Chapter -I

The Human Subject in Maurice Merleau-Ponty and J. P. Sartre: A Phenomenological Analysis

Introduction

Traditional philosophy from Greek until now has been said to be the philosophy that adds a footnote to Plato. In other words, the philosophical system of Plato- its metaphysics, epistemology, politics, ethics, and even aesthetics- sets a tone for much of future philosophical systems. Before Socrates and Plato, there were Greek philosophers who raise questions about the nature of the world and man’s place in the cosmos. In particular, these pre-Socratics developed cosmologies that attempted to explain the workings of the universe. As early metaphysicians, they sought to discover the essential “what-ness” of the material world. They postulated the stuff of the cosmos in terms of water, air, fire etc and were known to be dualists, maintaining that the world was, for example, essentially light and dark; others defended a unitary explanation.

Plato believed that the world of everyday life cannot provide a basis for knowledge. Like the Skeptics, who argued that knowledge is impossible (some even went so far as to refuse to utter assertions?) Plato maintained that knowledge must be universal, immutable, and eternal. Our sense perception, in contrast, is notoriously inaccurate and deceptive.

The body, for Plato, is a distraction from the truth and the true philosopher in pursuit of wisdom despises the body. In searching for the real nature of things, one must cut oneself off from the senses, for they are unclear and inaccurate. According to Plato, the body provides us with innumerable distractions in the pursuit of our necessary sustenance and any diseases which attack us hinder our quest for reality. Besides, the body fills us with loves, desires and fears and all sorts of fancies and a great deal of nonsense with the result that we literally never get an opportunity to think at all about anything. Wars and revolutions and battles are due simply and solely to the body and its desires. All wars are undertaken for the acquisition of wealth, and the reason why we have to acquire wealth is the body, because we are slaves in its service.
Though we cannot escape the body, it is possible for us to achieve harmony that enables us to pursue wisdom. Such wisdom, Plato says, cannot be based on sense perception alone, for the world we perceive is what can we know. What is the connection between this world and the unperceived one? Plato's theory of reality does not automatically solve the problem of knowledge until he provides us with a theory of knowledge that gives us access to the world of forms. The answer for Plato lies in the transmigration of souls: reincarnation. It is only after we die that we catch glimpses of this other world, so that when we are once again embodied we come into the world with knowledge. Some of us who have died and been reborn many times have had more opportunity to attend to these perfect models, and so we may be wiser. But regardless, Socrates believed that a true teacher does not impart new information to a student but rather acts as a “midwife” to help the student give birth to his or her own ideas.

The Platonic system has several important implications. In particular, Plato's idealism leads to a number of dualisms. For one, there is the dualism of mind and body in which body imprisons mind (or soul). This dichotomy between the mental and the physical is grounded in the belief that the physical is the basis of error and temptation. The body houses the soul, yet it is the source of great suffering and pain. The life of intellectual contemplation—the life of the philosopher—is the ideal. Sense perception, whose origin is the material body, cannot be trusted to reveal knowledge. In addition, the material world is not the real world, for matter changes, deteriorates, and dies. The rational and the true cannot be part of that world of shadows. Rather, the world of forms provides the metaphysical basis for our understanding of the material world. Through it, we know the essence of all that is. Reason becomes the vehicle by which we know truth; all other aspects of human experience are inferior. Thus, the world of Plato is a static one in which what is truly real is rational, unchanging, and complete. Our proper function in life is to use our faculty of reason to discover this world.

Plato's impact on the future of philosophy is undeniable. Systematic thinkers, however much they disagreed with the specifics of Plato's arguments, tended to accept many of his presuppositions. For one, the body tends to be held in contempt; even nonreligious philosophers tend to view the physical body as the vehicle for sin, whether it
be moral or intellectual. In addition, the methodology of most philosophies has been based on the elevation of rationality and deductive thinking. Indeed, many philosophers, such as Descartes and Spinoza, used mathematics as the paradigm for speculative thinking. Further, philosophers tend to be suspicious of sense perception, viewing it as notoriously untrustworthy. The senses do not provide us with certainty, with what is truly real, that is, the unchanging. Finally, philosophers continue to struggle with the question of essence. Can we ever really know the essential “what-ness” of some thing in the world? How do we bridge the gap between our perception of what is and the reality of what is? For many philosophers, we cannot. Thus, for Berkeley, we uncover 'esse est percipii'—so to say, to be is to be perceived— that the existence of an external world depends on our (or God's) perception of it. This sort of thinking culminated in the metaphysics of Kant, who maintained that we cannot reach the noumenal world, the world of the real, but must instead be satisfied with the phenomenal appearances of things, knowing that they are grounded in a deeper, noumenal reality.

How has existentialism broken with this tradition? For existentialists, existence—that something is—precedes essence—what it is. This implies a rejection of other-worldly essences or realities behind appearances. Instead, existentialists in general repudiate the notion that existence is somehow less real than essence, though they may disagree on what they mean by existence. The word exist has its origin in Latin, and it literally means “to stand out.” though today we think of existence as fairly passive—think of the phrase “mere existence” - the word is in fact quite a dynamic one. It is that more dynamic connotation that existentialists want to recover. For existentialists, we are immersed in the concreteness of existence. Humans exist always in-situation, with the world given to us rich and independent of our will. Existence then is primary and, for existentialists, we create meaning. Thus, no essences exist which is separated from human reality. This reversal of the platonic world gives existentialism certain specific characteristics that distinguish it from mere traditional philosophy.

**Existentialism as a philosophical movement**

Existentialism is a term applied to the works of a number of 19th- and 20th-century philosophers who generally held that the focus of philosophical thought should be to deal
with the condition of existence of the individual person and his emotions, actions, responsibilities and thoughts. Early 19th century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard who is regarded as the father of existentialism maintained that the individual is solely responsible for giving his life certain meaning despite many existential obstacles and distractions that confronts one's life including despair, angst, absurdity, alienation and boredom.

‘Existentialism’ is not a philosophy but a mood embracing a number of disparate philosophies; the differences among them are more basic than the temper which unites them. This temper can be described as a reaction against the static, the abstract, the purely rational, the merely irrational, in favor of the dynamic and concrete, personal involvement and ‘engagement,’ action, choice and commitment, the distinction between ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ existence, and the actual situation of the existential subject as the starting point of thought. Beyond this the so-called existentialists divide according to their views on such matters as phenomenological analysis, the existential subject, the intersubjective relation between selves, religion, and the implications of existentialism for psychotherapy. Insofar as one can define existentialism, it is a movement from the abstract and the general to the particular and the concrete.

Existentialism became identified with a cultural movement that flourished in Europe in 1940s and 1950s. The major philosophers identified as existentialists were Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger and Martin Buber in Germany, Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel in France. The nineteenth century philosophers, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, came to be seen as precursors of the movement.

Existentialism reaped its richest harvest in the German School of Phenomenology. The branch through which the sap of Christianity runs has not produced a crop of Christians confident and comfortable in their doctrinal edifice. That would have been contrary to the very spirit of their belief. A man like Scheler switched several times from orthodoxy to independence, from one confession of faith to the opposite. A man like Jaspers, who set up Incompleteness as the measure of human existence, cannot even be called a Christian philosopher, even through every turn of this thought, expect, perhaps,
his latest, is clearly of Christian composition. Paul Louise Landsberg,\textsuperscript{10} whose work was prematurely halted in Orienanburg Concentration Camp, was carrying on this line. A Russian offshoot touches Soloviev, Chestov and Berdyaev. A Jewish branch leads to Buber. Through his dialectic theology, Karl Barth\textsuperscript{11} made no small contribution to the reintroduction of Kierkegaard to contemporary philosophy. Those who have heard the call of Bergson in all its sweetness, and sung its praises in lyric term will (although Bergson does not use the name “Existentialism”) recognize the voice of the Existentialist challenge protesting against the positivist notion of the objectification of man. The poets who proclaim this challenge are Peguy and Claudel—signal peaks which often did not know of each other but which, nevertheless burned with the same internal fire. Since at the present time another shoot from the same stem is being tended there, it would be unjust to forget the works of La Boutonnière and Blondel whose pleadings, sometimes clumsy and sometimes imperfectly understood, for the theory of Divine Presence amount to the same thing as the eternal call to inwardness.

Gabriel Marcel represents present-day French Existentialism coupled with certain of the earlier attempts to evolve a personalist philosophy. As far as Existentialism is concerned, he identifies himself directly with the so-called School (?) and particularly with Jaspers. As a matter of fact, he anticipated the very phraseology of Jaspers in some passages of the Journal métaphysique\textsuperscript{12}.

Kierkegaard is one of those men, who, having left no system cannot have any disciples, and yet can claim numerous posterity. Another of the isolated figures, Nietzsche\textsuperscript{13}, stands at the source of the second stream. The exact counterpart of John the Baptist, he tried to announce the end of the evangelical era by proclaiming the death of God to the men who, even after having been responsible for it, dared not accept it as a fact. At first, this death was joyously accepted by the circle. There never was a time of livelier optimism or a calmer atmosphere of indifference than that not end-of-the-century period which sat so happily amidst its ruins that not even the fall of Christendom or the awful predictions of science or the beginnings of the social apocalypse could succeed in arousing it.
Nietzsche bursts like an unseasonable clap of thunder in the holiday sky. Happiness was torn to shreds during this autumn of the West, and exposed to the equinoctial gales which are lifting our roofs and flattening our gardens to-day. Like Kierkegaard, he, too, had to wait for his voice to carry, and for despair to be engraved on hearts stricken by the Divine Presence, and deceived by mystical theories of regeneration. From the conjunction of the philosophies of these two men a new form of stoicism was to be evolved. By this, man is glorified in his struggle against his fundamental solitude.

