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An Analysis of the Paradoxes in Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism

David Ronald Burke

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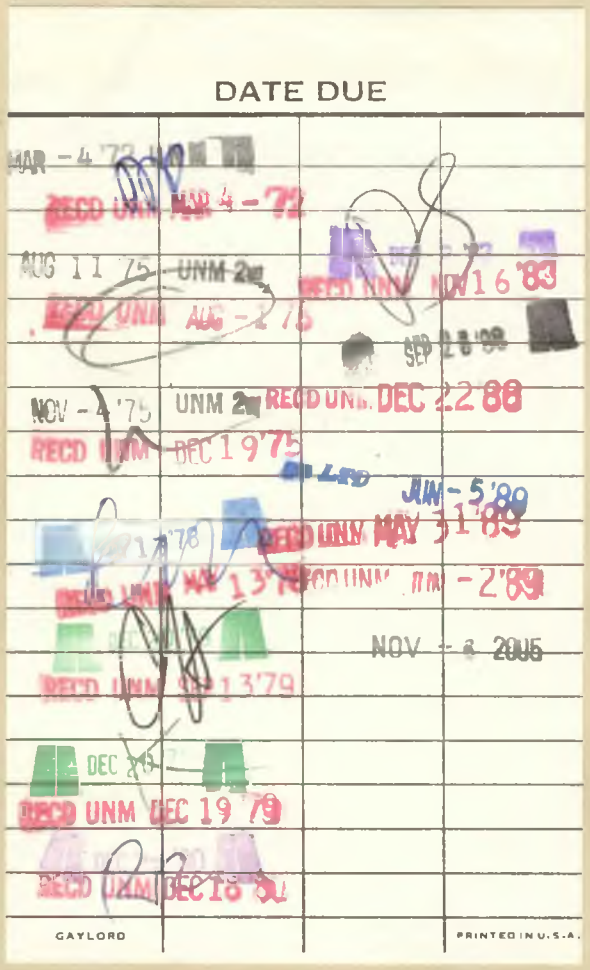

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE PARADOXES IN JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S EXISTENTIALISM

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D. R. Burke

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Since Jean-Paul Sartre's debut as a philosopher in 1943, with the publication of his Being and Nothingness, he has been one of the most controversial figures in modern philosophy. Few men have exercised such a strong influence in so short a time or met with such harsh criticism by professional philosophers and critics. While some of these indictments of Sartre's philosophy may contain elements of truth, most critics have overlooked one of the most significant aspects of his philosophy, namely, the role of the paradox. Until such an analysis is made, Sartre's philosophy can be neither fully appreciated nor adequately criticized.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study is: (1) to examine Sartre's intellectual background in search of those elements which have led to the development of paradoxical concepts; (2) to collect and examine current criticisms of Sartre's philosophical position; and (3) to show why the interpretation of his philosophy as an embodiment of paradox necessitates a re-evaluation of critical attacks.

Importance of the study. Few systems have been so frequently or thoroughly analyzed as Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism. Yet, in spite of the large number of critical

reviews, books, and articles dealing with his contributions, no systematic study of his thought as paradox has been made, so far as the writer knows. Even those critics who detected certain paradoxical elements within Sartre's Existentialism, failed to complete their analysis of this important aspect. Too often, even fairly perceptive critics would be misled by apparent contradiction, and would fail to pursue Sartre's thought to its conclusion, the paradox. The writer, by examining to what extent Sartre's system can be validly called a philosophy of paradox, claims to have discovered a significant technique for understanding Sartre's mode of thought, and at the same time has suggested a possible criterion for judging the validity and importance of the criticisms directed against Sartre's particular variety of Existentialism.

II. DEFINITION OF PARADOX

Paradox. Paradox is interpreted as meaning a statement or proposition which is seemingly self-contradictory or absurd, and yet which expresses a truth. In examining Sartre's philosophy, both the element of apparent self-contradiction or absurdity and the higher truth implicit within the proposition were analyzed. Without the presence of both aspects, Sartre's ideas could not be called paradoxical in the true sense of the term. Without absurdity, the truth involved would simply be a clear, explicit statement. Without the implication of a truth, the statement would remain a simple contradiction and would therefore be invalid.

All other terms of a technical nature are defined in the body of the thesis and will not be dealt with separately at this point.

CHAPTER II

INFLUENCES AND POSSIBLE SOURCES OF PARADOX WITHIN SARTRE'S PHILOSOPHY

Although many philosophers and philosophical systems may have contributed to Sartre's total intellectual development, only those which appear to have had the most direct influence upon the paradoxes within Sartre's philosophy have been considered. This is not to deny that some of the philosophers who were omitted may have been of some importance to the evolution of certain of his ideas; but a survey of all the possible sources and personal influences upon Sartre, as a man and a thinker, would have gone far beyond the scope of this investigation. Such a focusing of attention, dwelling upon a central trend within an entire system, will enable a closer study and analysis than a mere summation of all possible causative factors. With this goal and emphasis in mind, a brief discussion of major sources, relevant to the paradoxes within Sartre's thought, follows.

MAJOR INFLUENCIAL FIGURES

The order in which the following philosophers have been placed is dependent not upon their general influence upon Sartre, but upon their more direct contributions in respect to his paradoxical ideas. No critic or follower of Sartre would

seriously doubt that Martin Heidegger was the most important single influence in regard to Sartre's total philosophy, but Heidegger is less important than Soren Kierkegaard for the purposes of this study. Heidegger's influence, as well as that of Hegel, Husserl, Nietzsche, and Fichte, will also be discussed; but at all times the emphasis will be only upon each thinker as a possible source of the paradoxes within Sartre's outlook.

The theme of absurdity resounds throughout Sartre's entire system and becomes the very basis upon which, through the paradox, a higher truth emerges. Sartre himself makes no explicit statement concerning the origin of this notion in his thought, but in spite of his silence in this matter, many sensitive critics have noticed the relationship between his thought and that of Soren Kierkegaard. As F. H. Heineman has observed, "absurdity" for both Kierkegaard and Sartre, is a quality belonging to the highest truth. The Christian faith for Kierkegaard, and man's existence for Sartre, is regarded as an absurdity and a paradox.[1] Marjorie Grene furthers this suggestion by saying that Kierkegaard turns from the mere tautology to the paradox; from systems of impersonal truth, such as that of Hegel, to a more passionately realized subjective truth which is meaningful precisely because it is absurd

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[1]F. H. Heinemen, Existentialism and the Modern Predicament, (New York, 1958), p. 43.

from start to finish.[2] Such a statement from Kierkegaard could well be the prototype for Sartre's variations upon the theme of absurdity.

The note of absurdity is not the only basic concept which Sartre may have borrowed from Kierkegaard however. He also shares the violent protest against Hegel, which Kierkegaard voiced so clearly, and does so apparently for the same reasons. Helmut Kuhn reminds us that both Kierkegaard and Sartre deny the possibility of mediation through an automatic process of synthesis, which is the very principle of Hegel's dialectic.[3] Alfred Stern agrees, when he states that Kierkegaard rejected Hegel's solvent mediation of oppositions by means of an automatic dialectical process which dealt only with timeless ideas and hollow generalities.[4] Both Stern and Kuhn go on to note that Kierkegaard and Sartre keep the notion of crisis found in Hegel, even though they reject his synthetic method, a rejection which had serious implications in the philosophies of both men. Stern even suggests that it was just such a rejection of resolution between opposing forces which caused Kierkegaard to see the whole world in terms of an "either-or" relation.[5] A

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[2]Marjorie Grene, Dreadful Freedom: A Critique of Existentialism, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1948), p. 21.

[3]Helmut Kuhn, Encounter with Nothingness, (Hinsdale Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), p. 125.

[4]Alfred Stern, Sartre: His Philosophy and Psychoanalysis, (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1953), p. 5.

[5]Ibid., p. 25.

similar rejection on the part of Sartre seems to have resulted in his seeing the world basically as a realm of extremes, a view which makes the drama of choice of central importance in Sartre's existential outlook.

Not only are Kierkegaard and Sartre alike in their general rejection of Hegel, but they also share in their both using selected parts of his system. As Marjorie Grene has pointed out in regard to this point, Kierkegaard was revolted by the sterility of Hegel's system, but still referred to himself as a "dialectical poet."[6] In a similar manner, Sartre, although critical of Hegel, still uses Hegel's method to a limited degree and even entitles a part of the opening chapter of his most important work Being and Nothingness, "The Dialectical Concept of Nothingness."[7]

Since the relationship of Kierkegaard and Sartre to Hegel has just been noted, it might be well to mention here that one of the most basic paradoxical elements in Sartre's system probably came from Hegel. As James Collins has suggested, the idea that consciousness is productive because it is the power of negativity, a central theme throughout Sartre's Being and Nothingness, is merely Hegel's hymn to the omnipotent richness of negativity in The Phenemonology of Spirit, repeated

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[6]Grene, op. cit., p. 29.

[7]Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Barnes Translation, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 12.

in a minor key.[8] Herbert Marcuse agrees, feeling that Sartre's Being and Nothingness is to a large part a restatement of Hegel's The Phenemonology of Spirit.[9]

One of the seemingly most contradictory notions in all of Sartre's philosophy, namely that of the "For-itself," which contains nothingness coiled within it, and is the very essence of man, is distinguished by Sartre's using Hegel's basic dialectical method, minus the third stage of synthesis. As Helmut Kuhn has summarized it, Sartre's distinction between the "For-itself" and the "In-itself," which is the very basis of his Being and Nothingness, involves the use of Hegel's method and terminology.[10]

Martin Heidegger is important not only because of his general influence upon Sartre, but also for his specific suggestions which served as the foundation for apparent contradictions leading eventually to an implicit truth. John Wild, commenting upon Heidegger's definition of "Dasein," shows not only the obvious influence which this concept had upon Sartre's view of man, but also the paradox implicit in Heidegger's view. As Wild has stated, "Dasein is always shead of himself . . . He chooses how he is going to be. His existence is thus prior

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[8]James Collins, The Existentialists: A Critical Study, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 62.

[9]Herbert Marcuse, "Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's L'Etre et le Neante," Philosophy and Phenemonlogical Research, VIII, (March, 1948), p. 309.

[10]Kuhn, op. cit., p. 48.

to what he is."[11] This statement, which is apparently contradictory, is almost identical with Sartre's definition of the "For-itself" or human reality. Referring to the "For-itself," Sartre says, "It is the obligation of the For-itself never to exist except in the form of an elsewhere in relation to itself, to exist as a being which effects in itself a break in being."[12]

Heidegger's view of freedom, discussed in an article by Jean Wahl, shows the same contradictory overtones, used by Sartre to reveal a truth in a paradoxical fashion. As Wahl observes concerning Heidegger's concept of freedom ". . . freedom is the foundation of foundation itself . . . but this freedom is itself limited. It is an abyss, but nevertheless has bounds."[13] Sartre echoes this idea when he says ". . . no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself."[14]

Wilfrid Desan suggests yet another vital and paradoxical idea of Heidegger, namely, Heidegger's concept of "dread." For Heidegger, the "dreadful state," is the state in which we become aware of what we are not. "Dread" is the very process by which

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[11]John Wild, The Challenge of Existentialism, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955), p. 66.

[12]Sartre, op. cit., p. 78.

[13]Jean Wahl, "Freedom and Existence in Some Recent Philosophies," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, VIII (June, 1948), p. 542.

[14]Sartre, op. cit., p. 439.

our being emerges surrounded with non-being.[15] Marjorie Grene investigates the same concept and suggests that "dread" for Heidegger is the recognition of our radical finitude; this very "dread" then allows us to escape the snares of the present, to become suddenly aware of our freedom and, in a free resolve, to create a genuine future.[16] This view is almost identical with Sartre's suggestion that "anxiety" is the process by which we realize our contingency, a state which is then resolved by the awareness of our absolute freedom.

At this point Heidegger and Sartre both appear to be trapped in apparent contradictions. Heidegger's "dread" and Sartre's "anxiety" both cause worry or care; yet both men claim this very process frees man and makes him capable of forming a meaningful existence. Fritiz-Joachim Von Rintelen suggests that this "dreadful" or "anxious" state is temporary and is the very process which causes man to come to himself. It is in the very process of worry that man can find what constitutes his existence.[17] Sartre simply converts Heidegger's "dread" to "anxiety" and incorporates it as a part of his developing system. Sartre uses the element of "anxiety" as a bridge to hope, just as Heidegger employs "dread" as a tool for revealing to man his truest nature.

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[15]Wilfrid Desan, The Tragic Finale, (New York: Harper and Brothers) p. 17.

[16]Grene, op. cit., p. 53.

[17]Fritz-Joachim Von Rintelen, "The Existentialism of Martin Heidegger," The Personalist, XXXVIII (July, 1957), p. 245.

Another element of a paradoxical nature which Sartre has incorporated into his system is the contradictory search for truth, which Von Rintelen mentioned in regard to Heidegger. As Von Rintelen said, "Every disclosure of truth is for Heidegger, simultaneously a reconcealment of truth."[18] Sartre, in dealing with the problem of the ego, which is an important object in man's search for truth, suggests the same basic notion. Sartre says that man's elusive self or ego is never there except when it is searched for; "it can only be seen out of the corner of the eye."[19] In the course of Sartre's analysis however, he explains why this view is not necessarily contradictory, and shows how such an insight can actually lead man to greater understanding, instead of robbing him of what little understanding he has.

Edmund Husserl, the thinker who gave Heidegger and Sartre their valuable tool of inquiry, the phenomenological method, contributes the next source of paradox with Sartre's system. Husserl's importance in this respect comes from the basic assumption of his phenomenological method. As he has summarized this method, it holds that, instead of there being a cleavage between appearance and reality, appearance is reality.[20] By this Husserl did not wish to imply any sort of

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[18] Ibid., p. 376.

[19] Jean-Paul Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1957), p. 88.

[20] Edmund Husserl, "The Natural Standpoint and Its Suspension," Contemporary Philosophy, James L. Jarrett Editor, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954), pp. 459-465.

a naive realistic position; instead he meant that a systematic analysis of those things experienced, both perceptual and conceptual, could eventually result in a pure science based upon solidly grounded first principles. Sartre preferred to apply this method in the realm of ontology, the pure science of being. A combination of Husserl's basic suggestions and Sartre's own phenomenological analysis initiated Sartre's real philosophical career.

Alfred Stern, commenting upon the fact that Sartre used this method in the realm of ontology, suggests that the very science of ontology itself may be inherently contradictory, or at least hopelessly circular in nature. In support of this view Stern refers to the famous statement of Pascal, which deals with the problem faced by anyone who attempts to define being, with whatever method. As Pascal argued, one cannot define a word without first beginning by saying that the word one is trying to define exists, whether one states this directly, or merely implies it. In order to define a word, it would be necessary to at least say that the word exists, but this is to use in the definition the word that has to be defined.[21]

If Pascal's objection is true an inherent circularity appears to be the lot of the ontologist, a circularity which the ontologist cannot escape and still avoid self-contradiction. This character of ontology may help explain some of Sartre's

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[21]Alfred Stern, "Sartre and French Existentialism," The Personalist, XXIX, (January, 1948), p. 22.

difficulties, since his interest in ontology is one of the most dominant themes within his philosophy. The most that can be said of Sartre's treatment of ontology is that he has avoided many possible traps which yawn open before the ontologist, and has made the science of ontology into a living method, a method which can be used to examine human life and the meaningful realm of man's existence.

Albert Levi would like to add the name of Friedrich Nietzsche to the list of those who have influenced Sartre. Levi feels that Sartre's atheism, the source of so much of his paradoxical thought, is basically a restatement of Nietzsche's cry, "God is dead!"[22] For Nietzsche, as for Sartre, God is absent from man's universe and all that remains behind is the ancient paraphernalia of remorse, guilt, and bad conscience. For Nietzsche, God's absence means that man is now free to build toward the "Ubermensch;" for Sartre, the absence of God is necessary if man is to have absolute freedom. Both of their arguments are somewhat paradoxical, for there is left the apparent contradiction of a Godless morality, for both systems. Nietzsche solves the problem by showing that a renewed hope in man can replace the dead God, and that the aim of working toward the betterment of man can replace the morality of traditional religion. Sartre argues that the fact God does not exist deprives man of divine grace, intercession, and salvation; God's

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[22]Albert William Levi, Philosophy and the Modern World, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 388.

absence does give man freedom in its purest form however, which for Sartre is far more important.

The last figure to be mentioned in this chapter is Johann Gottlied Fichte, for Helmut Kuhn sees a considerable similarity between Fichte's famous Wissenschaftslehre and Sartre's Being and Nothingness. Kuhn says that Fichte begins with the ego which produces the non-ego and then makes these two terms operate against each other in a dialectical fashion. Kuhn feels that the ego and non-ego of Fichte become the "For-itself" and "In-itself" of Sartre.[23] Since Sartre's conception of the "For-itself" and "In-itself" are so important to his basic paradoxes, Fichte's role could hardly be ignored.

Kuhn could have expanded upon Fichte's influence had he desired, for there are other parallels. He could have pointed out that both men rejected the idea of a transcendent unknown reality. Both men insist that the mind or consciousness cannot be limited by anything and still claim supremacy. Just as Fichte argues that any limitation of the mind must come from within, so Sartre argues that man's absolute freedom is its own limitation. And last, but certainly of considerable importance, is the insistance on the part of both thinkers that everything can be deduced from the nature of the human consciousness, since it is the one reality of which we are sure.

During his career as a professional philosopher and teacher of philosophy, Sartre came into contact with a wide

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[23]Kuhn, op. cit., p. 144.

spectrum of thought. He has been immersed in many systems and may have been influenced in ways too subtle even for him to recognize. To list all of the possible factors which may have influenced Sartre would be to recreate a voluminous history of philosophy. This volume could become so diffuse and ponderous that Sartre's own thought would be swallowed up in the deluge of currents and cross-currents of conceivable causal elements. Since this study has focused its emphasis upon Sartre's own philosophical system, and not merely the sources of his ideas, the brief list already enumerated should prove sufficient.

CHAPTER III

THE PARADOXES IN SARTRE'S PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The present chapter is the actual core of the study, for its purpose is to present those concepts of Sartre which seem to be paradoxical in the special sense of the term. The emphasis throughout the following section will be upon Sartre's most basic concepts and will be presented by direct quotations from his own works whenever possible. Only those critical evaluations which are especially relevant and reveal a considerable degree of insight into Sartre's thought will be cited. In other words, only critical opinion of the third variety, as distinguished in Chapter IV, will be used.

