NAME ELEMENTS IN SARTRE'S THEORY OF FREEDOM

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ERRATA

Page 16: "Part Two" should read "Part Three."

Page 23: "Part Three" should read "Part Four."

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The two most familiar notions in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre are his atheism and his doctrine of the radical freedom of man. These two themes are intimately interwoven, as is obvious from even a cursory reading of Sartre's famous lecture Existentialism.[1] It is this lecture that is most responsible for the popular understanding of Sartre's philosophy. Actually, there are many facets of Sartre's thought not considered in this lecture. The approach I would like to take in this paper involves first of all a brief exposition of the popular notions of Sartre's philosophy, relying upon Existentialism, and then a more detailed consideration of the elements constituting his thought. The primary materials for these details are Sartre's essay The Transcendence of the Ego[2] and his massive tome Being and Nothingness.[3]

PART ONE

THE POPULAR UNDERSTANDING OF SARTRE

"By existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity."[4] Sartre puts us immediately into the setting of his thought. He is a philosopher of man, purely and solely. The two sides of his concern stand out clearly in this passage, indicating his desire to penetrate to the roots of the human problem, and to be satisfied with nothing short of a complete and fully human solution. He tells us of his concern to make human life possible. What does this mean? We must consider the social and political background against which man had been placed at the time of Sartre's major philosophical works. Being and Nothingness appeared immediately after the German Occupation; Existentialism was delivered in 1945. When Sartre speaks of making human life possible, he indicates that he is searching for a value on a commodity that had become very cheap, for a meaning to an enterprise in which his contemporaries had come to despair. The basic elements of Sartre's philosophy, it is true, were formed independently of the Nazi depreciation of man; these elements were present in Sartre's essay on The Transcendence of the Ego, which appeared in 1936; as Herbert Spiegelberg points, out, the

Husserlian context in philosophy is at the root of these elements.[5] As they appear in his early work, they are speculative attempts at scientific grounding; they are the beginnings of an ontology; they are not flavored by the seasoning of social and political elements. But Spiegelberg also indicates that there was more than a purely speculative cast to Sartre's thought even at this early period; phenomenology was for Sartre an answer to personal difficulties, possibly occasioned by the degradation of the human spirit that had occurred in Europe even before the Nazi terrorisms.[6] It is within the framework of the meaning of human life, and even of its possibility as human, that Sartre is operating throughout his philosophy.

The second characteristic of the anthropology of Sartre, suggested in the passage quoted above, is his familiar theme of man as the measure, or the meaning-giver, of all things. There is no truth, there is no action, there are no "things," if there is not human consciousness. This is one of the meanings of the dictum that "existence precedes essence." The existence of human consciousness must be given before there is any meaning, any "whatness." Human subjectivity confers all meaning.[7]

But this famous aphorism has a deeper significance, one connected with Sartre's atheism. Sartre maintains vigorously that there is no human nature, found in all men, making of each individual man a concrete instance of a universal concept. The essence of man would then precede man's historical existence.

Theism is associated with such an essentialistic position; the two examples employed by Sartre are Descartes and Leibniz.

> When God creates He knows exactly what He is creating. Thus, the concept of man in the mind of God is comparable to the concept of paper-cutter in the mind of the manufacturer, and, following certain techniques and a conception, God produces man, just as the artisan, following a definition and a technique, makes a paper-cutter. Thus, the individual man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence.[8]

In a godless world, there is one being whose existence precedes its essence: man. "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself."[9] What does it mean that man first exists?

> Man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future. Man is at the start a plan which is aware of itself, rather than a patch of moss, a piece of garbage, or a cauliflower; nothing exists prior to this plan; there is nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be.[10]

The notion of responsibility follows from the privileged position of existence. If there is no human nature, there are no binding precepts or universal values. We will see in detail in the next section that the spontaneity of human freedom is total, producing all rules of conduct. A man is responsible for his own existence, and also for that of others. The responsibility for others is a complex affair; it means, first of all, that in choosing our own selves, we create an image of what we think all men should be. "We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all."[11] Another meaning of responsibility for others is expressed in Sartre's earlier work, Being and Nothingness. By constituting a world, I cannot help but determine the relative positions of other selves within this world.[12]

The recognition of our twofold freedom is accompanied by anguish, which is simply the feeling of our utter responsibility.

> One should always ask himself, "What would happen if everybody looked at things that way?" There is no escaping this disturbing thought except by a kind of double-dealing. A man who lies and makes excuses for himself by saying "not everybody does that," is someone with an uneasy conscience, because the act of lying implies that a universal value is conferred upon the lie.[13]

Atheism is not an isolated doctrine in Sartre's philosophy; the nonexistence of God is rather a deeply distressing fact which touches on and radically changes all areas of human behavior. If there is no God, there is no a priori Good. If there is no God, then "nowhere is it written that the Good exists, that we must be honest, that we must not lie."[14] Without God, everything is permissible.

