Chapter -III

Sartre and His Philosophy of Human Freedom

Introduction

Jean-Paul Sartre was born in Paris in 1905. He is regarded to be the major French existentialist. Sartre developed his philosophy by drawing extensively on psychology, and to some extent on sociology, by means of novels, plays, and didactic essays. According to Sartre, the human person is characterized by a tremendous degree of freedom. There is no limitation placed on this freedom. Perhaps the most notorious aspect of Sartre’s existential freedom is that of “Being for another.” Under this general heading Sartre explores a number of themes that form the basis of his successful plays and notorious works. Existentialism in itself had no specific relation to sex until Sartre made it “sexy.”

Sartre’s greatest philosophical accomplishment, *Being and Nothingness*, sets out to provide a systematic description of consciousness, nothingness, and the phenomenon of being-in-the-world in a manner that reaffirms the fundamental precondition for human existence in the world: freedom. There can be no separation of human existence and freedom. For Sartre, the two are mutually dependent. Given this as the general starting point, several lines of inquiry can be pursued – but we will limit ourselves to only one.

Sartre’s project is continuous with respect to its focus on freedom. At the same time, Sartre’s understanding of freedom is significantly modified during the course of his development as a thinker. We will argue that Sartre’s legacy, in terms of his relevance for theory, is to be found through an examination of the direction of his development. That Sartre moves beyond his initial view of freedom, a view manifested in his earliest works, is testimony to the inadequacy of his starting point. Yet Sartre’s project remains a crucial undertaking, particularly with respect to its underlying motivation. Sartre attempts to contextualize and concretize his view of freedom while refusing to abandon his commitment to freedom as essential to an understanding of humanity.

While referencing Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, Sartre underscores the notion that ‘God is dead.’ He has made the categorical denial of God’s existence the very
cornerstone of his existential stance. His atheism is postulatory, in the sense that it is an absolutely indispensable starting point for all his philosophizing. As a consequence, humans can no longer discover in God’s will the appropriate objective values and principles for life. Since persons are free, and since there is no God, they must freely invent their own values, goals and purposes. Sartre advocates, “Invent the kind of person you want to be, and be it with all your heart.” He asserts that in a Godless world, humans are abandoned and “condemned to freedom” without the possibility of discovering objective, normative values. Thus, such a position entails the following: (1) There is no God; (2) there is no system of objective values; (3) there are no permanent essences or natures; and (4) man is freedom.

The primary reason why he rejects belief in God is because he simply regards it as irreconcilable with belief in total human freedom. Sartre is, however, ready to argue that even though there is no objective Lawgiver to whom persons are ultimately accountable, one is not on this account without responsibility. On the contrary, persons are consequently inescapably responsible for their own choices, ad this, in turn, raises the matter of ethics. Sartre never formalized his ideas of ethics beyond a number of tentative outlines. While some Sartrean scholars maintain that he would have held to an ethics of authenticity, others see him defending an ethics of anthropology of the “free man.”

Sartre’s commitment to radical freedom does not allow for this sort of explanation, and the result is a world devoid of meaning beyond that which each individual chooses for herself, and it brings about the collapse of theories of human nature. Sartre says that “if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and … this being is man.” Sartre’s understanding of being does not require the existence of God to justify it. The human individual does not have anywhere to turn to find meaning (or justification for her existence), and so cannot pass off the responsibility of her existence onto anyone else.

Interestingly, the existence of God creates problems for human freedom, though Sartre does not address exactly why the non-existence of God points to radical freedom on the part of the individual. That is, Sartre does not make the case for human freedom the way he makes the case for the non-existence of human freedom if
God exists. He presupposes inescapable freedom as the condition of humankind, though it does not appear to follow necessarily from the non-existence of God. Perhaps this could create a tension for Sartre’s commitment to freedom, though we will not attempt to either prove or disprove him here. Instead, we will posit this claim as our starting point in order to gain a better understanding of what it would entail, were it to be the case.

According to certain theory, the human being is ultimately defined as an intentional consciousness (Husserl’s influence) or freedom. For the early Sartre this consciousness and freedom is absolutely empty (nothing), but with the later Sartre (after 1954) his anthropology becomes more substantial. His Cartesian cogito becomes “socialized.” This interpretation or presentation of phenomenology has many repercussions on his analysis of freedom. Indeed, it inclines the analysis of freedom to be sought in a purely intellectual manner, and hence, the discussion of freedom will be severely limited since human reality and the world will be discussed merely in terms of being for-itself and in-itself rather than in terms of the material, spiritual, sensory, intuitive, affective, social, and other relationships. Thus it seems that Sartre has sacrificed even the provisional discussion of the rich complexity of being merely for the sake of having an all encompassing and yet coherent and unified view of reality. These conclusions and criticisms have, of course, been made in hind sight and as such can only be verified by pursuing an analysis of Sartre’s text to see if this is in fact the case.

The major theme concerns phenomenology more specifically as a method of philosophical analysis. At the outset, we are confronted with two seemingly contradictory statements. Sartre affirms both the hiddenness of being and the translucidity of consciousness. The resolution of this problem lies in the distinction that the hiddenness is due to the very structure of being whereas the translucidity of consciousness refers to the innate capacity to know. Thus it seems that Sartre views being as hidden in part because of its very structure, and yet, on the other hand, he wants to transcend any skepticism by saying that we have a pre-ontological comprehension of being. By the term pre-ontological, he seems to mean a comprehension without clearly defined concepts. Also, since Sartre says that we must rely on this pre-ontological comprehension, he seems to be adhering to a method of
analysis which by its very nature precludes any clearly defined argument for or against an issue. Thus with regard to his notion of freedom, we must realize that he is not so much interested in refuting one view and proving his own, as he is in merely elucidating and delineating his meditations and intuitions and thereby allowing the reader to behold and accept as his own or reject as alien.

I

Human Existence and the Ontology of Modes of Being

Sartre begins his description of human existence by discussing the ontology of two primary modes of being: being for-itself and being in-itself. To be for-itself is to be conscious, to be human in the sense that the subject is able to be separated from itself, to be filled with dynamic potentiality. To be in-itself is the reality of a static thing, the being of anything inanimate without consciousness that cannot be anything else. Whereas the for-itself is the nihilation of being, the in-itself is being. The task of ontology is to describe these two sorts of being, which by their very nature are contradictory and absolutely mutually exclusive. The Sartrean position holds the opposition to be basic and total. This section will examine the areas of being for-itself, temporality, being in-itself, being for-itself-in-itself, being for-another, and atheism.

Being For-itself: The consideration of consciousness brings us to for-itself, or conscious being. As pure consciousness, for-itself awaits definition, meaning, and formalization through the fundamental awareness of freedom in a world of unchanging permanence. In contrast to the in-itself, for-itself experiences the allure of consciousness, the passion to achieve stability, definition, essence, and permanency by embracing its own necessary reality, from both the past and present. The for-itself is, to the extent that it appears in a condition which it has not elected. It has been thrust into a world as a brute fact, and forsaken in a “situation” as pure contingency.

Another way of defining for-itself is to say that it “is what it is not and is not what it is.” What Sartre has in mind here can be explained by what goes on in the process of imagination or telling lies. In creating a realm of imaginary things one is creating a realm that is not; it is a realm of not-being. In the case of lying, one is saying what is not the case; it is to represent oneself as one is not.
The for-itself simply is, and as such it constitutes a “facticity.” By “facticity” Sartre means the inapprehensible fact of one’s particular existence. Facticity makes possible the assertion that a person is, that one exists. Without facticity, consciousness could decide on its own “givenness” or condition to the world. Thus, the relation of for-itself—as its own foundation—to facticity can be correctly termed a factual necessity. The for-itself is necessary inasmuch as it provides its own foundation. One cannot doubt that one is. Sartre writes, “Just as my nihilating freedom is apprehended in anguish, so for-itself is conscious of its facticity.”\textsuperscript{14} Facticity is not a substance of which for-itself would be the attribute. It simply resides in for-itself as a memory of being, as for-itself’s unjustifiable presence in the world.

The for-itself is further distinguished from objects, like tables, by its potential to enter into role-playing. The point is that one’s being is not limited or depleted by acting out a role. One does not become the character that one is acting in the same sense that a table is a table, because one is able to take on other roles and identities. Sartre is attempting to demonstrate the primary distinctive of the mode of being of for-itself, that to be conscious is always to be conscious of something. On that account, the mode of being of for-itself is not to be the object it is conscious of. The mode of being of for-itself is distinct from the mode of being of the in-itself principally by the “of” in “consciousness-of.”

There is a connection here to the “upsurge” of for-itself when it develops a world of complex spatiotemporal and causal relations to each other. Without for-itself, the in-itself world does not have meaning or relations; it is simple is. The important outcome is that for-itself dwells in a personally created realm or world for which it is necessarily responsible.

In the case of for-itself, existence precedes its essence. Sartre argues that all theistic positions necessitate the priority of essence over existence. He contends, however, that when it comes to for-itself, existence must come before essence. This is explained by affirming that for-itself is pure consciousness, and without an object there can be no consciousness. There is a basic separation between consciousness and its object. The for-itself is nothingness because it cannot have any essence or content of its own. We can speak of human reality as a kind of nothingness of the present that is positioned between the past of accomplishments performed and the future of the
projects to be undertaken. This is why as humans we possess no established or permanent nature. We are in the constant process of creating an essence, but in the end death intervenes and renders the essence or nature incomplete.

This thesis, which is pivotal to Sartre’s existentialism, is not without difficulties. Francis Lescoe points out that there is a ring of meaninglessness to the question concerning whether existence or essence has the priority. While it is true that the act of existing does enjoy a kind of primacy within being, still both essence and existence are concurrent principles. Lescoe argues that neither essence nor existence is prior when it comes to the created being. In his later years, Sartre eventually concedes to speaking of a “human condition” rather than a “human nature.” But this too is not without problems. In this connection Frederick Copleston writes: “But ‘ma,’ whether he is called Dasein or being for-itself, needs to be something whereby he is differentiated from a stone, tree or fish.” Paul Foulquié adds to the critique by faulting Sartre’s thesis at the point where he argues that humans are said to choose their own essence. He says that Sartre does not distinguish between the universal essence, which makes us human, and the individual essence which makes us this or that particular human. He concludes, “Sartre arrives at propositions that are paradoxical to the point of absurdity.” Our generic essence is not determined by us; we are human, and it is only our individually specific essence that presents a certain indetermination. Thus, Foulquié concludes, “it is only within these limits that a door remains open upon liberty.” Sartre, however, has insisted on a different construction. He writes:

Although it is impossible to find in each and every man a universal essence that can be called human nature, there is, nevertheless, a human universality of condition. This condition, for example, represents an ensemble of restrictions and coercions, and this condition is the fundamental human situation or if one prefers the ensemble of abstract characters common to all situations.

Sartre holds that for-itself is free from the stability and fullness of the in-itself. The for-itself is a lack of being, and in its seeking after being it is freedom. Such freedom must be understood in the sense that facticity provides the framework within which freedom is exercised. Sartre repeatedly states this: what I am free to do is to interpret what meaning my past and present context will have as I choose future
potentiality. Consciousness is free to decide what to do intentionally with the meaning of its facticity at a given time. In its complete freedom, human reality is what itself to be. Since for-itself is indefinable freedom, Sartre refuses to consider human reality as an essence. But herein lies the apparent contradiction. Wilfrid Desan maintains, “If for-itself is pure freedom, one is, in fact, presented with an essence of human reality. Sartre does not escape the necessity of defining that about which he is talking.”

Sartre does admit, in the end, the necessity of an equivalence of essence in the metaphysical sense. In contrast, theistic positions have asserted that through the exercise of free-will and the freedom in making decisions, persons are thereby fashioning or determining their own moral essence within the framework of their created human essence.

Sartre contextualizes this discussion of existence preceding essence in the framework of “temporality,” an analysis of which will follow. It is in the context of temporality that Sartre says humans are beings who are not what they are and who are what they are not. They are not what they are, inasmuch as they are not presently what their respective pasts demonstrate what they have been. At the same time, they are what they are not, because they are not as yet the undetermined future that they will become in terms of the choices they will make. This is Sartre’s way of imaging the transitional and temporal nature of personhood. Being subjected to temporality, humans can never be spoken of as having a completed or permanent being. There is a constant element of “futurity and negativity.”

We showed that both the in-itself and for-itself have three original characteristics. Being-in-itself is ontologically independent or uncaused. Sartre posits this because of his denial of the existence of God. If God does not exist, He has not created being, and therefore cannot be the ground of it. Next, being-in-itself is what it is. This can also be understood as the absolute identity of being with itself. It is complete positivity; there is no negation in being-in-itself. Third, the in-itself is. Sartre sometimes refers to this characteristic of being when he uses the term superfluous. This means that there is no justification for being, no ultimate explanation. It is contingent and without reason.

On the other hand, being-for-itself is characterized first as not itself, meaning it is ontologically dependent upon the in-itself for its being. Second, for-itself is what
This deliberately paradoxical way of understanding an aspect of for-itself refers to its account of negation. Since negation is a reality in the world, which we will see in detail in the chapter entitled “Negation,” Sartre provides an account of it using for-itself as the vehicle by which negation seeps into the picture, since being-in-itself is full positivity, it cannot account for negation. And since negation is a reality, or so Sartre argues, he must give an explanation of this phenomenon. His only recourse is to being-for-itself, since it is conscious activity. Finally, the third characteristic of being-for-itself is that it is. When Sartre says this, he generally means that it lacks justification. However, he slightly modifies, since it is ontologically dependent upon the in-itself. Simply, being-for-itself (loosely, he often means consciousness) is grounded in the in-itself in an important sense, even though it is wholly without explanation. Like the in-itself, for-itself exists contingently and without the ability to refer back to a creator to provide an excuse for its existence.

**Sartre’s Early Ontology of Freedom**

Sartre’s early ontology of freedom can be situated within the context of his particular approach to philosophical thinking. There are two relevant and related aspects of this approach which deserve mention here. Sartre’s work demonstrates a concern with the individual and the individual’s lived experience – with the inner life of humanity. From Kierkegaard, Sartre takes a distrust of systematic thought which subsumes individual experience in its emphasis on the universal. In his early work, Sartre takes this focus on the individual to extremes, and there is a less than adequate regard for sociality. This is reflected in his initial understanding of freedom, which gets caught up in this early individualism. It was in Paris, in my second year at the Lycee Henri IV....that I learned the word freedom, or at least its philosophical meaning. It was then that I grew passionate about freedom and became its great defender. Nizan...was attracted by materialism... We were on opposite sides, he basing himself on rational, concrete arguments, and I defending a certain conception of man...  