The ancients used to say that skepticism is never given its due. In the same spirit, the philosophy of complete hopelessness accuses modern Rationalism of being afraid, in the light of actual experience, to hold up to man the wretched unreal type of being postulated by Positivism\(^\text{14}\). Existentialism abruptly presents us with nothingness, the bottomless pit of experience. Such is the form of philosophy represented by the Atheistic line of Existentialism which runs from Heidegger to Sartre, and which, at present time, is being so roundly condemned by those who imagine it to represent the whole of Existentialism.

A brief examination will assure us that the first Existentialist tradition concedes nothing to the second, either in completeness or in influence. No matter how weak the link between them may be, however, their common origin can never be forgotten. They both have a certain way of setting problems, and they both re-echo many ideas which are, at least of common origin. These facts insure that the liaison between the two most extremely opposite forms of Existentialism is always smoother than that between all of them collectively and the particular ideas which are foreign to their common suppositions. Moreover, it has struck me that this fact provides one means of guiding us through the realms of Existentialism, rather than of devoting ourselves to detailed study of any outstanding concepts of Existentialism.

Existentialist philosophers keep hold of the emphasis on the individual, but differ in varying degrees, on how one achieves and what constitutes a fulfilling life, what obstacles must be overcome, and what external and internal factors are involved, including the potential consequences of the existence or non-existence of God. Many
existentialists have also regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophy, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience. Existentialism became fashionable in the post-World War years as way to reassert the importance of human individuality and freedom.

**Existence as a philosophical Problem**

Sartre’s existentialism drew its immediate inspiration from the work of the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger’s 'Being and time', was an inquiry into the “Being that we ourselves are”; it provided an emphasis on the worldly or “situated” character of human thought and reason; a fascination with luminal experiences of anxiety, death, the “nothing” and nihilism; it argued about the rejection of science as an adequate framework for understanding human being; it represented idea of ‘authenticity’ as the norm of self-identity and tied to the project of self-definition through freedom, choice, and commitment.

As Sartre and Merleau-Ponty would later do, Heidegger pursued these issues with the somewhat unlikely resources of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological method. And while not all existential philosophers were influenced by phenomenology (for instance Jaspers and Marcel), the philosophical legacy of existentialism is largely tied to the form it took as an existential version of phenomenology. Husserl’s efforts in the first decades of the twentieth century had been directed toward establishing a descriptive science of consciousness, by which is understood is not the object of the natural science of psychology but the ‘transcendental’ field of intentionality, whereby our experience becomes meaningful. The existentialists welcomed Husserl's doctrine of intentionality as a refutation of the Cartesian view according to which consciousness relates immediately to its own representations, ideas and sensations. According to Husserl, consciousness is our direct openness to the world, one that is governed categorically (normatively) rather than causally; that is, intentionality is not a property of the individual mind but the categorical framework in which mind and world become intelligible.

A phenomenology of consciousness, then, explores neither the metaphysical composition nor the causal genesis of things, but the ‘constitution’ of their meaning.
Husserl employed this method to clarify our experience of nature, the socio-cultural world, logic, and mathematics, but Heidegger argued that of the “meaning of being” as such. In turning phenomenology toward the question of what it means to be, Heidegger insist that the question be raised concretely: it is not at first some academic exercise but a burning concern arising from life itself, the question of what it means for me to be. Existential themes take on salience when one sees that the general question of the meaning of being involves first becoming clear about one’s own being as an inquirer. According to Heidegger, the categories bequeathed by the philosophical tradition for understanding a being who can question his or her being are insufficient: traditional concepts of a substance decked out with reason, or of a subject blessed with self-consciousness, misconstrue on fundamental character as “being-in-the-world”.

In his phenomenological pursuit of the categories that govern being-in-the-world, Heidegger became the reluctant father of existentialism because he drew inspiration from two different sources Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. One can find anticipation of existential thought in many places (for instance, in Socratic irony, Augustine, Pascal, or the late Schelling), but the roots of the problem of existence in its contemporary significance lie in the work of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche’.

Existence Precedes Essence

Sartre’s slogan “existence precedes essence” may serve to introduce what is most distinctive of existentialism, namely, the idea that no general, non-formal account of what it means to be human can be given, since that meaning is decided in and through existing itself. Existence is “Self-making-in-a-situation”. In contrast to other entities, what is essential to a human being- what makes her who she is, is not fixed by her type but by what she makes of herself, who she becomes. The fundamental contribution of existential thought lies in the idea that one’s identity is constituted neither by nature nor by culture, since to “exist” is precisely to constitute such an identity. It is in light of this idea that key existential notions such as facticity, transcendence (project), alienation, and authenticity must be understood.
(a). The human being is a "being-in-the-world." That is, the human being is always already involved in meaningful projects with others and alongside things. As Heidegger would say, the human being is "there being" (Dasein) meaning that the human being exists as the projection of possibilities which open up as a world. In this sense, the human being is not "in the world" like a match is in a matchbox. Rather, the human being is "in-the-world" in the sense that one is 'in trouble' or 'in a relationship.'

(b). As "being-in-the-world," the human being is "thrown" into that "world" such that she finds herself in the midst of the 'givens' of existence. One does not choose one's parents, the place of one's birth or the fact that one will die, yet, despite these circumstances, the human being is faced with the freedom to respond to these 'givens' of existence. In this sense, human beings can be said to be 'response-able.'

(c). As "being-in-the-world," the human being is always "with others." Even being alone may be said to be a mode of being-with-others, since one cannot be alone unless this is first understood secondarily as a being-away-from-others. Moreover, our being-with-others is always as a relationship of some sort, and, being so, we are both shaped by others and shape those others with whom we relate.

(d). Human beings are always "in-the-world" alongside things. Things, in terms of existence, are not mere extension in space. Rather, things exist as meaningful entities which, in one form or another, call to the human being as significant in terms of the human being's projection of possibilities. A thing is a thing when it matters to me in one form or another — when, as a thing, it enters into the clearing by which I am either helped or hindered on my way toward realizing my projects "in-the-world."

(e). Human beings are not things. A thing does not exist as a "being-in-the-world," since, as a thing, it has no world. For a thing, nothing matters. Things can only matter for a human being, since it is only in the world of the human being that things can have meaning. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon to treat human beings as 'things,' such as with biology. To provide an example: A corpse is a thing. A dead person is not a thing, but rather a human being who no longer lives. One can treat a corpse like a thing, but not a dead person. This is clear in terms of our relating to others. When I am with another human being, I fully recognize that I exist as an 'other' to the other person. However, with
a thing, say a rock, I do not exist for it — for I fully recognize that the rock does not exist in the sense that a human being exists. The rock is not "in-the-world."

(f) Human beings are finite. As a "being-in-the-world," we recognize that death is a "not-to-be-outstripped" (inevitable) possibility. Death as such is the possibility of the end of all possibilities. Existence, therefore, is not limitless, but inevitably must face up to the mystery of the "nothingness," that which lies beyond what can be known as a "being-in-the-world." As a "being-towards-death," as Heidegger would say, the human being becomes aware that she cannot have all the possibilities. Faced with the recognition of one's finitude, one also recognizes that one is always faced with choices. In making a choice, I simultaneously eliminate thousands of other possible choices. And, yet, making such a choice, I can never know with absolute certainty that I have made the 'right' choice. With this freedom to choose, I am faced with the responsibility for my own existence.

(g) Faced with such freedom, responsibility and finitude, I am confronted with anxiety and guilt. I am anxious in the face of the fact that my choice may render a death to my world. Further, in recognition that with my choice I eliminate other choices, I am 'guilty.'

(h) Immediate experience has priority over theoretical assumptions. Human experience is both physical and mental: How this is so varies greatly from thinker to thinker.

Existentialism: Major Characteristics

Existentialist thinkers rebel against the Platonic picture of reality as perfect and unchanging. According to them, human existence is always in process and dynamic and the experience of despair reminds us that there are no guarantees. These existentialists reject absolutes; unlike the nihilist, they believe in the possibility of happiness. "In the darkest depths of our nihilism, I have sought only for the means to transcend nihilism," said Camus in an interview. In Resistance, Rebellion, and death he wrote, “continue to believe that the world has no ultimate meaning. But I know that something in it has meaning and that is man, because he is the only creature to insist on having one.” The world may defy all our attempts to make sense of it, for the world is absurd and reason is
feeble by comparison. This does not mean that it is a world without meaning. The point is not to resign ourselves to suicide or to hedonism or even to hope for some afterlife. The point is to revolt.

For Heidegger, the human being is a being essentially full of care.27 Her care has a double meaning: It signifies concern and commitment but it also signifies a kind of anxiousness; And this caring may be unique to the human being. For it is the human being alone who is capable of experiencing the ontological, that is, the only being for whom being is at issue. Through our capacity for care, we can project ourselves into a future that is the pure possibility. If this is true, then we are also the only beings capable of experiencing alienation. For alienation is a kind of rupture, a splitting in which one feels not at home. But isn’t this experience a function of self-consciousness that is unique to human?

Absurdity and Death

Anguish28 is one of the themes of existentialist philosophies. Anguish is that which makes consciousness return upon itself. He who knows no anguish knows what he does and what he thinks, but he does not truly know that he does it and that he thinks it. Absurdity is relational; it lies in the confrontation between humans and the world; thus, it is neither in us nor in the world. Roquentin, Sartre’s protagonist in *Nausea*29 realizes absurdity30 in the world. The world of rationality and explanation is not the existing world. This world of rationality is the world of circles and triangles, not an absurd world. What is the connection between death and human meaning? Does death provide a basis for meaning or destroy any possibility of it?

