

NAME COMMENTS ON SARTRE'S
PHENOMENOLOGY

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Comments
ELEMENTS
ON
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SARTRE'S
PHENOMENOLOGY

A
very good analysis
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~~Philosophy 210~~
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INTRODUCTION

Skip
"Existentialism" is a name applied almost indiscriminately by many to the philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Heidegger, and Karl Jaspers. All but Sartre have explicitly rejected the term as not descriptive of their own thought; and Marcel, Heidegger and Jaspers, in rejecting the term, have indicated their repugnance to being mentioned in the same breath with Sartre. Sartre's system is certainly the nearest to matching the popular understanding of existentialism. This popular understanding, however, has laid hold of a spirit characteristic of a prevalent cultural phenomenon, rather than a philosophical system.

A properly philosophical understanding of Sartre demands careful research into the philosophical background of his thought, and especially into the precise relation of Sartre to German phenomenology. It is the purpose of this paper to clarify a basic methodological point in Sartre's procedure, against the background of the thought of Edmund Husserl; the precise point at issue is Sartre's conception of man's "being-in-the-world," a conception which serves as the starting point of his philosophical project. We will first of all cast the problem into its historical context, and present a detailed analysis of this question; then we

will attempt to illustrate the approach of Sartre by drawing upon several features of the phenomenological ontology of his Being and Nothingness.

~~PART ONE~~

I. A RADICALIZED PHENOMENOLOGY

The major commentators on the work of Sartre all seem to agree that the central motif of his thought thus far has been the radical freedom of man.¹ It is to this that all of the major factors of his thought are directed, and it is in terms of this that they receive their ultimate explanation. The popular conception of Sartre's existentialism focuses on a heroic philosophy of responsible freedom in an absurd world into which man has been unwittingly and unwillingly hurled. Basically, this is a legitimate interpretation. It only receives its full contextual meaning, though, when viewed against the philosophical background of Sartre's thought.² This background is, as we have said, mainly that of German phenomenology, and particularly the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl.

Indispensable to any understanding of the entire philosophical enterprise of Sartre is a careful and scrupulous study of a very important article which Sartre published early in his philosophical career, "La Transcendance de l'ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique."³ This significant entry serves to define the position of Sartre in the history of the phenomenological movement, for he vehemently contests several of the positions and implications of Edmund

Husserl's phenomenology, and suggests a new approach to this current Continental philosophical method.⁴

Sartre accepts the Husserlian "definition" of consciousness as "intentionality."⁵ But he declares that Husserl has contradicted himself by simultaneously defining consciousness in this fashion, and positing a unifying, actually existing transcendental ego.⁶ Let us study Sartre's mode of argumentation on this point.

A question that can be asked against the background of the Kantian consideration is whether "the I that we encounter in our consciousness [is] made possible by the synthetic unity of our representations, or is it the I which in fact unites the representations to each other?"⁷ For Kant, transcendental consciousness is a set of logical conditions for the possibility of experience; for the neo-Kantians these conditions are made into a reality. "This is the tendency which leads certain writers to ask, for example, what 'transcendental consciousness' can be."⁸

For Husserl, on the other hand, transcendental consciousness becomes an absolute fact, "a real consciousness accessible to each of us as soon as the 'reduction' is performed."⁹ The phenomenological reduction is the basic methodological technique of Husserlian phenomenology; it is reminiscent of Descartes' methodical doubt with its systematic

and ruthless elimination of all that does not smack of absolute certitude. Husserl goes a step beyond Descartes, however. (Looking at the situation from a different angle, he could be said to stop short of Descartes). Husserl suspends all question of existence, for he feels that to doubt existence is to take a position with regard to it. Husserl is interested in the essences intended by consciousness, and since "reality simply does not enter into the question of what things are,"¹⁰ he feels that he can simply bracket the question of existence.

The Cartesian cogito and Husserl's original contribution of the intentionality of consciousness are the foundations of Husserl's phenomenology.

