeed, everything other than itself. It is by no means certain that this supposed character of consciousness is as fundamental as Sartre seems to think it is. Whatever consciousness one has at any particular time must be determined to some extent by previous states of consciousness, which continue to direct new choices by calling attention to meanings which have been structurally established by past states of consciousness. As Desan says "A life structure of commitments at least directs the next decision and makes its influence felt on the meaning of the decision."<sup>(20)</sup> Thus, if life consists in a structure of choices, then one decision depends if not causally, then certainly "structurally" on the next.<sup>(21)</sup> The point we wish to make is that if freedom remains free from outside attempts to limit it, it nevertheless limits itself internally. The way in which it limits itself is through a certain kinship which it recognizes with its previous choices. We shall have to elaborate upon this.

It seems that if it is true, as we have seen, that the way in which a philosopher experiences the world, determines the way in which he sees man, which in turn determines the way in which he expects man to act, this can only be so if there is a mutual interaction between man's consciousness of the world and the world itself. A purely passive reflecting consciousness would not be sufficient to establish the principle of identity since man's changing experience of the world requires a consciousness which is itself capable of responding to such changes. If such changes were merely the result of changes

of the given world, man's consciousness would reflect identical states of affairs and there would not be conflicting world theories at any particular time.. But the fact that Sartre's theory of the world, for example, is called in question by others experiencing presumably similar situations (consider, for example, Gabriel Marcel), suggests that consciousness cannot possess a mere reflecting quality. It would, therefore, appear that consciousness cannot be as free as Sartre would have us believe. There have to be certain common features between consciousness and the world in order for consciousness to reflect those aspects of the world which are stable and those which change. As Mary Warnock has perceptively remarked: "There is a vast difference between saying on the one hand that human beings in general invent their own way of categorizing the world around them and that there is no single inevitable way that they should do this, and saying on the other hand, that each human being chooses his own categories." (22)

In order to explain how this is possible, it is necessary either to posit certain built-in aspects of consciousness which limit the freedom to choose just any way of categorizing the world, or the world must be such that it regularly transmits certain of its characteristic features to consciousness. Perhaps the former alternative is more plausible, but whatever the case may be, it can hardly be doubted that Sartre's distinction between a completely free pour-soi and a completely determined en-soi requires modification in the light of certain experiences of the world which are shared by all.

Let us/...

Let us consider the reasons which Sartre advances for his claim that consciousness is freedom. We have seen that, according to Sartre, human consciousness is free because, by its very structure, it is forced to think of itself as other than the world and as unincorporable into any causal sequences it may discern in the world. It must do this because it is a being whose existence precedes its essence, which means that it is a lack of being or nothingness. It is because consciousness is nothingness that consciousness is free. But how would consciousness, which is nothingness, reveal the en-soi? It is not clear that the en-soi would ever receive determinate structure by a being which lacked all being. Unless consciousness itself possesses determinate structure, it could not reproduce such a structure in its revelation of the en-soi. Consciousness has to be meaning - conferring, but in so far as it has to be that, it has to possess determinate features. It could then not be a nothingness, if by the latter term is meant lack of all determinate structure. Nor does the nothingness of consciousness follow from the theory of the intentionality of consciousness: "[the] thesis that consciousness does not exist in isolation but that it is always consciousness of something, i.e., contains an intentional element, is here misinterpreted in the sense that it is 'nothing'". (23)

Similarly, the claim that freedom is nothingness is equally vulnerable to criticism. We have seen that freedom is

actually a|...

actually a transcendental concept constituted in Sartre's own mind. If he who has grasped the nature of freedom is able to do so, it must be because his own mind possesses a structure which encompasses and transcends that which he attributes to freedom. As mentioned before, it must be from a pre-ontological conception of the nature of freedom that Sartre constructs his concept of freedom. Sartrean freedom cannot then be co-terminous with consciousness because, if it were, it would not be possible for Sartre to be able to distinguish this freedom from his own consciousness. But it is not consciousness which Sartre described, but his own concept of consciousness and thus his own constituted freedom. Ontologically, the equation may make good sense in terms of Sartre's method, but if his method is called in question, the associated concepts are thereby also called in question.

In his equation of freedom with nothingness Sartre has insisted that freedom "has no essence".<sup>(24)</sup> We cannot agree with Sartre that freedom cannot be defined, since descriptions of what a thing is not nevertheless imply attributes of that thing. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the concept of nothingness. While we acknowledge that the term "nothingness" has significance as a counterweight to being, we believe that Sartre is misleading by the way in which he occasionally uses the concept. As a result nothingness becomes associated with certain features of existence, most notably, consciousness, while still preserving on occasion the connotation of pure non-

existence. Such/...

existence. Such misuse of the term "nothingness" is the reason why Sartre is able to introduce the numerous paradoxes by which he characterizes human reality. Chief amongst these is his fundamental contention that "existence precedes essence." On what grounds does Sartre make this claim? Does he himself not thereby constitute human essence? The following questions, posed by Desan, strike at the heart of the matter: "But, in actual practice, how can he claim to make a system without accepting a general definition of human nature? How can his descriptions fit each of us if there is no stable conception of human reality?"<sup>(25)</sup>

The being in which existence precedes essence is the being which is its own nothingness. This is the same as saying that man is free. But in holding the view that man's being is freedom, the concept of freedom is being used to justify the negative characteristics of man. We have had occasion to mention the fundamental power of freedom to nihilate the being which it confronts. For Sartre, consciousness is not what it is about and, because what it reveals is positive, consciousness itself is negative. By this fact consciousness constitutes itself as a free existence. But this very freedom poses a threat to the identity of the self. When consciousness reflects upon its own state, the pure awareness of itself reveals the non-coincidence of consciousness with that of which it is conscious. This is why Sartre believes in the freedom of consciousness to constitute whatever meaning it decides upon. It follows that the

free man/...

free man is that individual who is constantly pointing out to himself that he is not what he is. He is the man who by reflection constantly cancels his identity by making his identity an intentional object of his ever present awareness of himself. Not that he thereby needs to "reject" himself, even if that were possible. All that is necessary is that freedom denies its own original being as a lack of being and elects to establish a personal identity out of its own nothingness. This paradox is possible because of the nature of nothingness. It is both lack of being and project of being.