In Sartre’s earliest published writings prior to *Being and Nothingness*, which is his first major philosophical text dealing with phenomenological ontology and the themes of freedom and alienation, it is clear that his primary preoccupation is
freedom, and the theoretical establishment of his thesis that consciousness is radically free.

The other aspect of Sartre’s approach has to do with his rejection of determinism. The inner life of humanity, for Sartre, is not determined; as we shall see below, proving this is a central pre-occupation, one that accounts for his interest in the imagination. Again, the early work takes the defense of freedom to extremes, and there is little appreciation for hindrances or obstacles to freedom. The terminology he employs and the characterizations of consciousness in the early work are evidence of the radical nature of his early view freedom.

For Sartre, consciousness is intentional, in the sense that consciousness is always consciousness “of something”- it is active, creative, (“constituting”), and spontaneous. While the meaning of these terms and the freedom of consciousness in general, will become clear during the course of an examination of some relevant early works, it is important to point out here that right from the outset, Sartre rejects the attribution of all forms of passivity to consciousness. This is related to his rejection of determinism, since Sartre views the latter as seeking to objectify humanity, by making human beings either passive receptacles of external forces and determinations or, importantly for our purposes here, simple conduits of internal determinations such as a “nature”.

The Transcendence of the Ego is a significant work to the extent that it reveals Sartre’s attempt to empty consciousness of all “content”, as well as demonstrating the connection between this endeavour and Sartre’s establishment of the thesis that consciousness is radically free. In this initial work, Sartre attempts to explain consciousness phenomenologically, and the issue he takes up concerns the status of the ego. Sartre refuses to accept the notion the ego is somehow in or behind consciousness. According to Sartre, psychologists had too often made the mistake of viewing the ego as an “inhabitant” of consciousness, and Sartre sets out to demonstrate that “the ego is neither formally nor materially in consciousness, it is outside, in the world.”

In making his case, Sartre focuses on what he terms the unreflected or pre-reflective consciousness. This primary consciousness knows itself only as absolute inwardness, and its objects are by nature outside of it. This is consistent with the
principle of intentionality that informs Sartre’s thought from the very beginning, a principle borrowed from Husserl. Consciousness is always consciousness of something. Sartre’s view of consciousness cannot be identified with a kind of narrow subjectivism, concerned solely with inner states or feelings. Sartre’s consciousness is referential, and therefore must be viewed as involved in the world.

In his work, The Psychology of Imagination, Sartre is concerned with two most fundamental modes, viz., perception and imagination, by which consciousness realizes its being-in-the-world. According to Sartre, consciousness has the ability to choose the way it will relate itself to the world. In this work, Sartre shows that consciousness is not entirely passive, when it comes to determining the specific way in which it will reflect the world. With this, Sartre goes towards the direction of his philosophy of freedom. The issue in the Psychology of Imagination is whether to perceive the world as it is or to imagine it as one desires it to be. Sartre describes the essential difference between the imagined and the real presence of a loved one as the following: In every person we love, and for the very reason of its inexhaustible wealth, there is something that surpasses us, independence, and an imperviousness which exacts ever renewed efforts of approximation.

The unreal object has none of this imperviousness. It is never more than we know of it. The first several times we no doubt affirm, as by a scruple, this imperviousness, and this strange nature of the loved person. But we feel nothing of the sort. It is a matter of pure knowledge which is soon attenuated and remains in suspense, because it has no affective material to which to attach itself. So that the unreal object, as it becomes commonplace, will conform more to our desires than would Annie herself. The return of Annie will shatter this entire formal structure. For a moment we may miss complaisance and simplicity of Annie as an image. But this is because we will have lost the memory of the affective impoverishment which was its indispensable correlative.

Man is Originally Free

Sartre’s ontology seeks to pursue being. His probe of being starts from reducing existence to its series of appearances. These appearances, as phenomena, require a being that is itself no longer an appearance. Since all phenomena are appearances perceived by human consciousness, the pursuit of the being of
appearances leads Sartre to study the being of consciousness. He finds that there are
two types of consciousness that can be distinguished as follows: positional
consciousness of an object and non-positional consciousness of itself. The former is a
reflective consciousness in the sense that it is a reflection of its object. The latter is a
non-reflective consciousness, for it looks directly back at the consciousness of the
perceiver. For example, a person is counting a package of cigarettes. He has an
impression of the cigarettes in the package, and finds there are a dozen. His
consciousness in the present case is positional-reflective consciousness. If someone
comes along and asks him, “what are you doing?” He replies, “I am counting.” This
reply does not aim at the object—a dozen cigarettes in the package—but at his
conscious activity.26

There are no objects or perception involved. Therefore, it is a non-positional
consciousness of self. In Sartre’s view, such non-reflective, or pre-reflective,
consciousness is significant because if is the basis for reflection and renders reflection
possible. “the unreflected has the ontological priority over the reflected because the
unreflected consciousness does not need to be reflected in order to exist and because
reflection presupposes the intervention of a second-degree consciousness.”27

However, consciousness itself is not sufficient to provide the foundation of
appearances. In his exploration of consciousness, Sartre finds that consciousness is
merely a revealer of being, which is not consciousness and which gives itself as
already existing when consciousness reveals it. Therefore “the trans-phenomenal
being that exists for consciousness is itself in itself.”28 Thus we reach a distinction
regarding being. There is being in itself, which is what it is, that is, it is the world
itself. It encompasses no negation and it is not subject to temporality. Then there is
the being of consciousness, which, on the contrary, is as being what it is not and as
not being what it is. It encompasses negation, and it is subject to temporality.

On the basis of this distinction between two kinds of being, Sartre goes on to
explore the relation between man and the world. Negation appears as the original
basis of this relation between man and world. Being-in-itself, we said, encompasses
no negation. It is full of certainty. It simply is what it is. Nevertheless, non-being
exists as a component of being. It conditions and supports negative judgments. Non-
being appears as human expectation and imagination. It contains only the possibility
or probability of being present. For instance, everybody expects to win the lottery and imagines they will become a millionaire when they buy a ticket to the lottery, because they possess the possibility of winning the lottery. Yet they may not win.

The being of this non-being leads us to understand the relation of non-being to being, for it requires a transcendent ability on the part of human consciousness which nihilates being. How does human reality bring nothingness into being-in-itself? Human reality can make being appeared as an organized totality only by surpassing being. This passing beyond the world is a condition of the rising up of the lived world as such. In order to surpass being, man must always separate himself from being. This appearance of consciousness beyond the totality of the world is an emergence of “human reality” as nothingness, because as nothingness alone can being be surpassed. At the same time, this surpassed being is organized into the lived world. “Human reality” as existing in nothingness “means on the one hand that human reality rises up as an emergence of being in non-being and on the other hand that the world is ‘suspended’ in nothingness.”

Why does “human reality” have this power of emerging from non-being? First of all, this nothingness is supported by being. Nothingness can be nihilated only on the foundation of being. It exists neither before nor after being. “Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being—like a worm.” Nothingness which is made-to-be by the in-itself is not a simple emptiness devoid of meaning. The meaning of the nothingness of nihilation is made to be in order to found being. Therefore being and nothingness can be conceived of as two equally necessary components of the real. Secondly, man is the being through which nothingness comes to the world. Man nihilates being by a double movement of nihilation. The first step is that of nihilating the thing in question related to man by placing it between being and non-being, because there always remains the possibility that it may unveil itself as nothingness. The second step is that man nihilates himself in relation to the thing questioned by wrenching himself from being in order to be able to bring out of himself the possibility of non-being. By means of this movement of nihilation, man brings negation into the world. Sartre’s famous example of this is: I have an appointment with Pierre at a certain time, but I arrive at the café late. I enter the café to search for Pierre. There is formed a synthetic organization of all the objects in the café on the ground of which Pierre is given as
about to appear. This organization of the café as ground is an original nihilation. Each element of the setting, a person, a table, a chair, attempts to isolate itself, to lift itself from the ground constituted by the totality of the other objects, only to fall back once more into the undifferentiation of this ground. For the ground is that which is seen only in addition to what appears. The original nihilation of all the figures that appear and are swallowed up is the necessary condition for the appearance of the principal figure, which is there the person of Pierre. Then, I examine the successive disappearance of all the objects that I look at, in particular the faces, which detain me for an instant. Could this be Pierre? They quickly decompose because they are not the face of Pierre. The figure that slips constantly between my look and the real objects of the café is a perpetual disappearance. It is Pierre raising himself as nothingness on the ground of the café. It serves as the foundation of my judgment that “Pierre is not here.” This is, in fact, the intuitive apprehension of a double nihilation.31

From this, Sartre is led to define what “human reality” is; Human reality, or in Sartre’s term, for-itself, is nothing else but the nihilation of the in-itself. It is like a hole in being at the heart of being. The for-itself is in no way an autonomous substance. As a nihilation, it is made-to-be by the in-itself. By means of the in-itself, it must make known to itself what it is not and what it has to be. Nevertheless, we have seen that the for-itself is not a non-sense, because it brings about a synthetic connection between man and the world.

Sartre has revealed to us that negation, withdrawal, and nihilation are the inner capacity and activities of consciousness. Negative activity is present in almost every form of human consciousness, such as when “I know John.” My knowing John implies that my coming to consciousness has been an act of nihilation. This nihilating activity of consciousness is possible only if consciousness detaches itself from Being-in-itself, only if it is somehow “outside” it. For if the for-itself were involved in the density of Being-in-itself, then all possibility of negation would be excluded. Only a being that “is not” can understand what “is.” That is why the for-itself or consciousness is not Being; it is its own non-being. It is nothing. Sartre expounds this point as follows. Human reality carries nothingness in its very structure. There is “nothing” that separates if from the rest of being. The consciousness that nihilates or negates exists as the consciousness of nihilation or negation. That is, nothing else can
cause nihilation to creep into the structure of consciousness. Nihilation is, therefore the synonym of freedom. Consciousness can withdraw from the world of which it is conscious. This withdrawal enables consciousness to be able to imagine something other that what is. “For consciousness to be able to imagine, it must be able to escape from the world by its very nature; it must be able by its own efforts to withdraw from the world. In a word, it must be free.”

Also, because consciousness carries “nothingness” within its very structure, it cannot be determined. Nothing can determine consciousness because there is “nothing” in it that can be determined. Consciousness has no content; there is nothing in it or behind it. It cannot be determined as being a thing in the world. It can withdraw itself from the world and know things in the world by nihilating the from the rest of the world, hence again it must be free. Indeed, Sartre defines freedom as the being of man, for “he conditions the appearance of nothingness, and this being has appeared to us as freedom.” So human freedom for Sartre, in one sense, means that man can detach himself from being by a nihilating withdrawal. In this way, man puts himself outside being and stands away from it. He can also weaken the structure of being by using a series of negations. Yet being cannot act on him, because it simply is what it is. Thus, “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.” So freedom is not one of the properties that belongs to the essence of human being, rather it precedes essence in man and makes it possible. The essence of the human being depends on his freedom. Therefore human freedom is as fundamental as human reality itself. It is the way man has to be. In a word, man is originally free.

The Human Situation

According to Sartre, the human situation is what it is because we are “condemned to be free.” He speaks of the fact of not being able not to be free as the “facticity” of freedom, and the fact of not being able not to exist is its “contingency.” In this sense facticity and contingency can be interchangeable. Facticity can also be seen as the fact of being a particular for-itself. The contingency of freedom, for example, is the fact that freedom is not able to exist. The human as freedom,
consciousness and nothingness, anguish, and self-negation as bad faith are realities of the human situation. A discussion on these points will follow.

(a) The Human Subject as Freedom

Freedom is not a part of human existence; it precedes human existence and makes it possible. One’s freedom cannot be separated from one’s being either—it is the being of consciousness itself. Sartre argues that freedom is not so much a human attribute as it is the raw material of one’s being. We owe our being to freedom.36

“Man is condemned to be free,” says Sartre, because he was not involved in his own creation. All attempts to restrict or stifle one’s freedom are vain, even with the sudden upsurge of anguish in the face of freedom and the stark recognition of the reality of freedom. The fundamental act of freedom is “a choice of myself in the world” and at the same time “a discovery of the world.”37 To be free does not mean to attain what has been willed, but to choose through oneself to will; it is not the possibility of attaining chosen goals but is the autonomy of the act of choosing. For example, a prisoner is not free to leave prison, but is free to think about (projection) a plan of escape.

Although for-itself is freedom, it is not free without responsibility for this freedom. If God does not exist, then everything is permissible, but as a result everyone is accountable.38 This is so because without God there is no objective moral code by which we must ultimately be measured. We are unavoidably and radically free, therefore, to make our own moral code. Being condemned to be free, each person carries the weight of the whole world on their shoulders. But this responsibility of the for-itself is overpowering because “he is the one by whom it happens that there is a world and since he is also the one who makes himself be.”39 According to Sartre, if indeed by reference to a given and specific human nature. There is no determinism—“humanity is free, humanity is freedom.”40

In the absence of God, there are no objective values or commands by which to legitimize human behavior. Sartre assesses, “We have neither behind us, nor before us in a luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse. We are left alone without excuse.”41 we proceed in life apprehending ourselves in anguish as beings which are neither the foundation of their own being. Persons who realize in anguish their condition as being thrown into a responsibility that extends to their being thrust
and abandoned into existence as a brute fact, have no longer either remorse, regret, or excuse. They are no longer anything but a freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very revelation. 42 “Man is free,” says Sartre, “and freedom is not a property of his being; it is his very being.” 43 He summarizes his position as follow:

I am indeed an existent who learns his freedom through his acts, but I am also an existent whose individual and unique existence temporalizes itself as freedom. As such I am necessarily conscious of freedom since nothing exists in consciousness except as the non-thetic consciousness of existing. Thus my freedom is perpetually in question in my being; it is not a quality added on or a property of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being; and as in my being, my being is in question, I must necessarily possess a certain comprehension of freedom. 44

The action of our various determinations, whatever its strength, does not infringe upon freedom; on the contrary, it serves it. If freedom is understood to mean that one is able “to obtain what one has wished,” then it is obvious that one is never free. “The history of a life, whatever it may be, is the history of a failure,” says Sartre. 45 The freedom of wish Sartre speaks is not necessarily synonymous with power, or what one is able to do. Rather, it is autonomy of choice. He writes: we may not say that the prisoner is always free to go out of prison... but that he is always free to try to escape. That is, whatever his condition may be, he can project his escape and learn the value of his project by undertaking some action. 46 Thus, human freedom is the freedom of choice, and Sartre is speaking of this freedom alone when he speaks of consciousness.