What the cogito first contributed was an apodictic certitude of the subject, afforded by the very fact of consciousness -- not, it is true, the certitude, which Descartes thought he had found, of a substantial subject of consciousness, but rather the certitude of a subjectivity from which all the contingent elements of factuality could be eliminated, leaving only 'pure consciousness' or subjectivity as such.¹¹

The elimination of contingency is accomplished by the epoché or phenomenological reduction, which leads us to "concentrate on the concrete phenomenon in all its aspects and varieties, intuit its essence, analyze and describe it without any consideration of its reality."¹² The residual element can be stated in the formula "ego cogito cogitata mea."¹³ It is the "ego" that we are particularly interested in. Husserl differs from both Hume and Descartes, in addition to his

abovementioned variance with Kant. Hume and Co. had rejected the idea of an identical subject over and above the intentional acts of consciousness, whereas Descartes had interpreted the ego as an immediately intuited substance. The pure ego for Husserl is constitutive of our empirical consciousness by unifying our perceptions and thoughts into an identical frame of subjective reference.¹⁴ "The I is the producer of inwardness."¹⁵

Sartre simultaneously denies the necessity and asserts the encumbrance for phenomenology of the transcendental ego of Husserl. It is interesting and all-important to note that Sartre's reasons for taking the stand which is peculiarly his own are found in the ultimate implications of a doctrine of Husserl which Sartre unqualifiedly accepts: the doctrine of the radical intentionality of consciousness. Thus Husserl is charged with betraying what is most fruitful in his own phenomenology.¹⁶

First of all, the transcendental ego is not necessary, for intentionality, the escape of consciousness from itself, grasps a transcendent object which itself serves to unify the intending consciousness. "The unity of a thousand active consciousnesses by which I have added, do add, and shall add two and two to make four, is the transcendent object 'two and two make four.'"¹⁷

For Sartre, Husserl's transcendental ego is inescapable

pably bound up with his ultimate immanentism and idealism. This is a major factor in Sartre's rejection of Husserl's pure ego.

It is possible that those believing 'two and two make four' to be the content of my representation may be obliged to appeal to a transcendental and subjective principle of unification, which will then be the I. But it is precisely Husserl who has no need of such a principle. The object is transcendent to the consciousnesses which grasp it, and it is in the object that the unity of the consciousnesses is found.¹⁸

This point is brought out more clearly in Sartre's declaration that not only is the pure ego unnecessary for phenomenology, but it is also a hindrance to the intentional activity of consciousness. Sartre here sets forth a key notion in his entire philosophical project, the concept of consciousness as a complete being-for, weighed down by absolutely no content or personal identity of its own and apart from the objects which it intends. In Being and Nothingness, this spontaneity will be developed into a philosophy of the utter, radical freedom of man in the world.

Sartre argues that if a transcendental ego is allowed to an intentional consciousness, contact with some independent reality is impossible, the intentionality which defines consciousness takes on the freakish character of immanence, and the constitution of the objects intended is completely dependent on the activity of consciousness. 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 transcendent object;
3. this sheer spontaneity is impossible if consciousness is weighed down by the presence of an I inhabiting it.

"If one introduces this opacity into consciousness, one thereby destroys the fruitful definition cited earlier. One congeals consciousness, one darkens it. Consciousness is then no longer a spontaneity, it bears within itself the germ of opaqueness."¹⁹

It is through this basic criticism of Husserl that Sartre thus introduces us to the conception of consciousness that means so much in his philosophy. The consequences of this new phenomenological starting-point, this "radicalization of phenomenology,"²⁰ are, says Sartre,

First, the transcendental field becomes impersonal; or, if you like, 'pre-personal,' without an I.

Second, the I appears only at the level of humanity and is only one aspect of the me, the active aspect.

Third, the I think can accompany our representations because it appears on a foundation of unity which it did not help to create; rather, this prior unity makes the I think possible.

Fourth, one may well ask if personality (even the abstract personality of an I) is a necessary accompaniment of a consciousness, and if one cannot conceive of absolutely impersonal consciousness.²¹

Several criticisms of Sartre's procedure thus far are, I think, justified. First of all, as Spiegelberg points out,²² the primary reason that Sartre proposes for eliminating the Husserlian ego (i.e., that it is not necessary for phenomenology), would receive the ~~approach~~, perhaps, of William of

Ockham, but it is a phenomenologically inadequate reason. Phenomenology does not use the razor technique beyond the point of eliminating from consideration those aspects of the naive, natural standpoint of men which lack absolute certitude; if Sartre wants to eliminate the ego of Husserl, he should appeal to experience or the question of certitude, but not simply state that the pure ego is phenomenologically unnecessary.

This criticism is intimately connected with a consideration, which should be kept in mind at every level of criticizing Sartre: he has a dominant penchant for postulating and begging the question. In the matter at hand, he has, first of all, postulated the radical self-sufficiency of the phenomenological technique, and has simply set about the task of "purifying" phenomenology of its Husserlian stains, so that it may be capable of founding an ontology. Secondly, by assuming that intentionality is equivalent to pure, spontaneous lucidity, he begs the question when he asserts that the presence of an I will weight down consciousness to the extent of rendering it incapable of transcending itself and intending the real world. This point is connected with what in Being and Nothingness is referred to as the "ontological proof" of the existence of an independent reality. Contained in the very notion of "intentionality" is the characteristic of transcendence to a "transphenomenal world."