In the excerpts from being and time, Heidegger argues that Being-toward-death is constitutive of Dasein’s nature.31 However, Heidegger shifts the focus away from termination to an understanding of one’s own being as being-toward-death.32 We are temporal beings, and Care (sorge)33 constitutes the everyday being of Dasein; thus, animals are “carefree”, for they live in the “nous”.34

In Being and Time, Heidegger begins by distinguishing the existential analytic of Dasein from anthropology, biology, and psychology. Understanding why Heidegger
means by the terms “ontic” and “ontological,” it is commonly acknowledged among interpreters of Heidegger that the term “ontic” refers to claims about some particular entity of other. For example, anthropology, biology, and psychology make claims about particular kinds of entities. These disciplines assume a specific domain of entities and then try to understand the various properties and functions of these entities.

The term “ontological” refers to claims not about the particular object itself, but about its being – its way of existing. If we claim spoons are made of metal, wood, or plastic, we are making an ontic claim about a set of objects. If we make claims about what it means to be a spoon, then such a claim is about what spoon-ness consists in, so to say, that we are making an ontological claim.

Heidegger shares the common view that the sciences are not a priori disciplines; they are empirical. Moreover, each of the sciences offers a specific interpretation of human being. We can interpret humans as social beings, biological beings, etc. Based on which ontic interpretation we accept, we can discover various facts about human beings. Heidegger wants to explore the a priori conditions of human being in general. For Heidegger this involves the claim that simply to say “human beings are” already implicitly designates a different kind of being, which is in some sense prior to any of the claims made by the sciences. Heidegger’s use of the term “existence,” in relation to Dasein, means something radically different than the contemporary usage of the term. Heidegger doesn’t mean Dasein “exists” in the way a chair can be said to exist, nor does he mean “being alive,” since many other creatures are alive but do not exist as humans do. Because of the special way human being exist (Dasein), they already, prior to any theoretical inquiry, have an understanding of different types of beings. Because we have an understanding of Being or existence in general, we can ask questions that lead to the development of the sciences.

Western philosophy, according to Heidegger, is based on the conception of being in terms of “rationality” or “conscious thought”. For Descartes, man is a thing who thinks. Thinking becomes the meaning, in some vague sense, of what it is to exist for Descartes. Existence as a thinking thing is existence as an immaterial substance. According to Heidegger, Descartes fails on two counts. First, Descartes fails to address
adequately what thinking actually “is”; thinking is taken as given. The claim that one's existence consists in thinking still leaves unanalyzed what exactly such a claim means. Second, and more importantly, Descartes fails to address what it means to claim “I exist”. Descartes treats the self-presence of thinking qua existing as given as immediately and intuitively transparent. Descartes’ notion of thinking substance is a metaphysical speculation not grounded in the phenomenology of human existence.

The tradition of Western philosophy has made access to beings as a matter of rational thought. For Plato, the Forms were not sensible entities; they were only graspable by the rational parts of the soul. Descartes claimed the essence of sensible things was that they are extended, extension itself being accessible not through the senses, but through the intellect. Skepticism about other minds and the external world depends on starting with a dichotomy of subject and object, but the dichotomy itself has almost always been taken as given. Heidegger offers a different starting place for philosophy grounded in an accurate description of the nature of subjectivity and an accurate description of the nature of the world.

Existentialist Philosophy and Merleau-Ponty

Maurice Merleau-Ponty was one of a number of post-war French Philosophers who adopted the phenomenological methodology of Husserl and Heidegger, and developed it into a distinctive philosophy of his own. Two of his major contributions to philosophy were in the areas of perception and language, where he maintained that both have a role to play in our-apprehension of objective truths.

In his early work on perception, Merleau-Ponty rejected the whole of the rationalist tradition and the work of Descartes in particular. He insisted that our minds and bodies are not separate substances, and that we cannot attain knowledge of our existence by privileged access to our own minds and their conceptual contents. He objected to Descartes’ assumptions that our minds and their concepts are transparent to us, and that clarity and distinctness are the hallmarks of knowledge. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty thought that human beings are in and of the world, just as are all other
Let us begin to understand the meaning of the term phenomenology itself. It is derived from the two Greek words: *phainomenon* (an "appearance") and *logos* ("reason" or "word," hence a "reasoned inquiry"). Phenomenology is, indeed, a reasoned inquiry which is meant to discover the inherent essences of appearances. But what is an appearance? The answer to this question leads to one of the major themes of phenomenology: an appearance is anything of which one is conscious. Anything at all which appears to consciousness is a legitimate area of philosophical investigation. Moreover, an appearance is a manifestation of the essence of that of which it is the appearance. Surprising as it may sound, other philosophic points of view have refused to make this move.

For Husserl, phenomenology was a discipline that attempts to describe what is given to us in experience without obscuring preconceptions or hypothetical speculations; his motto was 'to the things themselves'—rather than to the prefabricated conceptions we put in their place. As Husserl saw it, this attempt offered the only way out of the impasse into which philosophy had run at the end of the nineteenth century when the realists, who affirmed the independent existence of the object, and the idealists, who affirmed the priority of the subject, had settled down into a stalemated war. Instead of making intellectual speculations about the whole of reality, philosophy must turn, Husserl declared, to a pure description of what is. In taking this position Husserl became the most influential force not only upon Heidegger but upon the whole generation of German philosophers who came to maturity about the time of the First World War. In other words, Phenomenology is a science of 'beginnings.' The genuine beginner is an adept, not a novice. To begin, in this sense, is to start from the primordial grounds of evidence, from oneself as the center (not the sum) of philosophical experience. Such self-centeredness is the opposite of philosophic *hubris*; it is a confession of humility: the admission that, unless the inquirer has turned to himself in full awareness of his life, he cannot claim to have sought, let alone found, the truth.
The concept of the 'intentionality of consciousness' is the foundation of phenomenological philosophy. Husserl adopted Brentano's notion of intentionality and refined it. Husserl distinguished between the act of knowing (noesis) from the object (noema), whether existent or imaginary. To be conscious is to experience an act of knowing in which the subject is aware of an object. A conscious act is an act of awareness in which the subject is presented with an object.

In Husserlian phenomenology, consciousness is understood as fundamentally intentional. In this sense, Husserl is, in part, indebted to Franz Brentano's "Act psychology," which held that all mental acts are characterized by "intentionality." Following Brentano, Husserl holds that consciousness is never directed toward itself, but, rather, is always directed toward phenomena in the world. It follows, therefore, that any abstraction is ultimately based on phenomena in the world, and, thus, are secondary to the primary lived experience of phenomena as they "show themselves."

Merleau-Ponty and the Concept of Body-Subject

The theory of the body-subject is regarded as the fundamental discovery of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Various facts may be put forward to confirm this assertion. First of all, he himself is stating that his philosophy is a radical victory over Cartesianism, which is characterized by Descartes' sharp dichotomy between the thinking mind and the mechanical body. For this reason, Ponty's affirmation of the 'body-subject' as the ambiguous unity- not union- of bodily being and subjectivity is the most fundamental affirmation in his philosophy. Secondly, the conclusions that he has drawn in his 'Phenomenology of Perception' always concerned with the subjective character of the human body. Finally, Merleau-Ponty himself explicitly confirmed the central character of the 'body-subject' in his philosophy in an address, which is later published under the title the 'Signs'.

The fundamental point in his philosophy is the victory over Cartesianism, the opposition of body and spirit, over dualism or positively expressed as the recognition of
the body as a reality, which is the unity of these aspects. It follows that there is the unity of thinking and speaking as well as there is essential bond of fact and value. Both of these are rather the concretizations of the unity of body and spirit.

It may be difficult to express what he means by the term ‘body-subject’. For, according to him, the body -subject transcends the opposition of body and spirit since we may no longer speak here of an either or. We should not say that the body belongs either to the material or to the spiritual order. It belongs to the both, but not as their union, for a union is always the meeting of opposites. The human body is a single reality, which is at the same time both material and spiritual.

Descartes opposed extension to thought, matter to thing to mind or spirit. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is neither a thing in the Cartesian sense nor a pure bodiless thought. The human body has a mode of being of its own by virtue of which it defies description in Cartesian terms. To indicate this mode of being, he uses such terms as ‘body-subject’. The body itself is an existence and therefore of a subjective nature. The body is a subject and therefore does not derive its subjective character from a principle distinct from itself.

**Traditional Concept of Subject**

Subjectivity, as Descartes understands it, cannot be of bodily nature. Descartes’ concept of body is purely quantitative. The term subject has a long history. In Greek and medieval philosophy, it possessed a dual meaning, one logical and the other ontological. As of the logical meaning, it was used to indicate the subject of a proposition expressing a judgment and as such functioned in both the linguistic and the philosophical analysis of a judgment. Along side the logical meaning, we find the ontological aspect of the term subject. As we know, there is a distinction between substance and accident and the latter were supposed to be rooted in the subject. Those who fell under the rule of a king also is known as subject. If one is subjected to some one or something also can be claimed under the term subject. For example, if I am subjected to an attribution, or being influenced by an accident etc.
The Body as Subject

From Descartes onward, there have been two allowable ontological orders or two ways in which one could consider something to be existent: as a thing or as a consciousness. In any case, body was altogether a thing, ‘a bundle of process in the third person’ the objective body of physiological books. On the other hand, consciousness was altogether pure thought. But the phenomenon of perception reveals for Merleau-Ponty a mode of being, which is neither that of pure thing nor that of pure thinking. It is a third genre of being which body and consciousness are and the same phenomenon. That is why he says that ‘the experience of one’s own body reveals to us an ambiguous mode of existence... The body is not an object.. The consciousness I have of it is not a thought.’