Freedom makes human existence possible by preceding it, and it cannot be disassociated from the being of humans. 47 Freedom is not so much a human characteristic as it is the fundamental reality of one’s being. Sartre states, “Freedom has no essence. It is not subject to any logical necessity.” 48 Although freedom has no essence, it is nevertheless the ground of all essentiality. By virtue of the fact that a person “is,” he or she thereby is constantly and inescapably transcending the world by way of personal possibilities. In fact, these possibilities constitute what one “is.” Sartre explains:
For the for-itself, to be is to nihilate the in-itself which it is. Under these conditions freedom can be nothing other than this nihilation. It is through this that the for-itself escapes its being as its essence; it is through this that the for-itself is always something other than what can be said of it. I am condemned to live forever beyond my essence, beyond the cause and motives of my act...The fundamental act of freedom is a choice of myself in the world. I am condemned to be free.49

Consciousness of freedom amounts to being aware of the origin of our own possibilities as potential in relation to the future. We can understand our past and present only as they relate to our future. In this way meaning is bestowed on our past and present actions.50 Hence, free beings are those who make decisions relating to their personal past in light of their future and who so not let themselves be determined by the present. They make their essence known by their projects, and the end to which they project themselves. In this way freedom is potential as it relates to the future.

Sartre explains that phenomenological scrutiny can remove the veneer of words and theories relating to the human situation. There are instances in his writing that indicate this kind of occurrence where an exposing encounter with truth or reality takes place. One account is found in Nausea, a novel written in diary form. The principal male character, Antoine Roquentin, is Sartre is disguise. The following account, therefore, is in all likelihood close to what Sartre himself may have experienced.

Everywhere, now, there are objects like this glass of beer on the table there...I have been avoiding looking at this glass of beer for half an hour. I look above, below, right and left; but I don’t want to see it. And I know very well that all these bachelors who are sitting at other tables in the restaurant can be of no help...They could come up and tap me on the shoulder and say, “Well, what’s the matter with that glass of beer?” It’s just like all the others. It’s beveled on the edges, has a handle...I know all that, but I know there is something else. Almost nothing. But I can’t explain what I see. To anyone. There: I am quietly slipping into the water’s depths, towards fear.51

Sartre believes that this kind of “phenomenological reduction” that happens to Roquentin, --similar to the experience of loss—can occur with disturbing effects to one’s perception of reality at any moment in the course of one’s life. The loss is
perceived with regard to the stability of our world and the value of objects and things as they relate to us as devices of our purposes, raising the specter of absurdity. The “loss” of this stability is an unsettling and nauseating experience.

Absurdity and nausea conceptually fit within Sartre’s overall thought by being inseparably connected with the focus of existentialism on persons and their concrete emotions over the realization of life. In this connection, the novel Nausea presents two issues of significance regarding the sensations by which our “facticity” is revealed to us.

First, the protagonist Roquentin, becomes aware that being in general and himself in particular amount to an overwhelming reality, and this awareness is de trop (too much). Existence itself is contingent, gratuitous, and essentially unjustifiable. In short, he realizes the absurdity in the world. Existence is absurd in the sense that, since there is no external purpose to give it bearing, it really has no reason to be. Basically, being is there, and apart from it there is nothing.

A second substantial theme in the book is the concept of nausea itself. Nausea, says Sartre, is the “taste of my facticity.” It is ‘the revelation of my body to me and of the fact of my inescapable connection with being in-itself. It is the sheer contingency and purposelessness of the facticity of one’s existence that generates the awareness of absurdity and nausea. This awareness is a constant point of departure in Sartre’s existentialism.

(b) Consciousness as Nothingness

Consciousness is always of something other than the conscious subject, indicating a sense of separation and negation of its object, specifically the in-itself. This is why Sartre identifies nothingness with consciousness, which is the for-itself. Consciousness is itself not-being, and its activity, according to Sartre, is a process of nihilation, by this he means that as one’s attention is fixed on a particular object, other objects are thereby relegated to an indeterminate background. Nothingness is the non-presence of something and is supported by being, which it lacks, and is brought into the world by the for-itself. Thus, nothingness is not. Nothingness only comes from being by a conscious act of negation. In this way consciousness brings forth nothingness because first, consciousness is like a void in the core of being, and
second, it negates being. Nothingness only happens to things and it constitutes the emptiness of a gap in being and therefore a transphenomenal reality. Sartre defines consciousness as "a being such that in its being, its being is in question insofar as this being implies a being other than itself." Consciousness, therefore, cannot have any essence or content of its own. There is nothing more to it than existence. What appears to be its content comes, in reality, from its object. For-itself cannot be any definite being, otherwise it could not be consciousness. Norman Greene explains:

Sartre attempts to demonstrate that consciousness is not-substantial, or nothingness. Nothingness may be understood as not in the sense of not being anything but a nihilating activity. As nothingness it is separated from the object by not being the object and preserves a distance from it.

Along with Frederick Copleston, it does not seem to us that Sartre offers, or intends to offer, any clarity on the origin of consciousness. According to Copleston, as consciousness emanates through the occasion of a "crevice in being in itself," it must in all likelihood proceed in some way or other out of being, even if by a process of negation, and so be derivative. while Sartre excludes the question “why is there being?” he allows the question “why is there consciousness?” He proposes that “everything takes place as if the in-itself, in a project to ground itself, gave itself the modification of for-itself.” How the in-itself could have such a project is unclear if not contradictory. Self-consciousness is contained within consciousness itself. There is no difference between consciousness of self and consciousness of objects. To be conscious of an object is to be conscious of self. Sartre writes: If, for example, I want to remember a certain landscape perceived yesterday from the train, it is possible for me to bring back the memory of that landscape as such. But I can also recollect that I was seeing that landscape… In other words, I can always perform any recollection whatsoever in the personal mode, and at once the I appear.

The obvious difficulty here is that an “I” can be ushered or willed into consciousness, when one is aware of self, and there are moments when the I is not present in consciousness. Sartre reasons that apparent paradox is explained by distinguishing between two levels of consciousness. He refers to this level as “unreflected consciousness” and “reflected consciousness.” The critical issue is that at
both level consciousness is at the same time consciousness of objects and consciousness of self. The difference between the two levels is that at the unreflected level the self-conscious aspect of the consciousness is not “positional.” That is, it is not an object in its own field. At the reflective level, it is. Sartre explains this position thus: There is an indissoluble unity of the reflecting consciousness and the reflected consciousness (to the point that the reflecting consciousness could not exist without the reflected consciousness). But the fact remains that we are in the presence of a synthesis of two consciousnesses, one of which is conscious or the other. Thus the essential principle of phenomenology, “all consciousness is consciousness of something,” is preserved.\(^{59}\)

We are led to the conclusion that there is no ego (or more accurately, the me) outside of consciousness, that is, there is no transcendental ego. Instead, the ego is an object within consciousness, but not entirely within it at any one time. In this sense it is said to be transcendent. “The ego,” Sartre writes, is nothing outside of the concrete totality of states and actions it supports. Undoubtedly it is transcendent to all the states which it unifies, but not as an abstract X whose mission is only to nifty: rather, it is the infinite totality of states and of actions which is never reducible to an action or to a state.

Sartre draws two inferences at this point by asserting, in the first place, that we have no special or privileged access to our own egos: “From this point of view my emotions and my states, my ego itself, cease to be my exclusive property.”\(^{60}\) The second inference—following from the claim that the only method for knowing any object is observational experience—is that the ego, as a transcendent object, is unknowable. The ego also performs the function of defending us from having to deal with reality. “Perhaps,” as Sartre says, “the essential role of the ego is to mask, then the dreadfulness and anguish of total freedom is experienced. This anguishing experience is essentially the experience of the nothingness of consciousness in the face of freedom’s potentialities, so that at any moment we can be entirely changed from what we are at present.

The Human Subject and Freedom

Sartre represents a radical understanding of the human subject and freedom. He claims that the human person is unavoidably free and as result is essentially
“condemned to freedom.” It follows that, because we are totally free we are also fully responsible, not only for the personal use of our freedom, but also for the whole world. Since there is no God and consequently no “essences” or “natures,” there are likewise no objective norms or values by which to live. This leaves humans totally responsible for the choices they make and for creating their own values.

Humans prevail under a sense of being abandoned to the world in that we find ourselves suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which we bear responsibility without being able to avoid this responsibility for even a moment. Accordingly, against the backdrop of the meaninglessness of life, human freedom is a shattering and overwhelming condemnation. The search for meaning in the transparent awareness of freedom produces the primary human experience of anguish. According to Sartre, anguish is related to our freedom as being distinguished from the collection of past choices that represent our “up-to-now” transitional and incomplete essence. We find ourselves faced with the appalling and anguishing necessity of making choices without the help of any norms. We must invent our own values, says Sartre, as rules of conduct and guidelines for actions, and yet nothing justifies the choice of one value over another. We are our own supreme maker and inventor of values. There is absolutely no one or no thing that can either condemn or justify us. In short, the human is free in every respect—free to choose a way of behaving and free to choose a cause or reason for one’s particular actions.

Sartre asserts that the human subject constitutes a transient nothingness, an empty consciousness with no substantial or real self. Accordingly, we continually experience the need and desire for constancy and stability in the place of our transient impermanence. However, since such a state is only attainable at death, human life is considered to be an absurd struggle, thus reducing the human to a “useless passion.”

Sartre’s thought is grounded in the division of reality into two fundamental categories, that of human consciousness which he calls being-for-itself (pour-soi), and that of the world of non-conscious objects and things which he calls being-in-itself (en-soi). It is in this division that all reality must lie. Sartre adopts this fundamental division as the foundation of his ontology and anthropology. The world (in-itself) represents the sum total of what appears to consciousness (for-itself). Consciousness is both the apprehension of the world as it appears as well as that which appears to
itself in the act of apprehension. The being in-itself is the fixed being of the phenomenon; we are only able to say that it is. The being for-itself is pure consciousness awaiting a definition through the fundamental awareness of freedom in a world of fixed stabilities.

According to Sartre, total human freedom requires a postulatory or assumed atheism because the existence of God is untenable to human freedom. Thus, in a nihilistic fashion Sartre affirms the cry that “God is dead.” His atheism functions as the foundation to all his philosophical formulations and has a profound effect on his conception of the human person. Unlike the in-itself, Sartre claims that the human for-itself is without an essence or nature and undergoes a self-creative process through choice making and interpersonal relations. The for-itself does not begin life with a permanent human nature, but with the “brute fact of existence” that is identified with consciousness.

Throughout the for-itself's existence of impermanency, it seeks the stability of the in-itself and in this way tries to be like God who, should he exist, says Sartre, would be for-itself that is in-itself. But the relationship of for-itself–in-itself is impossible because consciousness is unable to exist and not exist at the same time. The awareness of the non-realizability of such a relationship leads for-itself to experience the absurdity and meaninglessness of life. By “absurdity” Sartre means that human existence in its pure contingency, that is, the brute fact of being a particular for-itself, is without justification. Furthermore, its tasks or projects are absurd since it’s ends—the desire to become a for-itself–in-itself like God—are unattainable. Later in his career Sartre shifted towards a minimalist view of human “nature” in which he referred to the human “condition.” In any case, the content of this consciousness and its implications for human life—anguish due to freedom, creating values, interpersonal relations—are the focus of Sartre’s method. In the expression of this and of his humanism, he was a libertarian of the utmost sort.

This study will focus on three primary Sartrean categories: human existence, the human situation, and the situation, and the human and ethics. Our purpose in this chapter is to examine the central issues of human freedom in Sartrean existentialism. From this presentation, a comparative analysis and assessment can be made with
Freedom and Situation

Is human freedom then absolute and unlimited? In other words, since freedom is the being of human reality, can man do whatever he pleases without encountering any counter-force? Common sense objects to the theory of absolute freedom in holding that we are not able to change our situation simply by willing it. No one can change his race, national origin, or the family into which he was born. Hundreds and thousands of facts in our life tell us that we can’t freely improve our situation simply because we want to. For example, not everyone can win the lottery and be wealthy. A patient in the late stages of AIDs cannot conquer the disease to avoid death given today’s science and technology. It seems that freedom is defeated by the situation. Does this mean that human being is not actually free, or that freedom is limited?

Sartre’s essential argument to defend his theory of freedom is: “The coefficient of adversity in things can not be an argument against our freedom, for it is by us—i.e., by the preliminary positing of and end—that this coefficient of adversity arises.”61 For instance, a crag itself is neutral. It is neither regarded as an adversary or as helpful. It would manifest a profound resistance if I tried to remove it. On the contrary, it would be a valuable aid if I climbed it to look over the scene. It waits to be illuminated by an end in order to manifest itself as what it is.

Freedom and Choice

The for-itself’s being-in-the-world is also a choice. For Sartre, choice is a deed that is revealed through every act of consciousness. It is continuously manifest, even through the smallest details of our daily activity. A common view holds that freedom is pure capriciousness and an incomprehensible contingency. A choice is said to be free if it is such that it could have been other than what it is. An example Sartre uses in Being and Nothingness is that I start out on a kike with friends. At the end of several hours of walking my fatigue increases and finally becomes very painful. I can’t bear it, so I give up. I throw my knapsack down on the side of the road and let myself fall down beside it. I am thereby accounted free, for no one determined my act except myself. I could have stopped walking midway, or I could have succeeded in resisting my fatigue longer if I had done as my companions and continued on to the end.
But is choice random and purely contingent, something that is done just as one pleases? Sartre’s view leads to a rejection of the notion that a subjective attitude is constitutive of choice. Choice cannot be defined as such by wishes, decisions, or individual desires. A choice is not made capriciously, but can be traced back to an original project.