~~PART TWO~~

I. REFLECTION

In the course of his process of eliminating the transcendental ego, Sartre also states the beginnings of his doctrine on the object of consciousness, hinting at his famous "pre-reflective cogito." As we have seen, all consciousness for Sartre is consciousness of itself, but only in so far as it is consciousness of a transcendent object. Sartre calls this immediate consciousness of consciousness "non-positional" in the sense that consciousness is not for itself an object, even though all consciousness is consciousness of itself.²³ As Sartre points out in Being and Nothingness, the conscience de soi which characterizes all consciousness should really be written conscience (de) soi.²⁴

This non-positional consciousness-in-the-world is the basic starting point of Sartre's phenomenology. In Being and Nothingness it becomes the inseparable dyad of l'en-soi and le pour soi. Collins refers us to the first two pages of L'Imagination²⁵ 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. 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 produced 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. 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.²⁶

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, a true "conscience de soi." This is the level of reflection.

The process of reflection for Sartre can be divided up into the following points:

1. an intentional consciousness of a transcendent object, which consciousness is also a non-positional conscience (de) soi;

2. 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.

In this setup, Sartre declares a position opposed to that of Descartes. Sartre would claim that, while the cogito attains to an absolute certitude, the I that is attained is not the I that intends, unifies, and individualizes consciousness as a subject, but is rather an I apprehended in a previous non-positional consciousness of a transcendent object.

We are in the presence of a synthesis of two consciousnesses, one of which is consciousness of the Other. . . . Now, my reflecting consciousness does not take itself for an object when I effect the Cogito. What it affirms concerns the reflected consciousness. Insofar as my reflecting consciousness is consciousness of itself, it is non-positional consciousness. It becomes positional only by directing itself upon the reflected consciousness which itself was not a positional consciousness of itself before being reflected. Thus the consciousness which says I think is precisely not the consciousness which thinks. Or rather it is not its own thought which it posits by thisthetic act. We are then justified in asking ourselves if the I which thinks is common to the two superimposed consciousnesses, or if it is not rather the I of the reflected consciousness.²⁷

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.²⁸

The reason, again, is found in the intentional nature of consciousness, with its basic act of intuiting essential

structures.

What is the I? It is, first of all, an existent, which gives itself to reflective consciousness as transcendent. There is a special intuition of reflective consciousness which apprehends the I behind the reflected consciousness. The I is a new object, affirmed only by reflective consciousness; it is not therefore on the same level as the original unreflected act, which can exist without being reflected upon, nor on the same level as the object of the reflected consciousness. The I, itself a product of the natural, naive attitude of men, must fall before the radicalized phenomenological reduction, since it is not a part of the original pre-reflective cogito which is a man's being-in-the-world. "The certain content of the pseudo-'Cogito' is not 'I have consciousness of this chair,' but 'There is consciousness of this chair.' This content is sufficient to constitute an infinite and absolute field of investigation for phenomenology."²⁹

In the Conclusion to The Transcendence of the Ego, Sartre anticipates the major themes of Being and Nothingness, in terms of his new meaning for man's being-in-the-world. The spontaneity of consciousness is portrayed as a "nothing which is all because it is consciousness of objects,"³⁰ as "a sphere of absolute existence, of pure spontaneities, which are never objects and which determine their own existence,"³¹ as "individuated and impersonal spontaneity" which

"determines its existence at each instant, without our being able to conceive anything before it. Each instant of our conscious life reveals to us a creation ex nihilo." ³² The frightening aspect of this utter projection of spontaneous freedom which is man constitutes pure consciousness in the dread and anguish which are the inescapable marks of man's life.

Up to here

~~PART THREE~~

III. TWO THEMES OF BEING AND NOTHINGNESS

We can now proceed to a more meaningful consideration of two of the most familiar notions of Sartre's philosophy. We will first take a longer look at man's being-in-the-world, and then investigate the being of others.

The full import of the analysis we have made 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.³³ This dualism is maintained within the apodictic framework of a monism of phenomena; the transphenomenal being is not a hidden noumenon.

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

As we have seen, 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 that man is free 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 in so far 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 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.