The problem with Sartre's equation of freedom with nothingness is that the reduction of freedom to the act of self-creation in the midst of nothing severs the natura naturans (the creative agent) from the natura naturata (the world).<sup>(26)</sup> This unwarranted and destructive separation may lead to a new form of alienation as we intend to demonstrate. The creative freedom for which Sartre has sometimes been lauded is quite capable of being transformed into the epitome of unfreedom and enslavement. These possibilities arise because each, a freedom which is divorced from its natural habitat, the world; a consciousness which is empty of content and structure; and a being whose essence is nothing, reflects the transcendental character of Sartre's model of en-soi and pour-soi, which palpably fails to do justice to all aspects of man's experience of the world. Sartre focuses only upon the undeniable capability of man to decide how to view the world. He excludes the possibility that the world itself may not necessarily be linked to man's consciousness in a negative

way, but/...

way, but may at least be neutral in this respect if it cannot be shown to be the positive ground from which man's consciousness arises. But Sartre's failure to reconcile man with the world is only the outcome of his equation of consciousness with nothingness. A consciousness with some content would not necessarily be estranged from the world, and such a consciousness could become the basis of a different ontological conception. We do not intend to suggest the lines such a conception might take. We merely wish to point out that Sartre's conception is based on an unnecessarily narrow foundation from the point of view of theory, and one, moreover, which renders certain experiences unnecessarily paradoxical, as will become clear.

These problems point to the theoretical nature of Sartre's self-constituted abstract freedom, exempt from all determination by virtue of its very structure as a consciousness condemned to perpetual lack of identity with that of which it is conscious. This purely theoretical freedom is negative and implies nothing about man's free action in the actual world. What it does imply is that Sartre is examining consciousness in a kind of abstract isolation as a being without determinate content and, for this reason, is led to describe its being as nothingness. Sartre's theoretical analysis of the structure of consciousness assumes the form it does because he conceives of consciousness as a "nihilating" activity and because he analyses the pour-soi in isolation from the world. But the pour-soi, as we have seen, is constituted by Sartre and is itself a constituting process whereby

the world/...

the world is revealed. The structure of the pour-soi is thus not something revealed by phenomenological inspection, as Sartre claims, but is already presupposed by Sartre's methodological constitution of the phenomenon of human existence. In this way Sartre links up with Husserl again, although it was ironically the latter's theory of constitutive consciousness which was criticized by thinkers such as Sartre, who wished to use phenomenology to discover the nature of reality. The reason for Sartre's failure to discover and describe consciousness as it is in its self-given actuality is that he, like other existentialist philosophers, tries to constitute "that which defies all constitution, namely, the principle of life, or themselves, their own individual existence".<sup>(27)</sup> Precisely because he is a finite historical being like everyone else, Sartre is unable to avoid constituting the world from a particular limited point of view. Sartre actually presents only one man's view of reality, a view which may have been shared by those who experienced a similar fate, but a view which remains contingent and problematic. Sartre's postulate of consciousness as a being-for-itself (pour-soi) is thus not, as he would have us believe, something which we cannot but affirm when we consider consciousness from the phenomenological point of view, but is on the contrary a carefully-wrought constitutive principle which is constructed by Sartre in order to explain being-in-the-world. Not only is Sartre not justified in describing consciousness as a nothingness simply on the grounds

that it/...

that it is capable of positing that which does not exist, but he is equally unjustified in considering the world to be en-soi. These categories cannot be justified as fundamental ontological postulates if the experiences which are to be explained in terms of them cannot be so explained. Since certain generally acknowledged phenomena and experiences are not satisfactorily accounted for in terms of Sartre's categories, it follows that pour-soi and en-soi have been converted into transcendental concepts through Sartre's own methodological construction. It is in his own mind that these concepts are constituted, since it is through his own particular method that they are justified. But if this is so, then the concept of freedom, by which Sartre brings man into relation with the world, is itself methodologically comprehended by him. In that case, the relationship between man and world, pour-soi and en-soi, ceases to be actually contradictory and becomes instead transcendental, that is, a concept of the mind. The theoretical constitution of freedom as a transcendental concept does not, of course, invalidate it per se, but it does raise the question of the degree of validity which may be assigned to this concept. In other words, ought Sartre's transcendental freedom to be taken seriously, and, if so, on what grounds? These questions are posed from the practical point of view and have to be answered by reference to the actual circumstances of life. It is man's relations with his fellow-man and his situation as being-in-the-world which require examination. Is Sartre's concept of transcendental freedom applicable to these concrete aspects

of human/...

of human existence? We shall now have to devote our attention to these long neglected questions.

B. FROM THE PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW

(I) THE QUESTION OF ALIENATION AND AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE

The theoretical problems raised by Sartre's concept of freedom are closely paralleled by the practical difficulties implied by a concept of freedom, which has been shown to be transcendental in character. Since Sartre has constituted his concept of freedom in his own mind on the basis of a particular experience of the world, which he unjustifiably universalizes, we must examine this fundamental experience in order to uncover the real ground from which Sartre's concept of freedom takes its rise. In this way, as we shall see, Sartre will be shown to have constituted his concept of freedom in accordance with the principle of identity. The link between Sartre and those predecessors whom we examined in our first chapter ought then to become clear. It is our intention to prove that although he reverses the position of his predecessors as far as the concept of freedom is concerned, Sartre links up with them again in so far as he, like them, constitutes his concept of freedom from a particular experience of the world which he rationalizes in a way similar to that of his predecessors. We believe that he, therefore, rightly belongs to the tradition of transcendental philosophy.

We have seen that Sartre's starting-point is man's actual

existence as a being conscious of his nothingness, a pour-soi compelled to create meaning arbitrarily in the face of an impenetrable undifferentiated en-soi. From this original picture, Sartre proceeds, as we saw, to delineate the various aspects of man's relation to the world and the implications which follow from this relation. The implicit assumption is that man and the world are mutually incompatible, so that man's existence cannot be derived from the world. The world, in fact, becomes the medium through which man's alienation becomes manifest. This alienation for Sartre is, as we have seen, the outcome of the ontological difference between pour-soi and en-soi. It is because the pour-soi is ontologically different from the en-soi, that the pour-soi is unable to achieve identification with the en-soi. Since Sartre considers this ontological difference to be basic to human existence, it follows that man will never be able to overcome his original alienation from the world. Yet, if man is condemned to alienation, he is also thereby condemned to be free, since his freedom is safeguarded by the impossibility of the world ever determining his consciousness. The question which then arises is how ought man to act in such a way that he fulfils his true condition as an alienated being? Can the primal condition of alienation serve as the basis for freedom, and, if so, what type of consequences would such freedom have?