Let us return to the above example. The question is why I can’t put up with my fatigue while my companion can. The fact is that my companion is fatigued, too, but he holds a different attitude toward his fatigue. He loves his fatigue, for he loves the feeling of suffering it to the end and being victor over the world. ‘Thus my companion’s fatigue is lived in a vaster project of a trusting abandon to nature, of a passion consented to in order that it may exist at full strength, and at the same time the project to sweet mastery and appropriation. It is only in and through this project that the fatigue will be able to be understood and that it will have meaning for him.” That is to say, my companion holds a different project than I, so, while the attitude “I” have toward my fatigue is based on an original project of a certain type of flight before my facticity in order to reassume it and love it in order to try to recover it. This is a project that seeks to respect my body and let myself be free with regard to this body. This initial form can according to Sartre be seen as a profound acceptance of facticity, for then the project of ‘making oneself body” is expressed. For example, by abandoning things, such as when “I” choose not to keep going with my other companions but rather giving in to my fatigue and letting myself fall to the ground. It is not the case that “my companion” did not love his body or refuse to comply with it, it is rather the case that my for-itself here seeks the desired synthesis of the in-itself with the for-itself, where the body become the instrument of synthesis. I lose myself in fatigue in order to manifest the meaning of the in-itself. The passion of my body coincides with my project of ‘making the in-itself exist.” Thus, the ways in which I and my companion suffer our fatigue demands a regressive analysis that leads back to an original project if they are to be understood. What is thereby recovered as the original project is a certain choice that the for-itself makes of itself in the presence of being. In the case where ‘I abandon myself to my fatigue” we find a choice of the for-itself that is made in terms of the appearance of the in-itself, such as that the road is revealed as interminable, the slopes are steep, the sun is burning hot, etc.
How can such a choice be possible? Sartre says that it is its "possible" that constitute the being of the for-itself. Indeed, according to Sartre, every particular possibility is, in fact, articulated as an ensemble of "possibles." One possible refers to another, and these to still others, and so on to the ultimate possibility that the for-itself is. This ultimate possibility ought to be conceived as the unitary synthesis of all actual possibles. Each of these possible resides in an undifferentiated state in this ultimate possibility until a particular circumstance comes into relief that makes one possible stand out against the background of this totality. Every project is comprehensible as a project of the for-itself toward a possible, because first we immediately apprehend the particular possible that we project as a certain end. Furthermore, this particular possible under consideration refers to other possible up to the ultimate possibility that the for-itself finally is. Thus the comprehension of a choice is effected in two opposed ways: by a regressive approach, we move back from the considered act to the ultimate possible; by a synthetic progression, we return from this ultimate possible to the considered act and grasp its integration into the total form.

Thus we can see that for Sartre it is necessary for a choice, on the one hand, to require an integration of the world that makes us apprehend things by progressing from the total integration that exists to the particular structure that is interpreted in relation to this totality. On the other hand, we rise up into the world suddenly and we do so as an original project. This original project reveals the original relation of the for-itself and the in-itself, for an original project remains a nihilation. This nihilation turns back upon the in-itself and expresses itself by a particular valorization of facticity. No matter whether a person accepts and enjoys his fatigue in order to be the victor over nature or gives in to his fatigue and lets himself fall upon a chair or into a bed with sensual pleasure, those projects are based upon certain modes of the organization of their facticity with regard to the world.

It follows that this original relation is nothing other than for-itself’s being-in-the-world. And, in fact, this being-in-the-world has finally to be understood as a choice, it is the choice to be one’s own nothingness. Hence, for Sartre, owing to the necessary reference back to an original project, it is clear that the mode of being of the for-itself in-the-world is a choice where this choice is a nihilation, a nihilation that has to be understood as a free act because there is no organized totality to explain this.
choice prior to it. The in-itself alone is not capable of the unity that makes a world. Thus the first phenomenon of being in the world is the original relation between the totality of the in-itself, organized as a world, and the for-itself’s own totality de-totalized. The essence of a choice, therefore, is that “I choose myself as a whole in the world which is a whole.” That is, just as I come from the world to a particular ‘this,’ I come from myself as a de-totalized totality (a nihilation) expressed as the outline of one of my particular possibilities. So the activity of any choice means projecting me beyond my particular situation toward this or that possibility on the ground of my ultimate and total possibility. This ultimate and total possibility, as the original integration of all particular possible, and the world as the totality that comes into existence through the upsurge of the for-itself into being are two correlative notions.

In the case of the example of how to deal with fatigue, the “I” has many possibilities for dealing with his fatigue: falling down to sleep by the side of the road, continuing on toward the rest area, reluctantly keeping up with one’s companions, etc. these possibilities can be referred to his ultimate possibility, say to seek the greatest pleasure, if we assume that the world appears to him as an integrated totality, then the sun, the mountain, the forest, the road all constitute a whole picture in his sight. If he makes the choice of stopping to relax by the roadside and not to go any further, this choice is made on the ground of his nearest project—to please his body. It does not matter if he becomes a coward in other people’s view because his ultimate possibility is seeking pleasure and given the particular structure of the world drawn from the totality of the world, such as the road appearing endless, the burning sun, and so on, this particular situation made him chose giving up. However, he may change his mind later on. He may accept the advice of his companion and continue on as other possibilities connected to his ultimate goal of pleasure; for example, to be proud of being a victor, or feeling that it is more comfortable to sleep in a hotel than at the side of the road, and so on. From this case, we can clearly see Sartre’s model of what is involved in any choice: by means of the regressive movement, the for-itself makes itself be raised up from a particular possible to its ultimate possible, and then by means of the synthetic method, the for-itself returns from this ultimate possible, and then by means of the synthetic method, the for-itself returns from this ultimate possible to this or that particular possible. This whole activity of nihilation is based upon the world as an integrated totality, which is constituted of many particular
things. In short, a choice is made through associating one possible of the for-itself with a particular structure of the world, which is internal to the totality of the world.

The choice, as a project, is both the being and the consciousness of for-itself. Sartre holds that, contrary to the common view, a choice is not made following a decision based on causes and motives posited by an original freedom. On the contrary, as soon as there are causes and motives, which are appreciation of things and of the structures of the world, there is already a positing of ends and consequently a choice. Since the fundamental act of freedom is to set a project as an end, thereby a choice of for-itself in the world is made at the same time. This constantly renewed act is not distinct from the being of for-itself as a nihilation. It follows that a choice of the for-self is the same as the being of for-itself. A choice as the choice of the for-itself is in the world and at the same time a discovery of the world. In this way, Sartre says, “the fundamental act of freedom is discovered.”

On the other hand, when Sartre says that a choice is not distinct from the being of for-itself and vice versa, he does not mean that this choice is unconscious. On the contrary, a profound choice is simply one with the consciousness we have of our ourselves. This consciousness is non-positional. It is we-as-consciousness since it is not distinct from our being. And as our being, it is precisely our original choice, the consciousness (of) the choice is identical with the self-consciousness we have. His conclusion is that “one must be conscious in order to choose, and one must choose in order to be conscious.” Choice and consciousness are therefore one and the same thing. If it is accepted that consciousness is a nihilation, and it is a project of ourselves toward this or that possible, to be conscious of ourselves and to choose ourselves are one and the same, just as “to will to love” and to love are the same since to love is to choose oneself as loving by assuming consciousness of loving. The significant point Sartre emphasizes here is that a choice is not a consequence of a consciousness but the same as consciousness. Choice is thereby traced back to its ontological foundation.

On the other hand, the consciousness in a choice is positional. This is because by surpassing the world toward ourselves we make the world appear such as it is. Through the negation by means of which we deny that we are the world, we make the world appear as world, and this negation can occur only if we have a projection
toward a possible. In turn, the world reflects back to us the image of what we are and how we are in this surrounding world, such as the clothing we wear, the furniture we use, the street on which we walk, the city in which we reside, the recreation facilities that we enjoy, etc. all these outline our image and inform our choice, that is, our being.

When Sartre says that a choice can be traced back to our original project, it does not mean that we have only one choice, or that we necessarily have to accept that choice. On the contrary, we are perpetually engaged in our choice and perpetually conscious of the fact that we can change this choice. Such a change is possible by a radical conversion of our being—in—the-world; that is, by changing our initial project and replacing our original choice by another choice and another end. In the case of yielding to fatigue, “I” may not let myself fall down at the side of the road through a modification of “my” original project that it is not worth the trouble of being tolerated.

The modification of a former choice is always possible. This is because of the very nature of the being of the for-itself in the world: we project the future by our very being, but our existential freedom perpetually eats it away. Because we are perpetually threatened by the nihilation of our actual choice, and thus perpetually threatened with having to chose ourselves, hence of becoming other than what we are. In other words, “as we make known to ourselves what we are by means of the future but without getting a grip on the future which remains always possible without ever passing to the rank of the real.” In sum, our choice does not present itself as an object for reflection and judgment. That is why it is always subject to change. Rejection and replacement. Our anguish bears witness to this perpetual modifiability of our initial project, for in anguish the possible that we project is perpetually eaten away by our freedom-to-come. I will return to the meaning and importance of such anguish in a later chapter.

Common sense holds that a choice is produced in an instant. This is not true. In Sartre’s view, a choice unfolds time and is one with the unity of the three ekstases of time—past, present, and future. Since to choose ourselves is to nihilate ourselves, that is, to cause a future to come to make us known as what we are by conferring a meaning on our past. Therefore to choose is to cause the upsurge of a certain
continuous duration. “Thus, freedom, choice, nihilation, temporalization are all one and the same thing.” How then are we to account for the sense that a choice is made in an instant? How are we to understand the positing of the “instant” in the unity of the three ekstases? In the process of temporalization the instant cannot be cut off from a concrete project. We have seen that a choice is the unity of the three ekstases of past, present, and future. It cannot be identified with either the initial or the final term of this process, for both these terms are an integral part of the overall unity. The instant, in fact, is produced as a point on which overlap the collapse of the prior process and the arising of the following process. The instant, then, will be both a beginning and an end. In other words, it is a temporal reality located on the border between the end of one project and the beginning of another, a beginning that is given as the end of a prior project. There is an instant only if we are both a beginning and an end at the same time, within the unity of a single act.

Yet an instant is produced in the condition of a complete modification of our previous project and as a result of our free choice. We make ourselves known to ourselves by a future being that we have chosen. In this way, the present becomes a new temporalization as a beginning. At the same time, our new choice makes our past choice just that, a past decision. Thus the new choice is given as a beginning only in so far as it is an end and as an end only in so far as it is a beginning. It is limited by a double nothingness; that is, a prior nothingness of the new choice and a posterior nothingness of the old choice, which now only exists as past. As such it realizes a break in the ecstatic unity of our being. Therefore an instant is the break in the ecstatic unity of our choice. It takes place at the moment of replacing our old choice by a new one.

However, the instant itself is only nothingness, for wherever we cast our view, we see only a continuous temporalization: either the completed course whose initial term is connected with the future possibility or the projected future which is yet to come as the future of just this past. Although the free and continuous recovery of our choice is obligatory, this recovery neither is nor made from instant to instant. This is because this recovery is so closely joined to the ensemble of the whole process that it has no instantaneous meaning and cannot have any. But, in so far as I choose, the making-past of the process will be effected and remains related to the present.
nihilation by means of its evaluation of the past and as determining the direction of its future. My choice makes the instant to spring forth as the nihilating rupture of the process of temporalization.

Sartre does not reject the element of contingency in the free choice of the for-itself. To apprehend one’s ultimate possible does not suffice to account for the choice of one possible rather than another. For instance, that I sit down at the side of the road or take a hundred steps more in order to stop at the inn are equally possible choices. How are we to explain this phenomenon? Sartre’s reply is this: the connection between the derived possible (i.e., to resist fatigue or to give in to it) and the fundamental possible (that there is a choice) is not a connection of deducibility. In other words, it is not a linear relation in which any chosen possible is necessarily related to the fundamental possible of there being a choice. Rather it is a connection between a totality and a partial structure. The meaning of any secondary possible always refers to the total meaning that I am. In addition, various secondary possible may enrich my fundamental choice. This phenomenon makes manifest that our freedom is entire and unconditioned. These free choices are all integrated—no matter that they are successive and perhaps even in contradiction with one another—into the unity of my fundamental project. It is for-itself that chooses to consider the secondary possible as indicative of its fundamental possible.

Furthermore, for-itself can make choices that are opposed to its fundamental ends. It happens frequently that the free subject turns away from its fundamental goal. That is, on the voluntary plane, it imposes on itself projects that contradict its initial project without fundamentally modifying this original project. This kind of choice is usually realized in what Sartre calls “bad faith.” In such choices, one deliberately refuses to recognize the true ends chosen by spontaneous consciousness, setting up false psychic objects as motives for making a decision. For instance, someone may wish to be a great artist but pretend to choose an inferiority that implies a constant gap between the end pursued by the will and the end obtained. Nevertheless, some artists intentionally maintain this gap because they wish to be great but know that at present they are not capable of being so and thus choose to be inferior instead. It follows that a choice of ends can be totally free, yet not necessarily happy or as willing fullness. The choice can be affected in resignation, uneasiness, shame, anger, bitterness.
However, such a choice made in bad faith need not be contradictory with the fundamental project. Rather it is conceived by the chooser as a means to attain certain ends. Consider again the above example: that one chooses to be an interior artist reveals the consciousness of rebellion and the emotion of the despair of the artist and manifests his desire to be a great artist, otherwise the inferiority would be neither suffered nor recognized by him, because in some other field the artist may reach the average without difficulty. He prefers to be the last in the artistic field rather than to be lost in the mass only because he hopes to become a great artist some day in the future even though he knows that this hope may be fruitless and he frequently falls into despair. To be free from such an “inferiority complex” and the bitterness accompanies it, a radical modification of the original project is necessary. In those acts of choice where “humiliation, anguish, joy, hope are delicately blended, in which we let go in order to grasp and grasp in order to let go—these have often appeared to furnish the clearest and most moving image of our freedom.”68

To human being, choice making is necessary and permanent, for the freedom of for-itself is neither a given nor a property. It can be only by choosing itself. Thus we shall never apprehend ourselves except as a choice in the making. This choice is always unconditioned. Human reality can choose itself as it intends but is not able not to choose itself. Since freedom is a being-without-support, and the project must be constantly renewed, I choose myself perpetually and can never be having-been-chosen. In short, freedom is the freedom of choosing, but not the freedom of not choosing. Not to choose is, in fact, to choose not to choose.