It is against this background that Sartre offers one of his arguments against the existence of God. As Spiegelberg points out, the basic problem of Sartre's philosophy is precisely that of reconciling being with man's freedom. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre attempted to give his solution in the form of an ontology.⁴⁷ What he arrived at, as we have seen, is a bipolar transphenomenal reality: consciousness as purely lucid, as a questioning activity, as the heart of nothingness; and being as opaque, dense, solid, and stable. Consciousness is a hole in being; it

eats away at being; it pursues the stability of being-in-itself. Man seeks to be a conscious being-in-itself; but this is an intrinsically contradictory notion. Man seeks to become God, and this makes man a useless passion. Man then projects into reality a transcendent Being who realizes in Himself the copresence of these two intrinsically contradictory states.⁴⁸

Another basic application intelligible only in the light of Sartre's phenomenology of the ego is his doctrine on the being of Others.⁴⁹

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."⁵⁰ 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 prereflective 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."⁵¹ The Other's freedom is revealed to ^{me} "across the uneasy indetermination of the being which I am for him."⁵² 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."⁵³ 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."⁵⁴

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."⁵⁵ 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."⁵⁶ 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."⁵⁷ 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."⁵⁸ 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."⁵⁹

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, 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

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 order 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.⁶⁰

And "thus the Other becomes now what I limit in my very projection toward not-being-the-Other."⁶¹ 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.⁶²

I can assume one of two attitudes when confronting the Other. The first attitude which Sartre considers is ^Sthe 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 free-

dom 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."⁶³ 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~~ transcends all other objects but which it can in no way transcend."⁶⁴

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 analysis, futile. I can never know the Other as subjectivity, can never, while still loving, 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.⁶⁵

FOOTNOTES

¹See, for example, James Collins, The Existentialists (Chicago: Regnery, 1952); Wilfrid Desan, The Tragic Finale (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); Maurice Natanson, A Critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's Ontology (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1951); *idem*, "Jean-Paul Sartre's Philosophy of Freedom," Social Research 19 (1952), pp. 364-380; Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960).

²A complete explanation of Sartre's thought would of course have to outline the details of more than just his philosophical background. Literary factors are important; a biographical study is badly needed; of special relevance is the socio-political milieu of France during the period of Sartre's philosophical coming-of-age.

³This article originally appeared in Recherches Philosophiques, VI, 1936-37, pp. 85-123. It has been translated into English by Forest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick: The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness (New York: The Noonday Press, 1957). The subtitle is misleading, since Sartre did not adopt the trade name of "Existentialism" until after the writing of Being and Nothingness (1943).

Spiegelberg (*ibid.*, pp. 459-462) describes Sartre's prephenomenological period, marked by an extreme skepticism, especially about the central problem of the relation of man's freedom with being. From 1932 to 1934, Sartre studied in Germany, and had personal contact with Martin Heidegger.

⁴Two later sources which we will employ are Sartre's article "Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: L'Intentionnalité," Situations I (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), pp. 31-35; and the Introduction to L'Être et le néant (Paris: Gallimard, 1949, fifth edition). The article on Husserl originally appeared in Nouvelle Revue Française (janvier 1939). L'Être et le néant has been translated into English by Hazel E. Barnes: Being and Nothingness (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956). The introduction is on pp. xlvii-lxvii.

⁵The Transcendence of the Ego, pp. 38, 38, 41. "Une idée fondamentale" sounds a jubilant note at the triumph of Husserl in refuting once and for all the "assimilation" theories of consciousness and proclaiming the indubitable fact of the transcendence of human knowledge. Sartre in this article

is tactically ignoring the idealism of Husserl. In Being and Nothingness, however, he roundly castigated Husserl for his strange type of intentionality which, while conferring upon knowledge the indispensable characteristic of being knowledge of, yet remains an immanent intentionality completely constructive of the very being of its intended objects.

It is Sartre who declares that Husserl has defined consciousness as intentionality. The translators of Transcendence assert that "Husserl never concerned himself with a final definition, but certainly he regarded intentionality as essential to consciousness." P. 114, note 7.

⁶Transcendence, p. 38.

⁷Ibid., p. 34.

⁸Ibid., p. 33. The error involved in this case is, says Sartre, a case of conceiving transcendental consciousness as a pre-empirical unconscious. But "the preoccupation of Kant was never with the way in which empirical consciousness is in fact constituted. He never deduced empirical consciousness, in the manner of a Neo-Platonic process, from a higher consciousness, from a constituting hyper-consciousness. For Kant, transcendental consciousness is nothing but the set of conditions which are necessary for the existence of an empirical consciousness. Consequently, to make into a reality the transcendental I, to make of it the inseparable companion of each of our 'consciousnesses,' is to pass on fact, not on validity, and to take a point of view radically different from that of Kant." Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁰Quentin Lauer, S.J., The Triumph of Subjectivity (New York: Fordham University Press, 1958), p. 49.