Sartre speaks of man as "condemned to be free."[15] Man had nothing to say about his origin, about the foundations of his existence. But total responsibility came into the world with man's meaningless entrance.

> Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life. . . . A man is nothing else than a series of undertakings, . . . he is the sum, the organization, the ensemble of the relationships which make up these undertakings.[16]

Sartre does admit the existence of "a universal human condition."[17] By this he means that man's being is always situational; there are "limits" outlining the projects of man, limits with reference to which we must determine what we shall be.

At the end of the lecture, Sartre returns to the theme of the possibility of human life.

> It is by pursuing transcendent goals that he is able to exist; man, being this state of passing-beyond, and seizing upon things only as they bear upon this passing-beyond, is at the heart, at the center of this passing-beyond. There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This connection between transcendency, as a constituent element of man -- not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of passing beyond -- and subjectivity, in the sense that man is not closed in on himself but is always present in a human universe, is what we call existentialist humanism.[18]

And, in closing the lecture, Sartre indicates the aspect of the God problem most relevant to his philosophy of freedom:

> Existentialism is nothing else that an attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position. . . . Existentialism isn't so atheistic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn't exist. Rather it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing. There you've got our point of view.[19]

The rest of this paper will be a more detailed analysis of the basic components of Sartre's philosophy of freedom. First of all, we will consider the ontological foundations of freedom, then the being of others, and finally that aspect of the God-problem most immediately relevant to the question of freedom.

PART TWO

MAN'S BEING-IN-THE-WORLD

Intrinsic to a proper understanding of Sartre's philosophical enterprise is a consideration of his place in the phenomenological movement. The early writings of Sartre are characterized by constant reference to the achievements of the German phenomenologists, and particularly of Edmund Husserl. There are particular points in Husserl's philosophy which Sartre violently contests, but there is never any indication of doubt with regard to the legitimacy and sufficiency of a phenomenological procedure in philosophy. Sartre credits Husserl with the discovery of the essential nature of all consciousness--that consciousness is intentional, and takes its whole being from intending the object.[20]

Sartre feels however, that Husserl has betrayed his basic insight into the intentionality of consciousness by conferring on intentionality the freakish character of immanence.[21] He accuses Husserl of the error of "pure immanence,"[22] of falling victim to the illusion of immanence.[23] Husserl has flatly contradicted his fundamental insight by adopting an idealistic standpoint and declaring that the noematic correlate of the intentional act is unreal. Basic to Husserl's failure, Sartre feels, is a misconception of the nature of consciousness, a false view of man's being-in-the-world.

Husserl asserted as an absolute fact the existence of a transcendental ego, on the part of the knowing subject, to

serve as a source of the unification and individualization of experience.[24] The phenomenological reduction, Husserl's basic methodological tool (used to eliminate from consideration all of the elements of the natural, naive attitude of men that smack of uncertainty), finally arrived at the residue "Ego cogito cogitata mea."[25]

It is with the ego that Sartre has difficulties. He feels that it is phenomenologically unnecessary to posit a transcendental subjective source of the unification and individualization of experience. The unification of experience is guaranteed by the unification of the objects, and its individualization by intersecting lines of transversal consciousnesses.[26]

The existence of the transcendental ego would also be positively harmful for the successful accomplishment of a phenomenology of man's being-in-the-world. It would introduce into consciousness an opacity. "One congeals consciousness, one darkens it. Consciousness is then no longer a spontaneity, it bears within itself the germ of opaqueness."[27] Intentionality is thus the reason for Sartre's rejection of the transcendental ego. Sartre's effort is towards a purification of phenomenology from all elements which smack of immanence and the opacity of an "egological" consciousness. The key notion in Sartre's understanding of man's being-in-the-world is the concept of consciousness as being-for, weighed down by absolutely no content or personal identity of its own, existing only as a

revelation of the objects which it intends. The reason that a transcendental ego is incapable of establishing contact with independent reality can be summarized in three points:

1. consciousness is necessarily consciousness of itself;
2. consciousness is aware of itself precisely in so far as it is aware of a transcendental object;
3. this sheer spontaneity is impossible if consciousness is weighted down by the presence of an I inhabiting it.

The immediate consciousness of consciousness is "non-positional" in the sense that consciousness is not for itself an object, even though all consciousness is consciousness of itself.[28] As Sartre points out, the conscience de soi which characterizes all consciousness should really be written conscience (de) soi.[29]

Sartre does not deny, however, the experience of an I. He is stating that the non-positional consciousness of consciousness in the positional consciousness of a transcendent object is the basic starting point for a phenomenological study of man's being-in-the-world. Collins refers us to the first two pages of L'Imagination for a description of this primordial given:

> I am looking at this white sheet of paper which is lying on my desk. I perceive its form, its color, its position. These different qualities have characteristics in common. In the first place, they are given to my observation as existences that I can only assert, but whose being does not depend in any way upon my caprice. They are for me, but they are not me. . . . They are present and inert at the same time. This inertness of the sensible content--which has been described so often--is existence in-itself (en-soi). It is useless to discuss whether this sheet of paper is reducible to a collection of representations, or if it is and must be more than that. What is certain is that the "white" which I assert can certainly not be pro-

> duced by my spontaneity. This inert form which exists over against all conscious spontaneities, and which must be observed and learned little by little, is what is called a "thing." In any case, my consciousness can not be a thing, because its mode of existence in itself is precisely that of a being-for-itself (pour-soi). For it, to exist is to have consciousness of its existence. It appears as a pure spontaneity facing the purely inert world of things. We can then posit, at the very outset, two types of existence. It is, in effect, inasmuch as they are inert that things escape the domination of consciousness; it is in their inertness that their autonomy is protected and preserved.[30]

It is obvious that this description is not made at the level of a non-positional and pre-reflective cogito, for in this description consciousness is taken as an object of consciousness. There is, then, for Sartre, a second level of awareness, the level of reflection.

The process of reflection can be divided up as follows: first, an intentional consciousness of a transcendent object, which consciousness is also a non-positional conscience (de) soi; secondly, a continuity between this non-positional conscience (de) soi and a positional reflective consciousness of this original consciousness, which is at the same time a non-positional, pre-reflective conscience (de) soi.

The essential point is that the I appears only at the level of reflection; i.e., as an element in the reflected consciousness.

> There is no doubt about the result: while I was reading, there was consciousness of the book, of the heroes of the novel, but the I was not inhabiting this consciousness. It was only consciousness of the object and non-positional consciousness of itself, . . . There was no I in the unreflected consciousness.[31]

The full import of this analysis can only be felt when we investigate the being that is revealed by the impersonal pre-reflective cogito. Through a series of very difficult (and questionable) analyses, Sartre feels that he has established the following points:

1. the nature of the act of perception (percipere) demands the transphenomenality of a perceiving subject;

2. the nature of the percipi demands the transphenomenality of a being over against the perceiver; that is, the esse of the object is not its percipi. Sartre has eliminated the dualisms of noumenon and phenomenon, of act and potency, and has replaced them with the dualism of finite and infinite. The perceiver grasps at a single moment only a finite number of aspects out of the infinity of possible intentional meanings that can be found in the object.[32] This dualism is maintained within the apodictic framework of a monism of phenomena; the transphenomenal being is not a hidden noumenon. It is very difficult to follow Sartre at this point.[33]

Sartre proposes what he calls an "ontological proof" -- not for the existence of God, of course, but for the existence of the transphenomenal being of the phenomenon. This transphenomenal being is derived with necessity from the pre-reflective being of the percipiens.

> 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, . . . To say that consciousness is consciousness of something means that for consciousness there is no being outside of that precise obligation to be a revealing intuition of something -- i.e., of transcendental being. Not only does pure subjectivity, if initially given, fail to transcend itself to posit the objective; a "pure" subjectivity disappears. What can properly be called subjectivity is consciousness (of) consciousness. But this consciousness (of being) consciousness must be qualified in some way, and it can be qualified only as revealing intuition or it is nothing. Now a revealing intuition implies something revealed. Absolute subjectivity can be established only in the face of something revealed; immanence can be defined only within the apprehension of a transcendent. Consciousness implies in its being a non-conscious and transphenomenal being. . . . 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.[34]

Sartre gives to this transphenomenal being the name l'être-en-soi, being in itself; consciousness is called being-for-itself or l'être-pour-soi. What precisely is the difference between l'être-pour-soi and l'être-en-soi?

First of all, they are utterly irreducible transphenomenal realities. "The preceding reflections have permitted us to distinguish two absolutely separated regions of being: the being of the pre-reflective cogito and the being of the phenomenon."[35]

Secondly, whereas being-in-itself is both uncreated and uncaused (it simply is), and also so self-consistent and self-enfolding as to be neither active nor passive, being-for-itself is self-caused and comes into existence only by revealing being-in-itself. L'être-en-soi is what it is, it is in itself, it is; l'être-pour-soi is "what it is not and is not what it is."[36] This is as far as a pre-ontological investigation can carry us

in the description of the primordial given of man's being-in-the-world.[37]

Sartre begins his properly ontological study of this given with the questions: "What is the synthetic relation which we call being-in-the-world?" and "What must man and the world be in order for a relation between them to be possible?"[38] Sartre inspects two situations in order to arrive at a preliminary answer: the question, and the negative judgment; he arrives at the conclusion that, because human consciousness has a capacity for generating non-being, because man, in every act of knowledge, is the being by whom nothingness comes into the world, the specific activity characteristic of being-for-itself is negation or "nihilation."[39] And if this is the case, human consciousness itself must be totally other than the density and massiveness of full being, it must be its own non-being. "By this we must understand not a nihilating act, which would require in turn a foundation in Being, but an ontological characteristic of the Being required."[40] It is here that we are introduced to the most significant element of the given of man's being-in-the-world, his freedom. The fact of human freedom is established by this description of man's relation with being. The possibility which human reality has to "secrete a nothingness which isolates it"[41] is freedom. The being of man, in so far as he conditions the appearance of nothingness, is freedom. "There is no difference between the being of man and his being-free."[42] The full implications of

man's freedom can only be understood after other elements of the human situation have been uncovered, but the fact of freedom as the possibility of detaching oneself from the density of being by a nihilating withdrawal is conclusively established by a study of man's being-in-the-world.[43]