Merely because the concepts presented in this chapter are said to contain statements of truth, does not necessarily mean that the author of this thesis accepts the total implications of Sartre's position. The writer's contention is that Sartre's philosophy contains many elements of truth which are usually missed by those blinded by the seeming self-contradictions to be found throughout his work. There is a significant difference between discovering meaningful concepts within a framework of thought and adopting the entire framework as one's own. The present study is not intended as a missionary tract

for Sartre's brand of Existentialism. It is an attempt to evaluate fairly an important intellectual figure.

In dealing with the paradoxes in Sartre's philosophy, the following scheme will be employed. First, there will be a statement of the basic concept, either in Sartre's own words or in a paraphrase. Next, the contradictory elements will be indicated and the problem which must be resolved will be made explicit. And last, Sartre's own paradoxical resolution will be given.

The order of presentation throughout the remainder of this chapter will be: (1) Sartre's view of the "In-itself" and the "For-itself," so basic to his entire system, will be defined. (2) The idea of Nothingness will be examined and its relation to human reality, consciousness, and freedom made explicit. (3) Human consciousness itself will be investigated. (4) Sartre's all-important view of freedom will be examined with particular emphasis upon the way in which freedom can be maintained in spite of obstacles, things and "causes," a past, responsibility, finitude, established moral signs, and the existence of other persons. (5) Sartre's position as a humanist will be discussed. It will be shown that his system is basically humanistic in spite of its use of such terms as "abandonment," "anxiety," and "despair." (6) Sartre's paradoxical avoidance of solipsism, in spite of his extreme emphasis upon the individual and his general denial that inter-personal relationships can ever be successful, will be demonstrated. (7) The question

will be raised as to how Sartre can provide his followers with an ethical system without contradicting himself.

ENUMERATION OF PARADOXICAL ELEMENTS

Before a complete analysis of Sartre's paradoxical notions can be attempted, one must become familiar with Sartre's special terminology. The two most basic terms in his entire philosophical system are "Being-in-itself," and "Being-for-itself." These will be referred to from this point on simply as "In-itself" and "For-itself." Sartre's central work, Being and Nothingness, was written primarily to distinguish between these two aspects of reality. Whatever exists, according to Sartre, must take either the form of the "In-itself," or of the "For-itself;" between these two forms, the categories of reality are exhausted.

1. DEFINITIONS OF THE "IN-ITSELF"

"In-itself" is pure being for Sartre. As Hazel Barnes, the translator of his Being and Nothingness, has pointed out, the "In-itself" is actually beyond both affirmation and negation. Affirmation is always the affirmation of something, since the act of affirming is distinguished from the thing affirmed. Such a distinction has no meaning in regard to "Being-in-itself."[24] Iris Murdoch has further described the "In-itself" by suggesting much the same notion, when she says that the "In-itself" is

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[24]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxv, Barnes' Introduction.

"brute and nameless; it escapes from the scheme of relations in which we imagine it to be so rigidly enclosed."[25]

Wilfrid Desan adds that the "In-itself" is "massive, full, dense, and compact; it has no history and no past and it has neither present nor future. It merely is."[26] Whatever past the "In-itself" has is given to it by the "For-itself." Sartre gives a dramatic description of the nature of the "In-itself" in his novel The Reprieve.

> There had been and forever would be that cold glare upon those stones under that black sky; the absolute forever; the absolute without cause, or sense, or purpose, without a past or a future, save a gratuitous, splendid permanence.[27]

The "In-itself" then is being. It is given only as being andso it is rather futile to ask for its cause or source. This being of the "In-itself" is the being of things as contrasted to thebeing of human reality, the "For-itself." This "In-itself" is passive, or as Sartre says in his novel The Age of Reason, "Objects are servile. Submissive. Subject to control."[28] Any meaning or significance which is to be found in this objective world of the "In-itself" is placed there by the "For-itself," man. In Sartre's short story, "The Childhood

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[25]Iris Murdoch, Sartre: Romantic Rationalist, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 26.

[26]Wilfrid Desan, The Tragic Finale: An Essay on the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, (New York: Harper and Brothers Torchbooks, 1954), p. 36.

[27]Jean-Paul Sartre, The Reprieve, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 352.

[28]Jean-Paul Sartre, The Age of Reason, (New York: Bantam Books Incorporated, 1959), p. 304.

of a Leader," he presents the following thesis. Young Lucien, the hero of the story, after tearing, cutting and carving the numerous objects around him, suddenly becomes aware of the fact that objects are inanimate and that it must be humans that confer all meaning upon them. His teddy bear, the statues, vases, and tables of his home acquire meaning only in the light of human projects; apart from this they have no meaning.[29]

Since the "In-itself" gains meaning only in relation to human projects, the meaning of things will vary from one person to another, as their purposes and intentions vary. Things have no fixed meaning, as Sartre's heroine of his short story, "The Room," suggests when she realizes the contrasts in outlook between herself and her own father. As she says, "I don't see things like my father. It isn't possible for me to see them exactly like him."[30]

Thus, for Sartre in a very real sense, human beings do not live in the same world at all; they each live in a world surrounded by things which have a meaning conferred upon them by that person's own projections. This basic idea of Sartre plays a significant role in his view of man's absolute freedom in the face of objective pressures, as will soon become evident.

2. DEFINITIONS OF THE "FOR-ITSELF"

The second mode of reality for Sartre is what he refers to as the "For-itself." This is human reality, and is patterned

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[29]Jean-Paul Sartre, The Wall and Other Stories, (New York: New Directions Press, 1948), p. 167.

[30]Ibid., p. 68.

after Heidegger's view of "Dasein," which has already been discussed briefly in respect to Heidegger's influence upon Sartre. The "For-itself" should not be thought of as being juxtaposed to the "In-itself," however. As Sartre states clearly, "The For-itself without the In-itself is a kind of abstraction; it would not exist any more than a color could exist without form . . ."[31]

It is this "For-itself" which has brought nothingness with it into the world, and it is this very nothingness which makes the "For-itself" differ from the "In-itself," which is dense and compact. It is this very core of nothingness which, "lies coiled in the hear of being - like a worm."[32]

This very nothingness enables the "For-itself" to project itself beyond present situations; man can always escape what he is for others precisely because he can use this nothingness within him to separate himself from solidified judgments and present pressures of all sorts. By himself man is nothing and so he must make himself what he is; he can only do this by projecting himself towards ends posited by the use of his creative nothingness which is within him.[33] Lucien, the hero of Sartre's long story, "The Childhood of a Leader," realizes, as we all must, that he <u>is</u> nothing. He gradually realizes that

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[31]Sartre, <u>Being and Nothingness</u>, p. 621.

[32]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 21.

[33]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 544.

he is not really his name, for this is only a name. He is not a student, because he does not like to study, and so on. In short, he is nothing and hence must create his own essence through a free and self-creative action.[34] His search for some action which can provide him with such an essence, occupies the greater part of the story.

At this point, Sartre appears to be involved in a contradiction. How can he argue that the "For-itself" which is man, is in itself nothing and still account for the world as we know it? Sartre gives a paradoxical answer. The "For-itself" by conveying meaning to the "In-itself" creates what Sartre refers to as a "situation." The "For-itself," then is really nothing other than its situation, which is a combination of brute existence and the meaning conferred upon this existence by a "For-itself." "The being-in-situation defines human presence in the world."[35] Man is thus his particular situation, i.e., his reaction to "In-itself;" but man is also the constant possibility of surpassing this given situation because of the creative nothingness which he has within him. Sartre would no more deny the reality of the external world of things than Fichte; what Sartre argues is that man creates a meaningful world from the raw material of simple existence.

If man is at heart nothingness, it follows that man "exists only in so far as he realizes himself; he is therefore

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[34]Sartre, The Wall and Other Stories, p. 187.

[35]H. J. Blackham, Six Existentialist Thinkers, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1951), p. 136.

nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is."[36] Without such action or involvement, man does not really exist for Sartre; man for him has no given essence in the same way that things have a fixed essence. Man cannot fall back upon a fixed nature. Man is neither burdened with a load of Original Sin, since for Sartre there is no God to place such a burden upon man, nor is man released from the necessity of creating his own essence by the gift of some God-given form.

In dealing with the problem of essence, Sartre shows his paradoxical turn of mind, for Sartre holds, as Hegel held before him, that essence is what has been.[37] Man can look to his solidified past to reveal what he is, although he is always more, since he has the power to use the nothingness within him to create his own future. Although action gives life its meaning, one cannot merely rely upon past actions to create a final essence. Man is always on the brink of nothingness and can escape this state only by attempting to escape from his freedom and its subsequent responsibility. This attempt by man is actually his desire to become an object, a mere "In-itself." Man can only succeed fully in becoming an "In-itself" when he dies however, for it is only then that man is nothing more than an object.

Neither attempt to evade nothingness can succeed however. Sartre argues that man cannot become an object for more

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[36]Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, Walter Kaufmann, ed., (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 300.

[37]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 630.

than brief periods of time; it is for this reason that masochism, the attempt to become pure object before the gaze of another, fails. In masochism, one assumes the condition of an object before the judgment of another; once he regards the other person as an object which satisfies his desires, he is once again aware of his own subjectivity, and his attempt to become a mere object fails. Death is not an intelligent alternative to freedom and its subsequent responsibility either. Death robs man of his consciousness, which is synonymous with nothingness in Sartre's view, and in so doing, defeats the purpose of trying to become an object. Death makes a person too much of an object; in death one loses his consciousness, and with this loss ceases to be a man. Hence, even suicide is no escape from man's inherent nothingness.

In creating his own essence, man cannot even depend upon the inanimate "In-itself" which surrounds him. Sartre, in his novel The Age of Reason, expresses this point clearly in the following passage: "All around him things were gathered in a circle, expectant, impassive, indicative of nothing. He was alone, enveloped in his monstrous silence, free and alone . . ."[38] Man, since he is more than a mere object, cannot depend upon objects to guide his course of action, even though man often pretends to be a thing, like other things, and attempts to escape his freedom and its responsibility by claiming various deterministic theories.

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[38]Sartre, The Age of Reason, pp. 275-276.

The task of man becomes still greater when one remembers that God cannot serve as a guide for man's actions any more than inanimate objects can. Man cannot use God or things in making his decisions, for things at best only reflect man's own image, and God does not exist. Even those who claim that things do determine man's choices, or who argue that God does answer their prayers for guidance, simply forget that their own meanings are being echoed back to them. Moses, when he prayed to Yahweh, heard a response which was strangely like an answer Moses himself would have given, and so it is with modern man. Sartre does not deny that many men appear to be guided by material things or spiritual forces outside of themselves; he simply would add that such individuals have misunderstood the true source of the power from things or from God.

The very fact that things have no intrinsic value or given meaning provides a note of hope for Sartre's form of Existentialism. Since things have no inherent and fixed meaning, man is free to evaluate his world as he chooses. Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre's famous colleague and common-law wife, points out that "no destruction of a thing will ever be a radical ruin for man."[39] Man has power over and above that of the "In-itself" precisely because the "For-itself" is separated from mere objective existence by a rift of its being, in the form of a creative vacuum. The presence of this core of nothingness is

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[39]Simone de Beauvoir, The Ethics of Ambiguity, (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 82.

just what makes man different from, and superior to, the level of the "In-itself."

SARTRE'S VIEW OF NOTHINGNESS

The real difference between the "In-itself" and the "For-itself" is nothingness. The "For-itself" contains within it a space, a constant not, a potentiality which can carve out through a process of naughtization an essence for man, in a somewhat Godlike, ex nihilo fashion. The "In-itself" has no such space within it. It is densely packed, full, completely actual, lacking nothing because it already is something. The "In-itself" is both prior to and more real than man in the strict sense; but since it has within it no core of nothingness, it does not have potentiality, consciousness, or freedom, which are the direct results of nothing. For this reason, Sartre often uses the terms "nothingness," "consciousness," and "freedom," as if they were one. These three terms all refer to, and are made possible by, this lack within man which he can never really escape and still remain man.

One might wonder at this point how Sartre can escape a somewhat contradictory position. He claims that his system is not really nihilistic, but he still places nothingness within man and even says that it is this very nothingness which makes man capable of being free and conscious. The paradoxical escape from this seeming nihilism, is offered by Beauvoir. She states that the nihilist is right in believing that the world possesses no justification of its own and that he himself is

nothing. However, she adds, "He forgets that it is up to him to justify the world and to make himself exist validly."[40]

To Sartre and his followers at least, this nothingness within man provides a spark of hope. It opens up horizons to man that are impossible to the "In-itself" which is in perfect coincidence with itself. The "In-itself" simply is what it is. Man is more than this because he is not in such perfect coincidence with himself. Man is always in the process of becoming. He never simply is like an object is, until at last in death, he becomes an object, being robbed of his precious nothingness.

SARTRE'S VIEW OF CONSCIOUSNESS

To make Sartre's conception of nothingness more explicit, is to make his view of consciousness and freedom clearer, for these elements are all parts of the same whole for Sartre. Consciousness, like nothingness, is somewhat negative in nature. As Sartre says, "Consciousness comes into the world as a No, and is aware of itself as an everlasting No, as pure possibility separated from everything existent."[41]

With Sartre's view of the negative nature of consciousness in mind, the charge of nihilism again seems to be applicable to his system. James Collins suggests that this view of consciousness is nihilistic only when viewed from one perspective. As Collins points out, the naughting function of the consciousness

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[40]Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 57.

[41]Blackham, op. cit., p. 111.

is not really nilihistic in intent, but is supremely creative. "It permits the light of meaning and structure to shine through the dark chaos of Being-in-itself."[42] Once again, the paradox in Sartre's thought reveals itself. Man is meaningful because of his nothingness, not in spite of it. Consciousness is creative precisely because it lacks content of its own. This very lack means that the consciousness is capable of embracing any content whatsoever.

If consciousness is nothing, and we can not discover nothing in a direct sense, since it is no thing, how can we ever investigate the nature of the consciousness? Has Sartre allowed himself to be trapped into saying that here is a noumenal realm which is cut off forever from man's knowledge, or is there some escape from such a conclusion? The answer, once again, is that Sartre does provide a paradoxical solution. Sartre says that we can investigate consciousness by studying the choices which a person makes. Choice is so important to Sartre's conception of consciousness, that he even goes so far as to say that "Choice and consciousness are one and the same thing."[43] The "For-itself" is conscious because it chooses; it chooses because it is conscious.

Sartre escapes the apparent contradiction of dealing directly with nothingness, which is consciousness, by then suggesting that we can understand consciousness through examining

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[42]Collins, op. cit., p. 62.

[43]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 462.

concrete choices. This is not to grasp consciousness as one would grasp a thing, to be sure, but since consciousness is no thing, it could not be dealt with in any other manner. By making this nothingness identical with choice, Sartre maintains the purity of his basic definition of consciousness, and still provides man with an opportunity for gaining insight into an otherwise impenetrable realm.

Sartre's conception of the consciousness next raises the question as to how such a notion can be applied to the human situation. Sartre replies that man uses this core of nothingness within him in a very interesting fashion. The very process of discovering that we are not the world of "In-itself," follows directly from an awareness of the inherent nothingness of the "For-itself." The distinction made between the realm of the "In-itself" which is already completely actual, and the "For-itself," with its nothingness, reveals the world as world. Man thus makes the world appear through the use of this process of internal negation. This internal negation then becomes a projection toward a possible.[44] Sartre has in mind the core of nothingness carried within man, when he says man <u>is</u> not in the same way an object <u>is</u>; man, unlike inanimate objects, is always involved in the process of this internal negation which is the separation of himself from the world. This separation of himself, as a "For-itself," from the realm of the world, composed of "In-itself" opens up to man a whole new world of possibility,

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[44] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 463.

undreamed of by any mode of being save his own. One could say at this point that man is the being who is not and knows that he is not; man then uses this knowledge to propel himself towards the future.

At this point, however, another contradiction begins to appear in Sartre's view of consciousness. Sartre claims that consciousness, just because it is nothing, is therefore perfectly free. Its nothingness, for him, coincides with absolute freedom. Here, one may suggest that Sartre has trapped himself. He cannot deny the existence of the ego or the human self without destroying a basic part of his system; and yet if he does not make just such a denial, how can he claim that human consciousness is absolutely free even though it is under the control of an individual, personal self?

Sartre's answer to this objection in regard to the human self, is both paradoxical and original. He does not deny that the ego appears to be a real entity, nor will he withdraw his claim that consciousness is absolutely free. He replies: if the ego controlled the consciousness in the usual sense, that it is quite true consciousness would not be absolutely free. However, as James Collins points out, "Sartre thinks that consciousness produces the ego as the ideal unity of its actions, states, and qualities, in order to mask its own spontaneity, and impersonality."[45]

The ego, in other words, is the product of consciousness. The consciousness, which is the actual creator of the ego, remains

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[45]Collins, op. cit., p. 53.

free while employing the ego as a limited, but convenient, method of unification. The consciousness always remains free "pure, without ego, no more than a mere puff of warm air . . ."[46]

The immediate response to such an answer, is to ask Sartre why it is that the ego appears every time one looks for it, if it is indeed nothing more than a mask for the impersonal, totally free consciousness. Sartre replies that "the ego never appears except when one is looking at it."[47] This is the case just because the ego is really the product of the very act of reflection; when one moves from the reflective level to the unreflective level, the ego simply disappears.

By the use of this rather paradoxical solution, Sartre is able to admit the common discovery of the ego and still claim that the lurking consciousness itself remains absolutely free. Consciousness exists on the ontologically prior unreflective level, which is also the domain of pure freedom. The ego is to be found on the overlaid reflective level, precisely because reflection is the cause of its existence, instead of being merely one of its effects.

Even if one accepts this resolution however, there are still other problems generated by such a view of the consciousness. The next question which arises in this connection is: How can Sartre argue that men are separate and yet share a core of nothingness? He obviously cannot argue that there are kinds or

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[46]Sartre, The Age of Reason, p. 211.

[47]Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego, pp. 88-89.

varieties of nothingness and he is likewise unwilling to dispense with man's individuality, since he accepts the Kierkegaardian tradition of an emphasis upon the individual. He even implies directly that the consciousness, by the very fact of its impersonality, could not possibly account for the differences between one man and another.

To deal with this issue, Sartre employs both the ego and the free consciousness. The consciousness to mask its own impersonality and spontaneity, creates the ego. The ego then uses this freedom resulting from the fact that the consciousness is itself nothing, and is therefore totally free, to project possibles. These possibles are then used to make choices and given courses of action to be followed. It is these diverse courses of action based upon choices of the ego, which result in the differences between one man and another. Just as there is a myriad of animal forms, all using the basic ingredient of protoplasm, so there is a myriad of human forms, all using their internal consciousness in connection with their ego to create an individual essence.

Thus, the ego even though it is a product of the consciousness, still aids in the separation of men. The solidified choices of the "For-itself" actually create a "me" or a "self." As Sartre puts it, "The very act of me excludes the Other. The Other excludes me by being himself."[48] When Sartre refers to "being oneself," he simply means following the course of action based

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[48]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 236.

upon one's own choices, for it is through choice and action alone that man can create his essence.