We have discussed some of the ethical implications of Sartre's concept of freedom previously.<sup>(28)</sup> The question which we now wish to raise is "What value (if any) can we place upon an existence which is, as Sartre sees it, absurd?"

Must the absurdity of human existence, its failure to justify the grounds for its relation to the world, result in total abdication of all morality? If not what type of morality can be established on such a foundation? It might seem that Sartre's inability to honour his undertaking to write a book on ethics, which might have given some indication of the direction of his thought on the ethical plane, renders our enterprise superfluous. But it does not follow that because such a work was never written, a Sartrean ethics based on the ontological model of pour-soi and en-soi must necessarily be impossible.<sup>(29)</sup> We need not pass judgement on this issue, since, whether or not a Sartrean ethics is theoretically possible, Sartre's given position has certain practical ethical implications which ought to be considered in any analysis of his philosophical model.

Since, for Sartre, man is ontologically alienated from the world, it follows that man is only truly free in so far as he recognizes his ontologically inescapable condition and faces up to its consequences. Foremost amongst these consequences is that man abstain from any attempt to derive his being (essence) as a particular pour-soi in terms of the various meanings which he has attributed to the undifferentiated en-soi. For instance, it is man himself who has constituted whatever meanings science, metaphysics (ideology) or religion possesses. These aspects of reality are from one point of en-soi - yet they are what they are through the meaning - conferring activity of the pour-soi.

Thus for/...

Thus for the pour-soi to attempt to take such meanings as intrinsic to the en-soi and to attempt to justify its own existence in terms of these self-conceived values is, for the pour-soi, to be guilty of bad faith, since the pour-soi has itself freely determined the meaning of these values. It follows that if the pour-soi is to avoid bad faith, it must constantly distance itself from that upon which it has conferred meaning. In recognizing the irreparable gulf between himself as pour-soi and the world as en-soi, man fulfills one of the indispensable conditions for authentic action, that is, action in good faith.

We have already examined Sartre's notions of good faith and authentic existence from the ethical point of view. It is now necessary to pose certain critical questions in respect of Sartre's notion of authentic existence from the practical point of view. We have questioned before whether Sartre's concept of authenticity amounts to much more than a reinstatement of a kind of honesty as a criterion for distinguishing between right and wrong. It may well be doubted whether the concept of authenticity furnishes any genuine illumination of the concrete dilemmas that men regularly face in their daily experience of the world. Does Sartre's concept provide a basis for ethical decision? Does it suggest any real directives for the moral life?

We do not think that Sartre's concept of authenticity is devoid of any content, but we do believe that Sartre is guilty of unforgiveable equivocation in his use of this concept. In order to show this we shall firstly contrast Sartre's explicit

view of authenticity with the actual practical implications of his concept of freedom. An action, for Sartre, does not appear to be an authentic action simply because it is done with passion. It seems that certain a priori limits are fixed which serve to demarcate authentic action from inauthentic action. In Existentialism is a Humanism Sartre suggests that a truly authentic existence entails a certain reverence for freedom and such limitation in the exercise of one's own freedom as may be necessary for the preservation of the freedom of one's fellow-man:

I cannot make liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim. Consequently, when I recognize, as entirely authentic, that man is a being whose existence precedes his essence, and that he is a free being who cannot, in any circumstances but will his freedom, at the same time I realize that I cannot not will the freedom of others. (30)

In other words, once man has recognized that he is free, he will want freedom generally to prevail in the human community. Hence it seems that in spite of his alienation from the world, and from his fellow-man, Sartre does not believe that man can embrace masochism or self-frustration as a mode of life. He has to seek self-fulfilment in his relations with his fellow-man. Thus, despite the unstable and conflict-

ridden character/...

ridden character of his relations with his fellow-man, man must strive to reach an accommodation with his fellow-man. That Sartre adopts this position can also be seen by an analysis of his dramatic works.<sup>(31)</sup> It follows, then, that authentic existence can be realized only by people acting collectively in good faith. The concept of authenticity seems to entail not only a personal ethics, but a social one as well, since man's recognition of the common ontological freedom (and the limits which such freedom imposes upon human beings) renders a purely personal and private authentic existence impossible. It is through joint free choices of particular values that the basis is laid for a community of moral beings. Only through reference to such a community (even as purely ideal notion) can the possibility of leading an authentic existence be entertained. On this view, the man who accepts his freedom in good faith, that is, who leads an authentic existence, would probably differ from both the conventional man and the anarchist with regard to the moral attitudes characteristic of the community to which he belongs. Such a man would make moral judgements in his own right by either assimilating, modifying or rejecting the moral attitudes of the community to which he belongs. But thus acting, the authentic man would live up to his existential situation of being free to choose whatever values he decides upon, but he would not be able not to choose since he is compelled to be free.

Sartre's position as presented above, is at variance with his

description of/...

description of the relations between pour-sois as we analysed them previously. Unless one decides to interpret the description of concrete relations between men in Being and Nothingness as applying to men in bad faith (as is done, for instance by S. de Beauvoir),<sup>(32)</sup> we believe that it will be difficult to reconcile Sartre's positions in the two works cited.

After all, as we have seen, Sartre has explicitly stated that man is a useless passion; that he is the desire to become God; that the essence of the relations between men is conflict. It seems to us that Sartre is guilty of equivocation, to say the least, in describing human relations in the way in which he does, while seeking to evade the full implications of this position by introducing limitations which are in conflict with the original position. After all, he has consistently described freedom as illimitable, so whence comes the injunction to limit freedom in the interests of freedom? Since our concern is with the concept of freedom as it emerges from the analysis of the relationship between en-soi and pour-soi, we shall feel justified in giving precedence to that interpretation which is consistent with our view of the nature of this relationship.

On our interpretation it seems that Sartre's concept of freedom is quite compatible with acts of destruction directed against the values of the established social order. An action in good faith must necessarily assume the form of a violent repudiation of previously accepted values for which there is no longer felt to be any adequate foundation. Sartrean

freedom, therefore, /...

freedom, therefore, does not seem to us capable of finding expression through the acceptance or creation of moral relationships to other human beings. Thus Heinemann is substantially correct when he argues against Sartre that

An individual cannot make particular choices without a standard, as a matter of fact does not create the standard by every action he makes, but accepts it from the society in which he lives and from tradition.<sup>(33)</sup>

Sartre would probably reply that the authentic individual can accept whatever standards he receives from the society in which he lives and from tradition, but that the decision to do so rests entirely upon his shoulders. Such an answer would, however, have dangerous implications as will become clear.