Our freedom is revealed to us in anguish. Anguish is the specific consciousness of freedom, in the face of my past and my future. Anguish is my consciousness of being my own future, in the mode of not-being. The decisive conduct will emanate from a self which I am not yet. In like manner, my past resolutions are apprehended in anguish as being totally ineffectual for my present being. "The resolution is still me to the extent that I realize constantly my identity with myself across the temporal flux, but it is no longer me -- due to the fact that it has become an object for my consciousness. . . . I am it in the mode of not-being."[44] The condition of my freedom is the ineffectiveness of motives to determine my conduct.

> As soon as we abandon the hypothesis of the contents of consciousness, we must recognize that there is never a motive in consciousness; motives are only for consciousness. And due to the very fact that the motive can arise only as appearance, it constitutes itself as ineffective. Of course it does not have the externality of a temporal-spatial thing; it always belongs to subjectivity and it is apprehended as mine. But it is by nature transcendence in immanence, and consciousness is not subject to it because of the very fact that consciousness posits it; for consciousness has now the task of conferring on the motive its meaning and its importance.[45]

Thus, for Sartre, the root of freedom is the radical intentionality

which is the fundamental insight of the phenomenology which he has postulated as adequate for founding a science of being.

Sartre summarizes the implications of this theory of the pre-reflective cogito in words that are familiar to all who have even a popular understanding of existentialism:

> In what we shall call the world of the immediate, which delivers itself to our unreflective consciousness, we do not first appear to ourselves, to be thrown subsequently into enterprises. Our being is immediately "in situation;" that is, it arises in enterprises and knows itself insofar as it is reflected in those enterprises. We discover ourselves then in a world peopled with demands, in the heart of projects "in the course of realization." . . . All these trivial passive expectations of the real, all these commonplace, everyday values, derive their meaning from an original projection of myself which stands as my choice of myself in the world. . . . As soon as the enterprise is held at a distance from me, as soon as I am referred to myself because I must await myself in the future, then I discover myself suddenly as the one who gives its meaning to the alarm clock, the one who by a signboard forbids himself to walk on a flower bed or on the lawn, the one from whom the boss's order borrows its urgency, the one who decides the interest of the book which he is writing, the one finally who makes the values exist in order to determine his action by their demands. I emerge alone and in anguish confronting the unique and original project which constitutes my being; all the barriers, all the guard rails collapse, nihilated by the consciousness of my freedom. I do not have nor can I have recourse to any value against the fact that it is I who sustain values in being. Nothing can ensure me against myself, cut off from the world and from my essence by this nothingness which I am. I have to realize the meaning of the world and of my essence; I make my decision concerning them, without justification and without excuse.[46]

Possibility thus comes into the world by the presence of human consciousness. Being-in-itself is what it is. In my quest for this self-crystallized state of being, I find the world full of my possibilities, full of values which I lack and shall forever lack, because I am that which is what it is not and is not what it is. Frustration is of the essence of human freedom.

PART TWO

THE BEING OF OTHERS

We have seen that the primary given of man's impersonal and unreflective being-in-the-world establishes that man is free. The full implications of man's freedom can only be understood by an examination of some more details concerning the situation in which man finds himself. First of all, we must consider the question of the existence and meaning of the Other.[47]

My fundamental connection with the Other is found in my being seen by the Other. The look is the key concept in Sartre's philosophy of human relationships. The look of the Other diminishes my status as subject. For I cannot simultaneously perceive the world and apprehend a look fastened on me. "This is because to perceive is to look at, and to apprehend a look is not to apprehend a look-as-object in the world (unless the look is not directed upon me); it is to be conscious of being looked at."[48] But not only am I now an object for the Other; in addition I become an object for myself. This is not however the "self-objectification" which takes place through the reflective act, but a wholly new and unique knowledge, the entrance of the self as an object of the prefelective cogito, as a being in the world of objects, through the intermediary of the look of another. And this Ego which I apprehend completely escapes me, is separated from me by a nothingness which I cannot transcend, for it is not my being-for-myself, but my being-for-the-Other.