SARTRE'S VIEW OF FREEDOM

Sartre's view of nothingness soon leads directly into his position in regard to freedom. Freedom is at the very core of his philosophy. While reading this section on freedom, one should keep in mind that for Sartre, man is either absolutely free or absolutely determined. So far as Sartre is concerned, these are the only two alternatives. He argues that man is absolutely free, and Sartre's greatest single philosophical problem is to defend this rather extreme notion from both blunt attacks, as well as the more subtle indictments of trained philosophers and critics.

Since freedom is such a vital part of Sartre's total system, the present section will be far longer than any other. The discussion of freedom will be divided into smaller units, each bearing the label of particular objections to his conception of freedom. The order of these units will follow that indicated in the section entitled, "Introductory Remarks," at the beginning of this chapter.

1. FREEDOM, BIRTH AND DEATH

One of the most obvious objections to be raised in regard to Sartre's insistence upon man's total freedom is that man is born and dies without willing either. How can man lack control over these two basic human facts and still be called absolutely

free? To such a question Sartre replies with a paradoxical answer. He admits that both birth and death are "givens." He even admits that both birth and death are "absurd," by which, he means that they are facts bestowed upon man without his knowing why and without his choosing the existence of either one.

In reference to birth, Sartre admits that man did not ask to be born, but a man does choose to perform those acts which prolong his life. Even more important, man chooses the meaning which every action after his birth will have to him, as a "For-itself." Man is thrust into life, Sartre admits, but from that point on, his choice and "involvement" in situations; his confronting of the brute "In-itself," becomes his own. Man chooses his world, the meanings things are to have for him; and when he grows old enough, he can even determine for himself just what particular meaning, if any, he will ascribe to the fact of his birth.

If one still rejects Sartre's conception of freedom on the grounds that people are often born into undesireable surroundings, Sartre replies that the person's "situation," and not merely his surroundings, is what creates man's essence. Factual "givens" of this world, including all the inanimate objects, make up only a part of any individual's "situation." The second, and more important part of this idea of "situation," is what the person chooses to do in the face of such facts. The "For-itself's" engagement in this world is both the result of the "given facts," which include the presence of real physical

objects as well as his own birth and death, and his way of accepting and acting upon this facticity.[49]

Even if one is satisfied with Sartre's escape from the question of birth, the fact that man must die seems to be one limit to freedom which Sartre cannot admit and still maintain his contention that man is totally free. He attempts to do just this, however. As Wilfrid Desan, one of the finest critics of Sartre, has put it, "My freedom as a living being is complete. Death is the limit for my freedom, but a limit which I shall never grasp and which will never restrict me as a conscious being."[50]

Sartre has this argument in mind when he suggests that we do not really die for ourselves at all, since we are not conscious of our own death. We only die for others, who are still alive to judge us as being dead.[51] Death could only be regarded as a genuine restriction of our freedom if we were conscious after dying. Sartre declares that at death, we are reunited with ourselves, meaning that we come into perfect coincidence with ourselves. We then simply exist just as an object exists.[52] The nothingness, which is our consciousness, has vanished at death and with it, the possibility of realizing that a limit was ever placed upon our absolute freedom.

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[49]Ibid., p. 633.

[50]Desan, op. cit., p. 120.

[51]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 545.

[52]Ibid., p. 115.

For Sartre, as long as man is alive he is absolutely free, and in a very real sense, man can be said to be nothing but his freedom. It is only for the dead that "the chips are down." It is only for the dead that freedom has ceased to exist and it is for this reason that Sartre says that it is only after death that a man can be judged, if at all.[53]

2. FREEDOM AND OBSTACLES

The next major question which confronts Sartre involves the existence of obstacles and is a much more difficult issue to dispose of than either birth or death. Sartre, if not very careful, will be caught in a serious contradiction. Sartre surely has to admit that man encounters obstacles of all sorts in life, but Sartre cannot do so if the existence of such barriers represent limits to man's precious absolute freedom.

Sartre's answer is paradoxical, for he both admits the existence of obstacles and still asserts that man is absolutely free. He even declares that there cannot be a really free "For-itself," unless there is an existing, resisting world. The resistance which freedom reveals to man actually enables it to arise as freedom.[54] Were it not for the direct engagement of the "For-itself" with resistance in the form of obstacles, Sartre declares that the very notions of freedom, determinism, and necessity would lose their meaning.[55]

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[53] Ibid., p. 543.

[54] Ibid., p. 483.

[55] Ibid.

Sartre uses the existence of obstacles in the world as a proof of man's freedom and goes on to illustrate this notion in one of his finest plays, The Flies. In this play, Sartre shows that a man knows the strength which freedom provides only after he has become aware of his freedom. A man becomes aware of his freedom only when he must struggle against the burden of absolute responsibility which freedom places upon his shoulders. Sartre's hero, Orestes, says, "I'm still too--too light. I must take a burden on my shoulders, a load of guilt (responsibility) so heavy as to drag me down, right down into the abyss of Argos."[56] There is true freedom only when a burden is placed upon man's shoulders, even though such a burden may appear to be an obstacle to freedom. Sartre admits that human reality does encounter obstacles throughout life, but these obstacles and forms of resistance have meaning only through the free choice which human reality is.[57]

Freedom actually creates its own obstacles by positing its ends and choosing whether to label such ends as difficulty, easy, or impossible to attain. It is freedom which establishes even such "barriers" as distance. Freedom establishes the spatial connection between objects, a connection which may appear as an obstacle, when for example, one might feel that his freely chosen destination is "simply too far away to be reached."[58]

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[56]Jean-Paul Sartre, The Flies, from A Treasury of the Theatre, John Gassner ed., (Henry Holt and Company, 1959), p. 483.

[57]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 489.

[58]Ibid., p. 495.

Sartre treats so-called "given obstacles," in the same manner as the human ego. The ego is caused by the consciousness and the "given obstacles" are the result of freedom. "It is by the very surpassing of the given towards ends, that freedom causes the given to exist as the given . . . the given is assumed in order to be surpassed."[59] When one points out this or that as being "an obstacle to freedom," he misses the truth of the matter; each given is the evidence for posited ends and not proof that man is not free or that he is rigidly determined by a world of preestablished barriers.

For Sartre, there is really no such thing as a mountain which is "not capable of being climbed," unless a "For-itself" has first suggested that, "it can be climbed," and has then judged it as being "impossible to climb." Such a judgment can be made after having actually attempted the ascent or can be purely a mental operation, taking into consideration such personal factors as endurance, strength, and the like. In this regard, Sartre does not suggest that any man who so desires is free to climb any mountain he chooses. He simply argues that mountains or other "obstacles" can be called "obstacles," only because free "For-itselfs" have posited ends in relation to them.

There are really no "given obstacles." There are no things which can be considered as barriers to those who choose simply to ignore them. Things become obstacles only if, through a free choice of a "For-itself," one makes an impassive thing

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[59] Ibid., p. 508.

an obstacle. Mountains in themselves are neither "difficult," nor "easy" to climb; deserts neither "possible" nor "impossible" to traverse. Judgments about such things can be made only if one has chosen to attempt the ascent of a mountain, or the trip across a desert; otherwise they remain neutral objects.

3. FREEDOM, THINGS AND "CAUSES"

Sartre's approach to the matter of "obstacles" in general will indicate his paradoxical treatment of things and social pressures. As already suggested, things have no meaning in and of themselves. As manifestations of "In-itself," they simply exist. Anything beyond their bare existence is the product of man's free positing of values or anti-values within them.

It is man, the "For-itself," who by his freedom confers meaning upon all objects, places, and things, and who creates the very society which exerts social pressures. As Mathieu, Sartre's fictional hero of The Reprieve, realizes, places just exist. Paris is only a form of "In-itself." Any meaning or significance, any past, present, or future, which it has or will receive, is only through the acts of free men. The Paris, of which Mathieu is so fond, will soon gain a new dimension of meaning because there will soon be battles fought in its streets; strategic points and targets will soon be assigned in the process of the ensuing war. Paris will impassively receive this new meaning just as it has received all of the old meaning now attached to it.[60]

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[60]Sartre, The Reprieve, p. 349.

Places are neither ugly nor beautiful, neither far apart nor close together, neither easy to reach nor impossible to arrive at, except in relation to the free choice of a "For-itself." What is true of places is also true of such social phenomena as "causes" of all sorts, whether such a "cause" be liberty, Communism, Fascism, or Socialism. Men usually think that such "causes" result in their behaving in particular ways. They claim that a given political ideal or theory forced them to behave in a given pattern. Actually it is their own free choice which leads them to act in such ways. In Sartre's play, The Victors, he states this notion in the words of Henri who says, "A cause never gives orders; it never says anything. It is we who determine what it needs."[61]

Sartre does not deny that often, in the heat of enthusiasm for a particular system or set of ideals, men seem to be governed by a force outside themselves. If they would analyze the situation more closely however, they would soon come to find, at each successive stage of their career within a given party or movement, they constantly made decisions. Each day forced upon them new decisions, even when they tried to hide it from their own minds in an attempt to flee the responsibility which is the inevitable result of an acute awareness of personal liberty.

Sartre realizes keenly that men often hide behind deterministic arguments, claiming that for some reason they are not

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[61]Jean-Paul Sartre, The Victors, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 213.

really responsible for their actions. Such persons claim that their "cause" forced them to behave in a certain prescribed manner. Sartre does not deny they did in fact behave in a certain manner. Sartre does not deny they did in fact behave in a certain manner; what he does argue is: whatever way they acted, was actually the product of free choice on their part. No matter how much man may try to escape the fact that he must constantly renew decisions, and therefore accept the responsibility for his actions, he will never be able to rid himself of the burden of freedom, which is his lot as a "For-itself," and still remain a man, in Sartre's sense of the term.

When the argument is advanced that society forces its members to conform to special rules and regulations, Sartre still insists that man is free at any time to violate any and all rules of society. In the first place, society, even in the case of such aggregates as entire nations, is made up of individuals. There is an American nation only because free individuals have chosen to identify themselves as "Americans." At any time, the individuals who are a member of this group can denounce their role as Americans. Then the nation, as nation, will cease to exist. The same is true of all other groups. All groups are formed by the combined agreement of their members, an agreement which is based ultimately upon free choice.

Sartre does not deny that the violation of certain social rules may lead to rather harsh consequences. The fact that a man may be punished for not conforming to the rules of a group does

not refute the belief that man is free. Sartre carries this argument somewhat beyond the bounds of a meaningful paradox however, when he claims that no amount of social pressure whatsoever, even if it takes the form of physical torture, can rob any man of his absolute freedom. Sartre has confused theoretical with practical freedom at this point, which even a solid supporter must admit.

4. FREEDOM AND THE PAST

Sartre has not yet solved all of the objections raised in regard to his view of freedom. He must now deal with the problem of the past of the "For-itself." One would normally suppose that Sartre should either deny that the past is a fixed order of events which has already taken place and would thus rob the "For-itself" of an important dimension of freedom or that he should deny the reality or at least the importance of the past. Surprisingly enough, he does neither. His answer in this respect is especially paradoxical.

In his novel The Reprieve, he shows clearly that the past is fixed and solidified in a very real sense. Sartre's hero, Mathieu, gazing around his room, realizes, "They were all there, immured and dead, Marcelle, Ivich, Boris and Daniel. Thither they had some, there they had come, there they had been entrapped, and there they would remain."[62] Sartre makes no attempt to deny that each action which a "For-itself" performs does indeed solidify itself and become irreverisible. Time

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[62]Sartre, The Reprieve, p. 342.

cannot be turned back. The friends who have visited Mathieu's room and the events which have played a part in his life are fixed in the sense that what has already taken place is now finished.

Sartre likewise does not deny that the past is important to the "For-itself." As has already been suggested, essence for Sartre, as for Heidegger, is what has been. This means that the past is a very real and important dimension of the "For-itself," even though it cannot be said to represent all of man, at least until that man dies and becomes an "In-itself." At death, a man's past finally catches up with him and his whole life becomes past, fixed and solidified at least as far as he is concerned. Past is not all of a living man however, for he still has the nothingness within him which allows a constant projection of possibles.

Sartre emphasizes the importance of the past to the "For-itself," when he states, "I cannot conceive of myself without a past; I can no longer think anything about myself since I think about myself since I think about what I am, and I am in the past . . ."[63] Sartre then adds that without the "For-itself," there would be no such thing as the past. As has already been mentioned, the "In-itself" simply is; it has no past or future unless the "For-itself" conveys a past or future to its brute existence. It is the "For-itself" who has the past and the future, and who consequently assumes that all other entities in the world also possess the same temporal dimensions. Wherever

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[63]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 496.

man looks he finds temporal dimensions, but this is only because he brings these dimensions with him into any situation.

Sartre's view of the past and its essence-creating nature might be made clearer by an illustration. Sartre's view of the "For-itself" is analogous to a machine painting a stripe down the center of a highway. The "For-itself," sitting behind the controls of the machine, can look back over his shoulder and see the gradually unfolding line which he is creating. (the solidified past of the "For-itself.") This fixed line, in a sense, represents his achievement, his essence. But he cannot say that the line behind his machine is a complete definition of himself however, for the machine is still moving forward. The "For-itself" can examine the fixed past which it extrudes behind it, but as long as the "For-itself" remains a living human, this backward dimension, the past, will remain only part of his definition as a man.

Sartre admits that the past is fixed to the extent that one event has followed another and he has already admitted that the past is both a real and important dimension of the "For-itself." This does not force him to conclude that the past therefore has a fixed meaning. As he suggests, "I alone, in fact, decide at each moment the bearing of the past . . . I preserve the past with me and by action decide its meaning."[64] The past exists in the same way that the "In-itself" exists. Once events have taken place they become fixed. Our past simply

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[64] Ibid., p. 498.

is. To say that the past is, for Sartre, is to do no more than to say that an inanimate thing is. He would no more deny the reality of the past than he would deny the reality of the things which surround the "For-itself."

All that Sartre wishes to show, in regard to both inanimate things and the past of any "For-itself," is that such things have power to influence our action only when we choose to grant them this power. The meaning of objects changes in accordance with the projects of a "For-itself." The meaning of the past, since the past (but not its meaning) has become "In-itself," likewise changes in accordance with the present actions of the "For-itself," basing its present actions upon projected plans. The fact of a thing's existence is always of secondary importance in Sartre's philosophy. The more important part of any "situation," for him, is the meaning which is bestowed upon this raw existence by a "For-itself."

Another objection to Sartre's treatment of the past might be raised before leaving this aspect of his thought. What of the impulsion of the past? What of its forward thrust and its power to influence our present decisions? Once again, Sartre does not deny that there is a power to make decisions to be found in the past. But, he argues, we must look for the true source of such power. When the energy of the past to influence present action is traced back to its source, it is found to issue from a "For-itself," even though the person using the past in this manner is seldom, if ever, aware of this phenomenon. The "For-itself" brings the past into the present to use in making

decisions; it then selects those elements necessary and confers its own meaning on each of those selected aspects. Since there is no fixed and final meaning to the past as a whole, any more than there is a fixed meaning to the realm of the "In-itself" which surrounds man, the "For-itself" has almost complete freedom in its reconstruction of past meaning.

Sartre's argument at this point might appear to be somewhat dubious, but a closer examination will reveal some paradoxical elements of truth. Anyone who has taken the care to notice the wide evaluation of past events by different persons, will begin to realize what Sartre has in mind by such a suggestion. The wide divergence of opinion to be found even in the most scholarly accounts of historical events, certainly indicates that the past, while fixed in a chronological sense, is really much more than a constant meaning for all men to discover and read. Countless examples could be found of arguments supposedly based upon the historical facts, which widely differ in terms of the conclusions reached. Historical accounts of identical periods, especially if such periods are wars, serve as excellent examples supporting Sartre's contention that man and man alone confers meaning on the past. The diversity of interpretation is to be explained by the difference in intention of each of the "For-itselfs" doing the interpreting. The agreement, such as it is, to be found in such accounts and interpretations can be explained by the fact that most historians accept the same general chronology, i.e., recognize some of the same elements as being basic to an aspect of "In-itself."

Sartre suggests that persons interpret their own histories in a similar manner. The meaning which people choose to confer on certain portions of their past appears to them both fixed and inevitable. In reality, the meaning which they conferred was only one of the several which were possible. One is reminded at this point, of the conversion experience of a man like Blaise Pascal. The storm which was said to have "caused" his conversion, could just as easily have led to his concluding that the universe was ruled by a malevolent force, and that the belief in a loving, fatherly God was untenable. But, he chose to find another meaning and came to regard this meaning as the fixed and final one, ignoring the other possible interpretations of the same event. This practice of "projecting" a meaning into the past and then "discovering" it, is all too common in the life of the "For-itself."

Sartre, throughout his entire philosophy, and especially in the development of his ideas concerning the past and its power to influence the present, suggests that man's most common error in his investigations is either to stop his analysis one step too soon or to merely ask the wrong question at the outset. For example, instead of asking whether or not people ascribe the same meaning to a past action throughout their lives, one should ask whether they could not have chosen another meaning just as easily. Instead of merely granting the assertion that past actions make present decisions inevitable, one should investigate the past action in an attempt to discover what other possible decisions could be based upon the "same" past action.

Instead of being satisfied with the discovery that there is a power in the past to influence the present, one should pursue his investigation further in an attempt to find the source of this power. Sartre suggests that once a person seriously attempts to evaluate his own past, that he will soon discover for himself the many alternative decisions which he could have made, even though he was probably unaware of such alternatives before. Such a discovery of the diverse alternatives open in regard to past action will serve to make the "For-itself's" inherent freedom quite apparent and should serve to refute at least the more common arguments advanced by deterministic philosophies.

5. FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

For Sartre, man is totally responsible for all of his actions. By this, he does not wish to suggest a moral responsibility, but rather an awareness by man that he has created his own essence through his own free choice and that there can be no evasions, supports, or excuses for any of the actions which he has performed. As Sartre says in this regard, "This absolute responsibility is not resignation; it is simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom."[65] This belief on his part raises an important question: How can he assert that man is both entirely free and entirely responsible? Is not this very burden of responsibility a limitation upon freedom? Is not

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[65] Ibid., p. 554.

the very weight of such self-accountability an obstacle preventing man from ever being totally free, as Sartre argues?