The body is a subject in the above-described sense. That the body is a subject means that it is meaning-giving existence. As for example, the concrete space in which we live is prior for us as the abstract space spoken of by Newton. Our lived spaces are always oriented. It is not a datum existing independently from us. Accordingly, there is an oriented space from which we cannot escape. It imposes itself as a necessity on our consciousness and freedom. Yet, it is a space that exists for us and through us. Another example, which is even clearer, is sexual meaning. Reality, which appears to us has sometimes an obviously sexual meaning for us. The adult woman, for instance, has a sexual meaning for the adult man and vice versa. Certain sketches and symbols likewise have sexual meanings. If this sexual character of our existence has not developed, or if it has not grown at the same rate as one’s general development, then this same lack of development or underdevelopment applies also to the sexual meaning.

Pre-conscious Subjectivity of the Body

According to Merleau-Ponty, we are already a meaning-giving existence on a level on which we are not yet conscious of ourselves and on which we are not free. The orientation of space, the sexual meaning, the various sensitive fields of meaning and their interconnection are the result of our dialogue with the world. This dialogue, however, takes place at such a depth that we are unable to penetrate into it through our reflective consciousness. Below me, therefore, as conscious subject, there is another subject that is preconscious and pre-personal. This subject is the body itself, for all forms of meaning...
arising on this level appears to be connected with the structure of the body. For this reason, we may not equate meaning-giving subjectivity with consciousness and freedom. But we should recognize that the body itself is already a subject. As conscious subject, I take up this world; but I do not constitute it. The body plays a role in this perception and consequently, there is naturalness and necessity, which is perceptively given.

Accordingly, the body is permeated with ‘intentions’ ie; questioning orientations. The body is more than a mechanism endowed with ready-made patterns of activity, which would operate as soon as an external stimulus makes itself felt. I am open to the world because the body. It is the hidden form of ‘self-being’ and the bearer of conscious existence. Therefore, the I-body is not a mere single union, but a single mode of being. It is neither pure matter, nor the pure spirit, nor the merger of these two. This is a concrete indication that our concepts of ‘mechanical bodiness’ and of ‘spirit’ are abstract and one-sided forms of thinking, which are unsuitable for expressing reality in a genuine way. In a way, Ponty refutes Descartes’ schematic way of thinking by postulating a concept as “Body-Subject”.

**Sartre and Existentialism**

The Sartrean ontology is based on the distinction between ‘being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Being -in-itself is the self contained being of a thing. It is a sort of inert being. The proof its existence is that the ‘known’ can never be identified either with the knowing or with knowledge. Hence, we must discover for the known a being. Another proof for the being-in-itself is the transcendence of consciousness. Every consciousness is always the consciousness of something. It means that consciousness is born supported by the being which is not itself. The real to which consciousness is oriented and of which it is constituted is the being-in-itself.

The being-in-itself cannot be created. For, to be created means to be conceived in subjectivity, even if this subjectivity is a divine subjectivity. Hence, it would reduce the being-in-itself to an intra-subjective being, making it devoid of any objectivity. Nor can it create itself. For that would suppose that it is prior to itself. Being something in itself, the being-in-itself does not enter into any connection with what is not itself. It is what it is. It
can encompass no negation. It knows no otherness. It simply is. Being-for-itself is co-extensive with the realm of consciousness, and the nature of consciousness is that it is perpetually beyond itself. It is not what it is but it is what it is not. In consciousness the subject is oriented to the object, which the subject is not, i.e. the subject is oriented to its own negation. Hence, ‘consciousness is being such that its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself. The for-itself and the in-itself are reunited by a synthetic connection in man. But the for-itself is the pure nihilation of the in-itself. It is like a hole of being at the heart of being. This nihilation, which determines the reality of the for-itself is enough to cause a total upheaval to happen to the in-itself. This upheaval is the world. Ontologically and essentially the in-itself takes precedence over for-itself.

Consciousness must be what it is not, and not what it is. This means that consciousness appears through annihilation. To be conscious is to be at a distance from, as well as a present to, oneself. But this distance or gap is no being, rather it is negation of being. Being-in-itself is unconscious and there is no reason as to why it should negate itself and become conscious. Consciousness is a contingent fact. The pour-soi is not implicit in the en-soi; it is an original but a contingent appearance. In becoming conscious, we take a leap beyond being and thus cease to be anything. To escape from this nullity without suffering loss of consciousness we aspire to attain being-in and being-for-itself. But the whole idea is contradictory and we are condemned to an endless pursuit and our consciousness suffers from a radical sickness.

Since man is engaged in attempting the impossible, it is not surprising that he treats other people too in impossible ways. This is clear from Sartre’s analysis of consciousness of other persons. The other always causes my fall from myself as being-for-itself into the whole of being-in-itself. The other is one who stares at me. Before him, I am an object, an it-self, deprived of free subjectivity and freedom. The other for me is also an object. Hence, the world of persons is the world of objects and not of subjects. Another person thus appears to me as a rival and an adversary. Real communion between one person and another does not seem to be possible in Sartre’s view.
Sartre on the Body

Sartre distinguishes the body-as-subject and the body-as-object. The body-as-subject is explained in terms of the subject's instrumental orientation: it is the centre of a situation through which my projects can take shape in the world. According to Sartre, it is consciousness (consciousness lives its body). The body-as-object by contrast requires inter-subjectivity: it requires the other to make my body their instrument. Sartre thus denies that one grasps one's body as an objective item in the world: the only objectivity that it can have may be derived from its location in the structure of inter-subjectivity. Sartre, therefore, repudiates the commonsense conception of the body as a physical thing interacting causally with and affected by other physical things in the world.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty

Where Merleau-Ponty differs from Sartre is in recognizing that we do achieve significant contact with our world, even if the moulds are always being broken and reconstituted. For Sartre the ‘in-itself-for itself’ is never attainable; our effort at self-deification always produces ‘un Dieu manque’.45 We are a useless passion. But for Merleau-Ponty this process, which he describes more prosaically as sedimentation, or objectification, is normal experience, ceaselessly re-enacted. There is nothing tragic in the fact that the perceptual synthesis has to remain incomplete, since, if it is to be a thing, it must have sides hidden from me. It cannot present me with a guaranteed reality.

Our life for itself is similar to our perceptual life. There is an acquired and sedimentary self, which is our provisional essence. It is amenable to conceptualization, and formulation in terms of opinions formed of us, on our own part or on that of other people. But we are always free, and liable, to change it and give some new orientation to it. It is I who give direction, significance and future to my life, but that does not mean that these are concepts; they spring from my present and past co-existence. Objects, habits, principles, states, convictions and the self are instruments and landmarks on life’s way, used for a time, some for a very long time, but eventually discarded. Unless it could arrest itself in objects, consciousness would display no structure. But each one, like the body itself is mortal and has its day.46
Merleau-Ponty claims that there are two distinct ways in which we can understand the place of an object when we are visually apprehending it. The first involves an intentional relation to the object that is essentially cognitive or can serve as the input to cognitive processes; the second irreducibly involves a bodily set or preparation to deal with the object. Because of its essential bodily component, Merleau-Ponty calls this the second kind of understanding, so to say, ‘motor intentional’.

Sartre's Theory of Freedom

Only my freedom can limit my freedom. “The for-itself is the foundation of its world and so chooses its world (its birth, the laws of nature). What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the being of human reality. Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free.”

What freedom is not: (1) Freedom is not introspected or discovered empirically: it is 'not a quality added on or a property of my nature'. (2) Freedom is not a power or ability to perform certain actions, a psychological capacity – such as 'the will'. Freedom is not a power or ability to perform certain actions, a psychological capacity – such as 'the will'; 'freedom is not a faculty of the human soul to be considered in isolation'. Nor is it a property of any kind, even an essential property: 'freedom ... is not a property which belongs among others to the essence of the human being'. Involuntary consciousness (e.g. Imagination, dream, emotion) is as free as voluntary consciousness: 'The for-itself appears as the free foundation of its emotions as of its volitions. My fear is free and manifests my freedom [...] In relation to freedom, there is no privileged psychic phenomenon. All my 'modes of being' are meant to manifest freedom equally since they are all ways of being my own nothingness.' (3) Freedom does not presuppose a suspension of causal laws: it is not to be identified with the absence of causal determination (causal indeterminism). (4) Freedom does not have its source in something metaphysical, in the manner of Kant's grounding of transcendental freedom in a metaphysical ('noumenal') self. According to Sartre, the structure of freedom involves the following: (i) action presupposes (ii) nihilation of state of affairs (négation), which presupposes (iii) spontaneity of consciousness, which presupposes (iv) choice.
(directedness towards an end), which presupposes (v) the project of the for-itself. Therefore: 1. Freedom has unlimited scope, because it is coextensive with the original choice of self, the scope of which includes the person as a whole. 2. For-itself chooses a world corresponding to the existence which it has chosen for itself.

**Freedom and Authenticity**

Although there is a dissonance between the earthbound quality of existentialist theorizing and Platonism’s transcendently idealizing disposition, a positive association obtains between the existentialist analysis of the human condition and Aristotle’s classically influential Greek conception of a good person. According to Aristotle, human beings are rational beings and good humans are humans who act rationally well. Being a good person entails realizing human potential. In the existentialist tradition, this human potential is defined as the capacity to experience one’s freedom. Therefore, the ultimate existentialist would be someone who lives a life of freedom, or who maximizes his or her experiences of freedom. Those who remain confined by contingent and breakable constraints believe falsely that these are absolute constraints and they would be neither appreciating nor realizing their human potential in its ultimacy.

As traditional as the above framework happens to be, a distinguishing feature of existentialist thought resides in its conception of human freedom that defies rationalistic measures and constraints: here, human beings are not defined as “rational animals.” If one can indeed choose between being rational and being irrational, then rationality need not govern or determine one’s freedom, for one can say “no” to rationality itself as much as one can say “no” to anything else.