**Freedom and Responsibility**

Sartre begins the first subsection concerning freedom and responsibility by saying that man is fully responsible for the world and himself as a wany of being. By “responsible” he means “conscience (d') etre l'auteur incontestable d'un evenement ou d'un objet.”69 we have seen that this is true in three different way: a) the world arises through the for –itself since it can assume a meaning only across a project; b) the for –itself precedes its existence and makes its essence, not in the sense that it is the foundation of its way of being; c) regardless of the situation, the for-itself retains its freedom since a situation can be adverse or useful only in terms of a project.
There are, therefore, no accidents in life. If I am drafted into a war, it is my war because I have chosen it. The ultimate possible of suicide or desertion present another choice. Thus if I enter the war, I myself choose it because I prefer other values (e.g. life, honor) more than the refusal to engage in war. In any event. It is always a matter of a free choice00 even bad faith is a choice. Thus to seize upon facticity as an excuse or to attempt to evade freedom by inaction or passivity is a futile act in bad faith since for man, absolute responsibility is a necessary, logical corollary to man’s absolute freedom. Man, there fore, is not the foundation of his being; but he is condemned to be the foundation for the meaning of being. Thus Sartre says, “...je dois etre sans remords ni regrets comme je suis sans excuse, car, des l’instant de mon surgissement a l’etre, je porte le poids du monde a moi tout seul. Sans que rien ni personne ne puisse l’alleger.”

Freedom is Action and Project

Ethics has long been considered a kind of ontological problem. “The aim of ethics was to provide man with a way of being.” Earlier philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, and Descartes, along with the more contemporary G. E. Moore, described a world in a static state in which human beings were said to live passively. Their mistake is that they were not aware that “the being of man is to be reabsorbed in the succession of his acts.”

In fact, man is constantly active and directed toward his particular goal. Since man is always in action, “the purpose of ethics and obligations of human actions. In this sense, Kantian ethics was admired by Sartre as “the first great ethical system which substitutes doing for being as the supreme value of action.” For Kant, both morality and freedom are not theoretical but practical. There are a series of prior moral imperatives contained in human free will that regulate human actions. When man’s will is free his inclination of personal interest, his acts are in accordance with moral obligations and his action has a moral value. However when human will is influenced by inclination or passion, man acts immorally. Moreover, Kant imagines the possibility of establishing a universal system of morality. He thinks that this universal system of morality is possible because it assumes that everybody would seek to prevent themselves from violating the universal laws of morality before they act.
Sartre’s ethics is also an ethics of human action. In his view, action is the mode and essence of human existence. “There is no reality except in action.” “Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is.”

Human life is filled with actions. The whole of a man’s life is a series of projects and a process of undertakings meant to realize the aims of these projects and at the same time to realize himself. For this reason: “Dreams, abortive hopes, expectations, unfulfilled... What we mean to say is that a man is no other than a series of undertakings.” “One thing which permits him to have a life is the deed.” From this prospect Sartre defines his ethics as “an ethics of action and self-commitment.” And because action defines man, Sartre considered that the ethics he intended to build up was “not a contemplation of the world, but ought, itself, to be an action.”

Sartre expounds further that there is no prior human nature. Man’s behavior is judged by his action. For instance, a coward is not a coward because of his prior nature of cowardice, nor because of his physical organism, such as a cowardly heart or lungs or cerebrum, “he is like that because he has made himself into a coward by his actions.” For this reason, Sartre says that his ethics does not have “excuses” or “help” because everything depends upon man’s own endeavor. A man’s weakness and error cannot be ascribed to some prior human nature.

For Sartre, a meaningful action is a behavior that is conscious and goal-oriented. An action is in principle intentional. Put in an opposite way, doing something that is not intentional will not be regarded as an act. For example, a careless smoker who has through negligence caused the explosion of a power magazine has no acted. But a worker who obeys an order to set off dynamite in a quarry has acted when he produces the expected explosion, for he knew what he was doing, so he intentionally realized a conscious project. Every human action is constituted by a project which is the goal to be achieved.

Hence making projects becomes one of the chief modes of being of human reality, because the being of that human reality is basically free. That means man is capable of withdrawing himself from reality, nihilating the present state of reality and then positing a project on the basis of this nihilated nothingness. This is a double nihilation. “On the one hand, he must posit an ideal state of affairs as a pure present
nothingness; on the other hand, he must posit the actual situation as nothingness in relation to this state of affairs." This implies for consciousness the possibility of effecting a rupture with its own past state, of wrenching itself away from its past so as to be able to consider it in the light of a non-being and so as to be able to confer on it a meaning that it does not have. As soon as we attribute to consciousness this negative power with respect to the world and to itself, as soon as the nihilation forms an integral part of the positing of and end, we must recognize that the indispensable and fundamental condition of all action is the freedom of human beings. Human reality is free by being able to transcend its situation, but this is not to be understood as something that first exists in order subsequently to define itself in relation to this or that end, but on the contrary, as something that only exists as some project defined by its end.

On the basis of this position that human reality is defined by its project, Sartre illustrates the relationships among causes, motives, and ends in human action. In so doing, he takes up the old debate between determinists and proponents of free will. The latter try to find cases of decision for which there exist no prior causes. The former simply maintain that there is no action without a cause. Determinists argue that all human actions are causally determined to occur just as they do occur due to the presence of antecedent events or conditions. Libertarians argue that at least some human actions are not causally determined by antecedent events or conditions, and further that these “free” actions are those for which it is proper to hold the agent responsible. According to the causal theory expounded by David Hume, causation means essentially the regular sequence between two normally independent events, where the antecedent event is considered to be the cause of the following event. The two events are related contingently. Hence this cannot be the case for an intention, because an intention is necessarily the intention of getting or doing something. According to Hobbes, the ultimate desire that adheres to our action is the will. Desires are therefore the proximate sufficient causal conditions of our actions. But these desires themselves are physiological events that are still necessarily caused by other events. On this view, our actions are free because they proceed from our will, but they are necessarily determined because the will is caused by desires, which are also caused by other sufficient antecedent causal conditions. Sartre criticizes both these positions. On the one hand, he agrees with the view that any action must have a cause,
since every action must be intentional. Each action must also have an end, and the end is again to be referred to some cause. To speak of an act without a cause would be to speak of an act that would lack the intentional structure of every act. In this sense, by searching for the cause of an event within the process of its being performed, the proponents of free will end up by rendering the act absurd. On the other hand, the determinists weight the scale by stopping their investigation with the mere designation of some cause or motive. The essential question, in fact, lies beyond the complex organization “cause-intention-act-end.”

Sartre’s point is that it is not the motive that determines the action. Rather this motive itself is formed within the range of the project of an action. A motive or cause cannot refer to some prior cause; that is, to another real and positive existence. A motive is understood only in relation to its end; that is, in relation to something non-existent. The motive can exist only in the light of a project of the for-itself toward this end. “Therefore the cause, far from determining the action, appears only in and through the project of an action.” For example, that a worker revolts is not because he is suffering, for he does not represent his sufferings to himself as an unbearable until he realizes that these sufferings might not exist. He might even be accustomed to his poor condition. It is only when the worker conceives of a different state of affairs in which things would be better for everybody that he will consider his sufferings to be unbearable any longer. Therefore his suffering cannot be in itself a motive for his act. On the contrary, it is after he has formed the project of changing the situation that it will appear intolerable to him. The consequence, according to Sartre, is that a motive cannot alone be the cause of an action. It becomes the cause of an act only when it is related to some project of for-itself toward an end.

Sartre holds that why a specific individual did a specific action depends on what his goal was, and his goal cannot be thought of as a prior event, contingently and causally connected with the action. An intention is not a cause of action, at least not in the Humean sense of causation. For the latter is a regular sequence of independent events following each other. But an intention is necessarily an intention for something to be done or to be possessed. The concept of an intention, then, according to

Sartre cannot be logically described independently of the concept of a desired action leading to some particular outcome. The normal way in which the events in a
causal sequence are connected is the contingent regularity between the events. But the
relation between an antecedent intention and the consequent action is a non contingent
or necessary connection between them. If an intention were a causal factor of human
action, then, according to the Humean theory of causality, it would be logically
impossible. The reason as to why that is an intention is intrinsically an intention for
something. Hence an intention is necessarily connected with the action directed
toward bringing about that something. In other words, an action is the indispensable
means toward bringing about some desired end.

Since a motive must be related to a project, it always refers to something that
is not present. It is therefore in itself a negation. Thus the motive must be understood
as an ideal existence. It has meaning only inside a projected non-existent, and this
ensemble is ultimately for-itself as transcending itself, for the for-itself is capable of
escaping the in-itself by nihilating itself toward its possibilities. As we have already
seen with the example of rebellion, when the light of hope shines on suffering
indicating the possibility of a better life, the worker recognizes that it is necessary to
change the situation if such a life is to be obtained. This means that he will have had
to withdraw himself from the suffering in order to posit an ideal state as a present
nothingness, while positing his actual situation as nothingness in relation to this ideal
state. In other words, he will have to conceive of a happiness as a pure possibility but
presently a nothingness. At the same time, he will return to the present situation and
conclude that he is not happy in light of this nothingness.

Furthermore, every action is temporal in terms of all three aspects: cause,
motive, and end. The emergence of a cause, or a motive, is due to the thrust of a
project or the directedness toward the end of an action, while the end in turn is
referred to the cause or motive. The example we have been referring to—how the
workman rises up to change his situation—indicates this. It is in fleeing his current
situation toward his possibility of changing it that he discovers both the cause and the
motive for such action. At the same time, discovery of the cause and motive for
changing the situation already changes it. The result is that it is impossible to find an
act without a motive, but that does not mean that the motive causes the act. Sartre
claims, “The motive is an integral part of the act... The motive, the act, and the end,
are all constituted in a single upsurge. Each of these three structures claims the two
others in its meaning. But the organized totality of the three is no longer explained by
any particular structure. “82 In other words, without the act and the end, a cause (or
motive) alone cannot be the reason for an act. Each of these three structures claims the
two others as its meaning.” As we have explained, human action is the mode of being
of human existence as well as of freedom, and every act should be intentional, that is,
it should have an end. Motive is understood only in and through the project that led to
a certain end. That is why “the organized totality of the three is one structure.” The
three components of the structure are sometimes called cause, motive, act and end in
Sartre’s works; other times the just says cause, motive, and end.

Sartre sometimes regards cause and motive as identical in meaning, but
sometimes he distinguishes between them as regards their meaning. A cause,
according to Sartre’s definition, is “the objective apprehension of a determined
situation as this situation is revealed in the light of a certain end as being able to serve
as the means for attaining this end.”83 In other words, the cause is characterized as an
objective appreciation of the situation. But the situation must be revealed by a certain
end. Otherwise, the situation will not be revealed as a situation. For example, the
cause of the law controlling the sale of guns in the United States was based on the
apprehension of the criminal situation in today’s U.S. The fact is that as the number of
owners of guns increases, the number of victims killed or wounded by guns also
grows. But this situation will not be apprehended if it is not connected with the goal
of reducing crime in society and of establishing a safer and more pleasant
environment. Because discerning a cause depends on the objective apprehension of a
situation, Sartre stresses the objectivity of the cause: “the cause if objective,”84 for it is
the state of the world as it is revealed to a consciousness, namely, for-itself. As such,
it refers to the in-itself.

Motive, on the other hand, is a consciousness and refers to the for-itself in the
sense that for for-itself reveals the organization of the world in terms of causes and
experiences itself as a project toward an end. But a motive is also objective, for the
motive is nothing other than the apprehension of the cause in so far as this
apprehension is self-consciousness. Thus Sartre explains how it happens that a motive
appears to the psychologists as the affective content of a fact of consciousness. It is
because a motive, which is nothing other than a non-positional self-consciousness,
always appears as the consciousness in the past and as giving expression to an intentional significance and the meaning of subjectivity. It appears as past knowledge guiding one in the present. In fact, a motive, as consciousness in the past, “is fixed; it is outside.”85 Since it appears as a knowledge obtained in the past and as guiding one’s act in the present, it is an object for consciousness; more specifically, it is the object of a non-thetic, non-positional self-consciousness of the for-itself.

The difference between a cause and a motive, then, is that the cause is an objective structure that is revealed to consciousness in light of a certain end. Thus the apprehension of a motive refers to the cause as its correlate. Since the motive is in-itself, and represents our past which is lost in the midst of the world, and the cause is objective, they are presented as a dyad without ontological distinction. That is why we put them on the same level and why we are able to talk about the cause and motives of an action at the same time.

Let us now turn to the topic of the unity of cause, motive, and end as constitutive of all human action in terms of the three temporal ekstases. The end as my future implies a cause or motive, which points toward my past and present as the upsurge of an act. The motive, as the apprehension of the cause, has to be in the mode of the “was”; it can inform the act only if it is recovered. But in itself there is no force to it. The former motive can be recovered or rejected only through the act by which I project myself toward a new end, and through which in light of this new end I discover the cause in my present situation. Therefore “past motives, past causes, present motives and causes, future ends, all are organized in an indissoluble unity by the very upsurge of a freedom which is beyond causes, motives, and ends.”86

Since a cause or a motive appears as the reason in the past for a future act, it is in fact under the direction of a future end. As free, human beings decide the meaning of their past in light of their future, instead of simply slowing the past to determine the present. Thus Sartre reverses the common view that every action is the effect of some prior psychic state. Instead of understanding every action in terms of the past, he conceives of the comprehensive act as a turning back of the future toward the present.

There are some further aspects to Sartre’s theory of action worth considering. One has to do with his definition of action whereby “an action is in principle intentional.”87 Does this assertion logically preclude the possibility of there being
unintentional actions? John E. Atwell says it does not make the expression “unintentional action” self-contradictory, for the notion of “unintentional actions” used in ordinary life reflects merely our non-philosophical or pre-philosophical view. “A necessary condition for there being any actions...is that an action is prima facie intentional, though it allows that there may be numerous unintentional or non-intentional ‘doing’ properly called actions. Actually, the conceptual thesis seems to reflect more accurately our non-philosophical or pre-philosophical view.”\textsuperscript{88} is one somehow immediately aware of the distinction between doing something with an intention and merely doing (unintentionally undergoing) something? Sartre’s possible answer to this question is suggested by Mary Warnock who holds that the difference between these two is “the difference between the active and the passive, between doing things and having things happen to one... which can be experienced all the time.”\textsuperscript{89} Suppose that during a heated argument, Jones begins coughing “uncontrollably,” and that it is asked whether he intentionally did so, say, for the purpose of terminating a debate he believed himself to be losing. Was the coughing something Jones did, or was it something that happened to him, something he underwent? Only Jones knows for certain.