Sartre, again with a paradoxical answer, states that freedom and responsibility are bound together. They appear to be contradictories only to one who has not analyzed the situation thoroughly. Sartre argues that once a man has the courage to accept his responsibility for all of his behavior, his freedom will be revealed to him and he will discover a new source of strength. Man discovers his freedom as he feels the weight of his responsibility and feels the burden of responsibility as he becomes increasingly aware of his freedom. This revelation in reference to the burden of responsibility, is what causes Orestes, the hero of Sartre's play, The Flies, to declare "The heavier it is to carry, the better pleased I shall be; for that burden is my freedom."[66] Just as Sartre has argued previously that obstacles are actually necessary for a man to be truly free, so he now contends that responsibility is a necessary part of the revelation of total freedom.

Sartre never attempts to minimize the difficulty of standing erect under such a ponderous load of total responsibility, but he declares that the very weight of the burden is necessary if one is ever to realize his total freedom. Sartre even goes on to argue that it is quite true such a burden can and will lead men to despair, but Orestes shows that such a state is only a transient one, with the words "They're free; and human life begins on the far side of despair."[67]

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[66]Sartre, The Flies, p. 489.

[67]Ibid., p. 493.

With Sartre's admission that such a crushing burden of responsibility can very well lead a man to despair, another contradictory position appears. How can Sartre argue that his philosophy is positive and creative and still employ such words as "despair," "anxiety," and "abandonment?" These three terms are often linked together in Sartre's philosophy and their presence has caused many critics to label his philosophy as being without hope. Sartre's system is often attacked as being "pessimistic," on the sheer basis of these terms and it must be admitted that there is at least a partial justification to such attacks. One must not be content with merely examining the usual meaning of the words "despair," "anxiety," and "abandonment," however, if he wishes to truly understand Sartre's arguments at this phase of his thought. One must analyze the role which these terms play in Sartre's total philosophy, instead of accepting them for their surface meanings.

"Despair" for Sartre, means that we must limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within the sum of probabilities which render our action feasible; it is the awareness that each choice we make is in a finite state.[68] "Anxiety" is the reaction of man when he comes face to face with the nothingness within him; it is the state of awareness that he is totally free and without support from God, other things or other living persons.[69] "Abandonment" means that God does not exist and that one must

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[68]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," p. 298.

[69]Ibid.

draw the consequences of God's absence right to the end.[70] The very existence of these reactions all contribute to man's total freedom. Man is not free in spite of "despair," "anxiety," and "abandonment;" he is free because they exist.

Freedom is clearly no light burden and the price one pays for it is often high. The best summary of freedom and its inherent consequences is to be found in Sartre's play The Flies, where Orestes declares:

> Suddenly out of the blue, freedom crashed down upon me and swept me off my feet. Nature sprang back, my youth went with the wind, and I knew myself alone, utterly alone in the midst of this well meaning little universe of yours. I was like a man who has lost his shadow. And there was nothing left in heaven, no right or wrong, nor anyone to give me orders.[71]

Immediately after uttering these lines, Orestes strides out of the temple where he had sought sanctuary, faces the howling mob which threatens him with violence, and defies the Furies who fling themselves at his back. Sartre does not claim that "mobs" representing social pressures, do not exist, or that "Furies" standing for those forces which attempt to maim man's instinct for freedom, are not real. Such forces certainly are real, and it is for this very reason that only persons willing to accept the often harsh consequences of their free action can fully embrace Sartre's variety of Existentialism. One must have a great degree of faith in man's potential strength to argue, as Sartre does, that even the most extreme social pressures have

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[70] Ibid., p. 294.

[71] Sartre, The Flies, p. 493.

power to force man into special paths only when he chooses to give such forces this power.

One should add at this point that a person does not suddenly find himself strong enough to exist in an "authentic" fashion, to accept the total responsibility for his actions, and to abandon all types of deterministic supports and excuses. He must gradually abandon successive props and supports. Even Orestes, although he experienced a final revelation of his freedom, in the lines just cited, still achieved this strength gradually. One does not have the strength to exist in a truly "authentic" manner before he acts; his very action will gradually reveal his freedom and responsibility to him. The revelation of freedom is an unfolding process which can be set in motion only when an individual has the courage required to take the first step. Each step in the process entails a greater load of responsibility, but the strength to withstand this growing pressure increases in a manner directly porportional to its growth.

One need not worry that he is now unable to accept total responsibility for his actions. All that Sartre requires is the strength to set the process in motion; total responsibility is revealed at the same time as total freedom, the end of the process. Just as a child need not worry about behaving like an adult before he has grown physically and mentally, so a follower of Sartre need not worry about having sufficient stamina to withstand the pressures of absolute freedom; these pressures will be exerted in their totality only after the individual is strong and mature enough to endure them.

6. FREEDOM AND FINITUDE

Even supposing that one could be strong enough to "stand erect" under the burden of responsibility which follows from his total freedom, would not the fact that man is a limited being in a finite situation impose a limit to man's freedom? Sartre could escape such a dilemna by denying that man is finite, or by abandoning his belief in man's absolute freedom. But he chooses neither alternative and so seems to open himself up to a charge of contradiction. He freely admits that human reality by its very nature is finite. To be finite for Sartre is the same as choosing one's essence. "To be finite is to make known to oneself that one is projecting toward one possible to the exclusion of others."[72] The very act of choosing one end rather than another and acting upon this choice is the assumption and creation of finitude. But, Sartre goes on to point out, finite choice, the creation of one's own essence, is the truest meaning of freedom.

Freedom for Sartre is always freedom of choice between alternatives and since any choice is always made at the exclusion of other choices, every choice situation is therefore finite and at the same time genuinely free. Sartre does not argue that a person is always capable of implementing his choice, but a person is free to make the basic choice from which other choices spring, and is also free to evaluate each of the subsequent results which follow from this original choice.[73]

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[72]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 546.

[73]Ibid., p. 472.

It is choice and action based upon that choice which creates the being of the "For-itself," for Sartre. Whatever our being is, we have chosen it; whichever one dominant mode of being we choose becomes the dominant way in which we realize ourselves, whether this choice was to regard ourselves as "great," "base," or "inferior."[74] This very notion of man's freedom and its role in creating human essence is precisely that note which provides Sartre's system with hope. If man creates his essence in a continuous process, he can change his mode of being whenever he chooses to do so, even though this choice may be a difficult one to implement. Sartre summarizes this idea nicely when he says:

> The existentialist says that the coward makes himself cowardly and the hero makes himself heroic; and that there is always a possibility for the coward to give up his cowardice and for the hero to stop being a hero.[75]

Sartre's statement does not imply that men will admit that their natures are anything other than fixed and permanent. This attitude of regarding oneself as a mere "thing" which does not change, a simple manifestation of "In-itself," is a convenient method of escaping from one's freedom and the responsibility which it entails. Acting as if one's nature were permanently settled allows for excuses of all sorts and eliminates any need for performing those acts which could readily lead to a change in one's essence.

This flight into the realm of the objective "In-itself," the claim that one's nature is ossified and unalterable, is an attempt to become just another "thing" shuttled and buffeted by

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[75]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," p. 302.

other "things." This flight is a flight from freedom and becomes a difficult temptation to resist when the admission of one's responsibility would lead to serious or unpleasant consequences. To stand erect and free, accepting the absolute responsibility for all of one's actions, is certainly more difficult than simply existing as "In-itself" exists. For this reason, Sartre typically shows the characters of his novels and plays in the act of trying to flee their freedom by attempting to become simply objects with a static nature. Sartre labels such attempts to become objects as acting in "bad faith." Whoever pretends that his essence is fixed and solidified for all time is acting in "bad faith."

Man can choose another mode of existence any time he so desires, provided he is also willing to actualize this choice through action on his part and is also willing to accept the responsibility for all such action. All varieties of deterministic arguments for Sartre represents nothing more than a persistent effort to escape the burden of responsibility and the awareness of freedom; all deterministic arguments in other words represent manifestation of "bad faith." Every form of deterministic argument, whether it be religious, physical, social, or psychological, has the same purpose, the evasion of freedom and responsibility, and is equally dishonest for Sartre.[76] Sartre recognizes that each particular form of deterministic theory has its adherents, but he argues that their tenacity in holding such beliefs is due to their weakness and not their strength. Deterministic theories

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[76]Grene, op. cit., p. 13.

are efforts to veil the truth of his freedom from himself and other men and provide excuses for both private and public actions; Sartre implies that such constant efforts at avoidance of responsibility can cause weaknesses within a society and contemporary events seem to bear him out.

7. ESTABLISHED MORAL SIGNS AND FREEDOM

What of the claim that man cannot be free in an absolute sense because there are already given moral "signs" established within his universe? What of claims, especially from religious authorities, that there are definite rules established by God which man must follow or suffer severe consequences? Sartre does not deny that such claims are common or that they may be held with great vigor and enthusiasm. What he does deny is that such claims are honest or proper interpretations of the human universe. Such claims all represent mistaken, or deliberately distorted, interpretations of what actually takes place within the moral realm.

Sartre shows that even those persons who claim that God has given man general laws, rules or regulations must still interpret such laws in the light of their own projects. Such men, even if they honestly feel that certain very general laws were actually divinely inspired, still must interpret and apply such laws. They deny that any interpretation takes place however; they fail or refuse to realize that the force of general rules to make specific decisions is placed there by their own freedom and has no other extrinsic source. Such persons examine a general statement like the Golden Rule and give it a particular interpretation;

these persons totally overlook the fact that quite a different decision could be arrived at using the same rule.[77]

If one asks the reason for such behavior, Sartre replies: this merely represents another effort to escape individual responsibility. Such action allows a person to make decisions based upon his own private projects and still claim no personal responsibility for such decisions. Just such behavior as this enabled authorities of the Spanish Inquisition, of the German concentration camps during the Second World War, and the like, to perform whatever actions they desired and still claim that they were forced to commit such actions. The claim that "they were merely following orders" was probably one of the most frequent excuses given by Nazi war criminals during the Nuremburg trials, and has been employed extensively by Adolpf Eichmann during the 1961 Israeli trials.

For Sartre, such claims are lies. Men are free whether they are the directors of concentration camps or members of a general staff; they must constantly renew their essence through a series of decisions, but they attempt to veil this fact from their eyes by positing their own decisions within some general rule and then pretending to "discover" their own choices there. There is no such person as a man who "is not in control of the situation." Each man is always in control of at least his own situation and can rebel against any order or edict whatsoever, provided he is willing to accept the results of such rebellion.

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[77]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," P. 298.

The existence of apparently fixed laws and regulations does not disprove Sartre's contention that man is totally free. Such laws do not really show that man's freedom is limited; they merely serve to show that there are many powerful persons in the world who hide behind authority in an attempt to evade their own absolute freedom and to maim the freedom of others. The result of such persistent efforts does often make it appear to the casual observer that freedom is limited, and that "no one is really responsible." A closer examination, such as that conducted by Sartre, reveals that man is far freer than he would care to admit, and that each human being is obliged to accept the responsibility for his own direct actions, as well as of the society in which he is a member. Since man also chooses to maintain his membership in his society, just as he chooses the meaning and importance of everything else around him, he must accept both individual and group action as his own.

The more examples one offers of fixed laws and absolute standards, the more strongly Sartre will attempt to convince him that such examples represent only a frantic attempt to reject absolute freedom and its implicit responsibility. Even the most stubborn attempt to hide behind established laws to escape one's absolute freedom eventually fails however, for to reject freedom is to reject being a "For-itself." Sartre holds that no man can reject the burden of freedom for long and still remain human, for the "For-itself" is defined in no other way than by his freedom and the actions based upon the use of such freedom. Apart from his freedom, man as man, simply does not exist.

Sartre's position in regard to man's freedom can be summarized best by using Sartre's paradoxical statement, "man is condemned to be free."[78] By such a statement, Sartre means that man cannot escape the burden of his freedom by pretending that external pressures make him behave in a particular manner. Only things are forced to react in set ways; man is not a mere thing. No external pressure has power over a man unless he grants it that power. Things, "causes," social pressures and the like are strictly neutral. It is man, the "For-itself," who provides all external forces and objects with their meaning and significance, even if such a meaning is negative in nature.

As long as there are even two alternatives open to a man, there is absolute freedom for Sartre. He defies anyone to suggest a situation where there are not at least two alternatives, regardless of external pressures, even if one of these alternatives might be death.

8. FREEDOM AND THE EXISTENCE OF OTHERS

When Sartre reaches the problem of the existence of other persons, he does not manage to escape contradictions as easily as he did in the cases already discussed. There are some genuinely paradoxical elements in his view concerning other persons, and several of Sartre's concepts concerning inter-personal relationships reveal considerable insight into the human condition, however.

Sartre never denies that "the Other" really exists, and that "the Other," too is absolutely free, since he too is a

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[78]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 539.

"For-itself." This leads Sartre to honestly admit that we do encounter other persons. As Sartre puts it, when we come into contact with other persons, "we must realize that we have just encountered a real limit to our freedom--that is, a way of being which is imposed upon us without our freedom being its foundation."[79] But this limit imposed by "the Other's" existence is not a result of his actions, as one might at first suppose. The "Other" presents an inevitable limitation upon our absolute freedom by the mere fact he exists. This is the notion which Sartre had in mind when he had his hero Garcin, declare, in the play, No Exit, that "Hell is other people."[80] Other people are Hell to the extent that they create a very real limit to the freedom of any "For-itself," a freedom which would have been unlimited otherwise.

This view that "Others" limit our freedom by their very existence, is also what was behind the statement of Inez, in the same play. She is tormented by the very presence of her two fellow inmates in Hell, just as any "For-itself" will be "tormented" or "haunted" by the existence of another "For-itself." Inez has just been asked to forget about the presence of her two fellows, Estelle and Garcin, but she replies:

> To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I feel you there in every pore. Your silence clamors in my ears. You can nail up your mouth, cut your tongue out, but you still can't prevent your being there.[81]

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[80] Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), p. 23.

[81] Ibid.

Now Sartre seems to be trapped into a contradictory position from which he cannot escape. He has admitted that other people exist without our choosing them to exist. He has also admitted that the "Other," too, is a free agent and that the "Other" limits our freedom by his very existence. Sartre has even declared that the "For-itself" could not really be called "human" without the value judgments conferred upon it by the "Other" and so has shown the "Other" to be a necessary part of the human realm, as was indicated earlier in this study. Yet Sartre still insists that the "For-itself" remains free, that its freedom has not really been destroyed. He does this with the aid of an argument which is tinged with sophistry, but which still seems to contain some elements of paradoxical truth.

Sartre agrees with Heidegger that freedom sets its own limits.[82] If freedom sets its own limit, it can remain free and limited at the same time. This is just what takes place in the realm of inter-personal relationships according to Sartre. The freedom of one "For-itself" is limited only by freedom itself, namely the absolute freedom of another "For-itself." When this limitation is encountered it can be transcended by projecting oneself toward other possibilities, just as material obstacles can be transcended toward other possibilities.[83] The freedom of the "Other," even though it is a threat to our freedom, can still provide the opportunity for overcoming the situation, and need

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[82]Wahl, op. cit., p. 542.

[83]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 270-271.

not necessarily destroy the freedom of any one "For-itself."

Overcoming the situation of confronting another person's freedom is the most difficult problem faced by any "For-itself," as Sartre readily admits. A victory can be lost at any time merely by the "Other" revealing his freedom as still being intact through his "look."[84] The "look" for Sartre, has metaphysical implications, for it reveals that the one behind the "look" is a subjective "For-itself," with a freedom of its own, and that we are only another object or manifestation of "In-itself," in his field of vision. Needless to say, such a confrontation causes tension to arise. The freedom of the "Other" must somehow be conquered in order to establish our own absolute freedom once again. Love, sadism, and masochism are all nothing more than overcoming this freedom of another "For-itself."

Love, for Sartre, is merely the attempt the gain the "Other's" freedom as freedom, by "seduction:" that is, we try to lure the "Other" into voluntarily granting us his freedom. Masochism is the attempt to become a mere object before the "Other" in order to escape our own freedom. Sadism is the attempt to force the other to be a mere object; if this attempt fails, hatred is the result, a hatred which might even end in killing the "Other."

All of these various reactions to coming in contact with an "Other" are self-destructive, however. The balance of freedom of two "For-itselfs" in a love relationship is too difficult to maintain for any length of time. Masochism fails when the

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[84] Ibid., p. 263.

"For-itself," desiring to become a mere object before the "look" of another "For-itself," begins to use the "Other" as a tool or object to attain his own ends. The using of the "Other" as an instrument to attain one's own ends, reveals to a person the fact that he is a subject and not a mere object. With this revelation, the crushing sense of freedom which comes with being a subjective "For-itself" returns, and this attempt fails. Sadism fails because the "Other" can free himself from the grasp of another "For-itself" at any time, even when he is being physically tortured, merely by using his "look" to show his torturer that his freedom is still intact. Sartre argues that even murder cannot end this conflict because one's memory that the "Other" has even existed and created a real limit to his freedom, will still be there to frustrate him. (Sartre, in his Being and Nothingness devotes pages 361 to 430 to an exclusive discussion of the concrete relations with others, revealing its importance to his general scheme).

Sartre summarizes this struggle to maintain absolute freedom, which is so basic to the "For-itself," in the following passage:

> It is therefore useless for human reality to seek to get out of this dilemna: one must either transcend the Other or allow himself to be transcended by him. The essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the Mitsein; it is conflict.[85]

Sartre even goes so far as to admit that this struggle of two absolute freedoms pitted against each other, sometimes results

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[85] Ibid., p. 429.

in one of the "For-itselfs" being enslaved by the "Other," even if there is but little willingness on his part to view himself as "an enslaved object." Sartre's own words reveal this position more clearly than those of anyone else:

> To be looked at is to apprehend oneself as the unknown object of unknown appraisals, in particular of value judgments. . . I am a slave to the degree that my being is dependent at the center of a freedom which is not mine and which is the very condition of my being. In so far as I am an object of values which come to qualify me, without my being able to act on this qualification, or even know it, I am enslaved.[86]

Thus, even though Sartre can still maintain his position that there is no theoretical limit to freedom, he is forced to admit that there is a practical limit to freedom. This limit occurs whenever one "For-itself" encounters another "For-itself," and so cannot be avoided for any more than brief periods of time, unless one chooses to leave society. The balance of freedom between two "For-itselfs" is so delicate that even love holds "the seeds of its own destruction."[87] For similar reasons, already indicated, masochism, sadism, and hatred likewise defeat themselves because of the fleeting character of absolute consciousness and freedom and because of the constant possibility of one "For-itself" transcending the other in the attempt to make the other "For-itself" a mere object before its omnipotent "look."[88]

If one wonders how Sartre can still claim that man has even theoretical absolute freedom, he need only recall that the freedom

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[86] Ibid., p. 267.

[87] Ibid., p. 377.