It is doubtful whether Sartre's concept of authentic existence is anything more than a conception of reality as it is conceived through the methodological constitution of the world by Sartre himself. It cannot be doubted that Sartre's methodological constitution of the world occurs from a particular historical and existential situation. As Heinemann rightly remarks "Sartre's philosophy arises from the new experience of freedom under the dictatorship... No doubt it expresses a genuine experience of a concrete ultimate situation."<sup>(34)</sup> It was the pervasive mood of anxiety and

the accompanying/...

the accompanying experience of the self-estrangement of man as he conceived him at that time that led Sartre to re-consider the nature of human existence and to re-assess the relation in which man stood with the world. Through this re-assessment Sartre conceived of man as a being who was fundamentally distinct from the world and, in fact, alienated from the world. Perhaps he was led to this conclusion by the actual circumstances of life, which suggested that man had become enmeshed in his own creations thus having become alienated from reality - existence as a pour-soi - and having lost his freedom. Sartre no doubt realized that man was in great danger of losing his true sense of selfhood under the conditions of life at the time. That is probably why he sought to safeguard man as a free being by insisting upon the radical ontological difference between man (pour-soi) and the world (en-soi). By divorcing man from the world, by constituting man's being as essentially free, Sartre tried to prevent man from losing himself in theoretical constructions. The irony, as we have seen, is that Sartre himself has to employ theory in order to point out the dangers of theory and as a result we are, by implication, being forewarned against Sartre himself; since Sartre cannot overcome theory. If we are being asked merely to exchange one theory for another, we shall have to be given stronger reasons than Sartre has provided for preferring his theory to those of his predecessors. This is especially relevant if we recognize that Sartre's supposedly original starting-point of actual individual human existence has been

converted into a transcendental concept. As G.A. Rauche points out "The paradox of existentialism is that the individual disappears as a result of the theoretical constitution of individual existence by the dialectical method."<sup>(35)</sup> Thus the philosophy of individual existence becomes transcendental and links up once more with the rationalist philosophies of Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl.

As already mentioned, we believe that Sartre's experience of the world was such that his concept of freedom as an individual response to that experience is understandable. We, too, believe like Heinemann that

As an experience of liberty it rightly stresses its two sides - that is, negatively the power of resisting oppression, and positively, the genuineness of choice and the responsibility in this choice. If it falsely universalizes an abnormal case... this is the natural consequence of the exceptional extremeness of the situation.<sup>(36)</sup>

Moreover, we agree that this freedom "must, from the practical point of view, lead to a war of all against all, to an anarchy where all freedom, all security, and all civilized conduct are destroyed."<sup>(37)</sup> Although Sartre specifically denies that freedom is "a licence to do as we please,"<sup>(38)</sup> we believe that the aforementioned practical implications are unavoidable. On Sartre's model, we are free only in a particular situation and if our action in that situation/...

that situation is to merit the designation "authentic", we must recognize that our actions, and the standard whereby we act in that situation, depend entirely upon ourselves.

What then are the practical implications of Sartre's concept of freedom for the question of authentic existence? In how far can Sartre's concept of freedom free man from suffering, doubt and uncertainty and enable him to lead a life in accordance with his true nature? It seems that the short answer is "not at all". Far from freeing man from suffering, Sartre's concept of freedom actually accentuates man's unhappiness by holding out no hope for a future spiritual union of man with the world. Even where suffering was recognized to be the result of trying and failing to constitute the pour-soi from the en-soi, Sartre's concepts of freedom and authentic existence hold out no promise of joy in the recognition of past errors, since no resolution of the conflict is described (except for the vague and never developed suggestions that it may be possible for freedom to "take itself for a value as the source of all values.")<sup>(39)</sup>

Sartre's concept of freedom also fails to free man from doubt and uncertainty because, despite man's condemnation to freedom, he is never certain how to use his freedom. Ought he to limit his personal freedom lest he clash with the freedom of his fellow-man? Sartre's concept of freedom provides no answer to this question. It might even be the case that his concept of freedom exacerbates man's existential dilemma by separating man (natura naturans) from his true ground (natura

naturata). G.A. Rauche would, therefore, be justified in considering that "In divorcing man from the world as his natural field of activity... [Sartre] causes man to perform a self-creative act in a vacuum, an empty, operationalist gesture that is analysed as reflecting man's authentic existence as a ... being to nothing."<sup>(40)</sup> From this it follows that Sartre's concept of freedom does not resolve the question of authentic existence, but leads instead to the further alienation of man in so far as it "artificially divorces man from the world of things, his natural field of activity and self-realization."<sup>(41)</sup>

It cannot be doubted that Sartre's concept of freedom "artificially divorces man from the world", since we have seen that, far from being true reflections of the nature of reality, Sartre's notions of pour-soi and en-soi constitute a self-conceived philosophical model by means of which reality can be comprehended. It follows that Sartre does not truly come to grips with reality and that his concept of alienation does not reflect the true nature of alienation. Hence Sartre's understanding of authentic existence is likewise imperfect. He fails really to come to grips with the question of authentic existence, because he has become enmeshed in a theoretical model of reality and is unable to push through to actual direct experience. It is only on the level of actual direct experience that the question of authentic existence can be resolved, since it is only in terms of this experience that man is truly confronted with his

fellow-man and/...

fellow-man and the world. In any case, we have already demonstrated the limited value and unsatisfactory character of Sartre's concept of freedom for resolving the question of authentic existence. We have seen that his notions of en-soi and pour-soi are impositions upon reality from outside, explaining and universalizing experience from a specific point of view. Therefore, despite Sartre's identification of freedom with the very existence of man, he has not shown that being condemned to self-creation, or (what amounts to the same thing) the condition of being alienated from the world, provides sufficient reason for resolving the problem of authentic existence. An existence is not authentic because man experiences self-estrangement and recognizes this estrangement. It would only be authentic if a means could be devised to overcome this estrangement, that is, if, from the practical point of view, the experience of alienation can be transcended. This Sartre's concept of freedom is unable to do.