Another issue is that Sartre draws a fairly sharp distinction between a mere wish and a genuine intention, between a representation that I could choose and a real choice, between a dream and an undertaking. The difference between a mere wish and a genuine intention is that for the latter, one intends to do something, one must do something or must succeed in doing something directed toward successfully doing that something, even though one may not finally realize the end one intends to bring about, whereas a mere wish or a dream means that one wanted to do something but that one did not act on it. In Sartre’s view, this is self-contradictory: “I intended to do x, but I didn’t do anything toward doing x.” In short, if I intend to do x, then I must do something that I take to be instrumental in getting done. To cite an example, it is only by trying to escape, hence by doing something toward escaping, that the prisoner learns of his own intention (not mere wish) to escape.\textsuperscript{90}

Another point that Sartre emphasizes is that the causal explanation of natural or mechanical events is to be clearly distinguished from the reason-explanation of goal directed or intentional human actions. This is because, as John Passmore
indicates, the reason for performing an act may consist in the fact that there is a conventional rule, governing its performance. The reason explanation of behavior is essentially normative. This is because human behavior is a rule-governed purposive activity. For example, moral rules, which may constitute the reason for performing an act, prescribe what kind of action ought to be performed in specific circumstances. For example, A. I. Melden suggests that a man may actually desire food as a natural necessity or a bodily need. He feels hungry. However, he may all the same refrain from getting the desired food when it is readily available. This is because, for instance, out of his moral convictions he may not want to get the food that he needs badly. For it may mean, depending on the concrete circumstances, that he would actually be stealing. He could even be depriving others of food they need more desperately than he does. The point of drawing such a conclusion is to indicate that a motive or a desire cannot be logically or essentially conceived of as a causal factor of human behavior. They are not, in other words, to be understood as an organic state of physiological tension or of bodily drives. For Sartre, an emotion is not a physiological tempest. It is an intentional means to a desired end.

In my view, it is not appropriate to interpret Sartre’s position in terms of Libertarianism, as Bernard Berošky does. Sartre explicitly rejects the position of Humean determinism that an action is a consequent event caused by an antecedent and contingent event. His view is that an action is in fact generated by an intention toward a certain end. However, he does not deny that any action must have a cause. And we can see that the notion of cause applied at many places in his ethical writings. He states clearly that to speak of an action without a cause is to speak of an act without an intention. It can only lead to absurdity, because, for him, an intention has to be referred to the cause of an action. So what Sartre rejects is not the view that human action has a cause, but rather that causes are to be understood in a Humean sense, that is, as antecedent and independent events.

The other important distinction between Sartre’s notion of cause and that of determinists is that Sartre defines the cause to be the consciousness of for-itself that makes an objective observation and apprehension of the in-itself in light of some end. In other words, causation is not the association between two independent and contingent events, but rather the manifestation of capacity and ability of human
consciousness for nihilation and transcendence. In a word, it is the manifestation of human freedom.

It will be our concern to show how the transcendence of human reality as presented by Sartre in L’ Etre et le néant involves a point of view of human freedom which is based upon a radical subject-object dualism constituted by the negating action within consciousness itself thus making the Sartrean concept of human freedom fundamentally different from a unifying Heideggerian perspective of human freedom which expresses itself as freedom for Dasein’s authentic disclosive affirmation of Being. In L’ Etre et le néant, Sartre has remarked on Heidegger’s philosophy of Dasein:

It should be clear by now that we are planning to briefly sketch out the Heideggerian sources of Sartre’s concept of freedom. In so far as we are studying this concept primarily as it is expressed in Sartre’s work, L’ Etre et le néant, we will be dealing with the ontology of human freedom rather than its ontical comportment expressed in individual acts of choice (although we frankly admit that the latter has great significance in Sartrean concept of freedom, particularly in comparison to a Heideggerian concept of freedom). We will be dealing primarily with freedom as the fundamental constitution of being which is prior to all free acts providing them with their absolute precondition.

Our first question must be: what can Heidegger mean by human freedom? In the following section of this chapter, we will set forth systematically the basic elements of an answer to this question. We will develop the philosophy of human freedom which Heidegger himself can be said to have expressed in his early writings, especially Sein und Zeit (Being and Time). Later we will get into a discussion of temporality as developed in Being and time because we recognize this as having enormous influence on Sartre’s ontological frame-work. We will consider this aspect of Heidegger’s work in view of the general orientation of a Heideggerian concept of freedom. Finally, at the conclusion of this first part dealing with Heidegger we will touch on those aspects of Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein, as brought out in Being and Time as well as Vom Wesen des Grundes (The Essence of Reasons) which give preliminary indications of a Sartrean concept of human freedom. In this way we hope to be better able to understand Heidegger from Sartre’s point of view and thereby
achieve a more illuminating transition from the thought of Heidegger to that of Sartre. From then on, in the second part, we will merely refer to Heidegger when such references are useful in situating such Sartrean concepts as nothingness, bad faith, choice, etc. once all the differences and similarities have been uncovered we expect to better able to arrive at a more precise awareness of the fundamental difference which, as we expressed at the beginning of this paper, distinguishes the Sartrean concept of human freedom from its Heideggerian counterpart.

In our introduction, it was shown that Sartre placed the world in opposition to human existence as that which was subject to transcending negation. For Heidegger to “free” is to give an ontological interpretation to the various existential modes of being-in-the-world. “freeing) allows these apparently isolated tendencies—elements of a philosophical anthropology—to be understood in view of existential characteristics of Dasein—the latter comprising elements of an existentially a priori anthropology which is to provide access to the question of the meaning of Being. Just as pure freedom is not an original characteristic of Dasein so perfect “luminosity” is not an original trait of understanding with regard to an understanding of Being; rather we are led to realize that the ontological ‘hermeneutic’ is something one has to work toward existentially. Dasein is initially “in truth” and “in untruth”, disclosed and closed off.94

II

Questioning and Anguish as the Revelation of Freedom

The second main section of Sartre’s book is concerned with the problems of nothingness and questioning. We will for the most part, pass over this section and merely point out some connecting threads of thought. I do this simply because I think the primary function of this section is to provide a continuity of ideas rather than to provide any substantive basis for his notion of freedom, which is what we are primarily concerned with. There is, however, a part within this section concerned with anguish which is very important in respect to his notion of freedom. I say this in spite of the fact that Sartre says in this section that anguish is not a proof of freedom, but rather freedom is the necessary condition for the possibility of man to question. This is, however, said in the context of answering objections which psychological determinism poses to Sartre. It is quite evident, nevertheless, in the context of the
whole, that questioning is an aspect of freedom and that the primary revelation of freedom as a structure of man’s being is due to anguish. Hence I will only analyze in detail his notion of anguish. Thus, it is hoped that this will provide a good introduction to the section concerning bad faith.

Sartre begins this section by pointing out that in our questioning of being we can recognize questioning as a mode of human existing. The structure of questioning, in turn, reveals the existence of negations or what Sartre terms Negation (*négatités*). There is first of all, negation in the sense that a negative answer to the question is possible. There is also negation in the sense of the ignorance on the part of the questioner as to the answer. Lastly, there is negation in the sense that every objective answer is a limit and will exclude other answers. (There are also many other kinds of negations) Absence, change, otherness, is that all of these negation have human consciousness as a necessary condition for the possibility of their existence. And, more precisely, it is human consciousness insofar as it is free to project possibilities that are the origin of this nation. Freedom here is considered primarily in a negative sense; that is, freedom is considered under the double aspect of being able to stand at a distance from or to disengage itself from both objects and itself. For instance, man can project the possibility of making a ladder out of this lumber. Also, man can project the possibility of being a carpenter rather than a teacher. Thus the first main meaning of freedom for Sartre is a mode of consciousness which enables man to withdraw and relate himself to himself and the world.

Thus Sartre’s reasoning is as follows: questioning as a mode of existence for man is a fact; questioning reveals the existence of negation: negation has as a necessary condition for their existence a mode of consciousness which consists in the freedom to project possibilities. Then, however, Sartre says that someone may object to this by saying that if this freedom is a mode of consciousness, then there must necessarily be a consciousness of this freedom. He answers this objection by saying that anguish is the consciousness of this freedom. Anguish, however, in my estimation has the more important function of being the sole evidence for the existence of Sartrean freedom. This is how Sartre makes a detailed analysis of anguish. Thus the next section will analyze on anguish.
Concerning anguish, Sartre says: “... a man is walking on a narrow path up the side of a mountain.” There is fear here because an avalanche, a slippery rock, or some weak ground will result in our falling to our death. There is also anguish, however; for we know that we can exercise extreme caution or be carefree, cling to the side of the mountain or walk the edge; and finally, we can even commit suicide. In the one case, we are afraid of a transcendent object which we cannot have any control over. In the second case, we are anguished because of our self insofar as we must freely choose among many possibilities. Normally the states of fear and anguish are successive: an irreflective fear is usually followed by a reflective anguish. There are, of course states of pure anguish which are neither preceded nor followed by fear.

But now there is a problem: if freedom is a permanent structure of the being of man (as Sartre will assert and explain in the section on for-itself), and if anguish is the mode of revelation of this freedom, then man should be in a constant state of anguish. If we realize, however, that anguish usually presupposes a reflective awareness of certain possibilities as my possibilities, then there will be a way of explaining why men usually experience anguish rarely. The obvious reason is that we often perform our daily acts in a non-reflective manner, that is, most of our possibilities are only non-reflectively apprehended by our realizing them in action. This way of acting Sartre terms a pattern of flight when faced with anguish. To say it simply, rather than acknowledge our freedom and the responsibility of choosing, we simply ignore the problem and act unreflectively or else pretend that we are not free and that there is only one true or good way of acting. Both of these ways of acting in Sartrean terms are “bad faith.” Nevertheless, we are still left with essentially the same problem; for it doesn’t seem possible that man can ignore a fundamental structure of his being. Sartre tells us that we must look for an answer in an analysis of bad faith.

The major theme in this section seems to be that of anguish. Its function for Sartre is to reveal and “prove” the existence of freedom. I certainly would not deny that there is a type of anguish which reveals the freedom to act ad hence the responsibility for acting. Nor would I disagree that in some sense freedom is a permanent structure of man since I think his distinction between reflective and non-reflective anguish and his notion of bad faith sufficiently explain the rarity of anguish. Two questions however remain in my mind: a) “Is man’s freedom absolute or
limited?” b) “Does the experience of anguish reveal either absolute freedom or limited freedom to the exclusion of the other.” These questions, however, are intimately related to the question of action and values and hence will be taken up again in the section where Sartre treats of this.

Bad Faith as the Futile Endeavor to Avoid Freedom

Sartre begins the first subsection concerning bad faith by recalling that man is not only the condition for the existence of negation, but that he can also negate himself because of his freedom to actualize various possibilities. Bad faith is one way of negating one’s self. One can say that bad faith is a lie to oneself if one is careful to distinguish this lie from a lie simply. The fundamental difference is that in a lie simply, some one in possession of the truth deliberately hides it from another; whereas in bad faith, there is a unity of consciousness in which the same person both possesses the truth and conceals it from himself at the same moment. Also, bad faith is not a state which comes to us from outside, but is the result of a free project which implies 96 at this point, Sartre doesn’t try to explain the paradox, but concludes the section, by showing that the Freudian unconscious does not explain the paradox, but, in fact, either presupposes bad faith in the censor, or else results in a worse duality of the me and the other within the same person.

The Why of Sartre's Philosophy of Human Freedom

For Sartre the freedom of for-itself is a fundamental condition of its existence which cannot be pre-determined in any way by its essence.97 In this regard he seems to have borrowed, at least, from the language of Martin Heidegger as presented in 'Being and Time', 'The Essence of Reasons' and 'what is Metaphysics'? Since he uses such terms as “existence”, “transcendence” or “nothingness” which are found in these writings of Heidegger, he clearly understands them in view of his own ontological point of view.

In borrowing from Heidegger’s Being and Time and The Essence of Reasons, Sartre describes the transcendence of for-itself towards itself as the manifestation of the nothingness as primordial freedom.98 As early as 1936 in his essay, Transcendence de l’egeo, Sartre describes consciousness as nothingness because, Sartre refers to Heidegger’s concept of primordial nothingness—the foundation of the “not” – as
providing a significant advance over previous theories of the origin of negation. Thus, as we noted in the introduction, Sartre’s dualism develops from dualistic interpretation of intentionality. Consciousness always shows itself to be different from its object insofar as it is consciousness of that object. This does not conform to the Heideggerian understanding as we have studied it so far – which reflects a prior unifying relationship with “being-in-itself” as the precondition of all disclosure of “being-in-itself” in transcendence.

Sartre’s outlook, clearly developed in view of his concept of freedom, follows a prior conceptual framework in which Being and Nothingness are defined in terms which clearly distinguish one from the other. The criterion which Sartre proposes for such an ontological schema is contained in the fundamental requirement that the individual have. Thus we are introduced to the philosophical presuppositions of Sartre’s ontology which reflect a radical concept of freedom as autonomy. In this regard we should recall that freedom for Heidegger is tied to a concept of disclosedness as a revealing relationship of understanding towards its own most potentiality-for-being in view of a preliminary disclosure of Being-in-itself. We will see how the Heideggerian concept of nothingness ties in with this concept of freedom so as to put in relief the Sartrean concept of nothingness in view of his concept of freedom.

Critical Analysis of Sartre’s Concept of Freedom

After giving an elaborate analysis of Sartre’s concept of freedom as found in his earlier work, viz., Being and Nothingness as well as in his later work, viz., Critique de la raison dialectique, I will, in this chapter, make some critical observations on Sartre’s concept of freedom and then bring out some points of similarity between both his works. I believe that there are some similarities, with regard to his concept of freedom, between Being and Nothingness and Critique de la raison dialectique, though I agree that Sartre has introduced completely new concepts in his Critique de la raison dialectique and on many points, Sartre’s view appears to be in sharp contrast to one another.

In Being and Nothingness, Sartre recognizes the common sense fact that every person is born in a given situation with a given set of circumstances. As we have seen,
in Chapter II, Sartre believes that these givens are not limitations to one’s freedom. Man, as free, can either accept these as given or he can transcend them by creating new meaning. Even when one accepts these givens, it is not mere passive acceptance. For Sartre, acceptance constitutes a free choice of the conditions. Only those meanings which are conferred from the outside, for example, when someone says, “he is a Jew,” can be suffered. Again, these givens, though considered as obstacles and hindrances to freedom, are necessary to be overcome, something to be changed, there can be no action and as a result no freedom.