[88] Ibid., pp. 405-413.

of man, properly speaking, is nothing. Freedom can never be grasped or captured as one would capture an existing thing; freedom is to be found in man only as a "lack," a sort of "creative vacuum," which causes man to be a "not-yet" instead of an opaque, completely actualized "In-itself." Even though a man's body may be chained, the nothingness within him, which is his absolute freedom and which makes human consciousness possible through a process of internal negation, can never be taken from him.

EXISTENTIALISM AS A FORM OF HUMANISM

In spite of all of the ideas presented which seem to place Sartre at odds with the humanist camp, Sartre himself claims to be a humanist. One could argue that he does so only to popularize his system, but this argument is somewhat dubious. There were many other points within his philosophy which Sartre could have softened if he had merely wanted a system with popular appeal. He could have allowed God a place in his system, for example and used the paradox, in the Kierkegaardian fashion, to prove that a leap to saving faith is necessitated by man's "absurd" life and inherent lack of essence. Sartre could have suggested that Hegel's method of synthesis can come to man's aid by solving the problems of opposition which surround him. He could have held that human affection such as love is the real answer to man's problems. But he chose none of these alternatives. Certainly if all that Sartre wanted was to popularize his system, he would have chosen a different technique than arguing his Existentialism is a form of humanism.

If Sartre did not suggest that his system is a type of humanism merely for popular appeal, one must assume that Sartre sincerely feels that it is a form of humanism. At first sight, his system does appear to be antithetical to humanism; and such figures as Van Meter Ames have denied that Sartre's philosophy could ever be truly humanistic.[89] If one takes the trouble to look more closely, Sartre's humanistic elements cannot be entirely denied even though much of his humanism is clouded by apparently contradictory characteristics.

In the following passage, Sartre gives one of his clearest statements as to why he feels his Existentialism is a form of humanism.

> Existentialism is a humanism because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself abandoned must decide for himself; also because we show that it is not by turning his back upon himself, but always by seeking beyond himself, an aim which is of liberation or of some particular realization, that man can realize himself as truly human.[90]

Christian humanists will attack Sartre's view as not being humanistic because it emphasizes atheism, has no respect for mankind as a whole, and offers man no genuine hope. Sartre admits the partial truth of such charges. Existentialism, as he presents it, does deny God's existence, but this denial is only Sartre's way of saying that "man must find himself again and that nothing can save him from himself."[91] Existentialism does have no respect for the aggregate "mankind" as such, for "mankind" is nothing apart from

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[89]Van Meter Ames, "Is Existentialism a Humanism?", The Humanist, I (1950), pp. 16-22.

[90]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," p. 310.

[91]Ibid., p. 311.

the actions of its individual members. And as for hope, Sartre could argue that his philosophy has much more hope and faith in man's future than any theistic system. To the Sartrean Existentialist, even the most loathsome coward is defined only by the cowardly deeds which he commits; he can cease being a coward whenever he ceases to commit such deeds, even though it may be true that he must maintain this new mode of existence by constant effort, renewed choice and action.

If one accuses Sartre's philosophy of offering no "salvation" for man, Sartre can counter that it threatens man with no "damnation," either. When Existentialism is attacked for its emphasis upon "despair," Sartre replies: "Existentialism is optimistic. It is a doctrine of action, and it is only by self-deception, by confusing their own despair with ours, that Christians can describe us as without hope."[92]

To charges that his system is nihilistic and therefore not worthy of being called a form of humanism, Simone de Beauvoir points out that such criticisms are based on selected negativistic elements within Sartre's total system. She reminds the reader that, "The most optimistic ethics have all begun by emphasizing the element of failure involved in the condition of man."[93] Sartre does locate nothingness within man; he does declare that nothingness, freedom and consciousness are the same, and that man without free choice and involvement is not man; such views do not necessarily mean that Sartre's system is negativistic, however. By

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 10.

saying that man contains nothingness, Sartre only wishes to suggest that man is not in perfect coincidence with himself in the same way as a thing, which simply is what it is, and is nothing more. Were man in perfect coincidence with himself, which is what those who assert man is fully actualized and contains no nothingness must argue, man would simply exist, and meaning would be totally absent from the world.[94]

If one argues that Existentialism is not a humanism because it refuses to offer man any set of ideals, goals, or guarantees, Beauvoir offers a paradoxical reply, based upon Sartre's own reasoning. She says that the mere fact that Existentialism, as envisaged by Sartre and his followers, does not offer man any promises, or confer upon him any fixed labels or guarantees, is proof of its faith in man. Sartre has faith in man not as man is, for he is nothing; Sartre has faith in man for what man can make himself become. Beauvoir agrees with Sartre that man does not really need guarantees of all sorts to make his existence meaningful. Man needs no absolute decrees to be certain about the validity of his goals; the meaning of his goals comes from his own drives and need not be supplemented by divine sanction or grandiose promises.[95]

There is one basic statement of Sartre which is extremely difficult to reconcile with humanism, however. This is his statement that, "The best way to conceive of the fundamental project

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[94]Ibid.

[95]Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 159.

of human reality is to say that man is the being whose project is to be God."[96] Such a statement from Sartre, the atheist, seems like a direct contradiction. By such an assertion, Sartre only wishes to say that man seeks to become an "In-itself," with its purely actualized state, and a "For-itself," with its inherent potentiality and freedom made possible by its internal nothingness. Sartre declares that such a fusion of the two modes is impossible; this means at one and the same time, that there is no God and that man's basic project is a futile hope. This idea causes Sartre to strike a rather somber note at the end of the main section of his Being and Nothingness. Here he states, "Man is a useless passion."[97] This statement would follow logically from his view that the "For-itself" has posited a basic project which is impossible of attainment, but it has often been utilized by Sartre's bitterest enemies to prove that his system is nihlistic.

While there seems to be no solution to his contradictory belief in Sartre's own words, Alfred Stern feels that he may have found at least a partial answer to this problem in Beauvoir's writings. As Stern suggests, Beauvoir adds to Sartre's statement that, "man is the being who wants to be God," the appendage that only those acting in "bad faith" would even seek such an impossible union. Only a person acting in a dishonest manner, fleeing the burden of his freedom, would even attempt this impossible synthesis. The truly "authentic" man would be willing not to "be" in order

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[96]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 556.

[97]Ibid., p. 615.

"to exist."[98] The true Existentialist would be willing in other words, to admit that he is not fully actual, that he is totally free, totally responsible, and cannot lose the potentiality which makes him a "For-itself," without ceasing to be a man at the same time.

While Beauvoir's suggestion is certainly compatible with Sartre's general ideas, and does help extricate him from an otherwise contradictory position, in view of his claims of optimism and humanism for his system, his remark concerning the "basic project of man" seemed to include all men and not just those acting in "bad faith." Beauvoir's defense is probably as adequate as any which Sartre himself could provide at this point, but there remains a genuine flaw in Sartre's system in this regard, a flaw which will be examined in Chapter V.

THE PROBLEM OF SOLIPSISM

The next issue to be dealt with is Sartre's paradoxical escape from solipsism. The specific problem is: How can Sartre escape a solipsistic position when he places such an exclusive emphasis upon the individual, denies the existence of a transcendent mind which could act as an objective mediator between individual selves, and even denies the continued success of interpersonal relationships?

Sartre's paradoxical method of escaping this dangerous philosophical trap has been implied, but it should now be made more explicit. H. J. Blackham suggests that Sartre's system is

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[98]Stern, op. cit., p. 178.

not solipsistic at all. He reminds critics of Sartre that, whenever a "For-itself" is aware of its "objectivity," the process has been made possible only because the "For-itself" is in the presence of another independently existing "For-itself." As Mr. Blackham goes on to demonstrate, the existence of the "Other" is not only as real as the existence of one's own "For-itself," but in a sense it is even more real or certain than one's own existence.[99]

Sartre argues that the "Other" is indispensable for personal existence, as well as for any knowledge which one can have of his own "character," for what men commonly call their "character" is really the result of the judgments of others. He also declares that the discovery of one's own self and the existence of other selves is simultaneous. As he puts it, "The intimate discovery of myself is at the same time, the revelation of the Other as a freedom which confronts mine . . ."[100] Sartre even attacks the position of the solipsist directly in his Being and Nothingness, claiming that the position of solipsism has an inherent flaw. In Sartre's own words:

> If solipsism is formulated in conformity with its denomination as the affirmation of my ontological solitude, it is a pure metaphysical hypothesis, perfectly unjustified and gratuitous, for it amounts to saying that outside of men nothing exists and so goes beyond the limits of my field of experience.[101]

If there were need for further proof that Sartre's position is not solipsistic, his work, The Transcendence of the Ego, should

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[99]Blackham, op. cit., p. 118.

[100]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," p. 303.

[101]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 229.

provide such evidence. Sartre states his position in regard to the existence of the "Other" quite clearly in the following quotation. "My 'I' is in effect no more certain for my consciousness than the 'I' of other men. It is only more intimate."[102] Neither other men nor the material objects of the world are creations of our imagination. As Sartre continues in the same work, "The World has not created the me; the me has not created the World. These are two objects for absolute, impersonal consciousness . . ."[103] Thus, Sartre's philosophy escapes at least the snare of solipsism.

EXISTENTIALISM AND ETHICS

One of the most serious questions facing Sartre's philosophy is that of its ethical implications. Unfortunately, Sartre has not yet completed his own volume on this vital topic, even though he has been planning to complete such a work for some time. In 1956, Sartre told Wilfrid Desan that he would probably not finish his study on ethics until at least 1966, and consequently one can do little else but wait for its release, with more than a little curiousity.[104]

Of all of the problems dealt with in Sartre's entire system, that of ethics evokes the most doubt and uncertainty. There are many issues in this phase of his thought which seem to be contradictory, and some of these problems have not been resolved. One major reason for this uncertainty is that Sartre has based so much

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[102]Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 104.

[103]Ibid., p. 106.

[104]Desan, op. cit., p. xvi, Introduction.

of his philosophy upon ontological foundations. As Sartre says, "Ontology itself cannot formulate ethical precepts. It is concerned solely with what is, and we cannot possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives."[105]

All one can derive from ontology, at least according to Sartre, is such concepts as nothingness, consciousness, and freedom. But, if one is to formulate moral laws, he must do so in accordance with such concepts, for it is ontology alone which can provide the certitude necessary for a secure and valid ethical system. With this ontological inclination in mind, Sartre suggests there can be only one moral judgment which an "authentic" person can pronounce. As Sartre expresses it:

> I can pronounce a moral judgment. For I can decide that freedom in respect of concrete circumstances can have no other end and aim but itself; and when once a man has seen that all values depend upon himself, in that state of forsakeness he can will only one thing, and that is freedom as the foundation of all values.[106]

If such a declaration is too general, so it will have to remain, for Sartre can really go no further without contradicting his most basic positions. The only basis for moral judgment which Sartre can suggest is that of freedom, but this notion is even more nebulous than Kant's view of the "Categorical Imperative," which Sartre himself has criticized.[107]

Simone de Beauvoir probably comes as close to making an absolute moral judgment as an Existentialist can come and still

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[105]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 625.

[106]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," p. 307.

[107]Ibid., p. 308.

remain a true Existentialist, at least so far as Sartre is concerned. In her book, The Ethics of Ambiguity, she declares, "There are cases where a man positively wants evil, that is the enslavement of other men, and he must then be fought."[108]

The average person will probably not be content with Sartre's solitary standard of freedom as the criterion for making ethical judgments; Sartre would reply: such a person has failed to think of ethics as a growing and creative process. One basic standard is enough, for the rest of the necessary bases for action will unfold in the very process of acting. Sartre argues that in a very real sense, man makes an act right or wrong by performing it. There is no standard which can guide man in making moral decisions save his own freedom, but this challenge can be accepted only by the man who is "authentic." Sartre seems to feel that only a man who is too weak to stand erect under his burden of freedom and its implicit responsibility, would even request absolute moral rules and standards; Sartre insists his philosophy is not designed for such a person. There are countless philosophical, political, and religious systems which can provide man with a complete set of fixed laws for every aspect of his behavior; Sartre attempts to emancipate man from such systems and he can do so only at the cost of what many would feel is "ethical insecurity."

One should remember at this point that the step, from accepting other's ethical judgments as one's own, to creating an individual set of ethical standards based upon personal action and

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[108]Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 136.

involvement, is not as difficult as it might first appear. Man really never escapes making decisions anyway; even when he decides to adopt already developed systems as his own, he simply hides from the fact of his choice by self-deception. Sartre asks merely that man realize the origin of the energy which he seems to find already deposited in "completed" ethical systems. Once a man discovers for himself that it is his own free choice which has made it appear that values are already deposited within things or systems, he will be able to dispense with such deceptions and will make his own essence through his own free choice and actions based upon that choice.

At this point, still another apparent contradiction arises. How can Sartre argue that man emancipates himself from self deception and "bad faith" if he is already free? How can he expect men to give up the security of absolute systems of all sorts in the name of freedom when the "For-itself" has been defined by Sartre as nothing but freedom (or nothingness)? In answer to such a question, Simone de Beauvoir, using one of Sartre's basic ideas, provides a paradoxical answer. She explains the nature of freedom and the "For-itself" in this manner:

> If freedom were a thing or a quality attached to a thing . . . one would either have it or not have it. But the fact is that it merges with the very movement of this ambiguous reality which is called existence and which is only by making itself be.[109]

Thus, man's only definition is in terms of his nothingness and his freedom; but a man cannot simply be free as a thing can be

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[109]Beauvoir, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

this or that simple state of existence. Man must use this nothingness to posit his ends; and by acting upon the choices made in the light of these freely posited ends, he can create his own essence. Man can use his absolute, theoretical freedom springing from his inherent nothingness, only by acting using this freedom in positing future ends. Through action, man causes his freedom to move from the pure theoretical realm to the practical realm of human affairs. Without such action man's freedom remains in the theoretical realm.

CHAPTER IV

A REVIEW OF CRITICISM OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Remembering that paradox has been defined in this study as an apparent contradiction which after careful analysis reveals a higher truth, one can distinguish three basic types of criticism of Sartre's philosophy. The first two types fail, or refuse to admit the presence of paradox in his system. The third type does admit the existence of paradoxical elements, to varying extents. The present chapter will deal only with the first two types, leaving the third for Chapter V.

THE THREE TYPES OF CRITICISM DESCRIBED

These three types of criticism can be distinguished by a special set of characteristics. The first type, whether taking the form of an indiscrimate rejection or acceptance of Sartre, is by far the most superficial. This variety is generally based upon insufficient reading and a lack of immediate acquaintance with Sartre's work. Surface appearances dominate the criticisms at this level and praise or condemnation typically exceeds the degree of genuine understanding. Such is the case with many French students who, after hearing a single lecture of Sartre, rush out into the streets declaring themselves to be "Existentialists." This first type of critical approach is also represented by certain critics who are careless in their rejection of Sartre's ideas. Such

critics usually ignore any merit of his philosophy on the grounds that it is "atheistic," "nihilistic," or "decadent." Neither view, although representing highly divergent evaluations of Sartre, is actually valid.

The second type of evaluation probes Sartre's thought more deeply, but finds itself unable to go beyond the level of apparent contradiction to the possible meanings beneath. This variety fails to distinguish between actual self-contradictions and paradox, as defined in this thesis. Often the basic statements of this type are true enough; the real weakness of the approach lies in not pursuing the problem to its true conclusion.

The third type involves a limited acceptance of positive elements within Sartre. The problem of the resolution of contradictions is noted at this level. Often within this type of criticism there is a mixed rejection and acceptance of Sartre's position, both for fairly sound reasons. The approach in general shows a far better grasp of Sartre's thought, as well as a much broader background of careful reading of his fiction and non-fictional works.

The best criticism of this third category is by far the most valuable, for it examines Sartre's thought to its very core. Paradoxical elements are clearly recognized. Apparent contradictions are usually separated from inherently contradictory positions built upon Sartre's ontological or psychological premises. Praise at this level is not abundant, but whatever aspects of Sartre's system are chosen for positive recognition at this level, one may

be certain that they contain genuine merit. Any flaws noted at this level are serious; some of those revealed are genuinely self-contradictory and not merely paradoxical. These indictments will be related directly to Sartre's own statements on significant issues in the Chapter V.

THE FIRST TWO TYPES OF CRITICISM

Before citing examples of the first two types of criticism, we should note that the placing of a critic's statements within one of these first two categories does not necessarily detract from his general critical stature. All that the following examples will serve to illustrate is a specific charge, which is invalid as given. Many of the same critic's charges may be true concerning Sartre, even those which appear in the same book or article as the invalid accusations. For this reason, some names may appear in more than one list. To condemn a critic for having made several erroneous judgments would be to make the same mistake which he himself committed in condemning Sartre on insufficient evidence.

THE FIRST TYPE OF CRITICISM

Although this first form of evaluation can include both acceptance and rejection of Sartre's philosophy, the emphasis here will be upon rejection. The critics in this group appear to reject Sartre because they can find no element of paradox containing a positive value or because their inclinations prevent them from attempting to find any merit within his thought. These thinkers

seem to feel that a blanket condemnation of Sartre enables them to dispense with a more careful analysis and evaluation. The paradoxical elements within Sartre are the source of the positive value to be gained from his variety of Existentialism, but these paradoxes are apparent only to one willing to conduct a careful examination. This first group of critics is not willing to undertake such a project.

The first example of this category is Guido de Ruggiero. In his book Existentialism, he deliberately omits Sartre from his discussion of Existentialist thinkers, drawing special attention, in the Foreword of the book, to the fact that he did so on purpose. He then quotes, with obvious approval, Benedetto Croce's statement that Existentialism is "an overstimulated, poisonous and perverse kind of swelling in the groin." He then adds a remark of his own, suggesting that Existentialism is merely a kind of "metaphysical pornography."[110] Such statements, although witty, reveal very little insight into a system of thought such as Existentialism. As de Ruggiero should have realized, Existentialism, at least as developed by Sartre, prefers to place its emphasis upon a direct application of the ontological-psychological method to human existence, rather than to raise questions of origins and ultimate ends which are best dealt with in metaphysics. For Sartre, the fact that man is here, in a present world with current problems and tasks, is far more important than questions which lie outside

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[110]Guido de Ruggiero, Existentialism: Disintegration of Man's Soul, (New York: Social Science Publishers, 1948), p. 28.

the realm of immediate human experience. Even ontology, for Sartre, has meaning and value only when applied directly to the sphere of man's problems.

De Ruggiero continues his attack however, taking such basic Existentialist terms as "anxiety" and "dread" out of their proper context, in order to prove that a wholesale condemnation of this philosophy is valid on the grounds that it is pessimistic and nihilistic. De Ruggiero does not allow for the presence of paradox in Sartre or Heidegger; for him where there are opposing forces there is contradiction. If a suggestion is made that man must face his crucial state, de Ruggiero labels such a suggestion "pessimistic." If Sartre or Heidegger present their views concerning the creative-negation principle embodied in their concept of "Nothing," de Ruggiero condemns the notion on the grounds that such a position is "nihilistic." De Ruggiero finally reveals his clear bias when he concludes that Existentialism, since it has no strong religious interest, must therefore place all of its categories in a distorted and unreal world."[111] Finding an admitted rejection of the ordinary spiritual values within Sartre's and Heidegger's Existentialism, de Ruggiero proceeds to look no further, and on this note ends his study.