"I am my Ego for the Other in the midst of a world which flows toward the Other."[49] The Other's freedom is revealed to me "across the uneasy indetermination of the being which I am for him."[50] A new dimension of my being is established, separated from myself by the Other's freedom. This means that I am for the Other as being-in-itself. I am stripped of my transcendence, and am given a nature, outside my lived freedom. "My original fall is the existence of the Other."[51] The reason that my new being escapes me is that it is a part of the world, of being-in-itself, which I can never attain; and I become alienated from all my possibilities, since they are anticipated and objectified by the Other. My possibility becomes a probability which I guess at as a pure indetermination; the situation, which is the milieu of my primordial being-in-the-world, now escapes me. I remain master of the situation, "but it has one real dimension by which it escapes me, by which unforeseen reversals cause it to be otherwise than it appears for me."[52]

The precise mode of my being-for-the-Other is rooted in the body. There are three dimensions to this consideration: the body as being-for-itself, the body as being-for-the-other, and the body as being-for-myself as known by the Other. This third dimension is the most important for our present purposes. Under this aspect, I am enclosed in the world of objects; I am made an instrument among instruments, whereas my body was for

me the instrument which I am, which cannot be used by any other instrument. And, says Sartre, "this is accompanied by an alienating destruction and a concrete collapse of my world which flows toward the Other and which the Other will reapprehend in his world."[53] It gives rise to an experience of my alienation, "made in and through affective structures." We attribute as much reality to the body-for-the-Other as to the body-for-us. And through the reflective awareness of the body-for-the-Other, we can grasp objectively our body as an object.

The for-itself is primarily relation, the relation of pursued-pursuing with regard to the in-itself. That is, the for-itself flees the in-itself from which it arises, but flees it toward the in-itself, which it cannot escape, "because the for-itself is nothing and it is separated from the in-itself by nothing."[54] When the Other arises, "the in-itself recaptures me at the threshold of the future and fixes me wholly in my very flight, which becomes a flight foreseen and contemplated, a given flight."[55] I am what I am, and my very freedom becomes a given. And the fixation of my flight by the Other is an alienation which I can neither transcend nor know.

Sartre, by means of a fascinating analysis, establishes the ever-present reality of the Other as almost an a priori structure of human existence. "The appearance of a man as an object in the field of my experience is not what informs me that there are men. My certainty of the Other's existence is independent of these experiences and is, on the contrary, that which

makes them possible."[56] The "prenumerical presence of the Other" is often, says Sartre, distorted into a purely formal notion, "the notion of God as the omnipresent, infinite subject for whom I exist."[57]

The first moment in the dialectic of the Other, then, is my apprehension of the Other-as-subject; the intermediary in this apprehension is my assumed objectness, the Me which he refuses by being the Other. But the objectification of the Other can be achieved; I can transcend my being-for-the-Other, and can make of him a being-for-me. It is this constant conflict of totally free consciousnesses to assume the being of the Other that leads to Sartre's famous line in Huis Clos, "Hell is other people." My making an object out of him is the second moment in the dialectic. His negation of me, his putting me "out of play," is the reason for my internal negation of the Other.

> For if there is an Other who puts me out of play by positing my transcendence as purely contemplated, this is because I wrench myself away from the Other by assuming my limit. The consciousness (of) this wrenching away of the consciousness of (being) the same in relation to the Other is the consciousness (of) my free spontaneity. By this very wrenching away which puts the Other in possession of my limit, I am already putting the Other out of play. Therefore in so far as I am conscious (of) myself as of one of my free possibilities and in so far as I project myself toward myself in ordeer to realize this selfness, to that extent I am responsible for the existence of the Other. It is I who by the very affirmation of my free spontaneity cause there to be an Other and not simply an infinite reference of consciousness to itself. The Other then finds himself put out of play; he is now what it depends on me to not-be, and thereby his transcendence is no longer a transcendence which transcends me toward himself but a purely contemplated transcendence, simply a given circuit of selfness.[58]

And "thus the Other becomes now what I limit in my very projection toward not-being-the Other."[59] We see here a very good example of Sartre's theory that consciousness provides meaning for the world, by limiting its infinite aspects.

> The being-in-the-midst-of-the-world which comes to the Other through me is a real being. It is not at all a purely subjective necessity which makes me know him as existing in the midst of the world. Yet on the other hand the Other did not by himself lose himself in the world. I make him lose himself in the world which is mine by the sole fact that he is for me the one who I have to not-be; that is, by the sole fact that I hold him outside myself as a purely contemplated reality surpassed toward my own ends. Thus objectivity is not the pure refraction of the Other across my consciousness; it comes through me to the Other as a real qualification: I make the Other be in the midst of the world.[60]

I can assume one of two attitudes when confronting the Other. The first attitude which Sartre considers is the attitude of assimilating the freedom of the Other, by which I am made an object, identifying myself with that freedom, and thus founding myself in being-in-itself (since the freedom of the Other is what founds my being-in-itself). This attitude is expressed in either love or masochism.

I am, says Sartre, the project of the recovery of my being; and this project involves fundamentally the task of absorbing the Other's freedom. Now my being-as-object is the only relation between me and the Other, and this alone can serve as an instrument in absorbing the Other's freedom.