As it applies to concrete circumstances, this unconstrained individual-centered conception of freedom generates extended reflection upon which features of one’s psyche and environment are contingent and changeable and which are not. Constant vigilance is advised against believing falsely that the contingent features of one’s experience are unconditional features, for such beliefs land one in the position of living inauthentically and of not realizing one’s freedom well. As the word “authentic” suggests, living authentically entails being the author of one’s own life, being in command of one’s
destiny, and being a genuine human being and good example of what it means to be free. Doing a genuine human being and good example of what it means to be free. Doing otherwise involves living in a condition of self-deception or bad faith (mauvais fois, as Sartre would say. Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86) echoes Sartre’s: “Freedom is the source from which all signification and all values spring. It is the original condition of all justification of existence. The man who seeks to justify his life must want freedom which is absolute and above everything else.”

These considerations reveal an existentialist sense of insecurity and anxiety in the face of one’s contingency in general, or in the face of the uncertain decisions one must make, or in the face of one’s inevitable death. Hence arises the thought that an authentic person lives in a manner that directly incorporates the insecure condition of the world in which we live. We can thereby note two strands of theorizing within this sphere of French existentialism, each of which expresses an attempt to identify a dimension within the human being upon which one can depend, given that the world as a whole is undependable.

The first is the Sartrean view that we are condemned to be free and that focusing upon one’s absolute freedom is the most authentic way to live. The second strand of theorizing, alluded to above in connection with nihilism, is Camus’s observation that only the present moment is absolutely steadfast, and that we ought not to center our attention upon past, future, or otherworldly dimensions. The two strategies intend to disclose reliable and attractive aspects of human experience that counterbalance the loss of meaning that a continually fluctuating and contingent world tends to precipitate, without at the same time denying the elemental and inescapable presence of that fluctuating world in which we happen to be situated.

Sartre expresses his conception of authenticity by advocating a constant effort to avoid self-deception and bad faith. It can be comforting to accept social definitions and self-conceptions as if they were unconditional characterizations, but he emphasizes that all such artificial definitions are revisable or rejectable. When a person gravitates into a mode of interpretation that assumes that he or she has an unchangeable essence,
opportunities are sealed off, potentialities remain unrealized, imagination becomes
constricted and unauthentic lifestyles crystallize. Sartre claims that the most authentic
mode of being is to be a constantly questioning being, and to be especially questioning of
oneself. This is the optimal expression of human freedom. Just as Descartes rested his
philosophy upon the singly reliable awareness of his being able to doubt in general,
Sartre finds a comparable security in the recognition of his ability to say “no” to any
given proposition, and his associated ability to question all ossifying and constricting
self-definitions, just as Descartes aimed to set aside all dubitable propositions.

Merleau-Ponty: A New Understanding of Philosophy

Merleau-Ponty’s approach to other philosophers has certain characteristics about
it that re-echo the poem, “the Blind Men and the Elephant.” While the poem has a
sarcastic edge to its criticism, Merleau-Ponty is much more open to other philosophers.
He assumes, as does the poem, that every real philosopher had contact with reality, and
thus has a truth to offer us. The problem is that philosophers have a tendency to
absolutize the truth content of their contact and thus distort it. What is needed is an
attitude that does not absolutize and yet still seeks the truth within every position. But the
only way not to absolutize is to be aware of the limitation of each perspective. Further, it
is only by grasping the truth within the context of each perspective that one’s quest for
truth within the context of each perspective that one’s quest for truth can begin. But for
Merleau-Ponty this does not mean that we are trapped in these perspectives and possess
only relative truths. Our perspectives are not barriers to discovering how reality is but
they are the necessary conditions for that discovery. Our perspectives open out upon a
world. They are the very conditions of our transcending ourselves and grasping reality.

With this view in mind, we find that Merleau-Ponty approaches the works of
other philosophers and the history of philosophy by treating them as a source of insights
into how reality ultimately is. He reads other philosophers to find the truth contained
within their works. And when he finds such truth, it should not be surprising that he
concludes that it is true. While error is sometimes important in understanding the
limitations of a particular philosopher’s perspective, for Merleau-Ponty, it is important
only in so far as it is a tool to discover what is true in that perspective. For Merleau-
Ponty, there is a sense in which a philosopher’s own claims are not the best authority for what he has discovered. Merleau-Ponty’s attitude is dominated by the quest for truth and that other philosophers and the history of philosophy turn out to be sources of that truth not unlike what we saw with Hegel.

When Merleau-Ponty first read Husserl, it transformed the way in which he viewed philosophy. It made him rethink his whole role as a philosopher. While Husserl said and maintained all sorts of other things with which Merleau-Ponty may not agree, Husserl’s conception of philosophy had a profound influence upon him and it becomes in Merleau-Ponty’s mind the significant part of Husserl’s philosophy. It is this part that he is presenting and characterizing as Husserl’s philosophy. In fact, the other philosophers that we have seen are also taken in this way. For example, the Kantian conception of the “a priori” dominates the Phenomenology of Perception. It is no longer restricted in the rather narrow logical sense of the Critique of Pure Reason, but still one could describe the Phenomenology as attempting to find the a priori structures of perception much more like Heidegger does in Being and Time. For Merleau-Ponty all philosophers are talking about the same “world” and while they may have different perspectives on it, all these perspectives must fit together. What is true in one philosopher must be compatible with what is true in another. And thus, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, not unlike Hegel’s, is not separated from the views of others but rather arises out of them.

**Merleau-Ponty and the Notion of Pre-Reflexive Intentionality**

Merleau-Ponty’s notion of pre-reflective intentionality, and the similarities and differences between him and Husserl’s understandings of intentionality is located in Merleau-Ponty’s critique of Husserl’s noesis-noema structure. Merleau-Ponty seems to claim that there can be intentional acts which are not of or about anything specific. He defines intentionality by its “directedness”, which is described as a bodily, concrete spatial motility. Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of intentionality is part of his attempt to rewrite the relation between the universal and the particular. He claims that meaning is intrinsic to the phenomenal field and impossible to analyze be a distinction between form and matter. Still, Merleau-Ponty’s notion of meaning and philosophy is strictly opposed to any naturalized philosophy. This becomes explicated at the end of the article, where
his attempt to embody intentionality is compared to Daniel Dennett’s corresponding approach.

Ever since Franz Brentano’s *introduction of the concept of intentionality into contemporary discussions, intentionality and intentional acts have been described by two metaphors, viz., as directed towards something and as of or about something. Brentano described intentionality as "reference to a content, direction towards an object" and defined "mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves".50

The two metaphors of being directed and of or about are usually seen as describing the same relation, even though the meaning of being directed towards something and being about something are quite different. I will be looking at how Merleau-Ponty seems to understand these metaphors and why he seems to prefer the explication of intentional acts as being directed towards something, rather than containing an intentional object. First, we will consider the explicit debt Merleau-Ponty pays to Husserl, and then will look at how he describes the embodied pre-reflective rationality. We will then explicate the main differences between Merleau-Ponty’s and Husserl’s understandings of intentionality. We will describe the distinctions Husserl makes between matter and form and then look at how Merleau-Ponty criticizes this distinction. Finally, we will briefly try to explicate some differences between Merleau-Ponty’s approach and another attempt to embody intentionality that has been made within the framework of cognitive science by the philosopher Daniel Dennett.51

Merleau-Ponty does not present any theory of intentionality. Instead, he studies specific intentional acts that are located in the context of other acts and experiences. Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical starting point is the last phase of Husserl’s phenomenology which was explicated in the *Crisis of European Sciences* (1954/70) He sees Husserl’s recognition of the Life-world, the Lebenswelt, as the most significant insight of phenomenology. As does Husserl, Merleau-Ponty views the field of perception as the very heart of the Life world. Phenomenology should give an account of this perceptual experience. According to Merleau-Ponty and Husserl’s perspective in the
Crisis, all meaning is produced in the encounter between the subject and the given world. It is the nature of this encounter that Merleau-Ponty sets out to study. He notes the importance of the distinction Husserl made between intentionality of act and operative intentionality. (Fungierende Intentionalität) 2 The intentionality of act is the intentionality of judging and other voluntary undertaken positing, while operative intentionality is "that which produces the natural and ante-predicative unity of the world and of our life"53 (Merleau-Ponty 1945/62, xviii; cf. 1960/62, 165).

In his investigation of the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)54, Maurice Merleau-Ponty defines phenomenology as the study of essences, including the essence of perception and consciousness. According to him, phenomenology is a method of describing the nature of our perceptual contact with the world. Phenomenology is concerned with providing a direct description of human experience. Perception is the background of experience which guides every conscious action. The world is a field for perception, and human consciousness assigns meaning to the world. We cannot separate ourselves from our perceptions of the world.

Merleau-Ponty argues that both traditional Empiricism and Rationalism are inadequate to describe the phenomenology of perception. Empiricism maintains that experience is the primary source of knowledge, and that knowledge is derived from sensory perceptions. Rationalism maintains that reason is the primary source of knowledge, and that knowledge does not depend on sensory perceptions. Merleau-Ponty says that traditional Empiricism does not explain how the nature of consciousness determines our perceptions, while Rationalism does not explain how the nature of our perceptions determines consciousness. Perception may be structured by associative forces, and may be focused by attention. Attention itself does not create any perceptions, but may be directed toward any aspect of a perceptual field. Attention can enable conscious perceptions to be structured by reflecting upon them.

Merleau-Ponty explains that a judgment may be defined as a perception of a relationship between any objects of perception. A judgment may be a logical interpretation of the signs presented by sensory perceptions. But judgment is neither a
purely logical activity, nor a purely sensory activity. Judgments may transcend both reason and experience. Perception is not purely sensation, nor is it purely interpretation. Consciousness is a process that includes sensing as well as reasoning. Experience may be reflective or unreflective. Unreflective experience may be known by subsequent reflection. Reflection may be aware of itself as an experience. Reflection may also be a way to understand and to structure experience. Reflection may be focused successively on different parts of a perceptual field. According to Merleau-Ponty, perceptual objects have an inner horizon in consciousness and an outer horizon in the external world. The object-horizon structure enables the individual to distinguish perceptual objects from each other. All objects reflect each other in time and space.