Otto Kraushaar has continued in a somewhat similar vein, by stating what he feels the results of Sartre's atheistic Existentialism have been. He argues that Sartre's atheism has

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[111]De Ruggiero, op. cit., p. 65.

created a "truncated, negative mode of thought that embodies all the morbidity, arbitrariness, subjectivity, and radical anti-rationalism of Kierkegaard . . ." Kraushaar then goes on to add that all of these negative elements are present in Sartre's philosophy without being counterbalanced by Christian elements, as was the case in the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard.[112]

Kraushaar, like de Ruggiero, has allowed himself to be misled by certain admittedly morbid and negative elements within Sartre's system. No honest defender of Sartre could deny that such elements do appear, and often, especially in Sartre's fiction. The function of such negativistic phrases and elements should be carefully studied however, for upon a closer examination, one can discover that many of Sartre's most morbid and seemingly negative statements lead him finally to a form of optimism. Even Jacques Maritain, a Roman Catholic, and active opponent to some of Sartre's ideas, has admitted the presence of an ironically pure form of optimism within Sartre's philosophy.[113]

Mexmilliam Beck attacks Sartre's philosophy by saying that it tries to convince man that his ordinary beliefs are useless. As Beck puts it, Sartre's form of thought tries to persuade man that, "God Truth, Knowledge, World, Man, and Value are all frustration, or nothingness."[114] Beck has taken Sartre's basic concept of "Nothingness" and forgotten what role it plays in Sartre's total

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[112]Otto F. Kraushaar, "Existentialism by Sartre," The Journal of Philosophy, XLIV, (January, 1947), p. 717.

[113]Jacques Maritain, Existence and the Existent, (New York: The Pantheon Press, 1948), p. 9, Introduction.

[114]Maximilliam Beck, "Existentialism," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, V (September, 1944), p. 131.

system. Beck has noted that Sartre denies absolute values and so concludes that for Sartre there can be no values, a conclusion which does not really follow from the mere fact that Sartre denies absolutes. There are no given values for Sartre, it is true, but such a view in no way means that man cannot create his own values in the very process of action. The denial of absolutes does not rob a system of all meaning or hope as Beck seems to believe; it simply places a greater burden upon man by making ethics a creative process, instead of a mere application of solidified rules and regulations.

Van Meter Ames, also interested in Sartre's concept of Nothingness, comments: "Man for Sartre, is the lonely individual, condemned to the freedom of making nothing of himself, but Nothing."[115] He too has taken the conception of Nothing too much at its surface value. Ames implies that Sartre is faced with contradiction if he wishes to claim any positive value in a view which asserts that man is the very embodiment of Nothing. Ames overlooks the element of a paradoxical truth at this point. Man, for Sartre, is able to create, think, apprehend, and plan, precisely because he is freed from the world of brute existence by a cushion of Nothingness which he carries within him.

E. O. Siepman indicts Sartre by suggesting there is little of anything original within Sartre's thought. Siepman even suggests that Sartre's dilemns are "crudely pessimistic," and continues his charges by quoting Sartre's now famous statement from

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115Van Meter Ames, "Mead and Sartre on Man," The Journal of Philosophy, LIII (March, 1956), p. 219.

his play No Exit, that "Hell is other people." Siepman adds that these "other people are represented by a pervert, a pacifist who is not sure if he is a coward, and a nymphomaniac."[116] Siepman has quoted Sartre correctly, but he has missed the real meaning behind Sartre's words. He has forgotten that for Sartre other people are both important and necessary, even if through their judgments, the precious freedom of the "For-itself" is threatened.

Robert Butts presents a far different, but equally inadequate, approach to understanding Sartre's philosophical outlook. Butts attempts to apply a rigorous logical analysis to Sartre's notion of "absurdity." He concludes that the notion of "absurdity," which is so basic to Sartre, can be achieved only at the cost of circularity in argument.[117] Such objections by logically-oriented critics, are of interest not so much for their explicit content as for the lesson which can be learned from their endeavors. Butts shows clearly what occurs when a strict and logical discipline is applied to a vital and elusive view such as Existentialism. The failure of certain notions in Existentialism to stand up to a strict logical analysis does not necessarily prove that Existentialism fails as a philosophy. Such a failure may only indicate that Sartre's philosophy, by its very nature cannot be classified and catalogued, even though Sartre does employ a deductive method in the construction of some of his basic notions.

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[116]E. O. Siepman, "The New Pessimism in France," The Nineteenth Century, XIX (May, 1948), pp. 275-278.

[117]Robert E. Butts, "Does 'Intentionality' Imply 'Being'?: A Paralogism in Sartre's Ontology," The Journal of Philosophy, LV (October 9, 1958), pp. 911-912.

A logical analysis of Sartre's philosophy might be a valuable approach if it were supplemented by an awareness of how paradox plays a vital role in Sartre's total outlook. When a strictly logical approach is not supplemented by a recognition of paradoxical truth, a total rejection of Sartre's philosophy is all but inevitable.

Norberto Bobbio summarizes our first type of criticism when he says, "The existential man is a ghost that moves among shadows . . . For a world of dead men, a philosophy of ghosts."[118] Bobbio has failed to see that one could say of each of many religiously oriented systems of the past, that it has been a "philosophy of ghosts" much more than Sartre's system. Few systems contain the vitality, power, and emphasis upon action as Sartre's Existentialism. Bobbio has assumed that since Sartre refuses to label man once and for all or confer a fixed and given meaning to man's life, Sartre has somehow sapped all human existence of its strength and vitality. A closer scrutiny of Sartre's ideas in this area would have revealed a genuine strength, an almost stubborn humanism, and Sartre's constant battle with those forces, whether religious or cultural, that would rob man of his potency or stifle the free expression of man's liberty. For Sartre, freedom is the very definition of man.

THE SECOND TYPE OF CRITICISM

The second variety of critical opinion in regard to Sartre is somewhat fairer than the first. It usually contains elements

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[118]Norberto Bobbio, The Philosophy of Decadentism: A Study in Existentialism, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), p. 52.

of true insight and attempts to go below the level of mere surface reflections. However, thinkers of this group still tend to be too sensitive to the seemingly contradictory notions within Sartre's outlook. The discovery of what they feel to be a self-contradiction often causes them to halt their investigation just at the point of a significant insight.

This variety can be illustrated best by several examples, the first of which is a summary made by James Collins. He says, referring to Sartre's view of man, "The dynamnic ideal of all human striving is to realize a state of being which is intrinsically contradictory and incapable of realization."[119] Such a statement is based more squarely upon Sartre's own ideas than are the attacks by critics of the first group. Collins, in making such a remark probably had in mind Sartre's famous statement that man is the creature who wants to be God, or that, "man is the being who loses himself as man in order that God may be born."[120] By suggesting that man is the being who wants to be God, Sartre, the atheist, means that man seeks to be "In-itself" or pure being, and "For-itself," human subjective reality, at one and the same time. Sartre argues that such a fusion is impossible; his conviction that such a fusion of the two forms of being is not possible is one of the basic supports for his atheism. If there is no God and man is the being who strives toward an impossible fusion, Collins has a point when he attacks Sartre on the grounds that

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[119]Collins, op. cit., p. 78.

[120]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 615.

Sartre has constructed a system which is frustrating at its very core. Collins has made a mistake however, not in his discovery that Sartre holds there is a futile and inevitable striving within man, but in not pursuing his point to its final place in Sartre's philosophy, but his failure to develop his arguments at this point, relegate his attack to the second type of criticism.

Erich Unger shows the same tendency to find contradiction in Sartre's philosophy as Collins. Like Collins, Unger fails to move beyond an apparent contradiction. Unger states for example, that Sartre cannot claim on the one hand to be advocating a doctrine which is humanistic, as Sartre declares in his essay, "Existentialism is a Humanism," and still refuse to set up an ideal of mankind or even give a definition of man.[121] Unger is correct in stating that Sartre appears to be caught in a contradiction. Sartre does indeed claim to be putting forward a form of humanism, and he does deny that man can be defined. But by approaching humanism from a different perspective from that which Sartre would call "sentimental humanism," Sartre shows how Existentialism can be more humanistic than those forms of the belief which attempt to define man once and for all. Sartre feels, with at least some justification, that his very refusal to give man a final label or a fixed and solidified definition is just what makes his view more truly humanistic than the more traditional forms of humanism.[122]

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[121]Erich Unger, "Existentialism," The Nineteenth Century and After, XIX, (May, 1948), p. 37.

[122]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," pp. 300-311.

Iris Murdoch, attacking Sartre from a different angle, suggests that Sartre's view is weakened by its contradictory solipsism. Miss Murdoch is partially correct when she says, "The individual is the center, but the solipsistic center. He has a dream of human companionship, but never the experience."[123] No one could deny that Sartre, like Kierkegaard, has placed the individual in a position of ultimate importance, but this in itself does not prove Sartre solipsistic. Miss Murdoch has overlooked Sartre's very careful avoidance of solipsism throughout his writings, especially in his Being and Nothingness. Sartre has been careful to avoid any position which would be too closely allied with idealism precisely because he feared such a position might lead him eventually back to solipsism. Time after time in his major work, Being and Nothingness, Sartre attacks forms of pure idealism, and he even suggests that idealism was Husserl's greatest single weakness.[124] In the course of his argument, which has already been indicated in Chapter III, Sartre even goes on to show that the existence of other is just as certain as, or even more certain than, the existence of the self who questions its own existence. Sartre's position not only opposes solipsism; it refutes it. Sartre's Existential man may be a lonely man, but not because he alone exists. Sartre's man is lonely because interpersonal relationships are difficult or even impossible to maintain for extended periods of time. He is lonely because he resists the

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[123]Murdoch, op. cit., p. 26.

[124]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 5.

pressures of the crowd to destroy his individuality. He stands alone because no one else can take the burden of his freedom from his shoulders or relieve the burden of total responsibility which such absolute freedom entails. All of these reasons explain the lonely character of Sartre's Existential man; none of these arguments are in any way solipsistic in the traditional sense of the term.

Miss Murdoch raises other objections to Sartre's philosophy however. She says of Sartre's fictional heroes in his trilogy of novels Les Chemins de la Liberte, for example, that "Sartre leads them up to the point of insight, realization, despair, and there he leaves them."[125] Sartre is at least partially guilty in respect to her charge, but what she is asking Sartre to do is to run contrary to his entire philosophy. Sartre can do no more than leave his heroes where he does, at the point of uncertainty, and still remain true to his own system. Miss Murdoch implies that Sartre cannot claim to have a positive system for human action and still refuse to offer his heroes some guide or direction for their lives; in other words, she implies that Sartre's theory is involved in a contradition in the realm of the human condition, when he leaves his heroes in such an indeterminate state, and still claims to be establishing a positive philosophy of existence.

Sartre would be acting contrary to the basic tenets of his belief if he assigned to his heroes a solidified meaning and purpose for their life. Miss Murdoch knows well enough Sartre's

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[125]Murdoch, op. cit., p. 17.

distaste for static labels, and so she should not expect him to convey any sort of fixity upon man. Sartre can do no more than lead his fictional heroes to the crossroads of a decision and then leave them there, for to provide a description of his heroes as if they were mere objects would be contrary to his distinction between the "In-itself" and the "For-itself." The "For-itself" is of value precisely because it is a constant possibility, a "not-yet," which is always in a process of becoming. Sartre cannot provide guarantees to man, whether in the form of his own fictional figures, or his own followers, even if such guarantees would encourage feelings of happiness or contentment. The lack of certainty within his system is no weakness in his eyes however, for his brand of Existentialism is not intended for those who wish to remain lazily quiescent in a torpid state of satisfaction.

F. H. Heineman points out a more legitimate and serious problem in Sartre's system. He suggests that Sartre's views are doomed to failure because they fail in the realm of morals. He suggests that Sartre is trapped into the position that he can give no standards of conduct at all without contradicting his basic beliefs. If Sartre refuses to offer a set of standards for moral conduct, Heineman suggests that this denial will prevent individuals from making choices.[126] Heineman is right when he holds that Sartre can provide no fixed standards of moral conduct without contradicting himself. He is also correct when he claims that people are now dependent upon tradition and society to provide them

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[126]Heineman, op. cit., p. 212.

with such standards. Sartre does not deny that adopting his view, and rejecting the traditional belief in set norms for moral conduct, will be difficult. He does not attempt to argue that adopting his view that morality is a creative, ongoing process, instead of a fixed set of laws, is easy. He is well aware that it is much easier to allow society to confer its ready-made values upon one's life, and that men do seem inclined to follow the path of least resistance. But even if men do seem to follow the easier path, instead of creating their own value systems, this in itself does not prove that man is incapable of choosing the alternative of creating his own system of ethics. Man is capable of adopting the view that ethics is really a growing, developing, constantly dynamic process.

For Sartre, whenever an individual realizes the value of a self-created code of ethical conduct, he can use his freedom to implement this system. Once a man is shown the superiority of authentic existence, Sartre feels that man can then adopt the Existentialist view of the ethical process. If Sartre has a weakness in his system at this point, it may be in his extreme faith in man's ability to change his condition at any time. Sartre appears to have more faith in man than Mr. Heineman in this regard.

Heineman continues his analysis of Sartre by finding another set of apparent self-contradictions. As he puts it, "Man desires to live, but is certain of death; searches for being but finds non-being; is a subject, but inevitably makes others his objects, and is himself an object for them."[127] All of these observations are

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[127] Ibid., p. 211.

quite correct; Heineman's mistake is that he failed to move from these basic statements to a proper conclusion. Had he analyzed these basic components further he would have seen their reverse side, their paradoxical content. Death for Sartre is nothing to worry about, for death is not properly speaking, "our" possibility at all. Since we cannot actually experience it, our own death is only experienced by other persons.[128] We do discover "non-being," but this very "non-being" is the stuff which is the essence of man's freedom, which is man. For Sartre, the very presence of this "non-being," which Heineman seems to object to, is the ingredient within the "For-itself," which enables man to isolate himself at any time from all types of external influences and becomes the principle of creativity.[129] Man is indeed a subject, and does attempt to become a simple object in order to escape his freedom and its subsequent responsibility, but even his "objectivity" has its place in the total scheme of human existence, for this "objectivity" becomes the way in which other persons view each other. One "For-itself" sees another "For-itself" in the mode of an object; this very "objectivity" creates the human "character" however.

Man's "character" or "outside" is the product of the judgments of others, and can be used by the "For-itself" in creating a self-image. Since a man's character is dependent upon the judgments of others, Sartre argues that an isolated "For-itself" would

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[128]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 545-547.

[129]Ibid., p. 79.

not even be human.[130] Had Heineman continued his investigation further at this point, he might well have discovered a basic flaw in Sartre's system; instead he stopped here and took up another argument.

Norberto Bobbio, interested in Sartre's conception of freedom, suggests another difficulty and possible contradiction. Bobbio says that freedom, the notion upon which Sartre's entire system is founded, is not positive and creative, but is destructive and annihilative. He adds that Sartre suggests man is the source of this nothingness, and that as a result one could argue from such a position, that without man, being would have always remained unchanged and nothingness would not be present in the world.[131] Once again, this basic objection contains some note of truth, as well as an implicit error. Sartre does indeed say, "Man is the being through whom nothingness comes into the world."[132] It is this nothingness which has enabled man to create for himself a realm of meanings and values. This nothingness is man's consciousness, the dividing line between man and animals or inanimate objects. Bobbio is correct in suggesting that there would have been no ugliness in the world without man, but he forgets that without man there would have been no value, beauty, or meaning, either. Without man, and the core of nothingness which he brings into the world, there would have been only pure, immutable, raw being which would simply exist, without even being aware of its existence.

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[130] Ibid., p. 282.

[131] Bobbio, op. cit., p. 56.

[132] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 24.

When Bobbio next accuses Sartre of weakening his system by focusing attention upon man, his charge is only partially true.[133] Sartre certainly does focus man's attention upon himself and his problems of living in a human realm. He would be the last philosopher to suggest that man should concentrate upon a realm of transcendent essences, forms, or God. But just this focusing of attention upon man, provides the major source of strength for Sartre's philosophy. Sartre's Existentialism is a humanism for this very reason; he calls man back to a study of himself and his own problems, leaving the realms of pure essence to take care of themselves.

When one looks back into those periods of history when man did concentrate upon the transcendental realm of Forms, God, or the after-life, and compares them with periods such as the Renaissance, when man's focus was upon his own world, he cannot help but agree that the modern world may need just the sort of emphasis upon man which Sartre's philosophy advocates. Sartre provides an important insight when he suggests that man must turn from the problems of traditional metaphysics long enough to solve his more pressing human problems, and it is this very suggestion on his part which is one of Sartre's most valuable contributions to modern living.

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[133]Bobbio, op. cit., p. 22.

CHAPTER V

THE MOST IMPORTANT WEAKNESSES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF SARTRE

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The numerous paradoxical concepts in Sartre's thought which have been revealed in this study should indicate that his philosophy has a considerable degree of merit and is revelatory of many basic insights. Not all of Sartre's philosophy is totally acceptable however, and not all of the contradictions which appear in his thought can be resolved into paradoxical statements. There are genuine flaws, weaknesses, and contradictions in his system, and it is the purpose of Chapter V to reveal in detail what these are. Since the rest of the thesis has been devoted to showing the strengths in his philosophy, it is only just, that at least some part should be devoted to the weaknesses of his thought. Without the presence of such a critical chapter, one might well draw the wrong inference from this study and conclude that none of Sartre's ideas are really contradictory or inadequate, if one simply evaluates such apparent contradictions carefully enough.

The writer will enumerate only the more important flaws in Sartre's system, but such an attempt should be sufficient to reveal the more central trends and directions in his philosophy. The writer will employ the following order in this chapter:

(1) Sartre's emphasis upon extreme views will be examined. (2) Sartre's extreme view of freedom will be criticized. (3) Sartre's ethical views and their inherent contradictions will be made explicit. (4) The contradictions in his view of "sincerity," or "authenticity," as a goal for man, will be pointed out. (5) Sartre's emphasis upon the inherent failure of inter-personal relationships will be examined. (6) The contradictions and faults of Existentialist social theories will be revealed. (7) The contradictory elements within Sartre's conception of the human consciousness will be analyzed. (8) Finally, his contradictory denial of a stable ego and his insistence upon a real past and a real "Other" will be discussed.