Sartre says that the lover wants to be loved in return because he wants to possess the consciousness, the freedom of

the Other. Love is not a desire for physical possession alone, because physical possession alone never satisfies. And, while the lover wants to possess freedom as freedom, he simultaneously wishes the freedom of the Other to will its own captivity. This freedom he describes as "a freedom which plays the role of a determinism of the passions and which is caught in its own role."[61] The lover consents to being an object for the Other, but "the object in which the Other's freedom consents to lose itself, the object in which the Other consents to find his being and his raison d'être as his second facticity -- the object-limit of transcendence, that toward which the Other's transcendence transcends all other objects but which it can in no way transcend."[62]

The masochist, on the other hand, makes himself an object for the Other's subjectivity. This is another kind of attempt on the part of l'être-pour-soi to achieve the status of l'être-en-soi, as a freedomless and selfless object for the Other.

The second general class of concrete relations with the Other is expressed by the desire to destroy the freedom of the Other, to submit him completely to the whims of my own subjectivity. This attitude takes the form of either hatred or sadism. The sadist attempts to make the Other a complete object for his subjectivity, to reduce him to the status of a "thing," of inert, non-conscious matter. And hatred is an attempt to cause the complete destruction of the Other through death; in hatred I seek the total abolition of the Other's consciousness.

Sartre says that all of these efforts are, in the last moment, futile. I can never know the Other as subjectivity, can never, while still living, become a complete object for him; nor can I destroy his subjectivity; and even if hatred succeeds in disposing of the Other's life, I in no way gain the solidification in being-in-itself which I have been seeking. I am a useless project.[63]

PART THREE

ATHEISM

Scattered throughout Being and Nothingness are various references to the atheistic framework within which Sartre is operating. Arguments against the existence of God are given; these arguments are rooted in the impossibility of having a pour-soi which would simultaneously be an en-soi; in the contradictory notion of creation; and in the psychological explanation of the genesis of the idea of God as an attempt to render human community possible, "by including myself and all other finite selves as common objects for a transcendent starer, an absolute third party, which can itself never come under our glance as an object."[64] ~~As we mentioned above,~~ It becomes obvious in Existentialism that these arguments are philosophical attempts to justify a pre-philosophical and gratuitous commitment to atheism.

All of these arguments are in some way related to the problem of freedom. But the second argument, concerning what it would mean to be created as a free being, is the most relevant and it is on this argument that we will comment.

Creation itself is impossible, says Sartre.

> For if being is conceived in a subjectivity, even a divine subjectivity, it remains a mode of intra-subjective being. Such subjectivity can not have even the representation of an objectivity, and consequently it can not even be affected with the will to create the objective. Furthermore being, if it is suddenly placed outside the subjective by the

> fulguration of which Leibniz speaks, can only affirm itself as distinct from and opposed to its creator; otherwise it dissolves in him. The theory of perpetual creation, by removing from being what the Germans call Selbständigkeit, makes it disappear in the divine subjectivity. If being exists as over against God, it is its own support; it does not preserve the least trace of divine creation. In a word, even if it had been created, being-in-itself would be inexplicable in terms of creation; for it assumes its being beyond the creation.[65]

The irrelevance of a creating God is even more pointed in the consideration of the creation of a free human consciousness. "The creation of a free being would relieve that being of all responsibility toward, and bond of dependence upon, its creator."[66] Sartre's ontological commitments do not permit him to investigate further the problem of the reconciliation of a free creature and an all-knowing Creator, a problem which, even in the most traditional theistic circles, trails off into mystery.

CONCLUSION

There are many particular points in Sartre's philosophy of human freedom which could be criticized. As Collins suggests,[67] the most basic and destructive criticism has to aim at the initial ontological position of Sartre, founded upon a radical phenomenology. There is another possible criticism, though, which, although not as basic, is more to the point here. This criticism is levelled against the notion of freedom in Sartre's philosophy. By making freedom synonymous with pre-reflective spontaneity, is Sartre not speaking really of a determinism? Is not all spontaneity determined? Man's freedom is rooted precisely in his power to reflect on his spontaneous urges and desires, in order to weigh them against an objective scale. It is in the moment of reflection that man is able freely to choose. Even Sartre's analyses of situations which reveal to him the freedom of man do not fit his theory of impersonal spontaneity. As Collins states, by making conscious subjectivity nothing more than a series of acts rooted in a primal dynamism, Sartre has really transformed the Cogito into a "determined thrust."[68]

> Freedom is here reduced to spontaneity, with the result that it loses all distinctive meaning. The distinction is wiped out between the acts of man in the wide and indifferent sense of whatever man does, and truly human acts that bear the stamp of his deliberate, reasonable choice. If this doctrine is followed through consequentially, it reduces the problem of choice to the sterile tautology that man desires what he desires and does what he does. Freedom

in this vague and unavoidable sense is no peculiar perfection of man and no peculiar perfection of any qualitative group of human acts. Condemnation to freedom would then mean not only that one cannot alienate responsibility from himself but also that one cannot avoid acting freely and well by the very fact of initiating any project with resoluteness aforethought. Basically, the Cogito is a determined thrust.[69]

FOOTNOTES

[1]*L'Existentialisme est une humanisme*. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947).