Even theoretically the experience of alienation does not appear to have been overcome, since the union of the en-soi and the pour-soi remains an unrealizable ideal, and as such man's existence can never be justified. It is futile for Sartre to reply that the very unjustifiability of man's existence is the means whereby he can begin to lead an authentic existence; for he has not even begun to tell us what such an existence will be like. We are merely left with an account of what inauthentic existence is like, together with the empty injunction to live up to one's freedom as a being

condemned to/...

condemned to be free. The extent to which Sartre sees man's condition as he does clearly derives from his negative experience in terms of which the world is seen as the material, not of man's self-realization but of his alienation. As a result Sartre cannot conceive of man's response to his fellow-man and of his action in the world in a positive light. On the contrary, it is abundantly clear that he conceives man's conduct negatively. For Sartre, man has to hold his own against his fellow-man if he is not to become the mere object of "the Other's" look (the paradigm upon which relations with his fellow-man is based). Therefore, Sartre, too, fulfils the principle of identity, for it is from his fundamentally negative experience of the world as that which is radically other than man himself, that Sartre conceives of man as essentially nothingness (that is, pour-soi) and it is from this conception of man that Sartre conceives of man's relations to his fellow-man as basically negative. In this way Sartre's model, in terms of negativity, complies fully with the principle of identity.

Yet, Sartre's picture of man as being condemned to be free cannot be a true reflection of man's condition. That man should necessarily be condemned to be free, that his existence should necessarily precede his essence, are both doubtful. It stands to reason that man, while recognizing his freedom to create himself, could also discover certain other features of his existence which he holds in common with his fellow-man, and which points to a common human condition other than the negative condition as postulated by Sartre. If there

exist such/...

exist such common positive features, a definition of essence which excludes freedom, and a definition of existence as preceding essence, become unacceptable. We could then still see man as essentially free, not in the sense of being nothingness, but in the sense that, in his way of thinking and acting, he is referred to his fellow-man, who then forms the ground of his freedom, for it will be through him that man comes to recognize the essential features of his existence.

We seem justified in concluding that, although Sartre's concept of freedom has the virtue of calling attention to man's inalienable right, and indeed duty, to determine his own destiny, it fails to account for those common features of man's condition which reveal that the conditions of his existence are not fundamentally negative in character. For, certainly, man is linked to the world not merely in a negative but, perhaps more predominantly, in a positive manner, as is shown by thinkers such as O.F. Bollnow and G. Marcel, who are able to render a more balanced account of man's existential condition. Sartre's one-sided picture fails to do justice to all aspects (in particular to the positive features of human existence). Where he appears to have succeeded in striking a convincing note in our hearts, he has done so by appealing to those common features of the human condition which he separates in his distinction between pour-soi and en-soi. Since the relationship between man and world and man and his fellow-man is not merely a negative one, but also a positive one, one experienced in terms of

such powerful/...

such powerful moods as love, expectation, confidence and hope, rather than the negative experiences of anxiety, nausea and guilt, Sartre's model fails to render a full account of reality. We recognise the limitations of his model when we, for instance, consider Sartre's attempt to account for the experience of love. A.J. Ayer seems to be correct when he points out that Sartre's view of love as a futile attempt to cause the other person to love himself illustrates "not that the enterprise of loving is self-destructive, but that there is something wrong with his conception of love."<sup>(42)</sup> What is wrong with Sartre's approach is that his restrictive ontological framework is incapable of reflecting in full man's experience of the world (reality), which circumstance cannot but yield a distorted picture of reality.

Our examination of the question of alienation and authentic existence leads to the conclusion that Sartre's concept of freedom fails to come to grips with the dynamics of human existence as it is engendered by the changing and contingent circumstances of life and reflected in the many changing theories man has conceived about himself. This is so not only because Sartre's concept of freedom is based on a model of reality which is too restricted to do justice to all of man's experiences, but also because Sartre has attempted to construct something in theory which cannot be so constructed, namely, the dynamic principle of life. It should be borne in mind that the dynamics of life's

changing circumstances/...

changing circumstances cannot be covered by rational construction in the form of a philosophical theory or model. It should be remembered that in reality philosophical models are only theories of the world and, as such, perspectives of reality reflecting a basic conflict which they seek to overcome in a rational manner: in terms of methodological construction. It can therefore be said that they succeed in overcoming the conflict experienced under specific historical conditions in theory only, not in practice. By transcending reality, that is, the actually experienced conflict of which they are the outcome, they point to a theoretical solution of the conflict, which might contribute to a change of practice and provokes the postulation of new theories by which they are called in question. In terms of man's contingent experience of the world and the interplay of theory and practice caused by it, all theories remain problematic, controversial and enter into a critical relationship with each other which points to contingent experience as the true ground of man's freedom and authentic existence. In terms of man's contingent experience of the world, and the various possibilities open to man in coping with actual experience in a theoretical way, Sartre's world theory as constructed in terms of the paradoxical relationship between pour-soi and en-soi and his concept of authentic existence embedded in it, remain problematic and questionable, thereby inviting the postulation of other views conceived from different premises.

Accepting himself/...

Accepting himself as a pour-soi which is condemned to freedom will not necessarily lead man to authentic existence, although it may once have appeared to be the key to leading such an existence. Under the conditions of life as they prevailed in his time, Sartre's transcendental concept of freedom can at least serve as a meaningful alternative to deterministically based theories of men which depersonalize and estrange him from himself by regarding him as a mere object among objects. But because man is a contingent being, he cannot be free in Sartre's sense of the word. To insist upon freedom by ontological necessity is in obvious contradiction with the contingent character of man's experience of reality, of which philosophical perspectives are the outcome and in terms of which they are rendered problematic and questionable. It is certainly not necessary to develop an ontology of total freedom in order to retain the view that man is responsible for his choices, decisions or actions. In fact, Sartre's concept of freedom may lead to implications which could be extremely dangerous. The possibility arises that this ontological freedom may lead not to authentic existence, but to a new and more devastating form of alienation. Whether it does or not will have to be considered next.

## (II) THE QUESTION OF SOLIPSISM

In taking his starting-point from man's actual existence as a pour-soi, it would seem that Sartre is confronted with a particularly difficult/...

ticularly difficult problem - the problem of the justification of the existence of others and of the nature of man's relations with his fellow-man. We shall now examine Sartre's attempt to show that being-in-the-world and being a pour-soi does not necessarily mean that the pour-soi is doomed to live in an incommunicable solipsistic universe. In the course of our examination we shall discover that this problem is by no means a purely epistemological one, but that it refers to the actual conditions of life and, as such, illuminates Sartre's concept of freedom from the practical point of view.