Psychological and physiological aspects of perception may overlap and influence each other. The spatiality of the human body, or the 'body image,' is an example of how both psychological and physiological factors may influence perception. Perception is a system of meanings by which a phenomenal object is recognized. The intentions of the person who perceives an object are reflected in the field to which the phenomenal object belongs. Merleau-Ponty argues that consciousness is not merely a representative function or a power of signification. Consciousness is a projective activity, which develops sensory data beyond their own specific significance and uses them for the expression of spontaneous action.

When one reads Merleau-Ponty's "Phenomenology of Perception", one becomes aware that there is a preoccupation with methodology: with what the natural and the social sciences ought to be doing, but more importantly there is a preoccupation with the methodology of philosophy. From the "Preface" on Merleau-Ponty is concerned that the reader comes to an understanding of how philosophy ought to be done and with what he is doing as an example of it. As mentioned earlier, for him, as well as for Husserl, Phenomenology is philosophy done rightly. The result is that the nature of philosophy is a central theme of the work. The problem is that while this concern is almost everywhere in the book, there are few explicit efforts to unpack as to how he conceives of philosophy. Merleau-Ponty’s conception of philosophy may be understood as the following: (1), How philosophy is different from the sciences. (2) There is a paradox at the heart of
philosophy. (3) The sense in which philosophy is viewed as a creative activity. And (4) How philosophy is related to the history of philosophy.

First, following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty sees much of contemporary philosophy having problems because it does not understand what philosophy is and even worse, he thinks that because of the great success of the natural sciences there has been a tendency to try to remake philosophy in the image of the sciences. But, the fact is that philosophy is very different from the sciences. The sciences are primarily concerned with developing knowledge about objects in the world: discovering if they exist, finding connections between, and explaining them. In a real sense, philosophy is not interested in objects in the world, and thus it is not concerned with developing objective knowledge. Science is a domain full of theories about this or that, and justifying these theories is one of its essential acts. But for Merleau-Ponty, philosophy ought not to be in the business of creating the theories. For him the term “philosophical theory” is a contradiction in terms and thus there can be no legitimate philosophical theories. But if science is concerned with developing objective knowledge and theories, what is the goal of philosophy? Merleau-Ponty claims that philosophy is essentially a kind of questioning, a question that aims not so much at getting answers like science does, but rather a questioning those goal is to unsettled us and shake our certainties. The goal here is not answers but rather the transforming of our perspectives. Now clearly this is not a radically new conception of philosophy. If one looks at the Socrates of the Platonic Dialogues, it is easy to see an example of this conception of philosophy. Socrates is clearly asking questions not to discover some factual information, but to raise his listeners above their naïve certainties.

One might make this same point in another way. Using the figure/background pattern, we could say that philosophy is not concerned with the figure or object, but rather it is concerned with the background as background. Following Gestalt psychology, Merleau-Ponty argues that the figure/background relation is not only the most primitive element that we find in all perceptual experiences, but that it leaves its mark on all our abstractions, conceptualizations, theories, sciences, and all forms of knowledge. Further, what is known has its real significance only when seen in terms of its context. The error that we make in the everyday world, in the natural and human sciences, and in
philosophy is to abstract out the figure or object and claim that this object is all that actually exists. In short, we have the error of the blind men dealing with the elephant again. The job of the questioning of philosophy is to get us to realize that there is something more than just the figure. Philosophy’s aim is to awaken our awareness of the background and overcome the “absolutizing error” and thus grasp the real value of what we have experienced. But there is a fundamental problem here. There is a tendency to think that all we have to do is focus our attention on the background, and thus we would become aware of it. But to transfer one’s attention from the figure to its background is just to make the background into another figure with its own background. A background transformed into a figure is opened to all the problems of the first level experience. This background-become-object becomes something that can be absolutized itself. The real job of philosophy is to become aware of the background of our ideas, concepts, sciences and knowledge without transforming it into an object. It is to grasp the background as background.

Second, there is a temptation to think that Merleau-Ponty in making this claim is trying to transform philosophy into some kind of intuitional activity. It seems that he has excluded philosophy from the domain of knowledge of objects and excludes it even from transforming what is not an object, the background, into an object so that it can be a part of our knowledge. It certainly looks like grasping the background as background is some sort of intuitive act. But this is an objection that Merleau-Ponty takes over seriously especially given the popularity of Bergsonian Intuitionism in his day. Merleau-Ponty fears that Bergson’s conception of philosophy leads us to conceiving philosophy as a personal act that occurs within us to and locks out such acts from the view of others. If the fundamental act of philosophy is intuition, doesn’t this somehow trap philosophy in subjectivism? For Merleau-Ponty, the philosopher’s questioning, it must be open to the view of others or else the questioning just does not make any sense at all. Further, the questioning activity itself does not make sense unless it can be guided by the transformation of the others’ perspective. Merleau-Ponty argues that philosophy is not intuitive because it is social and depends in an essential way on the mediation of language. Another problem with characterizing philosophy as some kind of intuition is
that it seems to imply that philosophy has a unique kind of knowing and thus consists of a unique body of knowledge. For Merleau-Ponty, there are all sorts of dangers with this characterization, and he tries to avoid talking this way at all. For him, philosophy is not like science. It is not a body of knowledge, even in some unique sense of body of knowledge. It is an activity that through language transforms our perspectives.

Thirdly, by claiming that philosophy is not a body of knowledge but rather an activity, especially a creative activity of transforming our perspectives, it seems that Merleau-Ponty is turning philosophy into poetry. It is interesting to note that he denies that there is any radical distinction between philosophy and not only poetry but also art in general. The goal of art is to transform our perspective so that we see that we see more, and that we see differently. It does this through physical and cultural things. Poetry uses language to transform our perspective much as philosophy does. It usually uses a different kind of language from philosophy. The philosopher uses argument, description, critiques, but then so does poetry at times. In the same way, the poet uses metaphors, similes, and maybe even rhyme to transform us. However, the philosopher could, and occasionally does, use similar devices. He may even use poetry itself to make this point. Merleau-Ponty often talks about the difference between philosophers and poets as if it were the case that philosophers in using arguments to transform our perspective are aware of what they are doing and those poets transform us unaware of what they are doing. But while he talks this way sometimes, clearly this is not his position. There is no reason why a poet cannot be self-aware and, clearly, no reason that a philosopher could not be unaware of what he is doing. To say the least, Merleau-Ponty has a rather ambiguous relationship between philosophy and poetry.

Finally, as we have already seen, the history of philosophy plays an important role in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. But in addition, it also plays an important role in his conception of philosophy. Merleau-Ponty sees a major problem with using the history of philosophy. If we make a distinction between the question posed by a specific philosophy in the past and the question we pose now, it certainly could be asked: Do we have the right to ask a philosopher of the past our contemporary questions, which Merleau-Ponty clearly does? If we recognize the unique character of each philosophy, we ought to say
no. but to do so would be to reduce different philosophies to isolated cultural objects. If we tend to deny the unique character of each philosophy, we ought to say yes. But, then, are we reducing the history of philosophy to philosophy? In the first case, there is philosophy, but no real history of philosophy. Merleau-Ponty’s answer to this dilemma is found in the way that he conceives of philosophy. Philosophy, like and artistic product, can provoke more than what is explicitly contained in it. Each philosopher is guided by a vision, which is not the explicit theme of his exposition. In each work, he explicit prose developing a specific theme, and at the same time we find a key which transforming our perspective into the vision of the author. But this vision is not some subjective possession of the author. If it were this, then there would be no way to access it. It is a vision of a “world” and a “reality” that is the same “world” and “reality” we Have before us. This is not a world and reality that is cut off by the philosopher’s perspective; it is rather the “world” and reality” that transcends his perspective and provides the background of what he explicitly sees. Merleau-Ponty talks as if there is a “primordial faith” that kinks us to other philosophers. But his point is much stronger than that. What we see is given to us as real. To experience something as real is to experience it as transcending our perspective. This awareness of “something more” or this background is what unites us to others. For Merleau-Ponty there are certain extremes through which we must chart our course if we are going to do philosophy rightly. There is the danger of egoism in transforming the past and the other into our own philosophy. And there is the idolatry of absolutizing the past as somehow having done it all. We need to look at the past, and other philosophers for that matter, as containing possibilities of transforming our perspectives. No philosophy belongs entirely to the past nor do we belong entirely to the present. No philosophy has been completely surpassed, but neither is there any philosophy whose works can simply be repeated.