[2]*The Transcendence of the Ego*. Translated by Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpartick. (New York: Noonday Press, 1957).

[3]*Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel Barnes. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956).

[4]*Existentialism*, p. 12.

[5]See Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), II, pp. 462-467.

[6]*Ibid*., pp. 459-462.

[7]How this is done will be considered in the next section.

[8]*Existentialism*, p. 17.

[9]*Ibid*., p. 18. If we did not have this lecture of Sartre's, it would be very difficult to locate precisely where atheism fits in to the philosophy expressed in *Being and Nothingness*. In *Existentialism*, it is obvious that atheism is an assumption, prephilosophical and all-pervading, and not the result of any demonstrative reasoning.

[10]*Ibid*., p. 19.

[11]*Ibid*., p. 20.

[12]See James Collins, *The Existentialists* (Chicago: Regnery, Gateway Edition, 1952), p. 84.

[13]*Existentialism*, p. 22.

[14]*Ibid*., p. 26. See pp. 27-35 for examples of freedom and responsibility in a godless world.

[15]*Ibid*., p. 27.

[16]*Ibid*., pp. 37ff.

[17]*Ibid*, p. 45.

[18]Ibid., p. 60

[19]Ibid., pp. 60f.

[20]See Sartre's article "Une idée fondamentale de la phenomenologie de Husserl: L'intentionnalité", Situations I (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), pp. 31-35. This article originally appeared in Nouvelle Revue Française (janvier, 1939).

[21]See, for example, Being and Nothingness, pp. lvii, lxi, 73.

[22]Ibid., p. 625.

[23]The Psychology of Imagination (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 83.

[24]Sartre's refutation of Husserl's transcendental ego is given in The Transcendence of the Ego. This essay originally appeared in Recherches Philosophiques, 1936-37, pp. 85-123.

[25]Spiegelberg, p. 140.

[26]Transcendence, pp. 37-40.

[27]Transcendence, pp. 41f. Notice Sartre's appeal to metaphorical language -- a trademark.

[28]See Transcendence, pp. 40ff; Being and Nothingness, pp. lii ff.

[29]See Being and Nothingness, p. liv. In additional to his metaphorical trademark, commented on above, Sartre also frequently employs such clever ways of expressing himself as this conscience (de) soi. It is not an altogether unfounded criticism of his procedure in Being and Nothingness that metaphor and clever aphorisms help him to escape the confining rigour of the principle of contradiction! A. J. Ayer has referred to Sartre's entire philosophical enterprise as a "misuse of the verb 'to be.'" In this vein, it is interesting to note that while Sartre claims to be purifying phenomenology, at the same time he introduces elements that utterly vitiate the strict scientific claims and ideals of Edmund Husserl.

[30] "Je regarde cette feuille blanche, posée sur ma table; je perçois sa forme, sa couleur, sa position. Ces differentes qualités ont des caractéristiques communes: d'abord elles se donnent à mon regard comme des existences que je puis seulement constater et dont l'être ne dépend aucunement de mon

caprice. Elles sont pour moi, elles ne sone pas moi. . . . Elles sont présentes et inertes à la fois. Cette inertie du contenu sensible, qu'on a souvent décrite, s'est l'existence en soi. Il ne sert à rien de discuter si cette feuille se réduit à un ensemble de représentations ou si elle est et doit être davantage; ce qui est certain, c'est que le blanc que je constate, ce n'est certes pas ma spontanéité qui peut le produire. Cette forme inerte, qui est en deça de toutes les spontanéités conscientes, que l'on doit observer, apprendre peu à peu, c'est ce qu'on appelle une chose. En aucun cas, ma conscience ne saurait être une chose, parce que sa façon d'être en soi est précisement un être pour soi. Exister, pour elle, c'est avoir conscience de son existence. Elle apparaît comme une pure spontanéité, en face du monde des choses qui est pure inertie. Nous pouvons donc poser dès l'origine deux types d'existence: c'est, en effet, en tant qu'elles sont inertes que les choses échappent à la domination de la conscience; c'est leur inertie qui les sauvegarde et qui conserve leur autonomie." L'Imagination (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), pp. 1-2. This book was written in 1936; as far as I know, it has never been translated into English.

[31]Transcendence, pp. 46f.

[32]See Being and Nothingness, pp. xlv-lvii.

[33]Collins feels that Sartre does not adequately distinguish his position from that of Kant. See p. 56.

[34]Being and Nothingness, pp. lxif.

[35]Ibid., p. lxiii.

[36]Ibid., pp. lxvff. Sartre's postularory atheism led him to maintain such an unintelligibility of the real. See Collins, p. 60.