Such a critical analysis is only possible after those elements which are paradoxical have been separated from genuinely contradictory concepts. This study, by first showing the paradoxes in Sartre's thought, is then in a position to more fairly evaluate his total philosophical position.

ENUMERATION OF BASIC WEAKNESSES

Sartre's philosophy reveals a world which is distorted and imbalanced. Conflict, as Sartre has declared himself many times, is the basic human relation and the old value systems are discarded by him since they are no longer valid.[134] Man faces an insecure world, a world in which there is no God and which threatens to destroy man at any moment. But such negative

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[134]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," pp. 308-311.

implications, alone, are insufficient to cause such a critical chapter. Sartre's philosophy is patterned for a "world out of joint," as Albert Levi has quoted Merleau-Ponty; but Merleau-Ponty adds, "this may be just what makes it true."[135] The discovery of ugliness, loneliness, or conflict within man's world is not sufficient reason for rejecting Sartre's philosophy, for such elements can readily be found within the world of today. There are far better reasons for rejecting Sartre's philosophy as a completely adequate world-view than its "negativism" or "nihilism."

1. SARTRE'S EXTREMISM OR ABSOLUTISM

Of all of Sartre's philosophical flaws, probably the worst single one is his extremism or his radical absolutism. As Alvin Dobsevage has put it, "The absolutism of Sartre is the horn of his system on which he impales himself. He has an 'all or nothing' view of metaphysics, and consequently of people."[136]

Alfred Stern suggests a possible reason for Sartre's preoccupation with extremes. Stern, who was himself a soldier in the French army during World War II, feels that much of Sartre's overemphasis upon extremes is the result of his wartime experiences. Stern says that the young Frenchmen with whom Sartre was associated during the War had only two alternatives open to them. These alternatives were either to adopt an attitude of nihilism or to accept both the idea of their absolute choice based upon their freedom and the complete responsibility for whatever choices they

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135Levi, op. cit., p. 435.

136Alvin P. Dobsevage, "A Review of Stern's Sartre: His Philosophy and Psychoanalysis," The Journal of Philosophy, LII (July, 1955), p. 413.

made.[137] Such a stressful state created countless "all or nothing" situations, and apparently Sartre has felt that his experiences of such an extreme nature are sufficient to allow him to generalize. He uses the drama of choice in his wartime experiences to describe all human choice. His wisdom in doing so is dubious.

Sartre constantly pictures absolute choices; he seems to view the world entirely in terms of a strict "either-or" relation. His statement concerning man's freedom should serve to indicate the tenor of his thought in this regard. He argues, "Man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all."[138] Sartre chooses the former and the support of man's absolute freedom becomes his greatest single burden.

Sartre views reality as a whole also in terms of absolutes. Everything which is, is either in the mode of "In-itself" or "For-itself;" there is no third. Since human reality is less actual than the "In-itself" which surrounds it, it attempts to be an "In-itself," but this is not possible because of man's inherent nothingness. This view makes Sartre declare, in a typically extreme statement, "Human reality therefore is by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state."[139] Sartre's view of these two modes of existence likewise causes him to rule out the existence of God. God would have to be

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[137]Stern, op. cit., p. 89.

[138]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 441.

[139]Ibid., p. 90.

a fusion of both modes; He would have to be simultaneously an "In-itself" and a "For-itself," and this for Sartre is impossible.

Sartre's emphasis upon extremes, combined with his rigorously applied deductive logic, continues to generate other absolutistic statements. His view of the "For-itself" with its core of nothingness combined with his rejection of God result in his stating that no comparison between two situations can be made. This lack of comparison has the result of isolating one "For-itself" from another. In Sartre's words, "There is no absolute point of view which one can adopt so as to compare different situations; each person knows only one situation, his own."[140] Sartre does not claim that "I alone exist," but he does imply that "I alone can judge my existence," a position which cannot avoid creating problems in the development of his social theory.

Van Meter Ames points out another extreme in Sartre's thought in the following passage:

> For Sartre, either man has nothing to decide concerning values, or they are utterly and unbearably up to him, and to him all by himself as an isolated individual, with no support from society or tradition or reason.[141]

Alfred Stern likewise comments on this dangerous tendency to exaggerate extremes in Sartre, by suggesting that:

> Sartre rejects substance in any form, be it called character, temperament, human nature or what you will. Principles like heredity, education, environment, and psychological constitution are, in his eyes, nothing but the 'big explanatory idols of our epoch' because they correspond to a substantialist interpretation of man.[142]

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[140] Ibid., p. 550.

[141] Van Meter Ames, "Mead and Sartre on Man," p. 218.

[142] Stern, op. cit., p. 112.

Stern adds that Sartre feels that no constituted value or right can have value just because of the fact that it is constituted. To admit that validity of constituted values is to limit man's power of inventing his own path.[143]

Sartre's stubborn insistence upon absolute freedom and the nothingness of the "For-itself" which must remain pure at all costs, also causes him to deny the possibility of lasting personal relationships of all sorts. Stern summarizes Sartre's extreme ideas in the area of personal contacts by saying that for Sartre desire, hate, indifference, the enslavement of other persons, and the appropriation of inanimate objects, all turn out to end in failure. Even love for Sartre, is, at best, a sort of "endless fooling mirror game."[144]

Sartre's insistence upon absolutism extends throughout his entire philosophy, from his most basic ontological premises to his ethical and social theory. Such constant applications of his extreme views, especially those such as his conceptions of human freedom and consciousness, cause such critics as Wilfrid Desan to condemn Sartre as being one-sided. As Desan says, "Sartre nowhere sets forth a fair account of the positive values which love and friendship introduce into human life . . . Human behavior implying both joy and pain moves in both zones. Sartre sees only one aspect."[145]

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[143] Ibid., p. 67.

[144] Ibid., p. 213.

[145] Desan, op. cit., p. 192.

Sartre's own words serve as a fitting climax for this portion of the chapter, for his extreme notions are the direct causes for his uttering the words, "Every existing thing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness, and dies by chance."[146] This is only another way of his declaring that all life is "absurd," meaning that life is without justification and purpose. Life, death, and human existence are all "absurd" because of Sartre's rigorous deduction based upon ontological first principles. "Absurdity" is the inevitable consequence of his extreme views of the "For-itself," human consciousness, and man's total freedom. "Absurdity" is a necessary consequences of man's being thrust into this world which is without a God and which contains no intrinsic answers to man's most basic questions. Human life is and will have to remain, "absurd," because of man's inherent nothingness, the contingency of birth and death, the lack of a God, and the absence of fixed standards or values. Even the most "authentic" action creates an essence only for transient periods and can rescue man from "absurdity" only momentarily.

2. SARTRE'S EXTREME CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM

The most serious flaw to be found in Sartre's general system is probably in his conception of absolute freedom. His philosophy is important and valuable because it claims that man is far freer than man generally would like to admit to himself. When Sartre moves from this position to the radical assertion that

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[146]Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions Books, 1959), p. 180.

a man remains absolutely free even when he is being physically tortured and chained to a wall, his position is considerably weakened. Wilfrid Desan suggests that one of Sartre's greatest errors, in his notion of freedom, is his not separating theoretical freedom from practical freedom. As Desan argues, men do not really experience theoretical freedom at all, even supposing it did exist the way Sartre would have us believe. Instead, men experience practical freedom. In Desan's words, "In fact, our freedom is grounded on our concrete situation, and this concrete situation is the result of a multitude of influences; our past, our heredity, our ability to learn, etc."[147] Sartre has dealt with the problem of the past in a fairly successful manner, but he leaves unanswered the importance of heredity, psychological predisposing factors and the like, precisely because all such "influences" are rejected as representing "established" or "constituted" factors and would threaten the absolute freedom of the "For-itself."

Sartre can maintain his extreme view of freedom only if he denies the importance of all outside influences, and so he does just this. Man, for him, is absolute freedom by definition and, consequently, no one can ever take a "For-itself's" freedom from him. Just such conclusions on Sartre's part have led critics like Herbert Marcuse to suggest the inherent dangers in Sartre's view of absolute freedom. Marcuse reasons that "The essential freedom remains the same before, during, and after the totalitarian

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[147]Desan, op. cit., p. 171.

enslavement of man."[148] Later in the same article Marcuse states that Sartre's constant use of the concept of absolute freedom has resulted in his entire system sinking to the level of a mere idealism which could serve as a most convenient justification for persecutors and executioners.[149] If man is always free, regardless of his external surroundings, one can never accuse any group of depriving man of his freedom, for man remains not only free, but absolutely free as long as he is a man. Absolute freedom is the definition of the "For-itself."

Jean Wahl finds yet another objection to Sartre's view of absolute freedom. Wahl believes that Sartre's view of freedom, instead of making ethical action possible, actually has quite the opposite effect. According to Wahl, Sartre argues that we are not less free when we act as knaves than when we act as courageous men. One man might choose knavery and the other courage, but both act freely. By extending freedom to all of our actions, Wahl feels that Sartre has made the very term "freedom" meaningless, and has rendered an ethical judgment impossible, if we are to use only the criterion of freedom as our standard of ethical judgment.[150]

Sartre's view of absolute freedom means that all barriers to freedom must be rejected. As Norberto Bobbio expresses the idea, "discipline, coherence, and method have no meaning; they

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[148]Marcuse, op. cit., p. 311.

[149]Ibid., p. 322.

[150]Wahl, op. cit., p. 546.

are only so many traps set for man's freedom."[151] Alfred Stern carries such an attack even further, showing the ridiculous position which such an extreme notion causes Sartre to take. The rejection of established values has strange consequences, Stern points out. As he says:

> It would be foolish to request, not in the name of truth, but in that of freedom, that each individual perform again all the scientific experiments and re-invent all the scientific theories, disregarding totally all the achievement of four thousand years of civilization, not because these achievements are erroneous, but simply because they are constituted.[152]

And yet, as foolish as such a suggesting might seem, it does follow directly from Sartre's own premises and suggestions. If Sartre is to maintain his extreme view of freedom, he must either accept this suggestion of Stern or a suggestion somewhat similar to it.

Wilfrid Desan shows that there are inherent contradictions within Sartre's conception of freedom. Desan feels that Sartre's establishment of his view of freedom might be even more disastrous to his whole philosophy that his failure to support the view. Desan's argument is as follows:

> If freedom has no limits, if human reality breaks all boundaries because it creates itself continually, if there is no essence except that which is continually in the making, then nothing is definable, our terminology is cut off at the base and we finish in complete subjectivity.[153]

Such a charge traps Sartre in a contradiction which he cannot answer in the terms of his own system, at least as it now stands. He must either admit Desan's charges, thus placing himself within

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[151]Bobbio, op. cit., p. 58.

[152]Stern, Sartre: His Philosophy and Psychoanalysis, p. 71.

[153]Desan, op. cit., p. 168.

the camp of solipsism, from which he extricated himself with such great difficulty, or he must alter his view of absolute freedom. Since Sartre is so opposed to both alternatives, one can only speculate as to which one he would choose; but the fact remains that Desan has located a serious and major flaw in Sartre's system. This fault, like the others already mentioned, is also the result of Sartre's rigid, absolutistic thinking and his constant emphasis upon "either-or" situations and radical definitions.

There are still other indictments of Sartre's concept of freedom, even though the objections already stated should be sufficient to indicate a considerable fissure in his philosophy. Herbert Marcuse and Alfred Stern both wish to quarrel with Sartre's assertion that freedom remains absolute even in the face of violent coercion. As Marcuse puts it, "The free choice between death and enslavement is neither freedom nor choice, because both alternatives destroy human reality which is supposed to be freedom."[154] Stern makes much the same observation when he states:

> Voltaire's Candide having to choose between being thrashed to death or shot to death has about the same freedom of choice as Sartre's slave, who must choose between dying in his chains in prison, or dying in a jail-break.[155]

Both of these charges are based upon Sartre's constant insistence that man is always free and they have put their finger on the same error which the writer presented in the words of Wilfrid Desan, earlier in this chapter. Sartre has simply failed to distinguish theoretical freedom from practical freedom. One might agree with

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[154]Marcuse, op. cit., p. 322.

[155]Stern, op. cit., p. 215.

Sartre in the idea that, if freedom is a lack in man, it cannot possibly be grasped in a direct fashion. One can only grasp a thing, and freedom, since it is actually nothingness, is not a thing and so cannot be grasped. But such an argument supports only theoretical freedom; Sartre is certainly not justified in assuming that theoretical freedom also establishes practical freedom. His most consistent error seems to be establishing one half of a notion and asserting that he has proven both halves. His ingenious use of "nothingness" to support absolute theoretical freedom is quite convincing, but his tacit dismissal of practical freedom, which is really the only type man comes in contact with, is a serious flaw in his philosophy. Whether Sartre's failure to distinguish between these two types of freedom is merely an oversight on his part, or is indicative of his use of sophistry, remains a topic for debate. The fact is that he has failed to distinguish between these two realms of freedom and in so doing has damaged his system.

Jeanne Hirsch reveals still another weakness in Sartre's thought at this point. This weakness is the result both of his "uncompromising and puritanical rigor" and his conception of the "For-itself's" inherent nothingness. Miss Hirsch suggests that Sartre, in a desire to prove his contention that the "For-itself" is absolutely free, has been forced to deny a permanent, substantial self to man. In doing so, she feels that Sartre has involved himself in a serious contradiction. If the subject is not anything, then the subject is nothing. If the subject is nothing, only a sort of functioning, and not a genuine freedom at all, is

conceivable in such a vacuum. "The freedom of a substance is a possibility full of misery; but the freedom of a nothing is simply an absurdity."[156] If this charge is true, Sartre will either have to admit the existence of a substantial subject or self, and thereby destroy his view of the purity of nothingness and consciousness of the absolutely free "For-itself," or he will have to support the doctrine of a pure freedom without a subject, which could be nothing more than a vacuum. Sartre obviously wants neither, but he provides no method for escaping a necessary choice between the two.

3. SARTRE'S ETHICAL THEORY

Before evaluating Sartre's contributions to the field of ethics, one should remember that Sartre's theory, whatever its failings may be, has performed an important service in the ethical realm. As John Wild has expressed Sartre's role in this regard:

> The existentialists have performed an important service in calling our attention to the directm empirical evidence that human beings are in some sense free, and in thus reviving the interest in ethics as a central discipline, which has long been on the wane.[157]

Were it not for Sartre's absolutistic type of thinking and his reactionary rejection of any and all constituted values merely because they are constituted and therefore offer an obstacle to absolute freedom, his contributions in the ethical realm would have been much more extensive. Because of his absolutism his

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[156]Jeanne Hirsch, "Is Jasper's Conception of Freedom Adequate for Our Times?", The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), p. 608.

[157]Wild, op. cit., p. 183.

contributions have been mostly negative in nature. He has shattered all ordinary standards and replaced them with a single standard, that of freedom. As Sartre declares, revealing his absolutistic turn of mind once again, "There are no means of judging . . . it has always to be invented. The one thing that counts is to know whether the invention is made in the name of freedom."[158]

Sartre's declaration, that freedom can be the only true basis for ethical decisions, sounds acceptable enough at first sight, even though the notion is admittedly somewhat vague. Upon closer analysis however, at least several major flaws appear in his suggestion. The weight of Sartre's ethical system is shifted from a fixed objective standard to a standard of free committal and devotion to the belief one has chosen. Helmut Kuhn argues that such a position would force Sartre to admit that the Communists and Nazis are right in their behavior, merely because they are devoted and have freely chosen their ends.[159]

Although such a charge might seem unfair, Sartre himself implies just this idea. He suggests that committal and devotion to a freely chosen project can and should serve as the new standard by which to judge ethical actions. Sartre provides an illustration of this suggestion in his short story "Erostratus." In this story, Sartre's hero hopes to create an individuated essence for himself through a freely chosen project. He finally chooses

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[158]Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," p. 308.

[159]Kuhn, op. cit., p. 66.

an act of destruction, just as Erostratus, the ancient for whom the story was named, chose to burn down the Temple of Ephesus, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, just to create, an individual essence. Sartre's hero chooses to murder six innocent people. When he fails in his project, panics after shooting only one man and then empties his revolver into a crowd of people, one has the uncomfortable feeling that Sartre feels contempt for the man not because of his destructive project, but only because he failed to carry it out.[160] Such an illustration would suggest that Sartre's rejection of traditional values and his substitution of a doctrine of devotion, or sincere committal to a freely chosen project, might lead to vicious social consequences.

If one looks to Sartre's thought regarding this matter of ethical judgment, hoping to find some suggestion which would exclude such deeds as murder and theft from being ethical acts, he finds none. Instead, he is told that, as James Collins summarizes it: any act which is done with perfect lucidity and acceptance of responsibility is a free, value-creative, and "authentic," or "good," act.[161]

Sartre and his colleague-wife, Simone de Beauvoir, are not totally unaware of the dangers implicit in their suggestions pertaining to the ethical realm. They both seem to feel that there is a need to somehow delimit their ethical standard to exclude some vicious acts from the category of "good" acts, without

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[160]Sartre, "Erostratus," from The Wall and Other Stories, p. 96.

[161]Collins, op. cit., p. 83.

restricting their precious notion of absolute freedom as a criterion for ethical judgment. Simone de Beauvoir, quoted by Marjorie Grene, makes the following moral declaration:

> You can excuse every misdeamenor and every crime, even by which an individual asserts himself against society; but when a man deliberately sets out to debase man into a thing, he lets loose a scandal which nothing can make amends for.[162]

While such a statement contains a certain degree of noble sentiment, it creates a major self-contradiction. As Grene goes on to point out, even though Sartre and Beauvoir both seem to feel that treating another person as an object or thing is wrong, this is the only possible relation which one "For-itself" can have with another "For-itself."[163] Unless Sartre wishes to abandon his ontological principles, he cannot avoid such a contradiction. If he chooses to leave his ontological views intact, especially his idea that the "For-itself" must "objectify" the "Other" in order to maintain its own absolute freedom, his system must fail in the domain of ethics. It is obviously useless to state that a given deed, such as the "objectification" of other persons, is wrong, when this process is basic to the "For-itself" or human reality. One would create just as meaningful an ethical criterion by stating that it is immoral for man to breathe. Either Sartre must offer some other definition of human reality than he has already furnished in his description of the "For-itself," or he must develop a more selective set of ethical

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[162]Grene, op. cit., p. 120.

[163]Ibid.

criteria. He cannot regard his ethical system complete as it now stands if he insists on maintaining his most basic ontological presuppositions.