From the nature of relationship between pour-soi and en-soi and between one pour-soi and another, it would appear that each pour-soi is his own standard of reference. Although pour-sois need each other in order to recognize their individual subjectivity, they are condemned to remain within the confines of their own subjectivity and are prevented from discovering outside of themselves the means to justify their existence. Being a pour-soi, for Sartre, would seem to mean being condemned to search in vain for such justification. If the pour-soi is incapable of being justified, it must remain caught up in its own internal relation to the en-soi. As such the pour-soi faces the problematcity of its own existence as a being whose existence precedes its essence - a being which "is not what it is and is what it is not". Since the pour-soi can never coincide with itself, the logical principle of

identity cannot/...

identity cannot apply to it, as we saw. Yet as a being whose existence is constantly in question, the pour-soi is referred to some other being as a standard of reference. If personal identity can be shown to require the existence of others, the problem of solipsism will have been overcome.

We must, firstly, distinguish between the epistemological problem of the existence of other beings (minds) and the practical problem of being able to relate meaningfully to them. From the epistemological point of view Sartre confesses that he is no more successful than Husserl in being able to prove that other minds exist.

...abandoning it (the hypothesis of a transcendental subject) does not help one bit to solve the question of the existence of Others. (43)

He, therefore, offers not rational arguments for the existence of others, but rather phenomenological description of certain experiences by which the existence of others can be incontrovertibly known. As mentioned before, one such experience is the "look" whereby the pour-soi recognizes that it is not alone in the world, since it is capable of being seen by another being. This being could not be en-soi because the en-soi is entirely without signification whereas the "look" of the other being refers the pour-soi to itself.

Through the/...

Through the Other's look I live myself as  
fixed in the midst of the world.<sup>(44)</sup>

Sartre produces the now famous example of being caught in the act of eavesdropping.<sup>(45)</sup> He argues that the possible attendant experience of shame would be inexplicable if one did not already recognise the existence of another conscious being. Shame implies that the pour-soi is capable of being judged by another being which, ipso facto, must itself be pour-soi. Hence Sartre believes that no proof of the existence of other pour-sois is needed, since shame is the apprehension by the one pour-soi that it can become en-soi for another pour-soi. Being a pour-soi necessarily implies as one of its possibilities being capable of being considered en-soi - hence the existence of "the Other" is at least as certain as the existence of oneself as a pour-soi.

Sartre's argument is not a petitio principii as some have thought,<sup>(46)</sup> because it would be impossible in principle for us to use language in the way we do, for instance, without the mediation of others we should not be able to say "I" in reflective utterances. As Sartre himself remarks

the Other accomplishes for us a function of  
which we are incapable, and which nevertheless  
is incumbent on us: to see ourselves as we are.<sup>(47)</sup>

Yet Sartre's/...

Yet Sartre's argument raises questions of an ethical nature. For instance, he has not shown that we ought to regard the other person as a pour-soi, even if there are times and occasions when it might be advisable to do so. That we are always in danger of being considered as en-soi by "the Other" is not a reason for treating him as en-soi. Yet on Sartre's model of inter-personal relations it is impossible for two pour-sois to co-exist harmoniously, to recognize each other's subjectivity and freedom. One must transcend the subjectivity of the other since, as we have seen, "the essence of relations between consciousnesses is not the Mitsein, it is conflict."<sup>(48)</sup> Hence, acknowledging the freedom of others does not lead one out of actual solipsism but only shows that solipsism is theoretically indefensible.

From the practical point of view, the relationship between one pour-soi and another, because it is modelled on the relationship between pour-soi and en-soi, plunges man, as Sartre sees him, into a dilemma similar to the one with which he was confronted in the recognition of his freedom in respect of the world. Just as man is faced with the problem of alienation from the world, so he is faced with the problem of alienation from his fellow-man. It seems that since Sartre's ethical directive in respect of alienation from the world implies the recognition of such alienation as the first condition for leading an authentic existence, he must consider that recognizing one's alienation from one's fellow-man is likewise the first condition for leading an authentic

existence. From/...

existence. From this it would follow that man would be justified in regarding his fellow-man as a being to be transcended, as an en-soi. Fulfilling himself at the other person's expense would not only be permissible, but incumbent upon man. Although Sartre may not have intended this consequence, it is not easy to see how he could deny that such an implication could be drawn from his position. He lays himself open to criticism such as "The only point in which it {Sartre's ethics} differs from American materialist humanism is that man is here interpreted as pursuing transcendent aims,"<sup>(49)</sup> or Marcuse's charge that he "presents the old ideology in the new cloak of radicalism and rebellion."<sup>(50)</sup>

It may be said that we are guilty of inconsistency in criticizing Sartre's ontological freedom from the practical point of view after earlier defending his concept of freedom against similar criticism from the practical point of view.<sup>(51)</sup> However, we believe that we are now justified in testing Sartre's ontological freedom from the practical point of view since his analysis of what there is has been shown to represent a self-constituted model and, as such, can only be defended by reference to the actual conditions of life. Unless these conditions of life are such as to validate Sartre's model, it will have to be called in question. Since these conditions of life are subject to change, we have been obliged to question Sartre's model of reality. In our opinion, Sartre does not wish to return to "the old ideology",

nor does/...

nor does he wish to espouse "American materialism", yet by his transcendental concept of freedom he links up again with thinkers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl. We, therefore, do not believe that we are being inconsistent in acknowledging the merits of certain criticism which, in another context, we are obliged to question, since it is only after having shown the character of Sartre's concept of freedom in perspective, that is, with reference to his experience of the world, that we are able to see the shortcomings in his concept of freedom.

The fundamental deficiency of Sartre's concept of freedom, as we have seen, is that it purports to describe the actual character of man's existence in the world, whereas it really presents only another theoretical constitution of the world. From the practical point of view, this concept of freedom reduces the authentic act of man to "the act of self-creation in the midst of nothing".<sup>(52)</sup> But this is the very essence of solipsism since the authentic man as Sartre sees him, condemned to freedom, is entirely alone in his decision to commit himself to whatever pursuit he regards as being in line with his nature as a free being. He cannot accept the assistance of his fellow-man without subjecting it to his own supposedly freely created system of values. But if this is so, then man's very perspective is solipsistic since he can never sympathetically adopt the point of view of his fellow-man or recognize that he too may have a valid experience to articulate. As G.A. Rauche remarks in this connection: "He has to remain an outsider, for his individualism is a



total one, one that cuts him off from nature and the other man and that surrounds him and fills him with nothingness."<sup>(53)</sup> For all his attempts to overcome the problem of solipsism in theory, there can be no doubt that Sartre reinstates it in practice.