Review of Literature

The literature review requires one to justify the fundamentals of research by critically evaluating previous studies on the subject under consideration. This is designed to identify related researches on the same topic and to set the current research project within a conceptual and theoretical framework. Thus the aim of literature review is to
evaluate and prove relationships between the work already done, and the current work and how the work adds to the already carried out researches. It also involves as to why the research needs to be carried out, how to choose the methodologies or theories to work with. This part of the thesis attempts to explain some key concepts of the subject involved and lay a theoretical background in terms of which thesis will be framed. Accordingly the present thesis intends to scan the literature on the topics such as concept of freedom, existence, choice, authenticity, and the like in the light of existentialism and phenomenological traditions. The thesis is purported to re-examine and analyze the notion of freedom and man from a strictly existentialist perspective. We will survey articles, books and other sources (dissertations and conference proceedings) relevant to the particular issues and topics, area of research or theory, providing a description, summary and critical evaluation of work previously done. We will keep ourselves open to what we can learn from other disciplines related to the present topic like psychology, cultural studies, political science and anthropology apart from philosophy. There is a plethora of literature available on the topics of man and freedom, culture and identity, both nationally and abroad. Libraries and archives will be indirect and secondary sources of data. An exposure to scholarly works related to man and freedom from existential and phenomenological perspective will help the present thesis in providing a general orientation, stimulating insight and guiding direction. The best thing about reviewing of literature is that it will help us discover where the present project fit in and how we can contribute through the present project to the richer understanding of the topic under consideration. Accordingly, the thesis attempts to explain some key concepts of the subject involved and lay a theoretical background in terms of which the thesis will be framed. In short, the present thesis scans the available literature of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty and the critical works written on them. We shall be highly sensitive to those topics such as existential phenomenology, authenticity, self-deception and bad faith, freedom, man’s being-in-the-world, perceptual consciousness, body-subject, incarnated freedom, life-world etc as these philosophical terms are highly perceptible in the works of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

Methodology
The type of data required for the research determines the kind of method to be employed. The subject of this study is the concepts of freedom and authenticity as conceived and explained in the existentialist literature of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. The nature of the subject itself suggests that the data of the research is primarily qualitative. The sources from which this data is gathered is from library and through discussion.

**Libraries and Archives:**

Libraries and archives will be indirect and secondary sources of data. In order to have a reasonable summation of the hypothesis is concerned, the researcher read the published, unpublished and other written documents and materials in the libraries and cultural centers. Many scholars from different academic disciplines have written on Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. An exposure to these scholarly works will help the present thesis in providing a general orientation, stimulating insight and guiding direction.

**Significance of the Present Study**

Although immediate practical application may not be expected from this research, it will hopefully come up with some benefits to concerned beneficiaries. As rational beings we raise questions in order to get reasonable answer, the answer that helps to solve problems. As a general condition, philosophy is more comfortable in raising questions that affect the individual and social life of the days; hence, it is more important and relevant to question the un-reflected life. This research project is concerned about as to how the modern man lives their life, whether the way they live is desirable or not. In the context of normative disciplines, truth is largely dependent on reasonableness, relevance and responsiveness. The aim of this research is, indeed, making an attempt at discovering the truth of the post modern sensibility alongside the path way of existentialist thinking. When viewed from this angle, this study will be advancing towards the systematization of the meaning of freedom and authenticity as conceived by the existentialists thinkers like Jean Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

**General Presuppositions of the Thesis**
The present thesis is purported to examine chiefly the following points of philosophical importance in the existentialist philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean Paul Sartre.

1. The thesis is particularly concerned with the existentialist issues of both Merleau-Ponty and Sartre wherein we shall be particularly concerned about their understanding on the nature of man, composition of man as a body, the essence of man and meaning of man’s life-world. The thesis also examines in a deeper level their views on the concept of man as a being-in-the-world and freedom, his value conceptions and attitude towards a lived world.

2. The thesis shall be concentrating on the important existentialist issues such as man’s existence in the world and the conditions of the world’s presence for man which implicates the possibility of looking at the objective and subjective nature of man. It amounts to saying that the philosophy of existentialism constitutes a unique philosophy which is methodologically a phenomenology and ontologically existentialism.

3. The simplest distinction between an expression of authentic and in-authentic discourse in the existentialist philosophy suggests that the subject has two modalities of being-in-the-world. Existence as both subject and object is the primordial or authentic status revealed by authentic discourse.

4. The thesis shall be particularly sensitive to understand and evaluate Merleau-Ponty’s theory of primordial communication in comparison with Sartre. Thus, the present thesis will briefly review Jean-Paul Sartre’s use of the en-soi/pour-soi (in-itself/for-itself) dualism as it is manifest in the use of language, for, Sartre conceives of a divided Being in the sense that Being-for-itself (étant-en-soi) is the lack of Being that requires the use of Nothingness to make itself stand apart from Being-in-itself. Hence, language is a modality in which this dualism operates at a manifest level of consciousness.

5. Another point of discussion in the present thesis is the contention of Sartre’s philosophy of communication which asserts a dualism within a dualism. In Sartrean ontology, there is a duality of the for-itself or Consciousness and the in—self or being, and, there is a duality within the for-itself, so to say, indirect communication and lack of communication. This dimension of communication in the existentialist understanding is a matter of contested claim.
6. The present thesis devotes to critically examine Merleau-Ponty’s methodology of phenomenology as a method of knowing existence and thereby compare such a claim with Sartrean concept of philosophy as a synoptic discipline which has a place in all fields of knowledge.

7. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, views human being as an embodied subject and embodiment is a contingent way of "existing" or "living" the world. But, the present thesis argues that Merleau-Ponty follows Marcel's original notion of embodiment more closely than does Sartre. For Sartre, to be embodied is simply to exist as situated, to occupy a place and time, to be in certain circumstances and conditions.

8. The present thesis, predominantly, concerned about a phenomenological analysis of man, his situatedness in the world, his environing a world, and his constitution as a person. Accordingly, we argue that two points of departure from which the phenomenological approach to the question of personality proceeds can be stated as follows.

9. In the phenomenological order, the phenomenon of person belongs to the first instance to be a subject of a world around us. So far as I am a person – and that applies intentionally to every other person, I am inseparably bound with the world around me. This world around me/us is that of which personal I is conscious of and to which it is related in different ways.

Objectives of the Present Study

The present thesis is purported to examine chiefly the following points of philosophical importance in the existentialist philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean Paul Sartre.

1. The thesis is particularly concerned with the existentialist issues of both Merleau-Ponty and Sartre wherein we shall be particularly concerned about their understanding on the nature of man, composition of man as a body, the essence of man and meaning of man’s life-world. The thesis also examines in a deeper level their views on the concept of man as a being-in-the-world and freedom, his value conceptions and attitude towards a lived world.
2. The thesis shall be concentrating on the important existentialist issues such as man’s existence in the world and the conditions of the world’s presence for man which implicates the possibility of looking at the objective and subjective nature of man. It amounts to saying that the philosophy of existentialism constitutes a unique philosophy which is methodologically a phenomenology and ontologically existentialism.

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6. The present thesis devotes to critically examine Merleau-Ponty’s methodology of phenomenology as a method of knowing existence and thereby compare such a claim with Sartrean concept of philosophy as a synoptic discipline which has a place in all fields of knowledge. The issue is whether freedom is best understood as categorical, as what human existence simply is, such that at every moment the entire meaning of our lives is at stake, or whether it is better understood as contingent, as a power, characteristic of our actions only in some measure, through which conditions having at least a general and fragmentary meaning independent of us are brought to some successful resolution.
7. For both Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, the fundamental phenomenon to be elucidated is that of a "situated" freedom. "We shall use the term situation," says Sartre, "for the contingency of freedom" that is, for the given and limiting conditions under which freedom appears, for the state of affairs in reference to which one must act.

8. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, views human being as an embodied subject and embodiment is a contingent way of "existing" or "living" the world. But, the present thesis argues that Merleau-Ponty follows Marcel's original notion of embodiment more closely than does Sartre. For Sartre, to be embodied is simply to exist as situated, to occupy a place and time, to be in certain circumstances and conditions.

9. The present thesis, predominantly, concerned about a phenomenological analysis of man, his situatedness in the world, his environing a world, and his constitution as a person. Accordingly, we argue that two points of departure from which the phenomenological approach to the question of personality proceeds can be stated as follows. In the phenomenological order, the phenomenon of person belongs to the first instance to be a subject of a world around us. So far as I am a person – and that applies intentionally to every other person, I am inseparably bound with the world around me. This world around me/us is that of which personal I is conscious of and to which it is related in different ways.

Special emphasis of the Study

1. The present study is particularly sensitive to the following points of emphasis with regard to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. What is specifically distinct in Merleau-Ponty is his conception of man as the body-subject. According to him, the body is an operative subject which cannot be described in terms of causal processes; rather man as the body-subject is the field of lived world experiences that has interiorly united spheres of meaning. According to him, the concept of freedom is the linch-pin of a phenomenological description of man in the world.

2. Man's life is not the product of physical or social determinism, but dialectic enacted between man and his environment. Hence, Merleau-Ponty has questioned the concept of freedom as suggested by Sartre and suggested that since consciousness is
nothingness and absolute freedom can find no anchor in the world; it makes action impossible.

3. Freedom is not absolute but embodied. One can talk about freedom only in a situation, in a field, in a social space which is not of our own making or choosing. It is limited to one’s capacities, knowledge and situation. Freedom understood in this way is a creative repetition. It is a rooted creativity.

4. Phenomenological description of human action does not support the claim that reason is the determining factor in action. He agrees with the Sartrean position that all human beings are free to the extent that they are open to different possibilities.

5. The thesis shall be specifically concerned about the Sartrean description of ontological freedom which emphasizes more on consciousness and sometimes tries to identify it with the subject.

6. Finally, one of the objectives of the present study is to compare and contrast both these thinkers in a critical-creative perspective so that the views of both of them can be understood for further critiquing.

By Way of a Conclusion

It has been customary ever since Kant’s day, to begin any system of philosophy with a Theory of Knowledge. This very order of priority implies that thinking is not considered from the angle of man’s being, that is, as one of his manifestations, but solely from the angle of things so that they can be classified and made use of as instruments. Now, the instrument has its own particular system of imperialistic development. From being the means of effecting a transformation, it tends to develop into a means of production, and then speculation, with all its fantastic tricks, takes a hand in the business. And, by the way, we must be careful to observe the effect of the double meaning of words. Whatever has happened in the economic world is sure to be reflected in the philosophic sphere too. Free and unfettered thinking is hashed up into a game with figures and meaningless words; the barriers against unreality and absurdity are thereby removed and man’s life, the purport and perfection of the life of the universe, is in danger of being lost sight of.
Existentialism refuses to hand man over to any sort of instrument before it knows something about the nature, potentialities and qualifications of the agent who is going to use it. It does not claim that man is easier to understand than matter but that understanding of him takes precedence over mere knowledge about the world and over all laws and ideas.