Now, compared to Being and Nothingness, in the Critique de la raison dialectique, human freedom changes its perspective together with the methodology. In Critique de la raison dialectique, Sartre’s attention is focused on the facticity of the situation and the limitation it imposes on freedom so much that he seems to give up his belief in freedom of the individual. There is a social condition in which the self lives and makes choice of his life. The worker who has to work all his life just to keep himself alive, cannot objectify himself in the same way as the man whose salary opens a wide range of choices. But still he can form a project of changing the situation more remotely by joining the union on strike. Thus, for example, the cost of medical education being very high, an ordinary worker cannot think of sending his son to medical school. But what he can do is to form a project of changing the situation by joining the union on strike and demand for the medical education of his grandson or even of his great grandson. Moreover, the freedom to form projects and make choices is constantly distorted or colored by the categories of one’s class and society which serve as conceptual framework.

In Being and Nothingness, it is clearly evident that interpersonal relationships are primarily characterized by conflict. Sartre explains the knowledge of the existence of others by his concept of “look.” This look, as we have seen earlier, is essentially a hostile look. By the “look,” the other becomes a threat to one’s freedom. The “look” of the other turns the one looked at into an object. Therefore, the other is essentially a threat to one’s freedom and this threat cannot be avoided.

In Critique de la raison dialectique, on the other hand, as we have seen in Chapter V, Sartre treats of relations with others in different ways at different stages of the dialectic. At the level of individual praxis, the other is a threat to one’s freedom.
Then, at the level of seriality, others are not regarded as violent because, as we have
seen, real freedom is not present at this level. The whole attitude is passive at this
level. But then, at the level of group in fusion, Sartre changes his view. Here Sartre
says that there are times when man can overcome hostility to each other. When the
members of the group in fusion join together and protest against a form of seriality,
they are exercising their freedom in the fullest sense of the term and their freedom is
mediated by the presence and action of each other person in the group. According to
Sartre, “It is the beginning of humanity.” Finally, at the level of group statuaries,
the relation to others changes again. At this stage, the group is united by oath and by a
“kind of terror.” There is no longer a common enemy against which group had united
to overcome. Now the fear is that the group and its sub-groups have a tendency to fall
back into seriality. Through the oath, there is reciprocity but there is ambiguity also.
But then the group becomes further organized with the differentiation of tasks to meet
different needs. With this organization, each is designed or has chosen a particular
task. This reduces his freedom but does not eliminate it. It is, once again, the
subordination of individual ends to a common purpose. But the man of Critique de la
raison dialectique, according to Sartre, ideally remains free because common action is
intelligible only through individual praxis. So the basic idea remains the same in
Sartre’s earlier work, viz., Being and Nothingness and later work Critique de la
raison dialectique.

In Being and Nothingness, freedom is viewed as the ontological structure of
man. In this sense, self is always free, everywhere and in every situation. Even in the
face of torture, he is still free. This freedom is absolute freedom of choice. In any
moment of life, self always has alternative. For example, he can choose either to
submit or to die, and if he is about to die, he can choose how to meet his
death.103 Again, in Being and Nothingness, freedom is identified with man’s
consciousness or existence. It is the awareness of man’s possibility of acting upon and
choosing his life. Freedom, for Sartre, must be translated into action. Action is
something that is intended and it is not something that just happens. As it has been
shown in the previous chapters, action involves three things. First, it involves the
awareness of something lacking in one’s situation. Second, there is the awareness or
the possibility of overcoming this lack or changing the situation. Third, there must be
a motivation on the part of the individual to act. It is this freedom of fact, as a given
that allows Sartre to say that the slave in chains is as free as his master.104

Sartre still maintains that the past of the self has no causal influence of the
present project. The relation between the self and his past is a relation in which the
self surpasses the past and in his perpetual act of surpassing the past, the self must
perpetually re-live what he is surpassing in order to be a surpassing of it. So the past
haunts the present. The surpassing of the past implies the repetition of it. It is the
necessity of the repetition the explains why adulthood. It is because of this that in
order to have a comprehensive understanding of Madame Bovary, it is necessary to
refer to the experience of Flaubert’s childhood. It is not a reference to a cause which
makes Flaubert write Madame Bovary. It is the praxis of the present which determines
from what the past will be interpreted. “...it is the choice which must be interrogated
if one wants to explain them in their detail, ... It is the work or the act of the
individual which reveals to us the secret of his conditioning. Flaubert, by his choice or
writing, discloses to us the meaning of his childish fear of death—not the reverse.”105
By choosing to write Madame Bovary, Flaubert surpasses his child-life and therefore,
is not causally determined to write the book by his past experience. Flaubert reveals at
the same time in the writing the very past that is being surpassed by the writing. So
when Sartre criticizes Marxism for its lack of proper attention to childhood experience
in its interpretation of a person, it does not mean that Sartre admits the determination
of childhood experience on present praxis.

Second, in the Critique de la raison dialectique, Sartre says that man is
essentially praxis.106 It is through praxis that freedom becomes explicity aware of
itself. In Being and Nothingness also freedom is connected with action (doing) but
there action is considered as a secondary mode of being or having. The Critique de la
raison dialectique emphasizes more on action making it absolutely irreducible. But
the emphasis on action or praxis does not mean that Sartre is giving up his original
idea that man is project, i.e., man can be understood through his project. According to
Sartre, “man defines himself by his project.”107 Thus, Sartre tells us that when he
looks from the hotel window and sees a construction worker and a gardener separated
from each other by a high wall, he is aware of them as not himself and also aware of
himself as not being either of them. But this awareness is possible only if there is

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comprehension of them in terms of their goals. So when the goal or aim is known, only then the significance of action is understood.

Third, though in the Critique de la raison dialectique, Sartre insists on the social aspect of the self, yet he does not give up his idea of sovereignty of the individual self. The group is seen as the product of the free praxis of the individual. The individual joins the group so that freedom can be realized in a more effective way. The limitation to freedom of the individual in the group is a result of his own praxis. He freely takes the oath to be a member of the group. I agree with Walter Odajnyk when he says that for Sartre, the individual can “step out” of the social evolution to regain his own freedom. The same freedom that makes possible the formation of the group entails the possibility of disregarding one’s oath and thereby risking Terror and standing outside the group as an isolated individual. With the emphasis on the power of the autonomous individual in originating social revolution and the process of history, the Critique de la raison dialectique maintains the freedom of the individual as absolute value. Now, the question still remains: Has Sartre been successful in marrying existentialism with Marxism? Is Sartre a Marxist as one school of thought calls him or is he a revisionist as Marxists label him or is he neither one of them?

According to Sartre’s own description, he is neither a Marxist nor a revisionist. He is not a Marxist because as he says, he sees the Marxist analysis as a hypothesis, not as dogma. In Sartre’s words: it is because we take the statements of Engels and Garaudy as guiding principles, as indications of jobs to done, as problems—not as concrete truths. Similarly, Sartre denies that he is a revisionist, saying that revisionism is “either a truism or an absurdity.”

Sartre distinguishes only three major philosophies which have emerged since seventeenth century: that of Descartes and Locke, Hegel and Kant, and now, that of Marx. Coming after the philosophy that had already been articulated, Sartre sees himself as an “ideologist”—“a relative man” --who can only be described as a parasite living off Marxism. According to Sartre’s definition, “a philosophy is developed for the purpose of giving expression to the general movement of the society,” in which the rising class becomes conscious of itself. To go beyond the living philosophy of the day, Sartre continues, is a fruitless task. This very definition
of philosophy shows that for Sartre philosophy is dynamic and not static. I believe that Sartre has adhered to this dynamic view of philosophy throughout his entire work.

Between his original existential definition of freedom and the subsequent political one, Sartre sticks to five major transitional concepts which allow him to move from the existential to the political level without abandoning his original premises. Of these five points, we will be repeating some of the points which we have stated earlier in this chapter. First, because the individual is existentially free, he is responsible for the world. The one who is conscious of his existential freedom must either accept responsibility for the state of affairs or act to change it through a revolutionary program in the real world. Second, Sartre’s existential philosophy is both humanistic and optimistic. It is true that his philosophy does not require that man should choose their self-preservation but still if the only available alternatives are an authentic death or continued life in Bad faith, Sartre would accept the former though it is natural for Sartre to declare on the political level that such life or death choices should not be the only alternatives available in a society. Man should always be allowed to choose a life in good faith rather than death. Third, the Other limits the individual’s freedom. This is the basis of conflict among individuals in the political level. It is man’s consciousness which is in conflict at the existential level, whereas it is their actions which conflict and limit their freedom on the political level. Fourth, having promised man life on the political plane, Sartre is forced to require effectiveness of his actions to change the unequal nature of the society in which he lives, and to gain control of his praxis. Last, the reason that man cannot always choose life without changing society and the reason that the individual is in perpetual conflict with the other, is because he lives in a world where certain goods which we need to stay alive are scarce.

In view of these reflections, we may say that the thesis of this dissertation is closest to the third school of thought in that it has attempted to prove that Sartre has retained his existential premises while adding a political level to his thought. In other words, Sartrean existentialism operates on a philosophical line similar and complementary to the Marxist political program. But even this diagrammatic description is not entirely accurate since the two philosophies do coincide or clash at
various points on the historical continuum, contradiction the image of parallel lines which, diagrammatically, indicate the complementary relationship between the two philosophies at the intersections. In simpler terms, the Marxist method provides a sweeping analysis of history and a general knowledge of collectives which the existential analysis supplements with an analysis which focuses on the particular nature of the individual and things.

We may not forget to state here that there are further question remains such as why does Sartre insist on saying that it is Existentialism which supplements Marxism and not the reverse. Is it imprudent to suggest that the Marxist analysis of history might help the Existentialist towards a heightened consciousness of his own freedom and his relationship to the world when engaged in some form of meaningful activity? Of course, Sartre avoids explaining the relationship in this manner, probably because he finds it tactless and incautious rather than untrue.

Though Sartre as an individual existentialist, quite often expresses his debt to Marx, yet he never integrates Marx into the existential framework, probably because he feels that his existential premises are ontologically complete. To add Marx’s political program to a highly intellectualized view would be gratuitous. In the final analysis, Sartre has offered Existentialism to Marxism not as an ideology, as he claims, but as an ontological philosophy which will retain its integrity while being used in the fight for political freedom. It is not clear why Sartre has subordinated Existentialism to Marxism, because existential freedom is what allows for political freedom. Sartre recognizes the possibility that the Marxist analysis could help to develop individual’s consciousness and that at some point in the future, a theory somewhat similar to Existentialism might emerge as the dominant philosophy of the day. It is only in a long range, optimistic projection of the future of Marxism and Existentialism that the subordination of the former to the latter could be imagined. Only when Marxist political program succeeds on the practical level and relegates material contradictions to a position of relative unimportance, will the existential level with its emphasis on psychological contradictions gain prominence? Sartre, however, never states it in such explicit terms.

Sartre’s philosophy of freedom, therefore, should be considered as a philosophical elaboration to the fundamental fact that freedom is the core of man. To
deprive man of his freedom is to deprive him of his humanity. Man is free because he is nothingness: he never is. He is in a state of perpetual self-definition and flux and is not identical with his situation. In whatever situation he is, the self is free, even if his freedom is limited to the choice of his attitude towards the situation. By making us aware of this basic fact Sartre is encouraging us to regard ourselves as, to act as, free and responsible beings and not as a cog in the machine, nor as a helpless victim of circumstances, of fate etc.

The brilliant description of bad faith shows that Sartre’s existentialism is, in no way, a naive glorification of human freedom. Sartre is very much aware that freedom, which is the ground of being, has a negative aspect too. Freedom is both the dignity and the tragedy of man. It is his dignity because it is the mark of his humanity. It is this uniqueness. It is his tragedy because it enables him to escape from freedom to choose bad faith as a way of life. Therefore, in spite of some of the weaknesses of Sartre’s concept of freedom, we may think that this keen insight into the nature of freedom is a great merit of Sartre’s entire philosophy. The major thrust of this dissertation, therefore, has been to give an emphasis on the similarities between earlier and later Sartre, than pointing out the differences, with regard to his concept of freedom, since an overwhelming majority of philosophers have emphasized the differences without pointing out the similarities.

There is clear evidence that Sartre is attempting to come to terms with critics who want to equate Sartre’s notion of freedom with subjectivism and/or relativism. Commentators often point out that Sartre’s concepts of “bad faith” and “authenticity” provides little ethical direction to his concept of freedom. Sartre’s project inevitably becomes prescriptive and normative in the sense that his fully developed conception of freedom entails the possibility of transcendence toward what he terms the “truly human”. While Sartre never explicitly defines a human nature per se, there is undoubtedly a “human” orientation to freedom that becomes more evident as his thinking progresses, and this does play a normative role in his work. In the final analysis, Sartre’s project employs a two-pronged attack against our sensibilities; he confronts us with a disturbing reality through his analysis of alienation, while at the same time insisting on the possibility of transcending that reality toward a more “truly human” existence.
Conclusion

In the light of what we have said above, we can conclude this chapter by comparing Sartre’s early theory of human nature to that of his later works. We shall start with what Sartre himself says in this respect in the similarities between being-in-itself and inert matter on one hand, and being-for-itself and praxis on the other hand. This is in fact what makes Andre Gorz believe that the fabric of the Critique remains phenomenological, in that it depicts man in terms of transcendence and projection, and extends the analysis of situation to encompass the group. In other words, the cogito in the Critique no longer bears on the formal relations of the interiority of a consciousness to itself and to being; it bears on praxis.

Therefore, whether man is consciousness or praxis, he remains the same: the permanent activity whose structure is defined by the end at which it aims. Thus, Sartrean man, whether that of Being and Nothingness or that of the Critique, has the same characteristics and the same aim. Sartre’s later theory of man then should not be considered as a radical conversion from the early one. What we really find is a shift in the emphasis, taking man out from his isolation and individuality and submerging him in the collectivity without any attempt to find a new basis by which he could live in peace and friendship with his fellow man. In sum, Sartre renounces all traditional views of man and draws a very new picture which is characterized by absolute freedom, nothingness, facticity and transcendence. Unfortunately, by these characteristics Sartre paints a very dismal picture of human reality. The following chapters will provide further evidence of this.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Sartre’s philosophy of freedom is dialectical; As a summary to the earlier pages, we shall do two things: first, we shall merely sketch what we consider to be the main points of Sartre’s philosophy of freedom and hope that the chapter as a whole has provided a coherent and true analysis; second, we will present our analysis of why we consider the rejection of any transcendent values to be the major limitation of Sartre’s notion of freedom.