The practical consequences of Sartre's solipsism can be seen in man's secular attitude to morality. He tends to regard morality as a provisional agreement into which he enters for his own convenience and which he can discard when it no longer satisfies his immediate needs. He considers all morality to be "relative", but by this he doesn't mean anthropologically or sociologically relative, but rather relative to his own fluctuating needs and interests. In this he is encouraged by Sartre's doctrine that "existence precedes essence", since he is able to deceive himself into believing that his fluctuating needs and interests are freely created by himself and as such per se point in the direction of authentic existence. In actual fact such individuals are not really free but are actually mere pawns of their contingent and irrational desires. Far from providing them with adequate guidance, Sartre's concept of freedom misleads them into believing that they are each a law unto themselves. As G.A. Rauche has recognized "The logical outcome of the existentialist approach as advocated by Sartre is then anarchical and licentious man, who is a law and a measure unto himself."<sup>(54)</sup> Although Sartre may not personally have wished to countenance anarchism<sup>(55)</sup> and licentiousness, it is hard to avoid the

conclusion that, /...

conclusion that, in terms of his model of en-soi and pour-soi, anarchism and licentiousness cannot be unequivocally rejected. It is even possible to ascribe much of the contemporary fascination with anarchism to Sartre's concept of freedom, since it may be thought that being condemned to freedom necessarily implies freedom for its own sake. Actually it seems to us that it points rather to man's unfreedom, since a freedom which cannot be renounced hardly deserves the name. Be that as it may, it seems undeniable that

Sartre's total rejection of any norm  
and his insistence that man is the  
creator of his own norms might easily  
bring about chaos and anarchy.<sup>(56)</sup>

We have seen that, notwithstanding his intentions, Sartre has conceived of freedom not as leading to the liberation of man from alienation, but as leading man to new alienation, alienation based on his own paradoxical concept of freedom. This concept of freedom is based on a particular experience of the world, and only as long as his account of man's relationship with his fellow-man and with the world represented a valid articulation of human experience, could the relationship between man and world be seen as a relationship between pour-soi and en-soi. But by postulating this this relationship as a fundamental ontological one, Sartre has falsely universalized a particular experience. The freedom which emerges from the antithetical relationship between

en-soi and pour-soi is not true freedom but only transcendental freedom. It is transcendental in so far as it reflects Sartre's methodological constitution of the relationship between man and the world, pour-soi and en-soi. This relationship thus ceases to be truly antithetical since it is comprehended, or grasped as a unit, by Sartre in his own mind. That this is so, can be seen by the fact that it is Sartre himself who describes the innumerable ramifications of this relationship. A truly contradictory relationship would not permit the total intellectual comprehension which Sartre brings to it, but would, we suspect, reveal its character in an indirect and oblique fashion; rather as Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication seeks to express the unbridgeable gulf and contradictory relationship between human knowledge and divine truth. Not that we believe that Kierkegaard's method would succeed in avoiding the pitfall. It merely seems to us to be a method more capable of rendering the supposed antithetical relationship between pour-soi and en-soi than Sartre's direct revelation. We feel that Sartre has not shown that man is free in so far as he is a pour-soi in relation to the en-soi, but that he has merely shown that he is free in so far as Sartre himself has constructed him, thus that he is free in theory, but not in practice. It is on this basis that we have critically examined Sartre's concept of freedom. Through this critical examination we have seen how theory and practice are referred to each other, thus pointing to the principle of identity, under which principle Sartre's concept of freedom, like that of his

predecessors, is/...

predecessors, is conceived. For in Sartre, as we have seen, the principle of identity is fulfilled in a negative way. It is from his experience of the world as negating man's existence that Sartre conceives of man as a being-to-nothing, and it is because he conceives of man as essentially nothingness, that he conceives of the relations between man and his fellow-man as fundamentally negative in character. As a result Sartre cannot help exemplifying this principle of identity, despite his paradoxical conception of the relationship between man and world. In fact, as should be clear, it is precisely his paradoxical conception of the relationship between man and world, that once more reflects the principle of identity.

In terms of the principle of identity Sartre's conception of the relationship between man and world, in other words, his concept of freedom, remains an important articulation of man's experience under particular circumstances of life. It reveals that, although Sartre's attempt to "rescue" man from alienation by beginning with the concrete experience of subjectivity as the new starting-point appears prima facie to be a radical reversal of the position of traditional philosophy, it actually links up with the efforts of such philosophers as Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl. Thus Sartre's enterprise is of undoubted historical value and deserves to be recognized as such. As an element of protest,<sup>(57)</sup> it retains its importance in the present functionalistic and depersonalizing post-technological society. In the present

conditions of/...

conditions of life the Sartrean concept of freedom can serve as a corrective to many deterministically based theories of man (such as Marxism or Behaviourism), provided the limitation inherent in Sartre's theory are recognized. By exposing these limitations and by showing the transcendental character of Sartre's concept of freedom, we hope to have located the rightful position of the early Sartre in the history of philosophy. Whether an analysis based on his entire corpus will require re-allocation of position is, of course, problematic. Fortunately, we are not called upon to deal with the problem of whether or not the thought of the earlier Sartre represents a radical divergence from that of the later Sartre. Our own analysis, as indicated in our FOREWORD, was necessarily restricted to the thought of the early Sartre. As such, we hope to have shown that Sartre, the "existentialist", occupies a distinct position in philosophy, a position which has not been sufficiently recognized.

N O T E S

1. SARTRE, J.P. : Being and Nothingness, p. 453.
2. Ibid., p. 439.
3. Ibid., p. 306.
4. HARTMANN, K. : op. cit., pp. 137-138.
5. HEINEMANN, F.H. : op. cit., p. 122.
6. HARTMANN, K. : op. cit., p. 145.
7. SARTRE, J.P. : Being and Nothingness, p. 486.
8. GRENE, M. : Sartre, p. 127.
9. SARTRE, J.P. : Being and Nothingness, p. 525.
10. Ibid., p. 567.
11. HARTMANN, K. : op. cit., p. 139.
12. WARNOCK, M. : Existentialism, p. 113.
13. ROBERTS, D.E. : op. cit., p. 215.
14. Cf. Neue Geborgenheit. Das Problem einer Überwindung des Existentialismus.
15. Cf. DESAN, W. : op. cit., p. 187.
16. Cf. MORELAND, J.M. : "For-itself and in-itself in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty." Philosophy To-day Vol. XVII, pp. 311-318; also Merleau-Ponty, M. The Phenomenology of Perception.