The last objection to be raised in respect to Sartre's ethical view is made by Alfred Stern. He reminds those interested in Sartre's philosophy that to accept Sartre's philosophy is to rob oneself of ethical security, to often be at odds with society, and to give up belief in God, as well as the possibility of lasting human relationships of a pleasant nature. "Standing erect" under the weight of one's absolute freedom and responsibility is to live in an "authentic" manner for Sartre. Such a life, even though it deprives man of so many tangible benefits, can offer him only one reward. As Stern puts it, "this is the moral satisfaction of living no longer in bad faith, of being sincere . . ."[164]

Even supposing that one has the stamina to reject all established values, secure and comforting notions, and has the strength necessary to admit his total freedom and with it his total responsibility, "sincerity" hardly seems a sufficient reward in the light of such sacrifices. The reward of living a "sincere" or "authentic" life has its own inherent contradictions however, and so the only tangible reward for "authentic" existence, which Sartre can offer those who would accept his position, has been eliminated. This point should become clear in the following section.

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[164]Stern, op. cit., p. 208.

4. THE CONTRADICTIONS OF SINCERITY

The admonition of Sartre to be sincere and use sincerity as a means for judging ethical decisions seems easy enough to follow, until one examines the suggestion more closely and its contradictory nature begins to reveal itself. As Alfred Stern has expressed the problem of "sincerity" in Sartre's sense of the term, "being sincere" means to be in complete coincidence with oneself. However, since man for Sartre is not what he is and is what he is not, he cannot possibly coincide with himself. Man is split into a subject and an object and is therefore incapable of complete sincerity.[165] Sartre, in his Being and Nothingness, takes great pains to establish the difference between a man's subjective and objective states, and declares with great vigor that no synthesis of these two forms is possible.[166]

Alfred Stern is not the only critic to notice the impossibility of man being sincere within Sartre's philosophy. Both Levi and Desan have also shown that man cannot be sincere. Levi points out that "The essential structure of sincerity does not differ from that of bad faith. One can even fall into bad faith by the very seriousness of the effort to be sincere."[167] Desan agrees with Levi and Stern when he states:

> To be sincere is to be what you are, i.e., to become (or to be) a thing In-itself. That this is radically excluded is manifest in the simple fact that duplicity and bad faith are

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[165] Ibid., p. 208.

[166] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 95.

[167] Levi, op. cit., p. 415.

> still possible. Indeed how can I be what I am when I am not a thing-In-itself, with its massive and solid identity, but a 'consciousness of being.'[168]

Stern offers an illustration to further clarify his contention that sincerity is an impossible goal if one uses Sartre's own premises. Stern's illustration involves a lazy man who is honest enough to admit that he is lazy:

> The lazy individual admits that he is a thing which cannot change; he denies the very freedom which would allow him to change and project himself toward being an industrious person. But denying one's freedom is to be of bad faith. Thus, in his very act of sincerity, an act of good faith, man is of bad faith.[169]

If Sartre can offer only one reward for abandoning all traditional beliefs and accepting his philosophical system, and even this one reward is impossible to attain, his system is all but annihilated. Sartre can neither honestly suggest that "sincerity," as he envisions it, is a genuine reward for "authentic" existence, nor can he use sincerity as a goal for human striving, since, to use Sartre's own words, sincerity, like love, would appear to have within it "the seeds of its own destruction."

5. SARTRE'S INADEQUATE TREATMENT OF LOVE

Love, for Sartre, is not only difficult; it is impossible. This conclusion, like those which preceded it, is based upon Sartre's rigorous application of his basic premises concerning nothingness, absolute freedom, and their relation to the "For-itself." The project of love, Sartre argues, is "to get hold of

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[168] Desan, op. cit., p. 25.

[169] Stern, op. cit., p. 117.

the freedom of the Other and reduce it to being a freedom subject to my freedom."[170] If love were merely a desire for physical possession it could easily be satisfied, but it is much more; love is the desire to capture the "Other's" freedom as freedom, and so is doomed to failure.[171]

Sartre can really do little else but deny the validity of love if he is to maintain his basic ontological presuppositions. For this reason, one should not be surprised to discover such passages as the following, which denies, without exception, the very possibility of human love.

> I demand that the Other love me and I do everything possible to realize my project; but if the Other loves me, he radically deceives me by his very love. I demanded of him that he should found my being as a priviledged object by maintaining himself as pure subjectivity confronting me; and as soon as he loves me, he experiences me as subject and is swallowed up in his objectivity confronting my subjectivity.[172]

Such a statement by Sartre is a categorical denial of genuine human love. While he does not state directly that all "love" which one seems to discover in the world is a mere shame or act of "bad faith" or self-deception, no other inference can be drawn from his thought in this regard.

One may attempt to create a meaning in life through love, but he will only discover what Sartre's hero and heroine of his novel, The Chips are Down, discovered. In this novel Sartre warns that human love is bound to fail. Even though love could act as

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[170]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 366.

[171]Ibid.

[172]Ibid., p. 376.

the synthesis between the opposition in man's world, the constant struggle of "For-itselfs," and provide an answer to the "absurdity" of life, love is only a desperate hope. When Sartre's heroine of The Chips are Down is asked by two young people, if they should attempt to create a meaningful existence by discovering true love, she answers, "Try it anyway," implying that she is now aware for herself that love is just a futile hope and is doomed to frustration.[173] This novel serves as a dramatic illustration of the impossibility of love, for the hero and heroine have found it impossible to love another person for even such a short period as twenty-four hours. The very brevity of the interval should indicate Sartre's outlook in respect to love.

Certainly no one could deny that Sartre would be correct in saying that human love is a difficult state to maintain; but Sartre is not content with such a statement. Love is either possible or it is impossible. Since a "For-itself" cannot love a mere "object" and feels threatened by another "For-itself" because of its absolute freedom, love is impossible. Even if Sartre had consistently failed to find love throughout his own life, this would hardly give him the right to make a declaration which would include all men. Only his absolutistic thinking, grounded as it is in ontological principles and applied with exaggerated vigor, could have led him to such imbalanced and unhappy conclusions.

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[173]Jean-Paul Sartre, The Chips are Down, (London: Rider and Company, 1951), p. 126.

6. SARTRE'S SOCIAL VIEWS

Without the presence of human love to provide a means of regulating oppositions between groups, it is small wonder that Sartre's thought can provide so little hope in the social sphere. To suggest that there could be a widespread application of Sartre's variety of Existentialism is a self-contradiction. Sartre may provide an excellent set of anti-social views, but it is inconceivable that any society could operate in accordance with his extreme principles.

As Desan states the matter, "Time and time again Sartre emphasizes the contradictions and failures of social relations without ever mentioning the slightest positive value."[174] Collins, following the same line of thought, observes that, according to Sartre, "Social action is basically a form of mutual conflict and hatred, although this stark truth can be disguised and softened in various ways."[175] Collins expands his statement by explaining why society must be viewed in this light by Sartre. "Since social life is a mutual robbing of the other man's subjective integrity, the basic social form is hate. All other attitudes are variations on this dominant theme . . ."[176]

Wild and Roberts also detect definite contradictions in Sartre's thought when he attempts to set up his Existentialism as a form of social philosophy. As Wild expresses it, "Shame and

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[174]Desan, op. cit., p. 85.

[175]Collins, op. cit., p. 85.

[176]Ibid., p. 237.

conflict seem to be the basic social emotions."[177] Roberts asserts that Sartre's view of the "Other" destroys any chance of establishing harmonious social relations. Roberts says of Sartre, "He writes as though the hidden things about myself which come to light when the Other 'sees' me are for the most part discreditable and shameful, instead of releasing and enriching."[178]

Sartre cannot admit ordinary social values without involving himself in numerous contradictions. Because of his very definition of the "For-itself" with its "subjective" and "objective" states, social action becomes basically a matter of conflict and hatred. One might suppose that Sartre could offer some solution to the problem of constant social conflict; but Marjorie Grene believes, with some reason, that he can offer no true solution to social opposition. She holds that if one accepts Sartre's basic position that social conflict is not only inevitable, but is also interminable; conflict between persons cannot even end in victory for one of the parties. As Miss Grene expresses the situation:

> The conflict never ends in victory for one or the other. Even murder cannot change the fact that the victim, by having existed, has threatened and limited my liberty. There can be no knockout blow, or even a decision, only round after round of a bout that never stops, and never starts either, for it is a continuous and unbroken circle.[179]

If a philosopher desires his system to be anything more than a set of esoteric statements, he must somehow demonstrate

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[177]Wild, op. cit., p. 184.

[178]Roberts, op. cit., p. 207.

[179]Grene, op. cit., p. 82.

its practicality in the sphere of human activity. Since man is a social animal, as even Sartre admits, whoever expects his theory to be accepted and applied must somehow show that his views have some utility. When a system is as permeated with anti-social implications as Sartre's, social application seems impossible. When a philosophy denies at every turn that positive, lasting values can be found in the social realm, defines human reality in such a way that conflict is necessary to maintain one's very being as a "For-itself," and regards "Others" primarily as a "necessary evil," one can hardly call such a system a "social philosophy" at all.

Sartre has not wanted to create a purely theoretical system; his attempt to create much more is revealed by the fact that he has expressed so many of his ideas in plays, novels, and short stories which can be read and understood by a relatively large number of persons. Although he has attempted to build a philosophy which can be applied in a dynamic manner to human problems and issues, his absolutistic thought, and his imbalanced emphasis upon absolute freedom, has doomed his philosophy to remain in the speculative realm. Selected aspects of his philosophy can certainly be applied to contemporary problems, but his general system is so designed that it could not be applied in its entirety.

Bobbio summarizes Sartre's position well in the following words:

> Existentialism shuns society as being an obscure, inert mass, but it does not seek society as being an active union of thoughts and deeds. It teaches men to stand aside with a

> dignity that is far-seeing, even if it is desperate, and to avoid being defiled and compromised; but it does not teach men to emerge from their solitude and meet other men face to face.[180]

7. THE CONTRADICTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

One of the weakest points in Sartre's philosophy is his treatment of the origin of Nothingness or consciousness. Sartre can deal with this question in only one of three ways. First, he could suggest that this Nothingness has created itself, which would involve an obvious absurdity. Second, he could use the notion of an external Creator; but his system rejects the existence of God. And last, he could argue that the "In-itself" causes consciousness or Nothingness. The "In-itself," however even though it seems to be the only legitimate possibility open to Sartre, must be eliminated. Wild has stated quite accurately the reason why the "In-itself" cannot be the source of consciousness in man. As he says: "The In-itself has no internal structure nor causal powers. Hence it cannot act, nor be the ground of anything."[181]

Sartre's absolutism has trapped him in respect to this theory. The very distinction which he has constructed so carefully to separate the "In-itself" from the "For-itself" now stands as the greatest barrier to his answering the basic question of the source of consciousness in man. He has placed so much power in the creative Nothingness of the "For-itself" and so

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[180] Bobbio, op. cit., p. 46.

[181] Wild, op. cit., p. 162.

little in the solidly existing "In-itself," that he has only served to draw attention to the conspicuous failure of his system to discover, or even suggest a possible source of its most important single principle, Nothingness, the principle which forms the basis for human consciousness and freedom upon which Sartre's entire philosophy rests.

Even if Sartre chooses to reply that the question of the origin of consciousness or Nothingness is of no real importance to him because he is interested in ontology and not metaphysics, whose concern he claims is to find origins, his system is still considerably weakened by this ommission.

8. CONTRADICTIONS OF SARTRE'S CONCEPT OF THE EGO

The last major contradiction in Sartre's philosophy is located in his notion of the human ego. As has already been suggested, Sartre feels compelled to deny any sort of a stable ego in man. Sartre fears that the ego might be mistaken for a "Thing-In-itself," and this would have the result of denying man his precious absolute freedom which must remain pure and untainted at all costs. Sartre's rejection of a stable ego is sufficient to cause him numerous difficulties; but when this rejection of a solidified ego is placed side by side with his assertion of a real past, a serious contradiction arises, as Desan has pointed out:

> Can Sartre speak of a past without something which was yesterday and is still today? Sartre himself accepts the existence of the past for the For-itself, and yet how could the For-itself have a past if the same For-itself did not exist yesterday?[182]

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[182]Desan, op. cit., p. 153.

To such a charge Sartre might reply that this impersonal, perfectly spontaneous consciousness has for some reason chosen the same "mask" or ego consistently, for it is the consciousness which produces the ego in man, according to his system. But such an answer would be inadequate. Pure spontaneity cannot become habituated to that degree that one mistakes it for a stable "self" or ego, and still remain absolutely free, as Sartre insists the consciousness must remain. If the consciousness is in actuality no more than a "mere puff of warm air," how can it continue to choose the same ego as a method of unifying its states, without itself becoming fixed and ossified? How can Sartre argue consistently that the ego is inconstant while the consciousness is constant, pure freedom, when all that man observes indicates that the ego is far more stable than human consciousness?

Desan pursues this flaw in Sartre's thought even further, and delivers what may be a death blow to one of Sartre's basic contentions. Desan argues that Sartre's whole theory of the past, the World and the existence of "Others" collapses unless Sartre admits the presence of some stability in the ego. Sartre's own dialectical proof of the "Other" and of the World, depends upon there being a reality at each end of the continuum. If the ego is not stable, its dialectical opposition with the World composed of "In-itself," or with other persons is not possible, and Sartre's system destroys itself.[183]

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[183] Ibid., p. 155.

Sartre has no method of explaining the consistency in human beings if he denies the stable ego, and he must deny the ego if he is to keep his extreme view of the free consciousness intact. Sartre cannot even explain the consistency which readers may observe in his own writings, unless of course, he wishes to admit that he himself has been acting in "bad faith" and has allowed the "illusory stability" of his ego to dominate his entire person. Sartre cannot explain his own love of method, his systematic application of logical precepts, or his creation as a philosopher and author, if he denies his own ego and places the cause for his actions somewhere within the realm of a perfectly free, non-personal consciousness.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Sartre's greatest philosophical strengths and weaknesses now stand revealed. Inadequate criticisms have been eliminated, paradoxical elements indicated, and the most serious flaws and contradictions in his thought enumerated. The above having been accomplished, a final evaluation to unify the findings and general conclusions of this study is in order. Such is the purpose of the sixth and final chapter to follow.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

To make a final evaluation of Sartre's philosophy is a difficult task, not only because the presence of paradoxes in his thought increases the complexity of analysis, but also because Sartre himself is a living embodiment of the paradox. Within this single individual one can find a wide range of opposing forces and apparently contradictory tendencies. Sartre is a highly skilled, technically minded phenomenologist, as his work, Being and Nothingness, clearly shows; and yet he is a talented writer of short stories, plays, and novels, as well. He is especially interested in the field of ontology, a science which deals with the most general and basic statements regarding being; and yet he is intensely interested in the problems of the individual and crusades constantly for self-identity in a world of increasing conformity. He is a spirited romantic, but he is, at the same time, a consistently-minded rationalist, using deductive techniques, and meticulously applying his basic premises in a deductive manner.

Even more paradoxes reveal themselves in Sartre's own nature as one investigates his thought still further. He uses dialectic as the method of establishing his most basic concepts,

such as the "Being-in-itself," and the "Being-for-itself;" yet he denies the existence of the final synthesis, even though synthesis is the very heart of the dialectical method. Sartre is a theoretically-minded philosopher, but he still feels a burning desire for, and an interest to be active in, the practical realms, especially politics. The fact that he has not yet completed his work on ethics may be attributed to the time he has devoted to French politics.

Sartre reveals his romantic spirit by his emphasis upon the powers of man, the potency of psychological states, the metaphysical content of emotional states such as love and anxiety, nausea and anguish, and the general spirit and vitality expressed in his work, especially in his better plays. Yet Sartre denies the romantic's favorite notions of love, lasting human relationships, delight in the natural world, the significance of death, and the existence of God.

Sartre is the founder of a school of Existential psychoanalysis, the use of which does not "cure" the patient in the normal sense of the word at all. Instead, his method attempts to reveal a subject's original choices, and may even have the effect of increasing the anxiety within the patient. "Anxiety" for Sartre, is the inevitable result of a man's awareness of his total freedom and responsibility, and the discovery of basic choices revealed by Sartre's method of analysis, reveals just this freedom. Sartre is a humanist, but is one who refuses to define man, and who has no respect for "mankind" as a whole. He labels such

entities as "mankind" just as inert masses, whose very weight can destroy the integrity of the individual. His respect for the individual is so insistent that one is reminded of Kierkegaard's crusade for individuality at this point in Sartre's thought.

Further, Sartre is rigorously deductive and systematic as a thinker; but he still insists upon emphasizing an unstable ego, an absolutely free and spontaneous consciousness, and man's constant ability to change his entire essence at any time through the positing of freely chosen ends. And last, he regards society and the very existence of other persons as offering a constant danger to the freedom of the "For-itself;" yet he chooses to live in Paris, surrounded by millions, each person representing a potential threat to his own absolute freedom as a "For-itself."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Although there are so many conflicting forces operating within Sartre's philosophy, this study has revealed that there are many basic and valuable insights to be found in his ideas, even if it may be true that many of his revelations are cancelled out by his absolutistic and extreme mode of thinking. Sartre's extremism renders his philosophy inadequate for a total world-view; but this does not destroy the validity or importance of the manifold suggestions included within his variety of Existentialism. There is much that one can learn from Sartre's thought.

Sartre's philosophy reveals, in a manner seldom equalled, that man is freer than he ordinarily wishes to admit. Man's

constant efforts to assert the omnipotent power of physical, psychological, material and social forces are nothing more than attempts to hide from his freedom and its implicit responsibility. The forces which have weakened and corroded the world of today will continue to do so until man finds the courage to accept his responsibility. If man continues to deny his responsibility, Sartre warns that the conditions of this human universe will continue to grow still worse.

Sartre's psychological theories are worthy of study in and of themselves. His theory of the consciousness, properly applied, can become a convenient and meaningful concept. His theories of the sources of sexual energy and human love, may likewise become valuable, when supplemented by other theories. His analysis of "anxiety," fear, the power of the other person's "look," the dimensions of the human self, and the importance of choice in analyzing human behavior, is acute and rewarding to investigation.

His awareness of man's crucial situation, and his insistence upon the importance of freely chosen action to create meaning for man's life, likewise shows elements of genuine wisdom and insight. His analysis of the realm of human meanings and his contention that it is man and man alone who confers value upon the world of inanimate things, provides a note of hope, and instills faith in man's ability to triumph over the inanimate world of the "In-itself."

Suggestions implicit within Sartre's thought can result in one's renewed investigation into the realm of ethics, politics, the interpretation of history, the generation of human conflict, and the origin of human hatred, especially on the national or racial level. Sartre's ideas can serve as an excellent tool for shattering the self-comforting and damaging complacency of solidified moral, political, religious, and psychological notions. And, perhaps most important of all, his philosophy can serve as a needed stimulant to individual initiative, expression, and creativity, at a time when the individual's very existence seems threatened by mass pressures and influences.

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