Sartre began by saying that phenomenology is the starting point for philosophy because the phenomenon is presupposed in every experience. It seemed at first that Sartre intended to leave the notion of phenomenon open to any kind of experience in which something appears or is evident. However, we discovered by the
way in which Sartre used phenomenology that he had in fact very much restricted the 
meaning and value of phenomenology. In fact, he explicitly disclosed later on that his 
major philosophical presupposition is that all of reality must be known and viewed 
first of all and primarily from the point of view of pure consciousness. We then saw 
how this type of phenomenology provided the foundation for two types of reality: for 
–itself and the in-itself. Sartre then presented the phenomena of questioning and 
anguish as the revelation of the freedom of for-itself. It is here that he presented his 
notion of bad faith as an answer to any objection concerning freedom. Thus he then 
made an analysis of the structures of the for-itself which provided the ontological 
foundation for his notion of absolute freedom by asserting of the for-itself all the 
conditions for the possibility of absolute freedom Sartre then analyzed exactly what 
he meant by freedom and how it is related to facticity.

We have seen that freedom was the ability of man to nihilate both the world 
and himself through consciousness. Second, we saw that freedom more specifically 
was the ability to project ends. Lastly, we saw that the most primordial meaning of 
freedom was the ability to choose, make, and create one’s self without restriction by 
capriciously projecting ends and endeavoring to realize them. In conclusion, Sartre 
pointed out the reciprocity of his notion of freedom with responsibility. With regard to 
the second point of this summary, we have seen that in our mind the major contention 
with Sartre has been his rejection of transcendent values. We have already seen within 
the text why Sartre’s explicit reasons for rejecting transcendent values were invalid. 
There seems to me, however, to be an implicit but more fundamental reason why 
Sartre rejects this position.

It has been shown earlier that the root, hidden presupposition of Sartre is that 
truth concerning man can be obtained only by viewing man first of all as 
consciousness and not as conscious of this or that. We have also seen that for Sartre 
the essence of consciousness is the utterly capricious projection of ends. It is clear that 
this view certainly precludes the possibility of viewing man as a thing because of a 
subjective lack. If one starts out by viewing man as absolutely free he will not later on 
find some ways in which he is determined. Thus Sartre refuses to accept a 
compromise solution which would maintain that man is determined to act on the basis 
of a subjective lack, but is free to act on the basis of this or that lack.
Now, however, we must present some positive reasons for the existence of transcendent values. Indeed, it is certainly difficult to “prove” Sartre’s position false since its very extremeness presupposes any argument against it. However, one can see that it is false in the sense that if one does not act out of sheer caprice then he must act because of a subjective lack. Further, it is evident that one who acts capriciously cannot possibly have any real concern or care or anguish about how he acts. Whereas the opposite is true for one who acts because of a subjective lack. Ironically enough, some of Sartre’s most moving passages are concerned with the anguish of the person who is confronted with his freedom to act in many diverse ways. Thus, the bulk of our argument will be to point out an example or two in which it is evident that man acts in anguish because he suffers specific subjective lacks.

Sartre himself recognizes this. He says, as we have seen, that every for-itself lacks coincidence with itself (i.e. the in-itself-for-itself or God) and that it is in virtue of this subjective lack that all projects are made. How then does Sartre reconcile his views? He simply doesn’t, and seems to consider them as two more of the many paradoxes in life. This is why, as Colette Audry points out, in the very last paragraph of this work it is still a question in Sartre’s mind whether or not freedom, once it discovers itself as the source of all values, can take itself as an end and as a value. 64 It seems, however, that the one view, that man is lack and desire is due to his sincere and perceptive realism, and that the other view, that man acts capriciously with regard at least to his fundamental projects, is due to his erroneous philosophical presupposition that man must be known and understood first and foremost as consciousness, that is, as the absolute freedom of capriciously projecting ends.

Thus it would seem to us that the notion of action presupposes transcendent values. We will have to define much more precisely what we mean by this term, however, since it is used in many diverse significations, we have seen that for Sartre the notion of action presupposes the notion of value considered as an end capriciously projected by a for-itself which corresponds to an objective lack. We, however, have said that action presupposes transcendent values considered as ends projected out of necessity precisely because of their capacity to fulfill a subjective lack. Thus the first and major precision is that relative values are absolutely freely chosen because they are arbitrary and capricious, whereas, transcendent values are chosen out of necessity.
Freedom, in the realm of transcendent values, seems to exist and consist of defining within one’s possibilities of one’s own being; for we have said that man necessarily acts in terms of transcendent values, but that he is free to choose among the many transcendent values. Now then, freedom is possible not only because of the diverse needs and hence values, but also because some needs and values are more immediate and forceful even if less fulfilling than other needs and values which though less forceful and immediate, and consequently more difficult to obtain, are more fulfilling. As an example, perhaps we could think of a man who desires very much to express his love for his wife be being faithful, and yet when confronted with some voluptuous tart, finds it difficult to choose the value of faithfulness, even though he realizes it would be much more fulfilling than the value of mere sexual gratification.

The next precision to be made is whether or not at least some transcendent values are objective. The term “objective” here signifies that there are some transcendent values corresponding to subjective lacks which are common to all regardless of situation precisely because of a common human condition. In this formulation of the problem, the phrase, “common to all,” does not mean that all men are aware of these values, but merely that they exist. Also, the qualification, “regardless of situation,” does not necessarily imply that the objective values in question are the highest, since they could be common and not essential or most primordial.

In order to further clarify the question, however, we should note that all transcendent values, precisely because they are rooted in one’s being, are objective in the sense that the situation cannot alter them or their hierarchical order since the situation can not change one’s being. At best, the situation can force one to consider certain values rather than others as being here and now at stake. Thus the real question is whether or not some of these values are common to all men as men. We may briefly summarize the discussion by saying that Sartre is a pure relativist because he has asserted the absolute freedom of man by considering him as essentially an absurd being capriciously projecting arbitrary ends. We, however, have maintained the limited freedom of man by asserting the existence of transcendent values and, in a limited sense, objective values.
Notes and References:

1 Sartre was influenced by Hegel, the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, and in his later years by Marx. p.1
2 “Freedom is the pivot of Sartre’s writings and not simply in the domain of ethics or psychology where the question is most explicitly elaborated. Freedom is also dominant in his aesthetics and literary criticism whose central focus is the creative imagination as synonymous with the freedom of human consciousness.” Christina Howells, Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 1.
3 No Exit, The Flies, Intimacy, The Reprieve. These titles include topics like: the glance or the look; shame: conflict as the basis for all human relations; possession of the other; seduction; sadism and masochism; love and hate. pp. 234-237
4 Many of his novels and short stories are almost pornographic. Perhaps this is also one reason for the tremendous success of Sartre’s version of Existentialism. See Alfred Stem, Sartre: His Philosophy and Existential Psychoanalysis (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 150ff.
5 According to Sartre, the idea of God is a projection that humans make, and must make, being what they are. Furthermore, it is necessarily the case that God cannot exist, because He is a contradiction in terms. Humans are uncomfortably restless in their state of pure consciousness (which Sartre calls pour-soi, of “for-itself”), and they yearn to combine their life of conscious awareness either the stability of non-conscious things and objects ( called en-soi, or “in-itself”), thus humans strive to be a pour-soi-en-soi, a “for-itself-in-itself” which constitutes and effort to be like “God.” But this is impossible because these categories are mutually exclusive. Hence God is a contradiction. See W. L. Reese ed. Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), p. 509.
7 Ibid., p. 317.
8 Sartre, “Humanism,” p. 35.
9 Sartre, “Humanism,” p. 35.
10 In Husserl, cogito is a collective name for spontaneous acts in which the ego lives. Descartes (Meditation II) employed the cogito argument to establish the existence of the self. Descartes’ Cogito, ergo sum (“I think, therefore I exist”) is an attempt to establish the existence of the self in any act of thinking, including even the act of doubting. Dagobert D. Runes, ed., Dictionary of Philosophy (Savage, MD: Littlefield Adams, 1983), p. 73.
13 According to Heidegger, “‘Thrownness’ suggests the facticity of Dasein’s being delivered over.” By “facticity” (Faktizität), Heidegger wishes to convey the notion that Dasein understands his “own-most” being, in the sense of a certain factual “Being-present-at-hand.” Hence, “whenever Dasein is, it is a fact; and the factuality of such a fact is what we shall call Dasein’s facticity.” See Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 82-174.
contingency (facticity, the brute fact of being a particular for-itself) is without justification, and human projects are absurd since they (for example, the desire to become God) are unattainable. See Justus Strel!er, Jean-Paul Sartre, To Freedom Condemned: A Guide to His Philosophy, trans, Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), p. 159.

18 Ibid., p. 64.


20 Desan, The Tragic Finale, p. 162. Paul Roubiczek writes: “Sartre is claiming, in short, that we are not merely developing our personalities by a growing understanding of the different aspects of our human nature, but are creating ourselves, entirely and arbitrarily...It is after all, plainly wrong to consider man as a completely undefined being, as material which can be transformed into anything; there are reasons why he is called a human being, and his humanness can-and must-be made the basis of his endeavors...if essence disappears, everything concrete which could guide our understanding of existence disappears with it—the characteristics of man, of freedom, of the transcendental, of external reality and even of his historical situation.” Paul Roubiczek, Existentialism For and Against (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), pp. 124-125.

21 See Francis J. Lescoe, Existentialism, p. 282.

22 Ibid., pp. 107-156

23 Ibid., p. 282

24 Ibid.

25 In his work, Emotions: Outline of a Theory, Sartre’s issue was whether to intuit the world as governed by deterministic and magical processes. In this book, he shows that in an emotional situation, consciousness appears to deceive itself by regarding the world as determined by magical rather than deterministic processes. Sartre’s theory of emotion rests upon the supposition that man normally lives his fundamental relationship to the world in a rational manner. But when a situation appears to be too difficult or too urgent to be dealt with by ordinary rational means the subject takes recourse to a Contd.


28 Ibid., p. 24.

29 Ibid., p. 51.

30 Ibid., p. 56.

31 Being and Nothingness, pp. 40-42.


33 Ibid., p. 60.

34 Ibid.

35 53 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 486.

36 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 486.

37 Ibid., p. 32ff.

38 Ibid., p. 32ff.

39 Sartre writes: “Existentialism isn’t so atheistic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn’t exist, that would change nothing. There you’ve got our point of view. Not that we believe that God exists, but we think that the problem of his existence is not the issue. In this sense existentialism is optimistic, a doctrine of action, and it is plain dishonesty for Christians to make no distinction between their own despair and ours and then to call us despairing.” Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and human Emotions (New York: Carol Publishing, 1990), p. 51.

39 Ibid., p. 51.

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40 Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, p. 34.
41 Ibid., p. 34.
43 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 455.
44 Ibid., p. 349.
46 Ibid., pp. 459-460.
47 We shall see that Sartre and Berdyaev agree on this fundamental principle.
49 Ibid., pp. 439, 461.
50 In terms of “cause,” Justus Streller points out: “There can be no act without a cause, but this does not mean that the motive is the cause of the act. It is rather an integrating component: motive, act and goal constitute a unity which appears as a single upsurge; this upsurge is one with freedom.” Streller, Jean-Paul Sartre, p. 34. Streller is responding to Sartre who writes; “Freedom makes itself an act, and we ordinarily attain it across the act which it organizes with the causes, motives, and ends which the act implies.” Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 438.
51 Sartre, *Nausea*, p. 16. Sartre says plainly that he was Roquentin and used him to show without complacency, the texture of his life. See Jeanson, Sartre, p. 130, in René Lafargue, Jean-Paul Sartre: His Philosophy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), p. 144.
54 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.lxii.
55 Norman Greene, *Jean-Paul Sartre: The Existential Ethic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 17. In this regard Philip Thody writes: “For Sartre, the for-itself (pour-soi) or Hujman mind, contains Nothing. Indeed, in a way, it is nothing but a force, immediately conscious of itself and of the world, a force which knows its capacity for change and self-denial and wishes to escape from it. But it does not wish in escaping, to lose its self-awareness and longs rather for that moment when it will coincide as absolutely with itself as the in-itself (en-soi) does, while still retaining that self-awareness which the in-itself lacks. This is, Sartre repeats throughout *Being and Nothingness*, a self-defeating and self-contradictory ambition.” Philip Thody, Sartre (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), p. 71.
57 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 715.
59 Ibid., pp.57-64
60 Ibid., p. 94.
61 Ibid., pp.98-104
62 Being and Nothingness, p. 587.
63 Ibid.,p.432
64 Ibid., p. 594
65 Ibid., p. 587
66 Ibid., p. 588
67 Ibid., p. 599.
68 Ibid., pp. 594-595.
69 Ibid., p. 491.
70 Ibid., p. 496.
71 Ibid., p.269
72 Ibid., pp.269-304  
73 Ibid., p.562  
75 Being and Nothingness, pp. 300-01  
76 Ibid., p. 302.  
77 Ibid. p. 302-304  
79 Being and Nothingness, p. 301  
80 Ibid., p. 562.  
81 Ibid., p. 578  
82 Ibid., p. 565.  
83 Ibid., p. 575.  
84 Ibid., p. 577.  
85 Ibid., p. 579.  
86 Ibid., p. 581.  
88 Ibid.  
90 Being and Nothingness, p. 484.  
93 Being and Time, p. 87.  
94 Ibid., p. 222.  
96 Jean Paul Sartre. 1943. p. 87.  
97 L’Etet et Le neant, P. 61.  
98 Ibid., pp. 53-55, 85.  
9999 L’ Etet et le neant, pp. 52-54.  
100 Ibid., p. 60.  
101 Sartre, Search for a Method, pp. 94-95.  
102 CRD, p. 453.  
103 Hazel Barnes, “Introduction” to Search for a Method, P. xxiv.  
104 BN, p. 569  
105 Sartre, Search for a Method, p. 152.  
106 Ibid., p. 20.  
107 Ibid., p. 150.  
108 Walter Odajnyk, Marxism and Existentialism, p. 160.  
109 Sartre, Searchch for a Method, p. 35.  
110 Ibid., p. 7.  
111 Ibid., p. 7.  
112 Ibid., p. 8.  
113 Ibid., p. 4.
Though I agree with the third school of thought, yet it should be pointed out that the greatest advocate of this school of thought, Hazel Barnes, has not addressed herself directly to the question as I have posed it in this dissertation.

CRD., P. 286.