An existent is not a wax tablet on which ideas, convictions and orders are stamped; the human subject is a dialectic movement from an implied way of thinking to a reflective way of thinking, from a dully and darkly desiring will to a desired will, and the ideas, calls and orders, transcendent though they be, must go out to seek in the heart of this movement the conditions they have come to supply. It follows, therefore, that the mind must become flesh, and, for every man, the flesh of his very existence. As Heidegger says it is not death that is a philosophic problem, but the fact that I do die. The problem of the immortality of the soul is not a learned study limited to a group of specialists, but is a problem which is concerned with finding out whether I am immortal, and my whole life depends on the answer. “It would be rational,” said Kierkegaard, “if being a thinker and being a man somehow involved the least possible difference.”

The first step in philosophy is a call to action: “Man wake up”. It is this life of the existent in all its intensity and with all its responsibilities, which Kierkegaard calls inwardness or subjectivity. This denseness of the individual subject is essential to the success and to the quality of the act of knowing. Pascal does not try to convert the incredulous man or to present him with proofs before he has shaken him out of his state of indifference and urged him on, from a vague form of doubting, to an impassioned and never-ending form of doubting. Existentialism tends to reduce subjective certitude of assurance, the last refuge of spiritual immobility, in order to assist dynamic and mobile passion which inwardly unites the existent with truth. He will then have to follow this line of thinking almost to the point of maintaining that the important thing is not so much truth as the attitude towards truth of the man who has gained knowledge. Three or four times, Kierkegaard and Jaspers emphasize this method of finding one’s way. In any case, without the inward attitude, knowledge is acquired in vain; it is deadened through consciousness of itself. The Christian who imagines that he is praying to God, but who
is, in fact, only imploring an accessory to his lusts or to his own particular desires is not really praying to God, but to an idol, and to be even more precise, he is not praying at all. It is just the same for anyone who thinks only by means of his desires or by means of the machinery of his ideas. Socrates, on the other hand, decides about immortality with a reservation, but by this very reservation, he does enjoy his life. There you have true knowledge, that of the “subjective thinker.” To exist is his first concern; the existence going on round about him is his greatest interest.

If existence, and particularly human existence, cannot be the object of systematization, the relations between the man who is seeking knowledge and the world are upset by it. We must abandon the traditional outline (whose perceptible origin is obvious) of conscience or of knowledge, “the eyes of the mind,” setting itself up in front of the world which it regards as something to be gazed at and something which it systematizes from a distance.

Let us strike the powerful argument as to why existence cannot be systematized. System is a kind of index or instrument. It collects evidence or it strings facts together. But inexhaustibility cannot be estimated and intangible things cannot be strung together. Kierkegaard said that Christian truth has something in common with the nettle-subjectivity gets stung by it and will not grasp it firmly. This is what Pascal meant when he called it incomprehensible yet reasonable. This refusal to systematically enforce our consciousness on our existence can be carried to great or less lengths.

The all-embracing nature of existentialism cannot be concealed. Whether it is Christian or Atheistic, it marks a return of the religious element into a world which has tried to represent itself as pure manifestation. Christian existentialism is an obvious defense against types of secularization of faith, a sort of prophetic revival on the basis of philosophy. Although it is hardly very widespread, atheistic existentialism is already bringing the light of day into dark mysticisms, and its success in this field indicates a revival of atheism rather than a calm and gradual inculcation of a method of reflection. If existentialism as a philosophical movement as well as a philosophy of life can avoid the baroque type of spiritual worthlessness into which some people seem to be driving it, and
if it can re-discover the secret of the fulfillment of human existence, then it will be able to present a rejuvenated outward and inward remedy to the manifold problems of human beings.

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Notes and References


2. The Latin 'essentia', which refers to the 'what-ness' or 'essential nature' of something... assume an essential reference to Idea... Once the essence of a being's Being consists in its LSea (its what-ness), then it is the what-ness of the being that most authentically is.


7. Famous Idealist Philosopher - George Berkeley (1685 - 1753) Explaining George Berkeley’s idealism philosophy (esse est percipi) and the interconnection of mind, body and universe with realism of Wave Structure of Matter (WSM).

8. George Berkeley is one of my favorite philosophers, despite the fact that I consider his conclusions on Idealism to have been a major impediment to the progress of Philosophy and the Sciences. His motivation was admirable, to find what was certain as a way of overcoming the destructive influence of Skeptics, Atheists, and Abstract Concepts masquerading as real things. His conclusion - we can only be certain about things we experience in the mind - thus that is what really exists! He writes; Esse est percipi (To be is to be perceived).


10. Existence must first of all be defined. "The root meaning of 'to exist,' in Latin, existere, is to 'stand out.' " For Tillich existence means to stand out of non-being, to stand out of nothingness. The Greeks had two words for...

The 19th century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard vicariously discusses ... The knight of faith is the individual who is able to gracefully embrace life.

Existentialism in the broader sense is a 20th century philosophy that is centered upon the analysis of existence and of the way humans find themselves existing in the world. The notion is that humans exist first and then each individual spends a lifetime changing their essence or nature.

Paul-Louis Landsberg (1901-1943), German philosopher, authored “The Experience of Death: and The Moral Problem of Suicide.” Landsberg, a Jewish Catholic, died in a Nazi concentration camp.


N. A. Berdyaev (Berdiaev) The Russian Religious Philosopher Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev(Berdiaev) was .... (1924-301) The Jewish Question, as a Christian Question . ....solovyov -- Devoted to the study and discussion of the seminal Russian Religious ...based on universalising the model of Jewish diaspora. He also .... A scholar of the origins of the early church, he became a leading theorist of the dialogue ..... variety (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre) as just one branch of a very large tree, rooted in the ...Scheler, Barth, Buber, Berdiaev, Chestov and Soloviev were presented ...

Louis Pamplume and Beth BrombertGabriel Marcel: Existence, Being, and Faith Yale French Studies: No. 12, God and The Writer .1953, pp. 88-100

the Marcelian philosophy Published in 1927,He insisted that philosophy begin with concrete experience rather than abstractions.


Auguste Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings 1998- Page xiv


Theodore De Boer The Development of Husserl's Thought 1978.p. 454


Hubert L. Dreyfus. Being-in-the-world: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, ... 1991.p. 113

Plato, Timaeus; Aristotle, Metaphysics; St Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles, Pars 3:1, Summa Theologiae, Pars 1:1, etc. Analysis of "existence before essence" in Etienne Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Introduction. existence precedes essence (French: l'existence précède l'essence) is a central claim of existentialism, which reverses the traditional philosophical view that the essence or nature of a thing is more fundamental and immutable than its existence.

43
Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), credits a slightly longer version of the claim to Heidegger: "Now freedom has no essence. It is not subject to any logical necessity; we must say of it what Heidegger said of the *Dasein* in general: 'In it existence precedes and commands essence.'" However, Sartre gives no page reference for this citation. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes: "The 'essence' of human-being lies in its existence." ("Das 'Wesen' des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz", *Sein und Zeit*, p. 42.)

People are free to make their own meaning: a freedom that is also a... nature, for the two hardly exchange words and, when invited by the Self-Taught Man to... one more receptive to noticing an existential situation that everyone has.


Albert Camus said: "In the darkest depths of our nihilism I have sought only for the means to transcend nihilism." (Guikshank)


... Initially, Heidegger wanted *aletheia* to stand for a re-interpreted definition of truth.... (See Hubert Dreyfus' book "Being-in-the-World")... *Dasein's fundamental mode of being-in-the-world as Care* (German: *Sorge*),..... to texts authored by Heidegger use "H.x" to refer to the original page number.

Martin Heidegger's main interest was to raise the issue of Being, that is, to make... be capable of telling us the meaning of Being, of the where and what *Dasein* is. ... as 'care' (*Sorge*) and that because *Being-in-the-world fundamentally belongs to*.... we may come to exist not on our own terms, but only in reference to others.


"Absurdity", or, alternatively, "the Absurd", generally refers to the experience of groundlessness, contingency, or superfluity with respect to those basic aspects of "the human condition" that seem as if they should be open to rational justification. Although first coined by Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism, and largely associated with a select group of existential philosophers, novelists, playwrights, and poets, the philosophical problem to which absurdity refers arose with modern philosophy and has continued to persist beyond the existentialist moment proper.
... Initially, Heidegger wanted aletheia to stand for a re-interpreted definition of truth. To be existenziell is a categorical or ontic characteristic: an understanding of all this which relates to one's.....

36 Ibid., p.52


38 Ibid., p.56

39 Ibid., p.142


42 Ibid., p.12

43 Sartre, Jean Paul, Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology. Hazel Barnes. Trans; London; Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1957, p.xii

Sartre uses pour-soi to describe human beings, who are defined by their possession of consciousness and, more specifically, by their consciousness of their...

Being and Nothingness - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

44 Ibid., p.52

45 C Howells. Sartre and Negative Theology1981 p. 717

monde, l'homme et l'homme-dans-le-monde n'arrivaient a realiser qu'un Dieu manque' (L'Etre et le neant,). In fact, Sartre insists, a metaphysical...

46 This view of the object and concept as provisional achievements is considered in relation to a wider philosophical context in Dolin Smith, Contemporary French Philosophy, Methuen, 1964

47 De Beauvoir 1991:24


50 Ibid., p.198
This is why Heidegger cautions against reading Being and Time as if it maintained that human understanding produces or causes being the way ... (es gibt) comes to language, say: “Only as long as Dasein is, is there being”? Of course.