17. Cf. MARCEL, G. : Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope.
18. See our Chapter III p. 158.
19. RAUCHE, G.A. : The Choice, p. 84.
20. DESAN, W. : op. cit., p. 166.
21. MERLEAU-PONTY, M. : op. cit., p. 439.
22. WARNOCK, M. : Existentialism, p. 99.  
(Emphasis Warnock's)
23. HEINEMANN, F.H. : op. cit., p. 125. In this respect  
Desan, following Varet, G.  
(L'Ontologie de Sartre) locates the  
basic weakness of Sartre's philosophy  
in its failure to distinguish  
between intentionality as methodological  
principle and intentionality as onto-  
logical thesis. Cf. DESAN, W.  
op. cit., p. 137.
24. SARTRE, J.P. : Being and Nothingness, p. 438.
25. DESAN, W. : op. cit., p. 191.
26. HEINEMANN, F.H. : op. cit., pp. 186-187.
27. RAUCHE, G.A. : The Abdication of Philosophy =  
The Abdication of Man, p. 91.
28. See Chapter III pp. 165-184.
29. See ANDERSON T.C. : "Is a Sartrean Ethics Possible?"  
Philosophy To-day, Vol. 14, pp.  
116-140.

30. SARTRE, J.P. : "Existentialism is a Humanism."  
op. cit., p. 308.
31. See ZIVANOVIC, J.K. : "Sartre's Drama: Key to understanding  
his concept of freedom". Modern  
Drama, Vol. XIV, No. 2, pp. 144-154.
32. DE BEAUVOIR, S. : op. cit., p. 46.
33. HEINEMANN, F.H. : op. cit., p. 212.
34. Ibid., pp. 113-115.
35. RAUCHE, G.A. : The Abdication of Philosophy =  
The Abdication of Man, p. 95.
36. HEINEMANN, F.H. : op. cit., p. 115.
37. RAUCHE, G.A. : The Abdication of Philosophy =  
The Abdication of Man, p. 148.
38. SARTRE, J.P. : Situations II, pp. 26-27.
39. SARTRE, J.P. : Being and Nothingness, p. 627.
40. RAUCHE, G.A. : The Abdication of Philosophy =  
The Abdication of Man, p. 147.
41. Ibid., p. 97.
42. AYER, A.J. : "Novelist Philosophers V - Jean-  
Paul Sartre." Horizon, Vol. XII,  
p. 108.
43. SARTRE, J.P. : Being and Nothingness, p. 235.
44. Ibid., p. 268.

45. Ibid., p. 259.
46. AYER, A.J. : op. cit., p. 110.
47. SARTRE, J.P. : Being and Nothingness, p. 354.
48. Ibid., p. 429.
49. HEINEMANN, F.H. : op. cit., p. 177.
50. MARCUSE, H. : op. cit., pp. 335.
51. See Chapter III p. 163.
52. RAUCHE, G.A. : Contemporary Philosophical Alternatives, p. 133.
53. RAUCHE, G.A. : The Abdication of Philosophy = The Abdication of Man, p. 97.
54. Ibid., p. 96.
55. It has come to my attention that, at the recent congress of the International Society of Metaphysics, Professor W. Desan remarked that Sartre had admitted to him his inclination towards anarchism and had changed his views only in his later years. Whether the early Sartre explicitly advocates anarchism as such still seems to me debatable.
56. RAUCHE, G.A. : The Choice, p. 88.
57. As Heinemann already pointed out in Existentialism and the Human Predicament, p. 178.

S U M M A R Y

This dissertation is devoted to a critical examination of Sartre's concept of freedom in the light of the relationship between en-soi and pour-soi. It does so by way of an analysis of his methodological procedure and of the problems facing Sartre in his attempt to derive a concept of freedom" from man's existence rather than his essence. In order to highlight Sartre's new approach (as well as to evaluate it subsequently) the approaches of certain of his influential predecessors are investigated in respect of the question of the relationship between essence and existence and the concept of freedom. In this way Sartre will later be shown to occupy a position in the history of philosophy which had not previously been recognized.

Our interpretation of Sartre's position in the history of philosophy depends upon our conception of the principle of identity. In terms of this principle the way in which a philosopher experiences the world determines the way in which he conceives of man, which, in turn, determines the way in which he expects man to act towards his fellow-man. Although Sartre reverses the position of his predecessors, he, like them, forms his concept of freedom under the principle of identity. The difference is that, in Sartre, the principle of identity is instantiated in a negative way. The conclusion from this is that Sartre's concept of freedom is itself transcendental in character.

Sartre's transcendental/....

Sartre's transcendental freedom is thus conceived in terms of his philosophical model as a whole, that is, from the dialectical relationship between en-soi and pour-soi. Our examination of the epistemological, ontological and ethical implications of this relationship indicates the extent to which Sartre's concept of freedom comes to terms with the perennial epistemological, ontological and ethical problems of philosophy. It is discovered that the ontological difference between en-soi and pour-soi is made to account for knowledge, the absolute and morality, albeit in a very different way from which these topics have normally been treated.

Finally, we considered in how far the many undeniable theoretical and practical difficulties facing Sartre's concept of freedom rendered his entire philosophical enterprise questionable. The ontological difficulties of Sartre's equation of freedom with man's consciousness and with his lack of being are seen to stem from his unwarranted separation of man (natura naturans) from the world (natura naturata). Also his ontological approach to the question of authentic existence is in conflict with the actual experience of man as a finite contingent being. Merely to recognize one's condition as a pour-soi condemned to perpetual estrangement from the en-soi does not provide grounds for leading an authentic existence. Nevertheless, we concluded that, despite its faults, Sartre's concept of freedom possessed undoubtedly merit if it is critically evaluated in the way in which we have

attempted to/...

attempted to do. It will then be seen that it contains potential for both good and evil influences, and that it is up to us to be influenced in whatever way we decide and to accept responsibility for the decision which we take.

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