¹¹Ibid., p. 47.

¹²Spiegelberg, Vol. I, p. 135. Spiegelberg, in a very interesting article entitled "Husserl's Phenomenology and Existentialism" (Journal of Philosophy, LVII, 1960, pp. 62-74), lists the following as the most important constants in Husserl's phenomenology: "1. Phenomenology is a rigorous science in the sense of a coherent system of propositions; it goes even beyond positive science by aiming at absolute certainty for its foundations and at freedom from presuppositions that have not passed phenomenological scrutiny. 2. Its subject matter is the general essences of the phenomena of consciousness; among these phenomena, the phenomenologist distinguishes between the intending acts and the

intended objects in strict parallel; he pays special attention to the modes of appearance in which the intended referents present themselves; he does not impose any limitations as to the content of these phenomena.

"3. Phenomenology is based on the intuitive exploration and faithful description of the phenomena within the context of the world of our lived experience (Lebenswelt), anxious to avoid reductionist oversimplifications and overcomplications by preconceived theoretical patterns.

"4. In order to secure the fullest possible range of phenomena and at the same time doubt-proof foundations it uses a special method of reduction which suspends the beliefs associated with our naive or natural attitude and shared even by science; it also traces back the phenomena to the constituting acts in a pure subject, which itself proves to be irreducible.

"5. Its ultimate objective is the examination and justification of all our beliefs, both ordinary and scientific, by the test of intuitive perception." P. 64.

¹³The Phenomenological Movement, p. 140.

¹⁴See Sartre, Transcendence, pp. 35, 37f.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 38. (Sartre is here, of course, expressing the doctrine of Husserl).

¹⁶See, for example, Being and Nothingness, pp. lvii, lxi, 73.

¹⁷Transcendence, p. 38.

¹⁸Ibid. On p. 625 of Being and Nothingness, Sartre accuses Husserl of the error of "pure immanence." And, on p. 83 of The Psychology of Imagination, he states that Husserl was "a victim of the illusion of immanence." (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948). This is a translation of L'Imaginaire, which was first published in 1940.

¹⁹Transcendence, pp. 41 f. Notice the metaphorical language -- a Sartrean trademark.

²⁰Collins, p. 43. Collins says, "[Husserl] introduced a special zone of reality so that phenomenological studies could be made to yield results relevant for a theory of being. But this supposes that the inquiry into essential structures and the conditions of intentionality is not adequate by itself

to found an ontology. Sartre calls this assumption into question." Ibid. We might add that Sartre also feels that it is precisely the introduction of the pure ego, with its immanentist consequences, which renders impossible an ontology within the Husserlian framework.

²¹Transcendence, pp. 36f.

²²"Husserl's Phenomenology and Existentialism," pp. 71f.

²³Transcendence, p. 41.

²⁴See Being and Nothingness, p. liv. In addition to his metaphorical trademark, mentioned 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 metaphors 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.

²⁵(Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948). This work, one of Sartre's earliest, was originally published in 1936. It has never been translated into English.

²⁶pp. 1f. (Translation mine).

²⁷Transcendence, pp. 44f.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 46f.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 52ff.

³⁰Ibid., p. 93.

³¹Ibid., p. 96.

³²Ibid., p. 98f.

To here — ³³See Being and Nothingness, pp. xlv-xlvii.

³⁴Ibid., pp. lxif.

³⁵Ibid., p. lxiii.

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

³⁷Sartre 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.

³⁸See Being and Nothingness, p. 4.

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

⁴⁰See Being and Nothingness, p. 23.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 24.

⁴²Ibid., p. 25.

⁴³Sartre 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.

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

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁶Ibid., 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.

⁴⁷See Spiegelberg, pp. 455-468.

⁴⁸Collins, p. 72.

⁴⁹Sartre 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.

⁵⁰Being and Nothingness, p. 258.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 261.

⁵²Ibid., p. 262.

⁵³Ibid., p. 263.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 265.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 352.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 362.

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⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., 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.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 281.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 287.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 288.

⁶²Ibid., p. 292.

⁶³Ibid., p. 367.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 367f.

⁶⁵Sartre 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 valleys, 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 threatening, but of itself alone 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.

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