[37]Sartre distinguishes between phenomenological description and phenomenological ontology. In the latter, he is following closely in Heidegger's path -- setting forth hermeneutic interpretations far beyond what immediate inspection would seem to warrant. Phenomenology becomes a tool in a philosophy characterized more by content than by method. See Spiegelberg, pp. 449, 472.

Sartre's distinction between ontology and metaphysics is explained in Collins, pp. 47f.

[38]See Being and Nothingness, p. 4.

[39]The two terms in the title L'Être et le Néant refer to the two poles of transphenomenal being.

[40]See Being and Nothingness, p. 23.

[41]Ibid., p. 24.

[42]Ibid., p. 25.

[43]Sartre claims that "by identifying consciousness with a causal sequence indefinitely continued, one transmutes it into a plenitude of being and thereby causes it to return into the unlimited totality of being." Ibid., pp. 25f. It is in an effort to refute all forms of psychological determinism, which would seek to reduce such forms of consciousness as emotion and imagination to determined features for which man is not responsible, that Sartre wrote his two essays in phenomenological psychology, The Emotions and The Psychology of Imagination. The latter work in particular is very suggestive of the major themes of Being and Nothingness.

[44]See Being and Nothingness, pp. 29-33.

[45]Ibid., p. 34.

[46]Ibid., p. 39. In his discussion of the being-for-itself, Sartre also introduces a phenomenological analysis of the attitude of "bad faith," which follows intrinsically and necessarily from the fact of human consciousness. Human consciousness is an escape from personal and full being, and thus necessarily involves duplicity. The fissure of consciousness, by which it is what it is not and is not what it is is the condition for the possibility of bad faith. The attitude of bad faith is structured very much along the lines of the emotions, as Sartre describes them in his short work mentioned above. "It [the emotion] is a transformation of the world. When the paths traced out become too difficult, or when we see no path, we can no longer live in so urgent and difficult a world. All the ways are barred. However, we must act. So we try to change the world, that is, to live as if the connection between things and their potentialities were not ruled by deterministic processes, but by magic." The Emotions (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), pp. 58f. "Its [emotion's] end is not really to act upon the object as such through the agency of particular means. It seeks by itself to confer upon the object, and without modifying it in its actual structure, another quality, a lesser existence, or a lesser presence (or a greater existence, etc.). In short, in emotion it is the body which, directed by consciousness, changes its relations with the world in order that the world may change its qualities." Ibid., pp. 60f. The difference between the duplicity of emotions and that of bad faith is that man is freely responsible for the duplicity of emotions: he can choose to face the situation as it is, in all its brutality and harshness. The duplicity of bad faith is inescapable, however,

since all attempts at sincerity themselves end up as failures. Sincerity aims at reification, solidification of human consciousness after the manner of being-in-itself. This, however, is impossible. See Being and Nothingness, pp. 47-70. This is one of the principle weapons of Sartre in his atheism: the impossibility of a being-for-itself that would simultaneously be a being-in-itself. Consciousness, being what it is not and not being what it is, is prevented from ever attaining the opaqueness and totality of being-in-itself.

[47]Sartre never proves the existence of the Other. The postulation of the sufficiency of the phenomenological method is supposed to replace all need of proof. Sartre merely describes, in great detail, what appears. We will concentrate on some of the more important elements for Sartre's concept of freedom.

[48]Being and Nothingness, p. 258.

[49]Ibid., p. 261.

[50]Ibid., p. 262.

[51]Ibid., p. 263.

[52]Ibid., p. 265.

[53]Ibid., p. 352.

[54]Ibid., p. 362.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid., p. 280. Later, Sartre says: "It would perhaps not be impossible to conceive of a For-itself which would be wholly free from all For-others and which would exist without even suspecting the possibility of being an object. But this For-itself simply would not be man." Ibid., p. 282.

[57]Ibid., p. 281.

[58]Ibid., p. 287.

[59]Ibid., p. 288.

[60]Ibid., p. 292.

[61]Ibid., p. 367.

[62]Ibid., pp. 367f.

[63]Sartre quotes the brilliant description from William Faulkner's Light in August of the death of Joe Christmas, in

order to point out the futility of the attitude of sadism. When the sadist thought he had conquered his victim's freedom, and made a complete object out of him, the look of the victim completely restored the alienation of the sadist's being. "But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself and from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush like a released breath. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever. They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful velleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age, in the mirroring face of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes. It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatful, but of itself along serene, of itself alone triumphant. Again from the town, deadened a little by the walls, the scream of the siren mounted toward its unbelievable crescendo, passing out of the realm of hearing." Quoted in Being and Nothingness, p. 406.

[64]Collins, p. 85.

[65]Being and Nothingness, p. lxiv.

[66]Collins, p. 79.

[67]Ibid., pp. 77f.

[68]Ibid., p. 82.

[69]Ibid.

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